# Ceception of the magazine for silver citizens

### GRANDPARENTS SPECIAL

- A tribute by Sudha Murty
- Legacy of love

#### 1 unlocking the human HUMAN

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KEEPING TAGORE'S VISION FOR SANTINIKETAN ALIVE



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\*The Olive Oil used in study is Extra Virgin Olive Oil as it contains highest quantities of polyphenols – a nutrient known for its health benefits as compared to refined version of Olive Oil which contains neligible levels of this nutrient.

# Studying **silver**

The world has silver on its mind, like never before.

Every month, we bring you news and updates from around the globe that relate to our constituency. And every month, I am amazed at the research that universities, institutions and think tanks from various countries are conducting to examine every aspect of the silver condition: the good, the bad, the happy, the sad.

Given our incredible demographic and geographical spread, and our multilingual and multifarious educational and research institutions, it is surprising that we haven't followed suit. To be sure, silver issues do get a greater share of newsprint than ever before; Harmony for Silvers Foundation is proud to have played a catalytic role in this. And advocacy groups routinely conduct studies on concerns like elder abuse, which get their turn in the spotlight. However, there is no concerted or sustained effort in our country to examine the silver experience in all its facets, especially the positives, the joys and sheer potential of life in the Third Age.

This month, we celebrate International Grandparents' Day; in our 'Orbit' section, we present a study from Boston College that establishes that grandparents and grandchildren who share a close bond display greater psychological well-being. This is not just a heartening study but a particularly valuable one from an Indian perspective, where grandparents have traditionally been an intrinsic part of their grandchildren's lives and upbringing. And while this trend continues in many homes, as our photo feature 'Bonds' demonstrates, many more families are choosing to go nuclear. Against such a backdrop, such a study conducted in the Indian context may help shape attitudes and decisions in years to come.

Take the case of Sweden. On the heels of a university study that examined how tech companies lowered their



attrition rate when they re-hired retirees as mentors, the government actually instituted incentives for companies who undertook such initiatives. Translate this to India and imagine the possibilities.

Indeed, possibilities are everywhere, waiting to be considered, examined and explored. As a nation, our response to silver issues cannot just be knee-jerk, flashin-the-pan reactions to periodic studies that herald danger and project doom. Instead, we need a continuous, constant engagement that informs and inspires, not just provokes and alarms. Our scientists, researchers and scholars must be urged and encouraged to establish and sustain—this engagement for it will hold incalculable benefit for society at large.

We need to turn existing perceptions on their head to turn mindsets and policies around. There is a positive inherent in every negative we hear about our burgeoning silver numbers. It is time for us as a nation to focus on finding it.

Ina Ambam

#### A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

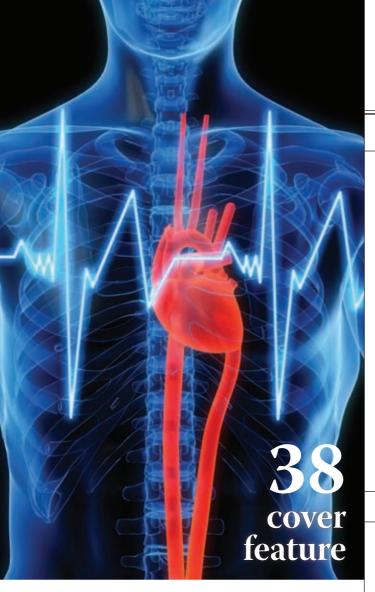
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Getting into the heart of the cardiovascular burden of India

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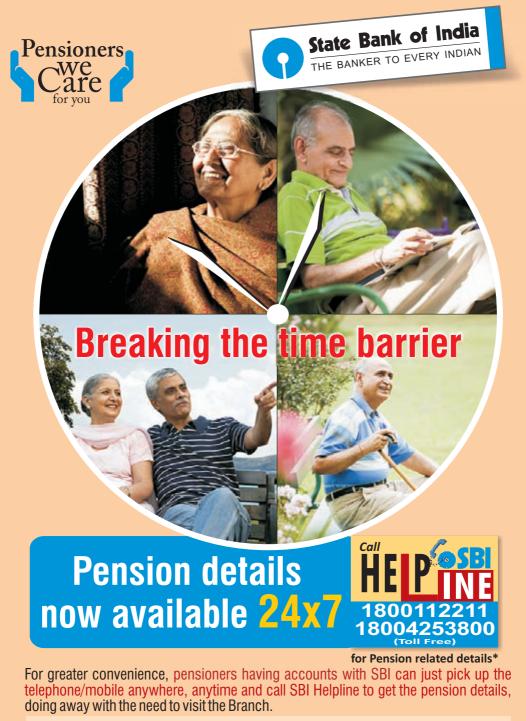
**WEB EXCLUSIVES** www.harmonyindia.org



LAW ON HER SIDE Advocate Lily Thomas shares her experiences in the legal world

LAUGH LINES A rendezvous with feminist-comedian Kamla Bhasin

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# column

How healthy is my heart? It is a guestion we all need to ask ourselves-no matter our age. As our cover feature, "Heart of the Matter" reports, we Indians are 'sitting ducks' for cardiovascular disease, with the average age of people susceptible to heart attacks getting lower. For silvers, of course, the heart has always been a vulnerable touch point owing to age-related conditions like hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol. We bring you the latest statistics and valuable information on symptoms, diagnosis and treatment. In addition, our experts chip in with heart-handy columns this issuewhile Dr V S Natarajan tells us why age changes the heart, Namita Jain writes about the connection between a healthy diet and a happy heart.

There's another thing that makes a heart happy: love. And there's no love as precious, or enriching, than the unique connection that develops between grandparent and grandchild. We present eight such 'Bonds' from across the country—in words and images that are sure to touch a chord. Underlining the sentiment is Dr Sudha Murty's tribute in 'At Large' to her beloved grandmothers, her inspirations.

There are more such inspirations to be found in the pages of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* each month. Like 'Proactive' ex-serviceman turned farmer S Chandrasekharan Nair in Kerala who uses his blog to campaign for the rights of rubber farmers and expose malpractices in the rubber trade. Or Usha Ashok from Hyderabad, who tells us in 'Speak' how teaching visually impaired children to speak English has given her purpose—and the strength to deal with bereavement. Heartwarming, wouldn't you say?

—Arati Rajan Menon

*Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, a feature film about a legendary Indian Olympian, leaves us with a glowing sense of pride. However, simultaneously, there is also a sense of disappointment. How is it that in so many years our 1-billion-plus country has produced only a few Olympic champions? Is it because we, as youngsters, don't get enough exposure to active athletics? Aren't there enough opportunities to become potential champs? On the contrary, I have realised, we are all offered free participation and easy access to 'training' in a gamut of



sporting activities—at all ages—every single day of our lives!

Consider a day in the life of a Mumbaikar. It's a breakneck race! The moment you are up, you are off to a running start. Brushing teeth, having tea, bath, breakfast—get-set-go, hop-skip-jump; a race against time. If you are a student, your first challenge of the day is weightlifting—your '1-tonne' schoolbag. Then you are off on a race to the local bus stop or rail station, sprinting across the road. It can be quite a hurdle, dodging speeding vehicles and skirting street hawkers and hustlers with wares galore. It's a series of sporting events in quick succession—long jumps over water-filled potholes, gaping drains and manholes; high jumps over resting stray dogs and bulls. And if you are an office-goer armed with an umbrella, it's showtime! Get a grip on your rolled-up umbrella and use it as a pole to vault over the mountain of garbage standing in your way.

Of course, if it's monsoon, you need to be armed not just with an umbrella but a strong pair of arms to take you streets ahead of others. Once you reach your bus stop or train station, you have to get ready for the next round, that of wrestling into a packed bus or train. This is our all-day marathon of daily Olympics.

#### Subroto Mukherjee Via email

Yet another breathtaking issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* in August 2013! I enjoyed reading the refreshing article "Best Friends Forever". It is so rare to see friendships lasting for decades, particularly in today's world of business-minded, arrogant and self-centred people. Seldom do we come across selfless and friendly people like the ones featured in the article. May their friendships last forever. As for me, my best friend for the past nine years has been Harmony-Celebrate Age, as it has always been there for me in my best and worst days. I also enjoyed reading the extract from Nehru's book on Mahatma Gandhi "Making of the Mahatma" ('Bookshelf'). It was such an endearing account of the Father of the Nation.

**Rajesh Vrajendra Gaur** *Mumbai* 

Thanks for writing about our ambitious 'Poster Hatao' campaign ('Speak', July 2013). I would like to share a few details about our work in Mumbai as well. We were in Mumbai during January and February 2012 to participate in the BMC elections which were held on

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17 February. Our awareness campaign was taken in the right spirit by aspirant corporators and the common Mumbaikar. The result was that no election-related posters, or illegal hoardings were reported in Mumbai.

We undertook similar activities for the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) elections with the help of the State Election Commissioner Rakesh Mehta and MCD Commissioner K S Mehra. Lokayukta Delhi has made us an intervener in the cases under DPDP Act, 2007. We contributed significantly towards the judgement pronounced by the Delhi Lokayukta on 15 May 2013, wherein show-cause notices have been sent to 22 politicians, including Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit. Each state has some kind of Prevention of Defacement of Property Act, which is not being implemented. We want state governments to implement them. As the task is enormous, they need the help of citizens to achieve the desired results.

#### Col (retd) Shivraj Kumar New Delhi

I read the article, "Memory Loss: Is it ageing or dementia?" ('Silver Lining', July 2013). It is extremely useful not just for silvers but for people with the elderly around them.

#### Jyoti Goyal Via email

any thanks for your health arti-Lcle "Urinary Incontinence: Treat and Cure It" (Silver Lining, June 2013). It's an excellent piece of information for silvers like me.

#### **Ravi Patankar**

Mumhai



#### CONTRIBUTOR

Dr Sudha Murty is chairperson of Infosys Foundation and a well-known writer. Healthcare, education, empowerment of women, public hygiene, art and culture, and poverty alleviation at the grassroots level are issues close to her heart. Murty is also a bestselling author in English and Kannada. Her published works include eight novels, five collections of short stories, four technical books, three travelogues, three children's books and a book on self-experiences.

Some of her most popular works include *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read*, Dollar Bahu, Mahashweta, Wise & Otherwise, Old Man and His God, Grandma's Baq of Stories and Magic Drum & Other Favourite Stories. Her latest book, The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk, is a collation of extraordinary stories about ordinary people. Her books have been translated into 16 Indian languages.

Murty's philanthropy and literary achievements have won her recognition at the state, national and international levels. She was conferred the Padmashri in 2006, the Rajyaprashasti award by the Karnataka government in 2000, and honorary doctorates by the SNDT Women's University, Mumbai, and the universities of Karnataka, Gulbarga, Chennai, Tirupati, Tumkur and Kolhapur. The University of California, Berkeley, honoured her with the International and Area Studies Global Leaders Award, while the Book Sellers & Publishers Association of South India, Chennai, recognised her contribution to literature with the R K Narayan Award. The Karnataka government awarded her its highest literary award, the Attimabbe Award, for the year 2011-12. She was awarded a doctorate of literature by Tumkur University in 2012 for her thesis on Functional Strategies and Best Practices of Infosys Foundation.

Tnsure, Assure" ('Money Matters', July 2013) was a really well-timed and appropriate article for silvers, particularly with its wide range of health insurance policies on the market. The comparatives were a real eye-opener. Keep up the good work. I request you to bring to the fore similar moneyrelated issues concerning silvers.

T S Ashoka

#### Goa

#### ERRATUM

In the feature "Best Friends Forever" in August 2013, we inadvertently printed the name of Nandita Raja as Nandita Raje. We regret the error. —Fditors

#### AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY

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

- You had an experience related to money
- You faced a serious health problem and conquered it
- You know of someone who has done something exceptional after the age of 55
- You have a hobby or an interesting travel experience to share
- You have a funny or insightful anecdote about vour grandchildren ...and we'll print it in the column 'Your Space'

Mail us at Reliance Centre. 1st Floor, 19, Walchand Hirachand Marq, Ballard Estate, Mumbai-400001. *Or email at* contact.mag@ harmonyindia.org

#### INSIDE

P26: Young at heart P30: Hips don't lie

NEWS ● VIEWS ● PEOPLE ● RESEARCH ● TRENDS ● TIPS

#### ► ANALYSE THIS

All you need is

imply put, it's all about sex. At the annual congress of The British Psychological Society, held in July, renowned British psychologist Dr David Weeks stated that an active sex life in the silver years could well be "the key to the fountain of youth". He cited research studies from across the world establishing that regular sexual activity can increase lifespan, battle depression, and lower cholesterol levels. It can also make you look five to seven years younger on average because it causes a release of endorphins and human growth hormone and increases blood circulation to the heart, which all make the skin look more elastic.

"Sexual satisfaction is a major contributor to quality of life, ranking at least as high as spiritual or religious commitment and other morale factors," said the 59 year-old. "So, more positive attitudes towards mature sex should be vigorously promoted." **R**BIT

# The best bond

While the world celebrates Grandparents' Day on 8 September, consider this: **the better the bond with your grandchild, the better your psychological wellbeing**. After tracking 376 grandparents and 340 adult grandchildren between 1985 and 2004, researchers at the Department of Sociology and the Institute on Ageing at Boston College discovered



that those grandparents who were emotionally close to their grandchildren, sharing and receiving tangible support, such as offering pocket money or helping out with chores, were less likely to suffer from depression and loneliness. And those grandparents who received tangible emotional support but did not give any back had an increase in symptoms of depression. This was linked to feeling frustrated about dependance and not being able to give back. "In fact, we found that an emotionally close grandparent-adult grandchild relationship was associated with fewer symptoms of depression for both generations," says Sara M Moorman, who presented the study at the 108<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association.

• Check out our grandparents special feature "Relative value" on Page 48

# The fine print

BEING A BOOKWORM has its advantages. Researchers at the Rush University Medical Centre in Chicago have established that activities like reading and writing that stimulate the brain when you are young can help preserve your memory into old age. The team gave 294 people memory and cognitive tests for about six years before their deaths (at an average age of 89) and analysed their activities during childhood, adolescence, middle age and at their current age. Following their death, the brains of the subjects were examined for lesions, plaques and tangles, which form physical evidence of dementia. After adjusting for different levels of plagues and tangles, they found that those who participated in mentally stimulating activities early in life had a 15 per cent slower rate of decline in memory. Further, the rate of decline was reduced by 32 per cent in people with frequent mental activity in late life. "Based on this, we shouldn't underestimate the effects of everyday activities, such as reading and writing, from childhood through old age on our brains," writes study author Robert Wilson in journal Neurology.

# **90** not out

Nonagenarians are smarter than ever-at least in Denmark. Scientists from the University of Southern Denmark insist that people in their 90s today are mentally sharper than those who reached the same age 10 years earlier. The team analysed data on two groups of Danes—one born in 1905, the other in 1915-and put them through a host of mental and physical tests when they reached their mid-90s. They discovered that the group born in 1915 performed significantly better across all tests, from memory to grip strength and everyday activities like walking. "This study challenges speculations that improving longevity is the result of the survival of very frail and disabled elderly people," writes study

leader Kaare Christensen in the Lancet Medical Journal. "It establishes that the functioning of people who reach their 90s is improving in Denmark, owing to a variety of factors like better medical care, healthier diet and greater intellectual stimulation. If this development continues, the future functional problems and

problems and care needs of very elderly people might be less than are anticipated."

# What lies beneath

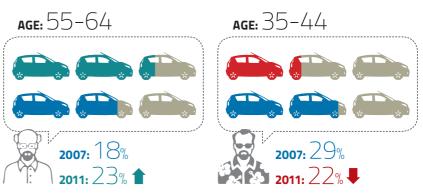
The past can inform the future in untold ways. An example is Edinburgh University's **Disconnected** Mind project, which uses IQ tests taken by Scottish children over 60 years ago to determine what lies behind cognitive decline. As London newspaper The Independent reports, over 1,000 people who took the tests decades ago underwent a new round of brain scans and physical and mental checkups over the past 10 years, along with detailed surveys of social background, education and lifestyle. "As we have baseline cognitive function from when people were healthy in early youth, we can estimate each individual's



change in cognitive function across the life-course from childhood to old age, and then study them within old age," says project leader Ian Deary. "It also helps us determine why some people age better than others." The first key determination: environmental factors outweigh genetics when it comes to brain ageing. Similar revelations are expected as the team continues to analyse the data—watch this space.

### DRIVING BUSINESS

A merican silvers are driving the auto business, quite literally. According to a new study by the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, people between 55 and 64 years of age were 15 times more likely to buy new vehicles than those younger to them.



"That is probably surprising to many people because they think of younger people being the target audience," says study leader Michael Sivak. "Although the auto industry is investing heavily in designs and marketing aimed at young buyers, our study shows that marketing to older buyers could be more worthwhile."

## The litmus test

f age is just a state of mind, here are some markers telling you to 'mind it'. Following a survey of 2,000 silvers, British financial services company Engage Mutual has released its Top 50 telltale signs of ageing. While many of these—feeling stiff, bemoaning how things have changed for the worse and losing hair-may not come as much of a surprise, some others might: drinking sherry, feeding the birds or wearing glasses around your neck. "Ageing is a natural process and we can

all recognise physical and attitudinal changes in ourselves as we get older," a spokesperson for Engage Mutual tells media. "What is interesting is the general expectation across age groups

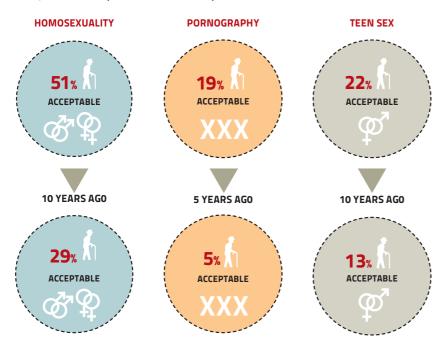


that someone in the 'older' age bracket will look and behave in a particular way." To see where you stand, go to www.edp24.co.uk/news/signs-of-ageing for the complete list.



# Minds in transition

Times change, people change. According to a report by market and social research consultancy Pew Research Centre, silver **Americans have changed their minds over the years about (often controversial) ethical issues**,



from divorce, premarital sex and parenthood outside marriage to gay and lesbian relations, and embryonic stem cell research. Despite this change of mindset, however, their views still remain divergent from younger Americans.

> For instance, as the report tells us, while 51 per cent of Americans over 60 now believe gay and lesbian relations are morally acceptable (up from only 29 per cent 10 years ago), 74 per cent of young Americans say the same. Similarly, 19 per cent of older Americans say pornography is morally acceptable, up from just 5 per cent 10 years ago—but when it comes to younger Americans, the figure is 49 per cent.

Another issue worth noting is sex between teenagers; while 22 per cent of older Americans now find it acceptable (up from 13 per cent 10 years ago), 48 per cent of younger Americans are on board. Time for a similar Indian survey, wouldn't you say?

### When love has gone

Many married silvers in the UK are opting for the single life. According to national relationship charity Relate, the number of people over 60 divorcing has increased by over a third in 10 years. Whimsically titled Will You Still Love Me When I'm 64?, its report states that there were 15,275 divorces among silvers in 2011 compared to 13,554 in 2010 and 10,273 in 2000, reports London newspaper The Observer. The fallout: less support, reduced well-being and increased loneliness. "Increasingly, pensioners are opting for divorce as they grow increasingly impatient with a lifetime of compromises and the children have left the nest," says Ruth Sutherland, chief executive of Relate. "Although this may seem empowering initially, over the long term it could have a tremendous negative impact on life satisfaction and lead to depression. Couples need to prepare to get old together and seek help for problems rather than impulsively file for divorce. It's more important than ever to invest in our relationships."





