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I connect

SEASON OF SPLENDOUR

WE ARE IN CELEBRATION

mode this month to herald the festive season, a time of enthusiasm and gaiety, colour and sparkle.

While it is true that food and festivals go hand in hand—hence our cover story “Life is a Festival” —there’s so much more to festivals. A seamless link with the past, for instance. While ancient Indians celebrated their utsava (festivals) a little more intensely, with performances of music, dance and drama, rugged displays of valour and virility through chariot races or wrestling matches, and yagnas to propitiate the gods, they too engaged in family rituals of prayer, cooked and served elaborate meals, and decorated their homes and themselves with care and pride. Indeed, our traditions have endured over centuries and our festivals remain symbolic of the link between the individual, the community and the larger world outside.

We must preserve this link. As you get together with your families—children, grand-

actor-activist Shabana Azmi, former police officer Julio Ribeiro, India Today editor-in-chief Aroon Purie, actor Rahul Bose and Rajya Sabha MP Supriya Sule—have carefully chosen our 10 heroes for 2007, people who have set extraordinary new benchmarks for themselves and society. To find out who they are and what they do, be sure to read the magazine next month.

On behalf of the entire team at Harmony for Silvers Foundation, I wish you and your family joy, peace and prosperity this festive season.

Tina Ambani
At 69, some give up on ice creams. And some enjoy working on glaciers.

Ageing doesn’t mean slowing down. And in celebration of that, Harmony for Silvers Foundation proudly honours ten Silver achievers for their irresistible momentum, at the first annual Harmony Silver Awards, being held on October 3, 2007 in Mumbai. A jury comprising Shabana Azmi, Julio Ribeiro, Aroon Purie, Rahul Bose and Supriya Sule has selected heroes who continue to set benchmarks for themselves, and society. Let’s show the world what Silver can do.

Instituted By: Harmony for Silvers Foundation

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column one

It’s unthinkable for a lot of our readers to take a chance on food. For the past two years, though, Harmony’s culinary expert Dr Pushpesh Pant has been giving the good life a chance. With mellow adaptations of sinfully delicious recipes for our silver readers, he has made moderation the core of his style.

He was our natural choice as a contributor when we decided to do a cover feature on silver-friendly sweets and snacks for the coming months of festivities. Dr Pant doles out temperate indulgence for silver revellers in a colourful, for-keeps spread: “Life is a Festival”. As part of this package, our regular columnist Amita Malik and Tamil food writer Viji Varadarajan take a nostalgic trip down memory lane.

That’s Harmony reader and silver traveller Raaja Bhasin’s favourite pastime. In his latest travel book, Shimla on Foot, published by Rupa, he resurrects history while walking around Shimla. The book will be a handy companion if you visit the hill station. In this issue, we feature an extract that takes the reader on a walk through pines and rhododendrons.

And as Dr Pant and Bhasin revel in the season of festivals, writer-activist Mahasweta Devi has other things on her mind (“Fire in her Heart”). Her calendar is chock-a-block with protest rallies, meetings, newspaper columns and writing books. The contrast forms the core of Harmony’s identity.

Enjoy your festivals!
—Meeta Bhatti

hPick

I am 83 years old but consider myself a young man. My mobility is greatly reduced but my heart—which rules me—remains large! In this life, I have achieved practically everything I wanted. I am not a learned man in terms of scholarly education but I have learnt all my skills in the real world. I came into some money, more than I required for myself, after the age of 50 and decided to use it productively. I have sponsored the education of poor students and women from nearly 20 villages in and around Mahuva, in Gujarat; it has brought me immeasurable satisfaction. I believe that the elderly should not think of their yesterdays and tomorrows but live firmly in the present. Don’t expect anything from anybody, just give unconditionally and you will find renewed vigour, a sense of true accomplishment, happiness and a meaningful purpose in life. For my part, I feel I am the happiest man in the universe because I have exercised the power to make others happy.

B S INAMDAR
Mumbai

The letter of the month wins music CDs from Big Music

It has been a very nice experience reading Harmony for the past three years and I eagerly await each issue. The magazine has grown considerably over a short period of time. From being a tender sapling, it has spread its roots deep into the soil and firmly established its position. I believe Harmony is the only magazine that caters to the needs of senior citizens and quenches their thirst for information. As a person starts to age, he is prone to many illnesses. For instance, I suffer from arthritis. I have been going to many doctors for the past two years and have been undergoing treatment. Although there is no permanent relief from arthritis, after reading your magazine and articles by doctors, I feel there is some hope for me and I can still live a comfortable life despite this painful illness. Further, yoga asana prescribed by Shameem Akhtar have helped me keep my joints flexible. Indeed, Harmony is the best—keep up the good work.

JOSEPHINE CARNEIRO
Mumbai

We congratulate Tina Ambani and the entire team at Harmony on the magazine’s third anniversary. Most people tend to get upset after retirement but Harmony offers them support, along with useful information and hope. The magazine is useful reading not just for seniors but younger people too. As Harmony gets
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 an hobby or an interesting travel experience to share
- You have a funny or insightful anecdote about your grandchildren
- ...and we’ll print it in the column ‘Your Space’

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older, we pray you retain your youthful character and spark.
HANSA AND GANSHAM BHARUCHA
Mumbai

I practice geriatric medicine and internal medicine in Honolulu. Some months ago, my father, who is based in Mumbai, sent me some copies of Harmony. After reading the past few issues of the magazine, I would like to commend you on an excellent job. I loved reading the magazines while I worked out on the treadmill. The article on the Harmony run at the Mumbai Marathon (“Silver Sunday”, February 2007) was so inspiring that I stayed longer on the exercise machine that day! Your ‘Get Well Soon’ section is also well written and addresses pertinent topics like insomnia and pain relief, which are important concerns for seniors.

I have forwarded issues of Harmony to my former professor Dr Kamal Masaki, who is now the programme director of the Geriatric Medicine Fellowship programme at the University of Hawaii. Aloha!

RITABELLE FERNANDES
Via email

I congratulate you on your work for senior citizens. I urge all Harmony readers to go through an article by Bhaskar Ghose called “The Age of Concern”, which appeared in Frontline magazine (15 June 2007). Like Ghose says, we urgently need to ensure that the basic needs of elderly in India are fulfilled.

A R SHAHAPURKAR
Mumbai

I would like to tell Harmony readers about the Probus Club of Chennai, comprising senior citizens from all walks of life, such as lawyers, journalists, teachers, accountants, businessmen, bureaucrats and doctors. We meet on the last Saturday of every month at the Russian Cultural Centre. Following breakfast, the meeting is called to order by our president. An eminent guest speaker addresses us followed by discussion and interaction between members. The club even has a magazine, called Probuzz. We honour fellow members when they reach the age of 75 and couples who celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We also celebrate all festivals and international days.

K N NARAYANA PILLAI
Chennai

Recently, when I visited MTNL in Mumbai for a new telephone connection for my son, I was told that there was a separate form in case I wanted to apply in my own name as a senior citizen as telephone connections are given to seniors with subsidised tariffs. I was also informed that I could even convert an existing telephone connection into the senior citizens’ category after submitting the necessary documentation. However, when I went along with the form to BSNL, Pune, where I live, they informed me that they have no such facility for seniors. I wonder why there is such a wide disparity in rules and regulations between two government agencies.

K D MIJAGIRI
Pune
IN THE CAPITAL

Finally, Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit is making good on some of the promises her government made to silvers in the Delhi government’s Masterplan 2021 (see March 2007 issue of Harmony). Although provisions like low-floor buses, special seats in ramps and public buildings will have to wait, Dikshit has announced the transfer of management of old age homes run by the Department of Social Welfare—one at Kalkaji and the other at Tilak Vihar—to NGOs. “We will be handing over the running of our homes to two Delhi-based NGOs soon,” says Rajiv Saxena, head of the Kalkaji home. However, he warns that involving NGOs in running homes may lead to biased selection of residents and profit-making activities. Next, the government will compile a comprehensive database of senior citizens in the capital to issue identity cards. According to the 2001 Census, the population of senior citizens, both male and female, living in Delhi’s urban and rural areas was 719,560.
**ALARM BELL**

**BEHIND CLOSED DOORS**

Here’s a home truth from the capital: **one in every two silvers in Delhi faces harassment over property**, or knows another silver who does. This finding comes from the ‘Older Persons Property Victimisation Survey’ conducted by NGO HelpAge India for Hindustan Times. The survey was conducted on a sample size of 1,183 people aged between 65 and 91 in 46 colonies in the city. Ironically enough, swank south Delhi harboured the bulk of the harassment cases (41.6 per cent), followed by central Delhi (20.8 per cent). North Delhi fared the best, with only 5.5 per cent cases being reported from there. “Elders in south and central Delhi suffer more property-related harassment because property prices have shot up in these areas,” Additional Commissioner of Police S B K Singh, who is also head of Delhi Police’s Senior Citizens’ Cell, tells Harmony. “As south Delhi is an affluent and impersonal neighbourhood, we rarely get to know about these cases. I feel that resident’s welfare associations and senior citizens’ associations are in a better position to alert us about such cases.” According to Nidhi Raj Kapoor, head of communications, HelpAge India, the incidence of property-related harassment could be even higher among Delhi’s 1.1 million elderly, as at least 31 per cent of those interviewed admitted facing problems but refused to talk about them. “What makes them suffer silently are fear of retribution and life becoming worse than it already is, physical frailty, lack of faith in the police and legal system, family honour and emotional dependence on the abuser,” she says. Himanshu Rath, convenor of NGO Agewell Foundation, too believes that dependence is the root of the whole problem. “Children often use it to their advantage and blackmail their parents to hand over their property,” he says. “Fortunately, now we have a solution to this. Reverse mortgage, now introduced in India [see April 2007 issue of Harmony], reduces dependence of parents on their children and has become a lifeline for older people all over the world.” Harmony urges all silvers facing any harassment to speak out—we promise to amplify your voice even further.

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**Menopaunch!** The number of middle-aged men undergoing cosmetic surgery in the UK has more than doubled in just five years as they struggle to come to terms with “menopaunch”, according to a report by The Harley Medical Group, which has cosmetic surgery clinics across the UK and Ireland. **Men over the age of 50** are spending thousands of pounds and taking weeks off work to have liposuction (on the abdomen, flanks, chest and chin areas) and **eye bag removal** (blepharoplasty) in attempts to remove stubborn fat. Face lifts, rhinoplasty or nose operations, tummy tucks, neck lifts, brow lifts, chin implants, and otoplasty or ear surgery are also equally popular.
ANALYSE THIS

ON THE WHEEL
According to research by the Rand Institute for Social Justice, an American research institute, **young drivers aged 15 to 24 are three times more likely to cause a car accident than senior citizens**. People over the age of 65 made up 15 per cent of drivers in the US but caused only 7 per cent of the 330,000 fatal two-car crashes in the past 25 years, while drivers up to age 24 represent 13 per cent of drivers but caused 43 per cent of accidents. Further, senior drivers were only 16 per cent more likely to cause an accident than drivers aged 25 to 64. “This study suggests that the stringent licensing policies adopted over the past 20 years for older drivers are actually questionable,” David Loughran, an economist who worked on the study, tells Reuters. The findings also indicated that silvers were choosing to drive less frequently or to stop altogether. Those who still drive often play safe by driving in daylight and avoiding dangerous conditions. “Efforts to reduce accidents should rather be focused on younger drivers who take more risks,” says Loughran.

NOT FUNNY

Sense of humour is a casualty of ageing, according to a study conducted at Washington University in St Louis, Missouri (USA). Researchers tested 40 people over the age of 65 and 40 undergraduates. Participants had to complete jokes and cartoons, choosing the right punch line or the correct picture from a selection. Undergraduates performed 6 per cent better than silvers while choosing the punch line and were 14 per cent better at the cartoon strips. Brian Carpenter, the author of the study explains, “The results suggested that age-related declines in short-term memory, abstract reasoning and moving between different thought-trains might affect humour comprehension in older people. This is cause for concern as laughing has been linked to health benefits such as boosting circulation.” The report is published in the June issue of the *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society*.

TRENDS

THE SILVER SHOPPER
We’ve said it too many times to count: marketers cannot afford to ignore silvers any more. Now others are joining the chorus. Devashish Das Gupta, 36, head of the marketing faculty at Indian Institute of Management - Lucknow, has just completed a study, *Senior Citizens as Shoppers*. “Most marketers have long assumed that the “elderly” market was not large enough to justify special attention. No specific products have been developed for the market except health products or products associated only with the elderly,” says Gupta. Other factors that alienate silvers from the retail buzz are: tiny fonts on labels, youthful packaging and unwelcoming sales staff. Das Gupta believes immense scope lies in catering to the elderly—particularly the 50-69 years segment—in “daily needs products, grooming, hobby, excursions, security, clothing, entertainment and housing”. The study was presented at the Academy for Global Business Advancement (AGBA), World Congress at Malaysia in May this year.
INNOVATION

HELP LINE
Last month, we reported in these pages that the Korean government is investing close to W25 billion (about Rs 1 billion) on developing custom-made cars for silvers. Now, the state-run Electronics and Telecommunications Research Institute (ETRI) has announced that it has developed a 'mobile phone system' for elderly that can sense if they have fallen and inform family and medical providers. When a sensor, which is worn on a belt or pinned on, detects a sudden movement, the phone sends a signal to a computer in a hospital. The computer then calls the phone to check if the person is hurt. If the person needs assistance, the computer reports the fact to the hospital's emergency centre and the person's family. The GPS (global positioning system) on the phone makes it possible to check where the accident took place. "When this technology comes on the market, seniors who buy it will be able to download a program that senses the signal from the sensor to their mobile phone," Park Soo-jun, bioinformatics team leader at ETRI, tells news website chosun.com. The system should be available on the market in 2008.

FUN FURNITURE
Making furniture fun for silvers is the aim of Eureka E! 3210 Specifurn, a design project established by Czech furniture designers Form and Addesign Furniture, and Germany's Fidura Capital Consult. Together, they have designed wardrobes, storage furniture, chairs, couches, bedroom furniture, tables and kitchen furniture. Special features include better availability and visibility of stored items, and rubberised or elastic handholds on lower furniture and wardrobes, ensuring maximum safety when moving as well as passive protection against possible falls. Other touches include removable upholstery, suitable shaping of arm handles, and innovative mechanisms for changing furniture configuration. "We considered the special needs of the elderly while designing our line," says Josef Bartak, coordinator, Specifurn, to Associated Press. "These designs are perfect for old age homes, public urban spaces and railway stations." Specifurn plans to launch the range worldwide in 2008.

Centre for ageing: A Euro 57 million (about Rs 3 billion) centre to promote successful and healthy ageing will be set up in St James's Hospital in Dublin, Ireland. The centre will provide clinical services, research, training and education with a special focus on the creative lives of older people. It will also provide more insight into how best to cope with conditions and illnesses associated with ageing.
MEDIA WATCH

SILVER, NOT STIRRED
Here’s something that may just break Miss Moneypenny’s heart: an ageing 007. British novelist Sebastian Faulks has written Devil May Care, a new, ‘officially approved’ thriller portraying James Bond as an older, damaged spy. Faulks, author of books like Birdsong and Charlotte Gray, was approached by the estate of Ian Fleming (Bond’s creator) to write a book to mark the centenary of the author’s birth. The book will be out on 28 May 2008—it is being published by Penguin in the UK and Doubleday in the US. Faulks takes up where Fleming left off in 1966 with Octopussy and The Living Daylights, the last of 14 Bond books that have since sold 100 million copies worldwide. “The basic character has lasted as Bond is a combination of vulnerability and ruthlessness,” Faulks tells British newspaper The Guardian. “That is the key to his appeal as an agent and a human being. Devil May Care, set in 1967, features an ageing, widowed and vulnerable Bond returning for one last heroic mission. But he is still highly seduced.” Thank heavens.

SUPER(ANNUATED) HEROES

Age has nothing to do with the spirit of adventure. We’ve established that our action heroes don’t have to be young to make the grade. Case(s) in point: 60 year-old Sylvester Stallone (left) in last year’s surprise hit Rocky Balboa and Bruce Willis (centre), 52, in this summer’s smash Die Hard 4. What’s more, Stallone will soon be back in Rambo 4, another testosterone-driven adventure, while 65 year-old Harrison Ford (right) will return as treasure hunter Indiana Jones in the fourth (and untitled) film of the series. Their natural charisma apart, in an industry still obsessed with youth, these hunks get by with a little help from their friends—makeup men.

“Never underestimate the magical power of haemorrhoid cream on an ageing face,” makeup artist Daniel Phillips tells The Times in London. “You put it under the eyelids and it has a tightening effect. It only lasts for a couple of hours, but it does the job.”

