

harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

SEPTEMBER 2012 ₹ 30



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THANK YOU!

Pride. That's the first word that comes to mind as *Harmony-Celebrate Age* turns a hundred issues young this month—100 months of bringing you people and stories that motivate and inspire; news you can use from India and across the world; and the tools to live your best life. There's also a deep sense of satisfaction that we have served as a catalyst in taking silver issues and concerns from the fringes to the front pages of newspapers in the country.

Like any product that has endured and evolved, this magazine owes much to the people who have created it and continue to sustain it. Indeed, we have built a wonderfully committed team with a shared vision and the determination to execute it—this, I believe, is the true strength of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*.

I first shared my intense desire to work for silvers with my husband Anil. Armed with his wholehearted support, and the backing of Reliance Group, I approached Aroon Purie of the India Today Group and his enthusiasm flagged off our journey. Tony Jesudasan of the Reliance Group and senior journalist-author Sudeep Chakravarti also believed this was an idea whose time had come and, along with senior journalist Priya Ramani, they helped set the tone and tenor of the magazine. Sudeep, of course,

continued to steer the magazine for many years as our consultant editor, setting the high editorial and visual benchmarks we pride ourselves on; today, we are guided by the inimitable journalist-columnist Malvika Singh.

After Anupa Mehta, our first editor, got the magazine off the ground, our editors Meeta Bhatti and Arati Rajan Menon have nurtured the magazine over the years and expanded its horizons. Visually, designer Dhun Cordo aided us with our original template, while Elephant Design set the grid for the magazine—our design vocabulary has evolved in the hands of Ritu Nanda and Jit Ray, with the able help of our photo coordinator Anuradha Joshi and design studio manned by Haresh Patel.

For his part, Shrenik Mehta, our business head since inception, has worked tirelessly to extend the reach and penetration of the magazine. In this regard, the support of Living Media India, notably Ashish Bagga and Poonam Sangha, has been exceptional. Here, we must also thank Adi Godrej (Godrej Consumer Products Ltd), Subroto Roy Sahara (Sahara India Pariwar), N K Baldota (Greater Bank), and Ankur Gupta (Ashiana Housing) for their belief in our magazine and what it represents. Working in tandem with the magazine is the Harmony for Silvers Foundation, whose



Suresh Natarajan

many activities are managed with aplomb by programme director Hiren Mehta, under the aegis of our director (and publisher) Dr Dharmendra Bhandari. And over the years, we have enjoyed the help and collaboration of a host of like-minded organisations, corporate houses and individuals for all our ventures.

Indeed, there are many people to acknowledge—our staff, writers, contributors and columnists old and new; everyone who has passed through the portals of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* and enriched us; the inspiring people we are privileged to feature. Above all, however, we must thank you, our readers. You are our reason to be; and with every letter, every email, every bouquet or brickbat, you remind us why we are here. We promise never to forget.

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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Aparna Ambike, a cancer survivor, throws a lifeline to other patients

CAMPAIGN KING
Adman Ashok Roy revels in being a wordsmith and artist



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Bid adieu to pricks and cricks with cutting-edge technology from pain management clinics

Cover design by **Haresh Patel**

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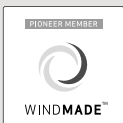
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column one

One hundred months ago, we bid you “welcome to the sun”—it was an invitation to inspiration; an open door to the possibilities and potential of being silver. More than eight years on, the sun continues to shine on *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. Don't miss our snippets on the number 100 scattered throughout this issue!

Sadly, for far too many silvers, the celebration of age is marred by debilitating pain. The good news: it's no longer a cross to bear stoically. In our cover feature “Ooh, Aah, Ouch!”, we examine cutting-edge pain management techniques. Although the discipline remains at a nascent stage in India, relief is on the horizon. There are many roads to healing—marketing guru Lalita Phadkar discovers a timeless one; her retreat to Ayurvedagram near Bengaluru (“A Date with Serenity”) left her rejuvenated. And if all it takes is a good book to recharge your batteries, take a cue from the 75 year-old Desaposhini Public Library in Kerala, which is lending the Kindle to its members (“A Library in Your Pocket”).

Innovation is undoubtedly the key to life. Our ‘Proactive’ silver this month, Kusuma Rajaiah would agree; he has created Ahimsa silk (“The Fabric of Change”) without killing silkworms. Just the kind of out-of-the-box thinking that would make Professor Yash Pal proud (“Life is a Lesson”). Rounding off this special issue are two new columns. Padmashri Dr V S Natarajan, a specialist in geriatric medicine, addresses your key concerns in ‘Silver Lining’, while author Pratibha Jain introduces us to delightful grannies who have forged bonds of love, wisdom and food across generations in ‘The Great Granny Diaries’. Dig in!
—Arati Rajan Menon

In recent times, *Harmony-Celebrate Age* has become my favourite magazine. It is truly a magazine you can get addicted to as the quality of the articles, interviews and even the material used for publishing is of the highest order. The August 2012 issue of the magazine was a delightful one with some very entertaining and informative articles, especially “Nation First” on 100 year-old freedom fighter Dattaji Tamhane. It would be great if you could give us detailed information on the secret behind the longevity of these centenarians. Also, it would be good to read interviews of the grand-old personalities of the Hindi film industry like A K Hangal, Pran, and so on. Though I am far from being a senior citizen, I love your



magazine, as I feel it is for readers of all ages.

Rajesh Vrajendra Gaur *Mumbai*

CONTRIBUTORS



“Fifty is the old age of youth and 60 is the youth of old age,” says **Dr V S Natarajan** on his website drvsngeriatrics.com. Closely associated with the Adhiparasakthi Trust in Melmaruvathur near Chennai in Tamil Nadu for over 25 years now, he offers free consultations to rural elderly once a week. A pioneer in the field of geriatric medicine in India, he was the first to start a geriatric department at Government General Hospital in Chennai and the first professor of geriatric medicine at the Madras Medical College from 1985 to 1997. Author of over 50 research papers and 15 books, VSN (as he is fondly called) is the recipient of several honours, including the Padmashri and the Dr B C Roy National Award for the development of geriatrics in India. VSN is also the brain behind Chennai's ‘Geriatric Housecall Programme’ and India's first ‘Memory Clinic’ in Chennai.

Srimati Lal has held several solo shows of her paintings internationally. The author of three books of poetry as well as many volumes of art criticism, she holds regular literary readings in New Delhi in tribute to her father P Lal, at her ‘WW Renaissance Salons’. Her book *Flowers for my Father* has received worldwide critical acclaim. This month, in ‘At Large’, she writes movingly about her father, “a hero and true Zen-warrior”, and their inseparable bond that continues to sustain and inspire her.



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Rock ART

The Rolling Stones are unarguably the baddest band of all time; their personal and professional longevity in the face of decades of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll is the stuff of legend. And now, as the band celebrates its 50th birthday, guitarist—and trained visual artist—Ronnie Wood is throwing open the doors to a series of artworks, sketches and drawings that chronicle the band's journey. Although **Ronnie Wood: A Major Retrospective of 50 Years of Rock and Roll** opened to mixed critical reviews in the UK, the fans just can't get enough—the lines to get in, as London newspaper *Daily Mail* reports, are "endless". The show, which began on 9 August, will run at the Symbolic London Pop-Up, London, W1J 6QX, till 9 November 2012.





Crystal CLEAR

He has had us in splits in the movies, on TV and at the Oscars. So when **Billy Crystal releases a book to celebrate his 65th birthday next year**, you know it's going to be a hoot. Published by Henry Holt and Company, the book will be "part memoir, part meditation, with jokes about getting older", as Crystal tells news agency AFP. "There are 77 million baby boomers in the US and this book will speak to them and how we look at the world," he says. The book, which will be around 300-350 pages (with print "that will be 4 inches high"), will be released in time for his birthday on 14 March 2013. As for the title, we still don't have one. Crystal, of course, has something to say about that: "We have a sincere title, and a dirty title. I'm still on the fence about which one to go with."

Beyond the closet

The decision to enter a nursing home is hard enough for any silver. If you belong to the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community, the fear of homophobia only compounds the anxiety. ***Gen Silent***, a sensitive new documentary by filmmaker Stu Maddux, throws light on the concerns of LGBT silvers in the US who are afraid of discrimination and bullying by caregivers and fellow residents at care homes. In the 60-minute film, produced by Creative Arts Enterprises in association with Treece Financial Group Inc, we meet six LGBT silvers who candidly share their own personal experiences—the most moving, perhaps is the story of Lawrence Johnson, and his (futile) struggle to find the right facility for his partner of 38 years Alexandre, where he could spend his last days with dignity. The film is currently doing the rounds of LGBT support



groups and community centres across the US. To see clips, go to stumaddux.com/GEN_SILENT.html



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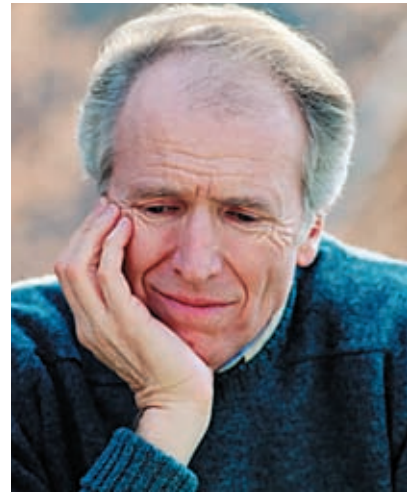
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Read me right

If you feel misunderstood, blame your wrinkles. That's the conclusion of researcher Ursula Hess of Berlin's Humboldt University. Her new study, published in the July issue of the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, says **younger people have trouble reading the emotions of silvers because their wrinkles and folds look like facial expressions and interfere with the perception of emotion**, thus conveying the wrong message at times. For the study, Hess and her team asked 65 college students to

view computer-generated faces of men and women who were young (ages 19 to 21) and old (ages 76 to 83) with varying facial expressions, from neutral to happy, sad and angry. They discovered that younger people were most accurate in recognising anger in silvers, less accurate in recognising happiness, and least accurate in recognising sadness. "We found that young people often make mistakes when judging the emotions of the elderly," writes Hess. "This may result in less harmonious social interactions."



Anxiety attacks

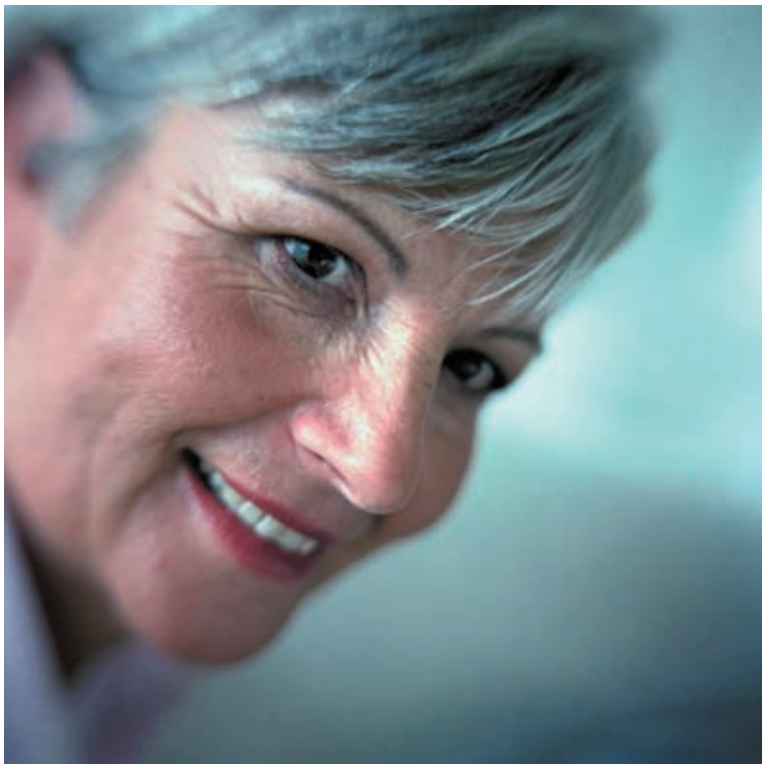
WORRYWARTS, WATCH OUT; anxiety may accelerate the ageing process.

According to researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH), a teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School in Massachusetts in the US, 'phobic' anxiety, one of the most common forms of stress, is linked to shorter telomeres in silver women. (Telomeres, considered key markers of biological ageing, are the protective caps at the end of chromosomes that prevent them from deteriorating.) For the study, the team studied 5,243 women from the ages of 42 to 69 and analysed their telomere lengths along with their responses to a questionnaire on anxiety, stress and fear. They found that women with high levels of phobic anxiety had significantly shorter telomere lengths than women who reported that they felt lower levels of stress or worry. "Many people wonder about whether—and how—stress can make us age faster," study author Olivia Okereke tells *The New York Times*. "This study is notable for showing a connection between a common form of psychological stress, phobic anxiety, and a plausible mechanism for premature ageing."

HER STORY

Men are finally beginning to understand why women—on average—live longer. A study by Monash University in Australia explains that **mitochondria may well hold the key to differences in the life expectancy of the sexes.** Mitochondria convert food into energy; genetic mutation in these organelles is clearly linked to longevity and speed of ageing in men. However, the same mutation has no effect whatsoever on the ageing patterns of women. “The tendency for females to outlive males is common to many different species of animals,” writes study author Damian Dowling in the journal *Current Biology*. “Our results, therefore, suggest that the mitochondrial mutations we have uncovered will generally cause faster male ageing. While children receive copies of most of their genes from both their mothers and fathers, they only receive mitochondrial genes from their mothers.” Thus, as he explains, evolution’s ‘quality control process’

only screens the quality of mitochondrial genes in mothers. All mutations that harm fathers, but not mothers, slip through unnoticed. “Over thousands of generations, many such mutations have accumulated that harm only males, while leaving females unscathed,” he concludes.



Silver STREAK

We’ve always told you silver is cool. Now, we learn that it’s healthy too! Scientists at the Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales in Spain have discovered that **grey hair could be a sign of a healthy body.** Their study of wild boars revealed that boars whose hair was greying—owing to an absence of melanin—were in prime physical condition with the least oxidative damage while those animals with a higher content of melanin in their hair were more susceptible to illness. “Given that all higher vertebrates, including humans, share the same types of melanin in skin, hair and plumage, these results increase our scant current knowledge on the physiological consequences of pigmentation,” writes researcher Ismael Galván in the journal *Physiological and Biochemical Zoology*.

THE NUMBER GAME

The world has spoken: age is just not what it used to be! Here are some highlights from a **landmark survey on perceptions of ageing of over 7,000 adults in 19 countries (including India)** by leading integrated marketing communications agency Euro RSCG Worldwide:

48 Middle age doesn't start until **48**, while old age doesn't start until 71.

60 per cent of people worldwide feel younger than their age. This ranges from 47 per cent in the US to 69 per cent in India and 79 per cent in Colombia.

55 per cent of people are confident they look younger than most of their peers.

About **75** per cent believe society has grown much too youth-obsessed and say they intend to age gracefully rather than fight it with surgery.

Over **65** per cent are moderately to extremely worried about diminished physical capacity and losing their cognitive skills.

Over **60** per cent are worried about running out of money before they die.

71 per cent of people (and 84 per cent of those over the age of 55) believe their government needs to do more to protect and provide for the elderly.

Less than **40** per cent (and only 30 per cent of people over the age of 55) say they worry about death and dying.

"The survey results point to a growing acceptance of the ageing process," Tom Morton, chief strategy officer, Euro RSCG New York, and co-chief strategy officer, Euro RSCG North America, says in a media release. "While people still want to optimise their looks, they aren't willing to go to extreme lengths to stave off the signs of ageing. It's no longer so

much about how you look but how you feel and how much you can do. The new generation of elderly doesn't expect to withdraw from society as they age. They fully intend to remain vital and active, and when that's no longer possible, they'd prefer a quick exit to a prolonged, unsatisfying existence." To read the report, go to www.prosumer-report.com



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Brits on a **BUDGET**

They may have a shoestring budget—but silvers in Britain stick to it better than the youth. According to a recent survey by the country's National Employment Savings Trust (NEST), **48 per cent of pensioners manage to live comfortably within their means compared to just 20 per cent of Britons between the ages of 25 and 34.** Further, 20 per cent of pensioners save money whenever possible—if that seems low, consider the fact that the national average is just 11 per cent. What's heartening is that although silvers are more fiscally



prudent, they still set money aside for special things: over 60 per cent of pensioners go on holiday more than once a year, compared to just 30 per cent of their younger counterparts; 28 per cent update their wardrobe once a year with new clothes; and over 50 per cent dine out at least once a week. "Young people might think retirement is all about sitting around watching TV, but these findings show life doesn't stop at 65," affirms Tim Jones, CEO of NEST. "If you live life with a degree of financial sensibility, you won't stop doing the things you enjoy and might even get to do them more often."

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Fall safe

Recognising that falls are the leading cause of death from injury among silvers (see *'Silver Lining'* by V S Natarajan this issue), the European Union (EU) has established **FARESEEING**, a project with **11 partners that aims to bring timely and effective help to silvers who have fallen**. For starters, the project has established the world's largest database containing information on the movements of the elderly just before and after they suffered a fall, as news agency Reuters reports. This has been achieved through sensors worn on the body that register if the wearer feels faint or weak in the legs. The objective is to predict a person's next fall and alert them to sit or lie down when they could be in danger. The second aspect of the project is to connect fall alarms to social media—the project is currently developing a prototype social network that can raise the alarm in case of a fall, instead of sending an alert only to one care provider, as is usually the case.

"It's easy to get the impression that Facebook is just for fun, but we are only in the early stages of the use of this medium," says researcher Babak Farshchian of the Foundation for Scientific and Industrial Research at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (SINTEF), one of the project partners. "Connecting the alarm to social media will enable potential assistance to be expanded into a 'team' in which not only the municipal services, but children and nearest neighbours can play a part too." For details, visit www.sintef.no/home/

FAST FORWARD

Ageism often stems from a lack of understanding of silvers—and their needs. In a bid to sensitise the younger generation to the challenges faced by elders, researchers from Berlin's Evangelical Geriatrics Centre and the Meyer-Hentschel Institute in Saarbrücken in Germany have created the **'Age Man Suit'**. The 10-kg outfit features a yellow visor that blurs eyesight and colours, knee and elbow pads and gloves that reduce flexibility, ear muffs that dull the hearing and a Kevlar vest that puts pressure on the chest, making the wearer uncomfortably aware of the physical challenges faced by silvers. "There is a huge disconnection between large sections of the medical profession and their elderly patients, as well as a lack of doctors willing to go into geriatric medicine," Rahel Eckardt, a



senior physician at Berlin's Evangelical Geriatrics Centre, tells London newspaper *The Guardian*. "My aim is to turn young energetic people into slow, creaking beings, temporarily at least. That way they will, I hope, develop a feeling for what it's like to be old. Only once we have their empathy can we really begin to win students round to becoming interested in old people as patients."

