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DELHI - NCR (BHIWADI) | JAIPUR | LAVASA (PUNE) | LUCKNOW
The highlight of August was shooter Abhinav Bindra standing on the podium to receive his medal—India’s first individual Olympic gold—the tricolour going up behind him to the tune of the national anthem. The timing couldn’t have been better. It was the eve of the nation’s 62nd Independence Day.

Indeed, India is in its silver years now, a nation built on “the age-old values of harmony, tolerance and mutual respect” in the words of President Pratibha Patil in her address to the nation.

We owe these values to none other than our silvers. These are the men and women who built this country brick by brick. They toiled selflessly to enable us to enjoy the fruits of independence. And they laid the foundations for India’s economic growth.

What have we done for them in return?

The answer: precious little. It’s been 61 years since Independence and we are yet to guarantee our silvers financial security, healthcare, shelter, protection of life and property, freedom from abuse, security and a barrier-free environment—all imperatives in a modern, developed, ‘free’ state. To achieve these goals, the National Policy for Older Persons was unveiled in 1999. But it resulted in more sound than substance.

In fact, the only concrete provision for the elderly has been the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens’ Act, passed in 2007, which makes it mandatory for adult children or grandchildren to financially provide for the elderly. With the constitution of maintenance tribunals in each sub-division to enforce it still underway, it remains to be seen whether the Act fulfils its mandate.

The good news is that some states are taking matters in their own hand. This month, the Himachal Pradesh government announced its ‘Integrated Programme for Old People’ (see ‘Orbit’) to establish old age homes and day centres, provide geriatric care; and reach out to silvers through counsellors and volunteers in collaboration with the community and NGOs.

Harmony for Silvers Foundation commends this effort. Rather than disparate agencies—government and non-government—working at cross-purposes, civil society must work as a unified force. Let’s give our silvers their due, recognise their potential and bring them in from the fringes. It’s only then that the true promise of our freedom can be fulfilled.
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column one

This issue is all about grit and gumption. On the cover is The Pink Ribbon, the symbol of support for breast cancer survivors. In a special feature upholding the cause, Harmony features four brave women (“Keep up the Fight”) whose power and will to fight have proved stronger than the illness. They overcame their fear and kept their focus and faith. They chose information over ignorance and emerged stronger. Our package—with facts, latest research, advances in treatment, glossary, details of support groups, and tips—will equip you with information, courage, and foresight.

Others who have exhibited aggressive readiness against the odds are three athletes from Bhavnagar in Gujarat. These septuagenarians participated in the Malaysian Open Masters’ Athletics Championship held in Perlis, Malaysia, and came back with medals. They have funded their own athletic careers and, more importantly, led disciplined lives to keep their body and mind alert and agile. So go for it!

This month we have introduced some new elements in the magazine. A capsule by nutritionist Anjali Mukherjee (‘Ask the Expert’) that shatters weight-loss myths; a feature on silver-oriented innovations and their creators (‘Innovation’); an update on home improvement (‘Wall to Wall’); and a dose of nostalgia in ‘Headstart’, our mind-teasers section. Do write in and tell us what you think.

— Meeta Bhatti

harmony september 2008

I response

Five years ago, at the age of 79 I went to Mumbai to spend a few days with my niece. On a morning walk by the sea, I came across a group of silvers in a big circle, laughing loudly with their arms thrown skyward. Their laughter was infectious and I watched them with delight. The next morning, they invited me to join them, explaining to me that laughter accelerates blood supply to the brain and heart and fills the lungs with oxygen.

This was my introduction to laughter therapy. On further research, I was amazed to discover that laughter lowers blood pressure, reduces stress hormones, increases muscle flexion, and boosts immune function by raising levels of infection-fighting T-cells, disease-fighting proteins called Gamma-interferon, and B-cells, which produce disease-destroying antibodies. Laughter also triggers the release of endorphins, the body’s natural painkillers, and produces a general sense of well-being.

I now realise that laughter guarantees happiness and health—with no expiry date. I urge my fellow readers of Harmony to laugh out loud whenever they can, especially when it feels like life is dragging you down. It’s all the medicine you’ll ever need.

MADAN MOHAN PRABHAKAR
New Delhi

The letter of the month wins music CDs from Big Music
ety, enabling them to be “as free to be themselves as children”, in Surendran’s words. But for this, the elderly have to come together as a unified force.

S K MAHAPATRA
Via email

I enjoyed reading your cover feature on designer Ritu Kumar (“India’s Label”) in the July issue. Your description of “her warm, lived-in face” was indeed encouraging for women who are ageing yet do not wish to go the Botox and collagen way. Kumar also seems to be so grounded, which is amazing considering her hi-fashion, glamorous life.

M BANERJEE
Via email

Recently, New India Assurance Company (NIAC) announced a plan of ‘loyalty sops’ for senior Mediclaim policy holders as part of ‘no-claim bonus’. I think the company is merely publicity hungry and does not believe in either following its own scheme or the directives of the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India (IRDA). I am 72 years old and a Mediclaim policyholder with the company for the past three years with no claims. In March 2008, while renewing my policy the company sent me a notice for enhanced premium, amounting to 120 per cent of what it had charged me in 2007. I had no option but to pay Rs 26,592. Later, I read that IRDA had issued a circular in December 2007 that nationalised companies should not charge more than 50-75 per cent of what they had charged the previous year. A special officer on duty was appointed to deal with this issue. In April 2008, I submitted a complaint to IRDA but am yet to receive a response.

While my appeal remains pending with IRDA, NIAC has been toying with me. First, they offered me a mere Rs 450 as refund against excess premium. This, despite the fact that their own ‘loyalty sop’ promises 10 per cent, while the amount offered is only 2 per cent. Naturally, I refused. The company has not even responded to my refusal. Now, where is the justice for silvers? Harmony should highlight such cases.

MOHANLAL SIROYA
Mumbai

CONTRIBUTOR

Nalini Singh is a familiar face on television as anchor, investigative journalist, presenter of daily programme Ankhon Dekhi on DD News, and promoter of India’s first TV channel in Nepali, NEPAL 1. She pioneered investigative journalism on television, exposing corruption and political chicanery in Sach Ki Parchaiyyan on DD in the 1980s. She and her team also produced the first comprehensive exit poll programme on Indian TV during the Lok Sabha elections in 1996. Singh says she has been lucky to have the family she does—brothers Arun and Deepak Shourie, and husband S P N Singh. Above all, she terms herself “the grateful daughter of exceptional parents”. In ‘At Large’, she remembers her father H D Shourie.

AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY

We are looking for contributions from our readers. Write to us if...

- You had an experience related to money or finance
- You faced a serious health problem and conquered it
- You know of someone who has done something exceptional after the age of 55
- You have a hobby or an interesting travel experience to share
- You have a funny or insightful anecdote about your grandchildren

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September 2008 Harmony 5
ANALYSE THIS

WORM OF DISCOVERY

The next time you’re about to stamp on a hapless worm, remember that it may hold the key to ageing. Scientists at Stanford University have discovered that when a worm gene called elt-3 slowed down, the process of ageing picked up. This opens up the possibility that we may be able to tweak certain genes to hold ageing at bay in humans too as the genetic makeup of roundworms (Caenorhabditis elegans) is remarkably similar to ours.

This finding also suggests that in addition to our bodies simply wearing out over time—the prevailing theory that explains ageing—there are also certain genes that may carry instructions to start the ageing process. “We may be able to slow or even reverse ageing if scientists can figure out how to keep our master genes from changing course,” says biologist Stuart Kim, co-author of the study, which is published in the July 2008 issue of journal Cell.
NEWSWORTHY

POSITIVE PROGRAMME
In a bid to improve the quality of life of silvers in the state, the Himachal Pradesh government has announced an ‘Integrated Programme for Old People’. According to Sarveen Chaudhary, social justice and empowerment minister, the government will provide grant-in-aid for running and maintaining old age homes; providing specialised geriatric care and mental healthcare; and establishing help lines, counselling centres, multi-facility care centres for destitute older women, day centres for silvers suffering from dementia, and volunteer bureaus. “The principal objective is to provide basic amenities like shelter, food, medical care and entertainment opportunities, and encourage productive and active ageing,” she says. “For this, active support for capacity building will be provided through the government, NGOs, Panchayati Raj institutions, local bodies and the community at large.” Up to 90 per cent of the cost will be provided by the government and the remaining would be borne by the organisation or institution concerned.

SILVER FORCE
In May, we announced the formation of the National Alliance of Senior Citizens’ Associations of India to advocate the cause of silvers in India. It comprises national and state-level organisations along with retired insurance and pensioners’ associations, NGOs, and private organisations. Now, K R Gangadharan (see photo), Director, Heritage Hospital, Hyderabad, who was nominated as the National Coordinator, has put together the First National Coordination Committee of the Alliance. The members include Shankha Kinjawadkar of All India Senior Citizens’ Confederation (AISCON), Navi Mumbai; Madhukar Kulkarni of Federation of Senior Citizens’ Organisation Maharashtra (FESCOM), Mumbai; Sisir Dutta of Indian Association of Retired Persons (IARP), Kolkata; Girish Gupta of Respect Age International, Agra; D Rajasekaran of Federation of Senior Citizens Association of Tamil Nadu, Chennai; C Maheswari, Bharat Pensioners’ Samaj, Gurgaon; Akbar MAVANY, Secretary General, Forum for Senior Citizens of India, Goa; and Hiren Mehta, Programme Manager, Harmony for Silvers Foundation.

HELP LINE: KOLKATA POLICE, IN ASSOCIATION WITH NGO DIGNITY FOUNDATION, HAS LAUNCHED A NEW HELP LINE: (033) 2418 7937, 24296048. AS PART OF THIS INITIATIVE, THE POLICE AND VOLUNTEERS WILL REGULARLY VISIT SILVERS WHO LIVE ALONE.
**TRENDS**

**SEX AND SILVERS**

*Harmony* has consistently reported studies that establish that there’s no expiry date on a satisfying sex life. And now a long-term study by Gothenburg University in Sweden reveals that the sex lives of the elderly have actually improved in the past three decades. The researchers collected data since the 1970s from 1,500 Swedish adults, all of whom were 70 years old at the time of the interview. According to their report, published in the *British Medical Journal*, the proportion of 70 year-olds reporting sexual intercourse increased significantly from 1971.

Among married men, 68 per cent were having sex, compared to 52 per cent in 1971. And among married women, 56 per cent were having sex, compared to 38 per cent in the 1970s. Sexual activity has also increased for unmarried seniors. Among the single, 54 per cent of the men and 12 per cent of the women reported having sex, up from 30 per cent of men and less than 1 per cent of women in the 1970s. Among those who were sexually active, more than 25 per cent reported having sex once or more a week, compared to only about 10 per cent in the 1970s. More than half the men and women reported very happy relationships, compared to just more than one-third in the 1970s. Overall, modern 70 year-olds reported higher satisfaction with sexuality, fewer sexual dysfunctions and more positive attitudes to sexuality in later life than those who were interviewed in the 1970s.
A HERO ALWAYS LEADS PEOPLE FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

Here’s one who sheds light on the constitutional and Islamic rights of impoverished Muslim women.

She sparks their quest for self-respect by teaching them skills and lights the flame of financial independence in their lives.

We are proud to call our crusader for Muslim women’s rights a hero and we hope she continues to turn on the shine.
100, NOT OUT
A poll of 100 centenarians in the US is a cultural snapshot that reveals vibrant lives fuelled by enriching relationships. Here are some findings of the Evercare 100 survey, conducted by health services provider Evercare, and released in July.

Magic mantras: Centenarians rate staying close to friends and family (90 per cent), keeping the mind active (90 per cent), and having a sense of humour (88 per cent) as keys to longevity.

Defining independence: They feel independence is the ability to take care of themselves (94 per cent), staying in good health (93 per cent), and making their own financial and health decisions (89 per cent).

Making it work: They say being honest with each other is the most important factor in a relationship (91 per cent), followed by laughing together (88 per cent) and respecting each other’s independence (83 per cent). Sharing the same interests comes in lower, at 35 per cent.

Tuned in to technology: 19 per cent use cell phones, 12 per cent have used the Net and 7 per cent send email; 3 per cent have dated someone they met online; 3 per cent have purchased a gift online; and 2 per cent have made travel arrangements online.

Faith counts: Spirituality ranks as very important in their lives (85 per cent) and 63 per cent believed that religious background is important to a relationship.

Concerned citizens: 70 per cent say they would vote in this year’s presidential election in November.

What they watch: Music reality TV show American Idol emerged as the most watched (70 per cent). And 45 per cent could identify acerbic British judge Simon Cowell.

There are more than 84,000 centenarians in the US, and that number is projected to increase to 580,000 by 2040. For the full report of the survey, go to www.aboutevercare.com

STILL IN THE RACE
Silvers weren’t just spectators at the recently concluded Beijing Olympics—many of them actually took part. Japanese equestrian Hiroshi Hoketsu, 67, led the silver contingent at the Games, which included 61 year-old equestrian Ian Millar, 57 year-old shooter Susan Nattrass (see photo) and 50 year-old fencer Jujie Luan, all Canadians. “Athletes today can delay the impact of ageing by maintaining a high level of activity over many years,” Dr Michael Joyner of Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota in the US, tells news agency AFP. Joyner studies the effects of ageing on athletes. “While most people begin to show the effects of ageing in their 30s, these can be staved off until the late 40s through intense and continuous exercise. The tailoring of training regimens to individual athletes has also enabled older athletes to stay competitive.”
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MEDIA WATCH

FOR ‘ELDRS’
A willingness to speak about controversial issues like euthanasia (the right to die) and sex (even putting a picture of two nude silvers on the cover) has led to the rising popularity of ELDR, a quarterly American magazine for “active and affluent seniors”. Launched last year in Berkeley, California, the magazine features stories on lifestyle, health, profiles of notable silvers, travel, finance, grandparenting and food—much like Harmony—and plans to go bimonthly by February 2009. “Our readers are influential and active in their community,” Chad Lewis, the 40 year-old founder and publisher of ELDR tells Discover magazine. Before getting into the magazine business, Lewis helped start AgeSong, a company that develops innovative senior housing communities. “We wanted to create a publication that was not as mass as AARP – The Magazine [which is given out free to members of AARP and has a circulation of 24.4 million, the largest of any magazine in the world] but more hip, edgy and humorous. We target those who are high net-worth, but not the super-rich.” ELDR has a newsstand price of $ 4.99 (about Rs 200). Check out the website www.eldr.com, which features some of the content of the magazine.

PHIPPS™ by Joseph Farris

LIVE ON
“Everyday solutions to improve the lives of the elderly”—that’s the promise of liveonnetwork.com, a new website launched in the US. Silvers get access to an array of services, from food delivery and transportation to caregivers, handymen, paralegals, travel agents and even beauticians across the country. There are also a host of innovative healthcare, diagnostic and lifestyle products, including remote controls with large, easy-to-read buttons, timer-set pill dispensers, and wheelchairs. In addition, the site also features a ‘virtual time capsule’, where you can store photographs, home videos, and write journal entries so that your story can be remembered and shared with family and friends for generations to come, and a blog where you can connect to other silvers. The best part: the site is a breeze to navigate.
LOVE THAT!