Phillips, who made up Willis for Die Hard 4, also uses a “tightening balm” mixed in with foundation. “A lot of products I use also have a silicone base, which has a plumping effect on the screen,” he says. “Like cosmetic products for women, it’s basically about tightening the skin and temporarily lifting out the wrinkles. You can also remove wrinkles digitally during post-production. As for the body, I mostly airbrush the men with a fake tan, which can make a huge difference on camera.” Another tip from Phillips: clever lighting, and avoiding extreme close-ups.
SAUCY!
A series of saucy cookery videos posted on self-broadcasting website YouTube by a Cypriot couple Andreas Theodoulou, 76, and his wife Christina, 69, is full of banter, argument and amusing sexual politics as they teach viewers how to cook Stuffed Vine Leaves (youtube.com/watch?v=ueciU49YGtw&mode=related&search=), Greek Meatballs (youtube.com/watch?v=ZNvjuhrzDctA&mode=related&search=), and Fajin or lentils and rice (youtube.com/watch?v=fMxzwrXog0Q). Andreas raps to music while squeezing some lemons and lands a cheeky slap on his wife’s bottom. As she bends to pick one up off the floor for him. She slaps him back on his face and, later, kneels him in what she calls his “crown jewels”. Director and cinematographer: their son, ironically named Orthodoxos.

TECH TALK WITH PUROHITS

How come the electricity bill is so high? We are so particular about switching off all our gadgets when not in use.

A recent estimate by the US Department of Energy suggests that in the average home, 40 per cent of all electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off. Add that up and it equals the annual output of 17 power plants.
OFFBEAT

DEATH BY TELEVISION

Coming soon to TV screens in Germany is Eos, a round-the-clock channel devoted exclusively to death and dying, which will feature documentaries about graveyards, funeral services, undertakers, televised obituaries, and reality shows on how families are coping with an imminent death. “More than 800,000 people died in Germany last year,” says 51-year-old Wolf Tilmann Schneider in British newspaper The Telegraph. “Multiply that by four and you have a rough estimate of the number of relatives affected. They will be our target audience.” Schneider, a former TV producer, has joined forces with Germany’s state-run Funeral Association (yes, they have one) to launch the channel on cable television. “After all, death has its own allure as a concept,” he says. Eos will also promote “cemetery tourism” through documentaries highlighting the beauty and tranquillity of graveyards in Germany and abroad. “It may come as a surprise but older people really enjoy visiting cemeteries, not just to mourn but to soak in the atmosphere and enjoy the solitude.” If you say so, Herr Schneider.

H RECOMMENDS

ACTION PLAN FOR SEPTEMBER

Make a book bank. Set up a library at your association or community centre for fellow silvers and even poor students. You can collect a variety of books on various subjects from your family, friends and neighbours—it may even help you de-clutter your own home! In July, the Senior Citizens’ Welfare Association in Manimajra, Chandigarh, set up a book bank for needy students. “We must do something for society to bring meaning to our lives,” Amrit Dhingra, president of the association, tells The Indian Express.

Start a cool club. Form a club where you can get together with like-minded silvers and have some serious fun. The Senior Parishioners’ Club, which meets at St Anne’s Church in Mazagaon, Mumbai, was formed in 1999 when Colin D’sooza, 58, felt the need to jazz up the lives of silvers in and around the parish of the church. Today, the club organises monsoon getaways, sunset cruises, sports tournaments and talent hunts. It even conducts summer holiday activities for parish children, like treasure hunts, chocolate-making classes and field trips. “Being a member made me realise that one needn’t become a fossil at 50,” Judy D’sooza, a single mother, tells newspaper DNA. “I have something to look forward to every day.”
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MIND OVER BODY

Some people over 60—and even those who are younger—declare that the game of life is finished. They start to brood and seclude themselves, often complaining about their ailments. If you ask them how they are, they usually start by describing their medical history. On the other hand, there are some people who always remain optimistic and keep smiling. These people do take care of their health but they take everything that comes their way in stride. They keep themselves busy, working for honorary institutions or carrying on with their own business. They do not sit idle.

There are still some of us who restrict our lives to reading newspapers all day long after we retire. While this keeps us in touch with the world, it remains a passive way of making the most of our day. Sometimes this can make people sad and depressed as it is only ‘passing of time’ rather than ‘enjoyment of time’.

If we keep ourselves busy everyday, ageing will be forgotten

Everyone has ailments. But I believe that if we have some work or a commitment towards something everyday, the aches and pains of physical ageing will diminish. We will go to work on time and forget about our ailments. Only if someone enquires about our back pain will we be reminded about it.

Both mind and body do work together but I definitely believe the mind has a far greater effect on a person. A couple of years ago, I had the good fortune of meeting Helen Keller in New Delhi. She was born blind but rather than brooding about it, she worked for the dignity and rehabilitation of the blind all over the world. She had a graceful and charming personality, even though she was ‘aged’.

I am in my 85th year but I still have the curiosity to try many new things. I recently asked an astrologer—in jest—how many more years of life I had. My intention was to ascertain how many Five-Year Plans I should make to fulfil my ambitions!

I want to pursue new hobbies, learn another musical instrument and study a new language. I have been thinking of buying a guitar and learning how to play from a good teacher. Two years ago, I engaged a teacher to learn Spanish—though this learning did not go very far, the experience was good and the few sentences I remember serve me well today!

Last year, I went to Mussoorie. I had a lot of time to read books I had missed out on, and write articles and letters. Initially, I was reluctant to write myself as I always had good secretaries and was not accustomed to writing in long hand. Then, I decided to try to write in long hand anyway. With slow and steady practice, I started to write in a style that was readable. In the cottage next to mine, there was a Dutch scholar who picked up one of my articles to read. I was apprehensive that he would not be able to read it and may laugh at me. When I expressed my thoughts to him, he read my article aloud and assured me that my handwriting was quite good!

Indeed, if we keep busy and involved with activities we enjoy, with perseverance and a positive attitude, ageing will be forgotten. The truth is, ageing is not a consequence of the years of your life but the pessimism of the mind when it accepts defeat.

—D N Malhotra, New Delhi

Malhotra introduced paperback publishing in India
HERE & NOW

I never thought that I would see one day over sixty-three.
Now that I’ve reached three score and ten, I’m left wondering just when
My ticket will arrive to fly beyond that rainbow in the sky.
And yet there’s so much left to do, long lists of tasks—I’ve done a few.

My boys both want me to recall the good, the bad, the rise, the fall,
Of folk connected to our clan, some close, some in a distant land.
Of loathsome thieves— their deeds so vile, no doubt they rot on putrid pile.
I am the angel to record their evil deeds, their greed, and fraud.

Our inheritance they grabbed to use, to gamble, squander and abuse.
With no intent to recompense, their kindness was a great pretense.
I’ll write of friends, their chivalry, their goodness and generosity.
Our legacy, my boys will see, lies all around our family tree.

Stefan, Brandon, Kegan, Drew—have brought me joy and made me do
What I thought I could not achieve, when I “pass on” then I must leave
Warm memories to last and last, old stories of a loving past.
Of grandparents in whose old eyes, these boys could only touch the skies.

Our flat is mostly up-to-date, some details I will leave to fate.
I’d like to put my recipes, just as I please—in categories.
Tezaal is my cookbook’s name, inventive, traditional it will contain
Housekeeping hints, preserves, parothas, fuggias, Suzettes, baigan burtas.

My stories too are still and waiting, at least six more are incubating.
I’ll quickly edit them so I can publish them before I die.
My characters should have more to say, I think I’ll let them loose to play.
Just now they’re mere staccato folk, speak not too much or wear a cloak.

I don’t care if the world will smirk, not give me credit for my work.
I’ve written as I meant to do and not a word will I eschew.
Soon I must run through all my notes, and put together all my thoughts.
Try one last time to understand my foray in computer land.

Then I must reconstruct my will, and when complete there’s one thing still
That does remain for me to do, explain so that my doctors too
Will understand and then abide with my request, when like the tide
My life will be on ebb and flow—they must be kind and let me go.

I’ve done my share and had some fun, and now so long to everyone.
I’m very happy to have been a part of this dear family scene.
I’m on my way to someplace new, but where and when I have no clue!
Now here’s a slot for someone dear—goodbye, I leave you with good cheer.
—Maria Ferreira

We reserve the right to select articles, which will be edited to suit space and editorial considerations. Harmony takes no responsibility for advice offered in this column. For more Your Space letters, log on to www.harmonyindia.org
Fire in her heart

Mahasweta Devi has consistently used her writing and activism to plead the case of the marginalised. Harmony discovers how anger at their plight and hope for a better tomorrow keep her going.

I find my people still groaning under hunger, landlessness, indebtedness, and bonded labour. An anger... directed against a system that has failed to liberate my people from these horrible constraints, is the only source of inspiration in all my writing. All the parties to the Left as well as those to the Right have failed to keep their commitment to the common people. I do not hope to see in my lifetime any reason to change this conviction... Hence I go on writing to the best of my abilities about the people, so that I can face myself without...guilt or shame. For a writer faces judgement in his lifetime and remains answerable.

—Mahasweta Devi in her introduction to Agnigarbha (1978)

It’s not easy to get a conversation going with Mahasweta Devi. People walk in and out of her small first-floor rented flat in South Kolkata’s Golf Green with their problems—a job needed, admission into a hospital, help with civic authorities...the list is endless. Her phone rings incessantly. And it’s clear she doesn’t see the point of a rerun of her life as writer-activist-journalist. “Why do I need to give an interview?”
she rasps, dressed in her cotton housecoat, silver strands combed back into a bun. “My work should speak for itself.”

The 82 year-old answers her phone with the same brusqueness, numbing some callers into silence with monosyllabic responses. Others, like a person calling for help to write an application or a member of a tribal group, get more time—here, she listens patiently, taking notes or referring them to the right person.

There are no clues to her literary stature in this flat, rented for Rs 6,000 per month, no signs that it’s the home of an award-winning writer who has written over 20 short story collections and 100 novels; the last two, Jarotkumari and Pancha Kanya, as recently as 2006. In her sparse room, her bed, a cluttered desk and lamp complete the décor; a talcum powder box, perched on a shelf, the only concession to vanity.

You finally get her attention only when you point to the newspapers scattered on the bed opened to reports on the Nandigram

leading to 14 deaths. “Rich fertile land is being taken over forcefully by the government,” says Mahasweta Devi. “Activists like Mamata [Banerjee] and Medha [Patkar] were already involved; I have just butted in.”

Her “butting in” has led to regular visits to Nandigram, neighbouring Haripur, and Singur (where another bitter row over land acquisition for a Tata Motors plant is taking place), and participation in protest rallies. She began to write a regular column in Dainik Statesman on the issue, and has helped organise a rehabilitation camp and ‘health centre’ for the victims, for which she has donated Rs 200,000. She is also collecting used cycles to distribute in Nandigram—a poster above her desk screams, “Leave your old bicycles here”.

“This is the first time when faceless farmers are standing up to be counted,” she says. “Land is as dear to them as their mother and they will not sell out under any coercion. This is not only about Nandigram or Singur. This is a global issue.” At a protest rally on 17 March at the Esplanade area in central Kolkata, Mahasweta Devi spoke forcefully, censuring the government and urging it to make reparations to victims at Nandigram. Today, the

“Writer, activist...these are just tags. I am just me; I cannot be branded”

controversy—land acquisition for the chemical hub to be set up by Indonesia’s Salim Group in this rural area in the Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, about 150 km from Kolkata, became a bloody affair earlier this year, putting the state government on the defensive. Villagers began fierce protests against the project. On 14 March, policemen entered Nandigram and fired at them,
I profile

project’s future is in doubt, thanks in large part to her efforts.

“When I see her on TV attending rallies, I wonder how she overcomes her cramps and need to go to the bathroom frequently owing to diabetes,” wonders younger sister Soma Mukhopadhyay. “A recent pro-establishment rally carried a banner that read ‘Restrain Mahasweta Devi’. We took it as a compliment!” Mahasweta Devi is cagey when you ask her about her diabetes, only allowing that she needs to inject insulin twice a day. Last year, she fractured her left arm and leg after a fall. “Before that, I could walk for 14-15 km at a stretch; now I have slowed down,” she grumbles. People who know her well wouldn’t agree. “Mahasweta Devi looks like everyone’s favourite grandma but she’s made of steel,” reveals Anjum Katyal, editor, translator and poet. As series editor of the Collected Works of Mahasweta Devi, published in 23 volumes by Seagull, she has worked closely with her. “I have seen people requesting her to attend a function or a seminar,” says Katyal. “Her response would be ‘I can’t spare time.’ But she’d help out people in trouble any time.”

So has the writer in her taken a backseat to the activist? “Writer, activist... these are all tags,” she harrumphs. “I was never an ‘armchair’ writer, even when I wrote my first book on the Rani of Jhansi.” Not satisfied with existing historical records on the queen who challenged the British, in 1954 she left her only son Nabarun (then six) with her first husband, late Bengali theatre writer and activist Bijon Bhattacharya, and set off to Jhansi and Gwalior to do her own research. The result: Jhansir Rani, published in 1956, earned her an instant reputation of a writer with sincerity. “I felt this was the best way to write—by visiting places and talking to people. And when you talk to people, you want to improve their lot if you can. That’s what people call ‘activism’ nowadays. To me, the process appears very logical. I am just me; I cannot be branded.”

THE SISTER I KNOW

Soma Mukhopadhyay, 63, retired professor of Bengali from Calcutta University, shares her memories of her eldest sister...

We are a large family with five sisters and four brothers. Didi is the eldest, born when our mother Dharitri Devi was just 18. Our father Manish Ghatak was an income tax officer, but also a poet and writer. His youngest brother, who grew up to be filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak, was Didi’s contemporary and friend. I am the eighth sibling, nearly two decades younger than Didi. My earliest memories of her are rather funny: she would be home from Santiniketan, and summon the young ones in the family and start cutting our nails, checking our hair for lice, cleaning our ears! She would insist we wore khadi. But she had a lighter side—she told us stories of Jim Corbett and took us to see Charlie Chaplin movies.

In college, she developed strong leftist leanings and did a lot of relief work during the Bengal famine. Once, when she was still in college, father bought her two silk saris. She refused to wear them. But I remember her in colourful cotton saris and big bindi, teaming them up with ‘Poona-style’ blouses with contrasting borders, sometimes putting flowers in her hair. But she was athletic too—a keen cyclist and swimmer. Her stamina, always strong, has stayed with her.

Despite her commitments as a writer and activist, Didi remains the ‘father figure’ of our family. She supported me financially during my MA and later, when I fell in love, she was a pillar of support. We have this family joke that Didi is our telephone directory for everything ranging from schools, hospitals and fire engines to psychiatrists! When my husband Ashok and I thought of writing a Bengali Thesaurus, she helped us tremendously with many rare books. Samrtha Sabdakosh came out in 1987 and since then I have also edited four of her anthologies and hope to edit more.

We come together in the big and small moments of our lives—we call each other up everyday, sometimes even 10-12 times! We have lost five siblings, all our brothers and one sister, which makes us bond even more. She’s lost many comrades, and must be lonely. Her room has a photograph of our brother Maitreya: he was always by her side and she misses him sorely.
Through her writing—fiction, essays and columns—she has enjoyed popularity in India and overseas and been honoured with the Jnanpith in 1995, the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1997 (“for her compassionate crusade through art and activism to claim for tribal people a just and honourable place in India”), and the Padmabhushan in 2006.

Her writings have been translated in many Indian languages, and in English, French, Japanese and Italian, and have been made into critically acclaimed films. *Rudaali*, a tale of a rural woman who is unable to weep despite the misery of her life, was adapted for the screen by Kalpana Lajmi in 1993. *Hajar Churashir Maa* (Mother of 1084), inspired by Kolkata’s Naxalite movement in the late 1960s and 1970s, was brought to life as *Hazaar Chauraasi Ki Maa* by Govind Nihalani in 1998. This story of the trauma of an upper-middle class woman who learns her son is lying dead in a police morgue owing to his involvement in the movement, became a cult classic. And in 2006, Chitra Palekar made her directorial debut (and *Harmony’s* Hotlist of achievers) with *Maati Maay*, her take on *Baayen*. Chandi, a Dalit gravekeeper accused of being a witch, is the protagonist of this dark tale about how a patriarchal society treats a woman who defies social norms.

Mahasweta Devi seems unmoved by all the praise for her writing. “I don’t like too much fuss about fame or awards,” she announces, drinking black tea unflappably from the saucer. This is a woman who barely tolerates anything that interferes with her urgency to depict a world rarely covered in literature; as she told Navin Kishore of Seagull in an interview, she “finds her own solitude in the chaos around to pour out her thoughts with lots of words”.

She tackles horrors like rape in stark prose shorn of literary niceties and devices system, legislation or the state. Horrors like rape, dispossession, exploitation, violence and murder are detailed in stark, unsentimental prose shorn of literary niceties and devices giving the reader the sensation of walking barefoot on scorched earth.