Touch and go

Rakuraku in Japanese means 'easy'—that's the spirit behind electronics giant Fujitsu's RakuRaku product line that aims to make life simpler for elders and people with disabilities. Its latest offering is the **F-12 D, a new smartphone for silvers with a unique touchscreen and simplified Android user interface**. Developed in collaboration with Google, the phone has large text and buttons and only allows vertical scrolling for facility of use. As tech website *cnet.com* reports, the most remarkable feature of the smartphone is its touchscreen. Keeping in mind that many elders find it hard to use a touchscreen, the F-12 D features a specially designed touchscreen that actually gives way a little when pressed, akin to the feeling of pressing a button. The phone went on sale in Japan in August; Fujitsu expects a global rollout by the end of the year.



Miracle pill?

Will what works for a mouse work for you? If the answer is yes, scientists may be sitting on a multibillion dollar discovery. Already licensed to treat cancer, **the drug rapamycin has been proven to increase longevity in mice as well as protecting them from neurodegenerative diseases.** "Ageing is the main risk factor for all these horrible killer and chronic conditions like dementia, cardiovascular disease and cancer," Professor Dame Linda Partridge, director of the Institute of Ageing at University College, London, announced to

media. She was speaking at the 2012 Graeme Clark Oration held recently in Melbourne, Australia, by the ICT for Life Sciences Forum, which connects researchers active at the intersection between biology, computing and engineering. "What we are trying to do is hit the underlying ageing process itself through understanding mechanisms to protect against all these things at once, rather than treating them piecemeal. Rapamycin is beginning to look like a proof of the principle that this kind of approach is going to work." We'll wait and watch.



CARRY YOUR CARD: SILVERS IN THE CAPITAL REGISTERED WITH THE DELHI POLICE WILL SOON RECEIVE A 'SENIOR CITIZENS IDENTIFICATION CARD', PART OF POLICE COMMISSIONER NEERAJ KUMAR'S INITIATIVE TO "MAKE THE CITY SAFER". IF YOU LIVE IN DELHI, ASK YOUR LOCAL POLICE STATION FOR MORE DETAILS.

Make meditation your mantra. It's not just good for your mind but your body too. A new study conducted at Carnegie Mellon University in the US shows that eight weeks of training in mindfulness meditation—or self-regulated focus of attention aimed at inner reflection—reduced loneliness while simultaneously reducing the expression of inflammation-related genes. (Inflammation is a major contributor to cardiovascular and neurodegenerative diseases as well as cancer.) The study is published in journal *Brain, Behaviour & Immunity*.



Then: Coconut shell Now: Planter

Done using that delicious coconut? Use the shell to make an eco-friendly creative planter.

Use a shell as large as possible so you have room to plant the seeds you want. You could trim the shell to make it even or customise the size; do this with care as it will require a sharp instrument. Alternatively, you could just leave it uneven for a rustic look. Keep enough space on one side to nail the shell to a wall. Finally, nail a hole at the bottom of the shell cup to get rid of excess water when watering your plants.



FACTS

- » Coconut oil is a healthy dietary oil; it contains no trans fats and promotes a healthy heart.
- » Coir is a natural fibre extracted from the husk of coconut and is used in various products. India—mainly Pollachi and the coastal region of Kerala—produces 20 per cent of the world's supply of white coir fibre.



Haresh Patel

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. FILL WITH SEEDS AND HANG ON A TREE TO MAKE A BIRD FEEDER.
2. CUT SMALL PORTIONS OF THE SHELL AND USE AS CANDLE HOLDERS.

HARMONY in Newport

It was serendipity, plain and simple. I discovered ‘Harmony’ in Newport when I met Ken and Tia Scigulinsky, our guides to the pleasures—and treasures—of this resort town in the beautiful (and tiny) American state of Rhode Island. A former naval officer turned defence contractor, Ken teaches business to fifth graders, is a mentor at a middle school and teaches Sunday school at his church. And Tia, a retired teacher, is president of the Rhode Island Retired Teachers Association and Newport AARP and serves on the boards of a host of bodies, from a library to a zoning board and even a TV channel. In their off time, the couple, who just celebrated their 50th anniversary in style with their kids and five grandchildren, coordinate the volunteer program for newportFILM, a not-for-profit that brings great cinema to the community.

Community is indeed central to their lives—as it is for so many silvers here.

‘Active ageing’ doesn’t even begin to describe their enthusiasm and commitment. On 18 August, I attended the Rhode Island ‘Back to School’ Celebration with Tia, where 15,000 free backpacks filled with school supplies (donated or subsidised by a slew of organisations) were distributed to kids across the state from 11 locations. It was an incredible sight to see The Newport County Campus of the Community College of Rhode Island teeming with kids of all ages, accompanied by their parents and grandparents alike, as volunteers from AARP and BankNewport (the local bank) guided them through the venue.

“This is a wonderful grassroots effort and one of the outreach activities we are really proud of,” Deborah Miller, associate state director for AARP, Rhode Island, told me. With reason. Apart from taking home backpacks, school supplies, books and even socks, the families got the chance to interact with a variety of community



Tia and Ken Scigulinsky

agencies and get information about educational and recreational activities and services. And, of course, the intangible gains: a sense of bonhomie, belonging, being part of an organic entity that nurtures and nourishes.

For me, the real takeaway was an understanding of the strength of silvers as a force for change and advocacy; a fact that assumes even more significance in an election year—the Americans go to vote this November. Not surprisingly, both major parties are trying to co-opt this force to their benefit. While the Democrats featured the AARP in one of their ads to defend their record on Medicare, leading to an immediate (and indignant) response from the organisation, which prides itself on its non-partisanship, the Republicans are trotting out mothers (and tales of grandmothers) to plead their case.

I know one thing: it’ll take more than smart talk and smooth spiels to get the silver vote.

—Arati Rajan Menon



AARP, Rhode Island

100 DAYS, KNOWN AS THE WATERLOO CAMPAIGN OR HUNDRED DAYS OF NAPOLEON, MARKED THE 111-DAY PERIOD BETWEEN EMPEROR NAPOLEON I OF FRANCE'S RETURN FROM EXILE TO PARIS ON 20 MARCH 1815 AND THE SECOND RESTORATION OF KING LOUIS XVIII ON 8 JULY 1815.

TEA, the culprit

If a Glasgow-based study is to be believed, a statutory warning against excessive consumption of tea will soon need to be enforced. The new long-term research claims that drinking more than six to seven cups of tea every day can cause prostate cancer in elderly men. The warning comes after tracking the health of 6,000 men in a span of 40 years. It was concluded that men who drank an excessive amount of tea were at a higher risk of prostate cancer in comparison to men who had three to four cups of tea every day. This study contradicts previous ones that had showed tea as a risk-cutting factor in cancer, heart disease, diabetes and Parkinson's. In the latest research, participants aged up to 75 were requested to complete a questionnaire that followed the patterns of usual consumption of tea each day. It also tracked the consumption of coffee and alcohol, besides habits like smoking. About one-fourth of the



6,000 participants were found to be heavy tea drinkers; of them, 6.4 per cent developed prostate cancer later

in life. Tea being the favourite drink among Indians, it is yet to be seen if the study applies to the subcontinent.

DHANTOLI IN NAGPUR IS NOW HOME TO A SILVER WELLNESS HOSPITAL. FOUNDED BY DR SANJAY BAJAJ, A PREVENTIVE GERIATRICIAN, LAXMI GERIATRIC CENTRE AND PREVENTIVE HEALTH MANAGEMENT PROMISES TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT HEALTH ISSUES AMONG THE ELDERLY BY WAY OF REGULAR CHECK-UPS AND VACCINES. PERHAPS THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN THE COUNTRY, THE CENTRE AIMS TO MAKE THE LATER YEARS MORE HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE IRRESPECTIVE OF THE FINANCIAL CONDITIONS OF SILVERS. THE CENTRE—ENGAGED IN SENIOR HEALTH RESEARCH—WILL ALSO FOCUS ON PRACTICES LIKE PRANAYAMA, ACUPRESSURE AND HOMEOPATHY.



IN JUNE 2012, M V CENTRE FOR DIABETES MYLAPORE, PERUNGUDI AND ROYAPURAM, IN CHENNAI, ANNOUNCED THE LAUNCH OF ITS 'SENIOR CITIZEN 80+ OUTPATIENT PRIVILEGE CARD'. THE CARD PROMISES 50 PER CENT CONCESSION FOR OCTOGENARIANS ON TESTS LIKE PP BLOOD SUGAR, UREA, CREATININE, FOOT EXAMINATION, LIPID PROFILE AND ECG.

WALK FREE

Thanks to a brand new navigation system launched at Hinduja Healthcare in Mumbai, **knee replacement surgery just got easier, safer and less painful.** As Dr Vivek Allahbadia, consultant joint replacement surgeon at Hinduja Healthcare and the first to conduct this surgery in Mumbai, explains, "There are two types of knee replacement surgeries—one is a conventional method where you capture the exact point on a X-ray and conduct the surgery with cuts; the other is a computerised method where holes are drilled on to bones and pins inserted. This new upgraded technology avoids the pain involved in both methods." The navigation system uses infrared cameras and tracking software to conduct surgeries without using the conventional pins. "The new system is not only simplified but uses less time," adds Dr Allahbadia. Though the price is higher than existing procedures, 10 patients have already undergone the surgery after it was launched in May this year. Apart from being patient-friendly, the system also works in favour of surgeons, as the training required is less than other methods.





WHAT DO READERS LOOK FOR IN A MAGAZINE? IF WE SAID ADS, WOULD YOU FALL OUT OF YOUR CHAIR?

How often is it that you get to hear that people actually look for ads? That ads are seen less as interruptions and more as supplements to content? New research* indicates that magazine readers go through every page at their own pace. Even the ads. In fact, for most readers, ads seem to complete the magazine experience. Visit www.aim.org.in to read more about the research findings.

84% readers believe ads are part of the magazine experience

12% ad avoidance for magazines (lowest among all media, with TV at 31%)

83% readers don't see ads in magazines as interruptions. (TV ads are thrice as likely to be seen as interruptions)

*Qualitative research by Quantum, followed by a large scale quantitative study by IMRB, with 3600 people, across 10 cities.



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Association of Indian Magazines

SKY HIGH

Her wings have been on fire for half-a-century. When Rabia Futehally walked into the cockpit of a single-engine Piper PA 18 at the all-male preserve of the Bombay Flying Club in 1962, clad in a sari, she created quite a stir. After all, finding women behind the steering wheel was a rare sight even on the roads then. Today, life has come full circle for the first woman credited with acquiring a private pilot's licence (PPL) in India. Rabia, 76 today, has been inducted into the International Forest of Friendship (IFF), an international aviation organisation, in recognition of her contribution to women's aviation in India. The honour places her in the league of legends like the Wright Brothers and Amelia Earhart.

Her father, radical in his thoughts, was the wind beneath Futehally's wings. "My dad, three brothers and my husband had all joined the Bombay Flying Club, which was close to our home," she reminisces. "And all that they seemed to do those days was fly; and while not flying, talk about flying. I was nursing a nine month-old daughter. But even she couldn't veer me away from all the adrenaline-charging talk around me. One day I just walked up to my dad and asked whether I could join them too. Without batting an eyelid he told me to get into the car, which took off straight to the flying club."

She was just 25 then, and the only lady in a boisterous group of around 50 boys. Her only focus was to quietly learn her lessons and slip away. Shrugging off the importance given to her attire, she says, "There was nothing spectacular about flying in a sari. In those days, we did everything in a sari, whether it was playing badminton or table tennis. I even used to climb the mountains and go trekking in saris."



However, it was the sight of a sari-clad Futehally at the Bombay Flying Club in 1965 that caught the eye of Isabelle MacRae, a member of The Ninety Nines, the first women's aviation club set up by American aviator Amelia Earhart. Her interaction with MacRae convinced Futehally that there were other women flying in India. A comedy of errors played out before the discovery though. The letters MacRae sent got mixed up—Futehally got the one meant for Chanda Budhabhatti (Bombay Flying Club) and the latter got Futehally's. Along with Mohini Shroff (Bombay Flying Club), the duo tried to ferret out more women pilots by writing to flying clubs across India. Eventually, in 1969, the India's Women's Pilots Association (IWPA) was launched with 12 members.

Futehally still recalls steering joint flights with her husband to different parts of India. "That was our way of spending quality time," she chuckles. Over the years, aviation has become a way of life for her family. Her gift to all the children in the family, including her daughters, nieces and nephews, on their birthdays has stayed constant: a spin in the skies. While her eldest daughter Sumaira is a full-fledged pilot today, the middle one, Saira, is a flight attendant, and the youngest, Suraiyya, is a professional sailor, clearly carrying on the legacy of adventure in the family.

Does she have any regrets that she couldn't take up flying as a professional career? "None at all," comes her prompt response. "Airline flying calls for a lot of dedication. With my husband, in-laws and children to take care of, I could not have done justice to it." Then, with a chuckle, "Life has been one hell of a joyride, nevertheless."

—Srirekha Pillai

BIRTHDAYS



● American silver screen icons **Martin Sheen**, **Dustin Hoffman**, **Steve Martin**, **Robert De Niro** and **Sean Connery** celebrated their birthdays in August on 3, 8, 14, 17 and 25; they turned 72, 75, 67, 69 and 81 respectively.



● American president **Barack Obama** turned 51 on 4 August.

● WWE Hall of Fame wrestler **Hulk Hogan** turned 59 on 11 August.



● Legendary actor **Vyjayanthimala** turned 76 on 13 August.

● Former American president **Bill Clinton** turned 66 on 19 August.

● Legendary singer **Asha Bhosle** turns 79 on 8 September.

IN PASSING

● **Prabuddha Das Gupta**, one of India's finest fashion photographers, succumbed to a heart attack on 12 August in Alibaug, near Mumbai. Famous for celebrating the female form, his photographs were akin to art. He was 56.



● Two-time chief minister of Maharashtra and Union Minister for Science and Technology **Vilas Rao Deshmukh** died of liver failure at a hospital in Chennai on 14 August. He was 67.

● Freedom fighter and former Maharashtra minister **Prabhakar Kunte** passed away on 15 August. He was 92.

● **Nina Bawden**, author of over 48 books, most of them for children, passed away in London on 22 August. She was 87.



● American astronaut **Neil Armstrong**, who in 1969 took a 'giant leap' for mankind by becoming the first man to set foot on the moon, died on 25 August at the age of 82.

● The grand old man of Hindi cinema, 97 year-old **A K Hangal** died on 26 August following a brief illness aggravated by a fracture on his thigh bone. With 225 films to his credit, Hangal was a recipient of the Harmony Silver Award in 2007.



OVERHEARD

"Ageing? What ageing thing are you talking about? I have more fun everyday now at this age. I enjoy acting more and more than when I was 17. Acting was rather painful in those days, but I loved doing it. I have more fun now. In fact, I've gotten to the point where if it's not fun, I don't want to do it."

—**American actor Tommy Lee Jones, 65**, in an interview with website lifegostrong.com

Healing touch

M P K NAIR, 80, THRISSUR



“We believe Ayurvedic treatments work well when the patient is relaxed and happy”

I have spent most of my professional life within four walls—right from the time I kick-started my career as a clerk in Cochin Commercial Bank Ltd, till I became the chairman at Federal Bank in 1988. After retiring in 1995, I was engaged as the finance director at ASIANET television channel for four years from 1998. It was around this time that my sisters urged me to take over the ancestral building, an old dilapidated *nalukettu* (traditional Kerala house) in Parlikad village in Thrissur district; it was in urgent need of renovation.

Within a year of acquiring it, I was advised by an architect to go for a new *nalukettu*, almost identical to the old one, but with all the modern amenities. However, the death of my wife made its use as a residence redundant. While I was exploring the possibilities of utilising it in some other manner, a friend of mine, who happens to be an Ayurvedic doctor, suggested that the property be used to establish an Ayurvedic health centre.

Along with two of my siblings and the doctor friend, I floated a partnership firm, Ayuryogashram. The

objective was to promote Ayurveda by providing treatments for rejuvenation, obesity, skin and beauty care, body purification, better immunity and longevity, relaxation and stress management.

We started the centre with four rooms, four therapists, one doctor and six other staff members. As the space was insufficient, we laid the foundation for another building. We constructed three rooms with attached baths to facilitate the official launch in September 2001. In 2003, we leased an adjacent small building



Sivaram V

owned by one of my sisters with two bedrooms, one living room, a small veranda, kitchen, bathrooms, and thus added a family unit as an additional facility. As other partners were reluctant to make additional contributions to the capital fund, we faced a stalemate. We also realised that our day-to-day activities would call for spot decisions to be taken by an individual, without waiting for the consent of all the partners. According to the agreement, I took sole charge, by agreeing to refund the other partners their contribution of ₹ 400,000 each towards the capital fund within two years.

At present, we have 11 rooms, five treatment rooms, one conference hall and a small gym in the complex. A new office block is under construction, where we plan to house our outpatient division, pharmacy, and so on. We engage the services of three doctors, around 10 therapists and 15 other people. We believe that Ayurvedic treatments work well when the patient is relaxed and happy. So we go all out to make our guests feel at home.

The property, spread over 2.5 acre, has tall trees, sprawling lawns and a swimming pool. Guests are even allowed to cook the vegetarian food of their choice in our kitchens if they desire.

As Ayurveda deals efficiently with age-related problems, most of our guests are senior citizens. People from around the world come for treatment. Our doctors provide Ayurvedic treatment for arthritis, psoriasis, spondylosis, backache, constipation, diabetic disorders, eczema, frozen shoulder, general weakness, hypertension, insomnia, joint pains, knee pain, migraine, nervous disorders, osteoporosis, Parkinson's, sinusitis, post-natal care, etc.

So far, we have not subscribed to any marketing strategy except for Google's AdWords scheme. We sincerely believe effective promotion happens through word of mouth. Happy clients are our best advertisement.

Though I have just turned 80, my output hasn't slowed down. I still work for 16 hours every day, waking up just before 6 am and going for an hour-long walk. Till 8.30 am, I go through newspapers. If necessary, I spend an hour going through my daily mail. Thereafter, I have my bath and breakfast. The rest of the day is completely devoted to Ayuryogashram.

Hard work makes my world go round. People call me a workaholic, but I'm not complaining. My only prayer is that I should not be forced to remain idle, ever.

—As told to Sirekha Pillai

ACCOUNT FOR THE FUTURE

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

I am a retired businessman with experience in finance reports. I would like to use my knowledge and talent and pursue accountancy. How should I start?

Although the knowledge of a professor in accounts is the same as that of an accountant, there is still a lot of difference. You will need basic degrees in your name to start



practising accountancy—at least a diploma or bachelor's degree is required. Acquiring licenses for this profession is also necessary. That done, it's an excellent option for you as accounting is a demanding market and matches your skill sets. You can start with a small-time firm or niche businesses to build up your experience. This will facilitate jumping to bigger and better places. A career in accounting needs experience in various areas. With your experience, it gives you an added advantage to excel in this field. Do work on your communication and interpersonal skills as well. Making friends for clients is not a bad thing. Build up your contacts with people who are already experienced; this will open up other doors.