TALK OF THE TOWN
Árni Valdimarsson is a silver with a mission to put Eyrarbakki—a small town in southern Iceland—on the map. The septuagenarian bought a defunct fish freezing plant in the town two years ago and is busy renovating it as a community culture centre. “Eyrarbakki was the first city in Iceland and everyone’s forgotten it,” he told newspaper Örgunbladid. “I hope this initiative helps it reclaim its spot on Iceland’s tourist map.” Valdimarsson’s culture centre will include a flea market, art gallery, coffee shop, district museum, cinema and apartments and workshops for senior citizens who are interested in being part of his community.

GRANNY BEAT
This July, in the sleepy American town of Magnolia in Arkansas Mary Sikes fulfilled her childhood dream: she became a law-enforcement officer. After going through a year at law enforcement academy and passing the state police exam, she was sworn in as a reserve deputy. “I’m smiling so much my face hurts,” Sikes tells newspaper The Houston Chronicle. As a reserve deputy, Sikes, the mother of two sons and grandmother of four, will be a volunteer, working in the office and mostly handling calls. She’ll wear a uniform, and carry a gun and handcuffs, but she won’t be on the streets. She doesn’t mind though, saying, “It’s enough to be part of something I love.”

Sikes grew up in Houston, where she wanted to join the police department after graduation. But she met and fell in love with Tommy Sikes, got married and decided to stay home and raise their children. Eventually, it was her husband—he died this January of Parkinson’s disease—who urged her to enrol in law enforcement academy. “He knew how much I wanted this, and he supported me,” she says. “He actually gave me handcuffs for Christmas.”

THE SKY’S THE LIMIT
For members of the Harvest Club—a club for silver patrons of the First State Bank in Huntington, West Virginia, in the US—the sky’s the limit. “They do all sorts of neat things,” Adam Daniels, marketing director at the bank, tells local newspaper The Herald-Dispatch. Like skydiving. The two year-old club regularly organises sky jumps (from a chartered airplane) for members. Harry Messinger, 77, is the oldest member to sign up. And Sherrie Porter, the 62 year-old director of Harvest Club, enjoyed her sky jump last year so much that she has since trained to skydive solo. The group’s next big activity: a Mystery Trip, where members board a bus without any knowledge of their destination.
WORTH YOUR WHILE

PAPER TIGER

“Everybody should have a hobby,” says 63 year-old engineer and utensil manufacturer Vishwas Dhawal. His is origami.

Dhawal came across the art of paper folding over 20 years ago. “I saw a book on origami that I purchased on impulse and started folding models from the diagrams,” he remembers. His first model was a ‘dippy dog’—a two-piece, ‘action’ model where the dog actually rocks its head when touched. Dhawal was “hooked”.

Today, he has mastered a variety of models, from a simple ‘flapping bird’ that takes just a minute to the ‘pangolin’ created by Frenchman Eric Joisel that has hundreds of folds and took Dhawal 16 hours to make. His wife has even built a cabinet in their home to show off his creations. “Viewers find it difficult to believe that the models are made from one sheet of paper without any cutting and pasting,” he says. “The beauty of origami is not just about the craftsmanship. It’s how objects can be interpreted so innovatively.”

Learning to translate origami diagrams is the key to mastering the art, according to Dhawal. His advice to beginners: get familiar with diagrams and practise simple procedures before trying out more complex models.

DIY: AN ORIGAMI DOG

Materials: A square piece of paper

Method:
- Fold the paper diagonally downwards to make a triangle.
- Fold in half again horizontally, and unfold right away.
- Fold the two corners down, making sure to begin from the top of the crease in the middle of your paper.
- Fold the top and bottom corners to the back.
- Draw a dog face.

FACE OFF

STEM THE TIDE

It may take time for stem cell technology to fulfil its promise in the world of medicine but it’s already making ripples in the cosmeceutical market. American company NV Perricone MD claims its anti-ageing cream StimuCell, formulated with skin stem cells, replicates the protein, peptides and lipids “signals” responsible for renewing and restoring the skin. It also contains phosphatidylcholine or “super vitamin E”, which reportedly mimics lipids in our skin for better hydration and nourishment. According to the company’s media release, results are “immediate, with instant radiance and better definition of skin”. If you’re willing to part with Rs 6,500 on it (a 50 ml jar costs $155), go to www.nvperriconemd.com
H RECOMMENDS

ACTION PLAN FOR SEPTEMBER

Cook together. Nothing brings a family together quite like food. For more than 50 years, 90 year-old Ralph Brinegar and his wife Rosemary, 83, have tested recipes by serving up dishes for their four children and asking for a family vote. The couple, who live in Dallas, Texas, save their best recipes in voluminous binders, to be brought out and served at special family occasions and parties.

Favourites include fish almandine, western-style beans, cucumber salad, asparagus soufflé with cheese sauce, baked pears with sausage, and cherries jubilee. Although the Brinegars, married 62 years, have been asked numerous times to compile a book featuring their most treasured recipes, they’ve always declined. “We have a happy marriage,” Rosemary says. “But we could never agree on 100 favourite recipes.”

Make a ‘manifesto’. Get together with your friends and set an agenda to help your neighbourhood and community. For instance, a group of pensioners in Barking and Dagenham, a borough in Greater London, have signed a ‘manifesto’ to help young people in the community understand the dangers of carrying knives. While the London police has launched its own ‘anti-knife’ drive, these silvers believe teenagers might find it easier to talk to them. “I believe strongly that older people can do their bit in finding out from young people what’s going on and what the council and police need to do to help,” says Val Rush, borough councillor, and silver.

Get a massage. It’s proven to reduce blood pressure, bust stress and make your limbs more supple. From 20 to 26 July, the Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals, an American industry body, celebrated ‘Everybody Deserves a Massage Week’ across the US. And as part of the week-long event, the Grano Chiropractic & Wellness Centre in Hamburg, Michigan, offered complimentary 30-minute massages to silvers in the city. “We want to promote the many benefits of massage therapy, especially for the elderly,” says massage therapist Stacy Owens.
I your space

Have something to say? This is the place to do it. Reach out to fellow readers with interesting anecdotes, inspiring stories and heartwarming moments from your life. Write in with full contact details, and make this space your own!

**ON MY OWN FEET**

During the Indo-Pak war in 1965, I was commanding a forward post in the Rann of Kutch. My duties included supervising the task of clearing minefields. One day, while inspecting a stretch of land, I intuitively felt that there was a mine under the ground. The havaldar who was assisting me couldn’t locate it. I told him to step back and took his position. As I swivelled to collect the mine detector, a massive explosion in the area triggered the mine buried underneath. A couple of hours later, my right leg was amputated at the field hospital nearby. Soon afterwards, I was shifted to the Artificial Limb Centre in Pune. My wound healed soon, though more surgeries were required to prepare the amputated part to accept an artificial limb. Besides the excruciating pain, I had to get used to walking with an artificial leg—I had resolved that I would not use a walking stick. While my body healed quickly, the mental agony persisted. I had been a champion swimmer and tennis player all my life. For five years, I could not even bear to watch a tennis match on television.

My bitterness faded under the loving ministrations of my family and friends. My children and my wife made me feel that we could cope with the greatest adversity together. When I was in the hospital, the wife of my commandant sent me a bouquet every Friday. One day, when I didn’t receive the bouquet, the nurse at the hospital plucked flowers from the hospital garden and offered it to me. Even Brigadier Jenkins, a World War II amputee, offered words of encouragement and solace.

Six months after I left the centre, I purchased a second-hand car and learnt to drive it using my left foot. I also started driving my faithful old scooter. Today, at 74, I lead an active life. I help my daughter run her bakery-cum-coffee-shop. I take time out to play golf and bridge. And I still drive the car when we go out of town for vacations. Every week I visit the Artificial Limb Centre to motivate other soldiers who have met with a similar fate. I tell them what a fellow officer had once told me: “Don’t think about what you have lost; focus on what you have.”

—Lt Col (retd) Sawhney, Pune

**TWO OF A KIND**

After 36 years of service—first in the Air Force and later in Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd—I settled down in Vayupuri in Secunderabad in 2000. My neighbour, whom I fondly refer to as ‘PS’, is Major (retd) Preetam Singh Dhot, whose son Harmeet is a friend and Army course mate of my younger son Jaswinder. The Dhots moved next door in 2006 and PS is now my closest friend.

We have so much in common that it almost feels as if our lives have been running on parallel tracks. We are the same age—87. Both our spouses have passed away. Just like me, PS has two sons and two daughters. His sons are now retired from the armed forces—just like mine. And we continue to lead active lives even after retirement. Besides our family background, we even share common interests—both of us love to watch Shabad Kirtan on Amritsar TV every day. And we both enjoy reading religious and spiritual texts. While my little patch of garden is my pride
and passion, PS is a well-known homeopath. He has treated many people, though I often tease him that his own medicines don’t work on him. Neither of us has had any major health problems, though PS’s feet tend to swell up on days when he forgoes his evening walk. I have been going on brisk walks for many years; now I have managed to cajole him to come along with me everyday. Because of his aching feet, I slow down to keep pace with him.

Most of us make new friends in our youth. I am happy I have found such a wonderful friend and confidante in the autumn of my life.

— Sqnl Dr (retd) Malkiath Singh, Secunderabad

YESTERDAY ONCE MORE
When I took voluntary retirement from Allahabad Bank in 2001, I decided to fulfil a few long-cherished dreams—to revisit the different institutions where I had studied; to meet old classmates and teachers; and to visit the many houses where I had spent my childhood. As my father was a PWD engineer our family was constantly on the move.

In February 2008, I embarked on a 15-day journey through Hoshangabad, Multai, Chhindwara, Raigarh, Kannod, Sagar, Mandla and Jabalpur. The journey took me back in time and through places that I had left behind 50 years ago.

When I visited Hoshangabad, I was surprised to discover that nothing much had changed—neither the circuit house where we lived nor the banks of the Narmada where my father taught me to swim. In Multai, I visited the primary school where I had studied. The teacher kindly dug out an old register where my name and marks were still on record.

When I alighted from the bus at Chhindwara, I couldn’t believe my eyes. What was once a ramshackle bus stand was now a busy hub with a shopping mall. In Raigarh, I again traced the 6-km path from my house to the school. My trip through Sagar was special, as I met my old Hindi teacher and an old classmate. Sadly, many of the old theatres that used to show Hindi and English classics have now shut down.

In Mandla, I found out the address of my Sanskrit teacher who had often caned me for my poor performance in the language. We were both overjoyed to meet each other after 42 years. He not only offered me lunch at his house but also saw me off at the bus stand. My trip to Mandla, however, was tinged with a touch of sadness as I also found about the death of a dear childhood friend who, like me, was an avid stamp collector. My last halt was in Jabalpur, where I had

“I am happy that I had a chance to walk down my past”

Ayyangar: for old times’ sake

graduated from St Aloysius College in 1969. The principal was so happy to meet me that he immediately called for a staff meeting and also presented me with the latest college souvenir.

I am happy that I had a chance to walk down my past and come back with some more beautiful memories to be savoured in the future.

— Shriram Ayyangar, Bengaluru
Family RHAPSYODY

Runa Chakravorty gives you a glimpse into the world of violinist Dr N Rajam
My daughter and granddaughters started training in the violin from the age of three,” says Dr N Rajam, 71. Mumbai-based Rajam, her daughter Sangeeta Shankar and two granddaughters Nandini and Ragini are all violinists in the Hindustani tradition.

Daughter of violinist Narayan Iyer and sister of T N Krishnan, the famed Carnatic violinist, Rajam, a Padmabhushan awardee, gravitated to the Hindustani style under the tutelage of guru Pandit Omkarnath Thakur. She is credited for introducing khayal gayaki ang, a technique that captures all the nuances of vocal music.

Rajam is simply amma ji for her two granddaughters—Ragini, 19, an engineering student, and Nandini, 15, a tenth-grader. “The four of us love to watch movies and shop together,” says 42-year-old Sangeeta, who has collaborated with Grammy winners Bela Fleck and Vishwamohan Bhatt on the album Tabula Rasa and produced a series, Sur Sadhana, for Doordarshan. Age rarely intrudes into their camaraderie. But Rajam turns disciplinarian when she teaches them. “We practise every day,” says Ragini.

In 2006, all four went on a concert tour to the US and Europe. And now, they are working on Sangeeta’s brainchild Milaap, an educational project to inculcate moral values through music, which will be released on CDs and DVDs. “Though amma is traditional, she supports my experiments with fusion,” says Sangeeta. “The music is all that matters.”
GAME FOR LIFE

Three silvers from Gujarat returned with gold from the Malaysian Open Masters’ Athletics Championship held in July, proving that age is indeed in the mind, reports Rajashree Balaram

Harmony has always celebrated age with stories of people who don’t let age get in their way. This month, we bring you three septuagenarians from Bhavnagar in Gujarat who returned with gold from the Malaysian Open Masters’ Athletics Championship held on 19 and 20 July 2008 in Perlis, Malaysia.

Manubhai Vyas, Tarunbala Desai and Jaisingh Rao Chavan were selected to compete in the 70-80 years category from the 400 silvers who participated at the National Athletics Championships held in Mumbai in May 2008. Selections were based on their performances in the 100 m, 200 m and 5 km runs and the 5 km walk. In the championship in Malaysia, which hosted participants from 21 countries, the three silvers stood out amid the 43 other representatives from India belonging to younger age groups.

Vyas, Desai and Chavan are now gearing up for the Asian Invitation Athletics Meet that the Veteran Athletics Federation of India (VFAI) plans to conduct in Bhubaneswar in October 2008. Participants from 15 countries are expected to compete. The three winners are not deterred by tough competition though—they are waiting for their next victory lap. Here’s how they made it this far.

M D VYAS, 75

The retired physical education teacher won two golds—one in the 400 m run and the other in the 5-km walk. Vyas is reticent and talks about his achievements only when coaxed. He is more eloquent about silvers who were selected for the Championship in Malaysia but didn’t participate as they couldn’t afford the airfare. “I wish the government or some organisation could sponsor the expenses of silver sportsmen,” he rues.

Fitness mantra: “You are only as old as you think. The more you complain about aches and pains,
the more weary you feel. Try to stay fit and you will never be a burden to anyone.”

**Food facts:** Vyas attributes his fitness to his food habits. A teetotaller and vegetarian, he does not follow any special diet but eats sensibly. For breakfast, it’s *khakra* (thin crisp wheat biscuits) or *poha* (beaten rice and vegetables), fruits and a glass of milk. Lunch at 12.30 pm consists of *dal*, leafy vegetables, three *chapatti*, yoghurt and rice. Dinner at 8.30 pm is equally lean. No tonic or supplements. “My will to win is all I need.”

**Workout schedule:** He hits the road at 3.30 am everyday for a 10-km walk. Evenings are reserved for speed-walking and running at the nearby B M Commerce High School where he earlier worked.

**Cheering squad:** His wife, son and two grandchildren. Vyas also shares a wonderful rapport with many of his former students. He is still in touch with them and often visits them. In fact, they helped sponsor his airfare and stay in Malaysia.