Despite her admittedly narrow focus (“I have no interest in the middle class”), her work has From the mid-1970s, her words have zeroed in on the plight of tribals in India through the years, who she calls “the suffering spectators of the India travelling towards the 21st century”. For instance, *Aramyer Adhikar* (Right of the Forest; 1977), which chronicles the life and struggles of tribal leader Birsa Munda in the late 19th century; *Draupadi* (1977), the tale of Dopdi, a rebel who refuses to be subjugated despite days of
She has travelled extensively in these districts, melding her life with the tribals. “They trust me,” she says. Considering her background as student at Santiniketan and professor of English in Calcutta University, isn’t she a paradox to tribes who are so removed from her? “Who says they are different?” she snaps, chewing on tobacco. “You deny rights to these people, make them invisible, and then label them different! I live, eat and sleep with them like one of their family.”

It takes considerable prodding to get Mahasweta Devi to speak about her own family—her personal life has been marked by intense highs and lows. Upon her separation with Bhattacharya in 1961, she was also estranged from Nabarun, now a writer, for years. “I bled inside and even tried to commit suicide,” she said to Navin Kishore. She then married journalist Asit Tapas in 1965, only to divorce him in 1975. (She survives her former husbands.)

Although she says rather contrarily that she doesn’t stay “in continuous touch with her family as I don’t have that kind of time”, Tatagatha, her 32 year-old grandson, has forged a rapprochement between Mahasweta Devi and Nabarun, now 59. She also dotes on her great-grandson, three year-old Swayam, nicknamed Che after revolutionary Che Guevara. Her family lives in Golf Green too. “At times, we forget that she is a flesh-and-blood person too,” says Mukhopadhya. “She’s a proud great-grandmother, she’s still on her feet and, in her own way, must be happy.”

Much of this happiness comes from her work. In 1980, she launched a Bengali quarterly, Borika, which became a forum for marginalised people. And in 1983, she formed Paschim Bangla Kheria Sabar Kalyan Samiti, a welfare society to train tribals to earn their livelihood. “It is a self-sustaining unit now,” she declares, the barest hint of a smile on her face. “Also, when the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes Right Action Group was formed in Baroda in 1998 to fight for the protection of their human rights, it filled me with fresh zeal. The best part is that the right of the tribals over forest land has been recognised by the government.”

Mahasweta Devi still believes there’s much to be done and dismisses the sceptre of death with a wave of her hand. “Where’s the time?” she asks wryly, pointing to a calendar chock-a-block with engagements. Driven by anger and hope in equal parts, she soldiers on, driven by her belief that “the first right in the Indian constitution should be the right to dream”.

Now Dopdi spreads her arms, raises her face to the sky, turns towards the forest, and ululates with the force of her entire being. Once, twice, three times. At the third burst the birds in the trees at the outskirts of the forest awake and flap their wings. The echo of the call travels far.

—excerpt from Draupadi, by Mahasweta Devi

With inputs by Sulagana Biswas and Ruma Dasgupta
Nearly half a century back GKB made a humble beginning with its first retail outlet. A small venture later spawned into outlets across the nation making us the largest optical company in India. It has been our vision to take our optical business to the next level with outlets that are generation next. With our experience and expertise we always strive to deliver the best to our customers. By using global technology, we keep our customers at the cutting edge of style and quality. We have also exclusively partnered with international brands like Seiko and Rodenstock to bring the best in the world, home. Such has been our endeavour of making India look good for over 50 years.
At 87, some stop writing.
And some write exams.

Ageing doesn’t mean slowing down. And in celebration of that, Harmony for Silvers Foundation proudly honours ten Silver achievers for their irresistible momentum, at the first annual Harmony Silver Awards, being held on October 3, 2007 in Mumbai. A jury comprising Shabana Azmi, Julio Ribeiro, Aroon Purie, Rahul Bose and Supriya Sule has selected heroes who continue to set benchmarks for themselves, and society. Let’s show the world what Silver can do.

Instituted By: Harmony for Silvers Foundation Empowering India’s Senior Citizens

For details log on to www.harmonyindia.org
Life is a festival

It is the season of festivals and rituals—Janmashtami, Eid ul-Fitr, Navratri, Ganesh Chaturthi, Teej, Chhath and Laxmi Puja or Diwali. To celebrate, our culinary expert Dr Pushpesh Pant presents traditional festive recipes from various regions adapted to the health and dietary needs of our silver readers, sprinkled with nostalgia, garnished with interesting trivia, and seasoned with Harmony’s good wishes.
MALPUA OMELETTE
FOR DUSSEhra, from West Bengal

Preparation time: 1 hour
Cooking time: 30 minutes
Serves: 12

Ingredients
- Sooji/semolina: 100 gm
- Khoya: 250 gm
- Flour: 100 gm
- Fennel seeds: 7.5 gm
- Clarified butter (ghee) to shallow fry
- Whipped cream to fill the ‘omelette’ (optional)

Fruits
Four pears; four apples; four mud apples (cheekoo); eight plums; 48 grapes; one cracked pomegranate; 100 gm sugar; juice of one lemon

The sauce
- Dried apricots: 750 gm
- Sugar-free sweetener: 350 gm
- Lemon juice: 15 ml

Method
Wash the semolina in running water. Then, drain and keep in water for 35-40 minutes. Cover the khoya in enough lukewarm water and keep until ready to make the batter. Drain the semolina and khoya. Sift flour. Mash the khoya on the work surface with the base of your palm to remove granules. Mix semolina with khoya in a shallow utensil, add flour and fennel seeds, mix well to make a batter and divide into 12 equal portions.

Wash the fruits. Peel pears, apples and mud apples. Halve, core and cut into 1/2 inch cubes and refrigerate. Halve the plums, remove the pits and cut into slices. Cut the grapes into roundels. Reserve both in chilled water. Refrigerate the cracked pomegranate. Divide all the fruits into 12 equal portions.

Put sugar in a pan; add 3/4 cup water and the juice of one lemon. Bring to a boil, add pear and apple cubes and stew until soft but not mushy. Drain and refrigerate.

To make the sauce, put apricot puree in a saucepan, add sugar, lemon juice and 2 1/4 cup water.
Bring to a boil; reduce to low heat and simmer, stirring constantly for five minutes. Pass through a fine mesh soup strainer into a separate saucepan. Return sauce to heat and simmer (approximately five minutes) until it is of ‘spoon coating’ consistency. Remove and keep aside.

To make the ‘omelette’, spread a portion of the batter into a pancake of 5 1/2 inch in diameter in a non-stick frying pan. As it begins to cook, spread a little ghee around the periphery and shallow fry, turning once, until light golden. Remove to absorbent paper to drain excess fat. Repeat the process with the remaining portions of the batter.

To serve
Pipe whipped cream down the middle of each pancake and fold over (optional). Fill the assorted fruits in each omelette and serve on a bed of sauce. Sprinkle the leftover assorted fruits on the sauce and serve.

Fab fruits
Did you know that fruits, jam-packed with vitamins and anti-oxidants, are disease busters?

- **Apple**: Decreases risk of stroke, heart disease, and lung and prostate cancer, fights asthma and osteoporosis, boosts fibre
- **Apricot**: Low-cal, treats constipation and aids digestion, fights anaemia, lowers bad cholesterol, strengthens eyes, helps prevent cancer
- **Grape**: Fights constipation, gout, rheumatism, skin and liver disorders, decreases acidity, lowers blood pressure, protects against heart disease, slows down lymph, liver, stomach, breast and colon cancer
- **Mud apple (sapodilla or cheekoo)**: Fights high temperature, treats anaemia, helps digestion
- **Pear**: Low-cal, encourages digestion, reduces bad cholesterol and risk of heart disease and diabetes
- **Plum**: Antioxidant superstar (surpassed only by wild blueberries and cranberries), protects vision, aids motion, quells nausea, lowers risk of cancer
- **Pomegranate**: Reduces bad cholesterol, risk of stroke, heart disease and cancer, aids digestion
SHRIKHAND (SAFFRON LACED YOGHURT)

FOR GANESH CHATURTHI, from Maharashtra

Preparation time: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 30 minutes
Serves: 6

Ingredients
- Yoghurt: 1 litre; hung overnight in a muslin cloth to drain whey
- Sugar-free sweetener: 1/2 cup
- Saffron: 1 tsp; soaked in 1 tbsp milk
- Green cardamom seeds: 1 tsp; crushed
- Pistachio nuts: 8-10; blanched and slivered

Method
Take yoghurt cheese in a bowl, add sweetener and whisk until fluffy. Add saffron with the milk. Sprinkle cardamom and nuts. Whisk, cool and serve.

Sweet trivia
The earliest reference to shrikhand can be found in Manasollasa written by King Someshwara in 1130 AD. Shrikhand reflects our quest for spirituality. Just as it contains the richest essence of milk, Indians tend to seek spirituality in everything, leaving no room for the meaningless. A more sinful version is amrakhand—mango pulp mixed with shrikhand.
SEVIAN

FOR EID, from Hyderabad

Preparation time: 10-15 minutes
Cooking time: 10 minutes
Serves: 4

Ingredients

- Vermicelli: 500 gm; fine variety, pre-roasted. Can’t be substituted with any other kind, however attractively packaged
- Khoya: 200 gm; grated
- Ghee/unsalted butter: 100 gm
- Sugar-free sweetener: 1 cup
- Water: 2 cups
- Cloves: 3-4
- Green cardamoms: 4-6; only seeds, coarsely pounded
- Raisins: 50 gm
- Pistachios: 25 gm; slivered
- Almonds: 25 gm; slivered
- Saffron: a few strands soaked in warm milk and crushed with the back of a spoon

Method

Heat ghee in a thick-bottomed pan. When hot, add cloves. As they change colour and swell, add sweetener and water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium or low and add raisins, cardamoms, raisins and vermicelli, broken into one-third the original size. Stir very gently and simmer till vermicelli soaks all the liquid. Now sprinkle saffron with the milk in which it was soaked. Remove the pan from the flame and gently spread out the strands with a fork to ensure the dish doesn’t end up being a gooey mess. Sprinkle khoya evenly. Garnish with slivers of almonds and pistachio.

Enrich the dish with cashew nuts (added while cooking) and later with a few drops of rose water and a drape of chandi ka vark.

Versatile vermicelli

Other vermicelli wonders you can rustle up:

- Instant upma: Boil vermicelli and season with nuts, curry leaves and green chilli
- Omelette: Mix with eggs and grated potatoes
- Vermicelli nests: Line a metal tea strainer with vermicelli and lower it in hot oil; when fried, remove vermicelli baskets and fill with mashed paneer or potatoes
- Sauté vermicelli with tofu and veggies for a nutritious meal
- Use as a stuffing for onions, capsicum and tomatoes
CHURMA LADDU
FOR TEEJ, from Rajasthan

Preparation time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 25 minutes
Serves: 4

Ingredients
■ Whole wheat flour: 1 1/2 cup
■ Water: 1/3 cup
■ Sugar-free sweetener: 1 cup
■ Honey: 1 tsp
■ Fruit juice concentrate (optional): 1 tbsp
■ Low-fat margarine or butter (Nutrilite or a similar product): 2 tbsp
■ Raisins: 1/4 cup
■ Shelled almonds: 3 tsp; chopped coarsely
■ Dried figs: 2
■ Apricots (seedless)

Method
Make soft dough with the flour, margarine or butter, and water. Divide the dough into six balls. Flatten them with your palms. Heat some butter or fat in a wok. Shallow-fry the flattened dough. Grind the fried dough discs into fine powder in a coffee grinder. Gently heat the ground mixture in a pan. When still warm, add sweetener. Also add raisins, almonds, figs and apricots and mould them into small balls (laddu) with your right hand. Do it quickly before the mixture cools.
**Kanjeevaram Idli**

**FOR LAXMI PUJA, from Tamil Nadu**

**Preparation time:** 20 minutes (not including overnight fermentation)  
**Cooking time:** 15 minutes  
**Serves:** 4-5

**Ingredients**
- Black gram (*urad dal*): 1/2 cup; husked
- Fine semolina: 3/4 cup
- Parboiled rice: 3/4 cup
- Baking powder: 1 tsp
- Finely chopped vegetables (carrots, beans, florets of cauliflower): 1/2 cup
- Salt to taste

**Method**
Soak the lentils and rice in water overnight. Grind to a fine and smooth paste while adding semolina. Add baking powder and salt and whip briskly for a minute. Spoon out this batter into moulds or small bowls lined with cloth. Make a hollow and place a spoonful of vegetables and steam in a steamer or cooker without pressure for about 10 minutes.

**Idli’s avatars**
- Rice *idli*
- Kanjeevaram *idli*
- *Rava idli* (with semolina)
- *Bele idli* (with toor dal)
- *Ragi idli*
- *Malli idli* (shallow-fried with coriander and curry leaves)

**Add-ons:** mustard seeds, fresh green chillies, black pepper, cumin, coriander, fenugreek seeds, curry leaves, ginger slivers, sesame seeds, nuts, garlic, spring onion, coconut and unrefined jaggery.
SINGHARE KA CHILAH (WATER CHESTNUT PANCAKE)

FOR JANMASHTAMI, from Uttar Pradesh

Preparation time: 25 minutes
Cooking time: 2 minutes per pancake
Serves: 4

Ingredients
For the batter
- Singhare ka atta (flour obtained from water chestnuts): 300 gm
- Cumin seeds (jeera): 2 tsp
- Red chilli powder: 1 tsp
- A generous pinch of asafoetida (hing)
- Low-fat butter or margarine to shallow fry

For topping
- Paneer (cottage cheese): 150 g
- Fresh coriander
- Green chillies: 2

Method
Sift the flour with salt, add cumin seeds and red chillies and mix well. Soak asafoetida in 2 1/4 tbsp of water. Mix the dissolved asafoetida and flour in water to make a batter of pouring consistency. Grate paneer and divide it into 16 equal portions.

Melt just enough low fat butter in a small non-stick frying pan; spread a portion of the batter to make a pancake 4-inch in diameter and shallow-fry over low heat for a few seconds. Then sprinkle a portion each of the paneer and vegetables over the surface of the pancake, add a little low-fat butter along the periphery and cook. Lift the pancake—if perforations are visible and the chillah is lightly coloured, flip it over. Smear another small quantity of low-fat butter and cook for 45 seconds. Fold and remove on absorbent paper to drain off excess fat. Repeat the process with the remaining portions.

Alternative atta
There are several alternatives to cereals, which are allowed even when a person is fasting, especially during Navratri. Kuttu ka atta derived from lotus seeds, or flour grounded from spinach seeds or water chestnut (singhara) are used to make roti, paratha or pancakes. These types of flour taste grainy-nutty and turn deep brown-black when cooked. They are also healthier because of high fibre content. They are usually eaten in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.
PATHAR KA GOSHT
(KEBAB COOKED ON STONE)

FOR EID, from Hyderabad

Preparation time: 20 minutes (and six hours to marinate)
Cooking time: 15-20 minutes
Serves: 6-8

Ingredients
- Mutton (boneless): 1 kg; cut into flat steaks
- Green chillies: 6-8; ground to a paste
- Allspice: 1 tsp; powdered
- Peppercorn: 1 tsp; powdered
- Ginger paste: 1 1/2 tsp
- Garlic paste: 1 1/2 tsp
- Green papaya paste: 1 tsp
- Oil for brushing
- Medium onions: 2-3; finely sliced
- Lemons: 2-3
- Mint leaves
- Salt to taste

Method
Gently beat the meat with a wooden mallet. To prepare the marinade, mix all the ingredients except onions, lemons and mint leaves and rub the meat well with this marinade. Keep aside for 4-5 hours. Take a flat piece of rough granite, wash it and place it on two bricks ensuring that it is stable. Heat the granite well by placing live charcoals under it. Sprinkle a little oil on it and put the marinated meat pieces in batches. Turn these a couple of times (cook for approximately 4-5 minutes on each side), brushing lightly with oil. Remove when cooked. Serve with onions, wedges of lemon and fresh mint chutney.