—Vishwanath Paralkar is a Mumbai-based freelance accountant

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

THIS IS THE PLACE TO DO IT. REACH OUT TO FELLOW READERS WITH INTERESTING ANECDOTES, INSPIRING STORIES AND HEARTWARMING MOMENTS FROM YOUR LIFE. WRITE IN WITH FULL CONTACT DETAILS, AND MAKE THIS SPACE YOUR OWN.

THE INNOVATOR

As a child, I remember wrapping a jute string around two cross strips of wood and running with my 'airplane', pretending I was flying it! It is hardly surprising then that my earliest memories are of trying to design aircraft and 'flying'. In fact, it's funny that I lost my first chance of getting into the Indian Air Force (IAF) because of my aeromodelling. I was so involved in my miniature aircraft that day that I forgot all about my UPSC exam. Fortunately, I did better the next time; I joined the IAF in 1967 as a fighter pilot and flew to my heart's content for over 20 years.

My love for science had not gone anywhere, though. I worked on many creative suggestions for aircraft systems that could make things easier and simpler for flyers. Although some of them were small-time changes, there were others that were radical innovations in flying as well as technology. As for the acceptance of these changes, I used to insist that Newton's Law of Motion applies as much to matter as it does to the mind: the mind in a state of rest will

Ghouse: Giving wings to dreams



Shyamola Khanna

continue in a state of rest and will refuse to change course! People are so used to a certain way of thinking that they find it very difficult to accept anything new. It is a known thing that any new thought or idea is always ridiculed at first; only with time comes acceptance.

While I was doing a course at TACDE (Tactical Air Combat Development Establishment), I pointed out that a certain flying manoeuvre would not work in view of the missiles used by the enemy aircraft. I was told to obey orders but many years later I learnt that my suggestion had been implemented. When I came to a position of authority, I was able to implement some effective changes. At the same time, I came to a crossroads where I realised that if I were to pursue my dream of implementing changes, I could not possibly further my career.

I took premature retirement from the IAF in December 1990 and sent in a proposal to Air Headquarters with all my suggestions. A few months later, Chief "Nimmi" Suri called me personally to go ahead and work on my proposals. I put together a team of experts in their respective fields—mechanical engineering, hardware, software, fluid dynamics, electronics, IT—and we formed Innovative Systems Design (ISD) in Hyderabad. One of the many things we worked on was the Mig-23 'black box', which I had suggested should go completely digital to save man hours and get better efficiency. Unfortunately, ISD had to close because I was told that the IAF had run out of money!

At the Nuclear Fuel Complex in Hyderabad, scientists had made a robotic vehicle that could carry loads of radioactive fuel from place A to B. It worked well as long as it was going ahead; if it had to reverse, it would invariably go wrong. So I stepped in and worked out a special set of 'free floating castors' that were later patented in my name. The vehicle I designed cost half the value of the earlier one, weighed less than half, and carried three times the weight. I hear it is still in use.

At Hindustan Batteries Ltd (HBL) in Hyderabad where I joined as design head, I made a number of significant changes; some minor, some major.

In 2005, I happened to be browsing the Net when I came upon the concept of extracting energy from the ocean. I was convinced it could be done—back then, the US had worked out a model that was very expensive and therefore

commercially not viable at all. I quit HBL and started working on my model. I am still working on it. The Government of India has given me some funds and trials are to be held for the second time at IIT (Madras). I have complete faith in my working model and I know if it is put into place, this will be the next big thing.

—Gp Capt (retd) Syed Mohommad Ghouse, Hyderabad

SECOND NATURE

Writing is my habit; it is both second nature and an inner compulsion. At present, I cannot waste a single day without writing. I was born in 1932. I started writing when I was a student of Panbazaar Girls' School in Guwahati in 1944. During that time, we brought out a handwritten magazine called *Salita*, where I wrote for the first time a poem called *Jonbai* and a short story called *Janani*. Since then, I have made it a habit to stick to my pen.

I did my master's in English in 1954 from Calcutta University and subsequently another master's in Assamese from Gauhati University. While I worked as a journalist for several years—beginning as a sub-editor of *Nilachal*, an Assamese weekly, in 1968—I subsequently became the editor of three magazines, one after the other: *Saptahik Janajivan*, *Saptahik Sanchipat* and *Pashekia Chitragada*. In 1980, I quit my job to become a fulltime writer and columnist.

I have now 64 books to my credit. These include 33 novels, 16 short story collections, nine essay collections and six translation works. These apart, I also contribute regularly to several newspapers and magazines. For my novel *Abhijatri*, a biographical novel based on the life of Chandraprabha Saikiani, a firebrand revolutionary and social activist of early 20th century Assam, I received the Sahitya Akademi award in 1994. *Aragamini*, again a biographical novel, is based on the life of Indira Miri, another eminent lady who pioneered education in the remote hills of the erstwhile North-East Frontier Agency, now Arunachal Pradesh. And for my novel *Anya Jivan*, I was conferred the Saswati Award in 1987 from Women's Organisation in Bengaluru and the Basanti Devi Bordoloi Award from the Asam Sahitya Sabha in 1989-90.

In several of my novels, like *Anya Jivan* and *Ei Nadi Nirabadhi*, my stories revolve around rivers and the lives of village folk. For me, the river is a metaphor for life. My themes also primarily focus on women and their problems. That is why some people often call me a feminist. But at the core of my heart, I am a humanist. I want to shed light on social prejudice, political injustice and gender disparities through my writings. Women should come forward to understand what equality is; they should make themselves fit intellectually as well as physically to compete in the man's world.



Tapati Baruah Kashyap

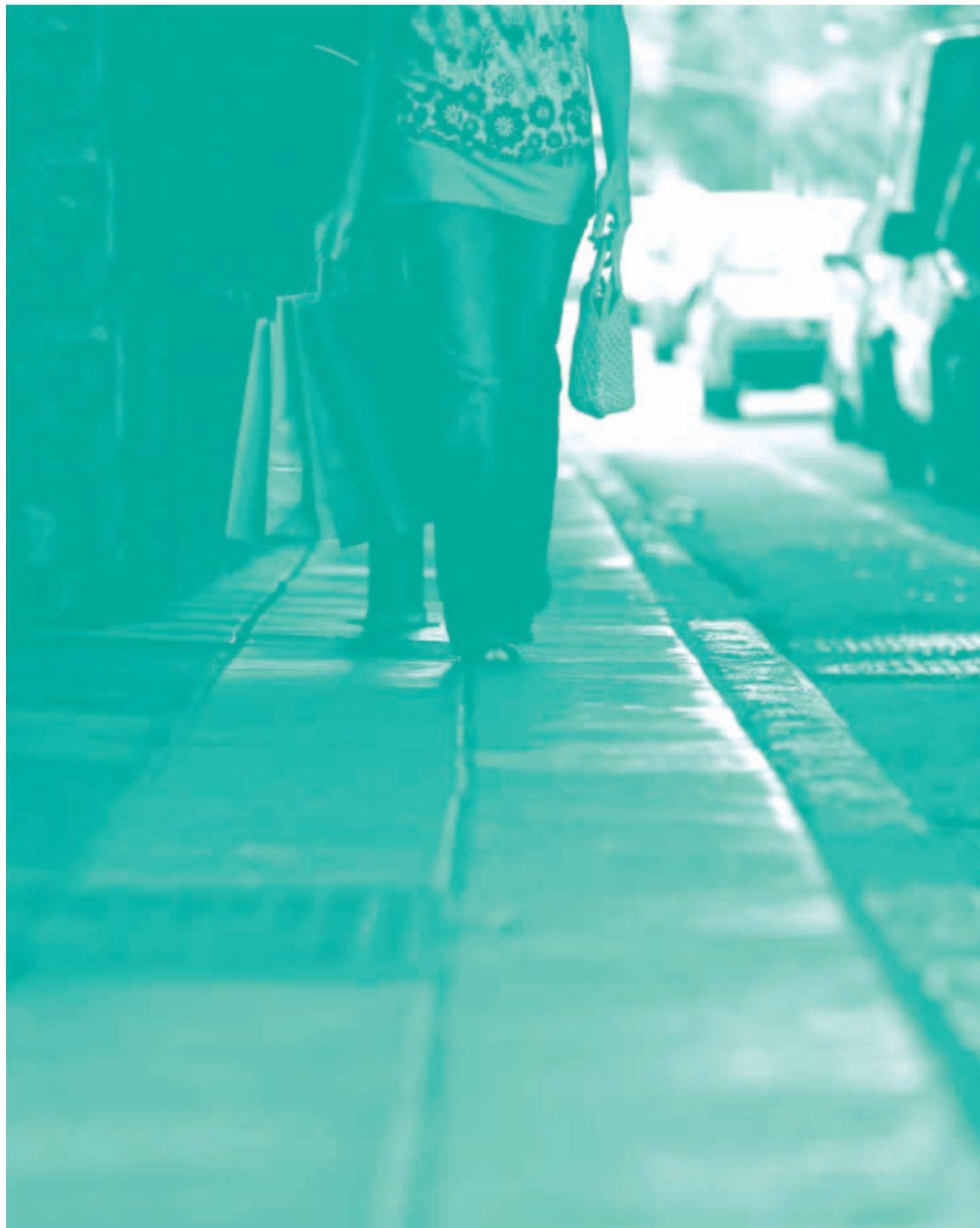
Bargohain: The pen is mightier

My husband is also an eminent writer; we have lived separately since 1977. Since then, I have faced tremendous troubles. While writing brought me very little money, a literary pension of ₹ 400 per month from the state government since 1980 was all I had to bring up my two sons. Those were the toughest days of my life but I managed to overcome them with determination and grit. I have assimilated my grief in the characters of my favourite novel, *Ipaaror Ghar Siparor Ghar*, which I wrote during that difficult period. All the characters were drawn from the residents of a shelter for destitute women in Guwahati, which I visited numerous times to understand the problems of the women there.

Through all my troubles, my pen has provided me maximum inspiration. Today, I can say that my struggle has paid me rich dividends. Both my sons are well settled and that is my greatest satisfaction. While Anindya is a bank officer, Pradipta is a professor of English in Gauhati University. When Anindya was posted in Kolkata, I lived with him from 1987 to 1992. That was when I completed my autobiography, *Biswas Aru Sangsayar Majedi* (Through Belief and Fear).

The pain in my hip joint restricts me from going out and I write more than I used to ever before. While Anindya is now posted in Udaipur, I live with Pradipta in Guwahati. I now write regularly for several Assamese newspapers and journals. In 2001, I got the opportunity to visit Europe; it really rejuvenated my spirit. I believe life is a blessing, which we should neither ignore nor waste.

—Nirupama Bargohain, Guwahati



WHEN READERS CONFESSED THAT MAGAZINES OFTEN TRANSPORT THEM, WHO WOULD'VE GUESSED IT WOULD BE TO THE MALL.

That magazines help build brands, we already knew. However, new research* indicates that magazines drive sales just as well. With ads in magazines performing far better than other media, on scores of purchase intent. Apparently, people actively seek information on brands in key categories, and then, act on that information. Visit www.aim.org.in to read more about the research findings.

57% purchase intent based on ads seen in magazines (amongst the highest across media)

62% readers find magazines trustworthy and reliable (higher than any medium)

54% readers trust products more when they are advertised in magazines

*Qualitative research by Quantum, followed by a large scale quantitative study by IMRB, with 3600 people, across 10 cities.



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EATING RIGHT BY ANJALI MUKERJEE

High-strung: Battle blood pressure with DASH

I am 72 years old and have just started working again. I am prone to hypertension due to my previous job. How can I eat right to prevent the condition? I have heard something about DASH—Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. Can you tell me more?

Hypertension or high blood pressure is a common condition among silvers; in fact, it affects more than two out of every three individuals over 75 years of age. Many heart studies indicate that even people with normal blood pressure readings at the age of 55 have a 90 per cent risk of developing hypertension. It is important to control high blood pressure as it makes the heart work too hard and contributes to hardening of the arteries as well as increasing the risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and blindness.

There is a strong link between a healthy diet and disease prevention. Food choices have an impact on blood pressure. Likewise, high blood pressure is more common in people who are overweight or obese. Losing weight and a healthy eating plan can reduce the risk of developing high blood pressure and help lower blood pressure that is already too high. Both these also help reduce medications required to control high blood pressure.

DASH stands for 'Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension'. It is a study conducted by an agency of the United States Department of Health and Human Services to prevent and control hypertension. The DASH diet is a lifelong approach to a healthy eating plan that is designed to help treat or prevent high blood pressure. It encourages you to reduce the sodium in your diet and eat a variety of foods rich in nutrients that help lower blood pressure and offer numerous other health benefits.

Nutrients like potassium, calcium, magnesium, protein and fibre are crucial in fending off high blood pressure. To include them in your diet, just focus on a diet rich in whole grains, fish, chicken, fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products.

The DASH diet

The DASH diet includes whole grains like wheat, *jowar*, *ba-jra*, *naachni*, fruits, vegetables, low-fat yoghurt and milk in larger quantities; fish, chicken and *dal* in moderate quantities; and red meat, sweets and fats in restricted quantities. The diet is essentially low in fats, sodium and cholesterol.

Ways to incorporate the DASH diet in your regime

The key to following a DASH diet is by increasing fruit and vegetable intake. Aim for at least four to five servings of vegetables and four servings of fruits per day. Half a cup of cooked vegetables approximates one serving. Green leafy vegetables, coloured vegetables and cruciferous vegetables like broccoli and cauliflower are particularly healthy. To increase the vegetable intake in your diet, start off by adding an additional serving at lunch and dinner.

With regard to fruits, eating a whole fruit is optimal but one of your fruit servings can be a glass of 100 per cent fruit juice. Add fruits to your meals or consume as snacking options. Legumes such as beans, lentils, and unsalted nuts are also an important part of the DASH diet. Have at least one to two servings (one serving is about one-third of a cup) a day from this category. Nuts can constitute one serving but opt for unsalted nuts without added oil. Emphasise on fish as well as white meat choices like chicken over red meat.

Nutrients like potassium, calcium, magnesium, protein and fibre are crucial to fend off high blood pressure. Focus on a diet rich in whole grains, fish, chicken, fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts and fat-free or low-fat milk





READERS ASK

What foods should I eat to get adequate protein in my diet?

When choosing protein-rich foods, pay attention to what comes along with the protein. Some protein comes packaged with healthy fibre and micronutrients; some protein, like red meat, comes with lots of unhealthy fat. Here are some good sources:

- Fish not only provides protein but contains iron, Vitamin B-12 and Omega 3 fatty acids.
- Eggs are one of the least expensive forms of good quality protein.
- Chicken is also a great source of protein and low in saturated fat. In addition to protein, it provides a good amount of B vitamins and zinc.
- Dairy is not just important for bone health; the protein in low-fat dairy products, such as yoghurt and skim milk, also helps maintain healthy blood pressure.
- Nuts are a great source of protein and good fats. They are also a slow-burning food, leaving you feeling full longer.
- Whole grains are a great source of protein, but when it comes to protein content, quinoa is the best source. It contains all the essential amino acids, making it a 'complete protein'.
- All beans, lentils and peas are good vegetarian sources of protein. They are also rich in fibre, folate, potassium, iron and magnesium.
- Tofu and other soy foods are an excellent alternative to red meat. In addition to being a good source of protein and calcium, soy products contain a group of plant chemicals called isoflavones, which help prevent certain types of cancer, heart disease, and osteoporosis. They are also moderately rich in important minerals such as zinc, magnesium, iron and selenium.

Choose oils high in mono-unsaturated fats such as olive oil or canola oil. Opt for fat-free salad dressings like lemon, vinegar, orange juice, honey, mustard. Use fat-free or low-fat milk products like milk, yoghurt or *paneer*. Preferably use skim milk. Start with two servings a day of dairy products, and slowly increase your dairy intake to three servings per day. Change your typical snacks like chips and *farsan* to unsalted nuts, raisins, low-fat milk and yoghurt, unsalted plain popcorn with no butter and raw vegetables.

A major dietary factor that affects blood pressure is a diet high in sodium. Lower consumption of sodium is conducive to blood pressure control, even if you are taking blood pressure medication. Start using salt-free seasonings like spices, garlic and onions to add flavour to your meals without adding more sodium. Do not consume more than 2-3 gm of salt a day. Studies show that if you follow the DASH diet and reduce sodium intake, you can get the benefits of reduced blood pressure in as little as two weeks.

A good way to change to a healthy eating plan is to write down all the foods you consume along with their quantity for two weeks. Note the areas that need improvement. This will help you analyse your diet and make relevant changes. If you are trying to lose weight, choose an eating plan that is low in calories. Maintain a healthy weight and be physically active. Combine everyday chores with moderate-level sporting activities such as walking. Drink alcohol only in moderation. In addition to raising blood pressure, too much alcohol can add unnecessary calories to your diet. Take prescribed drugs and follow all these lifestyle changes. Further, some supplements like garlic and Omega 3 fatty acids also help to control high blood pressure.

Here's a sample menu to guide you.

Breakfast: One whole-wheat bread sandwich with vegetables like lettuce, tomato, onion and green *moong* sprouts; a banana; one cup of fat-free milk topped with a teaspoon of cinnamon.

Mid-morning: A glass of vegetable juice made with a carrot, four tomatoes, three cloves of chopped garlic and an apple.

Lunch: Wheat or *jowar* chapattis; half a bowl of *rajma* curry or steamed fish in garlic; one cup of cooked green vegetables; a cup of raw salad; a glass of buttermilk.

Evening: A cup of green tea; carrot slices with a light yoghurt dip and any fruit like peaches/cherries.

Dinner: Brown rice or *jowar* chapattis; a cup of green vegetables; a cup of low-fat yoghurt; a cup of *dal*; raw salad.

Bedtime snack: An orange or a sweet lime.

Dr Anjali Mukerjee is a nutritionist and founder of Health Total, which has 15 centres in Mumbai to treat obesity and other health-related disorders. Visit www.health-total.com. If you have a question for Dr Mukerjee, write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



Fall safe: The elderly, without any obvious reason, tend to fall frequently. This may lead to injury or fractures. What is the reason for such falls? Are they preventable?

Falling is the leading cause of injury in silvers; with age, the risk increases and could also cause fractures and limit one's ability to lead an active, independent life. Millions of older men and women are disabled, often permanently, owing to falls. Even the psychological fear of fall can be equally disabling. However, it is possible to prevent falls and injuries by making simple changes in the surrounding environment and following safe practices. Most falls occur in the bedroom and bathroom because of lack of proper lighting, slippery floors, clutter on the floor, and minor obstacles.

Risk factors for falls

Falls in silvers cannot be attributed to a single risk factor; they usually occur owing to a combination of risk factors.

