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VIRTUAL WORLD

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BRAIN DRAIN

THE MYSTICAL
KERALA

RELAXED
MORNING
BOOSTS

SLOW START
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BEAT THE
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BLUES

THE ART OF
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September 2024

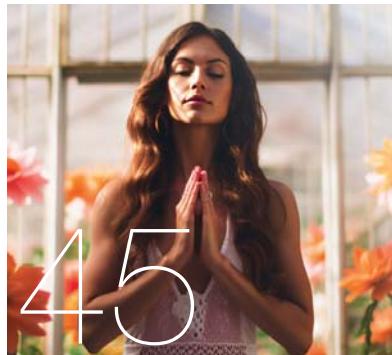
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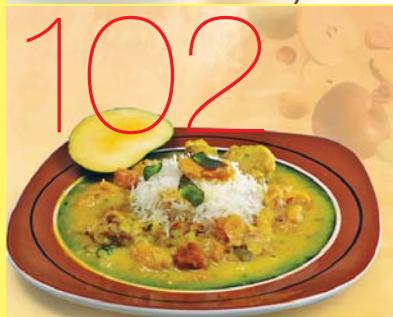
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Woman's era EDITORIAL

Political Exploitation Of Indian Athletes. The dismal presentation of Indian athletes in the Paris Olympics could be just a story of dirty political inroads. Even the medal winner Vinesh Phogat is now being pitched for politics to win a few seats for warring parties in the upcoming state elections. How dismal and compelling the sports landscape is can be visualised from the fact that Phogat is now going to run for state elections rather than running for more championships in wrestling or pleading for her lost opportunity for a medal despite one of the greatest performances in women's wrestling for India.

Now the rhetoric of winning the medal is long gone, handled deplorably by the people on the ground. But there is a smell that someone is getting back at her at the cost of the country's pride, and seemingly, it is acceptable to us all. Without being critical of it, Indian athletes and Indian sports teams need to gear up and train for better performance in international games. The level of sportsmanship has increased manifold, with new international records all the time, and even if Indians were to compete at the precharted levels, it would not be enough to get medals. We are about 10 years behind the rest of the world while competing in international games. It usually takes three generations of athletes and sportspeople to reach a level that could compete with the West. Presumably, we are on the right track, and the need is for a better diet, intensive training, and cheerful sportsmanship sans the politics behind it.

The Waning Impact. PM Modi's recent visit to Russia and Ukraine did not seem to bring up a buzz as it used to do earlier, largely because PM Modi did not achieve politically in the elections what he had claimed. Even the international press seems to have downplayed PM Modi's visits. The Ukraine-Russia war has escalated from one level to another. With the recent drone strikes inside Russia, the war is going to escalate to a completely new level. Not much is reported about it in the Indian press, though. NATO and the US do not really care about what happens to Ukraine as long as they keep fighting Russia on Ukrainian soil, which is the only entry passage bordering Russia. Technically, the Ukrainians should give up to the Russians to cease this war and level out with the West, but that is neither desired by the rich warring leadership of the Ukrainians nor the oil-gas-rich Russians.

A New Low: The Calcutta Horror. The Calcutta Nirbhaya episode is many notches above that of the one Delhi witnessed during the reign of Congress with CM Sheila Dikshit. If we remember correctly, it was the CM in

Delhi who tried, despite political and legal hurdles, to get Nirbhaya to Singapore for treatment. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, seems to be made of another metal, where she is defending her own person, Sandip Ghosh, ex-head of RG Kar Medical College, in safeguarding his position in this rape and murder case. Reports point out that the victim was a whistle-blower to a larger ongoing corruption and conspiracy at the hospital or the entire WB state healthcare system. It is now abundantly clear that Sandip Ghosh, who is being safeguarded by Mamata Banerjee, must have a lot to say other than what has been compromised at the crime scene.

Sandip Ghosh has not yet been arrested and is only being questioned by the CBI. State police in Calcutta have presented facts that do not align with the timeline on many fronts. One should imagine the clout behind this one person, who can afford to present 31 top lawyers of the country in the High Court and Supreme Court to contest his position in this matter, with the state footing the bill. It seems here that even the courts have lost out on this battle to Mamata Banerjee since this person is yet to go behind bars. Other than this, it has become a slugfest between the BJP and the TMC for settling scores from many elections.

The Fallout And The Future. The dismal fact remains that a young lady doctor has been treated this way by the state and the judicial system, displaying that everyone's hands are tied if the political leaders decide to do what they want to do. Surely in the days to come, there will be no further arrests except for one person who seems to be behind bars, possibly a scapegoat. The whistle-blowers have now been cautioned in Bengal, and so has the country, to let the political leadership do what they wish to do.

From this position, it seems that Mamata Banerjee rides on a weak position inside her state and that it is only the backdoor twisting of arms that has gotten her into a position of political leadership. Like in the old days of one person's upmanship, she will not leave much to the TMC, akin to Mayawati in UP, once she is out of power. From the state to the centre, it is now a settled case in Indian politics that the political leader has to align with the state machinery in order to keep itself in power (and the others out of it).

BJP has done that at the central level for the last two terms and maybe more, with the state leadership following suit to keep their positions intact.

editor@womansera.com 

CINEPLEX



The couple reportedly engaged in a private ceremony on August 8 at their residence. However, this information has not been confirmed by either party, and there have been no official statements or photographs shared by family members, including his father, Nagarjuna Akkineni. The couple reportedly began dating a few months after Naga's divorce from Samantha Ruth Prabhu.

Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala Engaged in a Private Ceremony



Khushi Kapoor Addresses Plastic Surgery Speculation, Earns Praise for Honesty



Khushi Kapoor, soon to be seen in *The Archies*, recently addressed rumours about undergoing plastic surgery. She admitted to getting lip fillers but did not confirm any surgery on her nose. Her candidness has been appreciated by many on social media, where she was praised for her transparency.



Kartik Aaryan Wins Best Actor Award for 'Chandu Champion' at IIFM

Kartik Aaryan won the 'Best Actor' award at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IIFM) for his role in the sports drama *Chandu Champion*. In the film, he portrays Murlikant Petkar, India's first Paralympic gold medalist. The film's director, Kabir Khan, also won the Best Director award for the same.



Actress Disha Patani recently did a photoshoot wearing a netted woven khaki dress designed by Shloka Bhatia. The dress, inspired by aerial photography studies of sand dunes, featured a deep neckline, a backless design, and a thigh-high slit. Her wavy hair and the sultry ensemble were well-received by her fans.

In the film *Khel Khel Mein*, several scenes, including an intimate one featuring Fardeen Khan, were cut by UAE censors. Fardeen expressed his disappointment, stating that the essence of the film remains unchanged. The director also mentioned feeling "cheated" after learning about the cuts from Indian viewers.

UAE Censorship Cuts
Fardeen Khan's Intimate
Scene in 'Khel Khel Mein'



Rumours Circulate About
Hardik Pandya and British
Singer Jasmin Walia Dating



Rumours of Indian cricketer Hardik Pandya dating British singer Jasmin Walia have surfaced after both shared photos on Instagram featuring similar picturesque backgrounds in Mykonos. While speculation is rife, neither Hardik nor Jasmin has officially confirmed the relationship.

Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas recently enjoyed a romantic vacation, sharing numerous photos and videos. In one picture, Priyanka is seen flaunting a ring with Nick's initials while holding their daughter Malti's hand. The couple also posted photos of them sharing affectionate moments.

Priyanka Chopra Flaunts Ring with Nick Jonas's Initials in Vacation Photos



AR Rahman Breaks Record with His 7th National Award Win



Music director AR Rahman won his seventh National Award, setting a new record for the most awards won by any music director. He was awarded Best Music Director (Background Score) for his work in Mani Ratnam's Tamil film *Ponniyin Selvan: Part 1*, a blockbuster hit in 2022.

Woman'sera

Presents

October 2024



Lifestyle
Special

Glamour never takes a day off.

Don't
miss this
issue

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Sonakshi Sinha's Absence from Rakshabandhan Celebrations Sparks Speculation

Sonakshi Sinha did not share any photos or posts related to Rakshabandhan on social media, sparking speculation among fans about a possible rift with her brothers. However, her brother Luv Sinha posted a generic Rakshabandhan message on Instagram, without mentioning Sonakshi.



Tamannaah Reportedly Paid 1 Crore for Stree 2 Item Song 'Aaj Ki Raat'



Tamannaah's item song 'Aaj Ki Raat' in Stree 2 has become a major talking point. The song, which was released before the film's premiere, quickly garnered over a million views on YouTube. Reports suggest that Tamannaah was paid Rs 1 crore for her three-minute performance in the film.

John Abraham spoke about women's safety in India during his appearance on the Beer Biceps podcast with Ranveer Allahbadia. He emphasised the need for Indian men to treat women with respect and act as their protectors. He also discussed the importance of criticising societal issues to promote positive change.



John Abraham Discusses Women's Safety on the 'Beer Biceps' Podcast



Shraddha Kapoor Surpasses PM Modi in Instagram Followers



Actress Shraddha Kapoor has surpassed Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Instagram followers, reaching 91.4 million, slightly more than PM Modi's 91.3 million followers. Shraddha is now the third most-followed Indian on the platform, behind Virat Kohli and Priyanka Chopra.

We

Combating Child Aggression

The alarming rise in child aggression demands urgent attention.

By Ravi Bhushan



Children displaying abnormal and violent behaviour have become a frequent topic in print and electronic media, raising serious concerns for parents, grandparents, relatives, friends, and especially educators. Although children spend 5 to 6 hours in school, they are at home for the remaining 18 to 19 hours, either indoors or outdoors.

The alarming rise in child aggression includes extreme acts of violence, such as the use of sharp objects and firearms. Unfortunately, these dangerous tools are often easily accessible due to the negligence or carelessness of adults.

In a recent shocking incident, a third-grade boy brought a small firearm to school and used it to shoot a senior student.

In another incident a few years back in Haryana, a senior secondary student boy shot dead his principal in her office in broad daylight for rebuking him to improve his performance in studies. Very recently, in Assam, a student killed his principal. There may be similar occurrences that might go unnoticed. You talk to any teacher, head teacher, principal, or management member of any school, and you will find one general observation or complaint of aggressive behaviour in school-going children, which has become a severe issue to be dealt with tactfully and intelligently on priority.

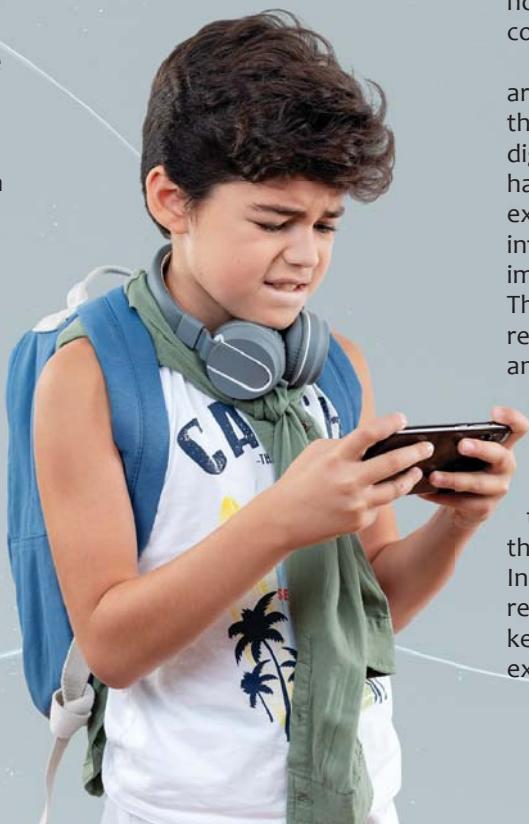
How To Tackle Kids

The first agency to tackle this widely prevalent human issue is the home. Parents are supposed to spare a few hours in the company of their children by withdrawing all types of electronic gadgets such as cell phones, laptops, or other similar devices that may hinder communication between parents and children. Parents should also ensure that if available, grandparents are involved in this process. The full and quality time spent with children at home can definitely pave the way for better communication with children and channelise their stress or pressure, if any, to get released. Making available high-tech gadgets to pass time or keep a child happy is not a solution; rather, it is counterproductive.

Next, educators should understand that the school environment has a direct bearing on the mind of a child. The environment in school should be highly communicative and polite. Educators and parents, including grandparents, are required to be in close communication for the smooth exchange of feedback on a child's activities. Although the homework system is forbidden for junior classes, unfortunately,



PARENTS ARE SUPPOSED TO SPARE A FEW HOURS IN THE COMPANY OF THEIR CHILDREN BY WITHDRAWING ALL TYPES OF ELECTRONIC GADGETS THAT MAY HINDER COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN.



children can be seen loaded with homework, which causes them anxiety and pressure. Educators should plan their teaching materials in such a way that the syllabus work is finished in school hours itself, and a child should feel free at pack-up time to go home, with arrival in the next morning also free from the burden of homework. Parents should cooperate with schools and should insist on giving homework to their child. It is disheartening to see that even KG students can be seen going for tuition in the evening hours mainly to get their homework completed.

Lastly, but importantly, children are required to be kept away to the maximum possible extent from digital media or social media, as it has the potential to give them early exposure to materials that they get influenced by enormously and try to imitate, which can result in violence. The bottom line is to instill the reading habit in a child by parents and grandparents by setting up their own examples and establishing a small home library. Parents and grandparents know better than anyone what their child will like to read. However, they can take the help of educators in this regard. In doing so, a child will develop a reading habit from an early stage, keeping away from excessive exposure to digital or social media. **We**

Virtual Wisdom

of receiving and giving advice in the

The challenges By Lasya Shashimohan



Lately, I had been discussing my PMDD (Pre-Menstrual Dysphoric Disorder) woes on a common post on Facebook with a group of women aged 35+. While I was publicly ranting about the bloating, stomach cramps, and endless food cravings, my audience was aptly empathetic. “Oh PMDD. That can easily be managed with regular exercise and by reducing stress.”

The advice, meted out casually, had come from a young man in his mid-20s, currently pursuing his MBA. Before you conclude the obvious and dismiss my friend as a creep, may I clarify that he is a very refined guy with a genuine interest in art, nature, and the history of ancient buildings. It's just that someone relatively wet-behind-the-ears coolly advising me



on a condition that causes monstrous upheaval in me every month was a bit too much to digest.

In another instance, a friend of mine created a vintage look for her social media story with her ensemble completed with a traditional silk saree, a long-sleeved blouse, and an elaborate coiffure. “You look like something straight out of a Raja Ravi Varma painting,” a mutual friend of ours complimented her. “However, you would have nailed the look had you applied winged eyeliner instead of normal.”

The epiphany had come from a middle-aged gentleman in business-like clothes, glasses, and typical office-goer’s shoes. All he was missing in his display picture was a briefcase! Yet this staid and sober-looking man had considerable knowledge of eye makeup while I didn’t.

During the Ambani wedding, the internet was afloat with pictures of Jaya Bachchan’s attention-drawing neckpiece. Snarky comments, dripping with hate and sarcasm, flooded the internet. “Why is she wearing armor? Is she going to war?” “Obnoxious neckpiece. Also, no smile on her face.” The old and

I SAW THE PERILS OF MRS. MEERA’S BLIND ENTHUSIASM AND UNSOLICITED ADVICE. IT MIGHT BE PRESUMPTUOUS TO URGE OTHERS TO VENTURE BEYOND THEIR COMFORT ZONES WITHOUT FULLY UNDERSTANDING THEIR INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

the young, the “employed” and the unemployed, were content to fritter away the entire day discussing the dress and deportment of a person they didn’t know personally.

As for the newlyweds, I found myself nearly pitying them despite their overflowing wealth and soaring fame. Anant Ambani had been the social media troller’s blue-eyed boy owing to his weight issues and “fake” concern for animals. His bride had been marked and sealed as a brazen gold-digger just because

she had married a man who, for whatever reason, didn’t meet certain aesthetic standards set by these social media experts.

Vicious Web Of Digital World

One evening, while scrolling through her Facebook feed, I noticed Mrs. Meera, an acquaintance of mine, participating in a post by a group of young women discussing their upcoming travel plans. From what I know of Mrs. Meera, a woman in her early 50s has long grappled with a deep-seated fear of venturing out alone.

Even a simple trip to a nearby shop has necessitated the comforting presence of a companion. Yet in the lively digital space of Facebook and Instagram, where pictures of youthful adventures and solo escapades are shared with vibrant enthusiasm, Mrs. Meera couldn’t resist getting carried away and doling out “expert” advice to the younger women.

“Time and tide wait for none,” I noticed Mrs. Meera advise the girls. “Travel, see the world on your own. There is no need to wait for parents or friends to join you. Also, in this day and age, you don’t have to wait

to get married so that you can travel with your husband. Do it on your own. Girls of your age are doing the same."

Though well-intentioned, I saw the perils of Mrs. Meera's blind enthusiasm and unsolicited advice. I felt it might be presumptuous



**"A WISE MAN
ONCE SAID...
NOTHING."
NOTHING I
HAVE COME
ACROSS SO
FAR HAS
RESONATED
WITH THE
TRUTH OF
THE ABOVE
QUOTE.**

to urge others to venture beyond their comfort zones without fully understanding their individual circumstances. I usually mind my own business, but this time I felt the need to gently intervene.

"I am touched by your child-like enthusiasm, didi," I typed, addressing Mrs. Meera. "It's really sweet of you to encourage the girls. However, don't you think everyone should set their own limits and ensure their own safety?"

There was a short pause followed by a reply. Mrs. Meera had realised the folly of her advice, following which she urged the girls to follow their intuition in matters concerning their safety instead of thoughtlessly listening to others.

As everyone is aware, as of mid-2024, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine remains intense, with both sides engaged in ongoing military operations. The United States and Western countries have continued to support Ukraine through sanctions against Russia and

Anas Ansari (@AnsariAnas)
Hello
If you're Israeli in the 1948 borders and find yourself repulsed by this, remember that that's exactly how your ancestors took Haifa, Yafa, Askelon, Safad, Tiberias, Lydda, Beisan, etc. etc.
Nakba never ended.
Al-Ud-Din (@Al-UdDin · May 6)
The settlers are shooting with real guns at the protesters. This is settler-colonialism.
#SaveSheikhJarrah pic.twitter.com/gbQ6fMzZ5
Show this thread
7:39 PM · 10/27/23
Mohammad Abdul (@MohammarAbdul)
I'm not a political expert but if you eliminated hamas but killed my whole family in the process my first move would be to start hamas 2
Mohammad Abdul (@MohammarAbdul · 10/27/23)
We reject outright the UN General Assembly despicable call for a ceasefire. Israel intends to eliminate Hamas just as the world dealt with the Nazis and ISIS.
11:29 PM · 10/27/23 From Earth · 17M Views
49K Reposts 1.6K Quotes

direct military aid to Ukrainian forces. Though China has maintained a neutral stance officially, the US-China rivalry has influenced the dynamics of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, global diplomatic and economic policies, which in turn affect how other nations respond to conflict.

As for the Israel-Palestine conflict, it continues with intermittent escalations and ceasefires. Superpowers often play roles through diplomatic channels, trying to mediate peace or influence outcomes through UN resolutions and direct negotiations. Internal politics isn't easy; international politics is a tightly woven intricate web in which conflict resolutions include peace talks mediated by international organizations like the UN, economic sanctions to pressure conflicting parties, and negotiations

that include a wide range of stakeholders from various affected regions. Yet it is not uncommon for social media “experts” to get on their high horse and behave as if these convoluted issues could be resolved with a flick of the wrist.

The Social Media Experts’ Syndrome

While it’s true that every government should be held accountable for its actions, it must be remembered that governing an overpopulated country of the magnitude such as ours is no mean feat despite the presence of several governing bodies and departments. Yet it is not uncommon for social media experts to behave as if it is a piece of cake.

If you are on Facebook or Twitter, you may have noticed that these know-all are divided into two radical and polarising factions—one which is full of relentless criticism of the present ruling dispensation and its functioning and another that insists on harking back to decades and laying the blame for any bungling up or mishap that happens in today’s India at Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru’s footstep. While everyone on social media has an opinion on how a country should be run, few would be willing to quit the smug complacency of their cushy jobs and work at the grassroots level.

While most are full of outrage when it comes to atrocities committed against Kuki Christian women in Manipur, the release and feting of convicts in the Bilkis Bano case, or the loss of innumerable civilian lives in Palestine; the sad truth is that very few are inclined to leave their safe environs and organise and participate in protest marches held for the likes of the aforementioned. Why would they when making a dramatic display of their “humanity” and eliciting “likes” within the realms of the virtual world is more satisfying?

Value Of Silence

Almost every religion or philosophy known to humankind advises one to be prudent and temperate in one’s speech. Hinduism emphasises abstaining from the use of slanderous and hurtful words, while Buddhism values silence. Speech, when used excessively and in an undiscerning fashion, often becomes the root cause of quarrels, misunderstandings, and heartburn. Furthermore, heedlessly shooting one’s mouth off helps scatter your energies and disrupts manifestation.

In Christianity, Mother Mary was known as a woman of few words; while St. Joseph went a step further—he was known as the silent saint. A popular quote that does frequent rounds of Facebook says, “A wise man once said... nothing.” Nothing I have come across so far has resonated with the truth of the above quote. When younger, most people born in generations X and Y were taught to listen more than speak and make sure that our actions spoke louder than words. Gossip was seen as evil, not an easy way of winning validation like it is on social media. Laughing at others was considered rude as no human being is perfect. However, in an era of Photoshop and instant gratification, people barely feel the need to use verbal filters and pride themselves more on speech than silence.