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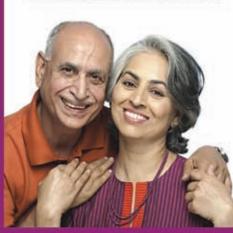


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# **JAI MAHARASHTRA!**

Making good on its promise to do right by the state's silvers, the Maharashtra government has announced that it will set up a senior citizens' commission and a separate department to cater to their welfare. A special provision for the same will be made during the next budget session. According to a media release, other than a separate helpline, employment opportunities and enhanced interest rate on fixed deposits, the government will take decisions on financial assistance to senior citizens, offer legal assistance and guidance, establish more recreation centres and old-age homes, reserve a greater number of seats in the transport system and launch more targeted health schemes.



KERALA TIDINGS: THE KERALA GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO SANCTION AN 8 PER CENT INCREASE IN DEARNESS ALLOWANCE TO STATE SERVICE EMPLOYEES AND PENSIONERS. THE INCREASE WILL HAVE RETROSPECTIVE EFFECT FROM 1 JANUARY THIS YEAR.

## **BLOOD TRAIL** It may just take a simple blood test to predict how fast

t may just take a simple blood test to predict how fast you will age. Scientists from London's King's College have identified a number of chemical markers called metabolites in the blood that are intrinsically linked to the ageing process. "As these 22 metabolites linked to ageing are detectable in the blood, we can now predict actual age from a blood sample pretty accurately," team leader Ana Valdes tells London newspaper *The Telegraph*. "In future, this can be refined to potentially identify future rapid biological ageing in individuals and pave the way for treatments to be developed to tackle conditions associated with getting older." The study was published in the *International Journal* of Epidemiology.



**Playtime:** The Delhi government has announced its plans to set up more recreational centres for silvers—there are already 83 such centres in operation across the capital. Delhi is home to over 2 million silvers.

### Be the change

ant to pay it forward? Here's one way: Mumbai's Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work in Mumbai has launched a three-month training course exclusively for silvers. While offering participants a holistic idea of social problems, the emphasis will be on developing strategies to tackle these problems as a professional social worker. A combination of theory classes with demos, simulation exercises and field visits to courts, police stations and NGOs, the course seeks to raise awareness, and inculcate vital skills like communication, leadership and counselling. What's more, if you are a high school graduate and above 50 years of age, you will be eligible for a certificate from the University of Mumbai after completing the course. To learn more, contact Nirmala Niketan Extension Centre of College of Social Work at Goregaon East, Mumbai; Tel: 022-29270981, 29271433.

FIRST RESORT . CRBIT

# HAVEN on earth

Surprisingly, this milestone for the LGBT (lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender) movement didn't occur in America or Europe but Asia. The world's first old-age home for transgender people was recently inaugurated in Jakarta, Indonesia. In a conservative country where silvers are traditionally cared for by their children, this is welcome news for a population of about 3 million transgender people, also known as waria, who are rejected and ostracised by their families and abused by the authorities. As news agency Reuters reports, the idea was the brainchild of 51 year-old Yulianus Rettoblaut, or 'Mummy Yuli', a waria from the island of Papua who escaped the cycle of prostitution to earn a law degree in Jakarta and became a high-profile advocate for the transgender community. "As a mother to the community, I needed to do something to support greying waria," she says. "Our families don't



want us, people become even more scared of us and the government is confused about whether to put us in a male old people's home or female. I see so many of us struggling, begging on the streets and living under bridges." Right now, the home houses three *waria*, all over the age of 70; in coming months, close to 120 will be accommodated. It's still a drop in the ocean, though; Yuli already has a waiting list of over 800.

### Home in the hills

For Indian silvers whose pockets are lined with, well, silver, living options are growing at a rapid pace. The newest entrant to this sunshine sector is

Antara Senior Living, part of diversified Max India Group, which will develop a sprawling residential community in Dehradun at an investment of ₹ 5.5 billion. Spread across 20 acres, the complex will house 217 apartments with one to three bedrooms and about 50 wellness suites, ranging from ₹ 15 million to ₹ 45 million, as well as three penthouses at ₹ 70 million. What's more, the monthly maintenance payment would be ₹ 29,000 plus ₹ 16 per sq ft. The community will also have facilities for arts and crafts,



a library and badminton and tennis courts. "We hope to change the quality of life of people," Tara Singh, CEO, Antara Senior Living, tells media, adding, "The net worth of the customer should be at least ₹ 50 million." The project is expected to be complete by the last quarter of 2015. If your pockets run this deep, go to www.antaraseniorliving. com/our\_community.php



CLASSIC REPRISE: HOLLYWOOD STARS KIM CATRALL AND SETH NUMRICH HAVE TAKEN TO THE LONDON STAGE TO PERFORM *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH,* AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHT TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' BITTERSWEET TALE OF A FADED MOVIE STAR AND A YOUNG HUSTLER WHOSE WORLDS COLLIDE IN A SOUTHERN TOWN.

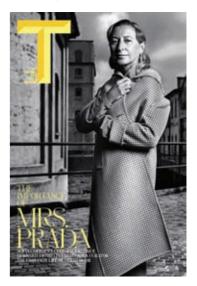
# HEARTFELT

Women share a common vocabulary despite differences of culture, country and, yes, age. That's the message that resonates through **Mexican filmmaker Natalia Beristain's first feature**, *She Doesn't Want to Sleep Alone*, which chronicles the connection of Lola, an imperious yet fragile former movie queen, and her wayward and (initially) indifferent granddaughter Amanda. Concerned about Lola's increasingly unpredictable behaviour and spells of disassociation, her neighbour calls in Amanda, the only relative she is able to reach. While the granddaughter is very reluctant to step into a life she barely comprehends, she realises she needs to take charge of the situation—in the process, she regains control over her own capricious life. "A delicate relationship develops between the two women," Beristain tells American magazine *Variety. She Doesn't Want to Sleep Alone* is now showing on the international festival circuit.



# Cover story

She calls herself a "conflicted feminist". Yet from this conflict, fashion designer 64 year-old Miuccia Prada has crafted some groundbreaking work. On the July cover of *T* magazine, she speaks about everything from her politics and her work



to ageing. "It is much more of a drama for women, the business of ageing," she concedes in the interview. "No one wants to age and I really think we should find a solution. Especially because we live so much longer. I think this question of ageing will define the society of the future." And while she demurs at the idea of putting silvers on the catwalk, saving "Mine is not an artistic world, it is a commercial world...I cannot change the rules... I don't have the courage," she is brave enough to question existing concepts of beauty. "Ugly is attractive, ugly is exciting," she insists. "The investigation of ugliness is, to me, more interesting than the bourgeois idea of beauty because ugly is human."

### FACE OFF . CRBIT

# HANDS UP

The most expensive facial treatments aside, **when it comes to age, the hands are a dead giveaway**. (Did anyone say Madonna?) Following a British poll where one in eight women said they were more concerned about the condition of their hands than their face, newspaper *Daily Mail* did a survey of the array of products that claim to knock the years off your hands. Here's what's on offer:

• Nivea's Q10 Plus Age Defying Hand Cream: Promises to reduce excess pigmentation; £ 2.83 (about ₹ 250)

 Neutrogena Norwegian Formula Anti-Ageing Hand Cream: With an SPF of 25, it protects from sun damage too; £ 4.09 (about ₹ 370)

• Sanctuary Anti-Ageing Intensive Hand Mask: A mask with gloves that works on your hands overnight; £ 5.10 (about ₹ 460)

• Lanolips Rose Balm Intense for Very Dry Hands and Nails: Contains medical-grade lanolin to heal fissures and cracks; £ 8.99 (about ₹ 815); victoriahealth.com

• Farmers' Hand Cream: A thick, protective cream that smothers the hand with emollients and conditioners; £ 12.95 (about ₹ 1,170); welshlavender.co.uk

• Clinique's Even Better Clinical Dark Spot Correcting Hand Cream: Clinically proven to reduce dark marks effectively; £ 22.50 (about ₹ 2,040)

• **Overnight Hand & Nail Treatment:** Used with gloves to allow the rich lotion to penetrate; £ 35 (about ₹ 3,170); *spacenk.com* 

• **Bliss Glamour Gloves:** Gloves with a moisturising gel lining impregnated with Vitamin E, olive and grape seed oils; £ 36.50 (about ₹ 3,305); *blissworld.co.uk* 

• **Renouve Anti-Ageing Hand Sanitiser:** Alcohol-free lotion with peptides found in facial creams; £ 42 (about ₹ 3,805); *victoriahealth.com* 



## Ash you like it

fter causing havoc for global travellers, it appears to have redeemed itself. Volcanic ash from Iceland is now responsible for the latest anti-ageing wunderkind, BioEffect's EGF serum. With the help of biotechnology, barley grown from volcanic ash is engineered to produce epidermal growth factor-EGF-which stimulates cell growth and collagen production in the skin when topically applied. "EGF intervenes with the biology of the skin and can actually bluff its chronological age," Dr Björn Örvar of BioEffect, an Icelandic company, tells London newspaper Daily Mail. "When we used the product on a 52 year-old we were able to reduce skin age by over 10 years, giving it the density of a 40 year-old after just four weeks." If your pockets are deep enough, you can buy BioEffect EGF serum for £ 125 (about ₹ 11,320) at *bioeffect.co.uk* 

### Breakthrough

How does the epidermis really function? Scientists from the University of Sheffield in the UK working with consumer giant Procter and Gamble now have the skinny—their research sheds light on **the process involved in the regeneration of skin tissue** and the causes of epidermal ageing, as London newspaper *The Times* reports. Using a virtual skin model to test their theories, they found that a population of dormant stem cells resides in the



lowest layer of the skin and divides to make new cells only when the skin is damaged. However, this stock of 'sleeping' cells gradually depletes with age, making it harder over time for the skin to regenerate. What's more, the researchers contend that the mutations of these stem cells are responsible for causing skin cancers such as basal cell carcinoma. "If we can find a way to stop the depletion of these cells, we would be able to halt skin ageing," says Dr Xinshan Li of the University of Sheffield. "And if we find a way to prevent the activation of mutated cells, we may be able to reduce the risk of developing skin cancers."



**Declutter your life.** There's no time like now to clean out those cupboards, empty the lofts and throw out all the things you've accumulated over the years but don't really need. A recent study at Columbia University reveals that a lean, clean home with minimum clutter enables better sleep, lowers stress, reduces risk for colds and flu, and boosts energy levels. So what are you waiting for?



# Then: Toilet paper rolls Now: Scarf hanger

There are so many things that toilet paper rolls or even foil paper rolls can be repurposed into; all it needs is a bit of cutting and sticking. To make a simple but chic scarf hanger, collect a bunch of toilet paper rolls, and cut each in half. Glue the sides of the rolls to each other in such a way that they are stacked upon each other to form a square grid. You could also stack them up in a pyramid form, but a square grid would have more slots. Allow the glue to dry completely. If you'd like a bit of colour on them, paint the rolls first with primer and then with acrylic paint. Once the paint is dry, loop the ends of the piece with a thick string or lace, and tie the other ends of the strings to a hanger or a hook. Your easy to use scarf hanger is ready!





#### FACTS

Cardboard is a recyclable material as long as it is not wet or greasy because of food and oil. Most cardboard containers are also coated with wax to prevent them from disintegrating when wet, but this only makes them less environment-friendly. » One tonne of recycled cardboard is equal to saving about 46 gallons of oil and 6 cu m of space in landfill areas.

of oil and 6 cu m of space in landfill areas. Additionally, recycling corrugated cardboard carton boxes that come with a wavy inner layer of cardboard—saves about 25 per cent of the energy that would be needed to make new cardboard.

#### **MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...**

- 1. AVOID MESSY WIRES BY MAKING A WIRE STORAGE BOX. COLLECT TOILET PAPER ROLLS AND STACK THEM VERTICALLY IN A BOX, AND COIL EACH WIRE INTO ONE PAPER ROLL.
- 2. ORGANISE YOUR DESK—STICK THE BOTTOM OF TOILET PAPER ROLLS VERTICALLY ON A FLAT CARDBOARD PIECE TO MAKE A QUICK PEN STAND OR STATIONERY HOLDER.





### 'Early intervention facilitates joint replacement surgery'

A rthritis is among the most widely prevalent chronic diseases afflicting seniors in India but patients can regain full mobility and healthy lives due to advances in medical science and technology; joint and knee replacement surgery being one of them. This was the focus of an awareness drive conducted by doctors from Bhatia Hospital along with Harmony for Silvers Foundation at the National Association for the Blind in Mumbai recently.

While around 2 million people need these surgeries, only a third of arthritis patients actually opt for them owing to lack of awareness. The camp was attended by over 100 silvers, some of whom had already undergone joint replacement surgeries; some of whom had no clue about them; and others who had a bunch of questions about arthritis. Renowned joint replacement surgeon Dr Sanjay Desai (*see picture*) gave a run-down on the types of surgical options available in India: keyhole surgery, partial knee replacement, and total knee replacement. The main takeaway was that 90 per cent of surgeries are performed through arthroscopy, a type of keyhole surgery.

He went on to explain the benefits of the surgeries and backed this up with graphic representations of what could happen to bone structures when surgery is neglected. He emphasised, "Knee replacement surgeries should not be postponed till the knee joints are totally deformed or till they completely disintegrate." As early intervention is critical, he advised a visit to an orthopaedic surgeon when the initial symptoms occur. His presentation was followed by an interactive session with the audience. Reputed orthopaedic surgeon Dr Rahul Shah explained various pain management techniques, the evolution of surgical techniques, and the latest innovations in the field. He also told silvers what to watch out for, including initial symptoms and when a check-up was called for. Through videos, Dr Shah demonstrated the success of knee replacement surgeries on patients, whose mobility was restored and who were pain-free.

He also presented four of his previous patients who had undergone the surgery; they talked about their experiences. "I am very fine and in good health. The surgery has helped me get back to my normal life, and I have no complaints now," said Karuna Dandekar, a sexagenarian who underwent the surgery in July 2007, ending the session on a positive note.

-Neeti Vijaykumar

### **RBIT .** HEALTH BYTES

### The earlier, the better



This disease may have no possible cure but early detection can lead to a better control of its symptoms. Dr Rahul Shrivastav and his team at Michigan State University have now developed a **detection** mechanism that can diagnose

**Parkinson's disease at a very early stage.** The disease begins at around the age of 60, but symptoms gradually occur much earlier. Shrivastav's technique of detection involves the study of speech patterns, analysing the patterns of tongue and jaw movement.

According to him, changes in speech patterns are one of the first symptoms noticeable before the disease affects other muscles and movement. This is also the point where any treatment aimed at controlling symptoms would prove most effective. This new detection method is inexpensive, non-invasive and more than 90 per cent effective, requiring a minimum of two seconds of speech. A disorder of the nervous system, Parkinson's mostly affects senior citizens, but is rising in prevalence among Indians as young as 35 to 40 years old. Almost 7-9 million Indians are affected by this disease that begins with shaky limbs, slow movement and loss of balance and coordination. In previous studies, the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) had indicated that 17 per cent of silvers living in old-age homes have Parkinson's. However, according to recent reports, Parkinson's is severely undertreated, with doctors completely missing the early symptoms in at least 25 per cent of patients.

### Double benefit

Those who have been managing their risk factors for vascular diseases stand a better chance of preventing, or at least delaying dementia, reveals a new study from the University of Pennsylvania. By following simple, positive habits such as a heart-friendly diet and daily exercise, patients with symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and other memory-related ailments are at a reduced risk of developing dementia earlier on. Previous studies have shown that cerebrovascular diseases affect blood circulation in the brain, and are linked to dementia and other related disorders, more

so with Alzheimer's disease. The research team at the Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, found that the incidence of Alzheimer's patients with vascular diseases is higher than those with Parkinson's or those without any memory-related disorders, revealing a link between Alzheimer's and vascular conditions. The results are based on data collected from 5,700 case studies—80 per cent of those with Alzheimer's disease also had obvious symptoms of vascular diseases; of those who had no memory ailments, 67 per cent had vascular disease.

Stroke is one of the leading causes of death among Indians; almost 51 per cent of deaths are due to hypertension. New research by the ophthalmology department of the National University of Singapore (on 2,900 patients over a period of 13 years) suggests that it is possible to figure out if you are at a risk of developing a stroke from a retinal imaging analysis of blood vessels in the eye. Retinal imaging could work wonders as it is a non-invasive method to calculate the potential risk of strokes in people with high blood pressure.





Working professionals who skip breakfast are 27 per cent more likely to develop heart conditions compared to their breakfast-eating counterparts. This is the finding of a study conducted by a team at the Harvard School of Public Health. Researchers tracked the health, lifestyle and eating habits of over 27,000 working men between 45 and 82 years of age over a period of 16 years, adjusting for factors such as smoking, exercise and variations in diet. In this period, about 1,500 men developed heart-related ailments such as heart attacks and heart failure. The conclusive fact: The first meal of the day, when eaten at the right time, can have tremendous biological benefits over the years. With lunch as the first meal of the day, one consumes a higher amount of calories than required and can therefore develop insulin sensitivity. This is the leading cause for diabetes and blood pressure, eventually adding up to heart disease. In addition, latenight snacking can increase the risk of heart disease by 55 per cent. It's more a threat for those above the age of 50 but habits are formed earlier on.

A NEW STUDY SUGGESTS THAT AVOIDING PHYSICAL MOVEMENT, FEARING FRACTURES OR FALLS, DOES MORE HARM THAN GOOD. THE STUDY, BY DR JOANNA SALE AT ST MICHAEL'S HOSPITAL IN TORONTO, CANADA, REVEALS THAT OF THOSE SAMPLED, HALF THE WOMEN AND ONE IN FIVE MEN OVER 50 YEARS OF AGE WERE LIKELY TO HAVE A FRACTURE FROM A FALL. AS HAVING A FRACTURE DOUBLES A PERSON'S RISK OF HAVING ANOTHER, MOST PEOPLE AVOID LEISURE ACTIVITIES THAT REQUIRE MOVING AROUND, BUT THIS ONLY MAKES THE WEAK BONES WEAKER. THE STUDY SUGGESTS THAT INSTEAD OF SUCH NEGATIVE LIFESTYLE CHANGES, POSITIVE CHANGES SUCH AS REGULAR EXERCISE, USING PROPER FOOTWEAR, AND TAKING ADEQUATE VITAMIN SUPPLEMENTS CAN HELP AVOID FALLS OWING TO WEAK BONES.

# Sculpting history

It's my dream to rebuild the Konark Temple," says 70 year-old **Raghunath Mohapatra**, bustling with creative energy. A man with a mission who settles for nothing less than perfection, the renowned sculptor believes the secret to his success is hard work and divine blessings. Awarded the Padma Vibhushan in April 2013 for his contribution to the field of sculpture, lack of formal education did not impede Mohapatra's quest for excellence. Deeply spiritual and religious, he believes that one who has studied in the school of Lord Jagannath needs no formal education. A descendent of the Vishwakarma line, sculpting is his heritage; he claims his ancestors built the famous Konark Temple and Lord Jagannath Temple in Puri.

To preserve his inheritance, which he says is slowly disintegrating, he proposes building replicas. "In the name of restoration, the archaeological department puts plain stone amid precious carving," he rues. "This is an eyesore." he grumbles. His plan, he says, serves a twofold purpose of preserving history and training craftsmen in the ancient art of temple making. "I have already proposed to the state government to rebuild a replica of the Konark along the Chandrabhaga beach. This is my final commitment and dream."

Mohapatra was born in 1943 in Puri and brought up by his maternal grandparents. At the age of six, he fell sick. "Even the doctors had given up on me," he recounts quietly. "Then my father took me to the Devi temple and told the deity, 'He is yours'. Miraculously, I got better again, and I feel a very close relationship with the Goddess. My skill and success is God-gifted."





His maternal grandfather, a master craftsman, took to teaching him sculpting at the age of nine. At 18, he was appointed the master craftsman in the Handicraft Design and Training Centre, Bhubaneswar. He was eventually made superintendent with 2,000 students learning under him. In the 1960s, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru appreciated his work at a handicrafts exhibition in Odisha, which set his life in motion. The All India Handicraft Board instituted the first national award for handicraft in 1965, which also happened to be Mohapatra's first award at the age of 22, for his replica of the Konark horse that stood 9-ft tall, 6-ft long and 3-ft broad, and was deemed the first attempt after the original by anyone in Odisha.