Medical risk factors

- Poor or deteriorating vision.
- Taking four or more medicines daily; especially medicines for depression, anxiety, nervous disorders. These medicines can lead to a confusion or drowsy state in which an older person is more likely to fall.
- Bone weakness (osteoporosis); decreased calcium intake (in the form of yoghurt, milk) decreases the bone mass density, which could cause falls.
- Difficulty in hearing; older people often suffer from hearing defects; they might not hear vehicle horns and are, hence, more prone to accidental falls.
- Reduced physical activity and prolonged immobilisation; owing to severe illness or fracture.
- Mental health problems; in a state of confusion or disorientation, one might not realise what one is doing or where one is walking.
- Impaired balance and unsteadiness of gait.
- Underlying medical problems such as stroke, arthritis, thyroid disorders, and diabetes mellitus.
- Reduced muscle strength, coordination, poor reflexes; mostly because of age-related fragility and weakness.

External factors

- Lighting: when the light is too dim.
- Floor: when it is uneven or too slippery.
- Stairs: when the steps are either too high or uneven; also when the hand rails are absent.
- Bathroom: when the lighting is dim, the floor is slippery, or the toilet seat is low.
- Obstacles in the environment: When a room is not clear and the path is obstructed by minor obstacles such as books, furniture, papers, elders are more likely to trip and fall.
- Roads: when the roads are not even or when a proper pedestrian crossing is missing, elders struggle while walking, increasing their risk of falling.

Complications from falls

After suffering a fall, one's quality of life deteriorates rapidly; immobilisation can affect general health. Fractures are more common in silvers, especially in those with osteoporosis—in fact, hip fracture is most frequent owing to falls. Even head injuries can't be ruled out.

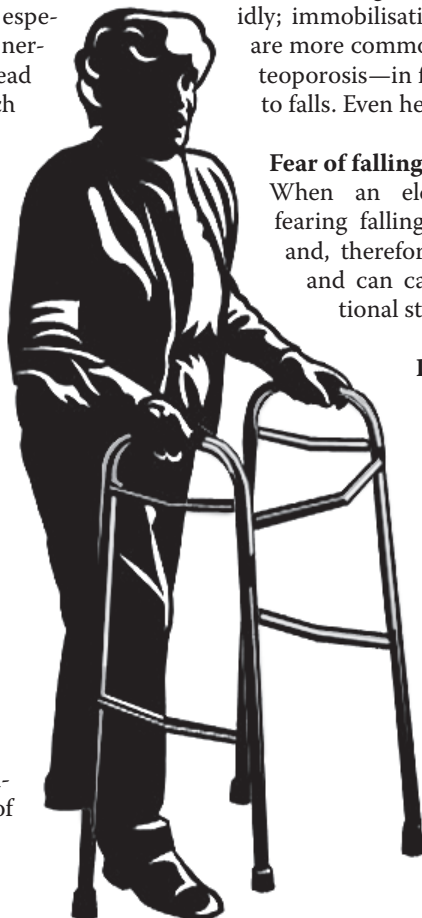
Fear of falling

When an elderly person falls, he could begin fearing falling again and restrict himself physically, and, therefore, socially. This compromises mobility and can cause stiffness of joints as well as emotional stress.

Prevention

The aim of therapeutic intervention is to improve functional capacity, decrease falls and reduce the risk of injury. Physical therapy has a major role to play in fall management in people who tend to fall often. Strength and balance training may help reduce the risk. It is, therefore, very important to keep the patient as mobile as possible.

- Conduct thorough body check-ups and find out if there are any risk factors for falls; pursue proper treatment.
- Vision should be tested periodically and corrected if defective.





When an elderly person falls, he could begin fearing falling again and restrict himself physically, and, therefore, socially. This compromises mobility and can cause stiffness of joints as well as emotional stress

- Hearing should also be tested regularly. Medical removal of ear wax can improve gait and balance.
- Medicines may affect coordination or balance and cause falls. A doctor should be consulted regarding the side-effects of any drugs taken.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Avoid getting up too quickly from bed and walking immediately.
- The use of a cane, walking stick or walker will help maintain balance.
- Use proper footwear.
- Regular physical activity strengthens and tones muscles; this eases mobility by keeping the joints, tendons and ligaments more flexible.
- Increased intake of Vitamin D and calcium (among

other nutrients) helps preserve bone mass. Intake of anti-oxidants delays frailty and decreases risk of falls.

- After a fall or a fracture, early mobilisation of the patient should be encouraged. Counselling sessions help the patient regain confidence.
- A history of repeated falls should be viewed seriously. The advice of a physician should be sought in such cases.

Environmental modification

The home environment should be closely assessed and appropriate modifications made. These include provision of good lighting in the living area, staircase, use of night lamps, removal of loose rugs and cords, use of non-slippery flooring with anti-skid tiles (especially in the bathroom), provision of secure grabbers/hand rails, and chairs with arm support.

Remember, a fall could become a complicated condition and affect your quality of life. As we say: the first fall is the beginning of old age and the second fall, the end of it.

Padmashri Dr V S Natarajan, a specialist in the field of geriatric medicine, runs Memory Clinic, a service for silvers in Chennai. If you have a question for him, write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

Dispassionately yours: Cultivate yoga's most cherished quality

Believe it or not, the quality of dispassion is the most cherished quality toasted by yoga practice. It does not mean a lack of interest but rather steering clear of distracting emotions, which is actually an intense challenge.

Dispassion or *vairagya* is the ability to step back from crushing emotions, and channel them to better a situation. A good example is a stage performer; he could use the fear he feels before going on stage to dramatise his stage presence charismatically—or allow it to petrify him into forgetting his lines. Other negative emotions that can be equally crushing are envy, jealousy, anger and depression, among others. The reality of life does usher in such emotions. However, if we train ourselves to step back, we come to handle the situation and, of course, the emotion, better.

In yoga, the quality of *vairagya* is best cultivated through control and focus on exhalation. This is easier said than done. Though inhalation is an automatic and strong biological activity, most of us exhale weakly. This is interesting and may be easily tested if you try to inhale to a count of

four and exhale to a count of six. And if you add breath retention (this is not advised for those with circulatory and heart problems), the idea of how this works, not just psychologically but biologically, becomes apparent.

Overcoming one's natural instinct for inhalation after holding the breath and actually gasping for it, we are invited to suppress thousands of years of biological conditioning and actually exhale. That too, not for an equal length as inhalation, but double the length, thereby extending the demand on mental stamina even further. This is how we break through patterns of basic instincts and reactions and sublimate ourselves. Thus, all breathing exercises (*pranayama*) that encourage exhalation to a specific ratio aid us with impulse control and help cultivate *vairagya*.

The best *pranayama* in this regard is *anulom vilom*, and the translation best explains just how: 'against natural order'. The other *pranayama* that extend exhalation are the humming bee (*brahmari*), cooling breath (*seetali*) and hissing breath (*seetkari*), particularly if done with retention.

YOGIC MOVES

Reversing the natural order (*anulom vilom*)

Caution: Do a modified form of this breathing exercise without any retention if you have cardiac issues/high blood pressure. Sit in any cross-legged position, or even in a chair. Keep your left hand in the chin *mudra* (the tip of the index finger touching the tip of the thumb) and the right hand in Vishnu *mudra* (with the index and middle fingers bent, using the remaining fingers to shut and open the nostrils). Inhale and exhale twice, deeply. Closing the right nostril, inhale from the left to a count of four. Then shut the left nostril to exhale from the right to a count of six or eight. Inhale from the right to a count of four, and exhale from left to a count of six or eight. This is one round. Do up to



nine rounds. **Benefits:** This exercise creates calmness and mental harmony as it balances the left and right brain hemispheres. One of the most healing *pranayama*, it is therapeutic for all ailments and controls insomnia and emotional upsets.

Model: Savita Adavede,
Harmony Interactive Centre
Photographer: Haresh Patel

Shameem Akthar is a Mumbai-based yoga acharya. If you have any queries for her, mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org. (Please consult your physician before following advice given here)



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THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN MEET MANGI KAWAR BAI MARLECHA, CHENNAI

An engaging new series about the wisdom of love, nurturing and culinary bonding across generations

Having led a full life, she is the embodiment of grace and love. She finds it easy to connect with people, whether it is her contemporaries or her great grandchildren. She has created frameworks that induce a sense of well-being and care among the family. "I believe that whatever the issue, we will solve it with a collective decision," says her 25 year-old grandson Abhay. The statement reflects a certain faith in the family structure, which is reinstated by the daughters-in-law. In these days when joint families are fast disintegrating, Mangi Kawar's family seems a happy and comfortable unit, bound together by an intangible understanding that works across generations.

Born in Pipliya village in Rajasthan, a village whose claim to fame is the crashing of the meteorite in 1996, Mangi Kawar Bai, the wife of the late Lalchandji Marlecha, does not have a true record of her birthday. Her son Narendra informs me that she has just completed 86 years. I meet her on a warm summer afternoon in her 100 year-old, comfortable, spacious and non-intimidating house in Chennai. We discuss changing times, traditional recipes and the magic of the Rajasthani *manuhaar*, which means hospitality. She insists on feeding a mouthful of *kasaar* to each one of us, including the photographer, with her own hands. Having attended to our snacks and tea, she settles down to enjoy the conversation, speaking in her sweet Marwari dialect.

When were you born and where in Rajasthan do you come from?

I was born in Pipliya on the day of Samvatsari, an important Jain

festival. Actually, this is what I tell people about my birthday. As I don't know when I was born, I decided to choose an auspicious day [she adds with a twinkle in her eyes]. My parents-in-law are from Sojat village in Pali District.

When did you come to Chennai?

My father-in-law Bridichandji Marlecha migrated to Chennai. So I came here after marriage. I have visited Rajasthan and stayed there for months on end, but my longest stay has been in this house.

"The greatest change is in communication. We used to live in the *purdah* system and adhered to the dictates of the family. Unlike today, we could not argue or even question any decision. But now the youngsters insist on their viewpoint"

Is it true that you enjoyed dressing up and used to always wear the *borla* (head jewel)?

Yes, completely true. I never rushed myself while getting ready. I enjoyed wearing finery and was much appreciated for it.

Were your elders very strict?

They were strict but very loving. My father-in-law was quite short-tempered with his son but never with me. If I ever made *papad* in large quantities, he would immediately ask my mother-in-law to give me a gift. I enjoyed speaking to visitors and they always encouraged me, thus making a good host out of me.

Are things very different now from earlier times?

Yes, poles apart. Things have changed a lot from earlier times; but mark my words, they are going to change at a greater pace. The greatest change is in communication. We used to live in the *purdah* system and adhered to the dictates of the family. Unlike today, we could not argue or even question any decision. But now the youngsters talk to us, insist on their viewpoint and do things their way.

Don't you consider that an ideal thing? Is it not important to have one's own will?

When you find happiness with others, it becomes irrelevant. You just learn to live in harmony and peace.

What was the attitude towards money then?

Nowadays, saving is secondary and spending is primary. But earlier, savings would be planned meticulously. Purchase of provisions, vegetables and fruits was planned in detail to avoid any wastage. That is how our elders managed to build such a large and sturdy house. We are enjoying the fruits of their hard work now. We easily hosted our family marriages here.



Photographs by Chennai Pix



Kasaar

This Rajasthani sweet is very popular in most traditional homes. Easy to prepare, *kasaar* is a favourite during travel and can be preserved for weeks.

Ingredients

- Wheat flour: 2 cups (run through fine sieve used for *maida*)
- Jaggery (*gud*): 1½ cups; crushed
- Ghee: ½ cup
- Edible resin crystals (about the size of green gram): 2 tbsp (see tip)
- Coriander seeds: 1 tbsp; crushed coarsely

- *Khopra* (dried coconut): ½ cup; chopped fine
- Almonds (optional): ¼ cup; slivered
- Cardamom powder (optional): a pinch

Method

Heat half the ghee in a wok. Lower the flame, add wheat flour and roast evenly on low flame for 5-6 minutes. Add resin crystals and coriander seeds; the resin will gradually fluff up because of the heat. Continue to roast for another 5-6 minutes. The flour must eventually turn golden brown.

Now add *khopra* bits and mix; remove from flame and set aside. Heat the remaining ghee in another wok and add jaggery. Lower the flame; as soon as the jaggery melts, switch off the flame. Allow to cool for a minute or two. Now mix jaggery, roasted flour and garnish with almonds and cardamom. Store in an airtight container and enjoy as a snack. **Tip:** While collecting the ingredients, check if the edible resin crystals are crisp. To ensure this, just add a few in hot ghee and they will instantly fluff up. Otherwise, they must be placed in the hot sun for a few hours.

What is the secret of peaceful living as one grows older?

Never ever say 'No.' Do not interfere in your children's lives. Accept them and the choices they go on to make. Enjoy your own religious or spiritual practices. That really keeps me happy and content.

What did you teach your daughters when they got married?

I always believed that if we worked with our hands, it would build our stamina. I always told my daughters to cultivate tolerance. I believe that we managed our lives so easily only because we were taught to be tolerant. And finally, I taught them to enjoy cooking because it is an easy way to win hearts.

What is the secret of tasty cooking?

Patience. It makes all the difference. I feel that even though my daughters and daughters-in-law cook really well, they do not roast the flour for *laddu* and *halwa* as patiently as I did. Though I know the difference, I do not point it out to them. The taste can say a lot about the patience and perfection with which one has prepared the dish.

"I always believed that if we worked with our hands, it would build our stamina. I always told my daughters to cultivate tolerance. I believe that we managed our lives so easily only because we were tolerant. And finally, I taught them to enjoy cooking because it is an easy way to win hearts"

What is the highlight among your cooking episodes?

Once, my daughter's father-in-law came home with some guests. Those days we did not get readymade sweets. So I quickly made *halwa* using semolina and wheat flour. The guests thought it was almond *halwa* as its texture was so perfect.

What are your best recipes that are popular among your family members?

[The family chimes in to reply to this question.] Among sweets, it is *falodi*, *besan ki chakki*, *kasaar* and *lapsi*. Among savouries, the *besan sev* of my house is much liked and we make it on every special occasion. Apart from these, I used to make large quantities of *papad*, *khhichiya* and *rabodi*.

No wonder then that everyone speaks of you as a storehouse of traditional Rajasthani recipes. Which recipe would you like to share as a legacy?

If you ask me for just one recipe, it is *kasaar*. It is easy to make and can be mastered if you have the patience. Do not allow the flour to turn deep brown, it must be perfectly golden.

Pratibha Jain, an author and translator from Chennai, is the co-author of two award-winning books Cooking at Home with Pedatha and Sukham Ayu. Her area of specialisation is documenting Indian traditions through research, translation and writing



The fabric of CHANGE

Photographs by **Stella Paul**

Can a yard of fabric lead a society from unrest to peace? ‘Yes,’ affirms Hyderabad’s Kusuma Rajaiah who created Ahimsa silk—an alternative silk fabric made without killing silkworms. **Stella Paul** meets the man behind the groundbreaking innovation

This is not just another consumer product but a concept aimed at changing hearts,” says Hyderabad’s Kusuma Rajaiah of Ahimsa Silks—a revolutionary silk fabric that is spun without killing silkworms. The 57 year-old textile technologist from Andhra Pradesh State Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society Ltd (APCO) is eagerly looking forward to 2014—the year he retires from his job. But leisure is the last thing on his mind; in fact, he is planning to use his unique yarn to not

only transform the textile industry but also contribute to the making of a more peaceful society.

AHIMSA SILK, A UNIQUE FABRIC

In the production of regular silk, the cocoons are immersed in boiling water to kill the worms and spool the silk yarn. With Ahimsa silk, however, cocoons are left alone for seven to 10 days, until the caterpillars have metamorphosed into moths and flown away. Once the moth leaves the cocoon, the extraction of the silk filament begins.

“To weave a normal five-yard silk sari, one has to kill at least 50,000 silkworms,” explains Kranti Kiran Kusuma, Rajaiah’s son-in-law who manages the production of this unique fabric. “Those who know this think the killing is inevitable, while some don’t know this at all. We, however, check each cocoon individually to ensure that the moth has escaped before the silk thread is spun.” Now a small-scale, home-based business, it is supervised by Rajaiah’s parents, wife and two children, as Rajaiah himself is still an employed professional.

The whole process—from spinning to weaving—takes three months; it's longer than the conventional way of making silk, as the cocoons are collected at least a week after the worms have left them. At present, Rajaiah can produce only up to 2,000 m of silk every month. Yet the inventor has no regrets. "Mass production is not my goal; I want the fabric to reach those who are able to understand and value the thought of non-violence attached to it," he emphasises. "In fact, it is technically possible to develop this into a nationwide, even worldwide, venture with multiple franchisees."

FROM FARMING TO INVENTING

Rajaiah is no stranger to challenge. He was born in Nagaram, a remote village in Andhra Pradesh's Warangal district. Though he belongs to a weavers' community, there was no loom or spinning wheel at home as his family had been practising agriculture for a long time (now his parents have moved to Hyderabad with him). His parents dreamt of seeing their little boy become a doctor but back then, the village had neither motor roads nor electricity; only a school that could teach up to the third grade. Rajaiah had to change schools eight times before finally completing his 10th grade.

After completing his intermediate examinations, when he got the opportunity to study textile technology, he jumped at the idea. It was a course offered by the Indian Institute of Handloom Technology in Salem, Tamil Nadu, with a scholarship for students from disadvantaged communities. "A government job was all that I wanted at the time; something that would end my hardship. The course offered that and a stipend of Rs 150 to each student, which was a big bonus," recalls Rajaiah with a smile.

Three years in college proved to be more enriching than any monetary returns. During this time, he had the opportunity to learn various weaving techniques as well as the history, old

practices and how the craft shaped people's lives. It stimulated Rajaiah's young mind; he spent a lot of time with old weavers asking them many questions, whetting his appetite for knowledge. It left him with the urge to do something new, something truly different.

A decade later, this impetus finally led Rajaiah to the invention of a method to create silk without killing silkworms. The story, however, has a fascinating prelude: in 1990, Janaki Venkataraman, wife of the late Indian President R Venkataraman, visited Hyderabad. During her visit, the first lady asked whether APCO made

silk saris without killing silkworms. The query prompted Rajaiah, then a procurement officer at APCO—a job he bagged soon after completing his diploma in textile technology—to experiment.

"The beginning was really tough; I had only an idea and my passion, but nothing else. There were no raw materials and no equipment," remembers Rajaiah. "I knew I had to begin from scratch and follow a long-drawn process. From finding a farmer willing to grow silkworms to looking for a factory where I could spin yarn, I had to struggle before my experiment bore fruit. Finally, in 1991, the





Ahimsa silk derives its idea and the brand name from Mahatma Gandhi, who was also critical of the conventional method of silk production. In fact, he had written to the Silk Board of India to explore ways of producing silk without hurting any living being

Lohia Group of Industries in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, allowed me to use their facility. It was there that I took 100 kg of silk cocoons. Each of these cocoons was empty inside as the silk moth had bored a hole on the surface and flown away. Using the spinning equipment at the factory, I started to extract the yarn from these cocoons. Finally, I was able to spin 16 m of silk yarn.”