In the age of social media, when people experience an inflated sense of importance by being experts on everything under the sun, maybe values like being frugal in speech would be considered too old school?

**"Light up
the fun with
Giggles
where playtime
comes alive with
sounds, lights,
and smiles!"**



Beauty Queries



Q & A

AS A SWIMMER, I FIND MY HAIR is constantly getting tangled and difficult to manage. What products or techniques can help me detangle and protect my hair from the damage caused by frequent swimming?

Swimmers often struggle with tangled and damaged hair due to frequent exposure to chlorine. To protect and detangle your hair, use a leave-in conditioner or a detangling spray before and after swimming. These products can help smooth the hair cuticles and make it easier to comb through. Wearing a swimming cap can also significantly reduce the amount of water and chlorine your hair absorbs. After swimming, wash your hair with a clarifying shampoo followed by a deep

conditioning treatment to restore moisture and health.

MY EYES ARE QUITE SMALL, AND I feel they often get lost in my overall makeup look. How can I apply makeup to make my eyes appear bigger and more expressive?

To make small eyes look larger, use a nude or white eyeliner on the waterline to open up the eyes. Highlight the inner corners with a light, shimmery shadow to bring light to the area. Keep your eyeliner thinner at the inner corners and slightly thicker at the outer edges, extending it into a gentle wing. Curl your eyelashes and apply a volumizing mascara to further enhance the openness of your eyes.

MY SKIN TENDS TO BECOME VERY oily, especially by midday, which makes my makeup look greasy. What can I do throughout the day and in my skincare routine to reduce oiliness and maintain a matte finish?

To manage oily skin, start with a mattifying primer before your makeup. Use an oil-free moisturiser and a foundation formulated for oily skin. Blotting papers can be used throughout the day to soak up excess oil without disrupting makeup. Incorporate a weekly clay mask into your skincare routine to absorb excess sebum and tighten pores.

I'M ALWAYS UNSURE ABOUT WHICH blush colour to choose that will look natural and enhance my complexion rather than overwhelm it. How do I select the right blush shade based on my skin tone?

Choosing the right blush shade enhances your natural complexion. For fair skin, try soft pink or peach shades.

Medium skin tones look great with rich pink, warm mauve, or deep peach. Olive skin is complemented by orange or rose tones, while dark skin tones can go for deep fuchsia, berry, and warm brown shades. Always start with a light hand and build up colour gradually for a natural look.

MY NAILS ARE QUITE BRITTLE and often break, which is frustrating. What dietary changes and nail care tips can help strengthen my nails and prevent them from breaking so easily?

Strengthening brittle nails involves both internal and external care. Internally, ensure your diet includes plenty of protein and biotin, which support nail health. Externally, minimise exposure to water and harsh chemicals by wearing gloves when washing dishes or cleaning. Use a nail hardener or a strengthening polish, and regularly apply a nourishing cuticle oil to promote healthy nail growth.

IHAVE AN UNEVEN SKIN TONE WITH some areas significantly darker than others. What can I do to achieve a more uniform skin tone without heavy makeup?

For an uneven skintone, incorporate a daily skincare routine that includes products with brightening agents like vitamin C, niacinamide, and licorice root extract. These ingredients can help reduce the appearance of dark spots and even out your complexion over time. Additionally, use a broad-spectrum sunscreen every day to prevent further discolouration caused by UV exposure. For immediate results, a tinted moisturiser or a BB cream can provide light coverage without the heaviness of foundation.

Readers are invited to send their problems of child care and child rearing. Woman's Era will provide the answers, solutions to problems usually encountered by mothers, young and old. Address your letters (neatly written on white paper) to:

Woman's Era E-3, Jhandewala Estate,
New Delhi-110 055.



Beat Strong, Live Long

World Heart Day

From simple lifestyle adjustments to understanding the unique risks women face, the goal is to empower you with the knowledge and tools to protect your heart. Let's embrace this opportunity to prioritise our heart health and inspire others to do the same, because a healthy heart is the foundation of a vibrant life.



Dr. Preeti Sharma



Dr. Anupam Bhamhani



Dr. Kanchana. K



Dr. Hema Shivalingaiah



Dr. Palvi Mahajan



Dr. Asha Mahilmaran



Dr. Manidipa Majumdar



Dr. Nalini. T



Dr. Lakshmi Thampy



Dr. Anjali Sharma



Dr. Sfurti Sunil Jadhav Patil



Dr. Sumidra Laishram



Dr. E Elavarasi Manimegalai



Beat Strong, Live Long



Silent Killers

High Blood Pressure, Cholesterol, and Diabetes. By Dr. Preeti Sharma

In the realm of health, some threats announce their presence with clear and alarming symptoms. Others, however, work insidiously, silently chipping away at our wellbeing. Among these stealthy foes are high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes, each of which can severely compromise heart health without pronounced warning signs.

High Blood Pressure: The Invisible Force

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is often labelled the “silent killer” because it typically presents no symptoms. It exerts excessive force against artery walls, which can lead to severe health complications such as heart attack, stroke, and heart failure. The danger lies in its quiet progression; many are unaware they have it until significant damage occurs. Regular monitoring is crucial, as controlling hypertension can significantly reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Cholesterol: The Hidden Foe

Cholesterol, a fatty substance vital for the formation of cell membranes and certain hormones, becomes a concern when its levels are unbalanced. High levels of LDL (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol, known as “bad” cholesterol, can lead to the buildup of plaques in artery walls. This buildup narrows

the arteries, reduces blood flow, and increases the risk of cardiovascular disease. Unlike high blood pressure, high cholesterol cannot be detected through symptoms. Instead, it requires blood tests to be identified and managed.

Diabetes: The Quiet Disruptor

Diabetes, specifically type 2, enhances the risk of developing heart disease. This form of diabetes often progresses quietly and is frequently diagnosed years after onset, once complications have possibly taken root. High blood sugar levels over time can damage blood vessels and the nerves that control the heart. People with diabetes are often at an increased risk of hypertension and abnormal cholesterol levels, compounding their chances of cardiovascular issues.

TO WARD OFF THESE SILENT KILLERS, A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO HEALTH IS ESSENTIAL. REGULAR HEALTH SCREENINGS ARE CRITICAL AS THEY CAN DETECT THESE CONDITIONS IN THEIR EARLY STAGES.



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Combating the Silent Threats

To ward off these silent killers, a proactive approach to health is essential. Regular health screenings are critical as they can detect these conditions in their early stages. A healthy diet, regular physical activity, and maintaining a healthy weight are pivotal in managing and preventing high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Furthermore, those diagnosed with any of these conditions should adhere to their treatment plans and consult healthcare providers to effectively manage their health.

Understanding the risks and maintaining vigilance against high blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes are crucial steps in safeguarding heart health. By addressing these silent killers head-on, individuals can significantly enhance their quality of life and longevity.





Beat Strong, Live Long

Stress and Your Heart

Managing stress for optimal heart health. By Dr. Anupam Bhambhani

Stress is an inevitable part of life. However, how we manage and respond to stress can significantly impact our overall well-being, particularly our heart health. Chronic stress has been linked to a range of cardiovascular risks, which underscores the importance of effective stress management techniques.

Understanding The Impact Of Stress On The Heart

When we encounter stress, our body's "fight or flight" response kicks in, releasing stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones prepare the body to respond to a perceived threat by increasing heart rate, blood pressure, and energy supplies. While this response is beneficial in acute situations, chronic activation can lead to detrimental effects on the heart, including:

- **Increased heart rate:** Prolonged periods of elevated heart rate can lead to heart muscle wear and tear.
- **Higher blood pressure:** Consistent high blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease.
- **Irregular heart rhythms:** Stress can trigger arrhythmias, which may complicate existing heart conditions.

Strategies To Manage Stress For Heart Health

Adopting effective stress management techniques can mitigate these impacts and promote heart health. Key strategies include:

Regular Physical Activity: Exercise is a potent stress reducer. Activities like walking, jogging, or yoga can help decrease stress hormones and increase the release of endorphins, improving both mood and heart health.

Balanced Diet: Eating a heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains can combat the effects of stress by reducing blood pressure and improving blood flow.

Adequate Sleep: Sleep is essential for recovering from stress. Adults should aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night to support heart health and stress reduction.

Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques: Practices such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, and mindfulness can

USING TECHNIQUES LIKE JOURNALING OR STRESS TRACKING APPS CAN PROVIDE INSIGHTS INTO YOUR STRESS PATTERNS AND HELP DEVELOP MORE EFFECTIVE COPING STRATEGIES.



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DM (Cardiology)
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reduce stress and lower blood pressure. These techniques help shift the body's response to stress from "fight or flight" to "rest and digest."

Monitoring Stress Levels

It's crucial to recognize personal stress triggers and monitor how you respond to stress. Using techniques like journaling or stress tracking apps can provide insights into your stress patterns and help develop more effective coping strategies.

Taking Action

Managing stress is not just about improving emotional well-being—it's also about protecting your heart. By incorporating stress management techniques into your daily routine, you can reduce the harmful effects of stress on your cardiovascular system and enhance your overall health. Remember, taking small steps to manage stress can lead to significant improvements in your heart health and quality of life.



Beat Strong, Live Long

Heart-Healthy Diet



The role of nutrition in preventing heart disease.

By Dr. Kanchana. K

Heart disease remains a leading cause of death globally, but many cardiovascular conditions are preventable through lifestyle changes, particularly in the area of diet. A heart-healthy diet involves consuming nutrients that contribute to overall cardiovascular health while minimizing or eliminating ingredients that can cause damage. Understanding the role of nutrition in heart health is crucial for making informed choices about what to eat daily.

Key Components of a Heart-Healthy Diet

Whole Grains: Whole grains are a cornerstone of a heart-healthy diet. Foods like whole wheat, brown rice, oats, and quinoa are high in fiber, which can help lower cholesterol levels and improve blood lipid profiles. By replacing refined grains with whole grains, you can significantly reduce your risk of heart disease.

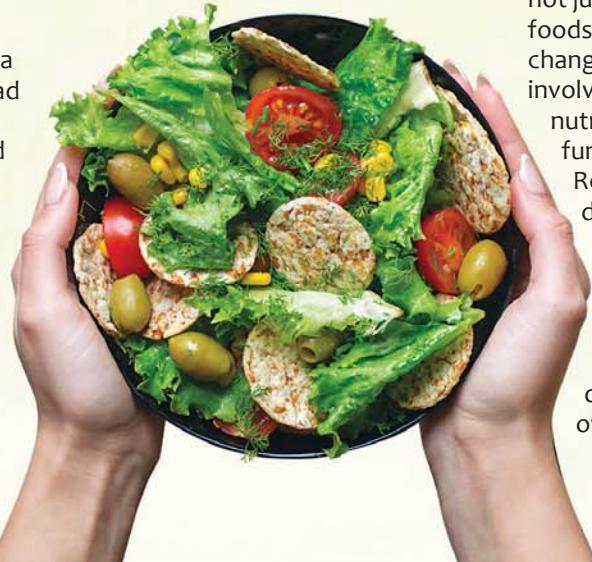
Fruits and Vegetables: Rich in essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, fruits and vegetables play a significant role in heart health. They are low in calories and high in dietary fiber. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables—aiming for a rainbow of colors—ensures a broad intake of beneficial compounds that help reduce inflammation and oxidative stress, which are risk factors for heart disease.

Healthy Fats: Not all fats are enemies of heart health. Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, found in olive oil, avocados, nuts, and fatty fish like salmon and



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mackerel, can help reduce bad cholesterol levels (LDL) and increase good cholesterol levels (HDL). These fats also contribute to the reduction of inflammation throughout the body, including the arteries.



Avoiding Harmful Ingredients

Salt and Sodium: Excessive salt intake is linked with high blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart disease. It's important to limit salt consumption and be mindful of sodium content in processed and packaged foods. Opting for fresh or frozen foods can help control sodium intake.

Sugars and Refined Carbs: High intake of sugars and refined carbohydrates can lead to weight gain and increased heart disease risk. Limiting sugary drinks, desserts, and white bread can help maintain a healthy weight and reduce strain on the heart.

Trans Fats: Trans fats are particularly harmful to heart health, found in many fried foods, baked goods, and processed snack foods. These fats can raise bad cholesterol levels and lower good cholesterol, leading to clogged arteries. Always check labels and choose products without trans fats.

A Lifestyle Choice

Adopting a heart-healthy diet is not just about eschewing certain foods—it's about making a holistic change to your eating habits. It involves choosing a variety of nutritious foods that support heart function and prevent disease. Regular physical activity and dietary choices work together to keep your heart strong and healthy.

By making these choices, individuals can significantly lower their risk of heart disease and improve their overall well-being.



Beat Strong, Live Long

Exercise and Your Heart

The benefits of physical activity for heart health. By Dr. Hema Shivalingaiah



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Heart disease remains a leading cause of death globally, but integrating regular exercise into one's routine can significantly mitigate these risks. Exercise not only improves overall cardiovascular health but also has specific benefits for heart function and structure.

The Cardiovascular Benefits of Regular Exercise

Improvement in Heart Function:

Regular physical activity enhances the heart's efficiency by strengthening its muscles and improving its ability to pump blood throughout the body. This increased efficiency results in lower heart rates at rest and during exercise, which reduces the heart's workload and extends its healthy functioning years.

Reduction in Coronary Heart Disease Risks:

Studies consistently show that active individuals have a 20-35% lower risk of coronary heart disease compared to their inactive

counterparts. Exercise helps manage weight, lowers blood pressure, reduces bad cholesterol levels, and increases good cholesterol, all of which contribute directly to reducing heart disease risks.

Regulation of Blood Pressure:
Regular exercise is known to help lower blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart disease. Physical activity promotes vasodilation, which increases blood flow and decreases stress on the heart. Consistent exercise can lead to long-term reductions in blood pressure levels, particularly beneficial for hypertensive individuals.

CONSISTENT EXERCISE CAN LEAD TO LONG-TERM REDUCTIONS IN BLOOD PRESSURE LEVELS, PARTICULARLY BENEFICIAL FOR HYPERTENSIVE PEOPLE.



Mental and Emotional Benefits of Exercise for Heart Health

Stress Reduction: Physical activity is a proven stress reliever. Reducing stress levels can decrease the release of stress hormones, such as cortisol, which has been linked to poorer heart health when levels are chronically elevated. Exercise also stimulates the production of endorphins, chemicals in the brain that act as natural painkillers and mood elevators.

Improved Sleep Patterns: Regular exercise can help improve sleep quality, which is vital for overall heart health. Poor sleep has been linked to higher risks of heart disease, and by promoting better sleep patterns, exercise can indirectly benefit heart health.

Conclusion: How Much Exercise is Enough?

The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week, or a combination of both. Incorporating moderate and vigorous aerobic activities, along with muscle-strengthening exercises at least two days per week, can offer significant benefits to heart health. Starting with smaller durations and gradually increasing the intensity and duration is advisable to ensure long-term adherence and benefit.

Embracing regular physical activity is one of the most effective ways to prevent heart disease and enhance heart health. With a range of activities to choose from, individuals can find a form of exercise that is enjoyable and sustainable for them, ensuring lasting benefits to their cardiovascular system and overall well-being.



Beat Strong, Live Long

Sleep and Your Heart

The importance of quality sleep for cardiovascular well-being.

By Dr. Palvi Mahajan

Quality sleep is an essential component of overall health, playing a crucial role in cardiovascular well-being. While the effects of diet and exercise on heart health are well-known, the impact of sleep is equally significant but less emphasized. This connection underscores the importance of understanding how sleep can influence heart health and the steps one can take to improve sleep quality.

The Connection Between Sleep and Heart Health

Sleep affects the heart in various ways. Poor sleep quality or insufficient sleep duration can lead to higher risks of cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension, coronary heart disease, and even stroke. The mechanisms behind this include the regulation of blood pressure, glucose metabolism, and inflammation. During deep sleep stages, the body experiences lower blood pressure, which gives the heart and blood vessels a chance to rest and recover. Conversely, sleep deprivation can lead to higher nighttime blood pressure and a greater likelihood of cardiovascular problems.



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The Risks of Sleep Deprivation

Chronic sleep deprivation is linked with an array of heart-related issues. It disrupts the body's natural processes, such as the ability to repair blood vessels, and is associated with higher levels of inflammatory markers, which are risk factors for heart disease. Additionally, lack of sleep is tied to an increased incidence of obesity and type 2 diabetes, both of which are risk factors for cardiovascular diseases.

It also can lead to poor lifestyle choices such as lack of exercise and unhealthy eating habits, compounding the risk to cardiovascular health.

Sleep Disorders and Cardiovascular Diseases

Sleep disorders like sleep apnea, insomnia, and restless legs syndrome

can have direct and indirect effects on heart health. Sleep apnea, for instance, is known for causing repeated awakenings and significant drops in oxygen levels during the night, which can stress the heart by increasing blood pressure and heart rate. Managing these sleep disorders is crucial for maintaining cardiovascular health and preventing heart disease.

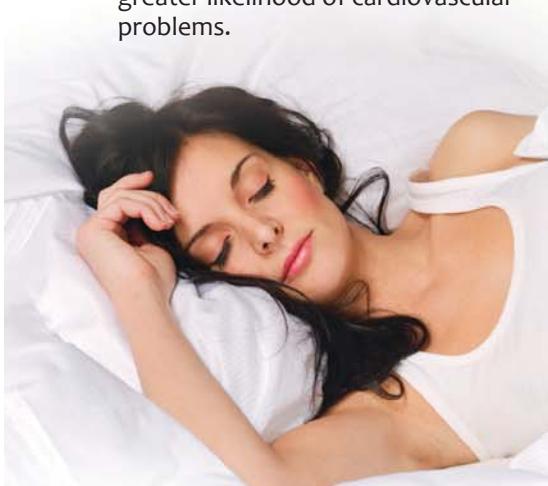
Improving Sleep for Heart Health

To harness the cardiovascular benefits of sleep, it is important to maintain both a sufficient quantity and quality of sleep. Adults should aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night. Consistent sleep cycles are vital for maintaining a healthy heart as they help regulate blood pressure. Enhancing sleep hygiene can include establishing a consistent sleep schedule, creating a restful sleeping environment, and limiting exposure to blue light before bedtime.

Moreover, addressing any underlying sleep disorders with professional help can greatly improve sleep quality and, consequently, heart health.

Conclusion

In conclusion, understanding the relationship between sleep and cardiovascular health is key to preventing heart disease and maintaining overall well-being. By prioritizing good sleep hygiene and managing sleep disorders, individuals can protect their heart and enhance their quality of life. Regular consultations with health professionals can provide personalized insights and interventions to improve sleep and heart health concurrently.





Heart Health for Women

Unique challenges and prevention strategies for women.

By Dr. Asha Mahilmaran

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women worldwide, posing unique challenges that often go unrecognized. Traditionally, heart disease has been seen as a predominantly male issue, but it is equally critical for women.

Women often experience different heart disease symptoms than men, such as nausea, dizziness, and fatigue, which can be misdiagnosed or overlooked.

Biological Factors

Several biological factors contribute to the increased risk of heart disease in women. For instance, hormonal changes throughout a woman's life, such as those during menopause, play a significant role. Lower levels of estrogen after menopause can increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease in the smaller blood vessels (microvascular disease). Pregnancy-related issues such as gestational diabetes or hypertension also raise future cardiovascular risks. Early menarche or menopause, surgical menopause at an early age, polycystic ovarian disease, and infertility are also associated with enhanced cardiovascular risk.

Lifestyle Contributions

Lifestyle factors significantly influence heart health, and this is where prevention can play a key role. Smoking, tobacco use, an unhealthy diet, and lack of physical activity are major heart disease risk factors that can be controlled. Women, particularly those who are busy with multiple responsibilities, often neglect their dietary needs and physical health.

Pregnancy And Heart Health

Pregnancy-related adverse outcomes such as gestational diabetes, hypertension, eclampsia, spontaneous abortion, pre-term birth, and intrauterine growth retardation are all associated with future cardiovascular risk. Pregnancy is considered as a window to a woman's future cardiovascular health. Two-thirds of women with heart disease undergo pregnancy without being aware of the disease. Being aware and informed reduces the maternal mortality and morbidity and greatly improves fetal outcomes.

Prevention Strategies

Heart-Healthy Diet: A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can reduce heart disease risks. Limiting the intake of saturated fats, salt, and sugars is crucial. Incorporating foods high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as fish and nuts, can also benefit heart health.

Regular Exercise: Regular physical activity is one of the most effective ways to ward off heart disease. For women, activities such as brisk walking, swimming, and cycling can make a significant difference. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity each week.

Stress Management: Effective stress management is essential. Techniques such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing can help reduce the heart disease risks associated with stress. It's also important for women to seek professional help when dealing with depression or anxiety.



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Regular Screenings: Regular screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and diabetes are crucial from the age of 20, especially for obese women or those with a family history of diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. Women with adverse pregnancy outcomes should evaluate their cardiac risk annually and check blood pressure, sugar levels, and lipids. Every woman should have a cardiac risk screening before planning the first pregnancy.

In conclusion, understanding the unique challenges of heart health in women allows for better prevention strategies tailored to their needs. By addressing the specific biological, psychological, and lifestyle factors that contribute to heart disease in women, we can reduce the incidence and impact of this serious condition.



Beat Strong, Live Long



Early Warning Signs

Recognizing symptoms of a heart attack and stroke.

By Dr. Manidipa Majumdar



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Heart attacks and strokes are major health events that require immediate medical attention. Recognizing the early warning signs of these conditions can be lifesaving. This write-up provides an overview of the symptoms of heart attacks and strokes, emphasizing the importance of timely recognition and response.