His other famous works of art include the majestic horse and *stupa* entrance at Barabati Stadium in Cuttack, a replica of the Suryanarayan statue of Konark Temple, the giant Buddha statues at Dhauli and Ladakh, and the majestic horse in Masteen Canteen, Bhubaneswar. He eventually took voluntary retirement from government assignments in 1992 and started his own firm called Raghunath Art and Crafts, which employs 150 people, and is involved in creating sculptures for India and exporting the same.

—Ruby Nanda



#### **BIRTHDAYS**

• Seventies' film heartthrob **Rishi Kapoor** (right) turned 61 on 4 September.

• Legendary playback singer **Asha Bhosle** turns 80 on 8 September.



Actor and theatre artist
 Shabana Azmi (left) turns
 62 on 18 September.

• Director, producer and writer **Mahesh Bhatt** turns 65 on 20 September.

• American horror and sci-fi novelist **Stephen King** turns 66 on 21 September.

• India's favourite singer Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar (right) turns 84 on 28 September.



#### **IN PASSING**

• Tamil lyricist **Vaali** (right), who has composed lyrics for over 10,000 songs over 50 years, died of respiratory problems on 18 July. He was 82.



• The world's oldest woman, **Sant Kaur Bajwa**, a resident of London born in Pakistan in 1898, passed away on 19 July at the age of 115.



• Winner of a Harmony Silver Award in 2010, **Ram Snehi** (left), 83, passed away on 27 July. He was a tireless vigilante who rescued many women and young girls from prostitution in Madhya Pradesh's Chambal district.

• Bollywood's most typecast actor according to *Guinness World Records*, **Jagdish Raj** (right), who played a cop 144 times on screen, passed away on 28 July. He was 85.



• Former Indian umpire **S N Hanumantha Rao** passed away on 29 July. He was 83.

#### **MILESTONES**

• Amitabh Bachchan, 70, was conferred the Whistling Woods International Maestro Award along with legendary flautist, 75 year-old Hariprasad Chaurasia and 75 year-old Shivkumar Sharma, veteran santoor player, on 17 July.



• Sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan (right), 67, was conferred the 21st Rajiv Gandhi National Sadhbhavna Award on 20 August, for contribution towards peace and communal harmony.

• Hindustani vocalist **Abdul Rashid Khan** (left), 105, was conferred the Lifetime Achievement Award 2013 by the Delhi state government on 11 August. Earlier this year, he was also awarded the Padma Bhushan, making him the oldest person to receive the prestigious award.





"A number of doctors have tried to sell me a facelift but when I looked at pictures of myself, I thought, 'What are they going to lift?' The fact is, there's sexuality in having these imperfections that come with age; I see it as very sensual."

> —American actor Sharon Stone, 55, in The New York Daily News



### **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.



#### LAUGH IT OFF

I am the living embodiment of the cliché that 'laughter is the best medicine' and vouch for its contribution to health and happiness. In fact, along with a handful of people, I founded the Laughter Club of Worli Sea Face around 15 years ago and have helped it become one of the biggest in Mumbai, with an average daily attendance of 150-175.

We meet at 7 am every day and begin our session with the Mahatma's prayer, *Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram*. After that, the session accelerates into various types of laughs and yoga exercises including breathing, neck, shoulder, hip, knee, leg, spine and lung exercises.

Why go to a doctor or pump oneself up with pills when laughter is the best cardiovascular workout? Laughter also aids muscle relaxation, activates the immune and digestive systems, reduces stress levels, and helps one get a good night's rest. In the past 15 years, many members have also reported improvement in medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and cholesterol after they started attending our sessions. Besides, where else can people go to forget their worries, even if it's for only 30 minutes a day? Do you know how refreshing that can be? Sure, there is a difference between humour and laughter. While humour is subjective, laughter is a physical activity. And if it seems forced at first, it becomes genuine after a few practice sessions. This simple activity has gifted me good mental health; keeps my memory in good shape; strengthens my decision-making powers; and has given me a positive demeanour. Did you know that those who attend our laughter sessions say that they are able to spend quality time with the family, which they never did before?

As I own a travel business that promotes international trade fairs, I have spread the message of laughter at conferences and conventions I organise. As a result, I have started Laughter Clubs in Germany, Switzerland, the US, Australia, Slovenia and China. I am happy to say that many of my overseas students visit our Laughter Club in Worli.

In today's stressful world, laughter is indeed the best medicine, and the 'Ha-ha-ho-ho, Ha-ha-ho-ho' mantra is easy to practice. So, let's spread happiness through laughter and help make the world a happier place to live in. Remember, try as you might, you cannot buy happiness. It comes from within.

—Om Prakash Sahgal, Mumbai



With the number of Indians living with diabetes. It's time to take action. We can make a difference in our family through exercise, eating right and teaching healthy behaviour to our children. So get out and play. Do something active together.

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### Second life N M RAJESHWARI 54 HYDERABAD

Am a living example of all that was wrong with the concept of child marriages—I was married in 1962 when I was 13; by the time I was 30, I was back at my parents' house with three children in tow. I had barely finished school at the time of my marriage and now my parents were as much woebegone as I because we realised that my minimal education was not going to help me sustain my children.

So I went back to school. With my parents' continuous and unstinted support, I went on to do my postgraduation in Telugu literature and then did my master's in education. At one point of time during graduation, my elder son Raghu and I were classmates. Today, he is a professor of biotechnology in Indraprastha University in Delhi.

By 1986, I had completed my education and joined the Zila Parishad School in Rajahmundry as a teacherwithin walking distance from my parents' house. In all my eagerness to have good educational qualifications, I realised my daughter Radhika and my younger son Venkat were really missing their mother, even though I was living under the same roof. The two of them would come to receive me at my school. Radhika would tell me, 'Feed me with your hands,' 'sit with me', or 'I want to sleep in your bed', but Venkat would say nothing! He could not express his needs and pain.

I taught for 22 years in government schools of Andhra Pradesh— 17 years in Thorredu and five years in Venkatanagram. After retirement in September 2006, I spent two years with my elder son in Delhi and then I came to Hyderabad, where my daughter was working. In these two to three years, my loneliness came back to haunt me and I kept feeling that I needed to do something for people like me—single senior citizens. But what could I do and how?

In 2009, I joined AASRA, an organisation that is a part of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. It is a daycare centre for elders established with the help of the Senior Citizens' Association of Hyderabad



and the NGO HelpAge. I realised that single senior citizens are awfully lonely and need companionship; someone they can grow older with. I conducted a public meeting and encouraged older adults to take a stand and speak up.

In October 2010, I set up Thodu Needa (*thodu* = companion, *needa* = shadow) to help seniors find companions either through marriage or a live-in relationship. The organisation was registered in December 2010. Our daycare centre also engages older people in health and leisure activities, with experts visiting the centre for talks. It is here at the centre that prospective silver partners meet. To participate in the programme, people must submit declaration of divorce or death certificate of one's spouse. Initially, my services were free. But when expenses started piling up and there were no donations in sight, I began charging ₹ 1,000 for a year. Today, almost 200 people turn up for every meeting, which is quite encouraging.

In 2011, B Damodar Rao, 67, came looking to find a companion as he had lost his wife in 2009 and was living by himself. Impressed with my work, he proposed to me six months after joining the centre. We got married on 15 August 2012. He has willingly taken on the responsibility of my ailing mother as well. My work has now become our work.

-As told to Shyamola Khanna

### POSE WORTHY

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

I'm a retired marketing professional and big on fitness and yoga. I have been practising yoga for over 15 years and wish to set up my own studio for working professionals. How should I proceed?

There are three ways to go about teaching yoga: start in an already established fitness centre; offer private classes; or have your own studio—and it works best if you move up exactly in that order. Some fitness centres might make it mandatory that you have a certification as a yoga instructor, so go about acquiring that on priority. Teaching yoga at a fitness centre or someone else's yoga studio is essential in two ways: first, you can establish yourself and build a loyal clientele that could follow you to your own yoga studio, and second, experience is experience. Learn about the kind of difficulties a fitness centre might face, figure out how they overcome it or how you could fix it when you have your own studio.

Moving up and forward, offer private classes and workshops to your students, as this will help you identify what's in demand and how much they are willing to spend for classes.

There are different kinds of yoga practices: Kundalini, Iyengar, Ashtanga and 'hot yoga', which is gaining popularity abroad. Figure out which will be best in the long term. Make sure you have enough capital and a long-term business plan. Include space rentals, acquiring licenses if any, décor, and advertising in your budget.

—Sheela Ramanathan gives private yoga training classes in Mumbai



#### FOOD FACTS BY NAMITA JAIN

# **Happy heart:** A healthy diet and exercise can keep it beating longer

I am 63 years old. I recently visited my cardiologist for a health check-up. After certain tests, the doctor told me that my heart's working efficiency has gone down as a result of my years. Could you please recommend a diet I can follow to keep my heart young and healthy?

Ageing is a natural phenomenon and heart functions begin to slow down with it. The ageing process reduces heart muscle strength as well, which means its pumping power declines and the maximal heart rate (the highest number of times your heart can contract in a minute) also decreases.

A balanced diet and healthy lifestyle can delay this process and boost heart health. Some specific goals should include:

- Maintaining healthy body weight
- A healthy and balanced diet
- Maintaining adequate cholesterol and lipid profile
- Working towards normal blood pressure and blood glucose levels
- Physical activity
- Avoiding tobacco and alcohol

You could follow these dietary guidelines to achieve the above goals:

• Eat a heart-healthy diet with reduced amounts of saturated fat (animal fat) and cholesterol; it should also be rich in unrefined, complex carbohydrates—this could be in the form of oats, *jowar*, *bajra*, wheat bran, wheat flakes, wholegrain cereals, husked pulses, nuts and brown rice. • Eat small, frequent meals to reduce the burden on the heart. Have three major meals and two to three small healthy in-between snacks.

• Limit the cholesterol in your diet to 300 mg or less a day. Eggs, meat and dairy products are major sources of cholesterol. One egg yolk contains about 220 mg of cholesterol.

• Reduce your salt intake to 2-3 gm per day. Avoid table salt in your diet.

• Eat raw vegetables such as cucumber, carrots, tomatoes and onions as well as food with more fibre content.

• Cut down on fat intake to 2-3 tsp per day. Keep fat intake below 30 per cent of your total calories. Avoid fried food and food that contains excess fat such as beef and mutton. The quality of fat is very important to maintain a healthy lipid profile. Lay emphasis on unsaturated fat in the form of vegetable oils, avocado, nuts and seeds as it helps lower

> LDL (bad) cholesterol and reduce inflammation.

Increase your intake of flavonoid-rich foods like berries, plums, apples, broccoli, strawberries, pomegranate, red grapes, and cabbage. Flavonoids are cardioprotective foods and have a positive effect on blood vessels. They act as antioxidants, decrease inflammation, and inhibit the formation of blood clots. They are also thought to help regulate blood pressure by keeping arteries relaxed.

• Avoid *papad*, pickle, sauces; they not only have excessive fat but also added salt.

• Include black or kidney beans in your daily diet; they are rich in B-complex vitamins, niacin, folate, omega-3 fatty acids, calcium and soluble fibre.



A balanced diet and healthy lifestyle can delay the process of ageing and keep your heart young. Incorporate oats, nuts and cereals in your regular diet for a healthy heart

• Carotenoids keep the heart well—sources include spinach, carrots, broccoli, bell peppers, asparagus, oranges and cantaloupe. Include them in the form of salads and soups.

• Include flaxseed in your daily diet as soluble fibre. Take up to 1 tsp (in grounded form) throughout the day, ideally with water. You can also include it in soups, salads and main meals.

• Almonds and walnuts are rich sources of omega-3 fatty acids, Vitamin E, magnesium and folate and further boost heart health.

• Include 3-4 cups of green tea in your daily diet as it is rich in antioxidants called catechins. Green tea lowers triglycerides and bad cholesterol, apart from boosting your heart health.

• Moderate exercise is one of the best things for general good health. Consult your healthcare provider before beginning a new exercise programme. Exercise moderately and within your capability, but be regular. Exercise helps reduce stress and prevents obesity that, in turn, is associated with the development of heart disease and diabetes.

READERS ASK

> I am a retired person. I recently visited a health camp where they did a lipid profile test. My cholesterol is higher than normal—the LDL cholesterol was high and HDL was on the lower side. Please suggest a diet to improve the levels.

Cholesterol helps the body build new cells, insulate nerves, and produce hormones. Normally, the liver makes all the cholesterol the body needs. But it also enters through food, such as animal-based foods like milk, eggs and meat. There are mainly two forms of cholesterol: the low-density lipoprotein (LDL or 'bad' cholesterol) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL or 'good' cholesterol.) Too much cholesterol or an imbalance of LDL and HDL in your body is a major risk factor for heart disease.

Making the following changes in your diet can help improve the levels:

• Start your day with a cup of green tea as it helps flush toxins from the body.

• Another easy step to improve your cholesterol is to have a bowl of oatmeal for breakfast. It gives you 1-2 gm of soluble fibre. Add a banana or some strawberries for another ½ gm.

• Midmorning and mid-evening snacks should be healthy with some citrus fruits and nuts like almonds and walnuts. Eating two ounces of nuts a day can slightly lower LDL. Apples, grapes, strawberries and citrus fruits are rich in pectin, a type of soluble fibre that lowers LDL.

• For lunch, include barley and other whole grains for chapattis. Incorporate fibre in the form of green vegetables—up to two portions and a bowl of *dal*. Beans, eggplant and okra are rich in fibre and low in calories.

• Dinner can be planned with a bowl of vegetables and soybean, 2-3 chapattis, salad and yoghurt. Eating soybean and foods made from soy, like tofu and soy milk, has been found beneficial in lowering cholesterol.

• For non-vegetarians, eating fish two or three times a week can lower LDL by delivering LDL-lowering omega-3 fats. Omega-3 reduces triglycerides in the bloodstream and protects the heart by helping prevent the onset of abnormal heart rhythms.

Namita Jain is a wellness specialist and celebrity nutritionist at Diet Mantra and has written bestsellers on diet and fitness. Visit www.dietmantra.in. If you have any questions for Namita Jain, write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



#### SILVER LINING BY V S NATARAJAN

### Revised condition: Age changes the heart

We are all aware that as we age, our chances of getting a heart attack increase. A recent study says that the mere fact that a person has been born in India makes him more prone to heart attacks! This is a tragic fact, but let us analyse the reasons for the problem, the country notwithstanding.

The three blood vessels supplying the heart with blood shrink with age. As fat gets deposited in the walls of these blood vessels, they get blocked and disrupt blood supply to the heart. The eventual problem: heart attack.

#### Symptoms of heart attack

If a middle-aged person suffers from a heart attack, he experiences severe chest pain. This pain spreads from the chest to the left shoulder and then to the left hand. It travels to the right hand and back, sides of the neck and the chin. The person suffering starts sweating profusely, and his body becomes cold. Some people may faint or vomit. But only some of these symptoms may be seen in silvers. For some, the symptoms may be different. One may feel extremely tired and breathless. An older person suffering a heart attack may faint, fall down or even suffer a paralytic stroke.

#### Silent heart attack

For some, the clear cut symptoms of heart attack do not reveal themselves. There is no pain or other related problems, but the ECG reveals the problem. This is called a silent heart attack. As we age, our nerves lose their ability to sense pain. More particularly, diabetics do not have chest pain when they have a heart attack. With progressing years, blood is supplied to the heart through smaller blood vessels (called collaterals) as well. Despite blocks in the bigger blood vessels, the heart gets a decent supply of blood and hence there is no pain.

Some elderly suffer from dementia in old age. They experience chest pain during an attack but can't communicate the need for help.

#### Problems related to heart attack

Many silvers tend to ignore chest pain, thinking that it may be owing to gastric problems. This, in turn, delays the treatment and hence unwanted results follow. The heart becomes weak, its rhythm changes and sometimes fluid is collected in the lungs. Owing to sudden shortage of blood supply to some parts, they may also have a paralytic stroke.

To avoid these problems, the right treatment at the right time is a must. On experiencing an uneasy feeling in the chest, or a burning sensation, they must be immediately taken to a doctor. ECG and relevant blood tests, and if necessary ECHO, should be done. Based on these, the correct treatment can be given. Normally, heart attack in the younger years is very severe and may cause death, but in old age, heart attacks are not so severe and mostly not fatal.



#### Silvers tend to ignore chest pain, mistaking it for a gastric problem. This delays the treatment; the heart becomes weak, its rhythm changes and sometimes fluid is collected in the lungs

#### Who is prone to a heart attack?

People with a family history, diabetics, hypertensives, people with high cholesterol, obese people, alcoholics, sedentary people and smokers are more likely to get a heart attack.

#### Treatment: medication, angioplasty or bypass?

Suppose a 60 year-old person suffers a heart attack. If he is not obese and exercises for at least an hour daily after he recovers, there may not be huge changes in his daily life. He can take his tablets regularly and stay healthy. It should be remembered that the blocks in the blood vessels cannot be removed by medication alone. Drugs only ensure obstruction-free blood circulation. If such a person experiences chest pain again, he/she must immediately consult a doctor.

#### Angioplasty

Persons who are around 60-70 years of age, those who have suffered a heart attack, diabetics, hypertensives, silvers with high cholesterol levels and those who experience frequent pain in the chest may require an angioplasty. For taking an angiogram, a medicine is injected into the heart through a blood vessel in the arm or leg. This helps find out the blocks in the blood vessels supplying blood to the heart. The place where the block is detected is blown up with a balloon and the block is removed. To avoid recurrence of the block, a tiny tube is fixed (stent) to restore normal blood supply. Patients are not given anaesthesia and there are no stitches either. After this, a person may lead a normal life for a long time. However, follow-ups with regular checkups are advised.

#### **Bypass surgery**

A bypass surgery is one of the most modern treatments available. If the angiogram reveals that there are blocks in the blood vessels and if they cannot be removed, a small blood vessel is taken from the leg and fixed near the place where there is a block, so that the blood is carried through an alternative pathway (CABG—coronary artery bypass graft). Age need not be a worrying factor or hindrance for such a surgery. After a bypass, one can lead a healthy life for about 10-15 years.

#### READERS ASK

#### Why do we get stones in the gall bladder? Is surgery the only treatment option or can the stones be dissolved with medication?

Though the exact reason behind the occurrence of gallstones is yet to be discovered, the elderly, women, diabetics and obese people are more prone to it. Much research has been conducted to find the exact relation between food habits and gallstones. Though not proven, it is said that people who consume food with high fat, carbohydrates and calories and low-fibre content are more prone to gallstones. Long-term intake of processed and purified sugar can also cause gallstones. However, there is no link between alcohol and gallstones. Surgery is the best treatment modality if a gall bladder stone causes abdominal pain. As medication is not known to be effective in dissolving these stones, laparoscopic cholecystectomy, wherein gallstones can be removed through a small hole in the abdominal wall, is an easier and safer surgical option.

#### Take care of your heart

- Go for periodic checkups—keep your blood pressure under control.
- Sugar levels must always be under control.
- Maintain an appropriate body weight.

• Take care of what you eat: avoid rice, sugar and food rich in fat. Try to include greens, wheat, millets, corn, horse gram, egg white, fish, oats, soy, mushrooms and fruits in your diet.

- Almonds, walnuts and figs make the heart stronger.
- Daily exercise is a must.
- Quit smoking and drinking.
- Consume less salt.

• Practice meditation and *pranayama* to keep the mind and body healthy.

• Be happy, always.

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

### Your hips don't lie : Don't neglect these hard workers

Having firm hips or butt muscles is very important, as they hold us up. Beyond the aesthetics of a firm set of buttocks, they have a functional relevance to how we move and stay upright. Strong hip muscles facilitate good motion; they are important for tough tasks like running (or even walking) up the stairs as well as easy ones like leaning back to sit on a chair. They align the spine and prevent pressure to the lower back if they are strong. Weak hip muscles could be the cause behind a wrongly curved spine that stresses the lower back and causes the abdomen to pooch out.