During the next 10 years, Rajaiah conducted a few more experiments. The first batch of silk he spun in Raipur was rather coarse in texture. He wanted to improve it. At college, he had also learnt about a few weaving, designing and colouring traditions that were no longer in practice. He wanted to revive and incorporate them in his fabric. These included making dyes out of eco-friendly and herbal agents such as onion peel, turmeric, black jaggery, and the bark of the *babul* tree. Of the designs, he tried

to revive the peacock motif that was once the benchmark of the Andhra handloom industry. Finally, in 2002, the Government of India awarded Rajaiah with the patent for the silk yarn Ahimsa.

A TRIBUTE TO THE MAHATMA

Ahimsa silk derives its idea and the brand name from Mahatma Gandhi, who was also critical of the conventional method of silk production. In fact, he had written to the Silk Board of India to explore ways of producing silk without hurting any living being. For Rajaiah, it's a matter of pride to have fulfilled that wish; a pride shared by those who use the fabric. “Though the fabric is made of cocoons that are technically ‘damaged’, it is much smoother than conventional silk,” says Sumedha Goswami, a Hyderabad-based social development professional who owns an Ahimsa silk stole. “Besides, it is a great feeling to

wear something that you know is not tainted by suffering or death of any creature and is, therefore, 100 per cent pure.”

WINNING ACCOLADES

Though Rajaiah owns no boutiques or showrooms and hasn't advertised the product anywhere, he already has a dedicated clientele comprising celebrities and leading designers. Among them are the former president of Indonesia Megawati Sukarnoputri and Suzy Amis, actress and wife of filmmaker James Cameron, who wore an Ahimsa silk gown to the Oscars this year. Apart from that, there are a number of leading designers in Israel, the UK, Europe and the US who regularly buy silk from him. Among Indian designers, Wendell Rodricks has designed innovative lines with Rajaiah's fabric.

The invention has also won Rajaiah several awards. Ahimsa International of New Delhi honoured him in 2008 for his humane approach towards silk production. Goethe Zentrum, a German educational institution, has made a documentary on Rajaiah and the Supreme Master Ching Hai International of Taiwan has conferred the ‘Shining World Compassion Award’ on him.

THE NEXT CHALLENGE

Having given the world something to celebrate, Rajaiah is now gearing up to contribute to another issue he is equally passionate about: education. In fact, he wants to use the profit earned from the sale of Ahimsa silk to support rural education. “Having lived in a remote village, I have seen how hard a child has to struggle to get education,” he says. “I also know the difference education can make in one's life. If it wasn't for the diploma in textile technology, I would have been suffering like thousands of other marginal farmers today, struggling to make ends meet. Now, I want to reach out and help those children who are orphaned and have nobody to turn to. I want to help them go to school.” 🌸

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A library in your pocket

Instead of loaning books, a Kozhikode library is lending Kindle e-readers to revive the reading habit—a first in India, discovers **Sadhana**

A library in Kerala is using digital technology to keep the reading habit alive—by lending the Kindle to its members. Not surprisingly, this slick tablet PC with a 6-inch screen and e-ink display (as close to a printed book as possible, without any reflection problems while

reading) has become the talk of the reading community in Kozhikode, where the Desaposhini Public Library has launched this first-of-its-kind initiative in the country. Why, Amazon, the maker of the Kindle, has even featured the initiative on its blog in a June 2012 post, titled 'Me And My Kindle'!

And what do you know? The library is already receiving four to five enquiries about the gadget every single day. "We hosted an inaugural function a couple of months ago, where Union Minister M V Raghavan introduced the Kindle to our members," says Krishna Kumar, president of the trust that runs the library, which will



Photographs by Haksar RK



THE LIBRARY IS MOVING TOWARDS COMPLETE DIGITISATION AND IS IN THE PROCESS OF CATALOGUING THE BOOKS, AFTER WHICH, **EVERY BOOK WILL BE SCANNED AND DIGITISED. THE LIBRARY WILL EVENTUALLY CREATE A WEBSITE THAT WILL INCLUDE A COMPLETE CATALOGUE**

soon start loaning the five Kindles it possesses. "It all happened quite by chance," he adds. "My son Karthik, who oversees the library's digital space, was gifted a Kindle when he was in Sydney. He thought this small gadget would be able to revolutionise reading habits in our hometown and so he bought four more Kindles and gifted them to Desaposhini."

There is a certain irony about a 75 year-old library using an e-tool to revive the reading habit, a practice whose virtual demise is attributed to the digital revolution. "It weighs barely a few grams, and its e-ink display gives the same reading pleasure you get when reading a book. The display resembles ordinary paper and it is also very easy to use," says Krishna Kumar.

And it's perfect timing, too. E-readers are currently the in-thing in India

and many seniors have succumbed to their appeal. "I prefer to use the Kindle when travelling but that does not mean books take a backseat," says 55 year-old Dr R Gopalakrishnan, a dentist and a member of the library who owns a Kindle. "Fonts in e-books can be resized, making it easier to read for people of any age." Karthik says the library has downloaded 200,000 e-books that are copyright-free from the Amazon site and will start by loaning these to members. "We have catalogued and stored them in our database and will lend two e-books at a time," he explains. "Members can take the Kindle home fully charged and they have to return it after 20 days. Every additional day will entail a small penalty." According to P Chandran, joint secretary of the trust, "Our library is moving towards complete digitisation and we are in the process of cataloguing all our books. After that, every



book will be scanned and digitised. We will eventually create a website that will include a catalogue of all our books."

The Desaposhini library, which started with just 438 books and 117 members, now boasts 250,000 books and



8,000 members. But it is more than just a library. The trust that runs it rallies the local community by hosting sporting and cultural events, and operates an employment forum, nursery and career guidance centre, among

many other activities. It has also won three state awards for its service to society.

With such a vast resource pool and access to the community at large,



Krishna Kumar: 'Kindle'ing a fire

Krishna Kumar is confident that the library's Kindle experiment will be a smashing success. "We organise weekly workshops so that our members can get used to the Kindle. We thought this new gadget would only invite young, tech-savvy enthusiasts but, to our surprise, we are getting enquiries from older people too, although senior citizens are a little apprehensive of taking the plunge." He adds, "Being a senior citizen myself, I read the *Ramayana* on the Kindle during the Malayalam month of *Karkidakkam*. The device is easy to use and has just four buttons to navigate. And believe me, the Kindle mimics printed paper, for those who still enjoy the feel of reading a book."

To entice senior citizens, 56 year-old Janardhanan, an active member and an ex-committee member of the library, has a suggestion. "The library should load age-old books on the Kindle as older people can relate to them. It would be wonderful to see senior citizens walking out of the premises with an e-library in their pocket." ❀

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OUCH

With the promise of providing better quality of life to silvers, advanced pain management is usually more cost-effective than conventional therapy. While the discipline remains at a nascent stage in India owing to lack of awareness, it is on the cutting edge of medical research globally. *Harmony-Celebrate Age* presents a detailed report

Modern medicine is a double-edged sword. While 'wonder drugs' and other treatments have increased the human lifespan, longevity, for many, comes at a price. The silver population is more vulnerable than ever to age-related ailments, making pain a crushing fact of life. Lifestyle changes and occupational hazards that make for unhealthy living also contribute to this predicament, and have turned pain from an effective signalling system into a chronic and debilitating condition.

According to Prof G P Dureja, who started pain-management services at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi and set up the Delhi Pain Management Centre, chronic pain is now considered a disease in its own right. "In India, it affects 30 per cent of the adult population, particularly women and the elderly," he says. "About 20-25 per cent of this population suffers pain from musculoskeletal and joint disorders; back pain accounts for another 25-30 per cent; headache and migraine 5 per cent; and cancer pain 1-2 per cent. Trigeminal neuralgia, postherpetic neuralgia and other neuropathic pain syndromes account for another 5-7 per cent of patients."

But does one need to suffer through the silver years? The answer, according to the medical fraternity, lies in advanced pain management. A super-speciality in the West, pain management is still at a nascent stage in India, says Dr Mahesh Menon, co-head, Pain Management Clinic, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Mumbai. "Although patients are being made aware of it by doctors, they are still quite apprehensive. Right now, either doctors or their immediate relatives are opting for these techniques. India has a growing population of senior citizens with age-related prob-

lems. Hopefully, we will soon see an amazing rise in the number of senior citizens opting for these techniques."

UNDERSTANDING PAIN

Pain has various connotations, depending on one's socioeconomic perspective, educational background and even religious beliefs. In India, pain is looked upon as *karmic* justice. But, according to the late neurosurgeon Dr Vijay Sheel Kumar, there is nothing noble about it. It only depletes one's energy and keeps one from living to one's full potential. "There is only one way to look at pain. It is nature's way of protecting us from injury," Dr Kumar, who pioneered the technique of ozonucleolysis or ozone disectomy in India as an alternative to surgery for spinal injury or lower back pain, had said.

One way to classify pain is as nociceptive and neuropathic. In nociceptive pain, the nervous system is working properly and the sensation of pain arises from external or internal injury; while neuropathic pain is caused by a malfunction of the nervous system. In other words, there is no obvious source of pain but the body tells the brain that injury is present.

Another way to classify pain is to associate it with disease. There are many ailments that are accompanied by a strong degree of pain, including arthritis, spondylosis, prolapsed vertebral discs, lower back pain, sciatica and cancer.

Pain can sometimes be mysterious without any physiological basis. Patients make the rounds of several specialists and are offered various treatment options but nothing seems to work. Dr S K Chaturvedi, professor of psychiatry at the National Institute of Mental

30%

of the adult population, particularly women and the elderly, suffer from chronic pain, which is now considered a disease in its own right. About 20-25 per cent of this population suffers pain from musculoskeletal and joint disorders; back pain accounts for another 25-30 per cent; headache and migraine 5 per cent; and cancer pain 1-2 per cent

As new frontiers in pain research open up and our understanding of pain deepens, doctors are increasingly adopting a multidisciplinary approach to treat chronic pain. Experts are unanimous that the future of pain management lies in specialised pain clinics equipped with a team of doctors and specially trained support staff

Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) in Bengaluru, offers an insight into an interesting dimension of pain. He says, sometimes, life events and psychological stressors such as interpersonal, domestic, financial, occupational, marital or sexual issues can act as triggers.

“A woman came to our hospital with pain on the tip of her nose,” narrates Dr Chaturvedi. “For over six months, she was treated with analgesics and other methods but that did not help. Though initial queries showed that she was well-adjusted to her husband, work and social life, further probing indicated a strained relationship with her mother-in-law. Counseling finally relieved her pain, quite literally. When dealing with pain, doctors ask questions such as ‘where is the pain, how much is the pain, what type of pain?’ Sometimes, we must ask—who is the pain?”

Dr Chaturvedi points out, “Let us not forget that pain is a common symptom of psychiatric illnesses like anxiety disorders, dissociative disorders, depressive disorders, hypochondria, somatoform disorders, drug dependence, alcoholism and personality disorders. The relationship between anxiety and depression

and chronic pain is intricate, and chronic pain may lead to or cause anxiety and depression.”

THE FUTURE OF PAIN MANAGEMENT

Approaches to pain management are as varied as the causes of pain and its experience. Orthopaedic supports, physiotherapy, over-the-counter medication, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), narcotic drugs and surgery are some of the conventional therapies used for pain relief.

However, as new frontiers in pain research open up and our understanding of pain deepens, doctors are increasingly adopting a multidisciplinary approach to treat chronic pain. Experts are unanimous that the future of pain management lies in specialised pain clinics equipped with a team of doctors and specially trained support staff. These clinics draw on specialties such as neurology, physical therapy, orthopaedics and neurosurgery so that patients can be comprehensively evaluated and have recourse to all the expertise they require.

As pain management in India is still considered a super-specialty meant only for the elite, there are only a few specialised pain clinics in the country, some of them within avant-garde medical centres. The techniques they use are minimally invasive and, although cutting-edge, easy to administer. As nascent as they are, techniques such as nerve blocks, stimulation through implantable devices, nerve regeneration and neuromodulation are steering treatment in new directions.

PAIN BLOCKS: Pain blocks are precision injections administered under local anaesthesia. Using C-arm (an imaging device), ultrasound or CT guidance, these injections are delivered with pinpoint accuracy at the site of the pain. With minimal side-effects, patients are quickly able to return to their normal routines and experience a better quality of life.

Pain blocks selectively block signals from nerves that carry the sensation of pain, without damaging the body. These techniques include radiofrequency current ablation; implant of pacemakers or spinal cord stimulators that blunt pain signals in the spinal cord; and implant of intrathecal pumps or tiny devices that supply medicines directly to the spinal cord for years.

ON THE CUTTING EDGE

- **Simple nerve blocks:** To pinpoint the nerve causing the pain
- **Radiofrequency denervation:** Back pain, neck pain, headache and trigeminal neuralgia
- **Transforaminal epidural injections or caudal epidural injections:** Backache and lumbar spondylosis with sciatica
- **Cervical epidural injections:** Neck pain and cervical spondylosis with pain shooting down the arm
- **Nucleoplasty:** Bulging discs (as an alternative to surgery)
- **Sympathetic plexus block (stellate ganglion, celiac plexus, hypogastric plexus):** Reserved for severe burning, shock-like pains that do not respond to medicine or surgery
- **Spinal cord stimulation:** Back pain in spite of surgical treatment, called post-back surgery syndrome
- **Spinal cord pumps:** Delivering medicines into the spinal cord using an electronic implanted device (reserved for severe pain)
- **Dry needling:** Using acupuncture needles for muscular pain and sports injuries
- **Ultrasound-guided soft-tissue injections and joint injections:** Knee, shoulder, etc, for sports injuries and muscle pain

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NERVE REGENERATION: Patients whose sensory pathways are damaged or destroyed suffer severe pain because of faulty 'incoming signals' in the nervous system. This is called neuropathic pain or nerve damage-related pain. For instance, patients with spinal cord injury experience severe burning, a 'pulling' sensation and electric shock-like pain. Cancer patients with nerve injury also experience debilitating pain. Nerve damage-related pain can be extremely disturbing and could push patients to the point of suicide. These patients may benefit from advances in nerve regeneration, which fixes signals that are abnormally firing in the nervous system.

MOLECULAR PAIN RELIEF: Pain is felt at the site of an injury because it is relayed via electrical impulses carried by nerves to the brain. These are called 'pain pathways' and function owing to various chemicals. By manipulating one or more of these chemicals, pain may be blunted or abolished.

For example, capsaicin, a chemical used in pain relief, is actually found in chillies. It acts

on a group of chemicals called vanilloid receptors and burns them out, as it were, so that they stop firing. This technique has been used in painful conditions like herpes, where the nerves fire continuously. Another example is ziconotide, a chemical found in the cone of a snail, which is used to block sodium channels, and is approved in the use of specialised devices implanted in the spine to reduce pain. In addition, cannabis is being studied extensively as it appears to play a crucial role in pain. One of the substrates for receptors for cannabis that is responsible for reducing pain perception is called anandamide, while one that blocks it is called virodhamide.

OZONUCLEOLYSIS: This technique was pioneered by Dr Vijay Sheel Kumar in India in the early 2000s. Ozonucleolysis or ozone disectomy is a cutting-edge procedure used to treat spinal injury and lower-back pain. It involves the injection of ozone gas into a prolapsed spinal disc. The ozone (O₃) breaks down into oxygen (O₂) and a single oxygen molecule (O) and shrinks the disc, thus relieving pressure on nerves in the spinal cord.

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Migraines are headaches caused by abnormalities in electrical activity and blood flow in the brain. Stress is one of the triggers for migraine. In fact, stress can aggravate all types of pain by altering the way we perceive it. Migraines typically have a throbbing quality, are usually one-sided and are accompanied by visual or auditory signals called 'auras'



Ozone is usually injected with a needle under fluoroscopic guidance. Patients may experience considerable relief in a matter of two to three sittings.

VISCOSUPPLEMENTATION: Viscosupplementation is used to treat osteoarthritis, where the cartilage in the knee joint and/or synovial fluid lubricating the joint is lost. The technique injects a fluid that mimics synovial fluid and acts as a shock-absorber.

This helps manage knee pain and improves mobility significantly. This therapy was introduced in India in the early 2000s. It is administered as multiple injections over three to five weeks. However, with recent advances, there is one type of injection available that can be taken once in six months. Dr Anant Patil, senior medical advisor, CNS & Emerging Markets, Sanofi India, says viscosupplementation improves

knee function as well as reduces pain. According to a study discussed at the European League against Rheumatism Congress, a single injection provided significant reduction in walking pain to patients with grade 2 and grade 3 osteoarthritis for 52 weeks.

MIGRAINE: Migraines are headaches caused by abnormalities in electrical activity and blood flow in the brain. Stress is one of the triggers for migraine. In fact, stress can aggravate all types of pain by altering the way we perceive it. Molecular research has shown how a chemical called serotonin plays a role in these disabling headaches, which are aggravated by triggers such as fasting, stress, exertion and even certain foods. Migraines typically have a throbbing quality, are usually one-sided and are accompanied by visual or auditory signals called 'auras'. Most patients throw up and avoid light, and 'sleep it off' to feel better.

The Pain Clinic at the Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Mumbai treats migraines along with neurologists. It uses special nerve injections and specialised medication to reduce the intensity of the pain. Certain types of headaches called cervicogenic headaches, caused by conditions affecting the neck and muscles at the back of the skull, are easier to treat with injections and procedures performed in operation theatres. However, migraines require a focused work-up, thorough investigation and appropriate treatment to prevent unnecessary impediments to a patient's quality of life.

WOMEN, BEWARE!

Age-related loss of bone mass or osteoporosis, coupled with wear and tear caused by ageing (osteoarthritis), afflicts a large segment of patients who experience joint pain. Women are more predisposed to these problems as are older people. These are 'non-modifiable' factors, while 'modifiable factors' lend themselves to correction. Here are some simple recommendations:

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: Regular exercise, walking and swimming improve muscle mass. These activities decelerate changes related to ageing. Women are more susceptible to osteoporosis owing to the loss of the female hormone oestrogen after menopause. Although studies lay emphasis on physical exercise at a young age, one consistent factor is its effect on muscles that support the joints and buffer shocks. Improvement in muscle strength helps mobility, prevents falls and adds to longevity.

DIET: Calcium deficiency is linked to osteoporosis. Poor calcium utilisation (especially in women who have borne children, are menopausal and have not replenished their body stores) also causes osteoporosis. International guidelines recommend 1,000 mg to 1,500 mg of oral calcium per day in elders, especially post-menopausal women. Improving your diet with higher levels of calcium and protein helps.

VITAMIN D: Sunlight, sunlight, sunlight! In addition to physical activity, a little ray every day is highly recommended. When the skin is stimulated by ultraviolet rays in sunlight, it initiates a chemical process whereby Vitamin D is manufactured in the body. Improved



NO PAIN, ONLY GAIN

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Vitamin D levels help absorb calcium and maintain healthy bone mass.

LIFESTYLE MODIFICATION: Cigarette smoking and excess alcohol rob the body of a healthy diet. And that great enemy 'stress' plays an important role in disturbing the healing and repair process.

DRUGS: Certain medications like steroids and thyroid supplements cause a decrease in bone mass. Patients must, therefore, keep their doctors informed of the various types of medication they may be taking.