Heart Attack Symptoms

A heart attack, or myocardial infarction, occurs when the flow of blood to the heart is blocked. The symptoms can vary greatly, but there are several key indicators to watch for:

Chest Pain or Discomfort: The most common symptom is a feeling of pressure, tightness, or pain in the centre of the chest,

which may last for more than a few minutes or come and go.

Upper Body Discomfort:

Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, shoulders, neck, jaw, or upper part of the stomach.

Shortness of Breath: This can occur with or without chest discomfort and is often a significant warning sign.

Other Signs: These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, lightheadedness, or unusual fatigue.

It's crucial to note that symptoms can differ between men and women, with women more likely to experience shortness of breath, nausea, and back or jaw pain.

Stroke Symptoms

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is interrupted or reduced, preventing brain tissue from getting oxygen and nutrients. Strokes require urgent treatment as early action

can minimize brain damage. Key symptoms include:

Face Drooping: One side of the face may droop or feel numb. Ask the person to smile to check for irregularities.

Arm Weakness: Sudden weakness or numbness in one or both arms can be a telltale sign. Ask the person to raise both arms to see if one arm drifts downward.

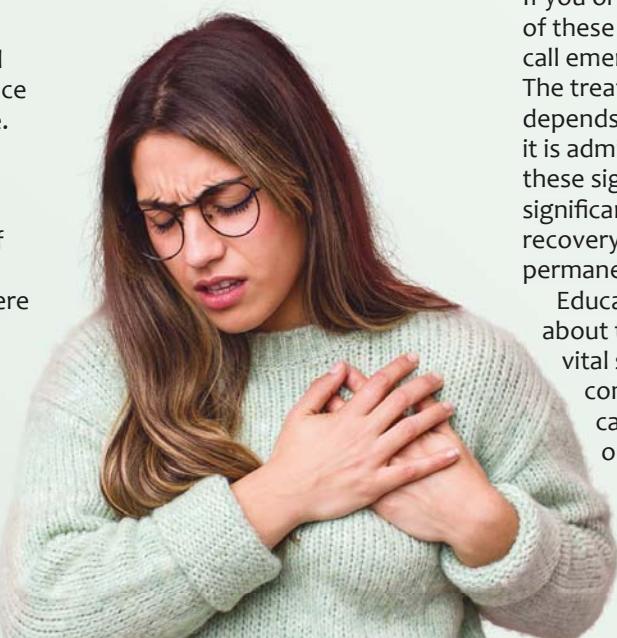
Speech Difficulty: Slurred speech or difficulty speaking are significant indicators. Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence and check if they can articulate the words correctly.

Other Symptoms: These can include sudden numbness or weakness of the leg, confusion, trouble seeing in one or both eyes, dizziness, loss of balance, or a severe headache with no known cause.

The Importance of Timely Response

Both heart attacks and strokes require immediate medical attention. If you or someone else exhibits any of these symptoms, it's critical to call emergency services right away. The treatment's effectiveness often depends on the speed with which it is administered. Understanding these signs and reacting quickly can significantly increase the chances of recovery and reduce the likelihood of permanent damage.

Educating yourself and others about these symptoms is a vital step in improving overall community health and can dramatically improve outcomes for those affected by these serious conditions.





Beat Strong, Live Long

Heart Screening

Importance of regular check-ups and screenings. By Dr. Nalini. T

Heart screening is a vital component of preventive healthcare, aimed at detecting heart disease early, even before symptoms arise. It involves a series of tests and evaluations that help assess cardiovascular health and identify potential risks. Regular heart screenings can significantly reduce the incidence of heart attacks and strokes by enabling early intervention.

Why Regular Heart Screenings are Crucial

Early Detection of Heart Issues:

Regular screenings can detect issues such as high blood pressure, blocked arteries, and other heart conditions that may not yet present symptoms. Early detection allows for timely treatment, which can be crucial in preventing more severe health problems.

Monitoring Heart Health Over Time: Heart health can change significantly with age, lifestyle, and health conditions. Regular check-ups help track these changes, allowing healthcare providers to make informed decisions about interventions or adjustments in treatment plans.

Risk Factor Identification:

Screenings help identify risk factors like cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and blood sugar levels. Knowing these risks can motivate individuals to make healthier lifestyle choices, such as improving diet, increasing physical activity, and quitting smoking.

Components of Heart Screening

Physical Examination and History:

A basic screening includes a thorough physical examination and a review of

personal and family medical histories. This step is crucial for identifying potential hereditary risks and current health status.

Blood Tests: Blood tests check for levels of cholesterol, triglycerides, and glucose, which are indicators of cardiovascular health.

Electrocardiogram (EKG/ECG): This test records the electrical activity of the heart and can identify irregular heartbeats, previous heart attacks, and potential heart function issues.

Echocardiogram: This ultrasound test provides detailed images of the heart's structure and function, helping detect problems with the heart's chambers and valves.

THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION SUGGESTS THAT HEART SCREENING SHOULD START BY THE AGE OF 20. THE FREQUENCY OF THESE SCREENINGS SHOULD BE BASED ON ONE'S RISK FACTORS.



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The Right Time for Heart Screenings

The American Heart Association suggests that heart screening should start by the age of 20. The frequency of these screenings should be based on one's risk factors. People with no identified risk factors might only need screenings every four to six years, while those with identified risks or existing heart conditions might need more frequent evaluations.

Taking Charge of Your Heart Health

Heart screenings are a proactive measure to guard against the most common form of death globally — heart disease. By incorporating regular heart screenings into routine healthcare, individuals can take significant control over their heart health, leading to longer, healthier lives. Regular check-ups also foster a better understanding of one's body and the effects of lifestyle choices on overall health, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a heart-healthy lifestyle.



Beat Strong, Live Long

Obesity And Heart Disease

The link between weight and heart problems.

By Dr. Lakshmi Thampy

Obesity is a pressing global health issue that has been closely linked to a myriad of health complications, among which heart disease stands out as one of the most severe. Characterized by an excessive accumulation of body fat, obesity increases the risk of developing various cardiovascular conditions, including coronary heart disease, heart failure, and hypertension.

The Impact of Excessive Weight on Cardiovascular Health

Increased Load on the Heart:

One of the primary ways obesity contributes to heart disease is by physically increasing the load on the heart. Excess body weight forces the heart to work harder to pump blood to all the cells in the body, which can lead to hypertrophy — an enlargement of the heart muscle. This enlargement, particularly of the left ventricle, can lead to heart failure.

Atherosclerosis Development:

Obesity accelerates the development of atherosclerosis, a condition characterized by the buildup of fatty deposits in the arterial walls. This process begins when excess body fat leads to an increase in LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol), which deposits on the artery walls. As these deposits grow, they narrow and

stiffen the arteries, reducing blood flow and increasing the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Metabolic Contributions

Insulin Resistance and Type 2 Diabetes:

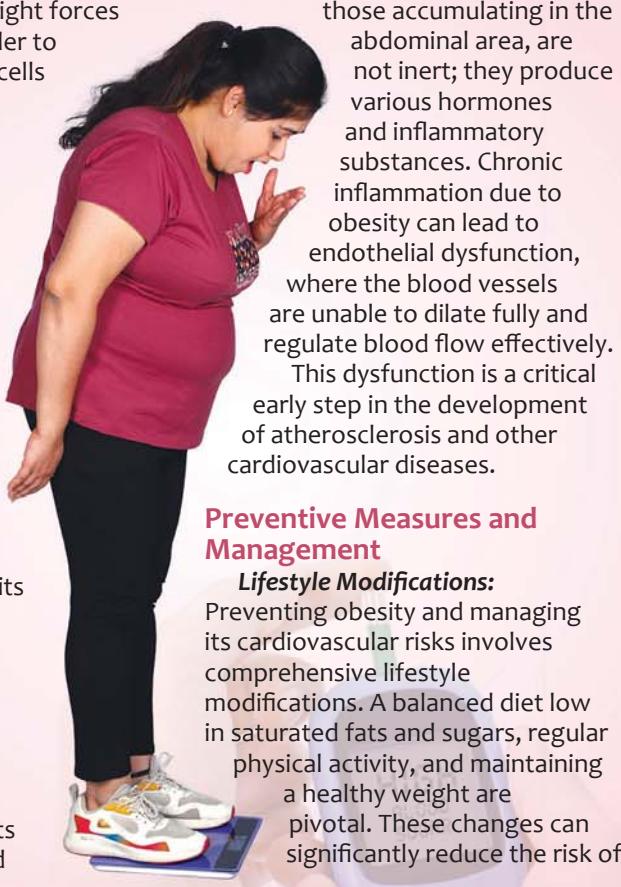
Diabetes: Obesity is closely linked with insulin resistance, a precursor to Type 2 diabetes.

Insulin resistance disrupts the way the body handles blood sugar, leading to elevated glucose levels that can damage blood vessels and nerves. This damage is a significant risk factor for the development of heart disease.

Inflammation and Endothelial Dysfunction:

Fat cells, especially those accumulating in the abdominal area, are not inert; they produce various hormones and inflammatory substances. Chronic inflammation due to obesity can lead to endothelial dysfunction, where the blood vessels are unable to dilate fully and regulate blood flow effectively.

This dysfunction is a critical early step in the development of atherosclerosis and other cardiovascular diseases.



Preventive Measures and Management

Lifestyle Modifications:

Preventing obesity and managing its cardiovascular risks involves comprehensive lifestyle modifications. A balanced diet low in saturated fats and sugars, regular physical activity, and maintaining a healthy weight are pivotal. These changes can significantly reduce the risk of



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developing heart disease associated with obesity.

Medical Interventions: In cases where lifestyle changes are inadequate, medical interventions may be necessary. These can include medications to manage cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and blood sugar levels, or even surgical options like bariatric surgery for weight loss.

Conclusion

The link between obesity and heart disease is both complex and significant. As obesity rates continue to rise globally, understanding and addressing this link is crucial for reducing the burden of cardiovascular disease. Preventive measures, whether lifestyle alterations or medical interventions, play a critical role in managing and mitigating these risks.



Beat Strong, Live Long

Advances in Heart Treatment

The latest breakthroughs in cardiology. By Dr. Anjali Sharma

Cardiology has witnessed remarkable advancements over recent years, significantly improving the diagnosis, treatment, and management of heart diseases. These innovations are paving the way for better patient outcomes and enhanced quality of life. This write-up explores the latest breakthroughs in cardiology that are shaping the future of heart treatment.

Minimally Invasive Procedures

Minimally invasive procedures have revolutionized cardiology by reducing recovery times, minimizing complications, and improving overall patient comfort. One of the standout advancements is Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement (TAVR). TAVR allows for the replacement of the aortic valve without the need for open-heart surgery. It involves inserting a catheter through the femoral artery and guiding it to the heart, where a new valve is deployed. This procedure has shown excellent outcomes in patients who are at high risk for traditional surgery.

Advanced Imaging Techniques

Imaging technology has seen substantial improvements, providing cardiologists with detailed insights into the structure and function of the heart. The introduction of 3D echocardiography and cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) has enhanced the ability to diagnose and plan treatment for various heart conditions. These imaging modalities offer high-resolution images, allowing for precise assessment of heart function, detection of anomalies, and guidance during procedures.



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Gene Therapy and Regenerative Medicine

Gene therapy and regenerative medicine are emerging as promising fields in cardiology. Researchers are exploring the potential of gene editing technologies, such as CRISPR-Cas9, to correct genetic defects that lead to heart disease. Additionally, stem cell therapy is being investigated for its ability to regenerate damaged heart tissue. Early clinical trials have shown that injecting stem cells into damaged heart muscle can improve heart function and reduce symptoms of heart failure.



Wearable Technology and Remote Monitoring

Wearable technology is transforming how heart health is monitored and managed. Devices like smartwatches and fitness trackers equipped with ECG capabilities allow for continuous heart rate monitoring and the detection of irregular heart rhythms. Remote monitoring systems enable patients to send their health data to their healthcare providers in real-time, facilitating early intervention and personalized treatment plans.

Personalized Medicine

Personalized medicine is gaining traction in cardiology, focusing on tailoring treatments to individual patients based on their genetic makeup, lifestyle, and other factors. Advances in genomics and biomarker research are enabling the development of targeted therapies that can more effectively address specific heart conditions. This approach promises to enhance the efficacy of treatments and reduce adverse effects.

Conclusion

The field of cardiology is advancing rapidly, with new technologies and treatments offering hope to millions of patients worldwide. Minimally invasive procedures, advanced imaging, gene therapy, wearable technology, and personalized medicine are at the forefront of these innovations. As research continues, the future of heart treatment looks promising, with the potential to significantly reduce the burden of heart disease and improve patient outcomes.



Beat Strong, Live Long

Arrhythmias

Common heart rhythm disorders and treatment options.

By Dr. Sfurti Sunil Jadhav Patil

Arrhythmias are irregularities in the heart's rhythm, presenting either as a rapid, slow, or erratic heartbeat. These disturbances occur when the electrical signals that coordinate the heart's beats malfunction. There are several types of arrhythmias, the most common being atrial fibrillation, which affects the upper chambers of the heart, causing rapid and disorganized contractions. Other frequent forms include bradycardia (slow heartbeat), tachycardia (fast heartbeat), and ventricular fibrillation (erratic heartbeats that can be life-threatening).

Factors contributing to arrhythmias encompass a broad range including heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, excessive alcohol or caffeine consumption, and stress. Genetic predispositions also play a significant role, making some individuals more susceptible to these conditions.

Diagnosis Of Heart Rhythm Disorders

Diagnosing arrhythmias typically involves a review of medical history, a physical examination, and specific tests. The electrocardiogram (ECG) is the most common diagnostic tool used to detect arrhythmias by recording the electrical activity of the heart. For a more extended monitoring period, a Holter monitor, a portable ECG device worn for one to two days, provides valuable data on the heart's activity over time.

In cases where intermittent arrhythmias may not be captured by these methods, an event recorder can be used for weeks or months to document sporadic episodes.

Treatment Options For Arrhythmias

Treatment for arrhythmias depends on the type and severity of the disorder. Minor arrhythmias may not require treatment if they pose no risk, while more severe conditions necessitate intervention. Medications are commonly prescribed to control the heart rate and rhythm.

ARRHYTHMIAS ENCOMPASS \ INCLUDING HEART DISEASE, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, DIABETES, CAFFEINE CONSUMPTION, AND STRESS. GENETIC PREDISPOSITIONS ALSO PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE, MAKING SOME INDIVIDUALS MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THESE CONDITIONS.

Antiarrhythmic drugs, beta-blockers, and calcium channel blockers are among the medications used to manage these disorders.

In more severe cases, medical procedures such as electrical cardioversion, which uses electric pulses to reset the heart's rhythm, or catheter ablation, which destroys small areas of heart tissue causing irregular signals, may be necessary. For persistent or life-threatening arrhythmias, implantable devices like pacemakers and defibrillators can be lifesavers. These devices monitor the heart's rhythm and deliver electrical



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shocks when necessary to maintain a normal rhythm.

Advances In Arrhythmia Management

The field of arrhythmia management continues to advance with research and technology. Innovations like three-dimensional mapping systems used during catheter ablation procedures improve the accuracy and outcomes of treatments.

Additionally, developments in genetic testing help identify individuals at risk of arrhythmias before symptoms manifest, enabling proactive management of the condition. Understanding arrhythmias and their potential impacts on health is crucial. Regular check-ups and monitoring are essential for those at risk, as early detection significantly enhances the effectiveness of treatment strategies.



Beat Strong, Live Long

Heart Health For Children And Teens

Protecting young hearts. By Dr. Sumidra Laishram



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Heart health is a crucial aspect of overall well-being, not just for adults but also for children and teens. Developing healthy habits early in life can significantly reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases in the future. This write-up explores the importance of heart health for the younger population, key factors affecting it, and practical steps to promote a healthy heart.

Importance Of Early Heart Health

Establishing heart-healthy habits in childhood is vital for long-term health. The foundation of cardiovascular health begins in the early years and continues through adolescence. Research shows that risk factors for heart disease, such as obesity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, often start in childhood. By addressing these issues early, we can prevent the onset of heart disease and improve quality of life.

Key Factors Affecting Heart Health

Diet and Nutrition: A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins is essential for maintaining a healthy heart. Excessive intake of sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats can lead to obesity, high blood pressure, and cholesterol levels, increasing the risk of heart disease. Encouraging children and teens to make healthier food choices is a crucial step towards protecting their heart health.

Physical Activity: Regular physical activity strengthens the

heart, improves circulation, and helps maintain a healthy weight. The American Heart Association recommends that children and teens engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily. Activities such as playing sports, biking, swimming, and even brisk walking can make a significant difference.

Mental and Emotional Well-being: Mental and emotional health also plays a role in heart health. Stress, anxiety, and depression can negatively impact cardiovascular health. Teaching children and teens coping mechanisms, providing emotional support, and fostering a positive environment can help mitigate these risks.

Practical Steps For Promoting Heart Health

Healthy Eating Habits: Parents and caregivers can encourage healthy eating by involving children in meal

planning and preparation. Offering a variety of nutritious foods and limiting the availability of junk food at home can set the stage for better dietary habits.

Encouraging Physical Activity:

Promoting an active lifestyle is essential. Families can participate in physical activities together, making it a fun and integral part of daily life. Schools also play a critical role by providing opportunities for physical education and active recess periods.

Monitoring and Regular Check-ups:

Regular medical check-ups can help monitor and manage heart health risk factors. Pediatricians can assess blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and overall health, providing guidance on maintaining a healthy heart.

Conclusion

Protecting the heart health of children and teens requires a comprehensive approach that includes a balanced diet, regular physical activity, and attention to mental and emotional well-being. By instilling these healthy habits early, we can ensure that the younger generation grows up with strong, healthy hearts, reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases in the future. Parents, caregivers, schools, and communities all have a role to play in this important endeavor.





Beat Strong, Live Long

Heart Health in the Elderly

Special considerations for older adults. By Dr. E Elavarasi Manimegalai



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As people age, their risk of developing heart-related issues increases significantly. This is due to various age-related changes in the body, including stiffening of the blood vessels and the heart itself. For elderly individuals, maintaining heart health requires tailored strategies that consider these physiological changes.

Understanding Age-Related Changes

One of the most critical shifts in the elderly is the increase in arterial stiffness, which can lead to high blood pressure and burden the heart. The heart muscle itself also undergoes changes, such as thickening of the heart wall and reduced efficiency in pumping blood. These changes can increase the risk of heart diseases such as atrial fibrillation, heart failure, and coronary artery disease.

Risk Factors in the Elderly

Several risk factors become more pronounced with age. These include:

Hypertension: High blood pressure is prevalent among the elderly and a significant risk factor for heart diseases.

High cholesterol: Age can lead to changes in cholesterol levels, increasing the risk of arterial plaque build-up.

Diabetes: The prevalence of diabetes increases with age, exacerbating heart health risks.

Lifestyle factors: Reduced physical activity and poor dietary habits in some elderly individuals can further deteriorate heart health.

Preventive Measures

Prevention is crucial in managing heart health in the elderly. Key measures include:

Regular monitoring of heart health: This includes regular check-ups and monitoring of blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood sugar levels.

Medication adherence: Ensuring that all medications are taken as prescribed to manage existing conditions is vital.

Physical activity: Engaging in appropriate physical activities can help maintain cardiovascular health and overall fitness.

Healthy diet: A diet low in saturated fats, high in fiber, and rich in fruits and vegetables can help keep the heart healthy.

Special Considerations

There are specific considerations when it comes to elderly care:

Tailored exercise programs:

Because of the varying levels of mobility and existing health conditions, exercise programs for the elderly should be specifically tailored.

Medication management:

Polypharmacy is common in the elderly, making medication management crucial to avoid drug interactions that could affect heart health.

Social support: Elderly individuals often benefit from strong social support networks that can help in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Conclusion

Maintaining heart health in the elderly requires a comprehensive approach that includes lifestyle modifications, regular medical monitoring, and a clear understanding of the unique risks posed by age-related changes. By addressing these factors, the elderly can manage their heart health effectively, leading to improved quality of life and longevity.



Beat Strong, Live Long

Know Your Heart

A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding Heart Anatomy and Function.

The heart is a vital organ that acts as a pump in the circulatory system, ensuring the flow of blood throughout the body. This muscular organ is roughly the size of a fist and is strategically located in the chest cavity, slightly to the left of the centre. Understanding the structure of the heart is essential for appreciating how it functions to sustain life.

The Chambers and Valves

The heart consists of four chambers: two upper chambers called the atria and two lower chambers called the ventricles. The atria receive blood from the body and lungs, while the ventricles pump it back out to these areas. This structure allows for efficient circulation in two parallel circuits – the systemic and the pulmonary circuits.

Between these chambers are valves that ensure blood flows in only one direction. The main valves are:

- **The tricuspid valve:** Located between the right atrium and right ventricle.
 - **The pulmonary valve:** Between the right ventricle and pulmonary artery.
 - **The mitral valve:** Between the left atrium and left ventricle.
 - **The aortic valve:** Between the left ventricle and the aorta.
- These valves prevent the backflow of blood and are crucial for maintaining proper cardiac function.