Yet, like many hard workers in our body, they too are neglected. Unfortunately, they are also the most likely to be ruined by bad technique in exercise: running can cause tight hamstrings that will, in turn, strain the hip muscles and the wrong type of abdominal exercises will stress the spine and do nothing towards toning the hips. So, it is important to use the wisdom of yoga as an assured way towards toning the hips.

There are several poses that are specially qualified to do so, such as the pelvic tilt (*kandharasana*), the basic cobra pose (*bhujangasana*), the standing Dancing Natraj pose (*Natrajasana*), and the upward plank pose (*setu asana*). All the squats are powerful hip strengtheners. Variations of the squat pose (*utkatasana*) are ideal in this regard. Remember that it is best to do both dynamic and static versions of the poses for more dramatic tone at the hips. You can do the dynamic version one day, and the static the next to develop a different muscle fibre tone. The number of repeats while doing dynamic versions should also steadily increase, instead of remaining the same. If time is a constraint, you can reduce the number of poses but extend the duration in each for more spectacular impact.

#### YOGIC MOVES

#### Plank pose (setuasana)

floor. This may be tough initially, especially for those who are stiff; in that case, try it with the legs slightly bent at the knees. If there is no neck problem, you can tilt the head back, just rest it out; returning to the pose regularly, with slight modifications, will help you reach the final pose without too much discomfort. Those with neck problems can look ahead instead of tilting the head back. **Benefits:** This pose tones the whole body, especially the hips, thighs and calves. It also boosts immunity and gives you an emotional high, alleviating depression.

Model: Shriram P Achrekar, Harmony Interactive Centre Photographer: Haresh Patel

Sit on your hips, legs out in front. Place palms flat at your hips, fingers pointed ahead. (Some people prefer to point the fingers backwards, to take the strain off the wrists.) Lift hips up, making the legs as straight as possible with the feet becoming flat on the shifting the weight to your arms and the legs. Stay up for a few seconds. Repeat a few times.

This pose is usually used as a counter pose to any forward bend, like the seated forward bend (*paschimottana-sana*). Also, those who are new to this pose may experience some cramping as muscles that have never been fully exploited are challenged. You need to

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 the advice given here)





#### THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN SMT DORAIAMMAL NEELAKANTAN, CHENNAI

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

A grandmother to six and great-grandmother to seven, Smt Doraiammal Neelakantan is much loved by friends and family for her warmth and hospitality. As Chithra Viswanathan, who introduced me to this great grandmother, astutely remarked, "Discipline with affection is her formula for success; it has allowed her children to enjoy their wings and yet stay rooted." The ease with which Smt Neelakantan answered my questions and the delightful chuckles with which she recalled many incidents made her seem much younger than her 83 years.

#### Namaste. Tell me about yourself.

I was born in 1930 in Chennai in a well-educated Tamilian family. My childhood was spent in Tiruchy. I got married when I was 16. My grandfather was bestowed the title of Rao Bahadur. My father-in-law was an engineer during the British rule. My husband, Brigadier Neelakantan, served in the Army. We were posted in around eight cities after my marriage, but eventually settled in Chennai.

# Your children tell us that your maternal family and your husband's family were highly engaged in education.

Yes, my sister completed her doctorate back then. If I had not been married early, I am sure I would have also studied further. My father-inlaw was also very particular that girls must also be educated. His daughters completed their graduation before he thought of their marriage. In fact, the family has always been broad-minded and a widow remarriage took place in the family as early as the 1920s.

#### During your husband's postings, did you travel with him? What about your children?

I travelled with him, but whenever he was on field, I chose to stay in Chennai. The children stayed here as we did not want to disturb their education.

### Did they manage easily when you were not here?

They had to learn to do that. Those days we communicated through letters and trunk calls. In fact, we all share a very affectionate relationship. My children came down with their families for my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and we spent a memorable week in Yercaud.

### What makes you so easygoing with your children?

I think that the military influence and constant shifting from one place to another played a great role in the way we looked at life. We were bound to have a broader social outlook. I remember when we first went to see my daughter-in-law Uma for my son, we wondered how she will adjust in our family because she was from a traditional background. I clearly remember how scandalised her family felt when my son suggested that he take her out for a chat. I must add that she has adjusted so beautifully.

#### I can imagine. In fact, in those days, youngsters were not expected to display such independence!

Yes, I am glad that things have changed now. At present, our role in the lives of our children is no more



as decision makers, but only in an advisory capacity.

### What is a prominent change in family structure over time?

Earlier, one was always surrounded by people. For instance, a young married girl was conscious of her mother-inlaw's likes and dislikes and adapted herself accordingly. Nowadays, families are smaller. Many young couples live by themselves. Even in a joint family, there is much more freedom and individuality now. Youngsters are much more conscious of their own preferences.

#### Your daughter Geetha says that she has learnt much from watching how you took care of your husband, his mother as well as the children.

I don't think we thought about all this. I just did it. In fact, from 1979, four generations have lived here in this very house. It required some adjusting but it was never difficult.

### What do you expect from your children now?

Just that they should get along well and be happy. My son married an American girl and so did my grandson. I am proud of their choices. I am sure it was the broad-mindedness prevailing in our family that allows us to welcome people from different cultures and languages as our own.

#### And how do you spend your day?

I take care of the house and supervise the kitchen work in the mornings. In fact, I have always loved cooking. Even when I am not feeling too well, I enjoy cooking. So my son has made a wooden stool for me to sit upon and cook.

### What is the secret of your joy in the kitchen?

When you have a husband who says, 'Prepare the dish however you



know and I will give it a new name,' then you obviously feel encouraged.

#### FROM SMT DORAIAMMAL NEELAKANTAN'S KITCHEN

#### Sojjiappam

A traditional sweet dish, *sojjiappam* is one of the most favourite preparations in the family. An interesting variation of the famous *poli*, it is easy to prepare and keeps for a few days.

#### Ingredients

#### For dough:

- Maida (plain flour): 1 cup
- Ghee: 2 tbsp
- Powdered sugar: 1 tbsp
- Kesari powder: 1 pinch

#### For filling:

- Semolina: 1 cup
- Sugar: 1 cup
- Coconut: 1 cup
- Jaggery: ½ cup, powdered
- Cardamom powder: 1 tsp
- Oil for deep frying

#### Method

To prepare the dough, mix ghee into the *maida* well. Add sugar, *kesari* powder and enough water to make soft dough (softer than for chapattis). Cover with a damp cloth and set aside. For the filling, mix semolina and sugar in a cup of water in a thick bottomed pan. Allow to cook on a medium flame until it reaches a dough-like consistency. Mix coconut and jaggery and cook on a medium flame until the moisture evaporates and it becomes dry. Add this to the semolina mixture along with cardamom powder.

To proceed with the *sojjiappam*, make small lemon-sized balls of the dough and make the same number of balls with the filling. Heat oil in a pan to deep-fry the *sojjiappam*. Roll the semolina dough on a plastic sheet with a rolling pin into a 2-inch circle. Place the stuffing on top. Now draw the edges of the circle inwards to the centre and stick it together by pinching. Gently flatten with your fingers. Deep fry 3-4 at a time on a low flame until crisp. Serve as dessert.

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

# a your service

An ex-serviceman in Kerala steps into a brave new world as a blogger campaigning for rubber farmers, reports **A K Anuraj** 

ike most farmers, S Chandrasekharan Nair wakes up at 4 am to milk the cows. But before he gets busy on his rubber plantation, he does something no other 64 year-old farmer in Kerala does. As dawn breaks and the birds begin to twitter, Nair switches on his computer, checks his email, browses through his social media accounts and updates his blog.

It's a hallowed ritual that, quite literally, gives him reason to wake up every day. Far from being a blog that chronicles an idyllic life on a farm, *keralafarmeronline.com* is a lifeline for thousands of rubber traders. Apart from exposing malpractices in the rubber trade, Nair's blog provides a real-time listing and analysis of Indian rubber statistics, export-import figures released by the Rubber Board of India, valuable information on rubber farming, and articles on bio-fertilisers and the environment.

Nair is no armchair blogger. His efforts to put the skids on unscrupulous middlemen and other corrupt players in the rubber trade have led him to approach various authorities and file numerous queries under the Right to Information Act (RTI), all of which are chronicled on his blog.



"After realising that rubber farmers are being cheated by middlemen, I started my crusade to uncover how this happens," reveals Nair, who lives in Peyad in Thiruvananthapuram. "When I approached authorities like the Rubber Board, I was up against a wall. They were simply not prepared to share any information with me. That is why I started using the RTI Act."

It's a long way from being a *havaldar* in the Indian Army to becoming a blogger. So how did the 50-something ex-serviceman-cum-farmer turn to the World Wide Web? "It was a very slow transition," remembers Nair, with a disarming smile. "I am a matriculate and not very good in English," he confesses, adding that he is conversant in Malayalam and Hindi. "On realising that rubber farmers were being cheated by middlemen, I launched *keralafarmeronline.com*, a comprehensive guide that is followed not just by farmers, but researchers and businessmen"

Nair's introduction to the information superhighway was gradual and started with help from his daughter and nephew. In 2000, he started sharing his thoughts on rubber marketing on *4me*, a web platform made available by a nephew of his in the IT field. Once he got the hang of the Web and fell in love with its seemingly magical ways, Nair started posting articles relating to rubber trade and statistics on *Geocities* of *Yahoo!* before he switched to blogging platforms in 2005. After he became proficient at blogging, in both English and Malayalam, Nair joined several groups of bloggers. "This helped me learn a lot of Web applications. All the youngsters and other bloggers helped familiarise me with innovations in the blogosphere."

His big moment came in 2008, when he launched the blog *keralafarmeronline.com*. "It is a comprehensive guide for farmers as well as researchers and businessmen as it contains in-depth details and official statistics on rubber production, exports, costs, etc," reveals Nair. A critic of unfair trade practices and a campaigner against exploitation, Nair regularly monitors the statistics released by various governmental agencies like the Rubber Board. "These figures provide a clear indication on how farmers are being cheated by intermediaries. Not only businessmen, but even the authorities have a role in this. These doctored figures and calculations are enough to understand the extent to which small-scale farmers are being cheated."

This realisation compelled Nair to use the RTI Act to dig deeper into malpractices and make a series of applications to the Rubber Board. "I have never got a satisfactory reply," he says with a wry laugh. But that has only strengthened his resolve. The answers to his queries have also provided subtle clues to areas of corruption and undercurrents in the trade. Naturally, all this goes up on his blog. The website gets a minimum of 150 hits on any given day, with most of the traffic directed toward the daily prices of rubber.

Nair is almost obsessive about updating his blog. Armed with accurate data including daily price fluctuations, he knows that people are less likely to fall prey to the wily ways of middlemen. "Those who visit my blog are not only farmers but business groups and even researchers," he says. "There was this MBA student who once thanked me be-



Nair's organic waste disposal system is cost-effective and user-friendly

cause he found some valuable information he needed for an academic paper he was writing."

Between blogging, campaigning and tending to his plantation, Nair founded the Quality Rubber Marketing Society (QRMS) in September 2009 to expose unhealthy practices in rubber trading. As a crusader, he realised there was strength in numbers and enlisted the support of experts including economists and those associated with the Rubber Board.

G Rajasekharan, a retired Kerala PWD chief engineer, owns a rubber plantation adjacent to Nair's. A member of the QRMS, he says Nair's vast and in-depth knowledge of the trade has helped many like him become aware of issues they never knew existed.

Nair has also extended his campaigning to the civic arena. "Thiruvananthapuram, once an eco-friendly city, has become a dumping yard. People, not just in the city but even in the villages, are losing their civic sense," remarks Nair, who is popularising a waste disposal system based on the principle of composing organic waste. Nair's model is an improvised version of a system developed by Dr Francis Xavier of the Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU). "On seeing the model developed under my guidance, Mr Nair thought of making a new model, which is cheaper," affirms Dr Xavier. "He has successfully developed a unit made of cement blocks and many farmers and villagers in Thiruvananthapuram and Palakkad are making use of his model."

While the KVASU model makes use of microbes in cow dung, Nair's uses the slurry from the biogas plant that provides microbes. The sewage-connected biogas plant helps to get manure balanced with nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium content while the slurry is high in nitrogen. The temperature inside the pile rises once waste is piled up. While the manure is ready in a few weeks, there is no issue of slurry or seepage. "This model is more user-friendly, which is why it's gaining in popularity among the rural population," adds Nair.

Even though Nair has achieved a lot, he says his mission is far from accomplished. "My blog and the RTI Act may help us gather information and expose corruption but that does not automatically bring about change. My next step is to expand the QRMS, so our voice will be louder and we can challenge the authorities with sufficient ammunition." Spoken like a true soldier! **\*** 

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# Heart of the matter

# Age, in this case, is a number that matters. With more and more younger people suffering

from heart diseases, lifestyle modifications and technological advancements can help lower the risk. **Srirekha Pillai** analyses the pitfalls and brings to light measures that can save many a life

n December 2009, Ranjan Das, the 42 year-old Mumbaibased CEO of SAP India, collapsed and succumbed shortly after returning home from the gym; he had suffered a cardiac arrest. Not only did he come across as fit to others, he was also known to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

For decades it has been assumed that heart diseases claim only the elderly. However, debunking the myth that cardiovascular diseases are only familiar terrain for silvers, a recent study conducted by the Cardiological Society of India (CSI) claims that the average age of individuals susceptible to heart attacks has fallen from 40 to 30 in the last decade. A sedentary lifestyle, insufficient sleep, poor dietary choices and skyrocketing stress are triggering cardiac failure at a much earlier age.

There have been cases, and not sporadic, when youngsters in their 20s and 30s have been reported to wake up with unknown symptoms that didn't bode well. Despite these signs, they went about the day as usual and didn't return home. Post-mortem revealed they had suffered a heart attack. With heart diseases striking Indians 10 to 15 years earlier than in the West, the World Health Organisation (WHO) in a recent report has made projections that we, by 2020, will have the largest cardiovascular disease burden in the world, what with coronary heart disease accounting for one-third of all the deaths, and many dying young. These findings are in stark contradiction to the age-old belief that heart attacks usually strike after the age of 50.

At the ground level, doctors feel that young people are almost setting themselves up for heart disease. Higher income levels have induced a nutritional shift towards unhealthy, processed, on-the-move food and a reduced consumption of fruits and vegetables. These factors, along with overcrowded, unhygienic living conditions, higher exposure to pollution, white-collar jobs and spiralling stress levels, are triggering heart complications. This is a fact confirmed by all the experts *Harmony-Celebrate Age* spoke to.

Even as the mean age for heart attacks is lowering by the year, experts claim that the incidence of sudden cardiac diseases (SCD) is, at the moment, quite high in India, with about 10 per cent of all cardiac-related deaths being sudden and the mean age of patients being less than 60 years. As far as silvers are concerned, the challenge is to battle age-old myths (see "10 Myths", page 45) and not ignore subtle symptoms (a problem with the younger age bracket as well) that invariably results in losing precious time in seeking medical aid. Compounding this are lifestyle-related problems like diabetes and hypertension; silent attacks, in fact, are nightmarish for diabetic silvers.

Another shocking revelation by the CSI study is a 50-per-cent rise in the number of women suffering from cardiovascular diseases (CVD) in India. Women, though, have been proven by other studies to be mostly older when they first show signs of heart problems. According to the findings of Bengaluru-based Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research in 2011, 25 per cent of its patients were below the age of 40, with 10 per cent of them being women. Dr M R Girinath, chief cardiac surgeon of Chennai-based Apollo Hospitals, observes, "Women have some protection from coronary artery disease during the pre-menopausal phase of their lives. Once the hormonal protection is gone, they are more vulnerable to heart problems."

With every statistic pointing to danger signs revealing themselves at a younger age, doctors are advocating early screening. Dr Ram Narain, executive director of Mumbai-based Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, says, "As opposed to the American and Caucasian population, the profile of patients afflicted by heart disease or coronary artery disease seems to be getting younger in the Indian subcontinent." Keeping the genetic profile of Indians in mind-Indians are known to be genetically predisposed to heart disease-the hospital has tailor-made cardiac screening packages for individuals above the age of 35.

Experts attribute the wider prevalence of heart disease among Indians vis-à-vis other ethnic groups to our genetic makeup and environment. One of the main contributing factors could be the widespread prevalence of cardiovascular risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity and dyslipidemia in India. In fact, these are major drivers in 52 per cent of CVD deaths in India below the age of 70, compared to 23 per cent in established market economies (EME). Socioeconomic and cultural changes sweeping the country, globalisation, urbanisation, increased life expectancy and stress together create a domino effect, resulting in an increased incidence of CVD.

Times are changing, though. With greater awareness about the right nutrition, better lifestyle conditions, heart-friendly measures, cutting-edge technological advancement in treatment and preventive care packages in place at medical institutions, taking care of your heart has never been so easy (*see "Procedures and Surgeries"* on page 44).

# WHAT IS CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE?

Cardiovascular disease is a generic term that refers to disorders of the heart and blood vessels. Coronary heart disease (CHD), the largest contributor to CVDs, is a disease of the blood vessels, where arteries that supply blood and oxygen to the heart muscle become narrow or get blocked, leading to heart attacks (see facing page). The most common reason for this is the build-up of fatty deposits or plaque on the inner walls of the blood vessels. Besides CHD, the other contributors to CVDs include strokes; congenital heart disease; rheumatic heart disease, which damages the valves of the heart; deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism, which involve blood clots in the veins of the leg and which dislodge and make their way to the heart and lungs.

Unfortunately, CHD often develops without any preceding symptoms. Symptoms, when they do manifest themselves, are generally identified as sudden onset of chest pain, cold sweats, nausea and breathlessness. However, a study published by the American Heart Association attributes fatigue, sleep disturbances, shortness of breath, indigestion and anxiety in women as the most frequent pre-heart attack symptoms. Many heart attacks begin with symptoms that are so subtle that they are often mistaken for indigestion or muscle ache. If you experience any of the above-mentioned symptoms or know of anyone who is experiencing them, it's wise to seek medical assistance at the earliest.

#### **PREVALENCE IN INDIA**

According to the Registrar General of India (RGI), the southern and eastern states of India report greater age-adjusted cardiovascular mortality. While CHD is more prevalent in the southern states of India, stroke, another major contributing factor to CVD, is more common in the eastern

#### CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION (CPR) GUIDELINES: THINK C-A-B



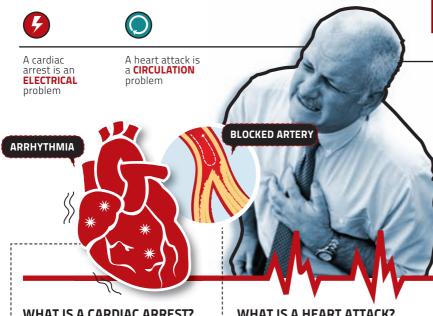
**COMPRESSIONS** Push at least 2 inches on adult breastbone, 100 times per minute, to move oxygenated blood to vital organs



**AIRWAY** Open the airway and check for breathing or blockage; watch for rise of chest and listen for air movement



#### **BREATHING** Tilt chin back for the unobstructed passing of air; give two breaths and resume chest compressions



#### WHAT IS A CARDIAC ARREST? A cardiac arrest occurs when the heart malfunctions and stops beating unexpectedly.

A cardiac arrest is triggered by an electrical malfunction in the heart that causes an irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia). With its pumping action disrupted, the heart cannot pump blood to the brain, lungs and other organs.

#### SYMPTOMS

Within seconds, a person becomes unresponsive, is not breathing or is gasping.

Death occurs within minutes if the victim does not recieve treatment.

#### WHAT TO DO

- 1. CALL AN AMBULANCE
- 2. START CPR RIGHT AWAY
- 3. IF AN AUTOMATED EXTERNAL
- DEFIBRILLATOR (AED) IS AVAILABLE, USE IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE



#### WHAT'S THE LINK

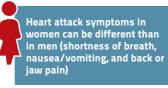
Most heart attacks do not lead to cardiac arrest. But when a cardiac arrest occurs, heart attack is a common cause.