**Track record:** Vyas has been an active participant since 1998 and won gold in state level tournaments held in Rajkot, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Lucknow and Goa.

“By struggling for a gold, I wasn’t out to prove a point to anyone. I wanted to do it for myself”
I in focus

“I never allowed myself to feel nervous or intimidated. I just decided to go out there and win”

TARUNBALA DESAI, 78
Desai won gold in the 200-m run and 3-km walk and a silver medal in the 100-m run. The eldest of six children, she recalls being active in school tournaments. Her tryst with sports resumed in 2004 when she responded to an ad for an athletics tournament in Rajkot. “It has filled a void in my life left by my husband’s death,” she says.

Fitness mantra: Desai lives alone and does all the household chores. She swears by her coach’s words: “Never lose focus of the finishing line and never think about losing.”

Food facts: She has signed up for a tiffin service, which includes vegetables, salad, fruits, chapatti and dal for dinner and lunch.

Workout schedule: Desai walks 5 km every morning and evening, followed by 20 minutes of jogging and a few yogic asana.

Cheering squad: Her four sons, daughters-in-law and four grandchildren settled in different cities. “My friends were shocked to see me wearing shorts in Malaysia. But they are proud of me.”

Track record: Desai has won several gold medals in athletics meets held in Surat, Pondicherry, Rajkot, Mumbai and Ahmedabad.
Our age should not define our potential. We lose our youth with age, but we don’t have to lose our dreams.

According to Jerry D’Souza, secretary-general of the Veterans Athletics Federation of India (VFAI), there are no qualifying criteria for silvers, except a fit body. “Adopt a fitness regimen and participate in state or district level tournaments,” says the 57 year-old. “The entry fee for state and district tournaments is Rs 100.” Participants have to pay their own travel expenses, though food and accommodation are sponsored by the federation. The federation is now in talks with the government to sponsor silvers who participate in athletics championships.

JAISINGH RAO CHAVAN, 78

Chavan, who retired as chief booking clerk from the Railways, has always loved sports. In his youth, he was a keen football player and boxer. Three weeks before the championship in Malaysia, Chavan sprained his right arm and had to discontinue practice for two weeks. At the event, he won silver in the discus and javelin, and gold in shot put.

Fitness mantra: “It’s all in the mind. Work out a regimen for yourself and stick to it. And let no one tell you that you can’t do it.”

Food facts: Breakfast is dhokla, poha or porridge. Lunch and dinner consists of dal, vegetables, chappathi, yoghurt and salad.

Workout schedule: Chavan has high blood pressure, which he controls with a daily 6-km walk. He is also a regular at the local laughing club. In the evenings, he spends two hours practising.

Cheering squad: His wife, two sons, daughter and five grandkids.

Track record: He’s won gold in javelin in Rajkot and Bengaluru.

Want to compete?

For more information about the Veterans Athletics Federation of India (VFAI) and sports events for silvers in India, email Jerry D’Souza at jerryathletics@yahoo.co.in or call 09821130693 or 022-25854361
A HERO’S JOURNEY NEED NOT ALWAYS HAVE A DESTINATION

As a social worker, this hero’s chosen path was neither smooth nor easy.

She always opted for the road less travelled - with by-lanes leading up to the mentally ill, physically challenged, alcoholics, drug addicts, unmarried mothers and abandoned babies.

She also changed the lives of many fellow travellers along the way. Then at a stage where most would long for a rest, she came back after losing her son to cancer at the age of 81, to sum up her travels in the form of a PhD thesis.
World over, October is Breast Cancer Month
The fourth Monday in October is observed as

The Pink Ribbon is a powerful symbol, worn as a badge of support for women affected by breast cancer. To generate greater awareness about the disease, Harmony joins the cause with motivating stories of survivors who emerged triumphant and information that could save lives.

**KEEP UP THE FIGHT**

A woman is diagnosed with breast cancer every three minutes, adding up to one million cases annually across the world. According to WHO’s World Cancer Report, the incidence of breast cancer—one among almost 200 types of cancer—could go up by 50 per cent to 1.5 million by 2020.

Though the rate of breast cancer is much lower in India than the West, the incidence of breast cancer among Indian women has already surpassed cervical cancer and continues to rise rapidly because of changing lifestyles and increasing stress. At present, more than 100,000 new cases occur among Indian women every year. According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of WHO, about 79,000 Indians were affected by breast cancer in 2001 and over 80,000 were affected in 2002. An IARC study reports an alarming rise to 250,000 new cases by 2015.

Data from the Indian Council of Medical Research shows that breast cancer is more prevalent in metros and higher socio-economic groups, being especially high among women in Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi. The average rate in urban and rural women in India varies considerably—about 22-28 new cases per 100,000 women per year in urban settings compared to 6 cases per 100,000 women in rural areas.

Detected at an early stage, breast cancer is usually curable. Yet owing to lack of information, ignorance, fear and misconceptions, it has become the second largest cause of death among women in India (after childbirth). For silver women, breast cancer is accompanied by additional challenges. Declining oestrogen levels after menopause lead to hormonal imbalance and physical changes. Consequently, the early signs of cancer get overlooked as another aspect of ageing.

Efforts to combat the disease and raise greater consciousness continue worldwide. India too has seen the emergence of many support groups that provide services for early detection, treatment, rehabilitation, guidance and counselling. Harmony joins the cause with an exhaustive fact-file on breast cancer—signs and symptoms; risks; diagnostics; latest treatment; reconstructive surgery; and lifestyle changes to reduce the risk. We hope this special issue will serve as an adjunct to a good doctor’s advice.

We also present the experience of survivors from every age group that matters—40s, 50s and 60s—as risk increases with every passing decade. These are stories that will educate and motivate. If you are a survivor too, share your trial with us. We will post it on www.harmonyindia.org to inspire our readers.
Frustation, anger and grief are natural reactions when faced with cancer. For Nivedita Nair, though, the takeaway was a new, enriching perspective on life. “With no time for personality conflicts, arguments or controversy, I now see more of the world than I chose earlier,” says the 48-year-old. A secretary in the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee, Nair was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2004.

Having seen her two aunts suffer from breast cancer, Nair routinely examined herself. During one such check, she found a lemon-size lump in her left breast. The following week, the lump had grown bigger.
Nair’s gynaecologist referred her to a cancer surgeon in Max Hospital, Delhi, where she was asked to undergo a series of tests, including mammography and biopsy. “The doctor told me I had ‘CA breast’ when I went with my reports,” she recalls. “It meant nothing to my husband. As a trained nurse, I knew what it meant and my world came crashing down. CA breast means aggressive breast cancer.” Nair knew mastectomy (surgical removal of the breast) would scar her permanently even if it cured her. She remembered how the loss of body symmetry had depressed her aunts, who had also suffered from breast cancer. So when her surgeon informed her about the option of mastectomy along with a breast reconstruction surgery, she decided to go for it.

Nair’s surgery took about 13 hours. After removing the cancerous tissue, her surgeon implanted tissue from her lower abdomen to reconstruct her new breast. This major procedure involving considerable trauma to the body includes extracting tissue from the abdomen and refashioning into a ‘new’ breast. Her healthy breast was also operated upon to match the symmetry of the reconstructed one. The nipple, reconstructed with local tissue, was cut and crafted over the breast, and later tattooed. The procedure cost her Rs 175,000. “It is estimated that less than 15 per cent of mastectomy patients undergo breast reconstruction,” she says. “Women aren’t even aware of it. I find this shocking as we have a right to live a normal life with full confidence. That’s why I decided to tell my story to Harmony, so that others can draw courage from my experience.”

Nair had two chemotherapy sessions after the surgery, but after she lost her hair and her skin darkened she discontinued it. She even stopped taking her daily Tamoxyphen pill after the first two years though the medicine was to be continued for five years. “I live under constant threat of a recurrence but the ordeal has helped me get past the ‘cancer phase’ of my life.”

**SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

In breast cancer, malignant cells form in the tissues of the breast. Common symptoms include:

- Change in how the breast or nipple looks/feels; a lump in/near the breast or under-arm area that may either be painless or painful, or nipple tenderness.

- The skin of the breast may have an orange-like texture.

- Change in size or shape of the breast, or a slightly retracted nipple; the skin of the breast, areola or nipple may appear dimpled, red, swollen or scaly; discharge from the nipple.

- In the early stages, breast cancer does not cause pain. If the lump is large, the doctor can feel it on palpation; a very small lump requires a mammography to be detected.

— Dr Jitendra Kumar Singh, director, Mahaveer Cancer Institute and Research Centre, Patna

**80%-100%**

**THAT’S HOW HIGH THE SURVIVAL RATE CAN BE WITH EARLY DETECTION**

Today, Nair says she takes more time out for what matters to her most. In May 2008, she realised her lifelong wish of working for women suffering from domestic violence and alcoholic spouses—she established an NGO called United Southern Association with 12 volunteers working in the Mayur Vihar area in Delhi. She spends much more time with her four children—three daughters and a son, aged between 12 and 24—who nursed her back to health. And she has distanced herself from her husband Reddy Nair, 49, who failed to provide emotional support during her illness. “It is still painful to face the mirror as my body is scarred in so many places,” she confesses. “I look battle-ravaged.” Then, she adds with a smile, “But I also look like a ‘survivor’.”

Text: TEENA BARUAH; Photos: NEERAJ SINGH
Regular self-check helps notice abnormality early and easily. Use a flat palm to examine your breasts. Check immediately after menstruation, as breasts might become painful before menstruation.

- Inspect your breasts in a mirror. Stand with arms at your side and turn left and right. Look for dimpling, puckering and change in size, shape or symmetry. Check if nipples are turned in or inverted.
- Inspect with your hands on your hips and chest muscles flexed, and with your hands behind your head.
- Lie down with a pillow under your left shoulder. Put your left hand behind your head and feel your left breast with the pads of the three middle fingers of your right hand. Start at the outer edge and work around your breast in circles. Gently squeeze nipples to check for discharge.
- Repeat the procedure for your right breast.

— Dr Selvi Radhakrishna, breast surgeon, Apollo Speciality Hospital, Chennai
Familiar with adversity—mother of twins after four miscarriages—54 year-old Neerja Malik has defied breast cancer twice. In February 1998, she first felt a sharp pain in her left breast. Self-examination revealed a pea-sized lump. A home-maker and an aerobics enthusiast, she dismissed it as muscular strain but the twinge returned 10 days later. A mammogram and a fine needle aspiration cytology (FNAC) test at the Apollo Speciality Hospital in Chennai confirmed her fears. In less than a week, she was wheeled in for surgery, in Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai. A resident of Chennai, she chose Mumbai for treatment because her sister lived in the city and she didn’t want visitors after the surgery.

Discharged from the hospital, Malik headed straight to the nearest theatre to watch Titanic, following it up with 54 movies during the six months of treatment. Discovering that it was a good palliative, she went to any lengths to get tickets. Like persuading a theatre manager to give two tickets on the first day of Hindi film Ghalam’s release. “I told him I must see the film before my chemotherapy next day,” she says with a chuckle. “And that I would remove my wig for him to identify me!”

Malik decided to reach out to other cancer patients after her brush with cancer. She took up cancer support voluntarily at Apollo Hospital in Chennai and encouraged other survivors to get involved. “I started counselling and soon realised patients coming from other states faced problems with the local language,” she explains. Her friend Girija Sudheendran, a 54 year-old cancer survivor, was working with Sanctuary, a support group at the Adyar Cancer Hospital. Together, they started Sahayika Trust in 2003. Generous donations from relatives—many of them settled abroad—and friends enabled the trust to give free treatment to 800 cancer patients. Funds are also spent to support children suffering from cancer.

In November 2004, Malik detected a lump in her right breast. Tests revealed cancer. Without any delay—her family from all over the world was coming together to celebrate the New Year—she came to Mumbai on pretext of visiting her sister. Deciding not to tell her children as their exams were on, she called them every morning. Three days after being discharged, she went to see a play. After the first chemotherapy, Malik was home in Chennai to participate in the family reunion.

Malik’s positive attitude is infectious and she uses it to motivate other cancer patients through her brainchild, the Apollo Cancer Support Group, which was launched in March 2004. She helps patients prepare for life after cancer and answers every query, such as coping with hair fall during chemotherapy and the best place to procure wigs. Although building a team was a challenge, she now has seven volunteers. Malik has also designed a leaflet that carries her own positive affirmations of faith in God. “If God has given me this problem, he will also give me the solution.”

Text: SWATI AMAR; Photos: CHENNAIPIX
resulted in an increased incidence of breast cancer. Longer the lifespan, higher the risk: For women below 40 years, the risk is less than 0.5%; for women between 40-59 years, it's 4%; for women below 40 years, the risk is higher the risk: For women between 60-79 years, the risk is nearly 7%. With age, the risk of a genetic abnormality of cancer increases. Longer the lifespan, higher the risk: For women below 40 years, the risk is less than 0.5%; for women between 40-59 years, it's 4%; for women between 60-79 years, the risk is nearly 7%.

Lifestyle changes (food preferences, stress and lack of physical activity) have resulted in an increased incidence of cancer. Fresh fruits and vegetables reduce the risk of breast cancer, whereas junk food increases the risk. Prolonged use of contraceptive pills from an earlier age add to the risk. Late age at first childbirth is the most significant.

Women with high oestrogen levels are at risk. Obesity increases breast cancer risk in post-menopausal women by increasing serum concentrations of oestrogens.

Late marriage, increasing age at first and only pregnancy, shorter duration of breast feeding, prolonged use of contraceptive pills from an earlier age add to the risk. Late age at first childbirth is the most significant.

Family history of breast cancer increases the risk, but it doesn't necessarily make you a high-risk candidate. A breast cancer gene abnormality can be inherited from either the mother or father. If either parent has a gene abnormality, the risk of inheriting the gene is 50 per cent. However, the risk of the disease depends on the specific abnormality, and its pattern of behaviour in the family.

— Dr Anurag Srivastava, professor of surgery, All India Institute of Medical Sciences

Yeshoda Nambiar has had a tough life. Coming from a poor family in Kerala, she had to give up her studies after sixth grade even though she was a bright student. She moved to Mumbai after marriage. Nambiar worked backbreaking hours packing biscuits at Britannia Industries, took care of her widowed sister and her children, tended to her husband when he was paralysed, and taught herself to read and write English. At 62, confronted with breast cancer, she faced it the way she faced every crisis—with a smile and never-say-die spirit.

All along, Nambiar struggled to offer the best education not just to her daughter, but also her niece who lived with her. Her husband passed away in 1989; her daughter got married and settled in Bengaluru; her niece pursued a career in advertising; and Nambiar retired from her job in 1995. Having taken care of her family’s needs all her life, she was struck with cancer when she was finally on her own.

Nambiar discovered the lump accidentally while sleeping on her stomach. “I felt as if a marble had moved inside my breast.” She was diagnosed with metastatic cancer in her right breast. Tests revealed that it hadn’t spread and her doctor recommended mastectomy.