Rock it!
Cooking kebabs or grilled vegetables on a thick piece of granite is a Hyderabadi tradition. The stone is heated at about 400°C on burning charcoal or a stove. Meat is thinly sliced, flattened with a mallet, scored with a knife and marinated before it is placed on the stone slab. As the meat cooks in its own juices, no oil is required. The stone allows it to heat evenly without using an open flame. The high temperature sears the natural juices and nutrients, giving it the aroma of burnt charcoal, a bit like barbequed food. This is a healthy alternative to modern-day cooking. If you find it too cumbersome, though, use a thick-bottomed non-stick pan.
CHURA MATTAR

FOR CHHATH, from Bihar

Preparation time: 30 minutes
Cooking time: 3-4 minutes
Serves: 4

Ingredients

- Green peas: 800 gm
- Chitra/pounded rice flakes: 150 gm
- Orange juice: 60 ml
- Ghee (clarified butter): 75 gm
- Cumin seeds: 4 gm
- Green chillies: 2
- A piece of ginger
- A generous pinch of asafoetida
- Mango powder (amchoor): 6 gm
- Sugar: 15 gm
- Raisins: 30 gm
- Rose water: 30 ml
- Saffron: 0.5 gm
- Milk: 15 ml
- Clotted cream: 60 gm (optional)
- Lemon juice: 30 ml
- Salt to taste
- A pinch of sugar
- Chura masala (4 cloves; 4 cinnamon sticks; 5 black cardamoms)

Method

Put enough water in a pan, add salt and sugar, bring to a boil, add peas and boil until partially cooked. Drain and refresh in iced water. Drain again at the time of cooking. Clean, wash and keep the chitra in orange juice for 15 minutes. Wash, slit, seed and finely chop the green chillies. Scrape, wash and finely chop the piece of ginger. Keep the asafoetida in 15 ml of water. Remove stems of raisins, clean, soak in water for a few minutes, drain and keep in rose water. Crush saffron threads with a pestle; keep in lukewarm milk and then make a paste with the back of a spoon. Mix with malai or sprinkle on the dish just before serving.

Sun-dry the spices before pounding them with a pestle to make a coarse powder. Alternatively, put all the ingredients in a grinder and, employing short pulses, grind to a coarse powder. Remove and store in a sterilised, dry and airtight container.

Heat ghee in a wok, add cumin seeds, stir over medium heat until it begins to pop, add green chillies, ginger and asafoetida, and stir for 30 seconds. Add green peas and stir-fry until devoid of moisture, sprinkle chura masala, salt, amchoor and sugar, stir until incorporated. Now add chitra along with orange juice, stir gently until mixed, reduce to low heat and simmer, stirring occasionally and carefully, for 1-2 minutes. Remove, adjust the seasoning, add the raisins, the saffron-malai mixture and lemon juice. Stir and serve.
The tradition continues

Viji Varadarajan tells us how festivals remain part of her identity

I am a Tamil Brahmin who grew up in the heart of Madras, surrounded by temples, and festivals and traditions are part of my identity. When I was growing up, the day of a festival, like any other day in South India, began with the ritual cleaning of the threshold. With a cool early morning breeze and the sky still dark, dried cow dung cakes were dissolved in a bucket of water and sprinkled on the smooth muddy entrance. After being swept away with a broom, the ground would be decorated with creative kolam (rangoli) patterns with flour made of rice powder and finely ground lime—an art that combines creativity with mathematical precision. I have watched fascinated as my grandmother, using her thumb and forefinger, drew fine lines with dots in traditional patterns bordered with kaavi, a thin paste made with red oxide powder, for a festive look.

This fascination continues till today. As I recall the kolam, the ritual oil bath that was washed away with whole green gram powder and powderered hibiscus leaves, the Kanjeevaram half-saris for girls and dhotis and angavastram for boys, jasmine flowers in our hair and anklets on our feet, I also smell delicious satvic food.

Despite today’s pizza culture, when there is a celebration or festival, we turn to traditional meals.

Festival cooking is more than just a collection of recipes; there is logic behind it. On Sri Rama Navami, neer mor, thinned salted buttermilk spiced with a dash of curry leaves, lime juice, asafoetida, and paanagam, a brown sugar and dry ginger drink are prepared—these are not just festive foods but coolants to beat the summer heat. There is also an effort to make optimal use of whatever you have. For instance, every part of the banana tree (ubiquitous in Tamil Nadu), like the stem, flower and raw banana, is turned into an exotic dish, with the leaf being used to serve meals, especially on special occasions, including festivals. Once eaten, the leaf is taken back into the earth—a perfect example of eco-friendly living.

Like scores of other families, our family has managed to hold on to our traditions. We still celebrate our festivals with verve—I relate them to a resurgence of religious activities, vegetarianism, music and food. Despite the marked change in Tamil Nadu today with the popularity of North Indian cuisine and the pizza culture that has swept through our country, it is heartening to know that when there is a special celebration or festival, we turn to traditional meals. Even if it is tedious to prepare certain dishes, there is always someone supplying a traditional takeaway. Despite the many limitations of modern life, I was also able to teach my daughters the stories, beliefs and rituals that go with our festivals. A priest comes home twice a year to chant from Vedic texts on Ganesh Jayanthi and Saraswathi Puja. And the oil bath ritual continues—my daughters follow it too. Juggling between their professions and cooking, they have done a great job taking the cuisine and traditions with them to foreign lands, celebrating festivals with their husbands and my little grandchildren.

Of course, we can’t deny that there are changes in festival celebrations today. Families or siblings cannot get together the way they used to as distance keeps them apart. People live in small apartments, not lavish homes; thus homes cannot be so elaborately decorated and kolam are now confined to interiors of the homes. Nevertheless, the spirit of the season remains as strong as ever and unites us all in a common bond of love and faith.

Chennai-based Viji Varadarajan, 56, has written several cookbooks on Tamil Brahmin cooking, including Festival Samayal: An Offering to the Gods
Feast of love

Amita Malik tells us what’s on the menu at a Bengali celebration

If you ask a Bengali what dishes he celebrates with, three words will come forth: sandesh, fish and payesh. Sandesh, that lovely not-too-sweet, subtle sort of fudge, both means and carries good news. It may be a birth, a wedding, success in an examination or a job—the news is accompanied with a dish of sandesh. It used to be sent on a silver thali but gift wrapping is more convenient in modern times. As sandesh means good news, a famous children’s magazine in Bengali, revived by Satyajit Ray, was named Sandesh.

However, no occasion is complete without fish. During a wedding, even when the bridegroom’s family is sending the tatwa around the haldi ceremony, it includes a huge rohu fish. Then to pamper the son-in-law, there is an annual tribute to him called jamai Sashti. That’s the day fish prices hit astronomical heights and the mother-in-law and other ladies of the wife’s household cook their best fish dishes. In Bengal, the only vegetarians are widows, and even that is dying out.

So no matter how high the prices, fish is still an essential part of the Bengali diet. Each family has its own special spices and secret recipes. They begin with little fish being fried so crisp that they can be eaten, bones and all, with the tangy flavour of pungent mustard oil. But the non-Bengali who has only heard of ‘mustard fish’ would be surprised to know that fish can be cooked in yoghurt or coconut milk.

One of my favourite dishes is chachra, roughly translated as bits and pieces. One normally looked forward to it at big family occasions because the vast quantity of fish and vegetables yielded all the bits and pieces required. You got the stems and leaves of cauliflower and spinach, odd bits of eggplant, parwal, potatoes, radish, pumpkin, all left over from the main dishes. Then you got the odd bits and pieces, called kaanta (bones), with flesh clinging to them, and everything was sautéed until dry and soft with mustard, ginger, chillies and paanch phoron, the combination of five spices you inhale the minute you enter a Bengali household for a meal. There is, of course, nothing like fresh fish. The last time I was in Guwahati, my birthplace, an old college mate and his wife treated me to no less than seven fish dishes, fresh from the Brahmaputra.

I also mentioned payesh, which is thick kheer with rice, nuts, raisins or sultana and rosewater; a variation is natun gurur payesh, made with fresh seasonal palm gur instead of sugar, the most prized payesh. A favourite for birthdays—as important as birthday cake—it can be served at a birthday tea, lunch or dinner party. But what is dying out is the typical wedding feast cooked by the thakur—a special tribe of cooks. We sat down to eat on the floor off a big banana leaf. First came the luchi (small puri made only of white flour) then later rice or pulao, dal, vegetable dishes including my favourite chachra, then fish and meat dishes, and finally the dahi and rosogulla or whatever. Not to forget the lovely tomato or green mango ambal or chutney. Now professional waiters do the serving, instead of the children of the family. I still remember carrying buckets of dal around and feeling important.

No matter how high the prices, fish will always remain an essential part of the Bengali diet

Today traditional menus are being replaced by tandoori chicken and ice-cream. The thakur are a dying race and cooks from hotels have taken over.

A great pity. I was therefore touched that when the daughter of Prannoy and Radhika Roy of NDTV got married in Delhi, we did sit at tables but the children of the family and friends carried around buckets and baskets of traditional Bengali food and served us with a smile.

Amita Malik, often referred to as ‘the first lady of Indian media’, is a columnist and film critic
GIRNAR ROYAL CUP TEA

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Brushing cancer away

Sprightly and fit, Shanti Ranjan Mukhopadhyay, 77, welcomes you with a smile to his studio in his house at Kudghat on the southern fringes of Kolkata. An artist who follows the Bengal School of Painting, with influences from both the Mughal and Rajput styles, Mukhopadhyay started dabbling with colours as a child and sculpting Indian idols from the age of 13. Even today, he paints for six hours everyday, his brush with non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma a non-issue.

“So you want an account of my disease to be preserved for posterity?” asks the soft-spoken artist almost playfully. But it’s quite obvious, that the topic—non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma is a malignant tumour (see box) that originates in the lymphoid tissue that makes up the lymph nodes, spleen and other organs of the immune system—makes him very uncomfortable.

Working and painting simultaneously, Mukhopadhyay retired as reader in the art and craft department of David Hare Training College in Kolkata in 1990 and was looking forward to a relaxed yet productive retirement. Suddenly, in 2003 he began to experience nausea and discomfort in his stomach. “Initially I thought I had acidity,” recalls Mukhopadhyay. Antacids provided temporary relief but the stomach ache and vomiting continued. On finding a blockage in his small intestine, his doctor asked him to go in for surgery. While being taken to the operation theatre, Mukhopadhyay remembers, “I almost felt like Jesus being crucified. Having enjoyed good health all my life, I could empathise with all those who were suffering or in pain.” Basanti, his 65 year-old wife and muse since 1963 chips in, “What really bothered him was that he would not be able to paint while undergoing surgery.”

Approximately 12 inches of his small intestine were removed and taken for a biopsy. The results confirmed non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma of the intestine. Later, Mukhopadhyay’s oncologist
insisted upon a scan and check-up twice a year, and a restricted diet that didn’t permit meat, saturated fats, dairy products, eggs and hard-to-digest vegetables like cauliflower and cabbage. For Mukhopadhyay, a foodie, this was quite a blow. Living in a bustling joint family, mealtimes are festive affairs with culinary temptation all around him. But with his family’s support, he managed to stick to his frugal regimen.

“I am fortunate that at my age, I have most of my loved ones around me,” smiles Mukhopadhyay, talking about youngest daughter-in-law Arpita and grandson Barnik, brothers Kanti Ranjan, Arun and Debajyoti and

Today, Mukhopadhyay is at peace with himself and the world around him. Always around for support and company is Basanti. “Once he goes up to his studio, he has no contact with the outside world,” says sister-in-law Dr Purabi Mukhopadhyay, a retired professor. “Now, I can look objectively at the world almost like I am watching a play,” he says, casting a glance upon his paintings.

Mukhopadhyay is currently writing a book on the utility of art in school education and also writes fiction and free verse. In fact, his articles have also been published by Bengali periodicals like Desh. In 2005, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Department of Information and Cultural Affairs, West Bengal, for his long-term contribution to painting. “I don’t know why they thought of me,” he mutters, slightly embarrassed. As far as his illness is concerned, he wants that chapter of his life firmly closed, saying, “I feel extremely fit and nothing is wrong with me.”

“Now I can look at the world objectively like I am watching a play”
Regain control

Incontinence is a manageable condition. Report it to a doctor and seek help immediately, says Shreya Sethuraman.

Uterus/womb
Front passage
Pelvic floor muscle
Back passage
Bladder
Vagina
Bowel

TYPES OF URINARY INCONTINENCE

Stress incontinence: This occurs owing to weak pelvic floor muscles putting pressure on the abdomen when a person coughs, walks or indulges in any hectic activity. It’s common in women and occurs after childbirth and/or during menopausal years, as both phases cause weakening of pelvic muscles and fascia.

Urge incontinence: This is involuntary loss of urine for no apparent reason, along with the urge to urinate. The most common cause is involuntary contractions of the detrusor muscle (contracting muscle in the bladder that helps to expel urine). Normally, the bladder first contracts and then opens to release urine. Sometimes, because of a neural problem or infection, the bladder becomes overactive and contracts and retracts without any stress. This condition is treatable with drugs.

Overflow incontinence: Here, the passage in the urethra narrows owing to a lack of hormones (especially in women during menopause). Thus, the bladder doesn’t empty itself completely. At the same time, the bladder keeps getting filled. When it can’t retain any more or any longer, it begins to leak.

Functional incontinence:
Functional incontinence occurs when a person does not recognise
the need to urinate, recognise where the toilet is, or get to the toilet in time owing to confusion, dementia, poor eyesight, mobility or dexterity, or unwillingness to use the toilet because of depression, anxiety or anger. In this case, urine loss may be heavy.

CAUSES OF INCONTINENCE
Apart from gender (women suffering from incontinence outnumber men) and age (it's disorders of the nervous system, and surgery involving the pelvic floor could be other reasons.

Most of these factors either cause local nerve damage or weakening of pelvic floor muscles or fascia resulting in loss of support to the bladder. Pons, a neural point in the central nervous system, also controls the bladder. So, patients of Alzheimer and Parkinson's with lesions in the brain tend to suffer from incontinence.

Incontinence is eight times more common in women till the age of 70

more common in elderly than young people who are primarily women after childbirth), obesity is one of the main causes. Urinary tract infection, major prostate surgery, illnesses like diabetes and multiple sclerosis, some coupled with a workout routine can also prove helpful.

In ‘stress incontinence’, common in women, a vaginal tape can be used. After the tape is internally applied, related nerves are alerted and awareness of the need to urinate increases. Or, the bladder may be surgically repositioned, which involves pulling it up and securing it with a string attached to muscle, ligament or bone. For severe cases, the bladder may be secured with a wide sling. This not only holds up the bladder but also compresses the bottom of the bladder and the top of the urethra, further preventing leakage. One option is a collagen jab around the urethra to add bulk to the area, which compresses the urethra. This increases resistance to urine flow. As the body slowly absorbs collagen, this may have to be repeated every three months.

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT
Treatment depends on the type of incontinence you suffer from. To begin with, alcohol, caffeine and foods that irritate the bladder should be avoided. A healthy diet

YOGA CAN HELP!

These asana fight incontinence by toning pelvic muscles.

Downward facing dog (adhomukha svanasana)
Also called mountain pose (parvatasana) or the inverted-V pose. Kneel and lean forward, placing palms flat on ground. Exhale and hoist hips off floor, pushing down shoulders as you continue breathing. At the same time, push down your heels; focus your attention on your stomach while applying pressure from your shoulder blades; and move your head as close to the ground as possible. Hold the pose as long as you can.

Do several times and, later, build up the stamina to hold the pose for longer, up to 30 seconds for real impact.

Wide-angled pose (upavista konasana)
Sit on the floor. Use a cushion if you suffer from back or respiratory problems. Spread legs apart as much as you can comfortably. Place palms flat on ground on either side of each thigh. Close your eyes. Relax and focus on your breathing. Breathe evenly, holding pose for a few seconds. Increase time in pose for a half a minute or so with sustained practice.
Urge incontinence is treated with medication. Anticholinergics are used to relax the bladder by blocking certain nerve impulses. Also, small doses of electrical stimulation to the vagina and rectum can stabilise overactive muscles and stimulate contraction of the urethral muscles. This method can reduce both stress and urge incontinence. Limiting fluid intake also helps. For ‘overflow incontinence’, a catheter may be used to empty the bladder. For women, the urethra may be widened with minor surgery.

Timed voiding and bladder training regimens may be practiced. You start by urinating at set intervals, such as every 30 minutes to two hours, irrespective of the need. Then, the time is lengthened gradually, until the person is urinating every three to four hours. Bladder training may take three to 12 weeks.

A healthy diet coupled with a healthy workout can help combat the problem

People suffering from incontinence can also use absorbent undergarments or disposable diapers available at chemist shops. Though absorbent undergarments help make you less self-conscious, diapers are more absorbent and eliminate the possibility of leakage. However, both can lead to skin irritation and sores if proper hygiene is not maintained.

Incontinence in patients of Alzheimer and Parkinson’s is treated through Sacral Neuro Modulation, where nerve supply of the bladder is stimulated with an electrode, which directs the brain to help you identify the need to urinate. These treatments should be discussed with a doctor.

**KEGEL EXERCISES**

One popular method to treat incontinence is Kegel, a pelvic floor exercise developed by American gynaecologist Arnold Kegel over 50 years ago to aid women to rebuild vaginal muscles after childbirth. These muscles are attached to the pelvic bone and act like a hammock, holding in the pelvic organs. You first identify the muscles that need to be contracted. For that, you must try and stop the flow of urine while in the washroom. Once control over the right muscles is achieved, these exercises can be done otherwise too. While doing them, you should be able to feel your pelvic floor move upward. Then, muscles should be relaxed and you should feel the pelvic floor move down.