#### WHAT IS A HEART ATTACK? A heart attack occurs when the blood flow to the heart muscle is blocked partially or completely.

A blocked artery prevents oxygenrich blood from reaching a section of the heart. If the blocked artery is not reopened quickly, the part of the heart normally nourished by that artery begins to die.

#### SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of a heart attack may be immediate and may include intense discomfort in the chest or other areas of the upper body, shortness of breath, cold sweats, and/or nausea/vomiting. More often though, symptoms start slowly and persist for hours, days or weeks before a heart attack. The longer the person goes without treatment, the greater the damage.



#### WHAT TO DO

- 1. CALL AN AMBULANCE
- 2. DON'T LET THE PATIENT DISSUADE YOU FROM SEEKING HELP
- 3. MASSAGE THE HEART AREA, LET THE PATIENT LIE DOWN WITH HEAD SLIGHTLY ELEVATED
- 4. IF PROPERLY TRAINED AND THE NEED ARISES, BEGIN CPR

#### NUMBER CRUNCHER

# **1.2 million**

The number of annual deaths in India owing to heart attacks (Cardiological Society of India, 2013)

# 10-12 per cent

The increase in prevalence of coronary heart disease in urban adults in the past 50 years; this is in comparison to a 4-5 per cent increase in rural adults (*World Journal of Cardiology*, 2012)

# 9.2 per cent

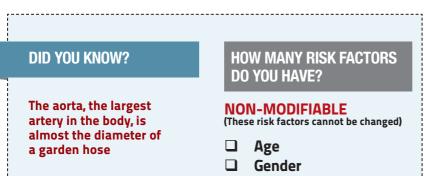
The increase in cardiovascular disease annually, making it the second largest non-communicable disease after mental illness (Cardiological Society of India, 2013)

## 24.8 per cent

Cardiovascular disease patients aged between 25 and 69 (Cardiological Society of India, 2013) states. Similarly, while there is a higher prevalence of CHD in urban pockets, stroke mortality is more or less the same in urban and rural regions.

The data also reflects high CVD mortality in Goa, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, and low mortality in the central Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. With 25 per cent of deaths caused by CHD, southern India tops the mortality charts, while the central region, with 12 per cent of deaths, is the least prone to heart disease.

Meanwhile, Dr Prabhat Jha, director of the Centre for Global Health Research at the University of Toronto, who conducted a study in collabora-





78 bpm (avg female) 70 bpm (avg male)

A woman's heart typically beats faster than a man's.

# Heart disease is the # 1 killer for Indians

## 7.7 & 5.5 million

Number of men and women (respectively) who are affected by coronary heart disease, according to WHO, and is said to double by 2020 (World Journal of Cardiology, 2012)

60% of heart disease cases in the world are from India Family history

#### MODIFIABLE

(Any person can make changes to these risk factors; even modest improvements to your health will make a big difference)

- High blood cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Physical inactivity
- Obesity & overweight
- Smoking
- Diabetes

#### HEART DISEASE PREVENTION TIPS

- ♥ Eat a heart-healthy diet
- Control cholesterol levels
- 🛡 Exercise
- Control blood sugar
- Control high blood pressure
- Control weight
- Manage stress
- Quit smoking

tion with the RGI and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in 2010, found that heart attacks are claiming lives not just in urban areas but in rural regions too. "If you look at the rural areas in poorer states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the leading cause of death among middle-aged men is cardiovascular disease," he says in the report. Part of the 'Million Deaths Study, which aims to investigate 1 million deaths by 2014, the research established that heart disease has emerged as the No. 1 killer in both urban and rural areas of the country. The findings are surprising because they also indicate a reversal in disease patterns in India, from communicable diseases to lifestyle or non-communicable diseases.

#### THE SILVER STORY

India is going through a demographic transition. While the census at the turn of the century in 2001 revealed 77 million silvers in India, with an increase in life expectancy, the number of people above 60 years of age has been pegged at 96 million in 2011 and is expected to grow to 179 million by 2031. In other words, it also spells an increase in the number of CVD cases owing to age-related, and lifestyle-related, factors like hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol. As it is, ageing brings changes in the heart and blood vessels. Many of these changes that are common with ageing are owing to modifiable factors, which, if not treated, can lead to heart diseases. Normally, the heart continues to pump enough blood to supply to all parts of the body. But, an older heart may not be able to pump as efficiently owing to the decrease in elasticity and the inability to respond to changes in arterial pressure. The resultant resistance to the pumping action of the heart increases the stress on it, leading to complications.

Heart disease is part of the ageing process. As you advance in years, the wear and tear starts showing: you put on weight; your blood pressure rises,



# HEARTY FUTURE

DR JAMSHED J DALAL, DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR CARDIAC SCIENCES, KOKILABEN DHIRUBHAI AMBANI HOSPITAL REVEALS HOW MODERN MIRACLES ARE MAKING HEART SURGERY SAFER AND MORE COMMONPLACE

Research into heart disease is on the very cutting edge of medicine and every advancement in technology saves more lives. That's just as well because, not only has the incidence of heart disease risen to alarming levels, the average age of patients suffering from heart problems is falling.

Technology has refined surgical techniques by leaps and bounds. Percutaneous procedures and beating heart surgery are replacing on-pump, which is open-heart surgery on a heart-lung machine, even as implantable devices selfadminister electrical shocks and revive patients suffering a cardiac arrest.

Here are some exciting developments that are touching hearts and lives:

• Valvuloplasty: Problems with the aortic valve are caused by narrowing of the valve, where the only treatment was major open-heart surgery to replace the valve. In the past few years, we have even been replacing valves percutaneously, that is, through a puncture in the artery

in the groin, without opening the chest. In

other words, it is now possible to replace the aortic valve without open-heart surgery.

• Stents: One of the biggest advances in the treatment of coronary heart disease has been the development of the angioplasty programme. This means blockages in the arteries of the heart can be opened with a balloon. After that, you insert a stent in the artery, which keeps it open. This eliminates the need for bypass surgery. Stent technology has evolved over time. After metallic stents, which left room for recurrence of the disease, we began using drug-medicated stents—or drug-eluting stents. Once the drug-coated stent was implanted, the drug acted at the site of the blockage, thereby minimising the chance of recurrence; this has reduced from an earlier 20 per cent to about 5-7 per cent. In the past couple of years, absorbable stents or dissolvable stents have been developed. These are not made of metal but dissolvable material and are then drug-coated. They dissolve in two to three years, leaving behind a normal artery.

• **Electrophysiology:** Electrophysiology is a branch of cardiology and addresses people who have irregular heart-

beats, cardiac arrest and very weak hearts. The biggest progress here is the implantable defibrillator. Currently, when patients go into a cardiac arrest, doctors try to revive them by immediately administering electrical shocks to his heart via a device called a defibrillator. The electrical shock is delivered via paddles attached to the machine. Unlike in India, most countries abroad have defibrillators at airports, auditoriums, etc, as emergency treatment. But there is a device called an internal defibrillator—a small device like a pacemaker implanted inside the patient. If the patient goes into cardiac arrest, say, while he is on the road or at home, this device senses it, gives the patient a shock

> and saves his life. It's an expensive procedure and people are not yet used to the idea. Most patients don't opt for it but they would greatly benefit from it.

> > • Special pacemakers:

Patients with a very weak heart (detected by echocardiography) that is not pumping adequately get a special pacemaker called a biventricular pacemaker

implanted in the heart. This device synchronises heart function and improves the efficiency of the heart, allowing the patient to feel better and live longer.

• **Bypass surgery:** There have also been many advances in heart surgery. Earlier, we used arteries from the chest and veins from the legs. Then, we found that veins taken from the legs did not last very long and switched to using only arterial grafts. This procedure is called total arterial bypass surgery, which is much better than using veins. Earlier, patients were put on a heart-lung machine while the surgeon performed bypass surgery. The patient was connected to the machine and his blood passed through it. The machine oxygenated the blood. This was associated with complications in those who had other medical problems. Now, surgeons can perform a 'beating heart surgery', which has eliminated the need for a heart-lung machine. The technology allows the surgeon to perform heart surgery while the heart continues to beat. This is a better technique and has fewer side-effects. Recovery is also faster. Another development is minimally invasive surgery. Here, instead of opening the chest completely, surgeons make a small incision and perform surgery through it. In selected cases, surgery can also be done endoscopically.

—As told to Neeti Vijaykumar

cholesterol shoots up and so does the risk of diabetes. All these factors pool together to create more problems for the heart. Even seemingly fit silvers are often caught unawares by disturbances in the heart. For 84 year-old retired professor from Thiruvananthapuram, Dr Raman Pillai, who has been fastidious about his health, it came as a shock when he suffered a mild chest pain eight years ago. An angiogram revealed a minor block in an artery and doctors prescribed medicines to dissolve the block. "I have been extra cautious after that and have banished dairy products from my diet to keep cholesterol levels in check," he says. "Thankfully, my heart has never given me any problems thereafter."

According to a recent study published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, silent heart attacks are more common in silvers because of diabetes and a resultant decrease in sensations. What is alarming is that silent attacks can be as fatal as normal ones. The research underscores the importance of paying attention to lingering, hard-to-pin symptoms in silvers, warning against dismissing them as indigestion or muscle ache.

An ECG, the first step in the screening process, is only an indication of the pumping of the heart. It is not indicative of all the blockages. The heart's pumping activity will show abnormalities in the ECG only if the patient has sustained an earlier heart attack or the blockage is significant enough to prevent a part of the muscle from contracting properly. There are instances when patients who have a normal ECG show blockages only on an angiogram. Seeking timely medical advice is the first step towards a resolution of the problem.

#### **INVASIVE OR NON-INVASIVE?**

With major advances in medicine, age is no longer a deciding factor

when it comes to treatment. As long as silvers are fit, with blood pressure and diabetes under control, they can undergo bypass surgery or angioplasty without any concerns. Doctors observe how silvers who have been running marathons continue to do so even after bypass surgery or angioplasty. For a patient to warrant angioplasty or bypass, the coronary arteries collectively should have a 70 per cent blockage.

At ₹ 120,000 to ₹ 150,000 for a medicated stent (excluding the procedure and hospital stay charges), the cost of angioplasty can fluctuate depending on the number of stents used. Bypass surgery can set you back by ₹ 250,000 (excluding hospital stay charges).

Offering yet another option, Dr Narain says, "Patients who are not suitable for angioplasty or bypass owing to multiple medical factors can opt for enhanced external counter pulsation (EECP). This can

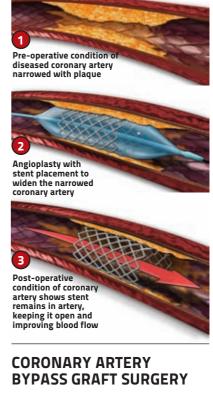
#### MEDICINAL TREATMENTS

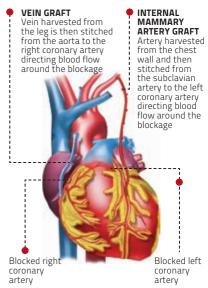
Treatment depends on your symptoms and how severe the disease is. Your doctor may give you one or more medicines to treat Coronary Heart Disease (CHD)

- Aspirin with or without clopidogrel or prasugrel to help prevent blood clots from forming in your arteries
- Ace inhibitors to lower blood pressure and protect your heart and kidneys
- Beta-blockers to lower heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen used by the heart
- Calcium channel blockers to relax arteries, lower blood pressure and reduce strain on the heart
- Diuretics to lower blood pressure and treat heart failure
- Nitrates (such as nitroglycerin) to stop chest pain and improve blood flow to the heart
- Statins to lower cholesterol

#### PROCEDURES & SURGERIES TO TREAT CORONARY HEART DISEASES

ANGIOPLASTY AND STENT PLACEMENT (PERCUTANEOUS INTERVENTIONS)





**NOTE:** The procedure can be performed open or by minimally invasive surgical technique



# 10 MYTHS THAT COULD PUT YOUR LIFE AT RISK

DR M R GIRINATH, CHIEF CARDIC SURGEON AT APOLLO HOSPITAL, CHENNAI, HELPS BUST MYTHS ABOUT CARDIO-VASCULAR DISEASES

# Myth # 1: Screening is necessary only after symptoms become evident

Coronary artery disease (CAD) is especially prevalent among the adult population in India, particularly in urban areas; the numbers are even higher than in the US and Europe. Chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension and lipid disorders are also widely prevalent in India, and all these conditions promote the development of CAD. We, therefore, need to prevent the harmful effects of these diseases. We also need to watch out for other factors that contribute to CAD, such as a sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy eating habits. Every adult person should have a full medical checkup at least once a year rather than wait till heart disease becomes evident. Remember, that in some cases, sudden death may be the first indication of heart disease.

# Myth # 2: Taking diabetes and cholesterol medication is enough to stem the effects of CAD

Taking medicines for these disorders is essential but they do not halt the progression of CAD. One needs to take further steps, such as cessation of smoking, de-stressing measures like yoga and meditation, adoption of a healthy diet, regular exercise and weight control.

# Myth # 3: Exercise and strenuous physical activities must cease after a heart attack

It takes around six to eight weeks to recover from a heart attack. Thereafter, the doctor evaluates the extent of damage to the heart with a treadmill exercise test to estimate safe limits of exertion. The patient may also need to undergo a coronary angiogram to evaluate whether he or she needs to undergo balloon angioplasty or bypass surgery before resuming normal activities.

#### Myth # 4: Heart disease is genetic. So nothing can be can be done to prevent it

Although there is a genetic prediliction to heart disease, a family history of coronary disease is found in only a small percentage of patients. In individuals with a family history, early and primary preventive measures can delay the onset and limit the severity of the disease.

## Myth # 5: Only overweight people are prone to high cholesterol levels and heart disease

Being overweight is only one of many factors that add to CAD. Therefore, being thin is no guarantee against this condition.

# Myth # 6: Heart attacks are characterised by shooting pain in the chest

Chest pain on exertion is one of the symptoms of coronary heart problems. The heart itself is technically an insensitive organ and the pain one experiences is a referred pain. Nearly 20 per cent of those who suffer severe CAD do not experience chest pain, especially in case of pre-existent chronic diabetes.

# Myth # 7: Heart disease begins to affect people above the age of 50

In India, relatively young people are beginning to experience CAD; this is higher when compared to the US and Western Europe. It is estimated that CAD occurs a decade earlier in India than in the West. Nearly 10 per cent of patients here are aged less than 40 and the majority of our patients are between 50 and 60.

#### Myth # 8: Aspirin is enough to prevent a heart attack Aspirin reduces the chance of blood clots forming within

Aspirin reduces the chance of blood clots forming within diseased coronary arteries. It only reduces the chances of a person with coronary heart disease from suffering a heart attack.

# Myth # 9: After heart surgery, it is safer to largely confine oneself to bed and not move around much

Coronary bypass aims at restoring normal life in patients with CAD. By bringing more blood supply to ischemic heart muscle, the patients' 'effort tolerance' is greatly improved and most patients can return to an active life.

## Myth # 10: Smoking only affects the lungs, not the heart

Apart from damaging the lungs, smoking affects the blood vessels in the entire body, especially the coronary arteries. The most diseased coronary arteries are often seen in long-term smokers, who are also diabetic.

—As told to Neeti Vijaykumar

relieve them, to a certain extent, from distress of the heart and improve quality of life. It is not a substitute for angioplasty or bypass and is meant only for those who cannot go in for the other options."

#### **PREVENTION IS BEST**

Lifestyle modifications are an absolute must for keeping heart trouble at bay. These include quitting smoking and avoiding tobacco in any form. Giving up smoking can pay rich dividends as 62 year-old Kochi-based Sasidhara Panicker found out. Panicker, who used to smoke over 20 cigarettes a day before he suffered a heart attack in 2009, has not only given up smoking, but is following a far healthier diet with less oil and more fibre. "I feel much lighter and fitter now," he says.

Although India has traditionally focused on curative treatments for cardiac care, there has been a recent shift towards preventive measures to address the development of risk factors leading to CVDs. North America and Europe have been able to arrest the incidence of heart disease with greater awareness and early screening and detection. "After a steady rise and the following plateau, the graph of heart disease in North America and Europe is actually dipping," elaborates Dr Narain. "This is directly attributed to greater awareness and preventive measures including screening."

#### THE FUTURE

Technological innovations are constantly breaking new ground in medicine. Among the many cutting-edge marvels is the CT coronary angiogram, which provides a clear picture of the coronary artery. This works best as a preventive measure, revealing blockages, if any, and their extent by injecting a dye while scanning. Another amazing device is the internal defibrillator, a small pacemaker-like device implanted in the heart, which

#### **HELPLINE NUMBERS**

CITY/STATE NAME OF SERVICE/HOSPITAL	DIAL
MUMBAI Bombay Heart Brigade Stroke Helpline	105 9622313000
PUNE Pune Heart Brigade Cardiac Ambulance	1066 020 26136315
BENGALURU Jayadeva Heart Brigade Rotary Life Saving Brigade	1051 1050
HYDERABAD Life Care Cardiac Ambulance Service	040 30900710
CHENNAI St Johns Ambulance Association	044 28194630
<mark>KOLKATA</mark> B M Birla Heart Research Centre St Johns Ambulance	033 24567890/ 30403040 033 24863926
COIMBATORE KG Hospital Heart Brigade	1055
DELHI CATS Ambulance National Heart Institute	102/1099 011 65900900/ 65900000
BIHAR, PUNJAB, MUMBAI, KERALA, RAJASTHAN AND ODISHA Ziqitza Health Care Limited	1298
ANDHRA PRADESH, GUJARAT, UTTARAKHAND, GOA, TAMIL NADU, KARNATAKA, ASSAM, MEGHALAYA, MADHYA PRADESH, HIMACHAL PRADESH, CHHATTISGARH, UTTAR PRADESH, DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI AND DAMAN & DIU GVK EMRI	108
CHENNAI, HYDERABAD, DELHI, AHMEDABAD, KOLKATA, PUNE, BILASPUR, KAKINADA AND	
BENGALURU Apollo Emergency Services	1066

can sense if the patient is going into cardiac arrest and render a shock, thereby helping save a life even while on the road or home (*see "Hearty Future", page 43*). Absorbable medicated stents, endoscopic surgeries and replacing the aortic valve without an open-heart surgery are all possibilities that ensure minimum discomfort for the patient and go a long way in saving lives. The artificial heart is another milestone technology, widely used in the West as a temporary arrangement till a donor materialises. However, artificial hearts have still not entered the corridors of Indian medicine. With further technological innovations in the offing, help is finally at hand.

-With inputs from Neeti Vijaykumar

**Syed Kirmani,** Former Test Cricketer & Widex Dream User

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# **RELATIVE VALUE**

On the occasion of International Grandparents' Day, we celebrate the unique connection between a grandparent and a grandchild. A sneak peek into the lives of silvers who are passing on their legacy of love



Eleven year-old Sidak is an artist-in-the-making thanks to his *nani* Desh Kaur, his mentor, guide and teacher. Her love of painting has brought out the prodigious talent in the boy. His sketch of Beethoven is remarkable but then *nani* taught him the finer points of shading when he was just six. Kaur, 63, says she has tried her best to turn him into a "self-sufficient individual". Now young Sidak can make his own sandwiches, pasta and even *aloo-subzi*! She taught him another valuable lesson when he was just three. The child was playing in the mud when he held up a seed one day. Kaur told him that if he planted the seed and took good care of it, it would grow into a fruit-bearing tree. Together, they planted the seed and, today, the lemon tree is a symbol of the respect the boy has imbibed for all living things. "I have learnt all about religion from *nani* and take her advice in everything I do," says Sidak, gazing at his guiding light.