Discharged from hospital a week after surgery, she returned home and cooked a full-course meal brushing away her family’s protests. “I cried all my tears in private,” she remembers. “Then I decided to see the positive side of life; I had fulfilled all my responsibi-
Doing the household chores in a joint family where the eldest member was her 98-year-old father-in-law and the youngest her seven-year-old grandson, Usha Misra, 61, had no real memory of falling ill. As a result, after detecting a lump in her right breast in September 2006, she ignored it for almost a year. “I’ve always been fit and never really thought anything could be wrong with me,” she recalls. “But when I mentioned it to my sister-in-law, she insisted I see a doctor.”

0.5-7%

The risk increases from 0.5% for women below 40 years to 7% for women over 60.
Alarm bells went off when the lump increased significantly in size. Misra went for a checkup in July 2007. She was referred immediately to an oncologist. A mammogram and fine needle aspiration cytology (FNAC) test confirmed ‘end second-stage cancer’. Time was of vital importance. Within a week of diagnosis, she underwent surgery at the Lucknow Cancer Institute where doctors removed a malignant cyst and performed partial mastectomy.

Even though the operation was successful, Misra feared relapse. “It was the start of third stage and I had this lurking fear that the cancer might have spread,” she says. “But biopsy confirmed it was localised and about 10 lumps discovered in the abdomen during an ultrasound were benign.” The news, together with encouraging support from her husband and family, gave her a new lease on life.

Misra remained calm through her treatment—a month of radiation and six sessions of chemotherapy every three weeks. “I never stayed at the hospital except those four days after surgery,” she says. “Even during chemotherapy, I would go in the morning and return home the same day.” Misra read magazines and books to learn more about cancer, and made necessary lifestyle changes. To reduce the adverse effects of chemotherapy, she included herbal juices—wheatgrass, amla, lauki—as well as tender coconut water in her diet. A follower of yoga guru Baba Ramdev, she continued pranayama, as well as her half-hour morning walk every day.

During the six months of treatment—the last chemotherapy session was in February this year—Misra kept depression at bay. Mentally prepared to lose her long hair, she visited a salon once her hair started falling and got a short haircut. When she reached a stage where she needed a wig, she decided to make a style statement and wore a scarf.

Despite having paid help at home, Misra has resumed control of the kitchen. Extremely social, she enjoys her kitty parties every month. “No one knows what lies ahead,” she says. “But we must accept whatever comes our way positively.”

Text: NABILA ZEHRA ZAIDI; Photos: AJAY SINGH

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**TREATMENT**

- **Breast conserving surgery—lumpectomy** (removal of the lump) or **partial mastectomy** (partial removal of the breast).

- **Total mastectomy** (total removal of the breast).

- **Radical mastectomy** (removal of the breast, chest wall muscles under the breast, and all lymph nodes under the arm).

- **Radiation therapy** uses high-energy X-rays or other radiation.

- **Chemotherapy** involves giving oral or injectable chemicals.

- **Hormone therapy** uses tamoxifen or aromatase inhibitors that lower the amount of oestrogen. In post-menopausal women with early, hormone-sensitive breast cancer, aromatase inhibitors work better than tamoxifen inhibitors.

- Sometimes before the surgery, chemotherapy is done to reduce the size of the tumour.

- W ith advances in treatment, conservation surgery is preferred—earlier, aggressive surgery involved the removal of the breast. **Breast reconstruction** may be done together with mastectomy or later.

- Later, the patient may be given radiation therapy, chemotherapy or hormone therapy to destroy any remaining cancer cells.

— Dr Jitendra Kumar Singh, director, Mahaveer Cancer Institute and Research Centre, Patna, and Dr Selvi Radhakrishna, Apollo, Chennai
ADVANCES IN TREATMENT

- Rapid strides in treatment have been made during the past decade, especially in drug development, chemotherapy and pharmacogenetics (clinical testing of genetic variation that results in different responses to drugs). Precision and accuracy have made surgical procedures safer and recovery faster.

- Systemic therapy—the latest in cancer treatment—is whole body treatment and not localised like surgery and radiation; it looks at change in lifestyle (diet and exercise) and renewed relationships with family and friends.

- Though chemotherapy is still used to destroy cancerous cells, it also kills normal cells. New targeted therapy specifically attacks only cancerous cells.

- Recent developments in molecular treatment use drugs called protein-tyrosine kinase inhibitors that block abnormal proteins that signal cancer cells to multiply.
  — Dr Ramesh B V Nimmagadda, director of medical oncology, and Dr Ranjan Kumar Mohapatra, senior consultant medical oncologist, Consultant Bone Marrow Transplant Programme, Apollo Speciality Hospital, Chennai

AWARENESS DRIVES

- Various private cancer hospitals and NGOs like Indian Cancer Society and Cancer Sahayog offer free/subsidised examination, besides creating awareness. The Indian Cooperative Oncology Network recently held programmes for doctors in various cities.

- The Director General of Health has so far trained 153 female doctors from the Central Government breast cancer health scheme.

- AIIMS and Cardiff Breast Unit, Cardiff University, have produced a study guide for students in CD format, which is being supplied free to patients to increase awareness.

SUPPORT GROUPS

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COMMON TERMS

- BIOPSY: diagnostic procedure where sample tissues are removed and examined

- CANCER: name for diseases in which the body’s cells become abnormal, divide without control and kill healthy cells around; cancer cells may invade nearby tissues and spread through the bloodstream and lymphatic system to other parts

- CHEMOTHERAPY: treatment that uses chemicals to selectively destroy malignant cells and tissues

- LUMPECTOMY: surgical removal of a lump in the breast

- LYMPH NODES: small, rounded or bean-shaped masses of tissue found throughout the body that may enlarge due to cancer metastases; also referred to as lymph glands

- ONCOLOGY: the branch of medicine that studies the development, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer tumours

- MALIGNANT: life-threatening

- MASTECTOMY: surgical removal of a breast

- METASTASIS: spread of cancer from its original site; the term is used for secondary tumours

- REMISSION: a lessening in the severity of symptoms or their temporary disappearance during the course of an illness

- TUMOUR: an abnormal growth of cells that may be benign or malignant
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I cover feature

DIAGNOSIS AND ADVANCES IN DIAGNOSIS

- The most reliable method of detection is **self-examination** and **clinical breast examination**.

- **Mammography**: An X-ray of the breast [see 'Doctor's Opinion' this issue]

- **Needle biopsy**: Known as fine needle aspiration cytology (FNAC), the procedure investigates superficial (just under the skin) lumps or masses.

- **Surgical biopsy**: Diagnostic procedure where tissue samples are surgically obtained from the affected area.

While conventional biopsy is still the chief diagnostic technique, investigation and treatment have become more precise with the advent of **positron emission tomography**, a nuclear imaging technique that produces a three-dimensional image of functional processes in the body (also called **PET scan**). and **computerised tomography** or CT scans. When the results of PET and CT scans are combined, the PET CT scan provides complete information on cancer location and metabolism, helping to identify the heightened metabolic activity of cancerous cells.

— Dr Ranjan Kumar Mohapatra, senior consultant medical oncologist, Consultant Bone Marrow Transplant Programme, Apollo Speciality Hospital, Chennai

**INSECTICIDES AND INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION ALSO TRIGGER BREAST CANCER. STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT EXPOSURE TO DDT INCREASES THE RISK. THE US BANNED IT IN 1964, WHILE IN INDIA FOLLOWED MORE THAN A DECADE LATER IN 1975**

**LATEST RESEARCH**

- Major strides are being made in breast cancer research with targeted therapy finding a definite role in treatment. Targeted cancer therapies focus on specific characteristics of cancer cells, such as a protein that allows cancer cells to grow in a rapid or abnormal way. Exerting their effect only on the rogue cancer cells, the drugs are generally less likely than chemotherapy to harm normal healthy cells. Some targeted therapies involve antibodies that work like the antibodies made naturally by our immune systems.

- Today, doctors use three targeted therapies—Herceptin (trastuzumab), Tykerb (lapatinib) and Avastin (bevacizumab). Herceptin can be effective both before and after surgery and has also been shown to reduce the risk of recurrence. Tykerb can be taken orally. It is used in combination with capecitabine (Xeloda) for patients with advanced metastatic breast cancer. The combination treatment is advisable for women who have received prior therapy. The side-effect profile of these drugs is much more acceptable than chemotherapy.

— Dr Geeta Kadayaprath, Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute, Delhi

**REHAB OPTIONS**

- **Breast reconstruction**—whether immediate or delayed, as recommended by doctors—plays a very significant role in the patient’s concept of body image.

- Recent trends in breast reconstruction and rehabilitation after breast cancer have ushered in a combination of a mastectomy with breast reconstruction surgery.

- Breast oncoplasty is performed to remove a small tumour and surrounding tissue, followed by simple plastic surgery to make the breast look natural. In the case of large tumours, the cavity created is filled with body tissue from either the abdomen or back muscles. Known as myocutaneous breast reconstruction, the microsurgery takes about seven to eight hours where the artery from the transferred tissue is joined to the surrounding tissue around the armpit. This gives women not only a new breast but also a tummy tuck as bonus.

- Chemotherapy is combined with mastectomy for large tumours. The tumour is first reduced through three cycles of chemotherapy before a mastectomy is performed.

- The option of breast implant exists but it’s very expensive—about Rs 12,000 to Rs 15,000—and is available only in private hospitals. It also causes side effects such as scarring and risk of foreign body rejection.

- There is an array of external prostheses that, if selected and used well, restore confidence and body image to a great extent.

— Dr Anurag Srivastava, professor of surgery, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi

**Swati Amar and Anjana Jha have contributed to this feature**
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Better safe...

A mammogram is vital for women above 40, says Dr Priya Selvaraj

Q I am in my mid-50s. Recently, I went for a check-up and my gynaecologist suggested a mammogram. I have no gynaecological problems or any other discomfort. Why should I get a mammogram done?

A As the risks for gynaecological cancers increase with age, it becomes mandatory to enforce awareness and screening procedures among sexually active as well as menopausal women. Both are at risk for common cancers like cervical, ovarian, breast and uterine. In the absence of strong family history for any of these cancers, and for those who are on hormone replacement therapy (HRT), it is ideal to undergo an annual gynaecological check and mammogram every two years. Women with family history need to undergo more stringent screening.

Q I am 50 and hesitant to get a mammogram done as recommended by my doctor. How is the procedure performed? Is it painful? And will it help to diagnose cancer?

A Although mammography helps detect about 70 per cent of tumours, a thorough physical examination can help detect a tumour even earlier. A mammogram picks up masses and areas of calcification and helps in distinguishing a benign from a potentially malignant lesion. Again, the confirmatory diagnostic tool would be a guided biopsy.

For a mammogram, the breast tissue is typically compressed between two plates of the mammography machine with imaging done on all quadrants. No preparation is required prior to the procedure except keeping the breasts clean and not using any lotion, talcum powder or deodorant on the breasts or armpits. This is to prevent breast movement and enhance the quality of the image. These days digital imaging is available for precision. If you are embarrassed, ask for a female doctor/assistant. As for the pain, women do complain of slight discomfort while imaging is being done owing to breast compression, but the pain is negligible. As some centres do a preliminary breast ultrasound, the entire imaging process takes about an hour.

Q What does a mammogram comprise and are there any symptoms that make it advisable?

A Mammography is the imaging of the breast tissue using low dose ionising X-rays to detect any abnormal findings like tumours (felt as a mass) or calcifications as a part of the screening procedure along with self-examination. Though mammography is advisable for all women over 40, it is essential if there are any breast-related symptoms such as lumps, nipple discharge, skin retraction, etc.

Q Can a mammogram confirm cancer? What are the limitations of mammograms?

A Studies conducted around the world show that breast cancer screening with mammograms reduces the number of deaths from breast cancer, especially over the age of 50. However, it need not always be lifesaving. Mammography cannot inhibit an aggressive cancer that has already spread to other parts. Overall, mammograms miss up to 20 per cent of breast cancers that are present at the time of screening. There may be instances when a mammogram may appear normal even though breast cancer is present. Such occurrences are known as false negatives which are more common in younger women because their dense breast tissue make cancers more difficult to detect. With age, breasts become fatty and less dense, and breast cancers become easier to detect with mammograms. On the other hand, false positives occur when a mammogram is mistakenly interpreted as abnormal by the radiologist in the absence of cancer. All mammograms should be followed up with additional testing such as a biopsy.

Dr Priya Selvaraj, obstetrician and gynaecologist, is assistant director at GG Hospital, Chennai
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This month, Dr Vijaya Venkat discusses pomegranates and tomatoes, both believed to be ‘forbidden fruit’ in the Garden of Eden

**POMEGRANATE**
Associated with health and rebirth for centuries, the pomegranate is probably one of the earliest cultivated fruits dating back to 2000 BC. According to legend, the pomegranate was the ‘tree of life’ in the Garden of Eden— forbidden to Adam and Eve—and its many seeds were a symbol of fertility. Ancient Greeks believed eating this ‘apple of many seeds’ would lead to immortality. Prophet Mohammed once advised, “Eat the pomegranate for it purges the system of envy and hatred.” And Ayurveda extols the medicinal, refreshing and soothing qualities of the fruit, describing it as a food that brings total balance to the body.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Calorie count (in a 1 cup serving)</th>
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<td>Arils: 175</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juice: 160</td>
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Today, the pomegranate is the new superfood. High in Vitamin C and potassium, and low in sodium and calories, the glistening juice-filled red arils with tiny edible seeds are a good source of valuable fibre. The ellagic acid content in the fruit increases glutathione, an antioxidant that protects DNA and helps recycle oestrogen, which protects skin cells.

Eaten regularly, the pomegranate is excellent health insurance—and a much safer and healthier alternative to antibiotics. Traditionally used as medicines in many countries, it is not only effective for digestive disorders, diarrhoea, dysentery and intestinal parasites, but also gum trouble, kidney or bladder stones and urinary infections. As an antioxidant, the pomegranate is credited with helping to prevent cancer and heart disease. Now, researchers have found that the antioxidant-rich juice not only appears to prevent hardening of arteries by reducing blood vessel damage but may also reverse the progression of heart disease. And though ‘immortality’ may be stretching it, this fruit is certainly an anti-ageing, skin protecting, cancer-fighting powerhouse.

**High in Vitamin C and potassium, the pomegranate is an anti-ageing, skin protecting, cancer-fighting powerhouse**
TOMATO

Native to South America, and brought to Europe by Spanish explorers, the tomato was first thought to be poisonous. Today, this fruit-vegetable, suspected as being the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, is one of the most favoured—both raw and cooked.

The tomato’s goodness lies in its rich vitamin haul—especially A, B and C. The 94 per cent moisture content is sufficient to quench and cleanse the body. Considered a ‘negative calorie food’, the tomato is a stellar source of potassium and iron, and contains a whole day’s requirement of absorbable calcium. And its protein content rivals even that of mother’s milk. The rich Vitamin C content helps to form and maintain collagen—a cement-like material that holds the cells together and provides strength and elasticity for the ligaments, blood vessels, teeth and bones. Tomato juice purifies the blood and increases blood circulation.

Tomatoes are especially beneficial for silvers as they dissolve kidney and gall stones, and help with piles, nervous disorders, eye troubles, acidity, and heartburn. They also lower blood pressure. Four or five tomatoes ensure a day’s supply of nutrients. And being rich in lycopene and beta carotene, they pack a powerful anti-ageing punch.