Heart Musculature and Electrical System

The heart muscle, or myocardium, is unique. Unlike other muscles in the body, it has intrinsic rhythmicity and can generate its own electrical

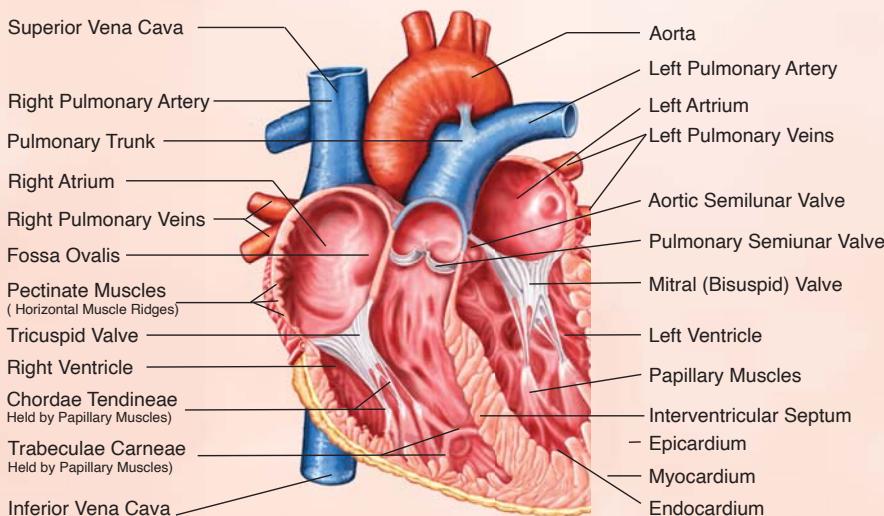
impulses. These impulses govern the heart rate and are crucial for synchronizing the contraction of heart chambers.

The heart's electrical system begins in the sinoatrial node, located in the right atrium. This node is often referred to as the natural pacemaker. The electrical signals it generates spread through the atria and converge at the atrioventricular node. From here, the impulses travel along the His-Purkinje network within the ventricles, causing them to contract efficiently and pump blood either to the lungs or to the rest of the body.

The Circulatory Roles of the Heart

The heart's primary function is circulatory, supplying oxygen-rich blood to the body and removing carbon dioxide and other waste. The right side of the heart handles deoxygenated blood, pumping it to the lungs via the pulmonary circuit. Here, carbon dioxide is exchanged for oxygen. The left side of the heart then receives the oxygenated blood and distributes it throughout the body in the systemic circuit.

Heart Anatomy



A Lifelong Commitment

Understanding the anatomy and function of the heart is more than an academic pursuit; it's essential for maintaining heart health. Lifestyle choices such as a balanced diet, regular exercise, and avoiding smoking can significantly impact heart function and overall well-being. Regular check-ups and being aware of heart health are crucial, especially as we age. By knowing more about this vital organ, we empower ourselves to take better care of our hearts and ensure a healthier future.



Beat Strong, Live Long

Family History And Heart Disease

Understanding your genetic risk.

Heart disease remains one of the leading causes of mortality globally, prompting individuals and medical professionals to explore various risk factors, including genetic predispositions. Family history plays a crucial role in understanding one's susceptibility to heart disease, as genetic factors can significantly influence cardiovascular health.

The Role of Genetics

Genetics contribute to the development of heart disease in several ways. Certain genes can directly predispose individuals to conditions such as high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, and congenital heart defects. For instance, variations in the APOE gene affect cholesterol levels and heart disease risk, while mutations in genes like MYH7 or TNNT2 are linked to cardiomyopathy.

Understanding Family History

A detailed family health history can act as a crucial tool for assessing risk. It's advisable for individuals to gather information about the health of direct relatives such as parents, siblings, and grandparents. Noticing patterns of heart disease that appear at an early age among family members can indicate a higher genetic risk.

Key Questions for Family Health History:

- At what age did family members develop heart disease?
- Were there any contributing factors such as smoking, diet, or physical activity levels?

- Did they have other health conditions that might contribute to heart disease, like diabetes or obesity?

Implications of Genetic Risk

Knowing one's family history helps tailor prevention strategies. For those at higher genetic risk, lifestyle changes such as maintaining

a healthy diet, regular exercise, and avoiding smoking can be particularly impactful.

Additionally, genetic counselling and testing might be recommended for some individuals to determine specific risks and appropriate preventive measures.

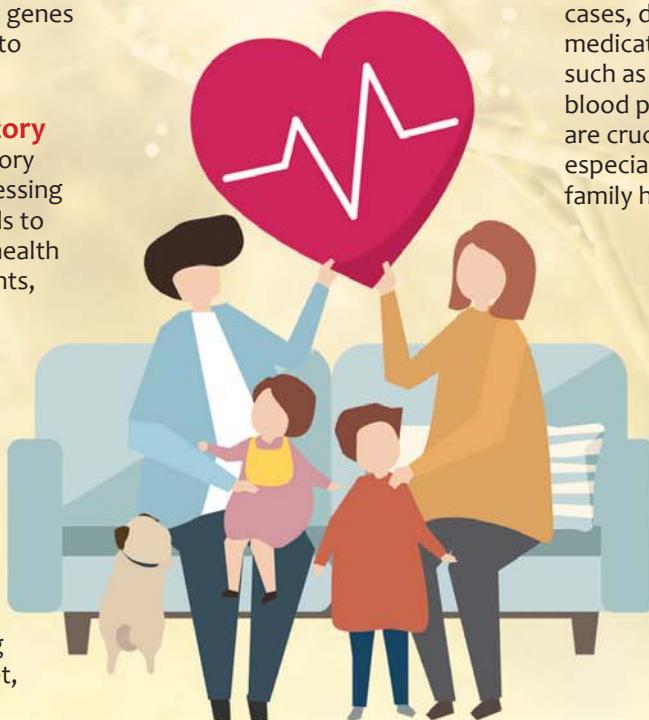
Preventive Measures and Management

Lifestyle Changes: Adopting a heart-healthy lifestyle is essential for everyone, but particularly for those with a genetic predisposition to heart disease. This includes eating a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, engaging in regular physical activity, and managing stress effectively.

Medical Interventions: In some cases, doctors may recommend medications to manage risk factors such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure. Regular check-ups are crucial to monitor heart health, especially for those with a significant family history of heart disease.

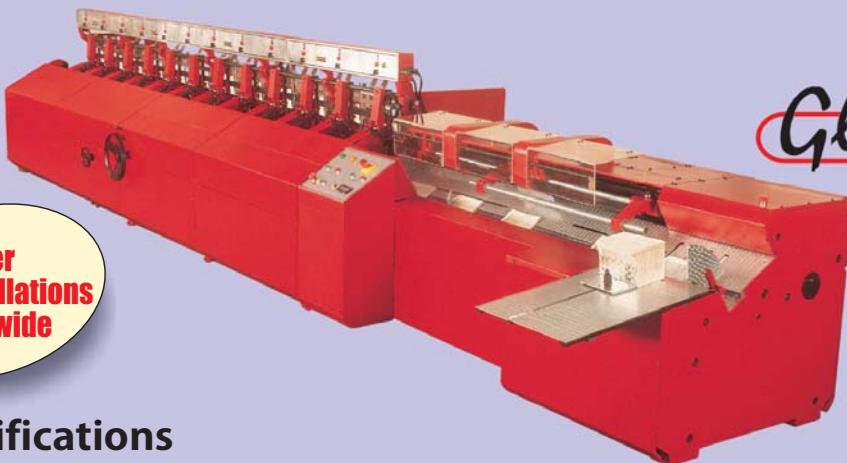
Conclusion

Understanding the genetic risk factors associated with heart disease through one's family history is vital in devising effective prevention and management strategies. By combining knowledge of genetics with lifestyle and medical interventions, individuals can significantly mitigate their risk and promote cardiovascular health.



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THE ANSWER

The smallest support can lead to victory. By Vuyyuru Anasuya

Look Pratyusha, if you don't do what I asked you to do, you know for sure that I would upload all our videos and intimate pictures on Facebook. You have to then face the consequences of disrepute," Krupal told her as coolly as possible.

Looking weakly at the smiling face of Krupal who was blackmailing her, "I already parted with thirty thousand when you asked me earlier. Where from I get such a huge amount now? How could my dad give such an astronomical amount without asking for a reason? Please, for goodness sake, leave me alone," she pleaded with him.

"Will they give you if you merely ask for the money? You must find ways to get money somehow. Your dad has lots

of money," he replied harshly.

She felt cursed for having loved such a truculent man. "Somehow means, what?" she asked him.

"Oh, you are an intelligent girl. When you turned up at the parks, cinema houses, and hotels browbeating your parents, shall I have to tell you how you could extort money from them now?"

Pratyusha could not stand before him anymore. She wanted to escape from him. "I need ten days' time," she said at last. "Ten days! Why should you require so much time?"

"Do you know the amount you asked for? Not a small amount...two lakhs. Will anyone keep so much cash at

"I already parted with thirty thousand when you asked me earlier."



Krupal was arrested by the police after a week on the complaint that he morphed the pictures of girls.

home? You heckled at me that I easily came to see you in parks, hotels, etc. You have no idea how much effort I had to make? I planned for two days before such meets," she explained.

"It may be true. Ten days will be over by the 4th. Isn't it?" said Krupal nonchalantly. "Okay. If I give you the money you asked for, will you delete all those pictures from your mobile?" she asked.

"Oh..sure, my darling. Did I not delete three pictures when you parted with thirty thousand?" he displayed his truthfulness.

When Krupal left her, she sat and began to ponder. How to go and face this problem? If her parents came to know about her affair, more than the fact that he deceived her, they would feel more for her characterlessness.

In fact, she was in a mind to discuss her love for Krupal and make them approve their marriage. Now, he showed his true colours! A wolf in sheep's guise! How was it that she fell into his trap so easily? The only escape from this situation would be suicide.

Pratyusha and Krupal had studied in the same college in the city. Krupal was tall and handsome. Naturally, girls were after him, and he took undue advantage of their advances.

However, Krupal had an eye on Pratyusha, who was attractive and mild in her temperament. As he stalked her often, Pratyusha gave it a thought. What was not in him? He was handsome, and she did not see anything adverse in him.

Probably, he was moderately rich, and the girls were crazy about him. When he expressed to her that he was in love with her, Pratyusha felt proud and lucky, as she won him over other girls.

When they moved together and became close, they kissed each other and hugged. He enthusiastically took selfies and showed her how beautiful she was. She was free with him, as she decided to marry him soon. This could not continue, as he switched loyalty in the love. He loved another girl and ignored Pratyusha. When confronted, he replied that the girl's father was richer than Pratyusha's father. Now, she understood his dubious character and selfish motive. She hated him and began to avoid him.



The girl with whom he was moving, leaving Pratyusha behind, began knowing about him. He was soon on his knees and pleaded with her, "Please forget what I did earlier. It was only my mistake."

One evening, Krupal glanced at her in the park, went to her quickly, and pulled her hand. The girl with whom he was moving, leaving Pratyusha behind, began knowing about him. He was soon on his knees and pleaded with her, "Please forget what I did earlier. It was only my mistake."

When she discarded him, he started blackmailing Pratyusha. 'Even if I lodge a police complaint, he would convince the police that he was madly in love with her. The police would counsel me and see that I am married to him.' It was his wicked plan. I would better prefer to die than to marry him, she vowed. She was thinking of ways and means to take her life.

Pratyusha was looking at a lone empty bottle on the lush green lawn in the park. Someone left it in the park. She observed that a black ant in it was trying to come out, but every time it made an effort, it slipped on the smooth

sides and fell to the bottom. She pulled out a lengthy grass from the ground, went to where the bottle lay, and slowly inserted it into the bottle. The black ant tried twice, but on the next attempt, it came out successfully, as it felt it had support.

Then an idea struck her. When an ant was able to find a solution, why not she? Why should she lament and think of dying?

So, support was necessary however little it might be. One should not think it was merely a blade of grass but one should know how and when to use it.

Krupal was arrested by the police after a week on the complaint that he morphed the pictures of girls as being naked and uploaded them on Facebook. They seized the



My problem was nothing compared to yours. I thank you, dear," she said.

Ramya was Ramesh, a transgender. When she was Ramesh, he was Pratyusha's childhood friend. When Ramesh wanted to go for a sex change, he was ill-treated by his relatives and friends when Pratyusha gave him shelter.

laptop and mobile phone of Krupal and produced them in court as evidence. Having read the news, Pratyusha felt very happy and phoned up Rama. "I owe a deep debt of gratitude to you, Rama. You were intelligent enough not to disclose my name in the case."

"It is nothing but repaying your gratitude. You took all the trouble to see that I am recognised in society. Even if he comes out of jail, no girl should fall for him. The 'black ant and the grass theory' brought you success," Rama laughed.

"The grass has its value. Everything in nature has a meaning. On that day's observation made me get support. You have undergone a lot of trials and tribulations in life. My problem was nothing compared to yours. I thank you, dear," she said and switched off the phone.

Ramya was Ramesh, a transgender. When she was Ramesh, he was Pratyusha's childhood friend. When Ramesh wanted to go for a sex change, he was ill-treated by his relatives and friends when Pratyusha gave him shelter. Ramesh turned Rama, who studied hard and got a job as a software engineer in Bengaluru.

When Pratyusha spoke to her over the phone about her predicament, she lost no time in landing at Hyderabad. She befriended Krupal as Ramesh and acted as if he was interested in stalking girls.

They soon became good friends. He purloined the passwords of his phone and laptop and morphed the pictures of the children of politicians. Then, he uploaded the pictures on Facebook.

When everything was done to expose Krupal, she removed her disguise as Ramesh, became Ramya, and flew to Bengaluru.

When Pratyusha was down in the mouth for what happened to her, Rama came to her rescue.

After talking to Rama for a while, she put down the phone. She then observed a black ant moving on her bed slowly. Every problem will have a solution. One should excogitate.

'Thank you very much, black ant sir, for guiding me,' she looked at the black ant and smiled.

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Exquisite Fruit Cuisine



A culinary adventure featuring creative fruit-inspired dishes. By Roma Ghosh

WATERMELON PILAF WITH SPICED CHERRIES AND MINT

INGREDIENTS

For Watermelon Pilaf

- 1 cup long-grain basmati rice
- 2 cups pulpy watermelon juice
- 1-inch piece cinnamon
- 2 cloves
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 dried red chilies
- 3 tbsp ghee
- Salt to taste

For Spiced Cherries

- 150 gms fresh cherries (preferably seedless)
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 1/2 tsp cayenne powder
- 1 tsp oregano or mixed herbs
- 1/2 tsp dry mango powder
- Mint leaves for garnish
- Dried prunes for garnish

METHOD

For the Pilaf

Wash the rice, drain, and set aside. Heat the ghee in a thick-bottomed pan and add the whole

spices. Allow to splutter. Add the washed rice and stir fry for 2-3 minutes on medium heat.

Lower the heat, add the pulpy watermelon juice, and stir gently. Bring to a simmer and cover the pan with a lid. Cook the rice in the watermelon juice until fully absorbed and the rice is cooked.

Top with the spiced cherries and garnish with mint leaves and pitted prunes. Serve as a main course with any dry vegetable preparation.

For the Cherries

Heat the oil, add the spices, and cook over low heat for 30 seconds. Mix in the cherries and toss gently. Top the pilaf with these spiced cherries.

Watermelon Pilaf with Spiced Cherries and Mint



RAINBOW FRUIT SKEWERS

INGREDIENTS

A variety of fruits (dragon fruit, red grapes, pineapple, cucumber, orange segments, ripened raw mango pieces, cherry tomatoes, etc.)

1 tsp cayenne powder
1 tsp cumin powder
Pinch of salt
1 tsp dill powder
1 tsp oregano
2 tsp olive oil
2 tsp lemon juice

METHOD

Cut the fruits into medium size pieces and place them on a platter. Sprinkle it with lemon juice to prevent discoloration. Mix in the spices and stir very gently.

Put the fruits on skewers. Heat a grill, brush with a little oil, and grill the skewers for 1 minute on each side. Serve immediately as starters or with dollops of ice cream for dessert.



MANGO BISQUE WITH GRILLED TOFU AND BELL PEPPERS

INGREDIENTS

For Mango Bisque
1 good quality sweet mango (Langra or Alphonso)
2 tsp grated raw mango
Salt to taste
1 tsp honey or brown sugar
1 tsp cayenne powder
3 pinches cinnamon powder

1 tsp cumin powder
2 tsp olive oil
60-80 ml cream
160 ml vegetable stock

For Grilled Tofu

100 gms tofu
2 tsp tandoori masala
Salt to taste
1 tsp cayenne powder
2 tsp lemon juice
2 tsp olive oil
1 red or yellow bell pepper
Basil leaves for garnish

METHOD

For the Bisque

Blend together all the bisque ingredients except oil and cream in a mixing bowl using a hand blender. Add the vegetable stock and blend well.

Heat a pan, add olive oil, lower the heat, and add the blended ingredients. Bring to a simmer. Cook on low heat, stirring constantly for 3-4 minutes until the spices are well mixed and the broth has thickened.

Remove from heat, add the cream, blend well, and pass through a strainer to obtain a smooth, thick sauce.



Mango Bisque with Grilled Tofu and Bell Peppers

For the Tofu

Marinate the tofu and bell pepper with the spices and lemon juice. Set aside for 10 minutes. Grill with olive oil on medium heat, turning over so both sides are grilled. Serve with the bisque sauce, grilled bell peppers, and basil leaves.

RED GRAPES TEMPURA

INGREDIENTS

12-15 seedless red grapes
2 cups ready-made tempura batter

For Homemade Tempura Batter

1 cup flour
1 tbsp cornstarch
2 tbsp rice flour
Salt to taste
3 pinches cinnamon powder
3 pinches red chili powder or black pepper powder
2 egg yolks
2 pinches baking soda
Oil for deep frying

For Salsa

3-4 red grapes



Jamun Jam

1 medium-sized tomato (seeds removed)
½ medium-sized onion
1 tsp olive oil
1/2 tsp pizza topping

METHOD

For the Tempura Batter

Sift all dry ingredients together. Add 1½ cups water and blend with your fingers. Add egg yolks and blend until the batter is fluffy.

For the Tempura

Heat oil for deep frying. Dip each grape into the batter and fry until light golden brown. Serve hot as a starter.



Red Grapes Tempura

JAMUN JAM

INGREDIENTS

2 cups jamun flesh (seeds removed)
¾ cup white sugar or brown sugar
¼ tsp salt
2-3 drops of lemon juice

METHOD

Heat 150 ml water in a thick-bottomed pan. Lower the heat and add the jamuns. Cook for 2-3 minutes. Add the remaining ingredients except for lemon juice.

Cook on low heat, stirring occasionally. After 4-5 minutes, most of the water will be absorbed and the sugar will melt.

Remove from heat, add the lemon juice, and blend coarsely with a hand blender. Cool and store in an airtight bottle in the fridge for 4-5 days.





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Dragon Fruit Cigars

GREEN MAGIC

INGREDIENTS

60 gms spinach leaves
1 medium-sized green apple (cored and cut into small pieces)
1-2 tsp lemon juice (to taste)
2 pinches salt
2 pinches chaat masala

2 tsp pepper powder

80 ml kiwi slush

For Kiwi Slush

2 medium-sized kiwi (peeled and cut into pieces)
2 tbsp brown sugar
Pinch of salt
1 tsp lemon juice
½ tsp cinnamon powder
Coconut pieces for serving

METHOD

For Kiwi Slush

Bring 200 ml water to a simmer, add kiwi pieces, and cook until tender. Add brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Cook and stir until the kiwi pulp is soft and mushy.

Remove from heat, cool, and add lemon juice. Stir and chill.

For Green Magic

Wash the spinach. Blend spinach leaves and green apple pieces with 2 tbsp water to a paste. Add kiwi slush, chaat masala, and pepper powder. Mix all ingredients together.

Chill and serve with coconut bites.



Green Magic

DRAGON FRUIT CIGARS

INGREDIENTS

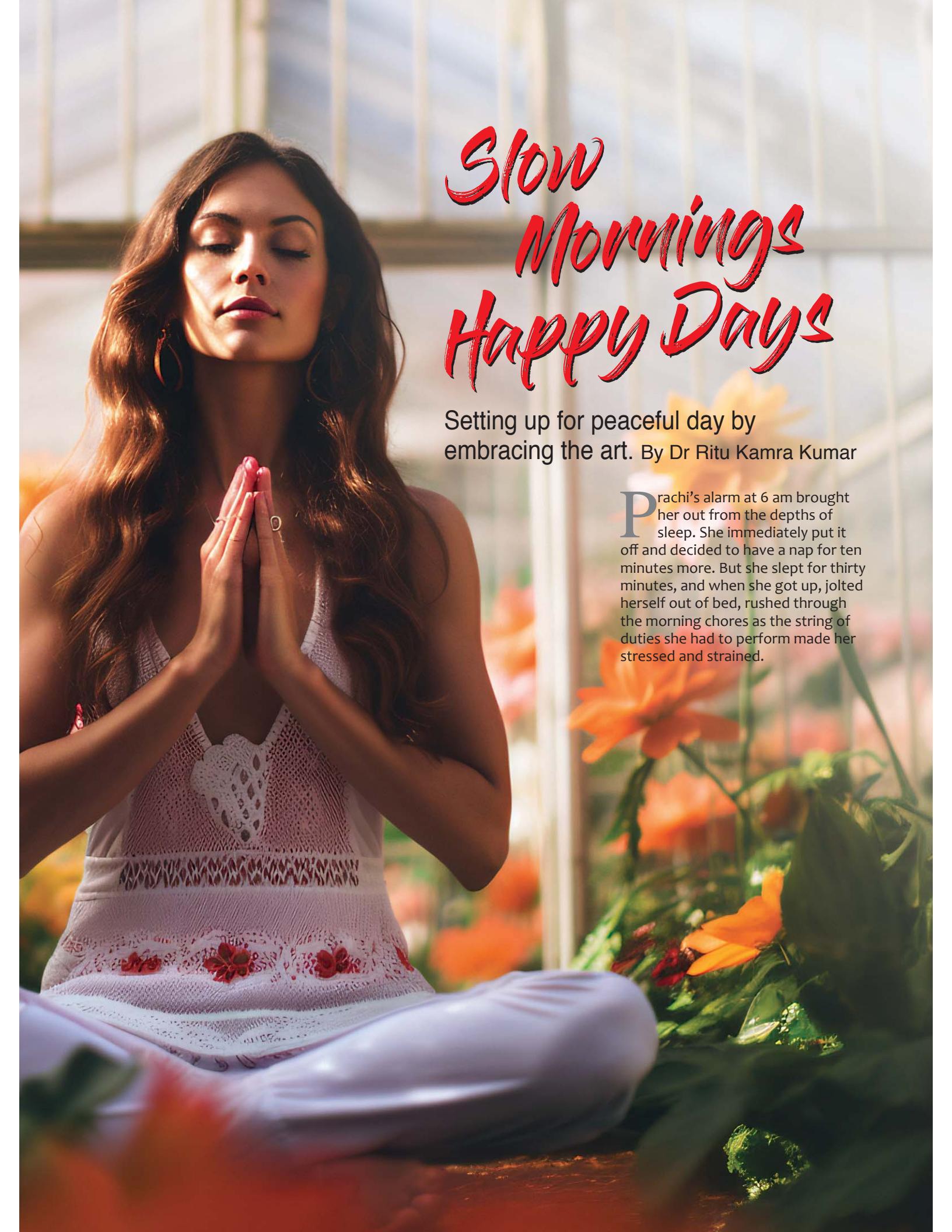
1 dragon fruit (weighing around 300-400 gms)
2 tbsp flour
2 tsp rice flour
2 pinches salt
2 cups bread crumbs (for coating)
Oil for frying

METHOD

Remove the top skin of the dragon fruit and cut into long pieces. Prepare the slurry by sifting flour and rice flour together, adding enough water to form a smooth slurry, and adding salt.