Kegel is to be practiced only in the early stages of incontinence when pelvic muscles are not very weak. Women with marked incontinence should be treated through medication. Also, it should not be performed with a full bladder as it could weaken muscles or lead to incomplete emptying of the bladder, increasing risk of urinary tract infection.

Ultimately, suffering in silence is not the solution. Even families of persons who suffer from incontinence should assist them in seeking correct medical help. It’s time to regain control.

**WHAT’S NEW?**

Botox, a drug developed by US pharmaceutical company Allergan to (temporarily) zap wrinkles and fine lines, is proving to be useful in fighting incontinence too. Dr Shailesh Raina, urological surgeon, andrologist and renal transplant surgeon at Jaslok Hospital, Breach Candy Hospital, Lilavati Hospital and Saifee Hospital, all in Mumbai, first tried it as an alternative in India about three years ago. A 2-ml shot of Botox is injected into the urinary bladder by endoscopy. The procedure takes only about 15 minutes and the patient can walk back home the same day. Depending on the ‘urodynamics’ of the patient, including bladder pressure capacity, pressure and compression, the patient may have to take two to three shots after a few months. However, Botox is only for ‘urge incontinence’ as it prevents the bladder from contracting. Also, it must be administered by an experienced surgeon who is familiar with the drug and its side-effects—it can even prove fatal if administered incorrectly.
Instant dryness, now within your reach.

Great news for people suffering from incontinence problems, because the best solution is now available at a special offer price. TENA’s Twin Core absorption technology, along with its Instant Dry Layer, provides TWICE the speed and capacity of urine absorption as compared to ordinary products, thus ensuring maximum leakage security and skin dryness. Besides, its Wetness Indicator notifies when a pad needs changing, so one is safe from skin infections.

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Urinary Incontinence is loss of bladder control.
Weighty matters

Dr Shrihari Dhorepatil answers queries on obesity

Q I am a 62-year-old social worker from New Delhi leading a very active life. Recently, however, I was diagnosed with arthritis. My doctor has told me to control my weight through diet and exercise to avoid further deterioration of joints. I was confused as I consider myself slightly overweight but certainly not fat. What is the statistical yardstick for obesity?

A Obesity is measured by different methods. The most commonly used method is the Body Mass Index (BMI = weight kg/height sqm). According to BMI, individuals can be categorised as follows:

- 18.5 or less: underweight
- 18.5-24.9: normal
- 25.0-29.9: overweight
- 30.0-34.9: obese
- 40 or greater: extremely obese

Being overweight does not necessarily mean being fat. Higher weight could be owing to bone or muscle mass. In such cases, the weight is healthy. But if the weight is because of bulk of fat, it is unhealthy and can be termed as fat or obesity.

Q I am a 70-year-old homemaker. My husband and I are both overweight. Our doctor keeps warning us about our rising blood pressure and cholesterol levels. The warning works as a temporary deterrent. For a while we vow to eat healthy, but lapse to overeating. We keep losing weight and routinely regain it. Is our soft and sedentary lifestyle responsible for our weight problem?

A Yes, lifestyle definitely contributes to weight gain. Changed eating habits and work patterns along with unhealthy food lead to weight gain. The calories consumed are not getting burnt owing to lack of physical activity. This excess energy is eventually converted into fat and stored in our bodies, leading to obesity. To reach an ideal weight, you have to change or modify your lifestyle. This calls for dietary changes as well as physical activity. Regulate meal timings, do not feast or fast, eat a balanced diet with lots of vegetables, salads, fruits and moderate amount of cereals and pulses. Do not binge on junk food, aerated drinks, sweets and chocolates. Make exercise a part of your routine. Build more muscles and decrease your percentage of fat. This will increase your metabolic rate and keep you fit.

Q Every time I maintain a fast, I notice that I feel less hungry by the end of the day. I have been told fasting could be detrimental for health. Is it true?

A That depends on which meal you skip.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day and should not be skipped. In the eight to nine hours between dinner and breakfast, acid built up in the stomach has to be utilised by eating a healthy breakfast. Lunch should be a little lighter than breakfast and should not be skipped to avoid overeating for dinner, which should be the lightest meal. Very obese people with low levels of physical activity can skip dinner or have it early. However, skipping meals can also reduce your basal metabolic rate (BMR) and slow down weight loss so it should be avoided. In other words, fasting is not advisable.

Q What’s your opinion on the new diet pill Alli? I am an overweight 60-year-old homemaker. Should I consider the option of a diet pill to lose weight?

A Diet pills can’t perform magic. To lose weight, these pills should be supplemented with a sensible diet and exercise routine. Also, medications for fighting obesity are useful only for people with a BMI of over 30. These medications help reduce appetite, and by way of that they help a person reduce up to 3-4 kg per month.

Dr Shrihari Dhorepatil is a consulting obesity surgeon at P D Hinduja Hospital and Research Centre in Mumbai and Jehangir Apollo Hospital and Medical Centre in Pune. He also runs an obesity surgery centre in Pune.
Get a leg up

Strengthen your legs for overall stamina, says Shameem Akhtar

A science report published in newspapers in India and overseas recently created a news splash for suggesting that jogging not only rewires the brain but spawns new brain cells too. Earlier, it was believed that the brain did not have the capacity to create fresh cells, only fresh connections between existing cells. The new findings, however, show that the brain’s capacity for regeneration is far greater than earlier suspected. This finding also corresponds to yoga’s belief that dedicated physical activity that focuses on large muscle groups, like the legs, helps gain greater control over the mind. Not surprisingly, most yogic poses for higher spiritual evolution and emotional control also focus on strengthening the legs.

Our legs also need to be powerful enough to bear our weight and keep the spine strong to ensure good posture. However, our large bones are more than load-bearers—they also churn out blood cells and store important nutrients. Their density determines our continuing health. When they stop supporting us, they lead to problems like falls, fractures, and the propensity to fall ill (owing to impaired blood cell production and lack of nutrients).

When our legs are not strong, they also lead to injury in our delicate joints, including knees and ankles. Pain here is usually controlled only by strengthening our legs. Similarly, backache is triggered by bad posture, which in turn is related to walking in a wrong way. This happens when the feet do not provide the right grip each time they hit the ground and when leg muscles are not supple enough to take the pressure of each footfall. Stiff legs and flaccid muscles exacerbate the problem.

All yogic poses are designed to take the pressure off the knees and ankles, while both large and subtle leg muscles are challenged. In inverted poses, legs enjoy lymphatic drainage and improved circulation, thus clearing water retention and providing natural relief in extreme cases of varicose veins. In yogic workouts, the hips, back of thighs, inner thighs, calf muscles and soles are all worked out seamlessly. A yoga workout for legs makes them supple while other exercises make them stiff as only the core muscles are worked out. Leg workouts are also good for the heart, as they increase blood circulation and thus boost overall health and stamina. According to scientific journal Psychology Today, such exercises elevate mood, provide a sense of personal mastery and reduce negative thinking.

Yogic moves

Angle pose (konasana)

Stand up straight with feet a metre apart. Spread arms out, holding at shoulder level. Inhale. Flare out right foot. Place left hand on waist. Exhale, slide your right hand over right leg till hand touches right ankle. Look ahead. Hold pose, breathing normally. Inhale, returning to starting position. Repeat thrice. Relax and repeat entire sequence for left side. Avoid this pose if you have lower back pain.

Benefits: It trims abdominal fat and shapes the inner arms and entire legs. It also strengthens and tones legs—owing to this, it is therapeutic for knee pain. It tones the spine, preventing spinal problems, and uplifts your mood. And its effect on the gut boosts digestion, spikes metabolism and relieves digestive problems.

Shameem Akhtar 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)
BAREFOOT MEDICINE
Tamil Nadu-based medical researcher Dr Harshad Sanghvi, in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland (USA) and International Agency for Research on Cancer in Lyon, France, has developed a diagnostic technique to detect and prevent cervical cancer. A nurse or a trained healthcare worker can do the test simply by washing a woman’s cervix with vinegar and gauze, using a speculum to hold it open. After a minute, any precancerous lesions turn ultra-white and can be seen with the naked eye under a halogen lamp. Officials used the technique on 49,311 women in Dindigul district in Tamil Nadu. The research was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and is published in the August issue of the medical journal The Lancet. Cervical cancer is a largely preventable disease that causes about 250,000 deaths every year in India and is the second most common form of cancer in women.

AIIMS GOES PAPERLESS
From September, the B R Ambedkar Institute Rotary Cancer Hospital on the All India Institute of Medical Sciences’ (AIIMS) campus in New Delhi will have 30 computers to manage records of all patients. Gradually, data from all existing files will be fed into the system, and labs and in-patient information will also be linked. “Soon records of all patients will be accessible through advanced digital and wireless technology,” Dr Kumar Harsha, president, Resident Doctors Association, AIIMS, tells Harmony. “Electronic health and patient tracking, wireless barcode medication charting and use of digital images will make written records relics.”

SLEEP ON IT
Kristine Yaffe, chief of geriatric psychiatry at the San Francisco VA Medical Centre, has found a connection between sleeping patterns and cognitive alertness in women. According to Yaffe’s research published in the 17 July issue of journal Neurology, women who experience cognitive decline after the age of 65 are more likely to have fitful and interrupted sleep. “It’s been known for some time that people with cognitive problems often have sleep problems, but those studies were done on people suffering from severe dementia,” says Yaffe to Science Daily magazine.

“Ours was the first study to look at the relationship between sleep and cognitive alertness in healthy women.” The reason could be that when dementia sets in, it also affects the area of the brain that governs sleep. Another possibility could be that someone who is becoming cognitively impaired sleeps poorly because they’re aware of their condition and are worried about it.” Yaffe studied 2,474 healthy women for nearly 20 years with the help of standard cognitive tests and a small gadget worn on the wrist called an actigraph, which calculates duration of sleep.
HEALTH BYTES

DOCTOR ROBOT
At St Mary’s Hospital in London, robots developed by Sensei Robotics, Japan, have carried out about 20 complex heart operations to treat irregular heartbeat by inserting thin wires through blood vessels in the heart. Surgeons guide these robots with a computer-aided joystick to accurately control the wires. While treating atrial fibrillation, a major cause of heart failure, thin wires and tubes are guided into the heart, through the groin, where they deliver an electric current. The current destroys specific tissues that cause the abnormal heartbeat. “Robots reduce the risk for patients and increase the number of procedures we can carry out in a day,” says Dr Wyn Davies, consultant cardiologist at St Mary’s.

COLD COMFORT
Popping Vitamin C pills doesn’t protect you from a cold unless you exercise hard or live in an extremely cold place, says a study by Professor Harri Hemilä of the Department of Public Health at the University of Helsinki in Finland. This piece of research comes 30 years after Nobel Prize-winning chemist Linus Pauling’s influential book Vitamin C and the Common Cold recommended that people take 1 gm of Vitamin C a day to prevent catching a cold. The new study involving 11,000 participants contradicts Pauling and says that those who took Vitamin C every day were only 4 per cent less likely to catch cold, a barely perceptible difference. “This benefit is so slight that it does not justify the expense and the bother of taking it every day,” Hemilä says in an article on medical website www.medscape.com

STEAM CLEAN
Now our hospitals can be cleaned without chemicals. Oxford Catalysts, a UK-based antibacterial additives specialist, has created a gadget that generates steam to fight hospital infections. The prototype, which is not available on the market yet, looks like a hand-held room freshener and lets out steam comprising alcohol and hydrogen peroxide at a temperature of 800°C. After its first trial at University College Hospital, London, Oxford Catalysts’ spokesperson David Wardle claimed that dry steam applied at temperatures ranging between 150°C and 180°C destroys bacteria, including antibiotic-resistant super bugs like MRSA in less than two seconds. MRSA is Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus, a group of organisms resistant to commonly used antibiotics. At present, each portable plastic bottle of this product can produce 70 litres of steam every minute at 650°C. More tests are needed, though, before it is deemed safe for large-scale use.
**TEA-TOTAIALER**

Demand for organic tea is brewing worldwide and this time it is the humble tulsi that is flavouring your cup. Organic India, a global producer of organic tea and nutritional supplements, is capitalising on the growing demand by introducing certified products under the ‘Tulsi’ brand. The Rs 30-crore company that has 12,000 farmers working on 50,000 acres of land claims to be the largest producer of tulsi in the world. “Looking at the increasing demand for all organic products worldwide, we are tapping the rejuvenating quality of tulsi and launching it as a health beverage,” Organic India’s marketing head Saurabh Tiwari tells Harmony. Apart from tulsi tea (a 100 gm pack of tea costs Rs 150), the company has launched 15 herbal health supplements.

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**MIND GAME**

Memories we want to forget seem to be the hardest ones to lose. Now a team of psychologists from the University of North Carolina (UNC) explains why. According to Keith Payne, assistant professor of psychology at UNC, intensely emotional memories are resistant to intentional forgetting. When people are trying to forget information, they need to mentally segregate it and block off the information they don’t want to retrieve. Emotion undermines both these steps. Dr H N Malik, professor of physiology at AIIMS, adds that emotions have a powerful impact on memory. “The most vivid memories tend to be of emotional events that are recalled more often,” he says. The study will appear in the September issue of *Experimental Social Psychology.*
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Grab some silver shopping with Harmony

With the festive season drawing near—Ganesh Chaturthi, Eid ul-Fitr, Navratri, and Diwali—it’s time to loosen the purse strings. This year, treat yourself and your friends to a shopping spree from the comfort of your home. Today, the Internet is home to an incredible number of websites dedicated to e-tailing, or online shopping. And a number of these websites are dedicated to products and services for silver, many of which are still not available in India. Although some of these sites have fantastic products but don’t ship internationally (www.seniorstore.com, www.seniorshops.com), many others deliver across the world after online credit card payment. Here are our picks of sites that ship to India. Enjoy your window(s) shopping.

Seniorsuperstores.com: They’re not kidding when they call this a superstore. This US-based site features 30 ‘departments’—from assistive devices, health books and tapes, foot care and incontinence products to skincare, sleepwear and sporting goods—and tons of products in each one. Large pictures and text with detailed descriptions make it easier for you to examine each product and the (reasonable) prices are marked clearly in US $. (To convert US $ into INR, use currency converter www.xe.com/ucc/) We loved the kitchen finger protector for $ 5.95 (about Rs 240) that guards your fingers while chopping veggies! Once you pick a product, add it to your virtual ‘shopping cart’. You can ‘view’ your shopping cart at any time and add or subtract products. After you are done, choose the ‘Checkout’ option and you will be asked to enter your shipping address. International shipping rates (which will be added to your bill) are clearly mentioned. When the site asks for your credit card number, don’t worry; all sites we recommend have a secure credit payment gateway with ‘SSL encryption technology’ and ‘AuthorizeNet’, to ensure safe and sophisticated processing. Enter your details and wait a couple of minutes for the site to get your purchase approved by your credit card company. International shipments may take 30 days to reach you. A similar process applies to all the sites we review this month.

Elderstore.net: Another comprehensive online store with sections ranging from ‘Around the House’ and ‘Recreation & Exercise’ to ‘Dressing & Grooming’ and ‘Kitchen & Dining’. Like Seniorsuperstores, all products are displayed large, with elaborate explanations. The prices too are equally reasonable and the products innovative—we think the Knobble, a special doorknob cover that makes a slippery handle easier to hold and turn, is an excellent idea (about Rs 300 for two). The difference: this site also takes wholesale orders.

Thevitalityshopuk.com: Longevity is the name of the game at this online store that stocks health, beauty and rejuvenation products for men and women. These range from hair and skincare products, antioxidants and books and magazines to sports and fitness and weight management products. There’s even a special section for your pets. The site admits that its products “are not the cheapest on the market”, but the selection is vast and exclusive. For instance, where else would you go for ‘life-extension toothpaste’ (about Rs 120), ‘herbal libido enhancer’ (about Rs 2,300) or a ‘face bra’ (about Rs 4,000)? Weird and wonderful.

—Arati Rajan Menon
Home, safe home

You can now choose from a wide range of safety devices and systems to protect yourself and your home. Shreya Sethuraman tells you what’s available.

The bad news first: these are unsafe times, with a worrying rise in the number of crimes against the elderly. The good news, though, is that there is a wide range of safety devices and systems available in the market making security achievable—and accessible.

Today, manufacturers of security systems—like Zicom Electronic Security Systems Ltd, Eureka Forbes, Godrej Secure Home Solutions, Security Vision and Secom Security Solutions—offer a variety of products ranging between Rs 1,250 and about Rs 20,000 (see box). These can be bought as an entire package or customised to suit individual requirements. Let’s take a look at what’s available.