—With inputs from Carol Lobo and
Radhika Raje

Life is a LESSON

SCIENTIST AND EDUCATIONIST PROFESSOR YASH PAL TELLS SUPARNA-SARASWATI PURI HOW WE CAN TURN AROUND THE WAY WE LEARN



Photographs by Anshuman Akash Jha

For those of us who grew up in the Doordarshan years, our introduction to Professor Yash Pal took place through a television series titled *Turning Point* that brought home matters of cosmic curiosity in a simple yet informed

manner, leaving many of us intellectually ignited and intrigued about the science of stars and galaxies and the world of discoveries. A staunch advocate of 'freedom of education', Pal is vehemently against 'compartmentalising' subjects of study.

A postgraduate in cosmic ray physics from Panjab University and a doctorate (in physics) from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the US, Pal has travelled extensively from scientific domains to expansive spaces of innovative learning with the

sole aim to know the 'why, when and how'. Recipient of an impressive array of honours, awards and international acclaim, he wears his titles with utter humility—to mention just a few, the Padma Bhushan awarded in 1976 for his contribution to science and space technology; the Marconi International Fellowship (the highest international recognition in communication) "to recognise wise and humane leadership in applying modern communications technology to meet the needs of isolated rural villagers in India"; and the 5th Annual Award of the Association of Space Explorers in recognition of best effort in bringing the benefits of space research home to earth.

Education is one of the key challenges the 21st century India is experiencing, says Pal. Despite constitutional changes like the Right to Education, significant reforms need to be implemented urgently for the country's educational edifice to truly improve and flourish. On the occasion of Teacher's Day this year, here are some of his valuable offerings as a scientist and educationist.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

You acquire education just as you acquire values and competencies. Right from one's birth, all kinds of questions begin to arise—some you ask and some you learn through experiment. For instance, crawling is not an easy thing to learn, yet an infant learns it on its own; and while crawling it begins to discover the ability to stand up supporting itself against a wall and tries to balance. So, there is an enormous amount of learning we do on our own. Gradually, we learn from others but the best learning is that which you acquire, not which is given to you. While the latter works sometimes, usually it is the learning you acquire that stays with you all along.

The learning moderated by society (for instance, the idea of going to a public school and scoring high marks)

can kill creativity. All activity schools are creativity-killing schools; unfortunately, we have not realised it and hence the trend continues. Even at higher levels, say the IITs, these are innovation-killing institutions. They give you competence but take away innovation.

In India, it is considered illegal to combine different disciplines. Discipline—from school through college and university—can constrain you. But knowledge (as in *gyaan*) can't be bound by disciplines. *Gyaan badhata hai jab disciplines mil jatey hain ek doosrey se* [knowledge increases when various disciplines merge].

We need freedom of education. In our colleges and universities, if you opt for science or humanities,

Even at higher levels, say the IITs, these are innovation-killing institutions. They give you competence but take away innovation

you are not allowed to study medical science. Hence you cannot innovate in medical technology, even if you had the passion to pursue it simultaneously. As a result, our medical technology remains outdated. For instance, our medical students have to study a voluminous syllabus that is so boring; doctors have to remember so much. We did not anticipate then that there would be a time when information would be made available to us through the Internet. Nobody thought of altering this approach because they think the harder it is to study, the more distinguished it is.

A similar disaster takes place in the entrance exam for IITs—the more difficult you make it, the better it is. The test paper is such that if an IIT

professor were to attempt clearing it, he would not be able to do so in 10 hours. We view it as a test of the student's stamina, but we need not keep such difficulties *en route* to good education as it is a futile effort that will not produce thinkers, which is what society needs.

There are those few who refuse to constrict themselves. It has been seen in the world that new discoveries and innovations have been made by those few who have walked on the periphery of their chosen discipline and not in the centre so that they may jump from the margins on to another totally different subject.

We don't change, we just copy. 'Importing technology' not 'creating technology' has become our culture. Twenty years back, I delivered a detailed lecture on "Why must we remain so utterly cubicked?" at AIIMS where I met a psychiatrist who invented a work of technology that has today become very important. It is called the PET scan (Positive Electron Tomography). Interestingly, the psychiatrist wanted to know how 'thinking' happens inside our mind, what things tick when a thought passes through, and he realised nothing could be done unless he looked inside the human brain with a fine resolution. However, back then there was no technology for him to accomplish his fascination.

I made a prediction to the AIIMS that in two to five years there will be such a machine available for about \$ 3 billion, which India would buy. Eventually, it took about a decade. It was with the help of this very technology that AIIMS doctors, on my request, investigated the state of my oesophageal cancer and I was almost cured, except for a small cluster of cells in one of the lungs. The procedure was repeated in a few months. Today, I have been totally cured. The point is that this new path-breaking technology was outside the purview of our medical fraternity, yet utterly useful to their line of work.

Science is fun and studying it is enjoyable. I chose to study physics primarily because of my curiosity. I have always maintained that developing a scientific temperament is cardinal to our progress as beings of this planet. Not to do so or be afraid of any such endeavour in this direction would mean not giving human capabilities a chance to flourish.

Life for me is an ongoing adventure. I never made any specific career choices. I engaged myself to learn more about whatever caught my interest. I still believe in it. Even while replying to questions people ask me through my column 'This Universe' in *The Tribune*, there are times I do not know the answer and I admit it to the one posing the query by saying, 'I will attempt to answer it; it may or may not be right'. I do not claim to know all the answers or that whatever I say is correct. Moreover, my life does not depend on it, which is why I often tell people that I am not in the business of delivering truth; I merely want to share my thoughts.

Social interaction and human contact in school are more important than bookish education. Studying and learning through books is not sufficient. One needs to learn from the world around us. This was elaborately articulated in the National Curriculum Framework 2005, essentially meant for schools. However, the recommendation ran into several controversies, particularly the ones dealing with some lessons in Hindi textbooks and the more recent one being on cartoons. You think children do not enjoy them? How then do you explain television's hugely popular Cartoon Network? For heaven's sake, learn to laugh at yourself.

Right to Education is important. First, we need to recognise that India cannot truly become a civilised country unless all our children go to school. Take the case of our performance at the London Olympics; we have much fewer medals in sports



compared to China. In China, all children go to schools where they have to play; their sportsmen get ready right there, in the school playgrounds. In India, not all go to school. You can't pick up sportsmen in their later years from Railways or other such institutions. Right to Education is important in another way by insisting that public schools have reservation. If we can implement this properly, a historic input for the future would be made.

The existing obsession of the young with gadgets is a good thing. I don't think it is terrible habit because, who knows, with that they can also become innovators and try to do new things. At the same time, our society has tremendous capability to incite peer pressure through gizmo programmes on TV. If we can go beyond

wanting to acquire a new gadget every day, it's not such a bad thing.

Silvers should become children again. Age, as a physiological reality, does slow you down. For instance, I cannot ride a cycle anymore.

Life is leisure. Whatever occupies my mind is fun and enjoyable. I do not treat it as an agenda that must be fulfilled; more so because my wife Nirmal has been an enthusiastic supporter throughout. Both my sons look after us immensely. Anil, 53, is a computer scientist in the US and Rahul, 51, works at the National Institute of Immunology in Delhi. Neither have any children but we are grandparents to our house help's family of a boy and a girl. They were born in our house and are studying in Amity.*

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A date with **SERENITY**

Lalita Phadkar returns rejuvenated after a healing fortnight in Ayurvedagram, in Bengaluru



As I grow older, I find some places have a power about them: to soothe, to centre, to heal. Our cottage in the mountains is one such place. I have just returned from another, just beyond Whitefields in Bengaluru, a place called Ayurvedagram.

I got stressed this summer with Delhi's hectic chaos, its power cuts and lack of water, the flat heat that makes tempers flare like a matchstick struck. I knew I needed more than a holiday: I needed some place where I could regain serenity.

A friend told me about Ayurvedagram, which offered 'healing stays' on the basis of Kerala Ayurvedic practices. I was sceptical. There are too many faddish places mushrooming where Ayurveda and Kerala massages become part of a five-star packaged health menu delivering pampering rather than fitness, body care rather than holistic healing.

My first hint that maybe this was different came when a qualified Ayurvedic doctor responded to my emailed queries. He suggested a 14-day detoxification, the 'Panch-karma' treatment, and clearly set out what he felt this could, and could *not*, achieve. When I asked about the

Kerala massages, he said he would decide which treatments I needed after my first consultation. Chocolate baths and rose petals were clearly not on offer. The programme seemed serious: no liquor, only vegetarian food and a strict, set regime. Excursions off-campus were a strict no-no. I took my leap of faith and flew into the far more civilised weather of Bengaluru. The Ayurvedagram car that met me bypassed the city, taking a surprisingly un-potholed rural road through green cultivated fields for much of the way. Already the red earth, monsoon skies and emerald fields together with the absence of crowds and smoke-belching traffic jams soothed me.

Then we turned into the 20 acre of heritage wellness that is Ayurvedagram, an idealised Kerala transplanted to the outskirts of Bengaluru. A short driveway led past stone guardian gods with red canine teeth to a stone flagged courtyard. The car halted in front of a *tulsi* plant in a temple-like structure, next to a 1950s Mercedes sitting under a palm-thatched garage. I took in the reception house, a single-storey, red-tiled grand Kerala home built mainly of teakwood. Beyond it lay a lotus pond, a *padipura* (the traditional Kerala royal gateway) and green, tree-filled spaces dotted with cottages and grander traditional mansions. This is a gentleman's country estate, I thought, looking at geese in a pen by the lotus pond, honking indignantly at a red setter that sat, dividing a yearning gaze between them and a pen full of rabbits.

Instead of the packaged sophistication of a five-star hotel, I was ushered down a short artefact-filled, teak-pillared corridor, over a very high teak threshold into the reception house, by a sari-clad lady with a long plait. "Welcome," she said shyly, "please step over the threshold. In Kerala, we believe God killed a demon on a threshold, so we never step on it. It's also good to enter with the right foot first."

I had gone back in time. Into a softer world where people lived in relaxed consonance rather than contention with nature and believed in a healing force that could be awakened by tapping into cosmic energy. The heritage aspect excited the history buff in me. Most of the buildings were 80-100 year-old Kerala houses, dismantled and lovingly restored here in Ayurvedagram. Thus, the reception house was actually the queen's palace of the Aranmula royal fam-



I HAD GONE BACK IN TIME. INTO A SOFTER WORLD WHERE PEOPLE LIVED IN RELAXED CONSONANCE RATHER THAN CONTENTION WITH NATURE AND BELIEVED IN A HEALING FORCE THAT COULD BE AWAKENED BY TAPPING INTO COSMIC ENERGY

ily, brought from the banks of the River Pamba in Kerala. The treatment centre had been the headman's house in Alleppey where the king would stay when he visited. I stayed in a Syrian-Christian cottage, its architecture and carvings quite distinct from the Mopala Muslim house that nestled near it. Our yoga, *pranayama* and meditation sessions were in a large mansion that had once belonged to a Namboodiri poet and freedom fighter.

Thus, the buildings together reflected the living styles of Kerala society in the 18th and 19th century. Their interiors, while comfortable, were sometimes gloomy because of all-wood walls and smallish windows. Plans are afoot to aesthetically upgrade them. While I welcome this, it will be a challenge preserving the charm of the interiors while bringing them in line with contemporary casual-chic standards. I hope the revamp will replace the incongruous *pichwai*, Jaipur miniatures and Rajasthani carpets with simple Kerala vegetable murals, artefacts like the Aranmula *kannadi* (mirror) and traditional woven mats.

Decor aside, over the 14-day programme, I got completely absorbed in the mild rhythms of the place. We were an



eclectic mix: from Japan, Portugal, Germany, Mumbai, Delhi and, of course, Bengaluru. Everyone enjoyed the experience together and strong bonds were formed. As I write this, I am looking at a beautiful origami crane a Japanese co-guest made for me as a farewell present. I am still in touch with her and three others over Facebook.

Underlying all activity was the presence of the four or five doctors. I did not know that Ayurveda is a five-year degree course with a year of understanding allopathic disciplines. Learning Sanskrit is mandatory because our herb-lore is contained in ancient Sanskrit texts. I was relieved to learn that Kerala Ayurveda is safe because it is plant and herb-

based, unlike the Ayurveda of the North, which also uses minerals and metals, some of which, like mercury, can be a two-edged sword. Apparently, the basic challenge is consistency. The same leaf at different seasons delivers different levels of efficacy. Kerala Ayurved Ltd, the parent company of Ayurvedagram, is currently engaged in research with Stanford University in the US to create consistent Ayurvedic formulations.

Because Ayurveda is holistic healing, doctors need to understand the mental makeup of guests. In my first two-hour consultation, apart from physical issues my doctor decided my treatments and medicines based on what af-



BEFORE BREAKFAST, WE ALL MET IN THE YOGA HALL. THIS YOGA WAS ALMOST MEDITATION, INVOLVING BODY AND MIND IN A FOCUSED CYCLE OF EFFORT AND RELAXATION. WE WERE ENCOURAGED TO DO ONLY WHAT WE FELT COMFORTABLE WITH

1,500 medicinal plants and trees. In the first few days, my brisk walk often degenerated into an exploratory amble as I learnt about the plants, listened to the orchestra of birds in the trees, explored the Kerala artefacts scattered around (a curly headed boat; a covered ox-cart called a *jhatka*; a *bhasm kuddaku* made from a single piece of wood around 100 years old to hold holy ash; *karivellaka*, the temple lamps of granite, now black with age and offerings), and peeked into any empty buildings.

Before breakfast, we all met in the yoga hall. Imagine a high-raftered ceiling with cream walls pierced by many windows through which daylight softly filters. A red oxide floor, neatly covered with individual sheets. At one end, a carved wooden Goddess dominating a raised stage. Earlier, the house owners hosted cultural events in this hall. Now, every morning we padded in, barefoot, and lay down in *shavasana* after a *namaskaram* to the serene yoga master, Mohanty. Listening to the strains of Vedic *mantra*, we drifted, deeply relaxed until the *asana* began.

This yoga was almost meditation, involving body and mind in a focused cycle of effort and relaxation. We were encouraged to do only what we felt comfortable with. Once, a rather obese guest with insomnia went to sleep waiting for the rest of us. That session was punctuated with his gentle snores varied by the occasional whiffle. He later told us it was his most satisfying sleep in months! The 45-minute sessions ended with us chanting *Om shanti, shanti, shanti*, the sound reverberating off the rafters. After class, the yoga master addressed individual issues—my aching knee, his weak lower back, her stiff joints—providing each of us with a tailor-made set of exercises. The stretches increased energy and flexibility, but equally they increased hunger. Breakfast was a glorious cornucopia of South Indian dishes and I ended every yoga session grateful that it was next on the agenda!

The dining area in Ayurvedagram is simple, a low Mangalore-tiled structure, open on three sides with wooden tables and chairs, yellow and red place mats and earth-coloured crockery with the occasional chipped edge. The rear of the dining area held a sink, liquid soap and a towel.

fected me emotionally, and how I dealt with situations and people. The days were thereafter punctuated by little plastic pill boxes or glasses left in my room, neatly marked with my name, and when and how I should have the decoctions and tablets in them. On my last day, my doctor discussed the impact my basic personality could have on my health. Dr Manu, bless him, managed the tightrope walk of telling the truth without hurting my ego or feelings. I left positive and happy. I could do this, I felt. Live life amid urban chaos, without stressing out!

Our days did have a loose routine: at dawn I would walk the meandering pathways, amid the fragrance of over

IN THE AFTERNOON, THERE WAS GROUP MEDITATION IN THE YOGA HALL. MY PEAK EXPERIENCE HERE WAS THE *MRITUNJOY* MANTRA JOYOUSLY RINGING OUT IN THE DARKENED HALL WHILE I LAY, EYES CLOSED, TRYING TO FOLLOW THE EXHORTATION TO EMPTY THE MIND AND CONNECT WITH COSMIC ENERGY

A disposable towel roll would have been better as everyone, including me, was reluctant to use a communal towel....

All meals were buffet-style, vegetarian—light, low on oil and *masala*—presented in a charmingly old-fashioned service, with descriptive labels, handwritten and sometimes gloriously misspelled! The ambience of a country home was furthered by Ranger amiably wandering among the tables. I loved the food and felt with some alarm that I could return heavier. Thank God, the vigorous exercise and treatments proved more than a match for my unashamed overeating. Nayak, in charge of the dining area, took pleasure in hearing what guests would most like to eat and producing it for them. He was helped by the fact that as Ayurved-agram grew most of its own vegetables organically, the taste of the vegetables was superb. It was mainly an Indian spread, a token nod to Western cuisine being trotted out religiously at breakfast in the form of a pile of brown bread—in all my 14 days, I never saw a single slice eaten.

Treatments were twice a day—after the breakfast and post-afternoon meditation session—with separate wings for women and men. The centre of the house was a grassy rectangle, open to the sky, surrounded by a colonnaded, red-oxide veranda. Once the site of many a heated village meeting when the house belonged to the Alleppey headman, now one relaxed here before treatment, sipping the herbal pink water on offer. Each treatment suite (four to a wing) had a bathroom, dressing area, massage room and, most interesting of all, an old-fashioned steam closet that encased you up to your neck and broiled your oiled self. The wooden massage table in the loose shape of the human body was traditional. One corner of the dimly lit room held an altar with a lamp burning. In another sat a gas stove to warm the medicinal oils or herbal poultices called *potli*.

Against a soft backdrop of recorded Vedic hymns, the massages were expectedly amazing. A synchronised oil massage by two masseuses remains a memory of heaven; another all-round favourite was the royal massage, the



pizhichil, three-and-a-half litres of medicated oil slowly poured over the body and rubbed in with gentle circular motions. As a fellow guest dreamily put it, "I'll never know how I made it back to my cottage; it was like drifting on cotton-wool." Some treatments were more focused: the *kadivasthi*, where oil was poured onto my lower back within an herbal paste boundary, escorted a nagging pain into permanent exile; the *shirodhara* helped me sleep even more soundly. The masseuses strictly followed the doctor's treatment chart. When I tried to extend the *pizhichil* over more days, the masseuse looked so shocked that I gave up. I did, however, win the War of the Enema. Apparently, the doctor had scheduled two for me. On hearing that I was ready to return the favour to anyone who tried to give me one, the girls giggled and desisted. They then put me through an extra hard oil rub with *potli*, explaining, "If no enema, then this."

As the girls spoke little English and I spoke no Malayalam, I didn't always understand why a particular treatment was prescribed. What I felt was their pride and belief in their work. When they needed to hurt to heal (in my case, by rubbing a pulled muscle) they did, ignoring any squeals with impassivity and stolid stubbornness of purpose. After treatment, there was a session of *pranayana* before lunch. The wide range of breathing exercises forced oxygen into different parts of the lungs. While some exercises like 'pant like a dog' defeated me, the entire session left me feeling as if every blood cell had received an energy pill!