Dip each dragon fruit piece into the slurry, coat with bread crumbs, and refrigerate for 2 hours. Heat oil and fry the cigars until crispy. Serve with your choice of sauce as a starter.

We



Slow Mornings Happy Days

Setting up for peaceful day by
embracing the art. By Dr Ritu Kamra Kumar

Rachi's alarm at 6 am brought her out from the depths of sleep. She immediately put it off and decided to have a nap for ten minutes more. But she slept for thirty minutes, and when she got up, jolted herself out of bed, rushed through the morning chores as the string of duties she had to perform made her stressed and strained.

Fuming and fretting over the household drudgery, her mental to-do list buzzed in her head. Finishing the chores, continuously looking at the clock on the wall, she drove to her workplace, skipping breakfast, with a coffee mug in her hand thinking, “Why can’t I just get up a little early? Already feeling worn out and anxious and the day hasn’t even started yet.”

How we spend the first moments of the day can have a big impact on the rest of the 24 hours! There is legitimate scientific evidence that proves that having a morning routine can reduce stress and boost your energy. But I would like to add that having a nice, slower morning routine enhances our happiness and is mood-uplifting.

What Is A Slow Morning?

A slow morning is an element of the slow-living lifestyle—a growing trend that aims to counter today’s fast-paced, high-consumption society. Slow mornings are a natural provision, a necessity more than a luxury. “Slow living looks different for everyone, but at its heart, it’s about creating space in your life for things that are important to do,” says Brook McAlary, author of *Slow: Simple Living for a Frantic World* and host of the award-winning show *The Slow Home*. Productivity doesn’t mean trying to accomplish everything the moment we wake up and rush through our entire day’s tasks.

This kind of approach will lead to heightened stress, overwhelming feelings, and a quicker way to burnout and exhaustion. Mornings are like nature in spring, humming with sounds of life and the promise of a fresh new day, so we need to slowly inhale and experience every moment of the morning with panache and passion to make our lives worthwhile.

Benefits Of Slow Mornings

A slow morning is the newest wellness trend intended to set you up for success by helping us stay mindful, manage stressful panic triggers, and soothe our nervous system. Instead of rushing through the chores, slow and gentle mornings help us begin the day on the right chord. Even the busiest, most energetic birds can implement the principle of slow mornings and reap the benefits. Eben Pagan, a famous business visionary from the United States, aptly observes, “Your first ritual that you do during the day is the highest leveraged ritual, by far, because it has the effect of setting your mind and setting the context for the rest of the day.”

A slow morning is exactly what it sounds like—a relaxed start to your day, with soothing activities that ease you out of your sleep state and prepare you gently for a productive

day. It’s all about doing what is right for you and taking a step back from autopilot. So, you mustn’t shorten your mornings by getting up late. Mornings should be looked upon as the quintessence of life, as to a certain extent sacred.

Examples of a slow morning can include claiming time for solitude, reflection, planning, body movement, stretching, exercise, or just meditation for a couple of minutes. “Slow mornings involve a lot of practices that our mind and body inherently crave, but we don’t always make time for,” observes Olivia Verhulst, a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and therapist based in New York City. Slow morning isn’t a scientific term, but it is an action, a gesture, a belief to live the entire day well.

Slow mornings set the tone for the rest of the day, encourage us to focus on the present moment,

GO FOR SMALL PORTIONS OF GREEN SMOOTHIES, CHIA PUDDING, OATS, FRUITS, ETC. BY TAKING THE MORNING TO EASE INTO THE DAY, YOU CAN SAVOR THE SIMPLE PLEASURES OF A LEISURELY BREAKFAST, RELISH THE WARMTH OF CUP OF COFFEE...





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and partake in morning serenity and spirituality. Problems don't melt away at night, but a fresh perspective is always waiting for us in the morning light. "Slow mornings have an air of mindfulness because it's actually not about what's next {in your day}—it's just about what's happening right now and doing something that feels good for you," says Shani A. Gardner, LCSW therapist from New York City.

Waking up early, connecting with nature, and having quiet time should be a priority, non-negotiable. Just be true to what allows your mind to be calmer and quieter. This could include preparing a favorite breakfast, listening to chirping birds, reading a book, writing in your journal, practicing yoga, or completing your morning cleaning routine.

A 2018 study found that when we start the morning believing the day is going to be grueling, it tends to manifest. Researchers discovered our morning mindset significantly impacts our energy, focus, memory, and creativity throughout the day.

The magic of a slow morning includes a clear mindset, a peaceful state of mind, increased energy and enthusiasm, and alleviation of anxieties about the day ahead. Slow mornings help build self-awareness and give you intentional time to be reflective and process how you are feeling emotionally and promote you as one of the most important people that you need to take care of.

A Slow Morning Routine Tips

Prepare the Night Before: Write your to-do list, prepare for a lecture or meeting as per your schedule, put together your bag and outfit, check the calendar, have a peek inside your fridge to ensure your morning vegetables are chopped and washed, and stored in dry containers. All this preparation can help save precious little moments in the morning and reduce morning anxiety.

**IF NOT EVERY DAY,
THEN ONCE OR TWICE
A WEEK, LIKE A
GRATITUDE JOURNAL
OR MORNING PAGES,
TO OVERCOME
NEGATIVITY OR
OVERLY CRITICAL
VIBES. IT ENHANCES
SELF-ESTEEM AND
CONFIDENCE.**



Make the Bed: A nicely made bed can transform the vibes of the whole bedroom and make it a cozy and comfortable place to partake in deep and delightful sleep.

Put Your Phone Aside: Don't check texts or work-related emails. Disable social media apps for certain hours in the morning. You don't have to avoid current events or neglect your emails, but to care for your mental well-being, you need to give yourself some time to acclimate to a new day before looking into things competing for your attention.

Wake Up on Time: Don't settle for oversleeping. Stretch yourself a little, leave the bed without surrendering to the temptation of a nap, open the blinds to let the light come in, and spend time in a pursuit. Anne Morrow Lindbergh, an American writer, aptly observes, "Arranging a bowl of flowers in the morning can give a sense of quiet in a crowded day—like writing a poem or saying a prayer." Then there can be ample time to do routine work comfortably.

Tidy Up Your Room: Before the start of the day.

Take Care of Your Body: Do breathwork exercises, stretch mindfully before your morning workout, practice yoga, or try out a five-minute meditation. It will definitely rejuvenate and recharge you. Devote some time to your own well-being and then begin the chores of home.

Everyone Has Different Needs: It's necessary for you to slow down and allow yourself to steal some time for yourself.

Hydrate Yourself: With a glass of lemon water. It is such an easy and quick health hack; you get a big amount of vitamin C which helps in digestion and is very refreshing.

Do a Journaling Exercise: If not every day, then once or twice a week, like a gratitude journal

or morning pages, to overcome negativity or overly critical vibes. It enhances self-esteem.

While Cooking Meals for the Day: Enjoy the aroma of spices and soups, savor the smell of your coffee brewing. Your positive vibes will add flavor to the food. All these spices and herbs not only make your food delicious but are incredible sources of antioxidants, help rev up your metabolism, and are mood-uplifting. Mindfully cook your meals.

Listen to Hymns: A five-minute prayer of gratitude will help in feeling pious and pure.

Eat a Healthy and Nourishing Breakfast: It would increase the chances of staying on the health track for the whole day. Go for small portions of green smoothies, chia pudding, porridge, oats, fresh herbs, and fruits, etc. By taking the morning to ease into the day, you can savor the simple pleasures of a leisurely

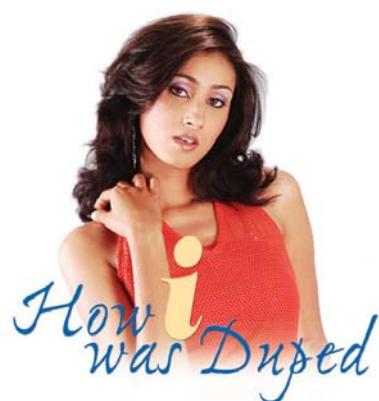
breakfast, relish the warmth of a steaming cup of coffee, and embrace the unhurried moments that set a tranquil tone for a beautiful day being unfolded.

Learn Time Management: You may be short of time or live in a joint family, yet spend some time in the morning to make yourself happy and keep in good health.



Well, we owe it to ourselves to enjoy our lives, find peace in whatever we do, and need to romanticize the little things. Wake up a little earlier and gift yourself the joy of slow mornings. It is not always about productivity as much as it is about reclaiming your time and energy and soothing your nervous system. Monday can be meditation day, Tuesday journaling, Wednesday a brisk morning walk. Mix and match as many of these practices as you like based on your body and mind's needs and your preferences and reap the harvest of calmer mornings and productive days. In one minute, you can change your attitude, and in that minute, you can change your entire day. Apt are the words of Lemony Snicket, an American author and musician: "Morning is an important time of the day because how you spend your morning can often tell you what kind of day you are going to have." Set the tone of the day on the right note and enjoy life's journey—a kaleidoscope.

We



BREACH OF TRUST

Three months ago, we had a lot of trouble with the water purifying system. We called the water technician for service and he checked our RO and insisted on us for AMC so that he would do a monthly check. We agreed and we were happy with his cost-effective service. He said he also supplies geysers, chimneys and other equipment. We needed a chimney

at that time so we told him to give us a chimney. Another day, he came and installed the chimney at a good price lower than market value. After 15 days, our RO had some problems, we called him, and he came the next day. He examined the machine and gave us an offer. He said you already did AMC of 4000, give me more 5000 I'll bring brand new RO with everything in my guarantee which covers part replacement as well. We got tempted by the offer and got it replaced. After One month, the filter choked again, we called him, hoping to come the next day but he did not come, we called him again he did not come this continued for 1 month.

It makes us frustrated and we checked the filter and found, no pipe connected to the valve of the filters and it was just an 'Empty box' filling unfiltered water. On the other hand, the chimney started making noise as it was not even a registered brand! He had duped us.

– Amrita

COSTLY TRAP

I had done my health insurance policy and it was due for renewal. One day, I got a call from an unknown number who claimed to be XYZ insurance firm. He confirmed my details and also my policy details which matched. To instil his confidence in me, he then shared the premium quote which matched the renewal notice I had already received in an email days ago. I told him I would decide later since I was comparing quotes.

He then said that since I had not claimed in over 4 years they could offer me a discount of 20% on the premium.

I said fine, please send me a revised quote and he immediately sent me an email that looked official with a renewal notice attached as well. He also sent me the payment link on WhatsApp. I clicked a link and lost Rs 80,000 and was shocked to learn that I was duped to renew my 10,000 premium insurance.

– Abhishek

INTERTWINED DESTINIES

Navigating the complexities of love, ego, and unspoken feelings. By Snigdha Jauhari

After having had their dinner at the airport itself, Atul and Ritu arrived quite late in the night at the hotel and went straight to their rooms.

The next day they reached the mountain resort by a cab and once again went straight to their rooms, emerging to meet at the lunch table.

They talked randomly as they ate their food.

After lunch, they came out of the resort and climbed a small hill.

The view was breathtaking. Both sat under a tree.

"Does this look normal to you?" Atul asked.

Baffled, Ritu looked around, "Yes, the scene around is all... normal."

Atul chortled, "I meant our coming on a holiday together."

"No," Ritu replied, shaking her head. "Why did you agree to come?"

"Your marriage has broken down. Mine... at the verge of it," Atul said. "All bookings were done." He sighed audibly, "...and I needed a break."

Ritu nodded.

They were quiet for a while.

"In all probability, Shatrujit is seeing someone," she said. "Is Sanjana too?" she asked.

Atul pursed his lips resignedly. "Maybe."

Again, quietness followed.

"Your marriage has broken down. Mine... at the verge of it,"
Atul said.



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"Look," Atul said, "you are welcome to stay on, but feel free to take the flight back anytime you wish to. As you know, you are under no obligation to stay."

Ritu nodded.

Three days later, as Ritu got into the car for the airport, Atul said, "You are a nice person, Ritu. I wish you all the best."

"Thank you," Ritu smiled. "I wish you good luck, too."

Due to the fact that her flight was delayed by a couple of hours, she arrived in her city late in the night.

Standing in the queue at the counter for a pre-paid taxi, tired, she gazed around and her eyes fell on her husband—arm in arm, cozying up—he and Sanjana!

She was too stupefied to think straight!

Then something triggered her, and she raised her phone, clicking non-stop!

By the time she had reached the counter, she had forwarded the photos to Atul.

She came home. Her mind was blank. "I will think tomorrow," she told herself and went in to take a shower.

As the water fell over her, she cried abundantly. Her tears mingling with the water from the shower and disappearing down the drain.

A week later, late at night, Shatrujeet walked in. Ritu was sitting on the sofa, reading.

He looked at Ritu and smiled.

Then he came forward and gave her a light hug.

Surprised, Ritu dropped her book and picked it up.

Shatrujeet went into the study, which he had converted into his bedroom. He had relinquished sleeping in their bedroom for the past six months.

Ritu went into hers. She switched off the lights.

Then she heard a sound and realised that the balcony door was being opened rather quietly.

She soundlessly got up from bed and tiptoed into the adjacent bathroom. The balcony was right outside of it.

"Our honeymoon got over too soon," she heard Shatrujeet speaking bitterly, into the phone.

Then, as a response from the other end, he said accusingly, "I am an egoist?! I am an egoist?! What about you?! Have you looked at yourself!?"

It seemed that there was a barrage of accusations from the other side because in response, Shatrujeet raised his voice and almost shouted, "Enough of this rubbish! Sanjana, you are most intolerable." Then she heard the phone click shut and his steps marching back into the house.

"You are a nice person, Ritu. I wish you all the best."



As the water fell over her, she cried abundantly. Her tears mingling with the water from the shower and disappearing down the drain. A week later, late at night, Shatrujeet walked in. Ritu was sitting on the sofa, reading.

Ritu remained crouched in the bathroom and walked out when she heard his door bang shut.

The next morning, Shatrujeet gave her a smile and murmured good morning as she—formally attired to join her new office—emerged from her room.

"Tea?" he asked her, once again giving her a smile.

"You can send the divorce papers to my office address. I will be shifting out of this house by evening," she replied.

Shatrujeet put his cup down and came a little nearer. "Look, Ritu," he said tentatively, "I know the last seven months of our marriage have... have not been exactly... good. But, we can start afresh?"

"Seven months out of eight months of being married," she said flatly.

"Yeah... whatever," he replied a bit impatiently. "But, there is always a future to make it better."

She looked straight at him. "Future is in love," she sighed. "Not in compromise."

"There is no compromise. Misunderstandings happen within marriage," he said, making his voice sound casual.

She gave him a hard look.

"I will send you the photos."

Saying so, she walked out with her luggage, closing the door on him.

Atul returned home the next afternoon. While on



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vacation, he had already made living arrangements for himself.

He went to Sanjana's house—which was his too till 10 days back—to collect his things.

However, at home, he found a weepy Sanjana.

"Oh! How I have missed you..." she sobbed, clinging to him.

Being an infinitely patient man, he endured nearly an hour of her fawning before showing her the photos.

Sanjana's face turned white. She then proceeded to give him explanations and loud protestations. But he was no longer interested.

Feeling tired, drained, and indifferent, he left the house, closing the door behind him.

A year later, Atul received an invitation for a wedding reception. Not having been in touch for a year, he was surprised to have received the invitation and decided to go.

He saw her standing on the dais with her new husband and a three-year-old child, who was excitedly receiving all the gifts on behalf of her parents, while her father and her new mother stood holding hands, smiling happily.

Atul congratulated them and handed over the gift to the little girl, much to the amusement of her father and her new mother.

It was a small party with only a few guests. After a while, like all guests, he too sat down to eat all by himself since he did not know anyone present there—except the bride!

"May I join you?" the bride asked laughing, "Or do

you want to romance your chicken biryani without interruption?"

"Be my guest, though technically I am your guest," Atul laughed.

They sat talking for some time.

"About a fortnight ago, I got to know from someone at Sanjana's previous office that she has migrated to the USA," he said. "As you know, her entire family is there."

Ritu nodded.

"And Shatrujeet," Atul continued, "shifted to Hyderabad. Has started a business there."

Again, Ritu nodded her head.

"Shatrujeet had called me," Atul said, "Tried to explain things from his perspective."

"I am in touch with no one," Ritu said complacently.

"On WhatsApp, Shatrujeet and I have exchanged a couple of messages in the last year—like happy new year, happy Diwali."

Just then Ritu's new daughter came dancing to her. Ritu smiled mirthfully at her little girl. "Here's to a new beginning, Atul," she said, smiling. "I wish the same to you."

"Thank you," Atul said, resuming his romance with chicken biryani.

Then he called out to Ritu, who was dancing with her little daughter and husband, "Besides chicken-rice, if you find a lady-nice for me, let me know," he said in a loud whisper.

Both Ritu and her husband smiled broadly, giving him a thumbs up.

We



Unexpected Bonding

I'm a working professional, working full-time in the Finance sector. Two years ago, I struggled for a job and to fulfil my financial need.

At that time, I was doing full-time and part-time gigs to cover the medical expenses of my hospitalised critical family member, but it was not sufficient. I called several relatives and friends, but no one helped me. I was distressed and looked up DMs scrolling through Instagram. There was a DM of the girl that I hardly know

who messaged me asking casually 'How are you'. We had known each other for less than a week and hardly interacted with each other, that day I poured all my thoughts to her about the day, she was listening to me and asked me how much I needed. I needed money desperately. But I still refused because I wouldn't trust a stranger myself and if in case, I won't be able to return it.

And so, when she insisted, we agreed on an amount and she sent it. I won't be able to forget her kindness, though I return her money after a month.

— Disha

Grateful thanks

I was working as an Intern in one of the known Recruitment firms. My responsibilities were to vet all resumes for respective IT positions and conduct phone interviews with shortlisted candidates. There

was a lady who was shortlisted for an interview, who was taking her written test for the vacancy. A while later, I went in to collect the paper and told her the results would be communicated if selected. She sat there, looking panicky. "Oh... Sorry, but I think I did one question wrong... I mean I know my answer is correct, but I think my work is wrong. She asked me to re-check once through my colleague. He checked and said that the answer was wrong.

She got panicked and said, "Oh no... did I fail the test?? Can I redo it? I-I want this job. Please?" She said that repeatedly and while I wanted to help her. Fortunately, within 48 hours, there were smiles. She aced both the test and the final interview. She sent me a long thank you email, though I didn't do anything but I won't be able to erase that sweet moment ever.

— Swikriti

My Family, My Friends and Me...



Q & A

AT 29, MY CLOSE FRIEND IS GOING through a tough divorce, and I'm struggling to provide the support she needs while balancing my own life. One particular instance was when she called me in the middle of the night, and I felt overwhelmed by her emotional needs. How can I best support my friend during this challenging time without losing my own balance?

Supporting a friend through a divorce can be emotionally taxing. It's crucial to set boundaries to maintain your own well-being while being there for her. Offer support by listening and providing practical help, like assistance with daily tasks or emotional encouragement. Encourage her to seek professional counseling if she hasn't already. Balancing support with self-care will help you sustain your own emotional health while being a good friend.

REACHING 45, I'VE FOUND MYSELF in the throes of a midlife crisis, questioning my choices and life's purpose. A recent school reunion stirred up reflections on paths not taken and comparisons with peers' achievements. How can I navigate this existential crossroads and redefine my goals for the next chapter of life?

Facing a midlife crisis involves introspection and goal-setting for the future. Reflect on your achievements and consider seeking guidance from a counselor or life coach to clarify your values and aspirations. Focus on personal growth opportunities, such as further education or hobbies that ignite passion. Embrace this transitional phase as a chance for self-discovery and redefine your life's purpose with renewed clarity and confidence.