Calorie count
(in a 1 cup serving)
- Chopped/sliced tomatoes: 32
- Tomato juice: 41
- Tomato sauce: 78
- Tomato puree: 100

Q Today, Ayurveda companies are selling ‘diet pills’ that promise weight loss. How do these products work and how effective are they in the long term? Are there any age-related contraindications?

A Most Ayurvedic medicines marketed as diet pills aim to detoxify the system and cleanse vital body organs of free radicals and toxins. If used in combination with a customised eating strategy and exercise routine, under the guidance of an experienced and qualified Ayurvedic practitioner, they are quite effective in achieving weight loss. I must reiterate that these medicines should be taken according to your doctor’s advice, who would consider your health history, possible side-effects and the potential interaction of the Ayurvedic medicines with other medications you may be taking. As the dosage and duration prescribed by the doctor would be in accordance with the individual’s age and nutritional needs, there would not be any age-related contradictions or complications. Weight loss achieved with these medicines can be sustained, provided you continue to eat sensibly and exercise regularly. After detoxification, the liver is able to do its job of metabolising fat better and the improved diet and exercise regime will be enough to keep the weight off. In case you are not able to maintain a healthy lifestyle, you may need to take another course of pills after six months.

Nutritionist Dr Anjali Mukerjee is the founder of Health Total, a nutritional counselling centre (www.health-total.com). If you have a question for her, write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

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Let’s celebrate

Dr Pushpesh Pant invites you to his festive feast

Common curries have pushed into oblivion delicacies whose charm can’t be withered by age. Qorma is one such delicacy. Traced back to the 16th century, this creamy Mughlai dish is cooked on low heat. Low heat cooking is quite difficult but if you get it right you also get a memorable dish. Red chillies, ginger paste and garlic paste are always used, but by adding bay leaves and sometimes coconut you can get sharply different flavours. Badam Pasanda is one such delight. For a lighter version, omit the nut paste and don’t go heavy on the almond garnish! Qorma Asafahi, named after a Muslim dynasty that ruled Hyderabad, is a Hyderabad qorma made with similar ingredients (without bay leaves) but has a taste and flavour of its own. It’s red meat, so have a small portion.

BADAM PASANDA
(ALMOND-LACED MUTTON STEAKS)

Preparation time: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 25-30 minutes
Serves: 4

INGREDIENTS
- Mutton: 500 gm; fillet-cut, flat-tened and scored
- Ghee: Just enough to stir-fry
- Cloves: 5-6
- Green cardamom: 3-4
- One bay leaf
- Boiled onion paste: 200 gm
- Ginger paste: 1 tbsp
- Garlic paste: 1 tbsp
- Red chilli powder: 10 gm
- Coriander powder: 10 gm
- Yogurt: 200 ml
- Cashew nut or almond paste: 3 tbsp
- Garam masala: 2 tsp
- Cardamom: 1/4 tsp
- Nutmeg (jaiphal): 1/4 tsp
- Mace (jauntrny): 1/4 tsp
- Almonds: 50 gm (soaked in water and without skin)
- A sprig of fresh coriander
- Salt to taste

METHOD
Heat ghee in a pan, add cloves, cardamom and bay leaf and lightly fry over medium heat for about 15 seconds. Add boiled onion paste and stir until the fat separates. Add ginger and garlic paste, stir-fry for about a minute. Add red chilli powder and coriander powder, yogurt and salt, and fry until the fat separates. Add water (about 300 ml) and bring to a boil. Then add the meat fillets and simmer until tender. Now add nut paste, bring to boil, reduce to medium heat and cook until the fat separates. Sprinkle garam masala and cardamom, nutmeg and mace powder, and stir.
QORMA ASAFJAHJ

Preparation time: 30 minutes  
Cooking time: 1 hour  
Serves: 4 to 6

INGREDIENTS
- Mutton (from shoulder): 500 gm
- Ghee: Just enough to stir-fry
- Garlic paste: 1 tsp
- Ginger paste: 1 tsp
- Almonds: 20 gm; blanched, cut into slivers
- Raisins: 1 tsp
- Onions: 2; medium-sized, finely chopped
- Red chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Peppercorns: 1/2 tsp; freshly pounded  
- Garam masala: 1/2 tsp  
- Sugar: 1 tsp  
- Green chillies: 5-6; minced
- A pinch of saffron soaked in warm milk
- Fresh coriander leaves: 1 tbsp; chopped
- Yogurt: 200 ml
- Salt to taste

METHOD
Marinate the meat in yogurt for about an hour. Heat some ghee, add garlic and ginger paste and stir-fry till golden-brown. Add meat with marinade and salt, and keep stir-frying, sprinkling a little water whenever the moisture dries up, for about 30 minutes. Add very little water at a time as the meat should not be boiled.

Heat a little amount of ghee in a separate pan, stir-fry almonds and raisins separately until golden and keep aside. Stir-fry chopped onions till golden brown in the same ghee, add red chilli powder and garam masala powder, pepper corns, sugar and green chillies with 2 tbsp water and cook, stirring well, till water dries up. Add to the meat and stir. Add almonds, raisins, yogurt, saffron and coriander leaves, and mix well. Simmer on low heat for just five minutes and serve immediately.

Dr Pushpesh Pant, our culinary expert, is a documentary producer, author and die-hard foodie.
Wrist pain is among the most common nerve pain that afflicts all age groups. As the pain usually begins sporadically, most people dismiss it. Unfortunately, wrist problems progress steadily till they disrupt normal functioning by making even simple day-to-day functions difficult.

Yoga helps by encouraging delicate movements that strengthen the muscles that service this joint. As the maximum pain occurs owing to a pinched nerve pressed by swollen muscles or tissue, yogic meditation can help with pain management in the initial stages. Where the pain is excruciating, it is necessary to involve a therapist to chart out an individual rehab programme. People who cook, garden, paint and type a lot, and those suffering from obesity, arthritis, diabetes and hormonal problems are prone to wrist pain. Apart from pain, victims may suffer from numbness, a ‘pins-and-needles’ sensation and, worse, progressive loss of function in the hands. Sometimes, the pain also begins to spread, moving up to the shoulder and neck.

Taking rest breaks (for a repetitive activity) is the most common, yet neglected, suggestion for those who tend to use their hands a lot. During such breaks, you must include a few wrist exercises. Ideally, yogic therapy must work on strengthening the entire hand, so that improved circulation aids repair of the ailing segment faster. Some preventive yogic wrist strengtheners are arm circles (skanda chakra), wrist rolls (mushtika bandha), wrist-bending practices (manibandha chakra) and elbow-bending practices (kehuni naman). There are several versions for each of these practices. Keep a timer that goes off every few hours to remind you to do these exercises. Doing them with ‘props’, such as crazy balls, soft rubber balls and rubber bands, makes them more enjoyable. Chinese balls, also called ‘Baoding’ balls, are another interesting way to challenge the entire hand—they also help you de-stress and work on major acupressure points.

Apart from these gentle exercises, you can up the ante by introducing more challenging practices that work the hand like the cat stretch (marjariasana), lion-roaring pose (vyaghrasana), mountain pose (parvatasana) and cobra (bhujangasana). Advanced practices like the sun salutations (surya namaskar), crow pose (kakasana) and other hand balancers ensure that wrist problems will never afflict you at any stage of your life. 

**Wrist bend (manibandha naman)**

There are several variations of this wrist bend. For this one, stand arm’s distance away from the wall, with the wall on your right. Spread out fingers of the right hand. Inhale and press hand gently on the wall. Exhale, twist to left, looking over left shoulder. Hold for a few seconds, breathing normally. Release. Repeat a few times. Switch sides to repeat for left hand. Avoid this exercise if pain is severe—such therapeutic moves are best used for prevention or in the healing phase. Benefits: This practice works out the entire hand, including all the muscles and bones that service the wrist, the shoulder and elbow.

Shameem Akthar is a Mumbai-based yoga acharya. If you have any queries for her, mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org (Please consult your physician before following advice given here)
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SAVING GRACE
Rember, a new pill developed by Dr Claude Wischik, a neuroscientist from University of Aberdeen in the UK, is being hailed as the biggest breakthrough in the battle against Alzheimer’s since 1907. Trials show that it can halt the progression of the disease in about 80 per cent of cases. Initial trials involved 321 patients in the UK and Singapore with mild and moderate Alzheimer’s. The results suggest that the drug is about two-and-a-half times more effective than existing drugs (cholinesterase inhibitors). After 18 or 19 months, co-researcher Dr Donald Mowat observed that patients were more confident, better able to cope with daily life and not experiencing the level of mental decline they had expected. The research was presented in July 2008 at the International Conference on Alzheimer’s in Chicago. According to the research team, Rember is expected to be available as a preventive drug in the US within four years. Meanwhile, Wischik’s team is trying to find a way to diagnose Alzheimer’s in its earlier stages, long before symptoms develop.

TOXIC TREATMENT
A common treatment for prostate cancer called hormone deprivation therapy (HDT) has now been found to impair the cognitive functions of patients. Scientists from the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Centre, New York, have issued a ‘red-letter warning’ against the procedure. As testosterone is known to boost the growth of prostate cancer, lowering the levels of the hormone arrests the growth of cancer. However, scientists have found that about 47-69 per cent of men undergoing HDT can’t recall and concentrate well. The results of the study were published in the American medical journal Cancer. “Hormone therapy is generally associated with side effects such as calcium loss, weakness of bones, spine fracture and loss in bone marrow density,” says Dr N.P. Gupta, head of the department of urology at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi. “Thus, one has to be careful while using this therapy. As patients undergoing this therapy generally require it for life, knowledge about the adverse effects is very important.”

DIABETES WATCH
DOUBLE TROUBLE
If you keep your blood sugar under control, you can deal with two medical monsters—diabetes and Alzheimer’s. A recent study conducted by Professor David Schubert at the Salk Institute of Biological Studies in the US has found a link between high blood sugar levels and Alzheimer’s. Schubert has conducted research into the link between Alzheimer’s and other age-related illnesses for more than 40 years. His study shows that 30 to 65 per cent of diabetics run the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease. “High blood sugar level in diabetes damages the blood vessels of the brain and also affects the nutrient supply to brain, which leads to early onset of Alzheimer’s,” Schubert writes in the July issue of Neurobiology of Aging, an online science directory of published research and studies.
SCAN FOR TROUBLE
If you wear any electronic medical device like a pacemaker, defibrillator, neurostimulator or drug infusion pump, tell the operator about it if you go for a CT scan. The FDA in the US has alerted health professionals to the possibility of X-rays disturbing these devices. A recent directive insists that CT operators must initially use CT scout views, which use only minimum dose, to check for implanted medical devices in the patient. While FDA investigates the issue, a study reported in Circulation Journal in 2006 revealed that pacemakers snag owing to CT examinations in six out of 11 patients. In another study reported in medical journal Radiology in 2007, researchers said that 20 out of 21 devices malfunction when exposed to high-intensity X-rays from CT scanners. Until now, the FDA has not received any reports of deaths.

KEEP WALKING
Even gentle physical activity can be vital in managing Type 2 diabetes. According to research conducted by Dr Michael Trenell of Newcastle University, UK, diabetics can limit the impact by walking for an extra 45 minutes a day. Trenell and his team studied 20 people with Type 2 diabetes and found that walking improved their ability to store sugar and burn fat. On an average, people take around 6,000 steps during their daily routine. Trenell’s team used MRI scanners to measure how efficiently 20 volunteers, 10 of whom were diabetics, burned energy in their leg muscles before and after taking part in the eight-week trial. Each volunteer was given a pedometer and asked to walk more than 10,000 steps a day. The scans revealed that by being more active, diabetics burned 20 per cent extra fat and were able to store more sugar in their muscles, Trenell concluded.

NEW DRUGS
Around 686 brands of anti-diabetic drugs are already on the market. Add two more to the list—Vildaglptin (price not available) and Januvia (Rs 43 per tablet). Both belong to a class of drugs called incretins, which are favourable for the treatment of Type 2 diabetes and could be an alternative to other hypoglycaemic therapies. These drugs act by releasing a hormone called glucagons (from the intestines), which acts on the pancreas. They also have a favourable effect on other hormones, thereby improving metabolism in diabetics. Earlier this year, an injectible drug was introduced—Exenatide is derived from the saliva of a lizard, the Gila monster. Exenatide causes weight loss and was earlier sold in India as Byetta. However, it hasn’t sold as well in India as overseas—we assume that’s because it is an injection, which is less popular than oral medication.
BRAIN WAVE
Deep-brain stimulation is being pitched as regenerating therapy for Parkinson’s, but it’s a painstaking procedure that involves implanting 1-mm-thick electrodes through the skull. Called brain pacemaker, these implants pump pulses of electricity to the brain, regenerating errant nerve cells. Now, Dr. Vijay Varadan of the University of Arkansas claims to have devised an advanced procedure. It involves fixing nanodevices (that work at the scale of a nanometer) with neurons and networking them with sensors. “It is easier and has great potential in treating degenerative brain disorders,” Varadan said at a conference titled Conference on Smart Materials, held this July in Bengaluru. Varadan is studying 20 patients using this device and will announce the results in December 2008.

LATEST ADVANCES IN CATARACT SURGERY
The Mehta International Eye Institute has recently acquired the OZIL Cataract system. This system generates much less heat than conventional laser systems & is much quicker. The advantage is that the hardest cataracts in old patients can be removed with minimal damage to the eye. In addition the system also has Aqualase which uses simple pulses of warm water to wash away the cataract. This is most useful in childhood cataracts. Even patients with bleeding disorders or diabetes can be safely managed with this system.

Even heart patients on Aspirin have nearly no risk during cataract surgery with this system & the chamber stability is excellent. Also the Crystalens, India's first accommodative lens which actually lets people see both far and near without specs after cataract surgery will be launched next month.

Says, Dr. Cyres Mehta, CEO of CYRESEYE, and Arogyadeep awardee 2007 with these new improvements in machine technology patients regain vision soon & resume work at the earliest. The Accomodative lenses are a great new advance in cataract surgery & are very popular in USA. Another common myth is that patients must wait till their cataracts are very advanced. On the contrary the sooner the patients visit their eye doctor the easier it is to remove the cataract with these minimally invasive techniques. Dr. Cyres Mehta is the author of "THE PATIENTS GUIDE TO CATARACT SURGERY" as well as "REMOVE YOUR SPECTACLES", THE PATIENTS GUIDE TO LASIK SURGERY. These books address in simple language the common doubts of patients regarding cataract surgery as well as number correction laser. (Dr. Cyres Mehta is Cataract Glaucoma and LASIK surgeon at the Mehta International Eye Institute, Masina Hospital and a Consultant at Breach Candy hospital). AS TOLD TO A.KULKARNI-MEDICAL CORRESP.
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____________________________________________

Age: _______________ Gender: □ M □ F

With whom do you live?

□ Alone □ With spouse

□ With children □ In a retirement community

Address: ______________________________________

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

Town/City: _______________ Pin Code ________

Phone: ________________________________

Email address: ___________________________

Marital status: □ Single □ Married

□ Divorced □ Widowed

How many children do you have?

______________________________

What is your working status?