—Ambica Gulati



Tma Sriram keeps a close watch on the group of youngsters executing intricate Bharatanrityam (Bharatanatyam with aspects of Natyashastra incorporated in it) moves. Among them is her granddaughter 17 year-old Mahati Kannan, who comes from an illustrious line of dancers. "We are both dancers and relate to each other very easily," says Mahati with a smile. "She means everything to meshe is not only my grandmother but my guru as well." Uma adds indulgently, "My bond with Mahati is one of grandmother and teacher. The guru-sishya relationship is a very special bond as is the one between a grandparent and grandchild. For me, it's double the joy." Mahati was destined to learn classical dance from the day she was born. It also helped at mealtimes, a trying ritual for most kids! "When she was a child, I used to feed her while showing videos of our guru's dance," recalls the 66 year-old. "The food went down without a fuss! She used to start dancing and enjoy the whole thing." She quickly adds that Mahati receives no special treatment in class. "In fact, coming from this family, we are quite strict with her as expectations are higher. It is a sheer joy to watch her dancing."

—Vinita Nayar

## GOPALKRISHNA BANERJEE WITH SHLOK BANERJEE, Kolkata

Gopalkrishna Banerjee's most precious moment is watching his grandson splash about in a swimming pool and call out to him, arms flailing. Banerjee says he is encouraging the three year-old to love sports—any sport as he believes it fosters a healthy mind and spirit. A footballer and cricketer himself, Banerjee takes his grandson to the local swimming pool almost daily, where they have a gala time in the water. After an hour or so, when he scoops up his "priceless asset" to towel him down, the granddad wears an indulgent look of triumph. Shlok's father Sid-

dhartha is Banerjee's only son and the boy, being the only grandchild, is extra special. "I am trying my best to groom him so he becomes a perfect human being," says the doting 69 year-old. Banerjee has plenty of time and opportunity to do that. With his son and daughter-in-law away at work and his wife deceased, Banerjee is the boy's sole caregiver on a daily basis. Not surprisingly, when we ask the little one who loves him most, he breaks into a smile and exclaims, "*Dadu*!"

—Partha Mukherjee



The aroma of freshly ground garam masala fills the air as grandma and grandson work together to prepare the perfect lunch. It's a collaboration that began a couple of years ago. With his mother holding down a full-time job, Ambarish Vishwanathan used to trail behind his grandmother everywhere she went. Now, like most grandmas, Radha Narayanan, 75, has always spent the better part of the day in the kitchen! The lad's inquisitiveness about food surprised Radha, who says with a doting smile, "Even as a kid, Ambarish would watch me cook with keen interest and ask a lot of questions." Now, the 15 year-old brings that extra zing to the kitchen; he loves to experiment with recipes, which he researches on the Internet and by watching television. In fact, he has even contributed a few recipes to celebrity chef Tarla Dalal's blog. Imprinting himself on his grandmother has gone beyond being a pastime, and Ambarish says, "Her cookery skills cast a magical spell on me and I am planning to study hotel management." -Sai Prabha Kamath

### RAMACHANDRANS WITH ATHREYA AND AGASTYA, Mumbai

**B**rothers Athreya, 12, and Agastya, 10, recite the *Veda* in tandem with the sweet chanting of their grandparents Shanta and K Ramachandran. The resonating chorus of the ancient scriptures in their home in Mumbai is a refreshing break in a metropolis that marches to an altogether different rhythm. This ritual unfolds almost every day, after the boys return from school, as the grandpa recites the *Veda* and *shloka* with them and the grandma tells value-based stories that teach right from wrong. Shanta, 67, beams as she recalls a precious moment. "Athreya once came run-

ning to me from school and said, 'I am so sorry Shama [short for Shanta *Ma*], I may have done something wrong.' The realisation that my grandchildren value honesty is a great reward." Ramachandran, 74, tells us that the family is part of a movement called Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas and the boys' mother too grew up in a spiritual environment. Now, boys will be boys and there are always trying moments while bringing up children. But another evening spent with grandma and grandpa soon dispels any trace of discord!

—Gautam Ruparel





**P**laying board games with young Kaavin is only one of many fun activities Dilip Raja revels in. At just fourand-a-half, the boy exhibits an unusual knack for machines and badgers his parents with questions, especially about aircraft and airports. "A keen observer, Kaavin wants to be a part of everything he sees," says his 74 year-old grandfather. "He flies a lot with his parents and whenever he visits an airport, he watches everything around him—the control

tower and hangars—minutely and asks a lot of questions. As his mother is very busy, he turns to me." To strengthen the child's cognitive abilities, Dilip has bought an armload of board games. "You will often find us locked in battle and fighting for victory at the table," beams the grandpa. "I relish these moments. As the proverb goes, 'Interest is always sweeter than capital'!"

—Partha Mukherjee

## SUDAKSHINA SARMA WITH PRAYASH, SREEDHARA AND TUHEEN, Guwahati

**F**or Sudakshina Sarma, singing has always been her first love and, at 80, her once-golden voice is gradually fading. But what better legacy than to pass on the talent to her grandchildren? Sudakshina has four grandchildren, three of whom are already writing their own lyrics, apart from singing for albums and at public functions. The fourth, six year-old Sreedhara, is well on her way too. Sudakshina learnt the basics first from her mother and then her elder brother and legendary singer Bhupen Hazarika. "Music is in our blood," says grandson Prayash, 23, who has dedicated his latest song to his granny. Why, Sudakshina's now-deceased husband Dilip too was a well-known singer and led the Rabindra Sangeet movement in Assam.

"My grandchildren have got their talent from both sides of the family," reveals Sudakshina, whose sons and daughters too inherited her talent. "We have grown up on music but *aita* would insist that all of us begin with *Mor pasolir bagicha* [my kitchen garden], a children's song written by Bhupen-koka," smiles Tuheen, 28, who is working on an audio-visual album where his grandmother has sung a devotional song. It seems Sudakshina's gift to her grandchildren is touching lives in ways she had never foreseen. Her granddaughter Treen, 30, who lives in Mumbai, has written and sung a song for the Delhi gang-rape victim, in Assamese.

—Tapati Baruah Kashyap



r P A Thomas shares a precious moment with granddaughter Neha as he tries to pass on a love of sports to the child. Neha is just eight but already enjoys whacking a tennis ball when she accompanies her grandfather to the Trivandrum Tennis Club, where they practice the sport four days a week. "I taught her the basics about two years ago, and now she's part of the junior coaching scheme at the club," says the 71 year-old general surgeon. His firm conviction that sports can have a positive influence on a person's life has prompted him to instil a love for the game in his granddaughter. "She enjoys the game as well as the company of her teammates," he adds. "I encourage her by pointing out the trophies she can win when she is old enough to participate in the junior games. I also coax her to follow the lead of her father, who played tennis at the state level." It will be a couple of years before Neha can participate in any tournaments but, till then, she will be content to play ball with her grandfather.

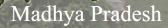
—Nisha Salim

Jahaz Mahal, the centrepiece of the Royal Enclave in Mandu

# TIME TRAVEL

Steeped in history and tradition, Mandu has the aura of living in an enchanted dimension

🔹 🖬 Gustasp and Jeroo Irani



• Bhopal • Indore

Mandu

t is almost like stepping into the long-forgotten pages of history. With its historical monuments and edifices, folklore about star-crossed lovers Rani Roopmati and Baz Bahadur, and exquisite palaces and ornamental canals, Mandu has a surreal yet romantic feel to it. Making a trip here was like a dream come true as this ancient city had been on our to-do list for a long time.

As we stepped into an abandoned watch tower in Mandu, archaic and crumbling, green hill slopes flared and plunged into ravines, while silence pooled around us like soothing balm. A table for two beckoned; it stood on rugs strewn with flower petals and bolsters for post-lunch relaxation. Even as we savoured our gourmet meal, thick mist rolled in like the billowing garb of a whirling dervish. Claps of thunder, gusts of rain and wind followed, underscoring the-only-people-in-the-world feeling that swamped us.

Suddenly, nature's special effects ceased, as though a movie director had shouted, "Cut!" In the heart-stopping silence that followed, we realised that Mandu in the rains has an added sheen of mystique when new life seems to thrust itself up everywhere—on the rocky soil and sun-bleached hills. As Emperor Jehangir famously exulted: "What words of mine can describe the beauty of the grass and wild flowers... I know of no place so pleasant in climate and so pretty as Mandu during the rains."

Indeed, Mandu in any season (barring high summer) is the stuff of dreams and legend, a historic getaway built on a spur jutting out of the Vindhya range, 2,000 ft above sea level. The hill fort is ensconced within 45 km of parapet walls that march across the mountains and are punctuated by 12 gateways. The town served as a strategic military outpost for different rulers and dynasties over the centuries and, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, came under the sway of the sultans of Malwa, the first of whom renamed it Shadiabad or City of Joy. It is believed that at that time the citadel was suffused with joy with the self-indulgent rulers building

exquisite palaces, ornamental canals, baths and pavilions. When Emperor Akbar led his all-conquering army into Mandu, he was so bewitched by the city that in a fit of jealous rage, he ordered some of the monuments razed to make it less attractive. Yet, under the Mughals, the town continued to reign as a pleasure resort and its lakes and palaces were the scene of festivity. Later, inexplicably, Mandu slipped into oblivion.

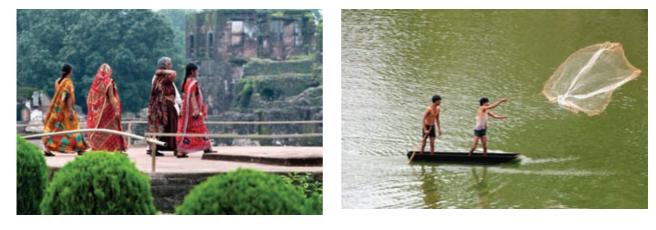
Today, the plateau town dotted with monuments, scattered over 8 sq mile, is a delightful escape for tourists looking for romance and solitude. The graceful and solid edifices are located in three main clusters: the Village Group, Royal Enclave and Rewa Kund complex. A main street lined with mud and brick houses leads to the hub of the small town and extends to Adivasi villages on the fringes. In the heart of the town, banyan trees with roots hanging like a *sadhu*'s dreadlocks rub shoulders with fat baobab trees reportedly brought to the country by the Abyssinian slaves of the sultans.

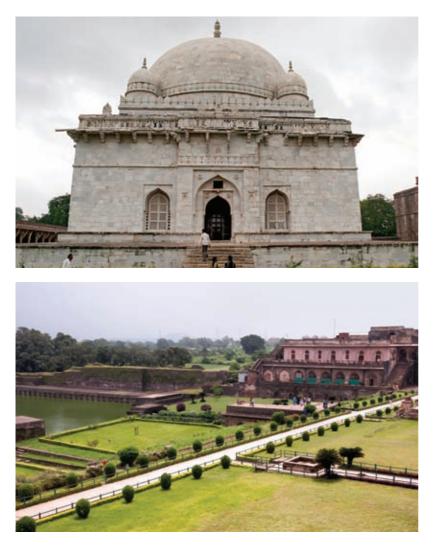
Nowhere is Mandu more dramatic than around the Jahaz Mahal (Ship Palace), the centrepiece of the Royal Enclave—especially in the rains. The levels of the lakes on either side of the palace start to rise and the 120-m-long building, with its pavilions and overhanging balconies, appears to float like a ghostly pleasure craft on the waters.

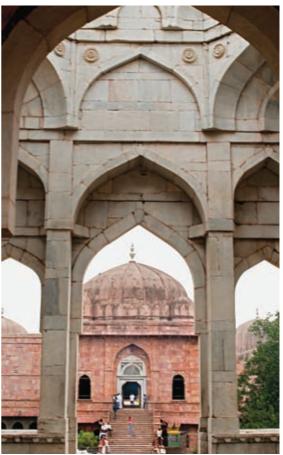
Ghiyas-ud-din Khilji, the sultan who built the Jahaz Mahal, also constructed the adjacent Turkish baths, the Champa Baodi, a subterranean escape hatch for women and the harem that housed 15,000 women. A devout man who never missed *namaaz* or touched a drop of wine, Ghiyasuddin, however, loved to surround himself with women. Even on ceremonial occasions, Turkish and Abyssinian women masquerading as armed guards flanked his throne.

Yet, this elegant edifice is swathed in an aura of otherworldly mystery and sadness; as though sorrow is its sec-

Visitors add a splash of colour to the ruins; fishermen in the lake around Jahaz Mahal







(Clockwise from top left) The strikingly beautiful Hoshang Shah Tomb; Jami Masjid is best viewed through Ashrafi Mahal; lawns and lakes add elegance to Jahaz Mahal

The town served as a strategic military outpost for different rulers and dynasties over the centuries; in the 13th century, it came under the sway of the sultans of Malwa, the first of whom renamed it Shadiabad or City of Joy

ond skin. Our guide whispered that, on full moon nights, the anguished cries of the women who inhabited the loveless harems of the sultans can be heard rising above the Jahaz Mahal. Many jumped to their deaths from their gilded abode in desperation to escape the stark loneliness of their lives, marked by only one high point: the occasional visits of the sultan.

Two other monuments that stand out in the scattering of ruins around this lake palace complex are Hindola Mahal, which gets its name from its massive, inward sloping pillars that suggests a swing, and Taveli Mahal, once a charming guest house, which now houses the offices of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

While Mandu has the aura of living in an enchanted dimension, the town is akin to a historic theme park that will keep tourists engaged over several visits. The most striking monument in the Village Cluster is the all-marble mausoleum of Hoshang Shah (built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century), believed to have inspired the jewel in Agra that the world knows as the Taj Mahal. An inscription here records the fact that Emperor Shah Jahan sent his team of royal architects to study and appreciate the beauty of this edifice before embarking on his grandiose project.

The grand Jami Masjid, inspired by the great mosque of Damascus, was built by Hoshang Shah, who shifted the capital from Dhar to Mandu. The mosque's awesome proportions and its almost stark simplicity make you feel dwarfed by history. Paradoxically, the best view of this mosque can be gleaned from the Ashrafi Mahal, across it. Today, Ashrafi Mahal lies in ruins but there is an interesting legend attached to it. Apparently, Emperor Jehangir, during one of his sojourns here, had placed an *ashrafi* or gold coin on each of the steps leading up to the victory tower within the palace complex, to cajole his pregnant wife Noor Jehan to puff up to its summit! We climbed uphill to the breathtaking Rani Roopmati Pavilion that broods over her consort Baz Bahadur's 16th century palace. The minstrels of Malwa still sing about the romance of this royal duo whose tragic lives have inspired several celluloid versions of their love story

On our way to the Rewa Kund complex, a little beyond the town centre, we passed local belles with pots on their heads walking with unselfconscious grace and snottynosed kids who ran behind our car, shouting: "Hello, good morning."

We climbed uphill to the breathtaking Rani Roopmati Pavilion that broods over her consort Baz Bahadur's 16th century palace. The minstrels of Malwa still sing about the romance of this royal duo whose tragic lives have inspired several celluloid versions of their love story. Our guide recounted how Rani Roopmati was once married to a Rajput prince. A devotee of the Narmada River, she would eat only after she had splashed around in the river and worshipped it. She spent so much time praying and singing on its banks that her husband abandoned her and married another woman. Sultan Baz Bahadur, also a musician, heard her singing in the forest while on a hunt and fell in love with her even before he set eyes on her. He subsequently pursued her with a singular passion. It is said that when Baz Bahadur sang the deep raag, diya would spontaneously light up in appreciation; while when Rani Roopmati sang, trees would blossom in multi-hued splendour. Baz Bahadur persuaded her to live with him at his court with its 400 musicians. He built the pavilion and two pandal for her within 48 hours so that she could have an unobstructed view of her beloved river that flowed across the valley below.

Their idyllic world was shattered when Adam Khan, one of Emperor Akbar's generals, spearheaded the Mughal attack on Mandu. Baz Bahadur fled to nearby Dhar, turning out to be more valorous in song than deed. Khan, in turn, asked the queen to marry him. Devastated by her consort's spineless desertion and preferring death to dishonour, Roopmati killed herself by swallowing a cache of ground diamonds.

When our guide, who was prone to histrionics, related the story, there wasn't a dry eye in the group. Rain came gusting in and we left the pavilion of the tragic queen, clutching



#### FACT FILE

The best time to visit Mandu is in the rains when the hill fort is encased in lush greenery. It is also pleasant in winter.

#### **GETTING THERE**

By air: Indore, the closest airport, is 105 km away.

**By train:** The most convenient railhead is Indore. From here, one can reach Mandu by state transport buses or private taxis.

#### TIPS

The best way to explore Mandu is on foot. One can also hire a cycle or a private taxi to explore the Rewa Kund cluster of monuments, which lie further away from the main village.

#### ACCOMMODATION

Jhira Bagh Palace Hotel, Dhar (35 km away); Tel: 0731-2556183; Email: *jhiraplc@gmail.com*Malwa Retreat; Tel: 07692-263235, 263221; Email: *mresoertm@mptourism.com*

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upturned umbrellas. By the time we reached our car, the rain had stopped and a violet-grey twilight had descended softly, just like a butterfly's wings. Shepherds were herd-ing in their cattle as the first stream of blue-white smoke coiled upwards from thatched-roof huts and sprinkled the fragrance of wood fire in the air. Listen closely enough and the whispers of the past mumble tales of valour, love and loss in Mandu. **\*** 

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# Etcetera

CULTURE 
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# Keeping the **DREAM ALIVE**

The woods of Shonajhuri in West Bengal preserve Rabindranath Tagore's vision for Santiniketan, says **Bala Karchaudhuri** 

Tagore's temple of fine arts,<br/>Santiniketan, is a melting pot<br/>of creativity and a nurturing<br/>ground for artists from near and far.Poul<br/>main<br/>dispThe various social and cultural<br/>events the university town<br/>hosts—Basanta Utsav, Barsha<br/>Mangal, Nandan Mela, Poush Mela and<br/>main<br/>Initiated by Tagore for bringing local<br/>artisans to the fore, Poush Mela (a fair<br/>in the the temple of the temple of the temple of temple

*Poush* in December) was one of the main platforms where craftsmen could display and sell their artwork.

AGE However, since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *mela* has metamorphosed into a large-scale, commercialised fair and, therefore, turned into a major tourist destination. A senior group of artists felt that in this fanfare, the *mela* was losing its meaning and essence. "Tagore had a vision for Santiniketan; progress of the cottage industries was one of them," says textile artist Chitra Ghosh. "However, overlooking originality, artists these days are working to fulfil the demands of the urban market. Art is being mass produced and, as a result, an artist's individuality is suffering." In 2003, Ghosh, along with artists Bidyut Roy, Lipi Biswas, Ashish Ghosh, Gopal Saha and Jiten Das, led by senior painter-writer

# **Etcetera**



Craft, food or music, Saturday haat is a feast for the senses

(late) Shyamali Khastagir, initiated a small fair or *haat* (marketplace) for the cause of local rural craftsmen, where they could showcase their works to connoisseurs. Most important, a path was thrown open for artisans to sell art without the interference of middlemen.

The group chose a beautiful location in the woods of Shonajhuri in Santiniketan and aptly named it *Khoai Boner Onyo Haat* (a different *haat/* marketplace of the Khoai forest). To preserve the pristine environment, the group spelt out four ground rules for sellers: no use of plastic bags or any other synthetic material; no fire to be lit in the area; no entry for middleman—the craftsmen need to be present at the *haat*; and the condition that they belong to the neighbourhood.

Keeping in mind the importance of weekends for tourists, the *haat* was organised on Saturdays, giving birth to the name Saturday *haat*. In initial

years, the response was lacklustre; some local craftsmen brought simple artefacts like wall hangings and toys, Santhal (tribal) girls came with their handmade jewellery, and village women sold handmade mats and fans. At this stage, the initiators lent their support by exhibiting their own works like pottery and textile. Over time, the simplicity and uniqueness of the *haat* attracted better footfall; not just people in and around Santiniketan, even tourists from overseas started pouring in. Despite the increasing popularity, one thing remained unchanged—the ground rules.