ENGAGING PASSIONATELY IN environmental activism at 38 has been a calling that fuels my purpose. Witnessing firsthand the devastating impact of pollution on local wildlife was a catalyst for my commitment to conservation efforts. How can I continue to advocate effectively and inspire meaningful change within my community?

Engaging in environmental activism requires strategic planning and community involvement. Channel your passion into local initiatives or advocacy groups focused on sustainable practices and conservation efforts. Collaborate with like-minded individuals to amplify your impact and promote environmental stewardship within your community. Educate others on the importance of conservation through workshops or public outreach to inspire collective action towards a greener future.

AS A 34-YEAR-OLD MOTHER, MY parenting style clashes with that of my partner, leading to frequent disagreements. Recently, a heated argument over how to discipline our children made me question our approach to parenting. How can we reconcile our differences and establish a unified parenting strategy?

It's common for couples to have different parenting styles, which can lead to conflict. To address this, sit down with your partner to discuss your values and goals for parenting. Try to find common ground and agree on core principles that both of you can adhere to. Consider seeking the help of a family therapist who can provide strategies for aligning your approaches while respecting each other's perspectives. It's important to remember that consistency

and teamwork are key to effective parenting.

TRANSLATING INTO RETIREMENT at 65 has brought a mix of liberation and uncertainty. The struggle to find purpose and structure in daily routines has been a poignant realisation. How can I embrace this new phase of life with optimism, discover new passions, and stay fulfilled?

Transitioning into retirement involves adjusting to new routines and exploring personal interests. Create a retirement plan that includes financial stability and activities that bring fulfillment. Seek social connections through clubs or volunteer opportunities to maintain a sense of purpose and social engagement. Embrace this phase as an opportunity for self-discovery and personal growth, celebrating achievements and milestones along the way.

BATTLING IMPOSTOR SYNDROME at 34 has been a journey of self-discovery and resilience. Despite external recognition for achievements, inner doubts often cloud my confidence. How can I silence the inner critic, acknowledge my capabilities, and forge ahead with conviction in my professional journey?

Overcoming impostor syndrome requires recognising your achievements and challenging self-doubt with rational thinking. Keep a record of your successes and acknowledge your skills and qualifications. Seek support from mentors or counselors to gain perspective and build confidence in your abilities. Practice self-care and positive affirmations to combat negative self-talk, focusing on continuous learning and growth in your professional journey.

This column will tackle queries related to family, social environment and personality development.

Please address your queries to:

Woman's Era E-3, Jhandewala Estate,
New Delhi-110 055.
or log on to Womansera.com

Back To Nature

Rediscovering the serene joys of agriculture and rural living.

By Dr. Veena Adige

Are the minds of people changing? We seem to be tired of the fast life, the busy schedule, and the shortage of time for personal work. The evolution of Indians from farmers to businessmen to IT personnel has come a full circle, with some of the modern generation opting for agriculture and farming on a large scale. Even women are taking a great interest in farming, milking cows, planning farm produce, and exporting not only in India but also abroad.

A couple living in the US suddenly decided to come back to India and join the family business of agriculture near Bangalore. They had a successful career in Connecticut, the wife doing beautiful paintings commercially and the husband working in an IT company when the motherland called. They, with a small daughter in tow, left the US to settle down successfully and help in the family business back home. And they have no regrets. When nature calls, there is no option but to follow. The fresh air and sunlight, the solitude, far from the maddening crowds beckon, and many are tempted to join. Another example is of a top executive in a pharmaceutical company, retiring and setting up a farm as a full-time venture, ably and happily supported by his city-bred wife and daughter-in-law.





A couple living in the US suddenly decided to come back to India and join agriculture near Bangalore.

After a hectic year working round the clock, my daughter and son-in-law came to India to relax along with their almost college-going daughter and a teenaged son.

They shunned the cities and chose to go to a forty-acre Srinidhi farm near Nashik in Maharashtra.

Indulging In Nature's Beauty

Passing through villages and unpaved roads, we went. There was a comfort in it, far from the maddening crowd. The farmhouse was neatly fenced, and we approached excitedly. The big gates of the farmhouse opened into a beautiful driveway lined by awesome tree hedges, opening into a lovely farmhouse mansion. We received a warm welcome from six dogs wagging their tails, jumping, and with tongues lolling. Ornate doors opened into a beautiful traditional sculpture, and the home was surrounded by glass windows welcoming in the natural sunlight. A swing in the middle of the room is the centerpiece, and the home is decorated in a rustic farm-style fashion. Positive vibes emanate and give the visitors a grand welcome. Srinidhi is created with lots of love and affection.

The 40-acre farm contains grapes, pears, bell peppers, and other vegetables and fruits. The farm has sophisticated systems that drive watering, fertilisation, and futuristic plans to conserve water for year-round farming.

The US-born children were a bit wary of the mosquitoes, flies, and

WHEN NATURE CALLS, THERE IS NO OPTION BUT TO FOLLOW. THE FRESH AIR AND SUNLIGHT, THE SOLITUDE, FAR FROM THE MADDENING CROWDS BECKON, AND MANY ARE TEMPTED TO JOIN.

animals. But one round on the forty-acre farm changed their attitudes. They applied mosquito repellents, wore socks and shoes, and trudged to the cowshed to watch the cows being milked.

"It was a real experience," said the teenager. "We had only seen milk in cartons, but to see and taste the milk straight from the cows was such a pleasure. The milk tasted so good." They had always had pasteurised milk served through containers. Fruits and vegetables were seen on the shelves and not on plants.

They now picked the light green round pears from the trees, saw the grapes in bunches, and were impressed. They had only seen fruits in malls and markets, but to see them on the trees and plants was a real experience.

The loving dogs who jumped at them, the fresh vegetables plucked from the fields added to their growing appetites. They walked the rough terrain, ran around the dam being built, soaked in the light rain, and generally enjoyed themselves.



"We export most of our produce," said Vrinda, the city-bred girl who has taken an active interest in the farm. "Our capsicums go to the north, the grapes to vineyards, and the fruits to various places. I enjoy dealing with all this and love living on the farm." She is sometimes all alone in the sprawling farmhouse, which is beautifully decorated and filled with modern appliances. But she loves it. It is far from the maddening crowds of Mumbai, where her home is.

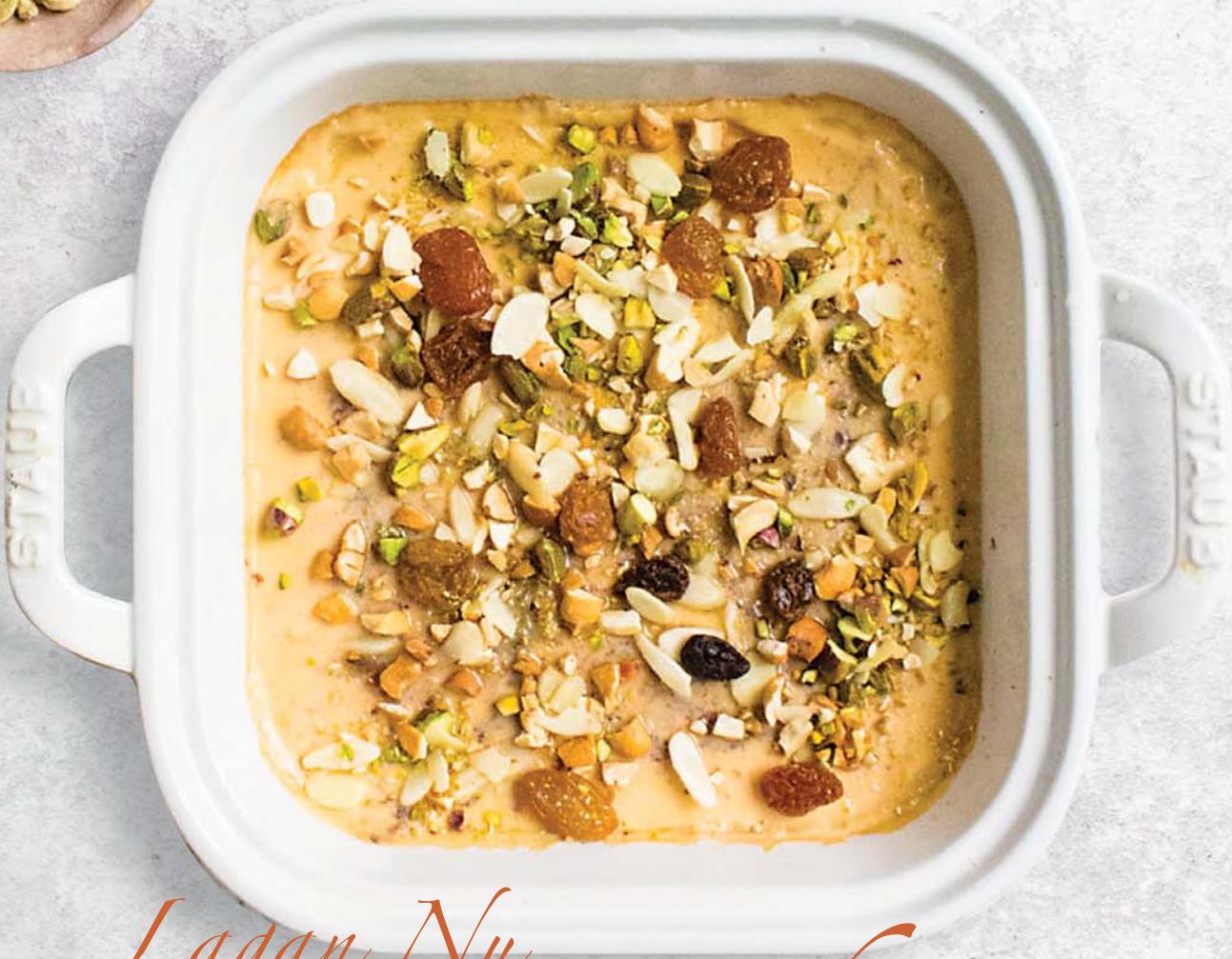
She sorts the fruits and vegetables, sees to their being branded and sent to their destinations. She makes pickles and jams, supervises the farming process—something which she has learned fairly late in life—but enjoys it thoroughly.

Her daughter-in-law, a dietitian and a healthy food advocate, suddenly changed tracks and is now also into farming.

"I am a pure Mumbai-born person," says Akshata. "All this is absolutely new to me, but I love it. The fresh air, the charming scenes, the quiet life with nature suits me and I love it."

There are many other cases like this where the urban class has gone in for agriculture as a career, and women supporting their partners actively. The round-the-clock busy schedule of today's younger generation, which has no time-life balance, has made them opt for a quieter life. Are we into a full circle now and going back to nature? To nature's treasures which are now a pleasure.

We



Lagan Nu Custard

Exploring the delights of parsi cuisine. By Delnaz Mehta

The Parsi community, a small but vibrant minority in India, descended from Persian Zoroastrians who migrated to India over a thousand years ago. Known for their distinct and flavourful cuisine, Parsis blend Persian, Iranian, and Gujarati influences into their culinary creations. Their cuisine features a variety of dishes, from sali boti to patrani machi, each bringing unique flavours to the table.

One of the most cherished desserts in Parsi cuisine is the *Lagan Nu Custard*, a dish often served at Parsi and Irani weddings. ‘*Lagan*’ means ‘wedding’ in Gujarati, and this luscious custard is a staple at celebratory events, including the Parsi New Year (Navroze). Unlike the classic caramel custard, *Lagan Nu Custard* boasts a unique taste and creamy texture that tantalizes the senses with every bite.

Here's a detailed recipe to help you create this rich, creamy dessert at home:

Ingredients

1 liter milk
1 can (400g) condensed milk
150 gms sugar
3 eggs
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon nutmeg powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cardamom powder
1 teaspoon vanilla essence
Mixed nuts (almonds, cashews, raisins, pistachios, etc.)
Butter for greasing

Preparation Time

Cooking time: 15 mins

Baking time: 20 to 25 minutes

Cooling time: 15 minutes

Method

Prepare the Milk Mixture:

In a non-stick pan, bring the milk to a gentle boil. Once boiled, stir in the condensed milk and sugar, creating a fragrant, sweet mixture. Continue stirring for a few minutes until the sugar dissolves completely.

If you prefer a sweeter custard, add more sugar to your taste. Turn off the flame and let the mixture cool for 15 minutes, allowing the sweet aroma to fill your kitchen.

Prepare the Egg Mixture: In a separate bowl, beat the eggs until smooth. Add the nutmeg and cardamom powder along with the vanilla essence, which will infuse the custard with a warm, inviting aroma. Beat the mixture until it turns frothy, ensuring a light and airy texture.

Combine Mixtures: Ensure the milk mixture has cooled to room temperature. If it's still hot, the eggs will scramble when added. Once cooled, gradually add the egg mixture to the milk mixture, stirring continuously, creating a rich and smooth custard base.

Prepare for Baking: Preheat the oven to 180°C (356°F). Grease a baking dish with butter. Pour the combined mixture into the greased



ONE OF THE MOST CHERISHED DESSERTS IN PARSI CUISINE IS THE LAGAN NU CUSTARD, A DISH OFTEN SERVED AT PARSI AND IRANI WEDDINGS. 'LAGAN' MEANS 'WEDDING' IN GUJARATI, AND THIS LUSCIOUS CUSTARD IS A STAPLE AT CELEBRATORY EVENTS, INCLUDING THE PARSI NEW YEAR (NAVROZE).

baking dish, its creamy texture already promising a delightful treat. Sprinkle your choice of nuts on top, adding a crunchy contrast to the silky custard.

Bake the Custard: Place the dish in the preheated oven. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes at 180°C, or until the top layer turns a delicious golden-brown color, filling the air with a tempting aroma.

Serve

You can serve Lagan Nu Custard warm or chilled, allowing the creamy, sweet flavours to melt in your mouth. It can also be refrigerated and stored for a few days, making it a perfect treat for family gatherings or a self-indulgent snack.

Tips To Keep In Mind

You can adjust the sweetness by adding or reducing the sugar quantity. Garnish with additional nuts or a sprinkle of saffron for an extra touch of luxury.

This delicious, creamy custard with its fragrant spices and crunchy nuts will not only delight your taste buds but also impress your guests with its rich, exotic flavors. Enjoy this traditional Parsi dessert with your loved ones and experience a taste of the rich cultural heritage of the Parsi community. The blend of aromatic spices, creamy texture, and sweet flavours will make this dessert an unforgettable experience. Happy cooking!

The Threaded Alchemy

Puja Nayyar's Closet, established in May 2018, offers a fashion line that blends elegance, style, and affordability with a commitment to sustainability. Known for its unique prints, fine laces, and intricate gotta work, the brand has garnered a global clientele, shipping worldwide to countries like Canada, USA, UK, UAE, and Singapore.

A striking fusion of scarlet red and regal purple, this ensemble is your seasonal must-have, with an organza dupatta and an exquisitely detailed border.





Immerse yourself in the romance of red with these vibrant Bandhani ensembles, crafted to celebrate the joy and colour of every traditional occasion.



This yellow cotton silk kurta, adorned with intricate embroidery on the neckline, sleeves, and hem, paired with an ivory salwar and organza dupatta, exudes festive elegance and timeless sophistication.





A captivating geometric design in muted gold and silver on rose pink mul cotton, paired with sleek straight pants, makes this ensemble an effortless showstopper for the season.



Step into the festive season with our luxurious fuchsia pink and red tie-dye ensemble, featuring intricate zardozi work and a deep red dupatta that radiates glamour.



This effortlessly charming floral blue print is styled into a long kurta with matching pants, complemented by a dreamy, flowy dupatta.

Courtesy:
Puja Nayyar's Closet
 @pujanayarscloset

Good Morning...

Friends

So sacred a relationship friendship is that it flourishes sans any selfishness.

By Suvarni Mohan

Cataract surgery was done on my right eye on a certain day and as the doctor advised, it was a game of an hour. I didn't think it necessary to inform all my friends about it. Then I had been advised rest for 15 days, and to keep away from mobile, TV and fire. I found it uncomfortable to use the mobile and hence my routine of "good morning" to my friends skipped that day and on some subsequent days.

My thinking was that nobody would be caring for my good morning wishes if I missed it for one day. But no, I was wrong. My true friend was anxious to know the reason why I skipped the routine. Whether I was okay or not. I had been asked to be in contact regularly without shooting up one's blood pressure.



So friends, be in touch with your friends and family always, who knows, whether you reside in their minds or hearts. A little bit of silence of yours may force them to think negatively about you, especially when you are a senior citizen.

Very recently I lost my hubby who used to send “good morning” messages daily to all his friends. One peculiar thing I noticed in his mobile was that when his wishes stopped, nobody with only rare exceptions, tried to enquire about his wellbeing or why his messages suddenly stopped, but he was receiving their usual wishes even after several days until I conveyed them the sad news.

One person on receiving the news of his demise, talked to my daughter, got all the details of his last rites and the very next morning, sent a big bouquet with laughing & funny emoji!! I could not judge what kind of friendship of that person was!!!! Because I was not ready or not prepared to receive funny and laughing emojis at that time.

Friendship messages with emojis should convey the soothing messages but it should not hurt anyone's feelings to any extent. When I lost my husband, I was no more a “suhaagan” but some send me flowers or garlands of mogra or jasmine that we used to put on hair, even after knowing the sad news, whereas a widow is not entitled to wear flowers as per Hindu tradition. (though it is up to you whether to adopt this tradition or not.)

Morning Messages

A “good morning” message is not only a simple message but also a messenger to convey about your well-being.

Whether you be punctual or not, at least be attentive to message once in a week or call in a quarter/year will be sufficient to get them noticed.

He or she will be felt important if you call them to wish on certain occasions like their birthdays, new year, or any festivals. Friendship is not related to any blood relationship

but related to minds and feelings of hearts. It is co-related to matching of ideas. My friendship with a friend is as old as 43 years, while some are attached with me for more than 24 to 31 years.

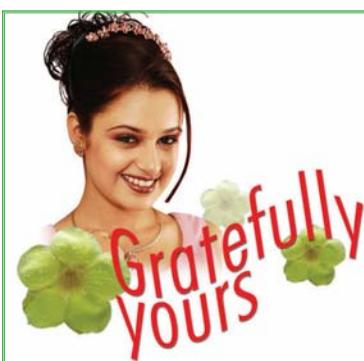
I feel myself as the most reserved one and I can't make friendship with every one. But once I treat someone as my friend, I know, how to manage the friendship.

Friendship is such a sacred relationship that it flourishes without any selfishness. The relationship that Lord Krishna had with his friend Sudama.

Lord Rama maintained with Sugriva. The great warrior Karna maintained with his friend Duryodhana. We may not be divine ones like Ram, Krishna or Karna but may be good friends as far as we can.

As the saying goes, even if some untoward incident happens in anybody's life, it is the friend circle that reaches timely at the spot while relatives or other family members reach only at the later hours.

We



HEARTWARMING HELP

In the last week of May, I was returning home from work and I had an accident. People rushed towards me and parked my vehicle. I was sitting on the footpath with my leg bleeding profusely and my mind completely blank. People were telling me to drink water, looking for a bandage and some were just staring at me. The pain was unbearable, but I told everyone that I was fine. There was a woman in her late thirties who calmly explained to me that I should be taken to the

hospital as my leg needed treatment. She volunteered to help me out with arranging my all valuables and kept the key of the vehicle in my bag. She then parked my vehicle safely in the parking area and took me to a nearby hospital in her car. She asked me where I was staying and coincidentally she stayed in the same area. So she spoke to my parents, told them not to worry and that she would drop me home safely. In the hospital, she never left my side and paid all the bills too. When my dad tried to pay her back, she refused to accept any money and said she was just helping a person in need. I can't forget her kindness and empathy ever.

– Kanisk

REUNION RELIEF

I was on an expedition trek to Uttarakhand with my 10-member team. One day, in the evening due to heavy rain I was disoriented and separated from my team due to my low vision. When I cleared my blurred vision, through rain drops sliding through my glasses there I couldn't

find anyone beside me. I shouted and cried for help but none of them was nearby. Lost in rugged mountains for five days, I feel exhausted and restless. I was weak, my legs were trembling and hands got bruises and were bleeding. I was getting drowsy, due to longing for drinking water. Within one km, I saw a village where a local man took pity on me.

He drew makeshift maps to help me reach my team and carried a donkey as our guide. Through the treacherous paths and dense forests, I finally went onto the ridge. He gave me his cellphone and I dialled one of the crew. I thanked him for his kindness and generosity, if he wouldn't be there for rescue, I could have lost in dense forest and literally died there. In a short while, my frantic crew spotted and reached me.

Well, finally tears flowed as I once again thanked him. He at last said ‘Take care, may god bless you’.

– Payal Ahuja

THE UNSUNG SUPER LADIES

The challenges faced and overcame by army wives. By Swikriti Swarnkar

The glint of batches, the camouflaged pattern on uniform armored with ammunition, and the inbuilt discipline system are the persona of the Army men. This sophistication of the ‘fauji’ regime made their families adapt to routine. The wives of the Army-men are talented, versatile, adaptable, creative, innovative, progressive, articulate, brave, and courageous. Confident in her strength, she skillfully manages her responsibilities and thrives in an environment without her man, who is on the frontiers.

Well, I wanted to recall the story of one, who is the wife of an army officer, who shared her experience of marrying him. She said, “Marrying an army officer is challenging. Despite having heard the challenges of marrying an army officer, experiencing life firsthand is entirely a different ball game. We do travel a lot owing to the postings every two-and-a-half years. I got a chance to visit a remote village in Arunachal Pradesh right after the wedding. Staying in a temporary accommodation settled amidst the lush green hills was an adventurous experience after having spent my entire life in Mumbai.”