□ Working full-time □ Working part-time

□ Retired □ Working for voluntary services

If you are still working, what is your profession?

________________________________________________________________________

Do you pursue any hobbies?

□ Yes □ No

If yes, what kind of hobbies?

________________________________________________________________________

Are you a member of any senior citizens' association/club/ or residents' welfare association?

□ Yes □ No

Do you make independent lifestyle/financial decisions?

□ Yes □ No

Rate the following factors in terms of importance to you:

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□ Companionship

□ Healthcare facilities

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□ Domestic help

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☐ Too High  ☐ Too Low  ☐ About Right

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People stories about achievements
☐ Too High  ☐ Too Low  ☐ About Right

People stories about interests
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Crossword, mind games, quiz and accessories
☐ Too High  ☐ Too Low  ☐ About Right

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Would you like to see more stories on the following topics? Please check all that apply.
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Thank you for your time! We would like to hear from you by 31 October 2008. Send the completed form to Anita Rosario, Harmony, 222, Maker Chambers IV, 4th Floor, Nariman Point, Mumbai-21. For additional suggestions, write to us on contact.mag@harmonyindia.org
The first day at school.

The first time you rode the bicycle.

The first crush you had at thirteen.

The first drama you got a part in.

The first day at college.

The first date you went on.

The first kiss.

The first time you proposed.

The first job interview.

The first board meeting you addressed.

The first day after retirement.

Butterflies never retire.

The first click of the mouse. www.harmonyindia.org
PLAY FOR KEEPS

Gayatri Menon has designed ‘toys’ for the elderly that fight memory loss and improve coordination

If Gayatri Menon has her way, silvers across India will be playing with toys again. The 33 year-old coordinator for toy design and development at the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad believes that her ‘memo cubes’ can improve memory, promote hand-eye coordination and enable socialising through play. “The game also helps in tactile, numerical and abstract pattern memory and can be modified to suit different levels of challenges,” she adds.

The game, for two players, comprises two sets of 10 wooden cubes (painted in non-toxic colours) with a rod in the middle. The four sides of each cube have a number from one to 10, a texture, a pictogram, and a pattern respectively. One player makes a sequence on his set and the other replicates it through memory. As there a large number of combinations possible, the game does not become repetitive and the challenge level can be increased or decreased. Menon has also devised an interesting variation on the game: players have to narrate an incident from their life based on the pictogram they uncover on their cube. This activates their memories while helping them socialise.

Menon developed these toys in Bethel, Germany, as part of an international workshop on designing for people with special needs. The two-week workshop, held last year, was organised by Fordern durch Spieldmittel an NGO partner of the UNESCO-German commission. After the workshop, the toys were replicated and tested in Germany and were published in a book with instructions on how to make them—it was launched at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2007.

The book is not available in India but Menon is eager to share her work. “These toys are easy to produce and customise,” she says. “I welcome any initiative to make them available to elderly in India.”

To make or produce these toys for individual and large-scale use, email menon.gayatri@gmail.com

WORLD VIEW: The iShoe

An insole designed for astronauts could save silvers from deadly falls. MIT graduate student Erez Lieberman developed the iShoe when he was an intern at NASA to monitor the balance of astronauts following their return from space. He soon realised it could help the elderly by detecting problems with balance even before a fall occurs. The insole would analyse the pressure distribution of the patient’s foot and report back to the doctor. It could also be outfitted with an alarm to alert family members when a fall occurs. Lieberman is now testing the device on about 60 people to create a model to predict the risk of a fall.
Most silver citizens would give anything to experience youth again.

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WATCH YOUR BACK
Harmony presents the first in a new series that helps you make your home a safer, brighter, better place.

As you age, bending can become quite a pain—especially if you suffer from osteoarthritis. Research on arthritis also shows that inactivity can do more damage than good. Add to that a study in the May 2008 issue of British Journal of Sports Medicine that finds that even 20 minutes of household activity can help alleviate depression. So this month, we scouted around to find something that helps you stay on your feet without hurting your back: the Scotchbrite flat mop.

It comes with a 4-ft-long retractable plastic handle with a rectangular mop at the end to ensure hassle-free cleaning without any bending or sweating. The wedge-shaped microfibres trap and lift dirt. It can be used as a broom for dry cleaning or with water for wet cleaning. Even better, you don’t need a bucketful of water to rinse the mop while you are cleaning the floor—just sprinkle water on the floor and nudge away the grime. It also swivels, so you can reach stubborn dust lurking in nooks and corners. Each mop lasts for a minimum 100 washes (about 4-6 months). When it’s worn out, unhinge the old mop from the handle and attach the new refill. Available at major department stores in Bengaluru and Mumbai.

RECYCLE

1. Old magazines
   - Donate them to a hospital or library.
   - Use colourful pages to wrap gifts.
   - Set up a table at your neighbourhood community hall where people can drop off old magazines and other people can buy them.
   - Give the money to charity.

2. The blanket
   - Don’t throw away that old blanket.
   - Fold in half lengthwise, sew it together over a jute mat.
   - Use as an exercise or yoga mat.
   - If it is not cushy enough and you feel the strain on your back, sew two together.
   - Make one for a friend.
In the 1950s, making a livelihood as an artist was tough. So I followed my father’s advice and took up science and let my passion take a backseat. Later, I devoted myself to teaching and was professor of botany and principal in various government colleges in Madhya Pradesh. My art lived in the illustrations I drew on the board for students—they loved what I did.

I took voluntary retirement at the age of 52 and coached privately. At 59, I decided to pursue art wholeheartedly. I decided to teach myself through books. I read extensively to understand painting and visited numerous art galleries to familiarise myself with different forms of painting. Vincent van Gogh’s work and N S Bendre’s forms and unique applications influenced my style.

I converted a room in my house into a studio and practised for several hours every day. I learnt how to use different mediums—canvas, paper, acrylic, watercolour, and oil pastels. I developed my own technique of oil pastels on an acrylic base. It has received considerable appreciation from other artists. In 2002, I formally launched my second career by participating in a group exhibition at the Art Academy in Bhopal. The success gave me the confidence to hold my first solo exhibition in 2004. Since then I have participated in several group shows and workshops. One of my paintings was

---

I am 58 years old and very fond of animals. I am thinking of setting up kennels in my farmhouse where owners can leave their pet dogs for a few days. What is the best way to begin?

Setting up kennels is a good idea provided you genuinely love animals. First, ensure the barking does not disturb neighbours. The area should be free of water-logging to avoid ticks and parasites. Besides the minimum specified dimension, the kennels must have a proper drainage and waste disposal system. The dogs must be housed and exercised separately to avoid fighting. Though packaged foods are available, canines should be given their regular diet. During admission, details of food and exercise schedules and medical history should be recorded. Ideally, start small with five dogs and expand gradually. You will need to employ a cook, dog handler and cleaner. However, as labour is unreliable these days, you must be prepared to do everything yourself when required.

—Dr Narendra Deva Sharma

Sharma is director and proprietor of Doctor’s Pets Crèche, an animal crèche based in Lucknow

My friends often compliment me for keeping a beautiful home. I also give advice whenever anyone consults me. I am 55 years old. Should I take up interior decoration professionally?
also shown in Bharat Bhavan during
the exhibition held to com-
memorate Raja Ravi Verma’s birth
anniversary.

I am advisor in Anand Vihar
College in Bhopal, a part of the
panel that interviews management
aspirants in Madhya Pradesh, and
chairman of National Talent
Search. I start my day by painting
for an hour—I complete a painting
every month. Through networking
website Orkut, where I have
uploaded my self-portrait, I inter-
act with young artists.

I have made 75 paintings, portraits
and landscapes. Even microscopic
forms of life like fungal spores and
chromosome threads sometimes
find their way into my paintings. I
believe pursuing a passion is more
important than the income it can
generate. However, I am on the
lookout for the right agent now.
— As told to Runa Mukherjee

Good ideas are not enough to take on professional
assignments. Interior decoration requires technical
information and experience. For instance, if you are
renovating a bathroom, you need knowledge about
plumbing, electrical connections, waterproofing—the
science that goes behind the surface makeup. Even to
start on a small scale from home, you will need man-
power, space to set up a computer, and an assistant
with the right qualifications (to make the drawings).
All this will require some investment. Though con-
tactors will do the actual work, you must have the
expertise to check whether the job is being done pro-
perly or not. Interior decoration is very competitive
and involves a lot of running around and networking
to ensure a regular clientele. It would be more practi-
cal to work for someone already in the business.

—Mohina Macker
Macker is partner in annm, an architectural practice based
in Mumbai

**Q**

**After a long innings in the public sector, I retired recently. I want to
become a franchisee of a food outlet. Is this a good idea at my age?**

First, you need to do a market survey. The clientele at
the location should assure a steady revenue stream.
Besides the amount paid to the franchiser, you will
spend on infrastructure, furniture, equipment, rent,
staff and electricity. You need at least Rs 3 million
that will be recovered over time. So, unless your earn-
ings exceed expenses plus recovery of capital and inter-
ests charges, there is no profit. Further, 10 per cent of
the profit goes to the franchiser every month. A good
location and high marketing skills can bring in profits
but considering the risk involved, it is inadvisable.

—Phalguni Matilal
Matilal is director of Wimpy International Ltd, a fast
food chain with branches in Delhi, Gurgaon and Mumbai

Send queries to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org; for second career options, go to [www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org)
I don’t think there are many people on earth who can remain unmoved by the ocean. Through its swell and shimmer, it speaks to everyone who cares to listen. I have been sailing for the past 18 years—not intermittently as a hobby but actually living on the sea on my 44-ft-long yacht Mistral. As I have been divorced for a long time now, I am a solo sailor.

Earlier I used to be an electrical engineer with a successful business. In 1992, in a dramatic act of liberation and wanderlust, I sold my business and house; bought Mistral, a rugged second-hand hunk of a yacht for 90,000 pounds; and started sailing with my two pet dogs on board. Mistral is as good as home—it’s equipped with 100-sq-m sails, four cabins, two bathrooms, a living room, pantry with stove, microwave, refrigerator, freezer, diesel engine, generator, air-conditioning, GPS, radar and auto-identification system.

Though my lifestyle may seem rather reckless to some, many retired senior citizens especially in Europe lead similar lives—traveling together in individual yachts as part of different sailing communities. Over the years I have befriended many such seafarers.

In 2003, after sailing to the Far East, I was flooded with requests from fellow sailors to venture on a world rally. By March 2005, 63 people from nine countries had gathered at Turkey for the Vasco Da Gama Rally. We started off from Turkey and sailed through eight countries before docking in Goa in May 2006. Our expedition was so successful that towards the
end we were already planning our second rally. I even received mails from people in Kochi, Mumbai and Goa who wanted to participate in the Indian leg of the rally. We didn’t have to wait long—the second Vasco Da Gama Yacht Rally set sail in October 2007.

It was a bright October morning when we flagged off 25 yachts from Setur Marina in Turkey. Of the 57 participants of the rally, 53 were senior citizens—mostly retired couples who had been sailing for years. With people from the US, Canada, UK, Holland, France, Switzerland and Italy, the rally was a vibrant mix of cultures, languages and, of course, quirks.

Along the way, we participated in regattas with local yacht clubs in Cyprus, and were thrashed; distributed shoes to kids in Sudan; took lessons from fishermen in Yemen; learnt how to scuba dive from a sailor; and discovered that the pyramids looked even more breathtaking by moonlight. Naturally, to explore every country we had to arrange for visas in advance.

Mumbai was one stop we were all looking forward to—and it didn’t disappoint. I loved the old buildings, quaint shops, restaurants, and of course the Royal Bombay Yacht Club and Gateway of India. I only wish the roads were cleaner and less crowded. Several Indian yachts joined us in Mumbai on a race to Goa organised by company Marine Solutions. Borders disappeared and all that mattered was the thrill of the adventure.

The journey of 4,500 nautical miles was not entirely smooth sailing though. We had our share of troubles: gastroenteritis; skin infections; diarrhoea; loss of a pet; a couple of accidents (without any casualties); and dangerous wind velocities. What thrilled me was the spirit of my fellow travellers; people who, like me, were well past their prime in terms of age, but had boundless zest for life.

As for the costs involved, the entire trip from Europe to India set me back 4,000 Euro (about Rs 250,000) including fuel and water charges, and harbour and transit fees. As I am a non-smoker and teetotaller, the cost for food was just an additional 200 Euro (about Rs 12,500) for a month. Most of us stock up our refrigerators at the starting point and buy more food wherever we dock.

We are now getting ready for two rallies: one from Kochi to Europe starting January 2009 and the second from Europe to India beginning in October 2009 and concluding in India in April 2010. Ahoy! 😊

---

*Ladjewik Brust, 69, is a former electrical engineer turned seafarer*
The empty chair

Nalini Singh remembers her father, consumer rights activist H D Shourie

In the lobby of the house in Delhi’s West End that our parents built, frugally and lovingly, sits my father’s ‘plastic’ chair, with a rubber cushion and a pink towel draped over it. This is the chair on which he sat, phoning, writing, ‘dictating’, laughing, and holding our mother’s hand.

“Iss dillagi ke huare mein, ik mashivra tumse kartaa hoon,” he would begin, reciting one of ‘their’ couplets—precious memorabilia of a wonderful life lived together—and our mother would smile and provide the next line, “Uss wakt mujhe kya laazim hai, jab tum pe mera dil aa jaaye....”

So it’s not just his chair that sits vacant, but also hers, next to his, still holding the house together. His cordless phone rests in its cradle, and a few days ago when MTNL changed the West End numbers, I reached out spontaneously to phone him to tell him his numbers had changed, and then swallowed the lump in my throat, because he would have called me first with the new number.

We always talked two or three times a day, not for long, but with a rare resonance. Each conversation communicated love, kindness, information and challenge. “Koi nahi cheez, bittu?” was his way of prodding. Sometimes I would peddle my last ‘achievement’ as ‘nahi cheez’, but with his sharp observation he’d laugh and tease, “That’s old; you told me this yesterday. Koi nahi cheez?”

Arun, my brother, says our father demonstrated what “one phone and a ball-point pen can achieve”, and that too, a phone without STD or ISD connections. His telephone diary has meticulous entries of law makers, law implementers, lawyers, experts, specialists, people who work for others. How can anyone be so meticulous, I marvel, as I run through the vast array of names. He used this network of phone contacts to access valuable information for “causes that burn”. Running through the list of 100 and more writ petitions he wrote and filed in the High Court and Supreme Court, I still wonder how he selected such critical subjects. The list mirrors his strong sense of right and wrong, his commitment to duty and his belief in working for others, without a thought to the rewards.

Talking about rewards, we found the citation scroll of his Padmabhushan, rolled and still tied with the Rashtrapati Bhavan string, in a small corner of the drawing room. We don’t know what happened to the Padmashri he was awarded almost 40 years ago. Awards, scrolls of honour, trophies lie crowded in a gigantic trunk, where our mother must have placed them as a way out of my father’s dilemma: he didn’t want any display of recognition, yet he was grateful for the love and appreciation that the awards embodied, and so they nestle in the trunk to this day.