BURGLAR ALERT
Burglar alarm systems, or intrusion alarm systems, detect the opening of a door or window, or any motion inside your home. These systems comprise detectors connected to a central control panel that sounds an alarm when the detectors are triggered. The output device, a horn, creates a noise to deter intruders. Most alarms have the same basic structure and include one or all of the following:

- **Passive infrared sensor** or PIR is a motion-sensing device that registers the different temperature zones with respect to the body heat of an intruder, and observes if the perceived temperature mass moves across the area covered by the PIR. Any movement within the area results in a confirmed intrusion and a signal is delivered to the control panel.

- **Photoelectric beam detectors** detect intrusion along compound or perimeter walls. A transmitter and receiver unit are mounted on
the two extreme ends of the same wall (in a straight line with no angular deviations in between). An invisible photoelectric beam passes between the two. Anyone trying to jump the wall will cut the beam and an intrusion signal will be generated.

- **Magnetic contacts** are placed on doors. When activated, they produce a magnetic field between them. This field is broken when a door is opened as one of the contacts will be fixed on the doorframe and another on the door itself.

Godrej offers a wireless burglar alarm with a range of detectors including a magnetic door sensor,

**Today’s security systems can detect intrusions, and warn against gas leaks and fire**

motion sensor, vibration sensor, glass break sensor and panic switch. “The outstanding feature of this alarm system is the automatic telephone dialling (ATD) facility, which calls up pre-fed numbers in case of an alarm,” says Akshay Luthra, assistant manager - marketing, Godrej & Boyce. “That’s why many seniors opt for this model.” Another feature the wireless model offers is remote access capability, which allows you to dial the phone number of the host from a remote telephone and disarm, arm, or start the siren. Godrej also offers Eagle Burglar and Fire Alarm Systems, a combination of a burglar and fire alarm, ranging from Rs 5,973 to Rs 11,349.

Securi-T-Link by Eureka Forbes consists of sensors installed on doors and windows. On detecting an intrusion or gas leak, a signal is sent to their Central Monitoring System (CMS), which informs the designated number (the host) or emergency services. “It detects any motion in any room,” says Ved Narayan, deputy general manager, Eureka Forbes.

Some players like Zicom offer free installation and insurance of up to Rs 100,000 as well as 24x7 remote monitoring along with their alarm systems. This comes at a nominal rate, varying between Rs 149 to Rs 225 plus 12.5 per cent tax. “These systems are extremely user-friendly,” says Shweta Basu, manager - marketing, Zicom. “In case any manufacturing defect arises, we replace the system free.”

**GAS AND FIRE DETECTION**

To avoid untoward incidents owing to gas leaks, Zicom has developed an electronic gas leak sensor, which detects leakage from LPG and CNG and activates the in-built horn, intimating residents. The device is fireproof and temperature resistant. The gas leak sensors are wireless devices that have a lifespan of a little over a year. You can use ordinary alkaline batteries to operate them. Similarly, Securi-T-Link by Eureka Forbes also detects gas leaks.

Meanwhile, all fire alarm systems make use of various kinds of smoke or heat sensors, which are linked in a loop to a fire alarm control panel, usually installed at the main service station of the provider. These can be divided into conventional fire alarm systems and addressable fire alarm systems. “Addressable systems are more intelligent as they indicate the exact location or place of origin of the fire, whereas conventional detectors will only indicate that a fire has occurred, without giving you the exact place or room which is on fire,” explains Sunil Rao, senior general manager, Security Systems

Making waves in the US is ‘**QuietCare**’, a carrot-sized motion-detector placed inside a plastic tube, which monitors the movements of seniors. Discreet wireless activity sensors are placed throughout the home to track individual patterns. Each sensor transmits information about activities and potential emergencies to a communicator about the size of a book. This updates information to the QuietCare server at regular intervals as configured. Any changes in routine are detected and sent to the communicator, which informs relatives and a hospital.
Zicom burglar alarm system

Project Division, Eureka Forbes. These systems can detect a smouldering fire (without flames). Fire alarm systems can be supported by an optional battery backup in case of power failure.

**RESTRICTED ENTRY**

Video door camera systems, ranging from about Rs 8,000 to Rs 18,000 in price, allow the host to see the visitor before allowing him to enter. They offer two-way communication, clear pictures and visibility of up to 25 ft. “The ideal angle is 60°,” says Ashish Gujrati, product manager, Zicom. “A person can be viewed clearly if he stands at a distance of about 1-2 ft. As he comes closer, the vision blurs. Then, the host can ask the person to stand at the required angle and communicate with the person.”

An older option is the audio door phone, which costs about Rs 4,000, but this is no longer popular. “When a person has the option of seeing a person before allowing him to enter, he wouldn’t really opt for an audio phone,” says Narayan. Video door phones take about two hours to install—installation charges are about Rs 1,500. Their popularity is steadily on the rise. For instance, Zicom sells anywhere between 2,000 and 3,000 devices a month.

You also have the option of installing a fingerprint lock system—extremely handy when it’s dark outside. Just place your finger on the lock, which reads individual fingerprints. After recognition, it allows entry.

**SAFE SOLUTIONS**

Looking to protect valuable documents, cash and jewellery? Now, even the traditional metal safe has gone electronic. Godrej has a range of electronic safes—the most durable is the fire-resistant model called Safire. It has been tested to endure fire for up to one hour and has been constructed to prevent hot gases and smoke from seeping in and destroying the contents.

The latest addition to the Godrej stable is the E-swipe, an electronic safe with swipe technology. It has an ‘audit trail’ facility that enables the safe to retain up to 100 transactions performed on it (such as the time and date of opening the safe). The E-swipe operates through a four-digit password and has an auto-freeze facility (the safe ‘freezes’ after the password has been typed wrongly thrice) for password protection. These safes can be fitted inside a standard cupboard. Another option is the Godrej Treasure Chest, which comes with an electronic digital lock with a feather touch keypad, dual password levels and an auto-freeze function.

After looking at the options available, choose the device that works best for your budget to make your home a place where you can rest assured.

**THE PRICE OF SECURITY**

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Greater gain

Looking for a fixed income avenue that yields a higher return than a fixed deposit? Turn to FMPs, recommends Sandeep Shanbhag

FMP stands for fixed maturity plan. It is essentially a close-ended income scheme of a mutual fund that runs for a fixed period of time, which means it comes with a fixed maturity date. This period could range from 15 days to as long as three to five years. By the end of the maturity period, your money is paid back to you with interest. As it guarantees protection of your money, an FMP is like a fixed deposit (FD)—but it is better by way of possible higher returns and tax advantage. While the FD guarantees returns, the FMP only indicates returns, as the regulator does not allow fund companies to guarantee returns. However, FMPs do earn better returns than FDs of similar tenure.

First, let us see how FMPs offer capital protection, even though they are part of a mutual fund. FMPs do not invest in equity; the portfolio is generally invested in debt and money market instruments maturing in line with the tenure of the scheme. The objective is to lock in the investment at a specified rate of return, thereby immunising the scheme against market fluctuations.

LIQUIDITY
In most open-ended mutual fund schemes, you can redeem your units anytime. However, the structure of the FMP does not lend itself to this kind of liquidity. You should invest money you are more or less sure you won’t need during the tenure of the plan. If you withdraw before the scheme closes, a steep exit load (the fee when you sell the units ahead of the maturity period) is generally imposed—it’s usually 1 per cent to 3 per cent depending on the time of redemption. Of course, if you hold on to the fund till maturity, you will not have to pay an exit load.

The reason for this steep load is to deter investors from treating the FMP like a normal income
scheme. Though income schemes invest in similar instruments as an FMP, being open-ended and not having a specific tenure-based investment strategy, these are subject to interest rate risk leading to fluctuations in the NAV (net asset value).

**FD OR FMP?**

Recently, the interest rates on bank deposits shot up, leading many investors to wonder whether a simple bank FD would be better than having to go through the process of investing in a mutual fund. But then interest rates fell again and, today, FDs and FMPs offer a similar rate of return. However, the tax impact tilts the scales in favour of the FMP.

The dividend from any scheme of any mutual fund is tax-free in the hands of the investor. FMP, though, is a debt-based scheme, so the mutual fund has to pay the dividend distribution tax at the rate of 14.16 per cent. While bank interest does not incur this dividend distribution tax, the interest is fully taxable in the investor’s hands. However, if you invest in the growth option of the FMP for less than a year, even its gains will be added to your income and taxed at your slab rate.

Thus, dividend received by an individual from an FMP is effectively taxed at only 14.165 per cent as against a tax of 20.6 per cent, or 30.9 per cent or 33.99 per cent on bank interest, depending upon your tax bracket. Tax directly eats into returns, which is why FMPs have the edge over FDs.

To illustrate this point, analyse the above table. It is assumed that both the FD and FMP yield the same rate of interest i.e. 10.25 per cent per annum. An investment of Rs 100,000 is made in an FMP of 91 days. (Before the scheme opens, the tenure is announced by the company. Pick a tenure that suits you the most.) The corresponding figures for the FD appear alongside.

**ARE FMPs FOR YOU?**

Right now, markets are choppy. Depending upon whom you speak to, either a severe correction is round the corner or the market will go up by a couple of thousand points more. Though no one has seen what tomorrow will bring, common sense indicates that a post-tax yield of 9 per cent is too good to ignore.

If you are looking for a fixed income avenue that yields a reasonable return with minimum risk, adequate liquidity and tax efficiency, FMPs will provide you with an effective shelter.

These schemes are not advertised extensively as the commission to the agent is low, so ask your fund planner for cues. And read the investment objectives of the scheme carefully before you invest.

*The writer is a chartered accountant and can be contacted at sandeep.shanbhag@gmail.com*
IN THE NEWS

BIOMETRIC PAN CARDS
The Indian Government is planning to issue biometric cards with enhanced security features like fingerprint or retinal scans to all new income tax payers. These will replace existing PAN cards.

Biometrics is the technique of recognising an individual based on physical characteristics by comparing ‘live’ information or images with records or patterns already stored and encrypted in a computer. The most common biometrics include fingerprints, retinal/iris scans, voice technology, facial or palm shape/size, signature, etc. What this means is that specific information about your eyes or your fingerprints can be stored on to the card. This information is unique to you and thus no one can misuse or duplicate it.

Biometric identification will provide accurate access to information and is a way of ensuring security against identity theft. It also offers the facility of not lugging around many documents, remembering umpteen passwords or entering personal identification numbers to access any sensitive personal information.

Though unconfirmed reports peg the date for launching the new cards as October 2007, officials maintain that cost is a major constraint hampering the launch. At present, getting a PAN card costs Rs 67. Preliminary estimates suggest that cards could cost between Rs 200 and Rs 300. Even if the number of applications for new cards stays at the present level, the cost can only go down if the government invests in the infrastructure needed for a nationwide programme. The move to introduce new PAN cards has been prompted not just by recent incidents of issue of fake cards but also the threat of terrorism. Though the department never intended it that way, PAN cards have now turned into a sort of an identity card used for transactions ranging from getting a mobile connection to opening a bank account. And with the criteria for proof of residence being liberal, the government fears PAN cards could be a tool for terrorists to open accounts to finance their activities besides getting mobile connections. It is not clear what will happen to the existing 40.6 million PAN cardholders. The Finance Ministry, however, assures us a policy will come soon.

ONE CARD FOR ALL
The Railways is considering a computerised database of its 2.5 million employees during the 11th five-year plan. Called ‘One Card System’, it will enable 140,000 employees and 110,000 pensioners to access their employment details, including salaries. Under the scheme, the Ministry would provide each employee and pensioner with a Unique Identity Number (UIN) to access individual information. WIPRO chief Azim Premji is known to have expressed his willingness to work on the database. Such a database is already in operation in European countries.

---

I am a 65 year-old retired army officer living at Chhatarpur in New Delhi. I have a large bungalow with six bedrooms, each with attached toilets, just 15 minutes drive away from Delhi airport. Senior citizens looking for accommodation while on holiday can contact me.

Contact R S Gaba at Office: 011-26210723, Mobile: 9810039549
Email: col.gaba@atfl.in

I am a 60 year-old man residing near the border in Kutch. My hobbies are social work, politics and travelling on pilgrimages. I would like to correspond with other silvers who share similar interests.

Contact Govind V Khokhani at Pragna Jyoti, New Vas, P.O. Madhapar, Tal: Bhuj Dist Kutch (Gujarat).
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Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

Q I have recently retired as the head of the psychology department of a reputed college in Kolkata. I love writing and interacting with children. As I have enough time to spare, I wish to use it productively. Please advise me.

You have several options; one is to join an NGO that works for street children. Your professional background will definitely be an asset. Alternatively, you can set up your own organisation to help poor and mentally and physically challenged children. As writing is one of your interests, signing up as a columnist for children’s magazines and writing stories for them would also be interesting. Another option, if earning money is not your primary concern, is to work as a psychologist with a state-run hospital.

—Sreemoyi Tarafdar
Tarafdar was a lecturer at Gokhale College, Kolkata

Q I am a homemaker. Recently, I took up a course in photography as I have always been fascinated by nature. I have visited many places and have created my own private travelogue. However, arthritis has restricted my movements. I want to know what I can do with my skills.

You can start by taking classes for children in your neighbourhood. People have begun to take a vocational as well as professional interest in photography. If you are interested in learning new skills in your field, there are many online courses for image editing. Later, you could join an art studio related to image editing. If there is a photography club in your area, you can offer your services as a teacher. Read up more on photography, get equipped with the latest news and technology and impart the information to your students.

—Siddharth Gaba
Gaba, a professional photographer from New Delhi, is now based in Singapore and is a senior member of the Singapore Photography Club

Q I retired from a government job three years ago and have dealt extensively with land and property-related matters. Now I have shifted base to my hometown Pune and I am very keen on starting my own consultancy firm. What are my prospects?

You have not specified the exact nature of your previous job. Anyway, you should do some research on the realty sector in Pune. Make notes of all that you learn. Also decide on the kind of real estate you would want to deal in—agricultural, commercial or residential. Starting your own consultancy firm will not be a problem at all as there are no capital investment and risks involved. However, you might have to hire an assistant for legwork and the hectic travelling that your job will involve.

—Rahul Das
Das is assistant manager (legal), McNally Bharat Engineering Co Ltd

Q I retired from the Army last year and am settled in Bengaluru. As a student, I had learnt sign language and Braille. I wish to help visually impaired children. How do I go about it?

Knowing Braille is certainly an advantage. As you live in Bengaluru, the best option would be to visit the National Association for the Blind (NAB). As you have retired from the Army, I am sure you must have had an adventurous working life. You could write about it in Braille for children to read and enjoy. There are various projects that NAB undertakes and you could participate in them. Visit our website www.nakkarnataka.com to get an idea of the work we do.

—Jayanthi
Jayanthi is administrative officer, NAB, Bengaluru
Oven-fresh happiness
Rita Saldanha moved from books to baking and discovered a world of warmth

Gourmet cook, baker, singer, librarian, social worker. At 74, Rita Saldanha can proudly look upon a life that reads like a cover story on reinvention. This gold medallist from Madras Christian College has been anointed the ‘Diva of Madras’ for her soprano and also been a strict librarian for over 30 years. Among all her talents, there is one that has endured life’s many ups and downs: baking.

Saldanha turned to baking after retiring from Chennai’s British Council Library in 1992. The decision was inspired by her urge to contribute to charities by doing something that she loved. What also nudged her ahead was her loneliness—she had lost her husband in 1982 and, by the mid-1990s, her three children had left home.

Saldanha felt no amateur nervousness when she started baking. “As a child, I learnt to bake cakes with the baking tray heated over a pan of sand kept on charcoal,” she recalls. Today, you name it, she bakes it—cakes, biscuits, puddings, pies, marshmallows and macaroons. At Vitan, the bustling supermarket at Spurtank Road in Chennai, Saldanha’s delicious macaroons and marshmallows disappear faster than you can say pie. Her oven-toaster-griller (OTG) is all she needs to cater to orders from church groups, parties, women’s organisations and local supermarkets. From the money she earns, Saldanha deducts material costs and donates the rest to NGO Child Relief and You (CRY) and an old age home run by Sisters of the Poor. She also helps run a soup kitchen for slum-dwellers at Kilpauk and provides snacks to kids being taught by the missionary group, the Salesian Brothers.

“Her ability to manage her cooking with her philanthropy is inspiring,” says her younger son Arun, an oncologist. Saldanha’s elder son, 45 year-old writer-columnist Ajit plans to follow his mother’s footprint and open a couple of restaurants in Bengaluru soon. Her daughter Kamini Sawhney, a journalist with NDTV, has also inherited her culinary skills and can whip up a feast in no time.

Apart from baking, Saldanha still makes time for holidays, books, Scrabble, musicals, her friends from the British Council, and her five grandchildren (Ajit’s three and Arun’s two). She used to sing solos for conductor Handel Manuel’s choir group in the city and has also been part of theatre group Madras Players’ musicals; today, she sings for the local choir. “I am content,” she says. And she spreads this contentment around—through her voice, enthusiasm, and marshmallows and macaroons.