She added, “Packing and unpacking is tough. I feel like a snail, carrying my house around. I don’t own furniture; my house consists of clothes, appliances, and kitchenware.



With each posting, I have gotten better at packing. Friends at any station become family; parting with them is heartbreak. This life distances you from your real family but gifts you a proxy family."

The army wives are unsung heroes, quietly standing by their partners, providing unwavering support, and shouldering the responsibility of caring for their families in their absence.

Loving him without any conditions, knowing that to him his 'first love' will always be the country...

The role of army wives is most overlooked as they serve as essential frontline mental health support. The kind of life she lives is hard. Though life seemed tough, there was ample adventure.

**ARMY WIVES
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Adaptability Challenge

I came across a personal blog by Anita Sud, who is an army wife, and her blog caught my attention. She quoted in her blog that, "The Indian soldier fights and sacrifices his life for the three N's: Naam, Namak, and Nishan. These represent his name, his loyalty to the motherland, and most importantly, the flag of his country." She truly resonates that being a spouse of a military man made her aware of the love, care, and sense of pride officers exhibited.

She also talked about how adaptively she converted challenges into opportunities, writing, "Each posting had its challenges, and I soon learned to deal with them. The biggest hurdle would be not getting appropriate accommodation on arrival. Initially, we would get a single room in a mess or if lucky, two rooms for a couple of months. I learned the skill of doing up the most barren place artistically, as our friends from the fraternity would drop by, and our social life kicked off from day one."

Life of the army men and their wives is portrayed through the lens of sacrifice and hardship, but there is another side of the narrative which is their resilience, camaraderie, and deep fulfillment. A notice of deployment and training requirements is part of military lives, and army wives with shared experience develop emotional strength but also in handling day-to-day responsibilities independently. Thus, they build bonds that are everlasting by mutual understanding and empathy.

Celebrating Memories

In the uncertainties and hardship, army wives cherish the moments of celebration and joy – especially homecoming is a heartwarming occasion, where families reunite to mark with tears of joy and overwhelming relief. Even the little events and celebrations become a lasting memory for both. After all, these reunion memories are not just personal but the collective celebration of togetherness. They find little joy and happiness through



video calls, sometimes letters during deployment, or attending military ceremonies, and participating in community events strengthen the sense of belonging and bring a sense of commitment. And also, unwavering support of each other sustains them through difficult times. They remain empathetic, as they create homes that are not defined physically but by love and support.

Pursuing Dreams And Interests

To remain engaged, army wives actively pursue career interests or something related to their personal growth. They either learn and spend time refining their hobby interest or establish remote work careers to contribute financially to their families. Some take military benefits and expand their horizon by joining educational pursuits and

further studies to have professional expertise. Amidst the constant posting and travel, they find their way to either gain corporate, entrepreneurial skills, or hobbies.

One of the real stories I remember is of Payal Talwar and Priyanka Kumar, army wives and leaders of the corporate training group WINGS (Women In Need for Grander Success), which was aimed at helping talented women in remote areas find work. Till now they have empowered them with skills and knowledge and also WINGS has helped train the staff of companies like Jindal Steel, Punj Lloyd, HCL, TATA, and Matrix, among others, as well as teachers of schools like the Army School, HD Goenka, Ryan International, and Aster Public School.

The story of Bandita Bose, who is the wife of a fighter pilot, also established her business of selling décor items. She creates bespoke decoupage décor items and sells them through her Facebook page. Her brand named – Unchainedreamz creates an assortment of products from jewelry and tissue boxes to trays and name plates that cost anywhere from Rs 250 to 1,600. Though the ordered items are customized, it takes several days for preparation and later on it is delivered. They became successful entrepreneurs over time and

understand the importance of their roles in enabling partners to serve their country with dedication and focus.

I wish to share the story of the spouse of a senior service officer, Maria Duckworth who has successfully transformed her passion into a profession. She is a self-taught choreographer who has organised several dance productions across service bases. She teaches salsa, jive dancing, hip-hop, and Bollywood to service officers and their wives at various defensc institutes. She mentioned that she happily donates 10 per cent of her earnings to a

DESPISE FACING SEVERAL CHALLENGES, THEY MANAGE HOUSEHOLDS, RAISE CHILDREN, AND MAINTAIN A CALM AND STABLE ENVIRONMENT.
THEY ALSO PROVIDE CONSTANT SUPPORT AND COMFORT TO THEIR CHILDREN AND LOVED ONES AS THEY ARE THE BACKBONE OF MILITARY FAMILIES.

welfare organisation. She also expressed that she dances not for money, but to spread joy and a sense of giving.

Supporting Families And Children

Since they experience multiple deployments and training, it makes them flexible to adjust to the army regime. Despite facing several challenges, they manage households, raise children, and maintain a calm and stable environment. They also provide constant support and comfort to their children and loved ones as they are the backbone of military families.

Their children know what is expected of them daily, despite the absence of their fathers. Army wives are resilient, adaptable, supportive and understanding. They shoulder the responsibilities and continue to maintain strong family bonds ensuring their families thrive amidst uncertainty. They became shining examples of courage, dedication, and inspiration to communities as they found their ways to thrive and pursue their interests and hobbies.

In an interview with TOI, Rita JP Singh, wife of Lt General JP Singh, called the army life ‘unmatchable, unparalleled, and unique’. She further elaborated on her experience of thirty-five years of marriage, saying, “It teaches you discipline. This army life is like a structured finishing school that prepares a young army wife to be a confident and independent lady to deal with the upheavals of life.”

A Blogger and Army man’s wife, Anamika Nandedkar, shared her experience of fulfilling responsibilities at home, saying, “I settled into the role of a full-time housewife, leaving behind a steady career. I must confess that I enjoyed every moment of the first six months. Having worked as a journalist for many years, covering sporting events around the country, I finally had time to read that book and cook that dish—and do all the other things that I had kept waiting for a long time. I felt like a rich person amongst all my



colleagues, having the one thing they did not have—free time!"

Community Services

Whenever a military family moves to a new base and starts anew in an unfamiliar place, the challenge posed for army wives is to start everything new from scratch. It is all about integrating into a new environment to build new relationships and extend the network.

One of the defining aspects of army wives' lives is the strong sense of community they build wherever duty calls. Military life often entails frequent relocations, which means uprooting lives and starting anew in unfamiliar places. However, these transitions are made easier through the bonds army wives form with one another. These relationships go beyond mere friendship—they become lifelines during times of separation and uncertainty.

When a military family moves to a new base, army wives are quick to reach out and welcome newcomers into their fold. Not only is this camaraderie a source of comfort but also a practical support network. They share advice on local schools, housing options, and community resources, helping each other navigate the challenges of settling into a new environment. Through shared experiences of deployments, training exercises, and the daily realities of military life, army wives forge bonds that are strengthened by mutual understanding and empathy. They celebrate milestones together, whether it's the return of a deployed spouse or the birth of a child during a deployment. These moments of joy are amplified by the knowledge that they are surrounded by others who truly comprehend the unique circumstances of military life.

The military community plays a crucial role in the lives of army wives. Through support groups, social events, and online forums, they form deep bonds with others who understand their unique circumstances. These connections provide not only emotional support but also practical



SHE IS THE EMBODIMENT OF BRAVERY AND COURAGE, WORKING TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE NATION BY UPHOLDING THE ISSUES AFFECTING WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND OTHER SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

assistance during times of need. Whether it's organising care packages for deployed soldiers or celebrating milestones together, the camaraderie among army wives fosters a sense of belonging and solidarity that is essential for their well-being.

Conclusion

An army wife is reckoned as a lady who is living a life of privilege, comfort, respect, and honour. Do people see the hard work, anxiety, and sacrifice that are a significant part of being an army wife? She is the

embodiment of bravery and courage, working to contribute to the nation by upholding the issues affecting women, children, and other social problems. She is always gripped with the fear of losing her husband if she learns about a terrorist attack, violent disturbance, or, worst of all, if a war breaks out. The phone assumes the role of her closest companion, and her husband's well-being invariably occupies her thoughts. The love for the nation is real.

Invariably, Rita JP Singh, the wife of Lt. General JP Singh, also described Army life as incomparable, exceptional, and unique in every sense. Amidst uncertainties, the moments of celebrating, living, and enjoying for a short time became a priceless, sweet chapter of what is called life. There is nothing ordinary about military life. The excitement of it is part of military wives, who wait patiently for their husbands to return, compile lengthy lists of cherished items and eagerly anticipate their return from duty, bearing treasured gifts thus, fulfilling their dreams, career interests and hobbies parallelly.

Personal Problems



I'M A 33-YEAR-OLD MARKETING professional, and despite my experience and qualifications, I've been struggling to secure a new job after several months of searching. Receiving rejection emails or not hearing back from employers after interviews has been disheartening. An incident that stands out is when I reached the final interview stage for my dream job but missed selection ultimately. Maintaining motivation and refining my job search strategy is essential for landing a new role that aligns with my career goals. How can I stay resilient, improve my job

search approach, and secure a fulfilling position in my field?

Tailor your resume and cover letter for each application, highlighting relevant achievements and skills. Leverage your network by reaching out to contacts for referrals and informational interviews. Enhance your online presence by optimising your LinkedIn profile and showcasing your work portfolio. Stay updated on industry trends and participate in relevant forums and groups. Consider working with a career coach to refine your approach and boost your confidence. Perseverance and a strategic approach will lead you to a fulfilling role.



I'M A 37-YEAR-OLD TEAM LEADER, and I'm facing challenges in resolving conflicts and improving collaboration among team members with diverse personalities and work styles. Miscommunication, differing opinions on project approaches, and personal conflicts have created tension within the team. An incident that highlighted these challenges was when a project deadline was missed due to disagreements among team members.

Building a cohesive and productive team is critical for achieving our goals. How can I facilitate effective conflict resolution, foster teamwork, and enhance collaboration among my team members?

Resolving conflicts and improving collaboration requires active facilitation. Foster an open communication culture where team members feel comfortable sharing their perspectives. Address conflicts promptly and impartially, focusing on finding common ground and solutions. Encourage team-building activities to strengthen relationships and trust.

Provide training on conflict resolution and effective communication. Set clear expectations and goals to align the team's efforts.

I'M A 42-YEAR-OLD PARENT AND caregiver for elderly parents, and I struggle to balance caregiving responsibilities with my career and personal life. Juggling medical appointments, household tasks, and emotional support for both my children and elderly parents is overwhelming. An incident that underscored these challenges was when I had to take time off work unexpectedly to care for my parent after a health crisis. Maintaining my own well-being while fulfilling caregiving responsibilities is essential for long-term sustainability. How can I effectively manage multiple roles and responsibilities without compromising my health, career, or relationships?

Create a schedule that allocates time for work, caregiving, and personal activities. Delegate tasks to other family members or consider hiring professional help if possible. Communicate your needs and boundaries with your employer to explore flexible work arrangements. Join support groups for caregivers to share experiences and gain insights. Regularly take time for self-care activities to recharge. Balancing multiple roles requires proactive planning and support to maintain your well-being and effectiveness.

I'M A 35-YEAR-OLD PROFESSIONAL who recently lost a close family member. The grief and emotional strain have affected my focus and performance at work. Last week, I missed an important project deadline because I was unable to concentrate due to the emotional burden.

I want to cope with this loss while maintaining my professional responsibilities. How can I manage my grief and continue performing well at work during this difficult time?

It's important to give yourself permission to grieve. Communicate with your employer about your situation and explore options for flexible work arrangements, such as temporary reduced hours or remote

work, to allow yourself time to heal.

Consider seeking support from a grief counselor or joining a support group where you can share your feelings and receive guidance. Gradually ease back into your work routine, focusing on small tasks before tackling larger projects. Taking care of your emotional well-being will help you regain focus and maintain your professional responsibilities over time.

I'M A 29-YEAR-OLD FREELANCE graphic designer, and I've been struggling with financial mismanagement. Despite having a steady stream of clients, I often find myself running short on funds due to irregular income and poor budgeting. Last month, I had to borrow money from a friend to cover essential bills because I didn't track my expenses properly. I'm worried about maintaining financial stability and planning for the future. How can I improve my financial management skills to ensure I have a stable income and avoid running into financial trouble?

It's crucial to develop a more structured approach to managing your irregular income. Start by creating a detailed budget that accounts for both fixed and variable expenses. Track your income and expenses meticulously using apps or spreadsheets to avoid surprises. Allocate a portion of your income to savings each time you receive payment, treating it as a non-negotiable expense.

Consider setting up an emergency fund to cover essential bills during lean months. Additionally, explore ways to diversify your income, such as offering additional services or seeking out more stable clients.

I'M A 34-YEAR-OLD MARKETING executive, and I've been experiencing harassment from a colleague who constantly undermines my contributions and makes inappropriate comments. Recently, during a team meeting, this colleague belittled my presentation in front of everyone, which made me feel humiliated and disrespected.

I want to address this issue

professionally and ensure a respectful work environment. How can I confront this harassment while protecting my career and well-being?

Document every instance of inappropriate behaviour and gather any supporting evidence, such as emails or witness accounts. Schedule a private conversation with the colleague to address their behaviour directly, calmly, and assertively. Express how their actions affect you and your work, and set clear boundaries for future interactions.

If the behaviour continues, escalate the issue to HR or your supervisor, providing the documented evidence. It's also beneficial to seek support from trusted colleagues or mentors who can offer advice and stand by you.

I'M A 40-YEAR-OLD SENIOR ANALYST, and I've been facing challenges navigating office politics. I recently discovered that my promotion was delayed due to behind-the-scenes maneuvering by a colleague who wanted the same position. This has left me feeling frustrated and uncertain about my standing in the company.

I want to advance in my career without getting enmeshed in office politics. How can I navigate these dynamics and position myself for growth and recognition in my role?

Navigating office politics requires strategic positioning. Focus on building strong relationships with key stakeholders and demonstrating your value through consistent, high-quality work output. Seek out opportunities to collaborate with colleagues across departments, which can help increase your visibility and reputation.

While it's important to be aware of office politics, avoid getting directly involved. Instead, focus on your long-term goals and align your actions with the organisation's objectives. Regularly communicate your achievements and aspirations to your manager to ensure you're on their radar for future opportunities.

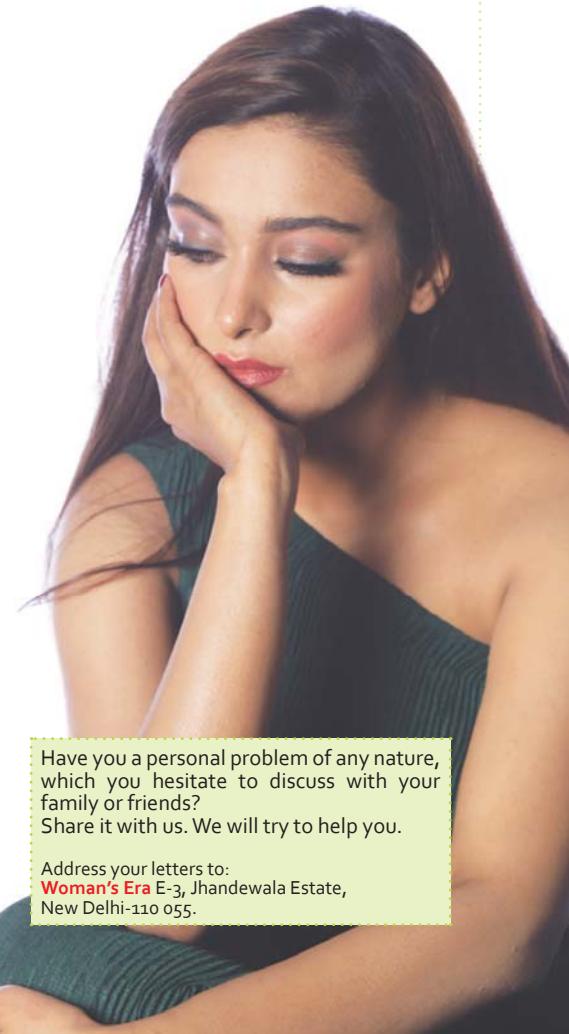
I'M A 27-YEAR-OLD TEACHER WHO also works part-time as a tutor to make ends meet. Juggling both jobs has led to exhaustion and a lack

of time for personal activities. An incident that highlighted the strain was when I had to cancel a planned family gathering because of overlapping job commitments.

I need to find a way to balance my responsibilities and avoid burnout. How can I manage multiple jobs effectively while ensuring I have time for rest and personal life?

Prioritise tasks based on urgency and importance, and set clear boundaries between your teaching and tutoring responsibilities. Consider reducing your workload by delegating or dropping less crucial tasks.

Create a weekly plan that includes dedicated time for work, rest, and personal activities. Communicate your availability clearly to both your employers and loved ones to avoid conflicts. Regularly reassess your workload and adjust as needed to prevent burnout. By managing your time effectively, you'll be able to fulfill your responsibilities while still enjoying your personal life.



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THE HAND OF DESTINY

When a desperate struggle turns into a new beginning... By Kalpana M Naghnoor

It was an unusual brumal morning; Parimala watched her daughter, Jaya, writhe in pain. Jaya was not due for another two months. Parimala's eyes filled with tears as she watched helplessly. She wasn't financially ready for this moment. Parimala stared at her husband's photograph, a small one.

She would, without fail, adorn it with a flower daily, which she would pluck from one of the gardens in the houses she worked. She had money to light the *Agarbatti* (*incense stick*) a year ago, but now penury had shadowed her sentiment. Had her husband been alive, she would have been more than able to care for her daughter.

Good people God took soon. She rued in her mind, recollecting the day his friends had brought her husband's body home after the hospital had declared him dead. He was an electrician and had died on the job.

The company owner paid them compensation, and Parimala continued working as domestic help in several houses. She and her daughter were doing fine, except they were sad that they had lost a dear family member.

Parimala's eyes filled with tears as she watched helplessly.

Jaya studied and got a job in a pizza outlet as a cashier, where she met Ravi, the floor manager and then began her downfall.

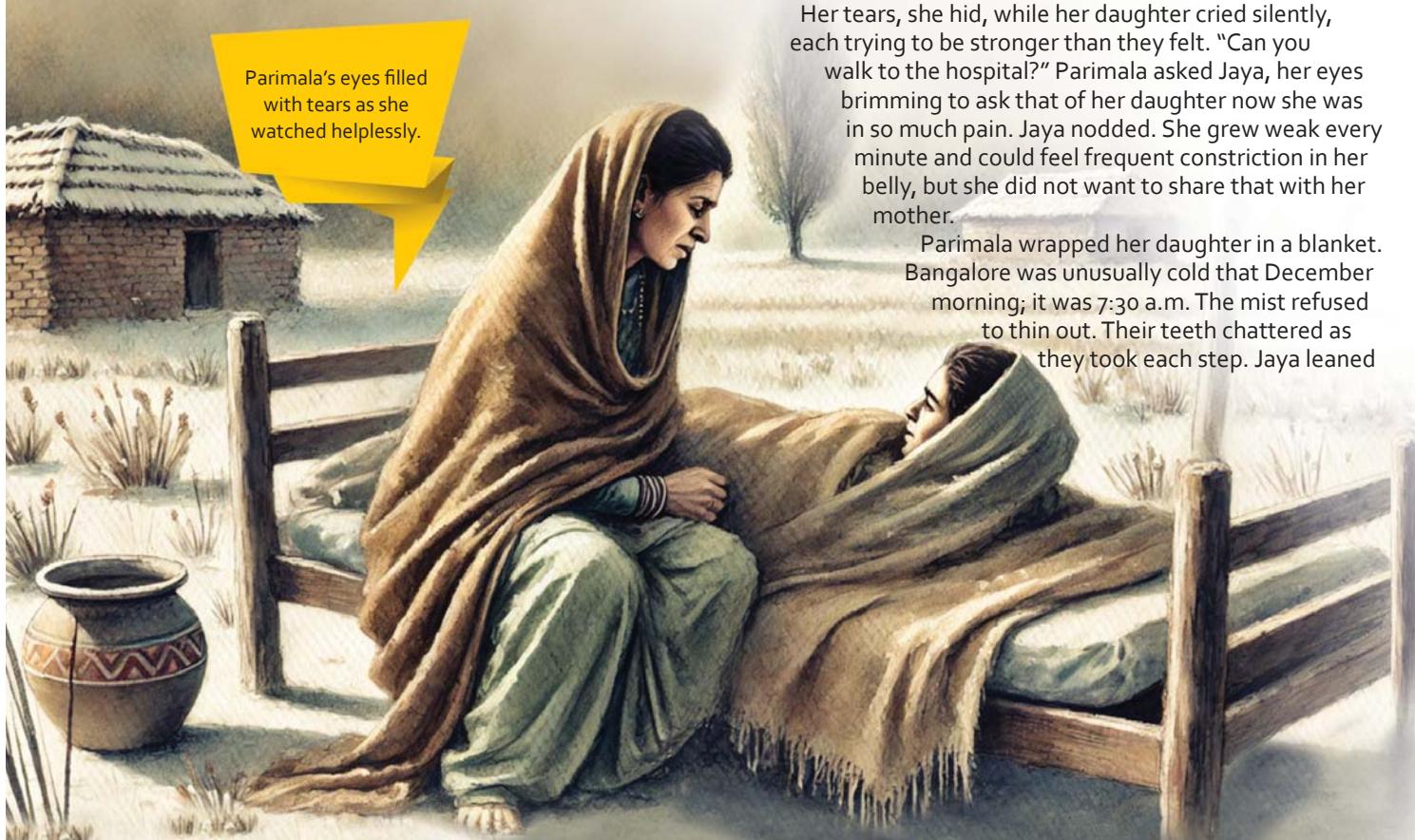
She eloped with him, and they married in a temple but did not get the marriage registered. Ravi disappeared even after he knew Jaya was expecting their child. Parimala had banked the money she had received as compensation after her husband's death in a fixed deposit. That deposit Ravi had forced her to break, and he took it all on one pretence or another.