Gradually, the *haat* became exclusive for its wares, local culinary flavours and the mystical sounds of Baul, the folk songs of Bengal. Juli Ta, a Santhal tribal woman, sells home-grown blackberries and eggs from her farm. "I love being a part of this *haat*," she says with a shy smile. "I don't have to go far to sell these now." There are many others who share their own daily lives—women who bring homemade sweets like *pithe* (rice bread filled with grated coconut) and *kheer*, momos, juices and pickles. There are interesting craft items like wooden toys, masks, bamboo wind chimes, glass paintings and handmade ornaments. The *haat* provides an ideal platform for the local handloom industry as well; the variety includes Kantha stitch and *batik* saris, handloom garments like shirts, *kurta* and *salwar-kameez*. Young artists come with handmade accessories like bags and purses, calendars and printed T-shirts.

Thanks to the *haat*, many handicraft sellers today can follow their dreams apart from earning decently. "Some of them depended on odd jobs at people's homes and could hardly afford raw materials for their work," says Ghosh. "Now, they can fully concentrate on their craft. On that count, the Saturday *haat* has definitely achieved what it set out to do; not just in making these rural artists self-sufficient, but in truly preserving a piece of Santiniketan."

#### Modern cut

After a successful cinematic career in the 1980s and 1990s, filmmaker Ketan Mehta started the Maya Academy of Advanced Cinematics 15 years ago to train animators. The cinemagic of *Mirch Masala*, *Hero Hiralal*, *Mangal Pandey: The Rising* and, of course, *Maya Memsaab* slowly turned into fascination for digital technology. With the belief that it will change the face and sound of Indian cinema, he has now set out to make an animation film for children. An Indianised version of *Laurel and Hardy*, *Motu and Patlu* is straight out of the 1980s comic book *Lotpot*. Produced by Mehta's Maya Digital Studio, the animation is already running as a television show on channel Nickelodeon and a spin-off film, *Motu Patlu in Wonderland*, has already been released as a film on TV. "They are idiosyncratic characters; Motu can't think without food [*samosa*, to be precise] and Patlu is a loyal friend," says the 61 year-old filmmaker, certain that there is an audience for good Indian animation.

# **THE TRUE PATH**

Architect-artist Ashok Mody tells Gautam Ruparel why painting is his road to self-discovery



shok Mody believes in what Mahatma Gandhi said about life being an endless series of experiments. That, along with his love for painting and the never-ending process of learning, added fuel to the fire and the 65 year-old architect picked up the paintbrush about ART a decade ago. Since then, he has held several exhibitions, the most recent being Graphic Expressions at Mumbai's Jehangir Art Gallery in June. As he didn't have formal training in painting, Mody's experiments were entirely based on trial and error. "For instance, my oil on canvases used to take a long time to dry, until someone suggested acrylic. I have improvised along the way."

As a student at the Sir JJ College of Architecture, Mody used to sneak into the neighbouring fine arts section out of interest and curiosity. As he trained and worked as an architect, his innermost desire to paint

waited in anticipation. "Nine years ago on my birthday, my wife and two daughters gifted me a painting kit," he recalls fondly. "I haven't looked back since."

Though his family comprised his first subjects, he gradually developed

an affiliation to portraits. And with Gandhian values instilled by his father, Mody found the perfect subject in his childhood icon, Mahatma Gandhi. "I feel very connected to Gandhi. He is alive in the hearts of people even today and the respect for him is universal."

Mody's first solo show, held in 2007 at Ronak Art Gallery in Mumbai, was aptly titled Gandhi: My First Inspiration. His latest exhibits are graphical forms using a glazing technique Mody learnt from the Internet. "I use solid colours and clear-cut lines that are typical of my field of work," he explains. "The glazing technique

involves thin layers of paint applied one over the other, giving them a transparent effect. The canvas further gives it a khadi-like look that suits my subject. All this gives the painting great depth, making it as good as three-dimensional."

In addition to learning on canvas, the artist has been open to upgrading his computer skills. "I had an idea of computer-aided design used in architecture, but Photoshop [used for image editing] was something I had to learn from scratch," says Mody, who now uses the software liberally. He sketches his 'Photoshopped' image on paper before transferring it on to the canvas before beginning to paint. "For me, the graphical feel is very important. Though the initial process is digital, my end product is a result of paints and strokes, and, of course, the hours I put in at my studio."

Interestingly, while his works depict portraits and important milestones in the life of the Mahatma, Modv's experience in architecture came in handy to include some structural forms as well. Recollecting a proud moment, he says, "Once Gandhiji's great greatgranddaughter Kasturi Gandhi came for an inauguration of my exhibition; she was so touched that she came back again with her friends and said. 'You really make us proud'."

While the Father of the Nation will continue to be his muse, the Mumbai resident now wants his paintbrush to explore the city as well. "It was my daughter's idea," he tells us, a gleam in his eye. "With its historic monuments, lovely landscape and colourful people, Mumbai has a unique personality and a typical trait. It will be fun to combine the city's architecture with my portraits."

# One with Kathak

For veteran performer Shailla Aurora, dance is devotion, discovers Sai Prabha Kamath

he flawless chime of her ghungroo challenges the rhythm of the tabla. With crisp footwork, immaculate *bhava* and breathtaking pirouettes, she dances straight into the hearts of the audience. As a dramatic climax to her dazzling repertoire, veteran Kathak dancer Shailla Aurora executes a thrilling 40 spins at lightning speed, ending in a statuesque pose. "Kathak is a beautiful dance form where the dancer tells a story through elegant gestures," says the sexagenarian. "The hallmark of Kathak is its subtle nuances. I find spiritual succour in its intricate footwork and magical swirls."

Trained under legendary Kathak exponent Padmashri Roshan Kumari of the Jaipur *gharana*, Aurora was the first disciple from her class to perform thumri at the age of 36. For the past 25 years, she has been training under the guidance of Kathak exponent Guru Ganesh Hiralal Hasal. "I am blessed to have trained under such great gurus. It is owing to their blessings and my deep reverence for them that I perform at this age. But the *guru-sishya* parampara [the teacher-disciple lineage, where there is an unwavering faith in the guru] is on the wane today and that is worrisome."

Deeply spiritual, Aurora loves performing on *stuthi* and *shloka*, *Anand*  Tandav, Ganesh Paran and Kali Paran, her favourite being the depiction of Radha and Krishna's dalliance. Recently, the 65 year-old was felici-

DANCE



tated by Maharashtra's minister for cultural affairs Sanjay Deotale for putting up a fabulous performance at a Kathak fusion programme in Mumbai. Ask her about contemporary forms of dance and she says, "I am not against them, but culture should not take a backseat; the classical form of Kathak should not lose its essence. We need to have classical dance festivals; in fact, we need to have a 24-hour dedicated TV channel to popularise the dance in its purest form."

Her passion aside, life has not been a bed of roses for the wife of reputed hotelier Gulshan Aurora, her "pillar of strength in all her endeavours". For 22 years, the dancer suffered from psoriasis, a skin disease that has no medical treatment. "My whole body had this itchy condition but I never ever missed *riyaaz* [practice] or thought of guitting dance," she says. "Also I was fortunate enough to serve my 106 year-old mother till her last breath; she passed away last year. My mother's blessings and dedication to Kathak kept me going in those testing times."

Today, Aurora is completely cured and has a message for the younger generation. "Kathak is a creative form of self-expression for all ages," she says. "I want young girls to learn it and take our rich cultural heritage forward." Fortunately, her seven yearold granddaughter Zaara is taking an interest in the dance form, a source of great joy for Aurora. "Tradition needs to merge into timelessness," she concludes.

#### **MASTER STROKE**

ADVANTAGE HOLLYWOOD SOUNDS EXACTLY LIKE WHAT IT IS: A COMBINATION OF TWO VOCATIONS, TENNIS AND CINEMA. A MOST APPROPRIATE TITLE FOR THE MEMOIRS OF FORMER TENNIS PLAYER AND FILM PRODUCER ASHOK AMRITRAJ, ADVANTAGE HOLLYWOOD CHRONICLES HIS JOURNEY FROM A TENNIS-FASCINATED CHILDHOOD TO BECOMING AN INTERNATIONAL PLAYER AND THEN HIS SECOND CAREER WITH HOLLYWOOD. PUBLISHER HARPERCOLLINS INDIA EXPECTS SCORES OF INDIAN READERS TO BE INTERESTED, CONSIDERING THE AUTHOR HAS GIVEN THEM ENGLISH MASALA POTBOILERS APLENTY IN THE PAST.



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# <u>Etcetera</u> bookshelf

# **YIN AND YANG**

**Vulsi Badrinath** has two passions: writing and dancing. In her latest book *Master of Arts:* A Life in Dance (Hachette India; ₹ 599; 312 pages), she has combined the two. A narrative on the world of Bharatanatyam, the book also focuses on her guru V P Dhananjayan's struggle to establish himself as a solo dancer in an all-woman domain. Badrinath's earlier books, Meeting Lives and Man of A Thousand Chances, were on the Man Asian Literary Prize long list in 2007 and 2008 respectively. In an interview with Ambica Gulati, she speaks about the prejudices and challenges faced by male dancers and about her favourite dancing couple, Dhananjayan and his wife Shanta.

# Is the book an ode to your gurus Dhananjayan and Shanta?

I don't see it that way. There are so many things that have inspired me to write about their journey in classical arts, my journey with them on a personal level, and the way male dancers are now being perceived. In any traditional art form, the recorded stories are less. As their student for over 40 years, I wanted to document the wealth of their knowledge. Their journey has been incredible. They have overcome prejudices and monetary problems along the way, before being awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2009.

#### Bharatanatyam has traditionally been the domain of women. So how did Dhananjayan feel when he started off?

Both my gurus started learning dance when they were children and did not have any idea about these prejudices. He was 13 then and she was eight. He does not hesitate to say that his father sent him to Kalakshetra to ensure that there was one mouth less to feed at home. They are in their 70s now and still dancing on stage. Tell us about their love for each other and for dance.

I see them as one soul in two bodies. The good part is that they have always

#### **AUTHORSPEAK**



"A male dancer needs God-given talent, a good body, dedication and a guru to take him to that height"

been frank about their lives. There are no dirty secrets and pretences. He wears the traditional *veshti*, *kurta* and sports a *tilak* while Shanta *akka* wears a sari. When you are around them, you can feel the strength of love, even though there is no physical display of affection. They have divided their areas of work beautifully. I have never seen a clash of egos that happens with dancers of the same calibre.

# Tell us about their school, Bharata Kalanjali, and style of teaching.

He is an extraordinary performer and a generous teacher. Even though a class lasts for an hour technically, when he is teaching, it doesn't end till you have learned your lessons well. Rehearsals continue till you have perfected them. He shouts and screams at us out of concern; Shanta *akka* is the more patient one. I also admire him for his entrepreneurial spirit. He took a risk and made it big. And those were not easy times.

# Among their compositions, which is the most beautiful?

They are popularly known as the 'dancing couple'. But a particular hit has been *Radha Madhavam* based on Jayadev's *Geet Govind*. It has some of the most erotic lyrics, but they have performed it so beautifully. The audience is aware that this is a real-life couple, but on stage they become two lovers. Radha is angry and Krishna is cajoling her; it's a staple repertoire.

## As the body changes over the years, their styles too must have evolved?

Yes, they are 70-plus now but they are still flexible. The pace is slightly slower and there are certain positions that are risky for them to attempt at this age. But the re-choreographed versions, though slightly shorter, have the same grace and eloquence. *Abhinaya* is the language of expression and my guru is the king of *abhinaya*!

#### The *shringaar ras* or eroticism has always come under the scanner as it was the domain of the *devdasi*. How have your gurus handled this?

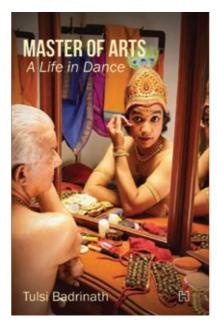
*Shringaar ras* can't be cut off from any form of dance. People did not like to talk about it as it was a part of

## <u>Etcetera</u> bookshelf

the *devdasi* tradition and some lyrics were coarse and lewd. But Rukmini Devi used to choose her lyrics carefully because romance and eroticism had to come out in the dance movements. She chose only graceful lyrics. My gurus also did the same and have also taught us the same values. Some of the most erotic *ashtpadi* are in the lyrics of *Geet Govind*, but they can be performed very beautifully.

#### How do male dancers fare today?

There has been some progress. Many more men are now learning Bharatanatyam. My guru feels you need phenomenal talent and luck, more so if you are a male dancer, as you need to prove yourself. In his many years of teaching, he found three such gifted dancers out of a 100. But unfortunately, none of them are in the domain now, as I have written in the book. However, now there are freelance male dancers who are



hired for a performance. For instance if they need someone to perform as Shiva, they will take a male dancer on contract for that role. A young boy has travelled across the world with groups like this. But this does not give them leverage as a solo dancer. A male dancer needs that God-given talent, a good body and a guru to take him to that height. It's also an art that demands a lot of dedication. Classical arts need an eternity to learn.

#### How do your gurus feel about their guru Rukmini Devi and her contribution in their making?

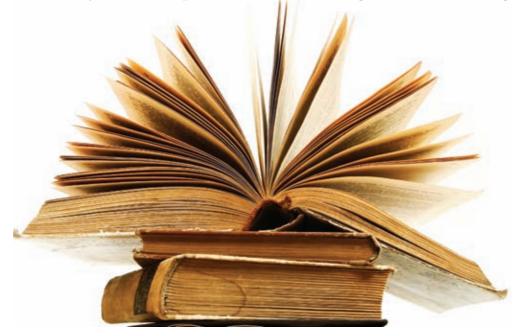
They recognise her as a great teacher of the art. In fact, my gurus call her the ultimate *Bharatiya nari*. She loved the arts and animals. She supported the animal welfare society, Blue Cross, and had a separate department for weaving cloth. She believed in imparting education. And initially when my gurus started their school, it was a mini-Kalakshetra. They have lived and worked around the same principles but believe in more freedom to innovate.



# <u>Etcetera</u> BOOKSHELF



In keeping with the spirit of International Literacy Day on 8 September, we bring you **Francis Bacon**'s essay "Of Studies", published in 1625, extolling the virtues of reading



Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business. For expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgement wholly by their rules, is the humour of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning, by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience.

Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books, else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things.

Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit: and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend. Abeunt studia in mores [Studies pass into and influence manners]. Nay, there is no stond or impediment in the wit but may be wrought out by fit studies; like as diseases of the body may have appropriate exercises. Bowling is good for the stone and reins; shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle walking for the stomach; riding for the head; and the like. So if a man's wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again. If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the Schoolmen; for they are cymini sectores [splitters of hairs]. If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call up one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers' cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.

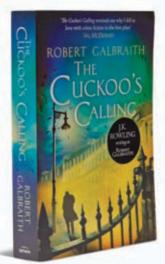
### Etcetera BOOKSHELF



It seems Dan Brown has cracked the code of writing bestsellers—borrow your theme from the world of art and letters, pepper the plot with clues and symbols, and set Harvard professor of symbology Robert Langdon on the job. INFERNO (Random House India; ₹ 750; 461 pages) is no different. It has the elements one associates with Brown's earlier works like The Da Vinci Code and The Lost Symbol; Langdon is on a mission deciphering symbols borrowed from Dante Alighieri's 14th century epic poem The Divine Comedy. With all due credit to Brown, the blockbuster formula doesn't disappoint; it gets you to turn the pages as breathless action unfolds across Florence, the birthplace of the Renaissance, and Venice and Istanbul. With only a few lines from Dante's epic masterpiece to quide him, and the super intelligent Sienna Brooks with an eye-popping IQ of 208 by his side, Langdon glides through the secret hideaways of museums, cathedrals and monuments to uncover the weapon of mass destruction created by an overzealous transhumanist as an answer to the world's booming population. Along with Dante's classic, the Malthusian theory on population forms the backbone of Brown's latest racy thriller.

The real mystery of **THE CUCKOO'S CALLING (Hachette India;** ₹ **599; 449 pages)** was the true identity of author **Robert Galbraith** who was unmasked as **J K Rowling**, propelling the book to the top of bestsellers' lists overnight. It's easy to understand why Rowling used a pseudonym. The

anonymity that came with it would indeed have been liberating for the writer, who was weighed down by expectations while crafting Casual Vacancy. True to her reputation, Rowling crafts an entertainer that holds your interest. She sketches her characters vividly, endowing them with minute details. Her hero is the oversized Cormoran Strike, a wounded war veteran



turned detective with a disintegrating personal life. His sidekick Robin is the perfect foil, and the platonic relationship between them is easily one of the most enjoyable aspects of the book. Together, they investigate the death of a young supermodel Lula Landry (Cuckoo). While the Potter series

dealt with the classic clash between the good and the bad and the loss of innocence, this one deals with matters mundane and midlife crises besides the glittery world of glamour and the fascination of the paparazzi with everything famous, rich and beautiful. This may not be a fast-paced thriller, but it definitely takes you back to the good old detective stories you relished while growing up.

The follow-up to the Breadwinner trilogy, **MY NAME IS PARVANA (Hachette;** ₹ **299; 199 pages)** is a simple but haunting narrative about Parvana's life after reuniting with her family. This book opens at a US military detention camp in Afghanistan, where her tight-lipped resolve confuses her captors into thinking that she was involved in aiding the Taliban. But, as **Deborah Ellis**'s narrative tells us the story through flashbacks, nothing is as it seems. Ellis shows us the helpless but stubborn resolve of women activists and teachers in war-torn Af-



ghanistan who stop at nothing to achieve their dream of a peaceful, progressive society in healthy competition with the rest of the world. Parvana's mother embodies the change-seekers of Afghanistan; she singlehandedly starts a school for girls and encourages parents in the town to educate their daughters. Even when the Taliban put up posters all around town threatening and denouncing the school, Parvana, her sisters and her mother put on their smiles and ran the school with the certainty of a new tomorrow. There are triumphs, such as when Parvana's older sister gets a scholarship to New York University, and then there are tragedies lurking right outside the school's gates. Ellis captures the lives of young girls yearning for a future-some who dream of lavender fields in France, some who are running away from child marriages, some who are still innocently young-and presents to us a picture that we don't get to see or read about in the midst of news about drone attacks and suicide bombers.

### Etcetera AT LARGE



## Thank you

In a tribute to her grandparents, **Dr Sudha Murty** recalls the lessons of compassion and empathy she learnt from them

was very fortunate to have grown up with my grandmothers on either side and grandfather on my maternal side. Both grandmothers lived in villages and had completely different personalities. My maternal grandmother, Krishna, was popularly known as Krishnakka; she was intelligent and sensitive. My paternal grandmother, Amba, was called Ambakka. She was quite the daredevil, yet practical and accommodating. My maternal grandfather was a schoolteacher and lived in a village called Shiggaon. Called Shiggaon Kaka, he was an idealist.

As I grew up mostly with my maternal grandparents, their influence was more evident in me. I used to call my grandmother *Avva*, which in Kannada means 'mother'. We had a farm that had mango and tamarind trees and *jowar* crop.

Once *Avva* took me to the farm during summer to show me ripe fruits hanging on the trees. She gave orders to the helper, "Pluck the mangoes and tamarind fruits, but leave one branch on each tree untouched." I was surprised by her decision. I asked, "*Avva*, the branches you are leaving out have a lot more mangoes and tamarind fruits than other branches. Will it not be great to get all those mangoes and tamarind fruits home? As there are 13 of us [grandchildren], each one of us will get more fruits."

Grandmother just smiled and did not reply. She made me sit under the shade of a mango tree in the scorching heat. With the cool breeze blowing gently, I felt good. She gave me a glass of water first and then a glass of *lassi*. I pressed for an answer again. "*Avva*, you did not reply to my earlier question."

She said, "You might have seen the rivulet that flows next to our land. Does it drink its own water?"

I can never forget the best lesson I learnt from my maternal grandmother, an ordinary housewife who had never been to school; that the human body is meant to serve others

"No!" I replied to her 'foolish question', or so I thought.

"The *lassi* you drank now came from where?" she asked me.