—Padmini Natarajan

Send queries to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org; for second career options, log on to www.harmonyindia.org
On a high

Educationalist and mountaineer Narayan Krishna Mahajan, 87, tells Brinda Gill about life in the lap of nature and Purandhar. It was wonderful. It is a pity that the tradition of Boy Scouts is fading away.

THE LURE OF NATURE
Jawaharlal Nehru once said that when you look at mountains, you feel they beckon you; however, the real difficulty starts only when you start climbing them! There is really much more to walking than reaching the top. Mountaineering teaches us to become self-reliant; live under difficult conditions with cheer; conserve energy that could be used in an emergency; expose yourself to difficult terrain; create opportunities to develop will power; learn about geographical conditions at high altitudes; face the forces of nature; and work with a team to ensure safety in the pursuit of a common goal. All these lessons can help us in everyday life.

I have been for over 50 expeditions in the Himalaya and many treks in the Sahayadris. In 1968, I founded Bharat Outward Bound Pioneers, Pune’s first trekking and mountaineering group. In 1980, I founded Pune Mountaineers and we conduct treks for all age groups. We generally organise two trips every year; one in May for beginners and one in September for advanced trekkers. In 1982, I led the first all-woman expedition team on a trek to Himachal Pradesh.

Walking is wonderful for body and mind and a great way to keep anger and depression at bay. Walking for an hour everyday keeps you full of energy for the rest of the day.

I rise at 4 am every day, get ready, wake up my daughter Neelam at 4:30 and by 4:45 both of us are out for our 10-km walk. Our route is fixed and includes 5 km of climbing up and down the Parnakuti hill (in Pune). We complete 10 km in 100 minutes and are back by 6:25 am. Every Sunday we go trekking at Sinhagad (a hill fort 25 km from Pune) with friends and children. It is a wonderful 14-km trek to the hilltop and we try different routes. These walks help keep me fit for the mountain expeditions we undertake twice a year.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS
I was born in a village near Alandi (in Pune district) in 1920 and we had a simple childhood. In those days, everyone worked according to his capacity and was paid in kind. Owing to plenty of physical labour, we stayed fit.

A few of us from the family moved to Pune city in 1929. I joined the Boy Scouts in my school days and learnt numerous skills. We would trek to forts near Pune such as Sinhagad, Raigad, Raigad, Lohagad, Torna etcetera.

Photograph: Hemant Patil
Our team has trekked in Kumaon Himalaya, Garhwal Himalaya, Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir, Ladakh and Tibet. We have climbed icy slopes in sub-zero temperatures and pitched tents in stormy weather. This past May, we went to Panchachuli at 13,000 ft, near the border of Nepal and Tibet. Next May, we have planned a trek to Sandakphu, West Bengal, at 12,000 ft. You can see Everest and Kanchenjunga from there. We plan to go to Nathu La pass in Sikkim from there.

MIND OVER MATTER
People ask me the secret of my good health. It is just that I can use all my limbs and do things on my own. It is inevitable that the body weakens after you enter your 50s, but that does not mean that the mind should follow. If the mind is weak, the body may become weak even at 20.

When Arjuna reached the battlefield and saw his kith and kin around him, his bows and arrows fell to the ground. His mind became weak even though he was physically strong. You must make your mind strong. We need wonderful person. I retired as principal and am now honorary chairman of the society.

The school has 500 boys from the ages of three-and-a-half to 16. As it is a residential school, I was on call 24 hours. I had to supervise all their activities, studies, games, food and upbringing. Being involved with the Junior Red Cross, and Bharat Scouts and Guides and conducting sports events for Poona Schools Athletic Association have given me even more opportunities to interact with young people. As a teacher there is a certain lack of stress—it is not a corporate environment. My needs have always been simple, so there has never been pressure to earn more.

I enjoy taking children on treks and expeditions. In the International Year of the Handicapped in 1981, I took a team of challenged children from eight to 12 years of age near Kedarnath to a height of 12,000 ft. There were two blind children, three with artificial legs and six hearing and speech-impaired children. We had a wonderful time. During our expeditions, we cook, improvise and create things if needed. If you need a hanger for clothes, you take a twig and a piece of string to make one.

FLYING HIGH
In 2003, I went parasailing for the first time at the age of 83. I took off from the National Defence Academy Glider Drome on 16 February 2003 and won an entry into the Limca Book of Records as the oldest parasailer in India. It was a fantastic feeling. This April, I went parasailing again near Pune.

I believe we should all be thankful for life’s bounties. The body is a chariot and the mind the horse. Just like the horse pulls the chariot, the mind pulls the body. You are the charioteer; you need to control the chariot. If the horse is timid, you may have the best chariot but it is of no use. You need a good strong horse—so build a good strong mind.

"Mountaineering develops stamina, self-reliance, will power and team spirit"
A touch of glass

Rakesh Koshal redisCOVERS life through painted glass, writes Mamta Shukla

As a child, I could not even draw a straight line,” wryly confesses Rakesh Koshal, sitting in his cozy apartment at Sector 70 in Mohali, adjacent to Chandigarh. The confession is hard to believe coming from someone who has recently held solo exhibitions of his glass paintings at Lala Lajpat Rai Bhavan and Panchayat Bhavan in Chandigarh.

In 2000, when Koshal, then a manager with State Bank of India, opted for voluntary retirement, he didn’t suspect life would offer him a fresh palette of colours. A few months after retirement, while helping grandson Kunal with a school project on glass painting, Koshal felt a deep sense of contentment unlike anything before. As the last stroke of paint dried on his grandson’s project, Koshal began to conjure fresh ideas for the next glass painting.

Today Koshal, 65, spends over two hours every day bringing colours alive on sheets of glass. His favourite themes include Hindu gods and goddesses, and religious symbols like onkara, bismillah and the cross. Although the indulgent grandfather also admits to painting an assortment of cartoon characters for his grandchildren, he prefers traditional Indian motifs to modern elements.

His favourite themes include Hindu gods and goddesses

Ranjeet Singh
GET GOING WITH GLASS

- You could start with a small glass sheet (7”x7” or 8”x8”), which costs about Rs 60. Make an outline of the required design with the special outlining pen used for glass painting (available at good stationery stores; about Rs 100).

- To make things easier, tape carbon paper over the glass, place a photocopy of the preferred design over the carbon paper and trace the design. After you are done, remove the papers and outline with an outlining pen. The outline will take roughly four to five hours to dry.

- Use watercolours (Rs 25 per bottle) or oil paints (Rs 50) to fill in the colours. Oil paints take about a week to dry, so be patient. Keep a piece of cloth handy to wipe excess paint off the brush.

- There are no rules; try to be as innovative as you can. You can glue strips of fabric, sequins, shells, foil, just about anything that will add an interesting twist. You could also smear gum all over the glass and sprinkle sand or glitter for an unusual background.

- Don’t expose the painting to direct sunlight; the paint may fade or peel off.
A lazy walkathon

Shimla on Foot
By Raaja Bhasin
Rupa & Co; Rs 195; 145 pages

For many of us who haven’t seen Shimla, the mere mention of the place inspires images straight out of a picture postcard. Much of the imagery can be attributed to Hindi cinema of the 1950s and ’60s—for it was Shimla where rakish heroes serenaded demure heroines amid dense pine groves. Not all of us are aware that the charming picture in our minds is not fully congruent with Shimla’s present reality. Thanks to irresponsible tourism, today ‘the queen of the hills’ is shuddering under indiscriminate urbanisation and careless waste disposal.

Raaja Bhasin’s Shimla on Foot, though, is not a commentary on any such bleak issues confronting the capital of Himachal Pradesh; instead, it’s a long walk through the beauty that has survived the degradation. The walks—10 of them—are delightful rambles through some exquisite topography and nostalgia. Along the way, you bump into many interesting fables and discoveries. You learn that Baloganj is actually Boileuganj, named after Captain J T Boileau; that quirky Baba Mast Ram who spent years in profound silence at the Jakho Temple was actually Russet, son of a famous French architect; and that hotelier M S Oberoi started his legendary career at Hotel Cecil as a humble desk clerk.

Directions and detours are explained in precise detail, right down to the amount of time you need to set aside for each walk and the kilometres you would cover by foot. Bhasin leaves no road unexplored—every bend and swing and curve of each road is lovingly catalogued. Very often, he also pauses to share information on local architecture, flora and fauna. Pictures in black and white add to the old-world charm. The book concludes with helpful tips on travel gear, important precautions and even local pronunciation of places with colonial names.

Overall, this book is a dependable companion to take along on your next trip through Shimla.

—Rajashree Balaram

EXCERPT
WALK THREE: WISHES ON A TREE
From Scandal Point to the temple of Karma Devi, atop Prospect Hill, which is accessed from Boileuganj

Direction, approximate time and distance
This walk also goes west from Scandal Point on the Mall. The approximate distance covered will be six to eight kilometres. Plan for at least two hours.

Suggested time of the day
This walk can be taken any time of day up to the early evening. Plan for morning or early afternoon if you wish to do the extensions as well.

Highlights
■ Built heritage
■ The views
■ Kamna Devi Temple

En route to the Boileuganj Bazaar
Just short of the gates of the Institute there is a road that branches off left at a slightly lower level than the main one. There is a rather fluctuating landmark in the shape of a small grocery store and STD telephone booth called the ‘Deepika Veg & Grocery Shop, Project Deepak’, and a more permanent one in the shape of the offices of the Deepak Project a few yards ahead. The Deepak Project is housed in the Tudor-framed structure that used to serve as the quarters of the viceregal band.

Continue along this road till you come to the Boileuganj Bazaar. En route you cross some attractive old houses, including the historically important, though rather tumble-down Woodfield. Noble Laureate, and author of India’s national anthem Jana Gana Mana, the celebrated writer Rabindranath Tagore once stayed here.

Prospect Hill and the temple of Kamna Devi
Boileuganj (locally pronounced ‘Baloo-ganj’) is named after the Boileau brothers—one Captain J T Boileau had made the observatory on the hill above in 1840.
when they used to be a part of the viceregal estate. Offering a magnificent view, this path is almost a kilometre long.

The hilltop is crowned by the temple of Kamna Devi—locally regarded as a goddess who grants wishes. Housing the deity, who is locally also called Kairaroo Devi, this is a single-storied structure neatly done in brick. There is a small bush in the compound, the remnants of a kainth tree on which many tie a small red string and make a wish. The view from the top encompasses the valleys, distant mountains and has an interesting angle of the airport. If you have carried along a picnic snack, this makes a good point to take a breather and have a bite.

The return
From Kamna Devi you can return to the Mall. If you decide to do this, a route variation is suggested. At the bottom of the slope, by the bus stop’s shelter, are the back gates of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study. Enter these, climb a little and then take the somewhat level road on the right that lies just above the bazaar and moves roughly parallel to the one that was used to reach Boileauganj. This road also arrives at the main gates of the Institute of Advanced Study.

A little detour to the aviary, opposite the gates of the Institute, may be taken. Then, just to vary the route, at the level space with your back to the gates of the Institute, take the road on the left. This will also bring you to the base of the climb to the museum, close to the Cecil. On this track, the views of the northern hills are quite magnificent and if it is early spring, the rhododendrons will be in bloom.

Rhododendrons in bloom
The worldwide interest in rhododendrons was exported from India by celebrated botanist Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker who did most for his work away from Shimla, in the eastern parts of the country. The rhododendrons of Shimla, *Rhododendron Arboreum*, grow to become trees unlike many of their cousins that are quite happy as bushes. Interestingly, Shimla’s rhododendrons live cheek by jowl with the local oaks, which in turn are quite unlike their relatives in other parts of the world and are fairly short and thin.
An option at Boileauganj
Another walk option lies at Boileauganj, on the return from the temple of Kamna Devi. You can walk on the Himachal Pradesh University campus at Summer Hill and then to the gates of the Viceregal Lodge. The loop passing through woods of oak and rhododendron with some fine views will add another two kilometres or so to the walk. From Summer Hill to the gates of the Viceregal Lodge, the road lies just above the railway track.

And another option at Summer Hill
Summer Hill holds yet another option. This is also the point where you carry on to the woods of the Conservation Zone called Van Vihar, to Potters’ Hill and the rain-fed Chadwick Falls. While this is given as a separate walk entitled ‘To Rain-fed Falls’, if you are a keen walker, you can include it in this walk as well. If you do, the following is the route to take.

There is a good road that lies just above Summer Hill railway station. Continue along this till you arrive at the Conservation Zone and Potter’s Hill. The way is over a tarmac road and is quite well marked. In the Conservation Zone you may be able to see a variety of butterflies. Potters’ Hill has a camp where you can get a good meal or snack.

If you have taken the entire route from Scandal Point to Boileauganj to Kamna Devi to Summer Hill to the Conservation Zone and back to Scandal Point, you will cover approximately ten to twelve kilometres. The walk is along level stretches and mild slopes—barring the sharp half-kilometre climb to the temple of Kamna Devi. Plan for at least six hours.

En route, Summer Hill has two historically important houses, The Holme, once the residence of celebrated artist Amrita Sher-gil, and Manorville, the property of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, where Mahatma Gandhi often stayed. Both Boileauganj and Summer Hill have some simple eating places.
History and destiny

The Bastard of Istanbul by Elif Shafak
Penguin Viking; Rs 960, 360 pages

Two Turkish writers whose free speech has run foul of the Republic are Orhan Pamuk in Istanbul: Memories and the City and Elif Shafak in The Bastard of Istanbul. Both Pamuk and Shafak were charged for “insulting writing” and were to go on trial in 2005, the year The Bastard...’s Turkish edition was released, but the charges were dropped. The last few years of Ottoman rule, especially 1915, are notorious for the Armenian genocide when 30,000 Kurds and a million Armenians were killed. The story of The Bastard... revolves around the family of an Armenian girl whose writer-father and uncle disappeared during the genocide. At the ripe age of 90, Shushan dies in the US, her second home, while her granddaughter Armanoush runs away to Istanbul to search for her roots, and the history of a crime perpetrated more than a century ago. As it turns out, Istanbul is the wrong place to look for anything more than sympathy. Armanoush realises that Turks have come into the habit of denying their wrongdoing, while Armenians everywhere, including those in the Diaspora, have come into the habit of savouring the cocoon of victimhood. Armanoush’s guide (the “Bastard” of the book) Asya is the flipside of the story as “being a bastard is less about having no father than having no past”. The Bastard... is brave literature on one hand (it’s also a feminist work) and a cultural point of reference on the other. It is also entertaining, so much so that some may see it as readymade fodder for a Diaspora film. There’s colour from the streets of Istanbul, aroma of food and perfumes, mood of changing times, and the intuition of a clairvoyant who knows more than history could supply. As Shafak concludes, “Life is coincidence, though sometimes it takes a djinni to fathom that.”

—Meeta Bhatti

Medicine made simple

What To Do When the Doctor Says It’s...Asthma by Dr Paul Hannaway; Rheumatoid Arthritis by Dr Harry D Fischer & Winnie Yu; Diabetes by Dr Melvin Stjernholm, Winnie Yu & Alexis Munier; Early-Stage Alzheimer’s by Dr Todd E Feinberg & Winnie Yu; Published by Westland Books; Each: Rs 250, 288 pages

Each book in the What To Do When The Doctor Says It’s... series deals with a specific disease in simple language. Treatment options enable the reader (patient or caregiver) to take charge with informed decisions. In the volume on Asthma, the author, an asthma sufferer, writes how this disease has reached epidemic proportions in developed countries. Analysing common triggers (mites, cockroaches, pets and pollen), Dr Hannaway evaluates the danger of air pollution for asthmatics across the world. He also talks about medications (old and new), immunotherapy, treatment failures and the art of mastering nebulisers and inhalers. Rheumatoid Arthritis, besides covering diagnosis, medication, surgical options and alternative treatments, also addresses the emotional aspects of the condition. Chapters on diet, exercise and research lend further credibility. In Diabetes, besides answering queries on glucose monitoring, medication and complications, ways to improve health based on latest scientific findings are also included. In Early-Stage Alzheimer’s, the authors reiterate that despite there being no cure for the disease, early treatment can slow progression and improve quality of life greatly. The book also reviews the importance of legal and financial decisions although it is a little skimpy on new research. Profiles of patients—successes and setbacks—give this entire series an additional dimension and prevent the books from becoming just well-researched volumes for handy reference.