Up until he was 89 years old, he used another ‘tool’ in his work – an old Maruti car that he drove himself to the High Court and Supreme Court, rejecting the family’s pleas to engage a driver. As cars with drivers occupied the pavements flanking the gates of the Courts, he would park the old car about a kilometre away, and carry his files to the Courts, often to argue his cases himself. A retired justice of the Supreme Court told me, “At first we tested him, to assess if he was genuine. When we realised how sincere he was, we wanted to rise to salute him each time he came to Court.”

He was not a lawyer, but he would prepare himself to argue by reading the relevant AIR cases and the
H D Shourie: a remarkable life

case law. Accustomed to the Internet, I often wonder how he mobilised all the information he required beyond the nuggets supplied by his phone network. And I conclude that he brought four spectacular characteristics to his work: ferocious focus, unflagging perseverance, broad-mindedness, and an ability to rise above the trivial.

Later, of course, some selfish lawyers joined him and they argued the Common Cause cases. As his work snowballed, I asked him to employ an assistant or two. He asked me what their salary would be. About Rs 20,000 for somebody good, I mentioned. “Rs 20,000! Rs 20,000! Tauba, tauba, is that what they expect today? There is no question of spending that kind of money!” he was firm. He was absolutely baffled when I told him that CEOs earn almost a crore a month, “What is the need for all that money?” he shook his head. By same-stratum standards, he had probably very little money, yet he would announce with a twinkle in his eye, “Arre, bahut paisa hai...We have enough, that’s all”.

Late one afternoon, both he and my mother were eating fruits, peaches and mangoes. “See, we can have fruits three times a day now!” he marvelled happily, no doubt contrasting this ‘indulgence’ with the no-frills manner in which we lived while he was in service. Deepak, my brother, plied them with such ‘frills’, and equally with all the medical attention they needed. About Arun, my father used to say that he would pluck stars from the skies if he thought our parents needed them (“falak se taare bhi tood lauge”). My last memory of them together is of Arun gently holding about 10 soft toothbrushes for my father to choose from as his gums were hurting.

My father often said that our mother and the whole family was the source of his strength. But actually, and reciprocally, he was the strength of the whole family. He had one, and only one, formula for dealing with any argument or any words spoken in the heat of the moment by anybody in the family—an immediate apology, within seconds; and the ‘injured’ also had to forgive immediately. He did so himself and often wrote notes to one of us saying, “I’m ashamed of myself for misbehaving,” when his ‘offence’ was no more than raising his voice a little. That is truly the most precious legacy he has left behind in the family.

Perhaps the iron self-discipline forged early in his life, coupled with his crystal clear understanding of right and wrong, gifted him a happy and contented life. Life brought its share of pain, but he coped uniquely—by stepping up ‘constructive’ and positive work, and pushing himself to the limits of endurance to complete the work he took up. He exercised twice a day, in the morning and evening, even the day before he left us. And he washed his own clothes, up to his 93rd birthday.

That morning of 28 June 2005 he read the papers, had his tea and biscuits, and then lay down to rest for a while…. It’s commonly believed that the last moment is the most important of a person’s life. We’ll never know what his last thoughts were, but as a daughter, I know that he was saying goodbye lovingly and without any regrets, and meeting head-on the challenge that death presented.

His photographs and mother’s adorn the walls of our homes, yet I’m not reconciled to their absence. Their absence is a keen presence, all the time.
Candid Camera

Ten Years with Guru Dutt: Abrar Alvi’s Journey by Sathya Saran
Penguin; Rs 499; 203 pages

Abrar Alvi was a legendary film maker Guru Dutt’s scriptwriter—Mr and Mrs 55, Pyasa, Kaagaz Ke Phool—before he donned the mantle of director for the classic Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam. Their decade-long creative partnership, as tumultuous as it was prolific, came to an end with Guru Dutt’s suicide in 1964. Alvi’s anecdotes form the backbone of journalist Sathya Saran’s book and bring alive Dutt’s cinema, personality and life for the reader—his propensity to play pranks with his actors on set, his love for all things Bengali, his obsessive attention to detail (he dragged Alvi to a kotha to get the ambience just right in Pyasa) and the care he lavished on each shot; his troubles with wife Geeta and deepening relationship with Waheeda Rehman (Alvi suggests it was passionate but never consummated); and his tragic end, made more poignant by his confession that he and Dutt had often “academically” discussed the best way to commit suicide. Alvi also has a point to prove. Stung by countless film journalists who have suggested that he was just a front for Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam and it was actually Dutt who directed the film, he offers enough evidence to establish that it was indeed his film, except for the songs, which were filmed by Guru Dutt. Saran lets Alvi speak in his own words—her restrained commentary merely guides the story from one point to the next with an elegance and economy that brings into sharper focus Alvi’s emotional reminiscences. Utterly absorbing.

—Arati Rajan Menon

Atlas of Explorations

An Atlas of Impossible Longing by Anuradha Roy; Picador; Rs 395; 304 pages

Near the ruins of Songarh, in a village with just one bungalow, Amulya Babu built one for his family and numbered it 3 Dulganj Road in tall, black letters. The “3” is for him and his two sons, Kamal and Nirmal. As always, he counts out his wife Kananbala. Amulya’s first love is the forest’s herbal produce. Brought up in bustling Kolkata, loneliness curls up Kananbala in a cocoon. And just when marriage of her younger son Nirmal (with Shanti) promises end to hibernation, her bedroom becomes her cage and her Anglo Indian neighbour—Mrs Barnum, the occupant of that other bungalow in the village—her unlikeliest friend. An Atlas... spans the story of the family over three generations—beginning with Amulya and ending with his adopted son Mukunda and Nirmal’s daughter Bakul—with Mrs Barnum making brief reappearances. Consistently lyrical, Roy describes every commonplace detail beautifully and people the book with great flourish. The Atlas... is embellished with the artisitic beauty of a forested village, the goings-on of a Bengali kitchen, and even a murder outside Mrs Barnum’s house. Every character has concealed longings, which later become their weaknesses. Sadly, they disappear as abruptly as they are introduced. Capable of being a song of longing, the book leaves the reader unfulfilled.

—Meeta Bhatti
Her story

The Palace of Illusions by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni; Picador; Rs 495; 360 pages

Listening to the enthralling stories of the Mahabharata as a girl, bestselling author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni was “left unsatisfied with the portrayals of the women”. The Palace of Illusions is her avenue of redress, where she imagines the entire epic through the voice of Panchali (or Draupadi). The book traces her life—her birth in fire, her spirited childhood and bond with brother Dhritishtadhuyumna, her marriage to five men, and her humiliation at the hands of the Kauravas followed by the devastation of the war at Kurukshetra. While all this is known even to those with a cursory knowledge of the Mahabharata, Divakaruni gets into Panchali’s head to read between the lines. In the writer’s trademark lush prose, you discover Panchali’s uneasy relationship with her father, born from a belief that she was unwanted; her complicated friendship with Krishna, whose divinity she comes to terms with only at Kurukshetra; her balancing act with her husbands and her astonishing discovery that only one of them truly loves her (and it probably isn’t who you think); her constant battle of wits with her mother-in-law Kunti; and, most fascinating, her obsessive attraction to her husbands’ enemy. Divakaruni’s Panchali is no hapless victim but a fiery, sensual woman whose often headstrong actions play a decisive role in an ancient world of warriors and gods. The author’s only misstep: a forced, fairy tale ending that lets the reader—and this fine book—down.

—Arati Rajan Menon

Home improvement

Home Design in an Ageing World by Jeffrey P Rosenfeld and Wid Chapman
Fairchild Books; $ 72 (about Rs 3,000); 319 pages

By 2050, 21 per cent of the world’s population—about 2 billion people—are expected to be silver. The result is a shortage of care and shelter in many rapidly ageing nations. In Home Design in an Ageing World, Jeffrey Rosenfeld, director of the gerontology programme at Hofstra University, New York, and Wid Chapman, senior faculty member at Parsons The New School for Design, New York, examine the responses to this shortage in India, China, Japan, Brazil, Sweden, Israel and the US. The authors demonstrate how each country’s approach varies according to its culture, economy, demographics and government policies. For instance, the US is focusing on design that will enable ageing in place—gadget-rich, ‘smart’ homes that offer silvers independence while ensuring their safety. Japan is experimenting with robotics to build homes with a mix of human, robotic and electronic care. And Israel’s sheltered housing settlements are a response to its migration pattern. With entire generations of kibbutz dwellers ageing in place, their homes have been retrofitted to enable silvers to continue living there. In the chapter on India, “The Karma of Home Design”, the authors predict that assisted living and retirement resorts will become increasingly popular for the elite while traditional old age homes will remain relevant for destitute and abused silvers. Citing reportage in Indian media—including Harmony magazine—they also foresee that products, gadgets and services targeted to silvers will make a tremendous difference to quality of life over time. An academic book written simply enough for the lay reader, this is an important resource for anyone working for the elderly. It tells us how far we’ve come—and how far we have left to go.

—Arati Rajan Menon
BRIEFLY

T he first of a new trilogy, **SEA OF POPPIES** (Penguin; Rs 599; Rs 515) is Amitav Ghosh’s seventh novel. The book unfolds in north India and the Bay of Bengal in 1838 on the eve of the First Opium War (the British attack on Chinese ports). A motley group of sailors and stowaways, coolies and convicts, both Indian and Western, assemble in Calcutta to sail together on the Ibis—a slave ship that is part of the opium trade—to Mauritius where they will build a new life. The unlikely shipmates (a bankrupt raja, a European orphan and a widowed village woman, to name a few) collide and collude in wild and wicked ways as they sail into the Indian Ocean. Through their stories, Ghosh paints a vivid picture of 19th-century life and the opium trade. Though overflowing with details and characters, Ghosh never lets his plot become chaotic. Bustling but never overcrowded, this robust, action-packed read is the perfect carry-on for a voyage of your own.

T he story of a privileged Indian family in Malaysia, Preeta Samaran’s debut novel **EVENING IS THE WHOLE DAY** (HarperCollins; Rs 395; 340 pages) focuses on the immigrant experience and one family’s struggles to come to terms with it. The Rajasekharans are a dysfunctional, unhappy family—Paati, the grandmother, dies under suspicious circumstances; father Raju is having an affair with a married Chinese woman; mother Vasanthi can’t get over her lower-class roots; the estranged eldest daughter Uma has gone away to the US; and the youngest, six-year-old Aasha talks to ghosts. As the book progresses the skeletons begin to tumble from the family closet as Aasha watches with despair. Samaran gracefully weaves personal dilemmas with Malaysian political history, offering up a story that is rooted in its setting yet universal in the dilemmas faced by the characters.

M eet 20 men and women who have shaped India in **ICONS** (Roli; Rs 395; 274), a collection of essays edited by Anil Dharker. The subjects—from Abdul Kalam to Amitabh Bachchan, Sonia Gandhi to Lata Mangeshkar—have all been profiled before. What sets this collection apart is the quality. Some of the country’s best-known writers have been roped in for this book and, as a result, it sings. Some stand-outs include Ranjit Hoskote’s richly textured take on Deepak Chopra (“How a Physician Became a Guru”); Darryl D’Monte’s portrayal of Baba Amte without the obligatory halo (“The Intuitive Environmentalist”); and Dharker’s own nostalgia-filled snapshot of Zubin Mehta (“The Maestro Who Always Came Back”). This one’s for keeps.

I n **EMPOWER YOURSELF** (Penguin; Rs 295; 239 pages), engineer, reiki master and panic healer Ajay Poddar offers “new life solutions for health and well-being” to combat today’s lifestyle diseases. Melding ancient wisdom with modern research, the book teaches us about the **chakra** or energy centres within our body; explains how vibrations resulting from the movement of planets affect us; and introduces us to alternative systems of healing like homeopathy, Ayurveda, reiki, yoga, acupuncture, colour and music therapy, and shiatsu. Sounds suspiciously like a new-age health manual? Well, it is. But Poddar never preaches and keeps it interesting enough to make it worth a read for even the most hard-boiled sceptic.

All titles are available at Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata, Bangalore, Mumbai, Goa and New Delhi, and on [www.oxford-bookstore.com](http://www.oxford-bookstore.com)
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A HERO CAN ALTER THE COURSE OF THE FUTURE

She steered the Siddi Tribal community towards self-sufficiency through education, family planning and a small savings group.

Under her guidance, the women’s cooperative movement spread across 18 villages, offering loans and increasing health awareness.

After centuries of living in the shadows, this marginalized tribe found their hero in a woman who put them on course to a brighter future.
THE SOUND OF MUSIC
Madhup Mudgal, head of Delhi’s cultural landmark Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, has planned a series of music and dance concerts to celebrate the institute’s 70th anniversary. The celebrations kicked off with the annual Vishnu Digambar Jayanti on 1 August. “When my father, Professor Vinaya Chandra Mudgalya founded the Vidyalaya in 1939, Delhi was a cultural desert,” the 52-year-old vocalist tells Harmony. “He personally persuaded parents to send their children, especially girls, to learn music.” Veteran arts scholar Kapila Vatsyanan was among the institute’s earliest students.

Today, with 1,200 students on the rolls in disciplines including vocal music, Kathak, Bharatanatyam, tabla, sitar, flute and other instruments, the institute counts a host of renowned artists among its alumni, including vocalists Krishna Bisht and Subhadra Desai, composer Satish Bhatia, flautists Prakash Saxena and Kailash Sharma, and Odissi dancer Madhavi Mudgal, Madhup’s sister. Students pay Rs 500 per month for three classes a week. “The idea was to make classical arts accessible to common citizens,” says Madhup.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION
Sai Paranjpye is back, at 70. The filmmaker, known for classics like Sparsh, Katha, Chashme Badoor, Sauz and Disha — cinema that touched the hearts of people — is making two films. The first is Khoon To Hona Hi Tha..., a thriller produced by Firoz Nadiadwala, who “happens to be a fan of my films”. In fact, Nadiadwala approached Paranjpye to make a murder mystery with a comic touch. The second film is Qisse (Episodes) and is about HIV/AIDS, a subject close to Paranjpye’s heart. “There’s no preaching though,” she says. “It’s just a message laced in the drama.” Paranjpye was recently a member of the jury at Osian’s Cinefan film festival 2008, held last month in Delhi.

BREAKING BARRIERS
When Narendra Jadhav, 55, chief economist at Reserve Bank of India and vice-chancellor of Pune University, wrote his family biography in Marathi in 1993 he wasn’t sure if it would get published. But Ancha Baap Aan Amhi (Our Father and Us), which shows how education can transform lives, went on to become a bestseller and is available in 15 languages (with a Braille version coming soon). Jadhav’s inspiration: his illiterate, Dalit father. The book begins with his father chasing a tonga in his village and ends with his daughter studying in the US. Jadhav writes how he wanted to be a peon while growing up in a Mumbai slum as it was “a stable job.” But his father’s advice changed his life: “Follow your inner voice and do what you want. I really don’t care what you choose as long as you’re at the top. If you’re a thief, make sure you’re an internationally acclaimed one.” Jadhav’s story will soon be made into a Hindi TV serial.
SPACE CADET
Don’t let her manicured nails and designer clothes fool you. Californian Victoria Principal, 58, will pilot Richard Branson’s Virgin Galactic spacecraft when it blasts off in 2010. The TV actor, who played long-suffering Pamela Ewing in classic TV series Dallas, learned to fly 18 years ago—her father was in the US Air Force. Principal now runs a £20 million cosmetics empire called Principal Secret, and has paid £100,000 (Rs 8 million) to be among the first passengers on the spaceship. According to reports, as Branson has always recognised the value of a good story, he thought having ‘Pam Ewing’ behind the controls for the first blast-off would be amazing. Principal is among 120 people who have already paid in full to be on the 180-minute ride at the speed of 4,000 kmph, 112 miles up in space—only to briefly experience weightlessness. Physicist Stephen Hawking, designer Philippe Starck and British princess Beatrice are the other probable space tourists.