In the afternoon, there was group meditation in the yoga hall. My peak experience here was the *mritunjoy* mantra joyously ringing out in the darkened hall while I lay, eyes closed, trying to follow the exhortation to empty the mind and connect with cosmic energy. Sometimes, I felt as if I was falling away in time and space, endless, infinite. Sometimes it was a waking sleep from which I rose refreshed; once or twice I must confess, meditation hour became my nap time. The evening treatment rounded off the structured part of the day. After a walk and an early dinner, you could sit in the reception house where Internet through WiFi was available, watch TV in your room, or join up with other guests to create your own entertainment either in the dining area or in the *padipura*.

The *padipura* had two little rooms on the ground floor on either side of the gateway arch and a library, with a long oval table with chairs on the first floor. One of the ground floor rooms had a table-tennis table, a carrom board and, in a cupboard, some board games, card sets and jigsaw puzzles. Two guests from Mumbai volunteered to buy more games. As soon as word got around that their trip to a mall was sanctioned, a boarding-school-like rush to freedom ensued! The doctors frowned, but overrun by giggling claims of public service, they saw off a carload of guests, feebly warning us not to eat or drink anything and



to return soon. Plunged into the world of consumerism after days of abstinence we gawked at designer chocolates, designer clothes and other gewgaws, though we obeyed the injunction against food and drink. Late in the evening we returned to a somewhat tight-lipped greeting, carrying an armload of games such as Jenga, Ludo, Monopoly and Snakes and Ladders. Thereafter, almost every evening, groups would get together in the *padipura* and play games, chat, read, argue and entertain each other in a way I had almost forgotten could happen in this age of television, DVD and video games.

Back in the whirlpool of Delhi, when tense times swirl, I close my eyes and return to gentle memories of Ayurvedagram: the goose girl with her line of geese on their morning round of exercise, the Japanese lady who spoke no English but whose smile lit up her eyes, the treatment supervisor who proudly insisted I taste her *sambaram*, the historical buildings nestling in natural beauty. There is indeed something special about this place, something fragile that goes beyond the Ayurveda and the yoga, the treatments and the *pranayama*. The substitution of human warmth for showy glitz. People connecting without facades. This is what will bring me back again and again. This to me is the heart of Ayurvedagram's gentle mantra of healing.

To learn more, go to www.ayurvedagram.com

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Photographs by **Chennai Pix**

Like father, like son

Mention his name in art circles in Chennai and it is met with fondness and respect. Maniam Selvan has donned his mantle with grace, not only through his work but by the decisions he took at a tender age. **Jayanthi Somasundaram** walks down memory lane with this famous illustrator

It's difficult to mention Maniam Selvan without recalling his legendary father. It's something Ma Se, as Selvan is fondly called, is inured to. As he slides images across the screen of his iPad, Selvan lets you into a privileged world—the works of the great Maniam, his father. And, then, the penny drops. The illustrations of both father and son exhibit the same, fastidious attention to detail.

ART

“Many people think it's easy to be an illustrator. I often get phone calls from writers who narrate just two lines of their stories and expect me to illustrate them. What can I do with two lines?” shrugs Selvan, who was christened

T S Loganathan but rechristened ‘Maniam Selvan’ (‘Son of Maniam’ in Tamil) by popular writer Savi.

Selvan's father's illustrations for *Ponniyin Selvan* by celebrated novelist Kalki Krishnamurthy became a benchmark for illustrators across the world. “My father and Kalki would travel across the country to research regions and study characters to illustrate the magazine.” Pointing to a painting on a wall in his home, Selvan says his parents lived in Mamallapuram for over a month so that Maniam could observe and draw. “Here's a photograph they took, and this is my mother posing as one of the characters.



With this picture, he would create a base and add all the other characters and details," he shares.

Selvan carved his niche in the art world early, exploring various mediums—pen and ink, watercolours, acrylic and pastel—and illustrating a range of subjects including mythological stories, fiction, humour, and even children's books. But, as he reveals, he never wanted to become an illustrator. "I wanted to join the Army or the Air Force, so I joined the NCC in school," he recounts. "My father was at the peak of his career when his diabetes started to affect him, and he soon lost his vision. I felt utterly helpless; all I could do was bring him his art supplies. I was 16 years old and I had to decide what path to choose. I think it was our family circumstances and seeing my illustrious father suffer that made me take to drawing. Fortunately, I discovered that I could draw."

The young lad wanted to join the J J School of Arts in Mumbai but chose to stay closer home; he enrolled with the Government College of Arts in Chennai, just like his father, who passed away not long after. "I graduated as a gold medallist, but I didn't want to become an illustrator as there

was no money in it. I still remember how upset my mother was when I decided to take up the arts as a profession as she had watched my father struggle," Selvan says.

Times were tough but they not only made a man out of him; they turned him into an artist. "I used to illustrate between classes and during the lunch break. I would cycle to a publishing office and submit my work before rushing back to college," he recalls with a chuckle. "I enjoyed what I did and I sweated it out. That was real happiness." He admits his father was a "gate pass" to the profession and that he landed his first opportunity purely because he was the son of 'Kalki Maniam'. "In time, I created my own individuality and people approached me for my work and style."

In his silver years now, Selvan feels he should limit the projects he signs up for, in the pursuit of pure passion for his craft. "Although I thoroughly enjoyed the work I have been doing, it was always for someone else. Now, I would like to work for myself." And, no, he's not 'slowing down'. "When we are young, we are more confident and daring and are willing to take risks. But when we reach a certain age, we are careful about everything we do." About retirement, he adds, "Many retired people feel they have reached the end. I believe there is a lot that can be done after retirement. In fact, in the creative sphere, there are a lot of people whose talent only blossomed after retirement, like famous Tamil writer Sujatha."

Selvan has over a thousand works stored on his iPad. But what about his father's original works? "I might do a show but I would need sponsors or a gallery to support me. I will definitely not give away any of his works. I might give them to my children and their families, if they want them," he says. Evidently, if the legendary Maniam left behind a legacy more precious than his body of work, it's a son who's done him proud.

SPARKLE OF THUMRI

THE SIMPLE CHARM OF A THUMRI AND DADRA LIES NOT JUST IN MUSIC AND LYRICS BUT ALSO IN THE EXPRESSIONS OF THE SINGER. THE BEGUILING ENERGY OF A LOVER, THE MOODS OF A MOTHER AND THE LOVE OR LONGING OF A WIFE, EVERYTHING COULD BE ACTED OUT WITH A SOULFUL THUMRI. GIRIJA DEVI, THE VARANASI-BASED 84 YEAR-OLD LIVING LEGEND OFFERED TIPS ON THE ANDAAZ OF A BYGONE ERA RECENTLY AT A WORKSHOP AT THE NATIONAL CENTRE OF PERFORMING ARTS (NCPA) IN MUMBAI, TITLED 'MASTERCLASS'. AT THE EVENT, SINGERS LISTENED TO APAJI, AS GIRIJA DEVI IS



FONDLY CALLED, SPELLBOUND; AND WHEN THEY ASKED HER A QUESTION, SHE WOULD PICK OUT A PAAN FROM HER FAMOUS SILVER PAANDAN AND ANSWER WITH THE NAZAQAT OF A STAR FROM THE 1960S. GIVING EXAMPLES, SHE ACTED OUT A HOLI THUMRI, SHOWING HOW ONE SHOULD GREET THE FESTIVAL. AND RECREATING THE SCENE WHEN SITA SHARED THE SWING WITH LORD RAMA, APAJI SANG THE LOVELY TUKDA, SIYA SANG JHOOLE BAGIYA MEIN RAM, WITH AN EMOTION THAT INSTANTLY CONJURED UP THE RAMA-SITA LOVE STORY, EVEN IN THIS KALYUG.

DRAMA QUEEN

Mala Pasha and her troupe have been responsible to a great extent for theatre revival in Hyderabad, reports **Shyamola Khanna**



THEATRE

For any artist worth his act, what can beat the high of seeing the 'Housefull' board proudly dangling outside the theatre arena? For Hyderabad-based Mala Pasha and her English theatre group Torn Curtains, a 'full audience' is a repeat act, stage after stage.

The latest instance: a rendition of Lee Mueller's iconic English play *Murder Me Always* at Secunderbad Club in the last week of July, where tickets were sold out in just a few hours. With an Indian context and nuances in place, the Indianised version of the play proved to be a runaway hit with the audiences.

This is a far cry from the theatre scene in 1972, when Pasha, her brother Tony Mirchandani and the late R V Raman (partner, Torn Curtains) went to see an English play at the Ravindra Bharati theatre in Hyderabad. They were shocked to see only 36 people in the hall that had a seating capacity of 1,080. Undeterred by the poor turnout they witnessed, the trio resolved to get a full house for Torn Curtains' first show, which they planned to hold at the same venue two months later. The trio went from house to house to sell tickets. Ultimately, they staged their first play, *The Letter* by Somerset Maugham, to a full house, a tradition they aim to emulate every time they put up an act.

Torn Curtains is one of the earliest English theatre groups of the city, the other being the Dramatic Circle of Hyderabad. Both specialise in adaptations of pre-war British classics, with murder mysteries and comedies galore. "Though English theatre existed

Photographs by Shyamola Khanna

**100 FIGURES 115
TIMES IN WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS.**

in India much before Torn Curtains, it was foreign in ambience, accent and attitude, making it difficult for people to relate to it," points out the theatre activist. Pasha concedes that Torn Curtains, which has brought theatre into a city where theatrical culture and awareness were almost non-existent, owes its success to the Indian adaptation of English plays. In fact, Torn Curtains engages in English as it is spoken in India, without any fake or local accent.

Speaking about the theatre scene in Hyderabad, Pasha says that with more youngsters taking an active interest in plays, and with more sponsors and theatre festivals doing the rounds, the stage is all set to take theatre to the next level. However, she rues the fact that while opportunities are aplenty, there is a lack of dedication on the part of most actors. "Earlier, an actor belonged to a certain group and wouldn't work with others," she



says. "Nowadays, actors jump from one group to another, seeking exposure and opportunities. What I find irksome is that most of them do not even give a thought to their craft. It is important to do the trudge—learn the basics, learn all the aspects of on-stage and back-stage management and take a few lessons in voice technique. But sadly, this is missing today."

Although she has dabbled in many things—modelling in her younger days, being a stylist to friends, and indulging in business and acting—Pasha

continues to do what she does best, theatre. "I am an actor; give me a stage and I shall perform," she says with unrestrained pride. "I have lived and breathed theatre for almost 30 long years. I have done everything behind the scenes as well as onstage, right from handling the scripts, coordinating and selling tickets to designing brochures and arranging the finances." Her husband, who is an eminent lawyer, lovingly calls her '*nautanki*' while her four children, all lawyers too, are part of her fan club, which continues to grow by the day.

MULTI-CRAFT MASTER

For the first time, artist S G Vasudev is going mini. He is working on a series of small-sized canvases (6×6 inches) and enjoying this new and challenging space. The 71 year-old artist began his career with caricatures but soon adapted to several ways of expression and came to be recognised as a leading contemporary artist. For transcending barriers (which he believes are in our mind), he gives credit to his education at the Madras School of Arts. "The principal gave us complete freedom of creativity and our teachers never interfered with our work. We were always persuaded to have our own technique,"



recalls Vasudev, who bagged the prestigious National Award from the All India Lalit Kala Akademi as a student. Allowing his work to cross the canvas and extend to other media like copper and silk tapestries, he asserts that he has never considered craft inferior in any way to art. "I find it difficult to draw a line between the two," he says. "Our Indian temples and murals are also a gift to us from craftsmen, yet we consider them art." In fact, he has also contributed as art director to a few Kannada films. His earlier series of work includes *Earthscape*, *Theatre of Life*, *Vriksha*, *Maithuna - The Act of Love*, *He and She*, and *Rhapsody*.

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AUTHORSPEAK

TIMERI N MURARI ON HIS LATEST BOOK, *THE TALIBAN CRICKET CLUB* (ALEPH BOOK COMPANY; ₹ 595; 325 PAGES), AND MORE

What inspired your latest, *The Taliban Cricket Club*?

Way back in 2000, I read a very brief report in the newspaper that the Taliban announced that they would promote cricket in Afghanistan and the regime, backed by the Pakistan Cricket Board, would apply for associate membership to the International Cricket Council. I thought the item was surreal: Taliban? Cricket? They were contradictory, an oxymoron. The regime had banned everything—including chess—and this was a diplomatic way for acceptance in a world that condemned their brutal rule. The idea nagged at me and I made a few notes on how I could use this for a story. I thought I'd throw in a tournament and that the winning team would be sent out of the country, all expenses paid, and never return. Great! But as no one knew how to play cricket back then in Afghanistan who's going to teach my team of young men? A pro from England/India/Pakistan—it didn't have any dimensions. I set the idea aside and went back to my other work when the Taliban were driven out by ISAF. When they 'returned' to fight ISAF, I pulled out my notes to rethink. I grew up playing cricket with my sisters and female cousins in our garden and even had a niece who played for India. So, why not have a young Afghan woman who learned her cricket in India, returning to Kabul when the Taliban announces this and have her teach her cousins how to play this game? Through her I could explore the plight of women under the Taliban rule and have my cricket team as well.

Cricket is a passion for you. Do you still play?

It was a passion as I learned the game in Madras but played all my cricket in England. Alas, I no longer play and miss it very much as it was a delightful way to spend a day, on the cricket field.



From Taj to Taliban, sum up your literary journey thus far.

It's been an exciting journey exploring India through both my fiction and non-fiction works and constantly discovering fascinating facts about this country through my own personal experiences and turning them into my books.

How has coming 'back home' to India informed your writing, the way you live your life?

India has certainly inspired and shaped all my writings; and by coming home to live here, I find that the material is inexhaustible. India is so full of stories to be told, and daily I meet men and women who have these stories. India has taught me to whittle down my daily life to be as simple as possible, to help the needy whenever I can, and to retain a sense of humour at the lunacy of our leaders. My regret is that we take our politicians and politics too seriously.

What's next—personally and professionally?

Oh, there is a lot more of life to be lived here and I hope to

continue being who I am. I have a wonderful wife and we have five street dogs to keep us company and bring sanity into our daily lives. I still play tennis and exercise daily. I will continue writing my books, articles, plays, whatever interests or inspires me, as it's what I do to the best of my abilities.



School daze!

To salute our teachers this month, we present an excerpt from *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (1934) by English writer James Hilton, a classic about a beloved schoolteacher who overcomes his own limitations to make his mark at a fictional British boarding school

When you are getting on in years it is nice to sit by the fire and drink a cup of tea and listen to the school bell sounding dinner, call-over, prep, and lights-out. Chips always wound up the clock after that last bell; then he put the wire guard in front of the fire, turned out the gas, and carried a detective novel to bed. Rarely did he read more than a page of it before sleep came swiftly and peacefully, more like a mystic intensifying of perception than any changeful entrance into another world. For his days and nights were equally full of dreaming....

Chips often thought, as he sat by the fire at Mrs. Wickett's: I am probably the only man in the world who has a vivid recollection of old Wetherby.... Vivid, yes; it was a frequent picture in his mind, that summer day with the sunlight filtering through the dust in Wetherby's study. "You are a young man, Mr. Chipping, and Brookfield is an old foundation. Youth and age often combine well. Give your enthusiasm to Brookfield, and Brookfield will give you something in return. And don't let anyone play tricks with you. I—er—gather that discipline was not always your strong point at Melbury?"

"Well, no, perhaps not, sir."

"Never mind; you're full young; it's largely a matter of experience. You have another chance here. Take up a firm attitude from the beginning—that's the secret of it."

Perhaps it was. He remembered that first tremendous ordeal of taking prep; a September sunset more than half a century ago; Big Hall full of lusty barbarians ready to pounce on him as their legitimate prey. His youth, fresh-complexioned, high-collared, and side-whiskered (odd fashions people followed in those days), at the mercy of five hundred unprincipled ruffians to whom the baiting of new masters was a fine art, an exciting sport, and something of a tradition. Decent little beggars individually, but, as a mob, just pitiless and implacable. The sudden hush as he took his place at the desk on the dais; the scowl he assumed to cover his inward nervousness; the tall clock ticking behind him, and the smells of ink and varnish; the last blood-red rays slanting in slabs through the stained-glass

windows. Someone dropped a desk lid. Quickly, he must take everyone by surprise; he must show that there was no nonsense about him. "You there in the fifth row—you with the red hair—what's your name?"

"Colley, sir."

"Very well, Colley, you have a hundred lines."

No trouble at all after that. He had won his first round.

And years later, when Colley was an alderman of the City of London and a baronet and various other things, he sent his son (also red-haired) to Brookfield, and Chips would say: "Colley, your father was the first boy I ever punished when I came here twenty-five years ago. He deserved it then, and you deserve it now." How they all laughed; and how Sir Richard laughed when his son wrote home the story in next Sunday's letter!

And again, years after that, many years after that, there was an even better joke. For another Colley had just arrived—son of the Colley who was a son of the first Colley. And Chips would say, punctuating his remarks with that little "umph-um" that had by then become a habit with him: "Colley, you are—umph—a splendid example of—umph—inherited traditions. I remember your grandfather—umph—he could never grasp the Ablative Absolute. A stupid fellow, your grandfather.

And your father, too—umph—I remember him—he used to sit at that far desk by the wall—he wasn't much better, either. But I do believe—my dear Colley—that you are—umph—the biggest fool of the lot!" Roars of laughter.

A great joke, this growing old—but a sad joke, too, in a way. And as Chips sat by his fire with autumn gales rattling the windows, the waves of humour and sadness swept over him very often until tears fell, so that when Mrs. Wickett came in with his cup of tea she did not know whether he had been laughing or crying. And neither did Chips himself.

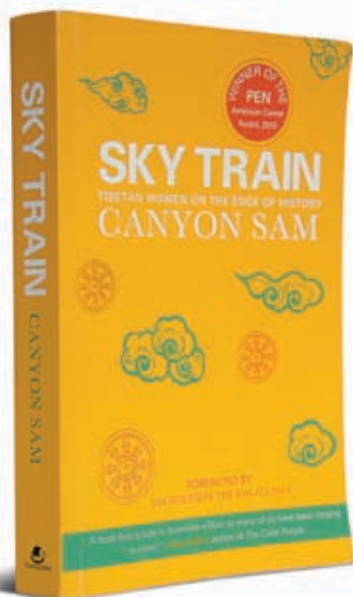


Between the lines

In part Kafkaesque, in part Existentialist, **Makarand Sathe's THE MAN WHO TRIED TO REMEMBER** (Penguin; ₹ 399; 237 pages), translated by **Shanta Gokhale**, is a close look at the working of the human brain. With a senior citizen at the centre of the proceedings, we go on a voyeuristic journey into the existential dilemma facing an intellectual and opinion-maker, who has to grapple with fading memory while making sense of the society around him. At one level, this brilliant piece of writing also looks at the conflict between the Individual and the Institution and takes potshots at mob mentality and the work ethics of the media. The style provides a perfect foil for the content, reflecting a disoriented mind to perfection. And the brevity of the sentences channels the resolution of the protagonist to make short sentences to achieve coherence. This one will grip you.