—Anjana Jha
PAYING IT BACK
It’s a homecoming of sorts for Fayaz A Shawl, the 54 year-old director of interventional cardiovascular medicine and clinical professor of medicine at George Washington University Medical School in Washington DC. Three decades after he left Kashmir as a young medical practitioner, Shawl has returned to Kashmir to set up a super-speciality cardiac care centre near the Nishat area in the Valley. The 30-bed hospital is expected to be ready by the end of 2008. While Dr Shawl plans to set up two more such hospitals in Dubai and Goa, the one in Kashmir will be different—the poor will be treated without any cost and a nominal fee will be charged from those who can afford to pay. “I have been very lucky and God has been kind,” says Shawl, son of a carpet dealer, who trained with Americans Andreas Gruentzig and Richard Mylar, pioneers of angioplasty. “I just want to give back to the people of the country of my birth.”

SURVIVAL SKILLS
London-based Gurkha war hero Tul Bahadur Pun, 84, is fighting a different battle. Earlier this year he was barred from entering Britain as immigration officials concluded that he did not have “strong ties with the UK”. This, despite Pun being a recipient of the Victoria Cross, the highest British honour for military bravery, after single-handedly storming Japanese machine-gun positions during World War II. However, following a public outcry, he was allowed to settle in Britain. He arrived at the beginning of July but fears he may be forced to return to Nepal as his family is now struggling on his annual army pension of £1,584 (about Rs 130,000)—a measly amount in a country where an average single-mother household receives £5,546 (about Rs 290,000) a year in benefits. The elderly Gurkha suffers from a heart problem, asthma, diabetes and high blood pressure and suffered a mild stroke recently. His lawyer Martin Howe tells BBC, “These people spilt their blood and guts for Britain but now they are not good enough for us to offer them a place to live.”

YESTERDAY ONCE MORE
“War isn’t worth one life,” says Harry Patch, the last known surviving British soldier who fought in the trenches of World War I. In an emotional journey, the 109 year-old recently revisited the battlefield of Passchendaele, Belgium, to recall his part in one of the most bitterly fought battles of World War I where the Allied Powers fought with Germany over the control of Passchendaele village. The battle claimed 250,000 British soldiers. Patch was only 18 at the time. He was working as an apprentice plumber in the town of Bath when he was called to join the Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry. He was badly wounded and three of his best friends were killed in the war. Patch laid a wreath in their memory at the site of the trench, which now forms part of a German war cemetery. “Too many died in both the camps,” he said to the BBC, visibly moved. “It was a calculated and condoned slaughter of human beings.” Historian Richard van Emden, who is helping Patch write his memoirs, accompanied him on the trip.
RED HOT!

Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, 76, is the new face of French luxury goods maker Louis Vuitton, replacing sensuous American actress Scarlett Johansson in the company’s ad campaign. Shot by photographer Annie Leibovitz, the ad focuses on travel, a “core value” for the company that started in 1854 as a trunkmaker. Gorbachev is featured in a car, a Vuitton bag at his side and the Berlin Wall in the background. The ad is part of a series that also features tennis superstar couple Steffi Graf and Andre Agassi snuggling in a hotel bed. The company first collaborated with Gorbachev when it contributed to the Climate Project, an NGO founded by Gorbachev to fight global warming. The ad will be in circulation soon.

IN PASSING

Former monarch of Afghanistan Mohammad Zahir Shah’s reign is remembered as one of the most peaceful periods in the country’s history. He remained in power from 1933 to 1974, when his cousin Prince Daoud deposed him in a bloodless coup. He lived in exile in Italy before returning home as an ordinary citizen in 2002. Born in Kabul, Shah, 92, came from a line of ethnic Pashtun rulers and is a distant relative of Afghan President Hamid Karzai. He supported the ban on purdah for women, used foreign cash to develop the country’s infrastructure and managed to keep a balance between Soviet and Western interests. Shah died in his sleep on 23 July.

Ingmar Bergman, Academy Award-winning Swedish writer and director whose name came to define an entire genre of stark movies about the human condition, died at his home at the age of 89 on 30 July. Bergman’s style of intensely personal cinema—The Seventh Seal, Wild Strawberries and Persona—in which desire and suffering dominated the characters’ lives, first gained wide attention and popularity in the early 1950s when many American filmmakers were making soapy dramas. Bergman’s work stood out for being disturbingly psychological, expressing emotional isolation and modern spiritual crisis.

The death of Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni, 94, slammed the door shut on an era of movies that depicted alienation through sparse dialogue and long takes. His slow-moving camera was never synonymous with box-office success, but some of his films like Blow-Up, Red Desert and The Passenger earned enduring fame. In 1995, Hollywood honoured his body of work (about 25 films and several screenplays) with a special Oscar for ‘Lifetime Achievement’. The award was later stolen from Antonioni’s home in 1996, together with several other awards. He passed away in his home in Rome on 31 July.
MILESTONES

**Awarded.** The 2005 Dadasaheb Phalke Award to filmmaker **Shyam Benegal**, 72. Considered among the pioneers of new Indian cinema, Benegal made his debut with *Ankur* in 1974 which broke new cinematic ground by focusing on problems of development and social and cultural change. Benegal received the Padmashri in 1976 and Padma Bhushan in 1991. As part of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, he will receive Rs 200,000, a golden lotus and a shawl from President Pratibha Patil.

**Awarded.** The Ramon Magsaysay Award 2007 to **P Sainath**, 50, rural affairs editor of *The Hindu*, in ‘Journalism, Literature and Creative Communication Arts’. The citation goes, “Sainath discovered that the acute misery of India’s poorest districts was not caused by drought, as the government said. It was rooted in structural inequalities—in poverty, illiteracy, and caste discrimination—and exacerbated by recent economic reforms...” The award was presented in Manila on 31 August.

**Awarded.** Germany’s Meister Eckhart Prize to noted Indian economist and Nobel laureate **Amartya Sen**, 73, for enriching philosophical and cultural discourse with an economic perspective. The prize, named after a 13th century German theologian and mystic, comes with prize money of 50,000 Euro (about Rs 2,769,692). Sen, whose area of expertise includes welfare economics, famine and gender inequality, will receive the prize in the western German city of Cologne at the end of November.

**Awarded.** The Grand Prize of the Fukuoka Asian Culture Prizes to **Ashis Nandy**, 70. One of India’s most irreverent social scientists, Nandy received 5 million yen (about Rs 1,783,855) as part of the award which honours people who, through their work, have exhibited the significance of Asian culture to the world. “This is an attempt to make me respectable,” confesses Nandy, who has taken on everyone, from scientists, Marxists, pro-Emergency intellectuals to modernists and anti-Sati feminists in the past 40 years. “I assure you I won’t succumb to the temptation and will stay as disreputable as I’ve always been,” he told friends and admirers.
At 60, some sneak chocolates,
And some reveal the secret to a dairy revolution.

Ageing doesn’t mean slowing down. And in celebration of that, Harmony for Silvers Foundation proudly honours ten Silver achievers for their irresistible momentum, at the first annual Harmony Silver Awards, being held on October 3, 2007 in Mumbai. A jury comprising Shabana Azmi, Julio Ribeiro, Aroon Purie, Rahul Bose and Supriya Sule has selected heroes who continue to set benchmarks for themselves, and society. Let’s show the world what Silver can do.

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If you can’t sleep, then get up and do something instead of lying there and worrying. It’s the worry that gets you, not the loss of sleep.

— American writer and self-improvement guru Dale Carnegie (1888-1955)

It is better to sleep on things beforehand than lie awake about them afterward.

— Spanish writer Baltasar Gracian (1601-1658)

Laugh and the world laughs with you, snore and you sleep alone.

— British novelist, critic and composer Anthony Burgess (1917-1993)

There is nothing frightening about an eternal dreamless sleep. Surely it’s better than eternal torment in hell and eternal boredom in heaven.

— American science fiction writer Isaac Asimov (1920-1992)

You cannot wake a person who is pretending to be asleep.

— American Indian proverb

All men whilst they are awake are in one common world; but each of them, when he is asleep, is in a world of his own.

— Greek historian and essayist Plutarch (46 AD-127 AD)

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

floordrobe n. A pile of discarded clothes lying on the floor of a person’s room [Blend of floor and wardrobe]

Example: This week, both my sons’ gap years will come to an end and they will leave home for the first time, to begin their university courses. Not only will the house fall strangely silent; their departure will also mean an end to the ceaseless washing and folding of jeans, T-shirts and boxers; there will be no more shopping for multipacks of mango juice; no more peering gingerly into their rooms and grumbling about the floordrobe situation.

— Markie Robson Scott, “I dread the day this house stops being a home,” The Independent, 21 September 2004

carbage n. The garbage that accumulates in cars, particularly in the back seat [Blend of car and garbage]

Example: What we needed, we thought, was a hybrid like ‘idolspise’, one of our favorite invented words. It refers to simultaneously feeling admiration and loathing toward a person, usually someone who has and does everything you would have and do if you were more motivated. And then there’s garbage, coined by one of us to refer to the empty Pepsi cans and used Kleenex that collect in the foot wells of the back seat.

— Karen Sandstrom, “Help us expand our vocabulary,” Plain Dealer, 1 July 2007

congeal collar n. An extensive system of roads and highways that surrounds a city

Example: Ashford’s controversial ring-road has gone two-way—a move town officials hope will aid the town’s regeneration. The road has been coined a concrete collar by its critics who point to it restricting the growth of the town centre.


Courtesy www.wordspy.com
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
HEADSTART

TIPS FOR BEGINNERS:

‘Bottoms Are On Top Again’ (7 6)

DOWN
2 Greg up as zero factor working against the foreign coach in Team India? (3-6)
3 East man at East issue (7)
4 Ouch De embraces a shower of water! (6)
5 Basil The Actor, not the Lal Krishna Advani yatra showpiece, bone of National contention (8)
6 New Zealand left-arm spinner (who toured India in September-October 1969) wondering about Mahesh Bhatt’s debut movie still years away? (7)
7 Something Sanjay Dutt couldn’t keep where he found himself (1 4)
8 Time Bedi and Gavaskar so gave up attempts to convince each other, isn’t it? (5 2 6)
9 The heavy-smoking Krish Sikkanth’s demand, had he performed in British India times? (7 6)
16 How crazy Inzamam-ul-Haq considered the Multan Test curator to be for providing a pitch calculated to make Viru Sehwag thrive (5 4)
17 What the Essex team had, as Don Bradman’s all-conquering 1948- touring Australians rattled up 721 (all out) in exactly 360 minutes of play on the opening day! (5-3)
19 Film in which the vibrant Vyjayanthimala danced out ‘Jao jao Nand ke laala’, as set in Raag Bageshri by one-time dancer Shanker of the SJ team (7)
21 This call after ‘Once more!’ for the character stabbing himself to death in the Final Scene, must rate as unique (7)
22 Palam’s sacred song (1 5)
24 Raag in which Amir Khan rendered the V Shantaram film’s title-song as ‘Jhanak Jhanak Pagal Baaje’ (5)

For answers, see Page 80

By Raju Bharatan

ACROSS
1 Guru fixation possibly could have seen her going the Parveen Babi way, she pulled herself away in the nick of time (7 6)
10 The ‘Ek Do Teen’ performer (5 4)
11 He goes into Lew turning circular (5)
12 How we vintagers view Bappi Lahiri’s music (7)
13 Odds-layers specifying the playing surface mustn’t be soft? (7)
14 Open car in which you got all but drenched before those comic side-shutters could be manually set up! (6)
15 Pessimist enough never to expect a ‘Yes’ for an answer? (1 2-5)
18 Traffic Regulation Authority of India in district just not there (8)
20 Sports Club leftover fruit from orchard (6)
23 Fabric of which Ann is core (7)
25 Bar turning into pale simple art of story-telling Rajaji employed to drive home a point (7)
26 Oration for the Muse of amatory lyric poetry (5)
27 In vain did she, with Bouncing Twins to match, venture to be a provocative prototype of the woman-and-a-half 28 Across is (5 4)
28 Mesmerisingly measuring up to the Hollywood punchline of

EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 35

Raju Bharatan is the originator of the ‘Sunday Cryptic’ crossword in The Times of India, where he set the first 1,500 puzzles

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 rearanged). 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 (PAINORA/MA). 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. The clue, Walls have them yet they hear not, has EARS for its answer. Next, pertinacity could split into Part in a city, face to face into facet of ace. For ANISEED, the clue could be: Carminative I see inside and outside—ANIL SEEID. The possibilities are endless.
BRAIN GYM

WORDSPEAK
Look carefully at the following words and the way they are arranged. Each contains a clue to a popular saying or word. (Hint: don’t bother with unscrambling; pay attention to the way the words are structured.)

1. MEREPEAT
2. COTAXME
3. CUS TOM
4. EITHER WEIGH OR WHEY
5. SH ORT
6. RIGHT = RIGHT

TWISTED TALES
The following phrases are colloquialisms, idioms or proverbs that are written in their literal, complicated, form. Can you uncover their true meanings?

1. Positive aesthetic appeal is solely the equivalent of the thickness of the epidermis.
2. The ground covering of slender-leaved plants is always a more vibrant hue of a common secondary color in the proximity of the opposite surface of a structure serving as a boundary.
3. Produce the sound of sharp tapping by striking blows to a processed piece of secondary xylem from a large perennial plant.
4. The gyre that emanates shrill sounds receives the viscous lubricant.

MATHMAGIC
A monk has a very specific ritual for climbing up the steps to the temple. First he climbs up to the middle step and meditates for one minute. Then he climbs up eight steps and faces east until he hears a bird singing. Then he walks down twelve steps and picks up a pebble. He takes one step up and tosses the pebble over his left shoulder. Now, he takes the remaining steps three at a time, which he completes in nine paces. How many steps are there?

ALKBOROUGH MAZE
Trace your path through the maze from the entrance at its top to the white spot at its centre. The real maze is cut in the turf at Alkborough in Lincolnshire, England. There is only one path through this maze.

SHAPE UP!
Which shape comes next in this sequence?

Choose from the box below.

SNOW DANCING
Move one of the snowballs to leave a kind of snowman. Which snowman are we talking about?
**SUDOKU FOR YOU**

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.

**SOLUTIONS TO EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 35**

**ACROSS:**
1. Waheeda Rehman (focusing on her Guru Dutt link); 10 Geeta Dutt (reference to her Ek Do Teen Chaar Aur Panch song rendition in Kaagaz Ke Phool, not to Meena Shorey in the 1953 Ek Do Teen slapstick comedy); 11 wheel (w/H/He/el: He goes into Lew turning, circular is wheel); 12 earwash; 13 Barclay (bar/Clay: Muhammed Ali), Barclay are the odds-layers; 14 touer; 15 a no-hoper; 18 distrait (distRAi: TRAI in district), distrait means absent-minded, ‘just not there’; 20 Scrump (SCrup: SC is Sports Club, rump is leftover, scrump is fruit from orchard); 23 flannel (fl/Ann/el: fabric of which Ann is core); 25 parable (pa tàu: bar turning into pale); 26 Erato (Orate, 5 letters of Erato rearranged) 27 Diana Dors; 28 Marilyn Monroe

**DOWN:**
2 age-groups (taking o in it as zero, Greg up as a, 9 letters of age-groups rearranged, age-groups represent factor working against the foreign coach in Team India); 3 emanate (E/Man/at/E: East man at East, issue means emanate); 4 douche (D/ouche): Ouch Do embraces, douche means a shower of water; 5 (Basil) Rathbone (Rath/bone it splits into, Rath part of it is the Lal Krishna Advani yatra showpiece, bone is bone of National contention); 6 Howarth (How/Arth?: reference to Hedley Howarth, who toured India under Graham Dowling; 7 a cell; 8 agree to differ; 9 Players Please (Players, the cigarette-brand popular in British India); 16 plumb loco; 17 field-day; 19 Rungoli (the 1962 Vyjayanthimala-Kishore Kumar starrer was spelt with a U); 21 curtain (call); 22 a psalm (6 letters rearranging into Palam’s); 24 Adana

**BRAIN GYM**

**Wordspeak**
1. Repeat after me
2. Income tax
3. Breaking a custom
4. One way or another
5. Short cut
6. Equal rights

**Twisted tales**
1. Beauty is only skin deep.
2. The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.
4. The squeaky wheel gets the grease.
Mathmagic
There are 49 steps. The monk hears the bird singing on step 33. He picks up the pebble on the 21st step and tosses it on the 22nd step. The remaining 27 steps are taken three at a time, which are nine paces. (The trick is to calculate from the clue given in the last line.)

Alkborough maze

Shape up!

Look closer; you will notice that the symbols are actually a series of letters—V, W, X and Y. Therefore, the last symbol in the sequence should be Z.

Snow dancing
By just changing the position of one snowball, as shown below, you get Yeti—the Abominable Snowman.

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**INCONTINENCE: REGAIN CONTROL**

- **Dr Shailesh Raina,**
  Consultant Urologist,
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**SOLUTIONS TO SUDOKU**

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**SOLUTIONS TO KAKURO**

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“Everybody can be great—because everybody can serve others. You don’t need a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace.”

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