I smelt her ignorance and said, "Cow."

"Does cow drink her own milk?"

I laughed and said, "Never. I have seen the cow eating grass always."

"Have you seen the mango or tamarind trees eating their own fruits?"

I laughed and said, "They never eat their own food. They require water and manure to grow."

Then she smiled and said, "Tell me whom does this land belong to?"

"Of course, it belongs to *Ajja* and you. I have seen the papers you have kept in the drawer."

"Before that it belonged to whom?" asked my grandmother.

"Maybe your parents or his parents."

"And before that?"

"I don't know the answers to all these difficult questions *Avva*. But I guess, long ago this area would have been a forest and later it might have been converted into a farm to grow edible things. *Avva*, you have not answered me and are talking irrelevant things instead."

"My child, you have already found the answer to your question. Yes, this land was a forest once upon a time and many animals and birds lived here. They owned this land the way we own now. As we can talk and express ourselves, we made a paper in our name and they could not. We cut the trees and built our homes where once they had their homes. We cultivated their land without their permission. That is the reason I don't take all the mangoes and tamarind fruits and jowar from a part of the land. I particularly want the birds to get their due share of fruits, flowers and jowar. The insects should get their dues. Butterflies and honeybees should get their flowers. And I want to tell you one more thing. We should not be too selfish. The rivulet that flows does not drink its own water, the cow that gives us milk does not drink its own milk and the trees that bear the nectar like fruits never eat them. So as a human being, we should

#### not take everything from everywhere and from everybody. I am not educated like you but I have heard a *shloka*:

Paropakaram vahanti nadyaha Paropakaram dugdanthi gavaha Paropakaram phalinthi vrukshaha Paropakaram idam shariram

(The rivers flow to serve others Cows give milk to serve others The trees bear fruit to serve others This human body is meant to serve others.)"

I can never forget the best lesson I learnt from an ordinary housewife who did not go to school but knew the basic laws of nature, environment, and the purpose of life. It has stayed etched in my mind forever. She is not with me for the past 40 years, but when I think of her, I think of the cool breeze, the shade of the tree, a glass of *lassi* and the lesson that has made me what I am today.

My paternal grandmother, whom we affectionately call Ajji, singlehandedly used to look after a large piece of cultivable land. In those days, she used to travel by horse. Also, she didn't believe in the caste system, which was prevalent at that time. She would travel on horseback and inspect the fields and eat along with all the labourers under a tree. Sometimes, she would carry extra roti and *laddoo* for the labourers during festivals. If she ever got to know that someone's wife was pregnant, she would carry bottles of ghee and old clothes for them. Once I asked her casually, "Ajji, is there any place you would like to visit?"

She said, "It may not be possible but I have always dreamt of going to Badrinath and Kedarnath, the ultimate abode of the Lord!"

"What would you get by going there?"



Whenever I see a banyan tree, its cool shade and the way it shelters hundreds of birds that take refuge in its vastness, I think of *Ajji*; she taught me compassion

"Everyone says you get a lot of *punya* if you go there."

"Why can't you go?"

"Oh! It's a long journey and it may be difficult for me. But I have found another way of getting *punya* without going to Badrinath and Kedarnath."

"What is that?" I asked her, my curiosity peaking.

"If you help women during labour and give them good food, it is as good as going to Badrinath and Kedarnath."

I liked her spirit and sense of helping people. Her concern for people working under her was amazing. Again, she was an illiterate housewife from a small village. Neither did she attend any philosophical class nor was she in contact with the outside world. She never received any awards either. When her end came, she said, "I would like to die tomorrow which is an auspicious day. It is the day Bhishma died in *The Mahabarata*. I have led my life like a normal housewife but tried to help people in my own way. If I get another birth, I want to be born as a banyan tree so I can shelter many more people." And she did die the next day as per her wish, which was amazing!

Whenever I see a banyan tree, its cool shade and the way it shelters hundreds of birds that take refuge in its vastness, I think of her.

Thank you *Avva* and *Ajji*, wherever you are. You have touched my life and taught me compassion!

Murty is a well-known social worker and a prolific writer

### <u>Etcetera</u> the last word

## Forgive and flourish

Modern research connects physical, mental and spiritual health to forgiveness, says **Everett L Worthington Jr** 

When Chris Carrier was 10 years old, he was abducted near his Florida home, taken into the swamps, stabbed repeatedly in the chest and abdomen with an ice pick, and then shot through the temple with a handgun. Remarkably, hours after being shot, he awoke with a headache, unable to see out of one eye. He stumbled to the highway and stopped a car, which took him to the hospital. Years later, a police officer told Chris that the man suspected of his abduction lay close to death. "Confront him," suggested the officer. Chris did more than that. He comforted his attacker during the man's final weeks of life and ultimately forgave him, bringing peace to them both.

Chris Carrier's act of forgiveness might seem unfathomable to some, an act of extreme charity or even foolishness.

Indeed, our culture seems to perceive forgiveness as a sign of weakness, submission, or both. Often we find it easier to stigmatise or denigrate our enemies than to empathise with or forgive them. And in a society as competitive as ours, people may hesitate to forgive because they don't want to relinquish the upper hand in a relationship. "It is much more agreeable to offend and later ask forgiveness than to be offended and grant forgiveness," said the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. I think many people today are inclined to agree with him.

Surely, now is a time when the world could use some more forgiveness. Americans resent the Muslim world for September 11. Iraqis and much of the Middle East feel humiliated by the United States. Diplomats in the United Nations bicker and insult each other, igniting or reigniting national rivalries. Still, many people hesitate to ask for or grant forgiveness when they feel they have nothing to gain in return. But a new line of research suggests something different. This research has shown that Chris Carrier's story isn't an anomaly. Forgiveness isn't just practiced by saints or martyrs, nor does it benefit only its recipients. Instead, studies are finding connections between forgiveness and physical, mental, and spiritual health and evidence that it plays a key role in the health of families, communities, and nations. Though this research is still young, it has already produced some exciting findings—and raised some important questions.

Though most people probably feel they know what forgiveness means, researchers differ about what actually constitutes forgiveness. I've come to believe that how we define forgiveness usually depends on the context. In cases where we hope to forgive a person with whom we do not want a continuing relationship, we usually define forgiveness as reducing or eliminating resentment and motivations toward revenge. My colleagues and I have defined forgiveness in close relationships to include more than merely getting rid of the negative. The forgiving person becomes less motivated to retaliate against someone who offended him

or her and less motivated to remain estranged from that person. Instead, he or she becomes more motivated by feelings of goodwill, despite the offender's hurtful actions. In a close relationship, we hope, forgiveness will not only move us past negative emotions, but move us toward a net positive feeling. It doesn't mean forgetting or pardoning an offense.

Unforgiveness, by contrast, seems to be a negative emotional state where an offended person maintains feelings of resentment, hostility, anger, and hatred toward the person who offended

him. People can deal with injustices in many ways. They don't have to decide to forgive, and they don't necessarily need to change their emotions. But if they don't change their response in some way, unforgiveness can take its toll on physical, mental, relational, and even spiritual health.

The physical benefits of forgiveness seem to increase with age, according to a recent study, which finds a significant relationship between forgiving others and positive health among middle-aged and senior citizens. People over 45 years of age who had forgiven others reported greater satisfaction with their lives and were less likely to report symptoms of psychological distress, such as feelings of nervousness, restlessness, and sadness.

Extracted from The New Science of Forgiveness (http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/). Worthington is a professor in the department of psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University and has dedicated his career to the study of forgiveness





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# Etcetera THE WAY We go 50 years back in time to bring you products, people, events and fashion that have influenced the world

## THE END OF CAMELOT

Rarely has an assassination been So minutely scrutinised as that of John Fitzgerald Kennedy in Dallas on 22 November 1963. His presidency, which was dubbed Camelot, was ascribed an almost mythic quality owing to the youth, glamour and charisma he brought to the White House along with his wife Jacqueline, a style icon, and their young children. His assassination ended the Camelot dream and spawned innumerable conspiracy theories involving the Russians, the Cubans, and even the CIA and FBI, as well as popular cinema, most notably, Oliver Stone's JFK.

It was a day America will never forget. It began with President Kennedy, accompanied by Jacqueline, throwing his security staff into a tizzy by breaking down the barricades and shaking hands with supporters and fans. Later, the first couple joined Governor Connally of Texas and his wife in an open-top convertible limousine to be driven to Dallas Trade Mart. At 12.30 pm Central Time, shots were fired at the President that hit him in the back of the head, killing him before he reached the hospital. A 20-month investigation by the Warren Commission, established by President Lyndon B Johnson, concluded that Kennedy was assassinated by a mentally unstable Lee Harvey Oswald, and that Jack Ruby who killed Oswald before he could stand trial, also acted alone. Although the commission's conclusions were initially accepted,



recent opinion polls reveal that an alarming 80 per cent of Americans believe the report was a cover up.

The event left a lasting impression on the national psyche; till today, a standard question in the US among baby boomers is: "Where were you when Kennedy was assassinated?" While Jacqueline's pink Chanel suit, splattered with blood, has become one of the lasting images of the tragedy and is safely stored in a temperature and humidity-controlled room in the US National Archives, exhibitions, books and films continue to explore the Camelot years—and expose the reality behind the myth.

#### THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: SEPTEMBER 1963

- On 1 September, an unidentified visitor to Lenin's mausoleum in Moscow detonated a bomb, causing widespread damage; the event was reported in the Soviet press only after the breakup of the Soviet Union.
- On 15 September, music legends The Beatles and The Rolling Stones performed in the same show for the first

and only time, at a concert at the Royal Albert Hall in London.

• On 16 September, Malaysia was formed through the merger of the 11 states of the Federation of Malaya and the British colonies of Singapore, North Borneo and Sarawak.

### Experience

A second childhood

Wouldn't it be great to have a second childhood? To start life afresh? Because at Harmony, a magazine for people above fifty five, we believe that age is in the mind. Which is why, you should live young. Visit us at : www.harmonyindia.org

celebrate age

### <u>Etcetera</u> enlighten

## Bliss point

 $\boldsymbol{n}.$  The specific concentration of salt, sugar, or fat that makes a food maximally tasty.

**Example.** Domestic goddess Nigella Lawson has named salted caramel as her favourite food obsession, declaring a love affair with the class-A confectionary 'drug' describing a **bliss point** when the mix of sugar, fat and salt is just right. —Fiona Donnelly, "Let salty-sweet sensations rock your palate (recipes included)", News Limited, 4 August 2012

## **Obtainium**

*n*. An object found or obtained for free, particularly material for an art, craft, or construction project.

**Example.** A self-described "atypical artist", Phyllis Hartley of East Falmouth is making her own waves by creating art out of what she calls **obtainium**— interesting objects she happens upon in the woods, on the beach, along the roadside, the landfill or even in her neighbour's yard.

*—Johanna Crosby, "Waves inspire artists in Arts Foundation annual exhibition",* GateHouse News Service, 10 January 2013

I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do.

—Helen Keller

## Threenager

*n*. A three year-old who displays the moodiness and attitude of a teenager. **Example.** Though my three year-old is a little more calm, he demands lots of attention and is a bit of a drama king at times. I like to refer to him as my **threenager**. You never really know what mood he's going to be in, and he asks "why" at least 100 times in a day.

—Dana Kroh, quoted in "Readers tell us what makes their house a zoo", News Record, 12 May 2013

## Hate-watch

v. To watch a TV show, movie, or actor that one vigorously dislikes.
Example. Having said all that, if they end another episode with a montage over Coldplay's *Fix you*, I will never hate-watch *The Newsroom* again—I just won't watch it.

—Pete McQuaid, "Craziness gets under 'The Dome'", The Lowell, 8 July 2013

### MICROLIFE

*n*. A unit of measure equal to approximately 30 minutes of life expectancy.

**Example.** Averaged over a lifetime, the following habits are linked to the loss of one **microlife**: smoking two cigarettes, eating a burger, being roughly 11 pounds overweight, chugging a second or third alcoholic beverage, and watching two hours of television.

-Olivia B Waxman, "When it comes to longevity, it's not years but microlives that may count", Time, 17 December 2012

## Snailpaper

n. A newspaper delivered physically and so more slowly compared to online news; the print edition of a newspaper.
Example. It's 2013. The screens are winning adherents left and right. Print newspapers are turning into snailpapers that arrive at our doorsteps with news that is 12 hours late.

—Dan Bloom, "Scissors, paper, screen: The future of reading", TeleRead, 8 June 2013

### <u>Etcetera</u> Enlighten

## Sodcast

 $\nu.$  To play music loud enough that other people can hear it, particularly in a public location.

**Example.** Just a few days ago I was treated to a speech on this theme by a cab driver, whose list of grievances included the neglect of hand signals by people riding Boris bikes and the prevalence of **sodcast**ing (playing loud music through a phone's less than sweet-sounding speaker) on the train.

-Henry Hitchings, "Contrary to perception, we Londoners are now less rude than at any time in our history", London Evening Standard, 11 January 2013

## MATILDA EFFECT

*n*. The systematic under-recognition of the contributions of women to science, particularly in favour of their male colleagues.

**Example.** Have you heard of the **Matilda Effect**? A term coined by historian of science, Margaret Rossiter, it is the systematic downplaying or overlooking of women's roles in scientific discovery.

—Athene Donald and Frank Norman, "Using Wikipedia to inspire the next generation of women scientists", The Guardian, 25 July 2013

## Ghosting

*pp*. Leaving a party, event, or group surreptitiously or without saying goodbye. *ν*. ghost

**Example. Ghosting**—aka the Irish goodbye, the French exit, and any number of other vaguely ethnophobic terms—refers to leaving a social gathering without saying your farewells. One moment you're at the bar, or the house party, or the Sunday morning wedding brunch. The next moment you're gone. In the manner of a ghost.

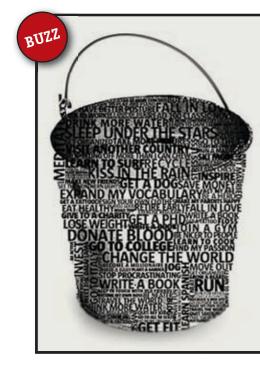
-Seth Stevenson, "Don't say goodbye", Slate, 3 July 2013

## Stem-cell tourism

*n*. The practice of travelling to another country for stem-cell-based medical treatments.

**Example.** With what appears to be thousands of Australians heading overseas for expensive treatments that don't reverse their illnesses, university researchers are trying to understand the "**stem-cell tourism**" phenomenon.

—John Elder, "Stem-cell tourists living in hope: Study", Sydney Morning Herald, 14 April 2013



## Do that thing

We all have a bucket list—what's yours? Fancy flying a plane? How about recording your own music album or taking over as the chef of a restaurant for a day. There's all this and more at The Yellow Cycle in Bengaluru, a web-based initiative that gives you the chance to gift or indulge in once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

Promising the best experiences in exotic settings, this happiness-oriented start-up has a wide range of thrills to choose from. If you're looking for some adventure, you can learn to track wild cats in the jungles of Kabini or go for a helicopter ride over the city. Get a private dance lesson from a star choreographer, or indulge in an exquisite nine-course meal, European style.

There's even something for your anniversaries and romantic cravings—you can choose an aphrodisiac evening, inclusive of a spa treat for two, a romantic drive and a special meal; and, for a much grander occasion, a luxurious stay in the backwaters and a trip to a tribal village. For more details, check out *www.theyellowcycle.com* 

#### "I am happy my teaching skills are helping me make a small difference to their lives"

Usha Ashok, 59, Hyderabad, trains visually impaired youngsters to speak English



ressed in a simple sari, Usha Ashok seamlessly blends into a crowd of regular office-goers. Put her in a classroom, and she comes alive. This petite and unassuming 59 year-old has been training visually impaired children in Hyderabad to speak English fluently. With the language gaining currency around the world, Ashok believes her classes will equip these poor children with the necessary skill-sets to face the world with confidence. In her three-decade-long career as a teacher with Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Ramakrishna Vidyalaya in Sainikpuri, Secunderabad, Ashok came into contact with visually challenged children for the first time while taking her school students for interactions at the Government Blind School in the Old City. The interactions continued as she kept taking her students for community activities and volunteer work to schools for the visually impaired. Thus, the decision to take classes for them was a natural progression when Ashok retired from active teaching in 2012. With the 'service above self' philosophy of Swami

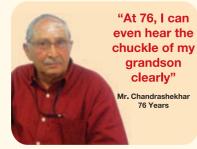
Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna guiding her life, today Ashok is happily ensconced in the company of over 30 children from Devnar Junior College and School for the Blind at Begumpet in Hyderabad, teaching them new words and spellings and sharing with them inspirational stories about Indian freedom fighters. "I introduce new words to them while narrating stories," she explains. "I ask them simple questions based on the story and encourage them to reply in English. Though the kids were shy initially, they are opening up now and are excited to share their experiences in English." Her continued engagement with children has also helped Ashok come to terms with the loss of her husband in 2007. With almost 90 per cent of her students coming from Telugu medium schools, working on their accent and pronunciation is proving to be quite an uphill task for Ashok. However, she has no complaints. "I have made a commitment and I am happy that I am here. Seva has always been a part of my mental makeup."

—Shyamola Khanna

### DO YOU NEED A SIXTH SENSE TO REVIVE YOUR HEARING?



Life takes us by surprise every day. Like 76 year old Mr. CHANDRASHEKHAR, who was facing hearing difficulties at a time when usually he would love to hear the chirping of birds & the gentle flutter of a passing butterfly. Reluctant to give up, he finally found a solution which brought back the complete joy of hearing. Here are the excerpts from his interview:



#### Q1. When did you realize that you had hearing difficulties?

**Ans.** Initially, I would refuse to acknowledge that there was any problem. But gradually, I started realizing that there was something wrong, when every time I had to direct my head towards someone speaking to me.

#### Q2. What hearing difficulties did you face?

**Ans.** I could not follow people talking to me, so I would ask them to speak a little louder & clearer. I realized that my one ear was hearing better so I always preferred using that to answer the phone. I also noticed that I was watching TV at a higher volume than before.

#### Q3. How did your family and friends react to your hearing loss?

**Ans.** My family was trying to persuade me to get my hearing checked. It made me feel irritated & I used to retort by saying that I was ok. In fact, I felt exhausted and frustrated trying to focus on understanding what others were saying.

## Q4. Which specialist did you visit to get your hearing checked & what was your first reaction when you were diagnosed with a hearing loss?

**Ans.** I came to know about my hearing loss from an ENT Specialist, who after initial assessment referred me to an Audiologist for further diagnosis. I was reluctant to go for a hearing instrument because of my old age and also because of my perception that I could somehow manage my day to day activities without a hearing aid.

#### Q5. Who advised you to go for a hearing instrument?

**Ans.** The Audiologist at Amplifon, duly supported by my family. Further during my interaction with Audiologists, I came to know that Amplifon provides best in class hearing care, state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment and works with highly qualified Audiologists - Truly World Class Standard.

#### Q6. What was your idea of hearing devices? Were you afraid?

Ans. I did not want to have them thinking that

they would be big, cumbersome & visible to everyone. To my surprise, I got a small and a comfortable hearing solution, hardly noticeable. I had no idea there were so many varieties of hearing instruments for inside the ear and outside the ear. The hearing aids have built-in intelligence to adapt to the surrounding environment.

#### Q7. How does your hearing instrument help you in your daily life? Are you happy with your decision of going for it?

Ans. I am thrilled. I can now hear sound as well as understand speech very clearly. Initially it took me some time to adjust to the hearing instrument but now I can't imagine a life without them. Everything is much easier now and I am back to my normal routine.

### Q8. Would you recommend other hearing impaired people to wear hearing instruments?

**Ans.** Definitely. Because at this age, you really wouldn't want to miss the beautiful moments that life bestows upon you. Like at 76, I can even hear the chuckle of my grandson or listen to my favourite devotional songs clearly. Thanks to this small device which has actually brought back smile on my and my family's face. I must also appreciate the personal touch, care and customized solution provided by Amplifon which completely fulfills my lifestyle requirements.



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