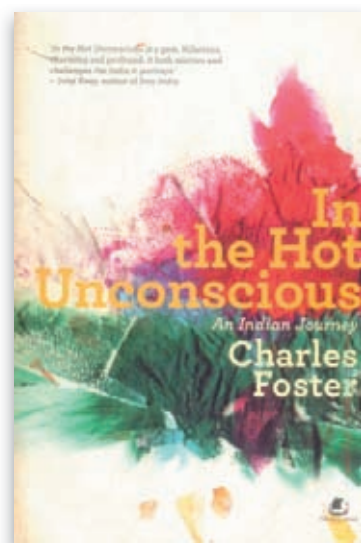


There are a few things you should know about **Canyon Sam** before you decide whether to read her book,



SKYTRAIN: TIBETAN WOMEN ON THE EDGE OF HISTORY (Tranquebar; ₹ 350; 372 pages). She is ethnically Chinese, was born and raised in the US of A, and adopted her name as a teenager growing up in San Francisco. The first time she visited China, she says, people gathered around her to gape at her and marvel at the fact that there were Chinese people who were actually 'American'. It is with this perspective that she revisits the land of her forefathers, from this vantage point of pity mingled with disdain that she views the admittedly disastrous ruination of Tibet by a mainland determined to appropriate it. There is much commentary, which adds a dash of perspective to surface observation, and some detail on recent changes in this region. A personal account of journeys through a failing mountain civilisation.

There will be much that is new in **Charles Foster's IN THE HOT UNCONSCIOUS: AN INDIAN JOURNEY** (Tranquebar; ₹ 250; 310 pages) for those who were not born and raised in India. There will be much that is new even for those who were. So why should an Indian read a book by an Englishman about our space and state of mind? Perhaps because he arrived on his first trip with the same weight of assumptions and preconceptions that blocks our own minds to what runs beneath the surface of an ancient land. Perhaps because it is a rare opportunity to reach outside one's own national consciousness



and explore a deep unconscious represented with such honesty, self-admitted bafflement and layered perspective that it forces you to acknowledge some of the most fundamental truths that still underline how we live and dream, as individuals and as a people. A thoroughly enjoyable read peppered with razor-sharp insight and anecdotes and subplots that are as quirky, witty and charming as they are self-deprecatory.



Eternally YOURS

Srimati Lal reveals how her late father
P Lal still lights up her life

***Love, like a Flower,
Has roots that reach
Beyond fragrance: beyond power
Of loving speech.***
—from *Love's The First*, by P Lal

Our bodily life on earth is merely a temporary transit-lounge towards a far more magical destination: Eternal Life. My father's departure from his physical body proved to me the truth of this phenomenon. On 3 November 2010, my illustrious father, the literary genius P Lal, decided to depart quietly from all physical suffering and keep his heavenly appointment instead with his old friend 'Vyasa Deva', the great sage-poet of the epic *Mahabharata*, to whose transcreation my *Baba* had dedicated his entire life.

And what has ensued since then, in my own life on earth, are a remarkable series of 'visitations from *Baba*'—regular 'visits' and amazing communications on the 3rd dawn of every month—some of which I have chronicled in detail in my book, *Flowers for My Father* (2011), an illustrated anthology.

Nobody can ever replace my father and, wonderfully, nobody need bother to even try. *Baba's* utter originality, multifaceted talents and charisma are powerfully with me; I feel lucky to have picked up a little bit of his artistry and flair by carefully observing him with awe and wonderment for decades.

My father was a hero and a true Zen-warrior in life, if ever there was one.

As the founder of the Indo-Anglian Literary Movement, he published the first work of every writer of repute, from Kamala Das to Keki Daruwalla and Vikram Seth, through his independent publishing house, Writers Workshop, which he set up from his Kolkata residence. Besides being a brilliant poet, publisher, literary teacher, transcreator of the epics, a truly remarkable prose-writer, and an international cultural emissary, *Baba* was also uniquely artistic. He was the first to bind Indian literary volumes in hand-spun *khadi* sari-cloth in jewel colours, with their titles and tracts emblazoned in gold dust with his own fabulous calligraphy in Sanskrit alongside English.

A tall, extremely handsome, stylish man with a mischievous smile and an incredible sense of humour, *Baba* was as much of a style icon and role model for the youth as he was a Renaissance literary giant. He lived life to the fullest and fought every battle on his own Kurukshetra, with steely will power and stoic determination.

In 1989, at the age of 60, my father faced a near-fatal illness at the reputed Toronto Harbourfront International Literary Festival in northern USA; a sudden affliction that caused him excruciating pain. He required two emergency surgeries and a painful colostomy, remaining in a semi-comatose state of near-death experience for weeks. But baffling advanced medical science with his sheer will-power and stamina, he recovered to fly home and continue,

undaunted, with his literary mission. In his magnum opus, *Lessons*, written soon after his return to India, he has described in dramatic detail his return to mortal life.

Baba was the most graceful and dignified man I have ever seen. In the 21 years that elapsed after his colostomy, he never once displayed his obvious physical discomfort; nor did he complain about the dietary restrictions his condition imposed upon him. Instead, I can only remember his childlike delight on returning home and quietly continuing to do his own thing. He unflinchingly underwent the discomfort of regular blood transfusions and constant checkups; he suffered so many things in silence and, yet, his angelic smile never vanished.

In the last decade of his life, I got a feeling that *Baba's* primary interest in continuing to remain in his physical body was to complete his life's mission of transcreating the entire epic *Mahabharata*, *sloka* by *sloka*. He had neither materialistic fascination nor any vainglorious, egotistical, earthly reason to stay around, aside from his transcendent mission. Regarding mortality, *Baba* had once written: "Death is not a full-stop; and Life, I think, is no parenthesis."

I will now share a remarkable, recent visitation. On 3 August 2012, in the early hours of dawn—a date close to Janmashtami, which is also, coincidentally, my father's birth-month—*Baba* appeared before me, smiling in the dim light, with a full-figure



Regarding mortality, Baba had once written: “Death is not a full-stop; and Life, I think, is no parenthesis.”

halo-armour around him, shining like an illuminated string of lights glittering vividly... and amazingly, he was coloured Krishna-blue! I rubbed my eyes in disbelief, until he smiled at me. And thus, I suddenly realised that *Baba's* lifelong immersion in the *Mahabharata* had actually merged him visually into Krishna, his favourite epic hero.

Another of *Baba's* favourite heroes, Shakespeare, had once perceptively written: “There are more things on Heaven and Earth...than are contained in your philosophy.” Faith is one such miracle. One either surrenders to the cosmic mystery and be-

lieves in ‘darshan’, or nit-picks, as sceptics are prone to do.

One of my favourite terms is the Sanskrit word darshan: now described in the Oxford English Dictionary as ‘Seeing a holy person or the image of a Divinity’. Darshan, as we Indians know, also means ‘philosophy’. Such intangible strengths can illuminate our days with unforgettable darshan, making life an exciting puzzle, not a prosaic burden. But then, we need to open our eyes and minds to ‘see’ fully, beyond physical limits.

In the chapter *Bouquets to Baba* as my Foreword to *Flowers for My Father*,

I have described some more of my darshan thus: “In the heavenly Valley of Flowers, I can now see my *Baba* moving as lightly and joyously as an eternal Bird of Paradise. Once again, in a moment of deep anguish, *Baba* is right beside me: stauncher than the staunchest spiritual mountaineer on the high road, that most difficult heavenly path to *Mahaprasthan*.”

While here on Earth beside me, *Baba* painstakingly taught me how to be a poet and an artist, showering me with affection. He gave me so many tremendous ‘earthly’ darshans. Holding my hand, he took me up to the monastery of the Dalai Lama in Himachal Pradesh, as well as inside St John’s Church in the dark wilderness of Dharamshala’s peaks. He took me inside the temple of Kangra’s Jwalamukhi Devi. He brought all the world’s poets and writers into our home every Sunday for his legendary Writers Workshop’s Salons: a tradition I now try to continue. He proudly introduced me to Andretta’s gentle sage-painter of Punjabi saints, Sant Sobha Singhji, high up in a heavenly Himalayan mountain studio, surrounded by orange orchards.

And equally, *Baba* lit a special candle for his daughter with a poetic prayer, within the dim sanctum sanctorum of Paris’s mysterious Notre Dame Cathedral and its hilltop Sacre Coeur Basilica of the Sacred Heart, as I stood beside him with faith, drinking in these multiple benedictions. To end with yet another mystical anecdote, my father and I, aside from our mutual *joie de vivre* and penchant for poetry, calligraphy and art, also shared exactly the same birthmarks on both our hands: a *til* on our right forefinger and left thumb.

Is it so very surprising, then, that my revolutionary and mystical *Baba* is for a fact still very much beside me, and always will be?

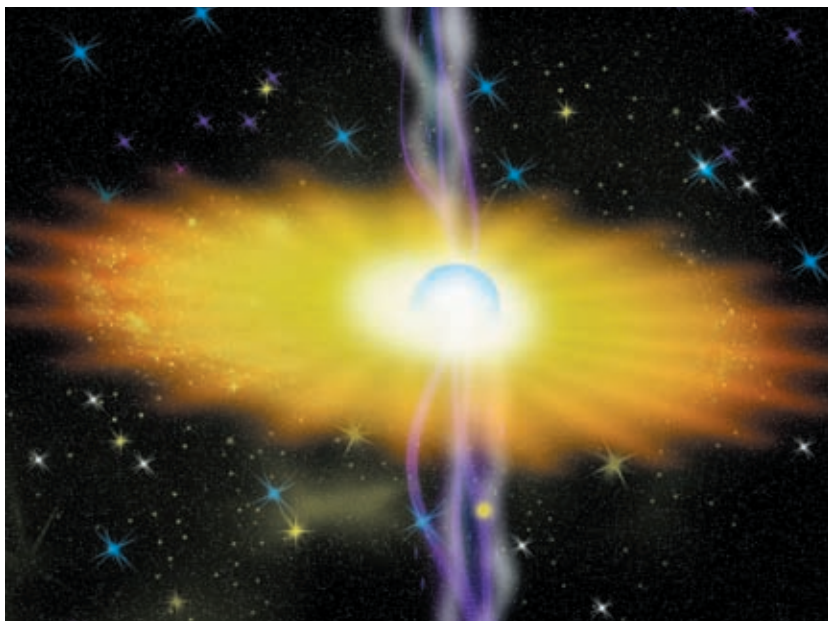
An artist, poet and writer, Srimati Lal lives in Delhi

Inside-outside

In his seminal poem *I*, Rabindranath Tagore examines the seamless connection between the self and the continuum of space and time

I wonder if I know him
In whose speech is my voice,
In whose movement is my being,
Whose skill is in my lines,
Whose melody is in my songs
In joy and sorrow.
I thought he was chained within me,
Contained by tears and laughter,
Work and play.
I thought he was my very self
Coming to an end with my death.

Why then in a flood of joy do I feel him
In the sight and touch of my beloved?
This 'I' beyond self I found
On the shores of the shining sea.
Therefore I know
This 'I' is not imprisoned within my bounds.
Losing myself, I find him
Beyond the borders of time and space.
Through the Ages
I come to know his Shining Self
In the Iff of the seeker,



In the voice of the poet.
From the dark clouds pour the rains.
I sit and think:
Bearing so many forms, so many names,
I come down, crossing the threshold
Of countless births and deaths.
The Supreme undivided, complete in himself,
Embracing past and present,
Dwells in Man.
Within Him I shall find myself -
The 'I' that reaches everywhere.

A cultural icon of modern India, 'Gurudev' Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a Bengali polymath who broke new ground in literature and music. The first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, he was instrumental in introducing Indian culture to the West

NET GAIN



At a time when Google is the ultimate guide, Wikipedia is the new encyclopaedia, Facebook 'likes' are a measure of your popularity, letters mean email and round-table conferences involve positioning yourself in front of the webcam, life without the Internet is unimaginable. But that was not always the case.

The birth of the Internet can be traced to the ARPANET, created by the US Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) during the days of the Cold War to facilitate communication between ARPA computer

terminals. Though the idea was born in 1962, the first stable link between multiple computers through the ARPANET occurred in 1969, and owed its origin to the desire of the US military to develop a credible communication structure in the event of an attack by spies or bombs.

After a decade of remaining a closed computer network, ARPANET transformed into the openly networked Internet that we know today, connecting millions of computers globally, forming a network where any computer can communicate with any other, as long as they are both connected to the Internet. Now, the world is just a click away!

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: **SEPTEMBER 1962**

- On 4 September, India welcomed Nagaland as its 16th state after the President's assent to the Statehood Legislation Bill.
- On 4 September, the closing ceremony of the 1962 Asian Games was held in Indonesia. This followed an attack on the Indian embassy by rioters protesting an 'insult' to Indonesia by Indian G D Sondhi, the then senior vice-president of the Asian Games Federation Council.
- On 12 September, US President John F Kennedy, in a speech at a football stadium in Houston, reaffirmed that the US would put a man on the moon by the end of the decade.
- On 20 September, the MGB sports car was introduced by British company MG Cars. Over the next 18 years, 500,000 MGBs were sold, making it the best-selling sports car in history.

Pudeur

n. A sense of shame, especially in sexual matters; modesty.

Example. Alexandra Styron first started reading her father's novel *Sophie's Choice* as soon as it came out, in 1979, when she was a preteenager. A few chapters in, encountering a steamy sex scene, she rushed from the room, overcome with adolescent **pudeur**.

—Liesl Schillinger, "Literary lions, by their cubs",
The New York Times, 10 August 2011

Apple picking

pp. Snatching a person's iPhone, iPad, or iPod.

Example. Nabbing electronic devices isn't new. But lately it is growing "exponentially" according to a 2011 report from the New York Police Department. The lucrative second-hand market for today's niftiest handsets has produced an explosion in **Apple picking** by thieves. A used iPad or iPhone can fetch more than \$ 400.

—Rolf Winkler, "Fighting the iCrime wave",
The Wall Street Journal, 27 July 2012

Skype sleep

v. To create a Skype connection with a faraway partner and then fall asleep together.

Example. Kaj Hasselriis brings us the sweet story of a couple who **Skype sleep** that is keeping their laptops on all night and falling asleep together on Skype.

—Nora Young, "Spark 161 - November 6 & 9, 2011", *CBC Radio*,
6 November 2011

SALMON

v. To ride a bicycle against the flow of traffic.

Example. I am not anarchic; I heed most traffic laws. I do not ride on the sidewalk (okay, except for the final 25 ft between the curb cut and my front door, and then with caution). I do not **salmon**, i.e. ride against traffic.

—Randy Cohen, "If Kant were a New York cyclist", *The New York Times*,
4 August 2012

100
100

“There is only one religion, though there are a **hundred** versions of it.

—Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

Do-ocracy

n. An organisation or movement where power and respect go to people who get things done.

Example. In fact, the success of Anonymous without leaders is pretty easy to understand—if you forget everything you think you know about how organisations work. Anonymous is a classic **do-ocracy**, to use a phrase that's popular in the open source movement. As the term implies, that means rule by sheer doing: individuals propose actions, others join in (or not), and then the Anonymous flag is flown over the result.

—Quinn Norton, "How Anonymous picks targets, launches attacks, and takes powerful organisations down",
Wired, 3 July 2012

Nutate

v. To nod the head or to oscillate while rotating.

Example. Down she slides not wanting to lose consciousness, chin **nutating** into bosom, yet straining in her mind to stay present.

—Forrest Gander, "As a friend",
New Directions, 2008

Goo-goo

ad. Amorous.

Example. Of course former rivals morph into allies all the time. John McCain now makes **goo-goo** eyes at Romney.

—Frank Bruni, "Embracing the pretzel", *The New York Times*,
16 January 2012

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100

“Work as if you were to live a **hundred** years. Pray as if you were to die tomorrow.

—US founding father, writer, scientist and political theorist
Benjamin Franklin (1706-17)

POCKET CONDO

n. A very small condominium unit; a condominium building with a small number of floors.

Example. So, what's the answer? As far as urban homes go, it might be a radical downsizing of condos and apartments. **Pocket condos**—or very small condos, under 550 sq ft—have been around forever in New York City and are now showing up in many other major cities.

—Marnie Bennett, “Predicting the housing needs of Gen Y can be tricky”,
Ottawa Citizen, 5 November 2011



Use it or lose it!

BUZZ

If you—or someone you know—are grappling with memory problems, log on to www.memoryjoggingpuzzles.com, a website developed especially for people dealing with the onset of dementia or Alzheimer's. Colourful and interactive, the site encourages visitors to participate in a variety of fun games and puzzles that work the brain and build self-esteem. There's also useful information, facts and links for both patients and caregivers. Don't forget to check it out!

GREEN TAPE

n. Excessive environmental regulations and guidelines that must be followed before an official action can be taken.

Example. The Prime Minister will use a high-powered business forum in Canberra today to support industry concerns about the burden of **green tape** that leads to delays and cost blowouts on projects.

—David Crowe and Annabel Hepworth, “PM tells premiers to cut green tape to free capital”,
The Australian, 12 April 2012

Noosphere

n. The sum of human knowledge, thought and culture.

Example. This avalanche of information is threatening to swallow us whole, to waste our days and to overwhelm our own thoughts. Essentially, it's the **noosphere** on steroids.

—Frank Bures, “Digitised to distraction”, *National Post*,
15 November 2008

Redound

v. To contribute to (someone's credit, honour, etc) or to come back upon.

Example. MIT officials fear that the explosion in the harbour will **redound** badly on Tech.

—Janet Maslin, “The Technologists by Matthew Pearl”, *The New York Times*,
22 February 2012

“We need to care for the environment. Start using paper and cloth bags and say no to plastic. Act responsibly.”

Madhuri Mandke, 59, Pune, on empowering rural women by going green



At a time when ‘Reuse,’ ‘Reduce’ and ‘Recycle’ are the three magic words, Madhuri Mandke feels vindicated. When Mandke, 59, first saw the appalling conditions in which villagers lived in Paud village near Pune, where she owns a farm, she decided to do her bit to help the women supplement their family income by getting them to make recycled newspaper bags. Mandke started collecting newspapers from friends and relatives in Pune and sourcing tape, thread and other accessories from the Rotary Club of Pune Central. For the past eight months, Mandke has been regularly supplying newspapers to the village women at a nominal price and buying the finished paper bags from them after a week. The bags are then sold to Mandke’s clients at the same price for which they have been bought. “The joy of helping these ladies pursue an activity that also helps the environment is immense,” she says. Mandke supplies paper bags in quantities of 500 and above, with clients getting to choose from almost 15 sizes. Mapro Foods, having bought over 4,000 bags, is among her prized clients. “The bags are quite sturdy and can be easily reused up to seven times,” she adds. Of late, Mandke and her team of 60 women, who are now in the process of getting individual bank accounts and PAN cards, have diversified the green mission by preparing cloth bags as well.

—Khursheed Dinshaw

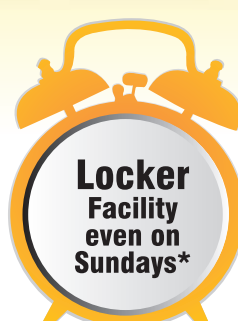
Hemant Patil

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