MILESTONES
Appointed. Renowned Indian classical vocalist Pandit Jasraj, 78, the chairman of Bharat Bhavan Trust, an independent body created by the Madhya Pradesh legislature to promote art and culture. Trained in the Mewati gharana, Pandit Jasraj’s biggest contribution to Indian classical music is his conception of jugalbandhi between a male and a female vocalist, each singing in their respective scales and different ragas at the same time. Besides Jasraj, other board members elected to the executive committee are actor and dancer Hema Malini, writer Amritlal Begad and poet Prabhakar Shrotriya.
**Awarded.** The Magsaysay Award to social activists **Prakash Amte**, 60, and his wife **Manda**, 62. Prakash’s father, late Baba Amte won the award for community service 23 years ago. The honour came for the work of the couple for tribals in Bhamragarh in Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra, where they have established a hospital and school. According to the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation in Manila, the two have “enhanced the capacity of the Madia Gonds to adapt positively in today’s India, through healing, teaching and other interventions”.

**Appointed.** Actor **Bo Derek**, 52, head of the California Horse Racing Board. Derek has lobbied the US Congress for five years to ban the slaughter of horses. She also owns a pet care products company called Bless the Beasts and has authored a book, *Riding Lessons: Everything That Matters in Life I Learned from Horses.*

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**Awarded.** The Vassilis Sgoutas Prize to Mumbai-based architect and urban-conservationist **Brinda Somaya**, 58, for her contribution to the improvement of living conditions. Through her knowledge of social parameters and sensitive architectural design, Somaya, on *Harmony’s* cover in March 2007, has been one of the leading drivers in the project to reconstruct the village of Bhadli in Gujarat, which was devastated by an earthquake. “This project has taught us how people, when helped in the right way, are capable of helping themselves,” she says. “It also proves that the incorporation of traditional architecture and aesthetic elements can add value to design as a whole.”

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**BIRTHDAY**

- **Speaker of the Lok Sabha Somnath Chatterjee** turned 80 on 25 July
IN PASSING

Marxist leader and former general secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Harkishan Singh Surjeet was a pragmatic politician who was often dubbed a kingmaker. To Cuba’s ailing Communist icon Fidel Castro, though, the veteran leader was India’s “bread man”. The name dates back to the early 1990s when Surjeet persuaded the Indian government to send 10,000 tonnes of wheat to Cuba to help the tiny Communist nation fight the US blockade in the early 1990s. He died on 1 August at the age of 92.

Soviet dissident writer and Nobel Prize winner for literature Alexander Solzhenitsyn was once an artillery commander in the Red Army. He was found guilty of anti-Soviet propaganda for criticizing Joseph Stalin in a letter to a friend and was punished with imprisonment in a labour camp. He documented the experience in his first book, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich (1962). He was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1974. His Gulag Archipelago (1973), a trilogy written between 1958 and 1968, describes the savagery of the Soviet state under Stalin. By the end, Solzhenitsyn had become critical of modern Western culture too, condemning it as being spiritually vacant. He died on 4 August. He was 89.

WHAT I LOVE

CHIME A DOZEN

Sita Venkatramani’s collection is unusual and impressive

Sita Venkatramani’s fascination with bells began when she first heard the peals of the Bells of London during a trip to the UK in 1978. Since then, the 65-year-old has collected more than a thousand bells from different parts of the world. Bells in different shapes and sizes adorn her house on Boat Club Road in Chennai. Elephant, cattle and Buddhist bells dangle from the ceiling. And cupboards in the sitting area display her collection in porcelain, glass, bronze, brass and crystal. “I clean and polish each bell myself, as I am very scared of breakage,” says the soft-spoken silver. A wooden frame showcases gongs and bells from Burma, while Lalique crystal bells from France and bamboo bells from Japan vie for space on her cupboard shelves.

“The auspicious chimes of the bell ring out selfishness and ignorance and ring in happiness and peace,” she says. In the past three decades Venkatramani has met bell-casters all over India and gathered information on the art of bell making. Does she have any really old bells? “The really old ones in India are usually stolen from temples,” she replies. “I am not comfortable buying them.” Venkatramani has designed several bells in terracotta herself with help from potters in DakshinChitra, a heritage village and artists’ enclave near Chennai. She often gifts them to friends and relatives.

In 1980, she got in touch with the American Bell Association (ABA) and went on to become the only non-American member of the ABA—she’s setting up its Indian chapter. In the long term, Venkatramani wants to start a private museum along with collectors of other rare artifacts. For now, she is gathering material for a book on bells that she will publish in collaboration with the Archaeological Survey of India.

—Padmini Natarajan
TIPS FOR BEGINNERS:

A whole variety of clues goes into framing a cryptic puzzle. For instance, the anagram. The clue here could be: Unresting opponent of authority (Unresting being the 9 letters of insurgent rearranged). Another variety of clue is the palindrome—DEFIED, when viewed backward or when viewed up in a Down clue, reads DEFIED all the way. Next, there could be the clue (8-letter answer) reading: Complete view of daughter sandwiched between parents—PANORAMA (PANORAMA). The 8-letter solution to the clue, The framework of our constitution, is SKELETON. At times, what looks straight could prove tricky. For example, the clue, How we stand—has UNITED for its 6-letter answer. The clue, How we fall, has DIVIDED for its 7-letter answer.
**SAY IT OUT LOUD**

The trouble with having an open mind, of course, is that people will insist on coming along and trying to put things in it.

—British writer Terry Pratchett

**THE BUZZ**

**IPHONE**
The world has been talking about it for months. Now the Apple iPhone 3 G is in India, powered by Vodafone and Airtel. With the price pegged at Rs 31,000, this ‘phone’ is anything but cheap; but it packs many nifty features—touchscreen operation, a state-of-the-art digital music player, Wi-Fi capabilities, TV feeds, access to email, online music store, and a map-based location guide.

**THE WORD IS OUT**

New terms that have made their appearance in newspapers, magazines, books, websites and other recorded sources

**DWT** abbr. Driving while texting; driving a car while reading or sending text messages.

**Example:** Give credit to the Maryland Senate, which passed Montgomery County Sen. Jamie Raskin’s bill by a thumping 26-21. But the measure died in a House committee. Sadly, it will probably take a well-publicised, in-state multiple fatality to convince legislators that DWT is a problem here. Nationally, the survey shows that more than half of drivers under the age of 29 text-message while driving.


**recessionista** n. A person who dresses stylishly on a tight budget. She’s super stylish, always able to buy a round of drinks and still seems to be wearing a new outfit every time you see her.

**Example:** She’s a recessionista, that New York marvel who’s a magnet for a good deal. And in this economy, she’s got a lot to teach us…. Finney agrees that aside from knowing where to find the best discounts, making better use of what you have is a key trait of the true recessionista.


**transumer** n. A big-spending traveller; a person who travels to shop. [Blend of transient and consumer.]

**Example:** Feeling somewhat abandoned by tight-fisted Australian consumers, Myer’s dynamic duo Bill Wavish and Bernie Brooks have gone in search of a far more appealing demographic—the **transurers**. For the uninitiated, a transumer is a consumer in transit; somebody who spends big while waiting around an airport for a connecting flight, or while enjoying a night in a foreign city.
during a travel stopover.

**pinkwashing** pp. Using support for breast cancer research to market products, particularly products that cause cancer.

**Example:** She also wonders whether corporations spend more money marketing the ‘pink’ product than they contribute to the cause, and she accused some corporations, such as cosmetic companies, of **pinkwashing**, which means an item’s production or usage may contribute to development of cancer.

**crowdfunding** pp. Getting a large group of people to finance a project by using a website or other online tool to solicit funds.

**Example:** David Axe... is a 30 year-old freelance war correspondent. On Saturday, he’ll be getting on a plane and flying to Chad, where refugees from the Darfur genocide in neighbouring Sudan have been streaming across the border. His reporting will wind up in a handful of major news outlets, as well as on his blog. And he’d like you to help pay for his trip. Axe has partnered with an online news outlet called the Guerrilla News Network (guerrillaneuws.com) to try Web-based fundraising for his reporting. The word for it these days is **crowdfunding**. He’s looking for $2,000 (US) in donations to help offset the cost.

**precycling** pp. Purchasing products based on how recyclable they are. [pre + recycling]

**Example:** The produce section, as it turns out, was a good place to illustrate the first rule of **precycling**: Don’t get any packaging at all. Buy stuff loose.
SUDOKU FOR YOU

ARITHMETRY

□ + ◊ = 32

3 = △

△ - ◊ = 31

TULIP QUIP

Faith and five other people won the 1st to 6th prizes in a tulip growing contest. Each of them entered a different variety of the tulip. Based on the clues below, place the winners in the 1st to 6th order of the contest and the variety of tulip each grew for the event.

- Erin’s tulips were judged one place higher than Ms Knight’s, whose tulips were judged one place higher than the Flaming Parrot tulips.
- Ms Post’s tulip choice wasn’t Indian Summer.
- Ms Lord and the woman who entered the Pink Impression tulips, who isn’t Grace, finished in the top 6 for the first time.
- Ms Oates grew neither the Flaming Parrot nor the Red Emperor prize-winning tulips.
- Helen’s tulips were judged one place higher than Ms Post’s tulips, which were judged one place higher than the Red Emperor tulips.
- Ingrid, who isn’t Ms Nix, isn’t the prize winner who grew the American Dream tulips.
- Joanne’s finish in the top 6 wasn’t in 2nd place.
- Grace’s tulips placed one position ahead of Ms Oates’ flowers, which finished one place ahead of the Indian Summer tulips.
- Helen, Ms Knight, and Ms Nix also had entries in the club’s annual Daffodil Contest.
- Erin and Ms Post are Summerset Garden Club officers.
- The American Dream tulips were judged one place higher than Ms Mills’ entry.
- The prize-winning Big Chief tulips weren’t entered by Ms Nix.

Choose a number from 1 to 9, and place it in the grid. Every digit from 1 to 9 must appear once, and only once, in each of the columns, rows and in each of the sets of nine boxes.

KOFFEE WITH KAKURO

The object of a Kakuro is to insert digits from 1 to 9 into the white cells to total the clue associated with it. However, no digit can be duplicated in an entry. For example, to total 6, you could have 1 and 5, 2 and 4 but not 3 and 3. You may, however, use a number again in the same row or column.
THE BEEHIVE

Go through any photo album from the 1950s or 1960s and you are sure to come across someone with a beehive—the outrageous bouffant hairstyle that created frenzy on the international fashion scene. The hairstyle originated in the US in 1958, teased and lacquered to perfection by hairdresser Margaret Vinci Heldt. Challenged by a fashion magazine to create a radically different look, Heldt came up with a hairstyle that was not only eye-catching but also promised to add inches to a woman’s height. Closer home, glamorous actors Sharmila Tagore and Mala Sinha adopted the beehive—with great success.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: SEPTEMBER 1958

- Jack Kilby of Texas Instruments tested the first ever ‘integrated circuit’—commonly known as a microchip. The idea was independently developed a short time later by Robert Noyce and both were awarded the Nobel Prize.
- To counter purse snatching, Japanese firm Matsushita Electric Company launched a portable burglar alarm that women could carry in their purse. A wire—designed to go around the owner’s arm—set off the alarm when the purse was snatched. Such quirky but intelligent devices made Matsushita one of Japan’s largest manufacturers of electrical goods.
- The Indian Government asked the Law Commission to revise the Indian Income Tax Act, 1922. The Commission felt that the Act was “complicated, illogical in its arrangement, and... obscure”. The revised draft was prepared by a committee of eminent jurists—P Satyanarayana Rao, G N Joshi and N A Palkhivala, who submitted it in September 1958. The draft was the basis for the enactment of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
SOLUTIONS TO EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 47

ACROSS:
1 Women’s Wrestling; 9 Red Fort; 10 Citizen (Kane); 11 Do it; 12 Trier (judge who tries); 13 A mew (Am E W (Swanton), reference to noted cricket writer Eric Swanton)]; 16 trapdoor (reads root-part withdrawing or going back); 17 the mat; 19 oodles (oo here standing for ‘a pair’); 21 had it out; 24 Raaz; 25 sigri; 26 a fee; 29 epigram; 30 tsunami: t(sun)ami; 31 turn it on its head

DOWN:
1 (The) world at your feet; 2 Madeira (Made IRA); 3 Noor (No/or: no choice); 4 Waterloo; 5 encees (e/MCE/es); 6 Tito (tit o: o: oobs); 7 Inzamam.; 8 Gone With The Wind; 14 Adler; 15 Shair; 18 Navratri; 20 Drapier (reference to Drapier’s Letters by Jonathan Swift); 22 offtake (suggesting Jony Rhodes takeoff); 23 firm no; 27 A Rai; 28 guts

SOLUTIONS TO BRAIN GYM

NUMBER UP

SOLUTIONS TO KAKURO

SOLUTIONS TO SUDOKU

ARITHMETRY

\[ \begin{array}{ccccccccc} 
\text{\(\blacksquare\)} & = & 36 & \text{\(\square\)} & = & 27 & \text{\(\blacklozenge\)} & = & 5 \\
\end{array} \]

TULIP QUIP

1st — Helen Lord, Big Chief
2nd — Faith Post, American Dream
3rd — Grace Mills, Red Emperor
4th — Erin Oates, Pink Impression
5th — Ingrid Knight, Indian Summer
6th — Joanne Nix, Flaming Parrot
“Silvers should keep themselves constructively occupied to ward off loneliness and boredom. Reach out to people who need your help—you’ll never feel lonely again.”

A former employee of the Maharashtra State Electricity Board, Arunchandra Kondekar visits patients in hospitals every day. Kondekar’s social cause has its roots in a personal tragedy. His wife Sunanda was often hospitalised owing to a heart ailment. After putting up a brave fight for 11 years, she died in 1998. During those years, Kondekar was moved by the heart-wrenching condition of patients around him—many had no one to take care of them; many others had no emotional support; and some simply needed help with paperwork. A fortnight after his wife’s demise, he decided to dedicate his life to looking after hospital patients. Today he visits five hospitals in Pune—Sanjeevan Hospital, Dinanath Mangeshkar Hospital, Sasoon Hospital, K E M Hospital, Cipla Cancer Centre—and also helps out at the Kothrud Girls Blind School. His daily rounds include helping patients with paperwork and hospital formalities; purchasing medicines during emergencies; arranging for blood; explaining post-operative exercises to patients and their families; or simply offering an ear. His warm rapport with the patients has also benefited the hospitals—they rely on him to extract feedback from patients about services.
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