Then, he just left without a word one day. Parimala approached Ravi's parents, but they refused to help find Ravi and acknowledge the marriage. It was now three months since the lad had left.

Parimala knew she would have to take her daughter to the hospital, but she had no money. She checked every place in the tiny house she lived in for stray cash that might have slipped under the only mattress or remained in the *dubha* where she had kept some; she shook her head; it was dry!

Her tears, she hid, while her daughter cried silently, each trying to be stronger than they felt. "Can you walk to the hospital?" Parimala asked Jaya, her eyes brimming to ask that of her daughter now she was in so much pain. Jaya nodded. She grew weak every minute and could feel frequent constriction in her belly, but she did not want to share that with her mother.

Parimala wrapped her daughter in a blanket. Bangalore was unusually cold that December morning; it was 7:30 a.m. The mist refused to thin out. Their teeth chattered as they took each step. Jaya leaned



on her mother, and the walk was turning into an arduous one. Silently from nowhere, an autorickshaw rolled by, taking advantage of the winding downslope of the road. "Kidhar jana?" the driver asked. Parimala shook her head, too weary from the situation. She did not have the energy even to say no!

"Arre bhai, kidhar jana?" the driver asked again. Autorickshaw drivers were persistent when they wanted savaari.

"Arre Bhaya, leave us alone!" Parimala said, her voice quivering.

"Hello Madam, hum puche, kidhar jana?"

Parimala stopped as anger took the stage in her mind when the driver got down from the autorickshaw and persuaded her and her daughter into the vehicle. He said nothing and began driving in the direction of the closest hospital. Parimala slumped from the events, and she had no energy to make the point that she could not afford the fare.

They entered the gate, and Parimala was surprised because she had not seen this particular hospital before, which was built behind the Masjid, covered by remarkable trees and felt colder now under them.

"Kareem Bhai!" a male nurse addressed him.

"Inko help Karo Bhai," the auto driver Kareem told the nurse. The nurse nodded, and he called out to others, and in no time, Jaya was in the emergency room, and doctors were attending to her. She could not remember the last time someone had helped her out of the blue.

Dr. Nilima Reddy was annoyed amidst her crises and the drift in her life about why the medical board wanted her and a team to visit this hospital to check if they were working as per the regulations. Of course, this was routine where new hospitals were concerned, and all hospitals were thus reviewed periodically.

They did not have an obstetrics and gynaecology department here. What would she assess? They got out of the vehicle and entered the hospital, and there was none to receive them. The invigilating team of doctors waited. Nilima spotted Parimala.

"Parimala?" Nilima went toward her. The woman looked near death, and fear gripped her. The same Parimala had served her delicious food indulgently when Nilima had visited her friend Gayatri. Parimala had worked for Gayatri for almost fifteen years. Nilima knew because they were close friends. Gayatri had to move to America because her husband had died, and her son wanted her to stay with him. Gayatri had settled Parimala well before she left.

Parimala stared at Nilima. It took her moments to



"Arre bhai, kidhar jana?" the driver asked again. Autorickshaw drivers were persistent when they wanted savaari. "Arre Bhaya, leave us alone!" Parimala said, her voice quivering. "Hello Madam, hum puche, kidhar jana?"

recognise Nilima Amma, especially because her mind was in turmoil. Her daughter desperately needed medical attention, and here they were by the mercy of God and yet how would she afford the treatment?

"Amma?" was she seeing right? Was this Gayatri Madam's friend?

"Of course! Parimala, it's me! I can never forget you. You worked for my best friend and fed me the best cutlets. How are you?"

"Amma..." Parimala tried to explain her situation, and words eluded her. She was overwrought by the predicament she was in. She was ashamed that domestic staff always found a way to elicit money from employers and employer's friends, and she wasn't that sort of person!

"I'm fine, Amma," she said.

A doctor approached them. "We cannot help you," she explained to Parimala. "We do not have the facility your daughter needs. You will have to take her to another hospital. This is the bill. As soon as you pay, we will discharge her. She needs immediate medical attention. So, hurry up and pay, and we will complete the formalities."

Parimala took the bill. She could read numbers, and she was astonished. She could not pay this amount and then take her daughter to the next hospital! She forgot she was talking to Nilima. In a daze, she walked away, went outside and sat on the steps. How had they reached this situation? She and her husband had carefully planned their life. They had savings earned by sheer hard work. Then providence had struck a blow; her husband had died.

Ravi had come like a hurricane into Jaya's life, ruining a lifetime of savings. She recalled that three months ago, a group of men chased Ravi, and he had come inside their tiny house to hide. Those men had broken down the door and dragged Ravi out.

The consequence of that incident was paying those men what Ravi owed them and repairing the door. That was the last bit she had. When they had run dry, Ravi disappeared. Now, what could she do?

"Kya hua?"

Parimala stared at Kareem. He was still here! That made her cry. She wept because something about his presence comforted her, and the fact he'd brought her to this hospital and had worked up a bill she could not afford, and her daughter needed immediate medical attention made her angry.

Nilima watched this. She wanted to comfort Parimala, but it was time for her to go with the team she had arrived with, so she gestured to Kareem. She introduced herself, said something, and left.

Parimala was still in a daze; the mist had lifted, but the city was still cold and indifferent to her problems. Jaya was the only person she had to call family, and the way the doctor from the emergency room explained her condition and what she gathered from it was clear she needed care straight away! More tears streamed down when she heard a voice say, "Chalo."

Kareem was gesturing for her to hurry, and he led her to a waiting ambulance. Parimala climbed into the

vehicle and sat beside her profusely sweating daughter. Jaya hardly recognised her; she was near death. Parimala was so frightened that she remained on the vehicle bench without reaching for her daughter.

The ambulance wound its way noisily. At the final halt inside the compound of another and bigger hospital, Parimala jumped down from the ambulance, and people carried her daughter on the stretcher. Parimala was at a total loss; she sat quietly outside the emergency room, but her daughter was taken into another some distance away.

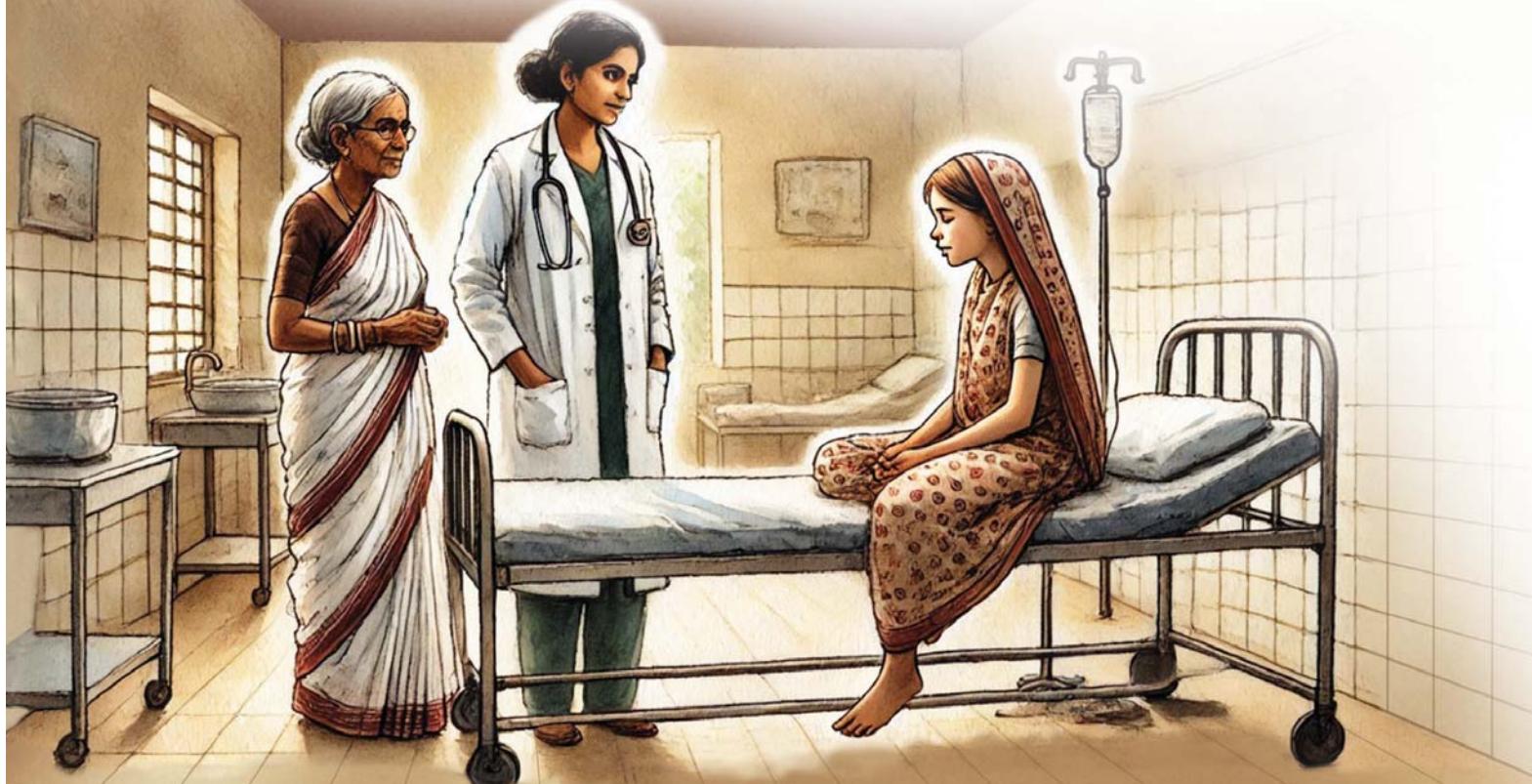
Kareem reappeared from nowhere, and he was a busy man. He walked from one reception section to another, then returned and asked Parimala questions. A girl who stood beside him was jotting quickly. They both disappeared. Kareem returned with a short cup of coffee and a packet of food. Parimala took the coffee but refused the food, though she was hungry. She hated being a burden on anyone.

A lady doctor approached her. "I'm Dr. Stella Mathew. My friend Nilima asked me to attend to your daughter. She is fine now. She will be alright." The doctor paused. Then she delivered the bad news, "We could not save the child."

Parimala nodded. Somewhere in her mind, she had prepared herself for this. Jaya had grown weak ever since her pregnancy. She had expected a malnourished grandchild, and Jaya was just eighteen and foolish. If the child had lived, Ravi would only have returned to extort more money from them and threatened to take the child away.

The child would have been his weapon. Yet she mourned the death of her grandchild, an

"I'm Dr. Stella Mathew. My friend Nilima asked me to attend to your daughter."



infant whom she would never know and blessed not to be a part of this mess.

"You may see your daughter." The nurse led her to a ward. Where her daughter lay vacant-eyed, she stared at the ceiling and then looked at her mother and cried.

*** *** *** ***

Gayatri looked outside the aircraft window. She was relieved to be returning to Bangalore and her house. Three years with her son, his first marriage running out of steam, and the second one arriving too soon with a daughter-in-law she could not relate to. Gayatri decided she would live alone rather than in hell! Her son had used up some of her savings, but she still had some, which fetched her returns. She smiled, thinking about the day Nilima called.

"Gayu, how are you?"

"You know my situation, Nili!" Gayatri was spent that day.

"Come back!" Nilima urged.

"Well, I have a little income, but I'm scared to return and restart. When my husband Narain died, I should have stayed in my house. I should not have uprooted myself; as it turns out, it was to my son's benefit and not mine."

"No point thinking of the past, make up your mind, and it's not like we don't have any problems. Karthik and I just learned that his younger brother had taken away our inheritance by getting my father-in-law to will everything to him. My father-in-law passed away two weeks ago. I, too, will be shifting. I need to find a place."

Gayatri felt shocked; she couldn't remember how the conversation flowed afterwards.

Three days later, Parimala brought her daughter home. Kareem had brought them home. He did not ask for any money. Instead, he gave them a bag of food supplies and left. Parimala was shocked by Kareem's kindness. She had worked hard and earned her money all her life, her husband too.

Perhaps they were too lenient with their daughter? She provided her well, assuming that was the correct thing to do. Three years after her husband died, Jaya passed her PUC exams, and she chose Ravi instead of a steady job. She disappeared, returned with him, and they played havoc with her money. What was her daughter thinking? Had she not seen her parents struggle? Just as she processed these thoughts, she saw Ravi enter the house, and Jaya ran into his arms. They held each other and cried.

Jaya walked out in sheer disgust. When the crises happened, there was no Ravi. Jaya had lay there squirming in pain. Parimala had borne all the consequences and the weight of it. She sat on the curb of the road and sat there crying. A voice broke into her misery, "Chalo Parimala!"

Kareem had again snuck up on her, sliding the autorickshaw down the road.

"Now What?" she asked him.

"Dr. Nilima asked me to bring you to Gayatri madam's house."

Parimala was confused; she had nothing else to do right

Gayatri was relieved to be returning to Bangalore and her house. Three years with her son, his first marriage running out of steam, and the second one arriving too soon with a daughter-in-law she could not relate to.

now, and a free autorickshaw ride did not seem like a bad idea. She sat in it without much thought. The cold breeze stung her a bit, but it was refreshing. That sad, helpless feeling left her not because she felt better but because she felt nothing. The autorickshaw stopped at the house she once came to work every day. It looked the same, neat as always; it did not look unlived. Parimala stepped on the porch, and the door was open. Two women were talking.

"Gayatri Amma!" Parimala felt a rush of happiness on seeing her. "You are here?" she asked.

"I came here a week ago, then Nilima told me she had met you."

"How is your son?"

"He's good, divorced and married again. I cannot get along with his new wife. I decided to return to India and wasn't happy there anyway. Three years of sheer boredom, insane routine, bah! I will never go back there. Tell me, how are you?" "You are here, I will be fine." They laughed.

"I had to get a new sim and did not have your number. I was wondering how to get in touch with you. Nilima said she had met you but did not have your number; she had the auto driver Kareem's number. I asked her to talk to him and bring you here."

"Oh!" Parimala was happy.

"I'm looking for a full-time now. Will you be interested?" Nilima and her husband will stay on the first floor as tenants, but they will be in and out of my house. There will be a lot of cooking. I am warning you, I have not eaten proper food for three years! Of course, I already have a part-time for cleaning, and there is the driver."

Parimala nodded. Her mind was planning how she would pack her clothes and give away some stuff. She would pay the landlord the last of the rent. He was a kind man, and he would understand that she could not endure a notice period. She was happy to throw that headless daughter out! Sometimes, love was destructive. She hurriedly left, determined.

Gayatri smiled as she watched Parimala leave, "Parimala is a sincere worker, and so was her husband. But they wanted to give their daughter everything they felt was denied to them when they were growing up. I warned her before that she was spoiling that daughter of hers."

Nilima nodded. "She was in a terrible situation. It so happened that Kareem had brought her to that new hospital; had she gone elsewhere, I would not have been able to help her. And she is not in her old house either, so we could not have traced her. She now lives far from here."

"Destiny works in strange ways and sometimes for the best!" Gayatri smiled.

Onam Delicacies

Elevate your feast with pickles, chips, and festive treats. By Indu Narayan



LEMON PICKLE (NARANGA CURRY)

INGREDIENTS

- 200 gms curry naranga (wild lemon)
- 8-9 green chillies (chopped)
- 4 tsp red chilli powder
- ¼ tsp fenugreek powder
- ¼ tsp asafoetida powder
- ½ tsp mustard seeds
- ½ tsp fenugreek seeds
- 4 tsp oil
- Soaked tamarind
- 2 cups boiled water
- 2-3 dried chillies

METHOD

Wash and cut the wild lemons into small pieces. Add chopped green chilies and salt. Keep it covered and aside for a day. Take 2 cups of boiled water in a small bowl. Soak the tamarind in the water, squeeze it, and then add the tamarind water to the lemon mixture.

Heat oil in a pan, then add mustard seeds, fenugreek seeds, and dried red chilies. When they splutter, add them to the lemon mixture. In the remaining oil, sauté red chili powder, fenugreek powder, and asafoetida powder.

Check the salt and cook for 2 minutes. Add the lemon pickle to the mixture and cook for 3-4 more minutes before turning off the heat.

BANANA PEPPER CHIPS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 kg raw banana
- Salt to taste
- 1 tsp pepper powder
- Oil (for deep fry)

METHOD

Remove the outer skin of the raw banana and cut it lengthwise into four sections. Slice each section into thin pieces.

Sprinkle salt over the slices and mix to coat each piece. Deep fry all the slices until crispy. Transfer them to a metal colander to drain excess oil and sprinkle with pepper powder. Mix well and enjoy!



Banana Pepper Chips



COLOCASIA CHIPS

INGREDIENTS

1 kg colocasia
Salt for taste
Oil (to fry)
2 pinches chilli powder

METHOD

Remove the outer skin of colocasia, wash, and cut into thin rounds. Sprinkle salt and mix well with your hand. Heat the oil in a broad pan, put the colocasia rounds, and fry until crispy.

Transfer the fried colocasia rounds to a metal colander to drain

Colocasia Chips



excess oil, then sprinkle with red chili powder. When it cools down, keep it in a clean and dry bottle and seal it tightly.

BANANA FLOWER THORAN

INGREDIENTS

1 banana flower
1 large onion
Salt to taste
½ tsp turmeric powder
½ tsp urad dal
1½ cups scrapped coconut
1 tsp red chilli powder
¼ tsp cumin seeds
¼ tsp mustard seeds
3 pods of garlic

METHOD

Chop the banana flower finely after removing its outer portions. Wash it well and put it in a bowl. Chop the washed onion and add it to the banana flower. Sprinkle salt and turmeric powder.

Transfer it to a pressure cooker and cook with just enough water to cover it. Grind coconut, red chilli powder, cumin

Mango Pulissery



seeds, and sprigs of curry leaves coarsely. Press the garlic and add the mixture to the ground coconut.

Add this to the cooked banana flower. Pour oil into a hot pan, add mustard seeds, urad dal, a sprig of curry leaves, and dried red chilli cut into two pieces.

Fry until it splutters, then add the banana thoran. Stir well until the moisture dries up.

MANGO PULISSERY

INGREDIENTS

4 ripened mangoes
1/2 tsp turmeric powder
Salt to taste
1 1/2 cups coconut grating
3-4 green chillies
1/4 tsp mustard seeds

1/4 tsp fenugreek seeds
1/4 tsp cumin seeds
1/4 tsp red chilli powder
1 cup of curd
2-3 dried red chillies
1 tsp oil
2 sprigs of curry leaves

METHOD

Wash the mangoes well and cut each into six pieces. The seeds can also be added. Add salt, turmeric powder, 1 slitted green chilli, and enough water to cook. When the mango pieces become soft and

tender, turn off the heat.

Grind the coconut, 2 green chilies, red chili powder, and a sprig of curry leaves well. Add this mixture to the cooked mango. Pour in the curd and add more water if needed to make gravy.

In a pan, heat oil and add mustard seeds, fenugreek seeds, dried red chili (cut into two pieces), and a sprig of curry leaves. When the seeds splutter, pour it into the curry. When the curry boils, turn off the flame.

ASHGOURD AND COLOCASIA OLAN

INGREDIENTS

100 gms ashgourd
2-3 colocasia
2-3 green chillies
A sprig of curry leaves
1 tbsp coconut oil
1 cup coconut milk (without adding water)
Salt to taste

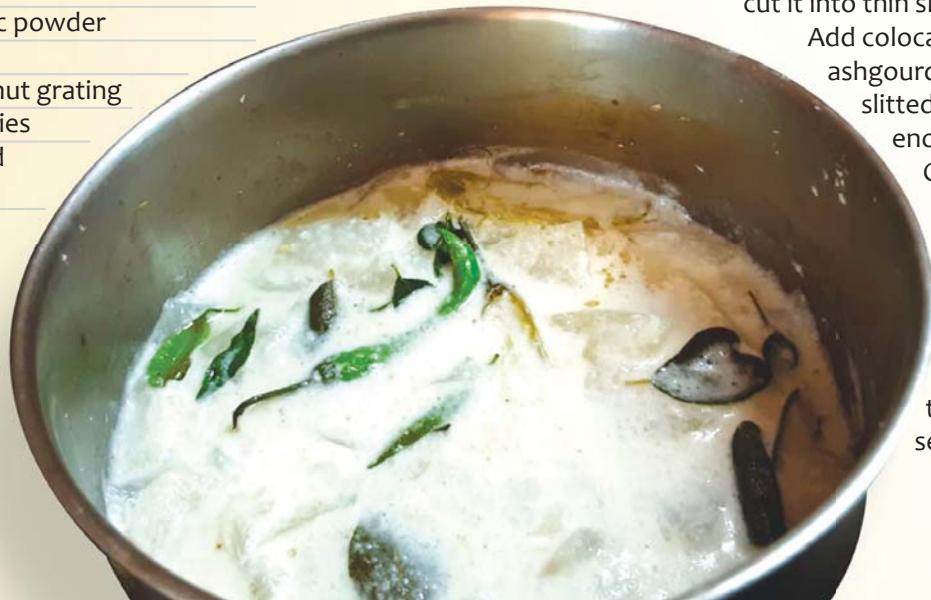
METHOD

Remove the outer skin and seeds of ashgourd and wash it properly. Cut it into square pieces. Peel the outer skin of colocasia and cut it into thin slices.

Add colocasia slices to ashgourd along with salt, slitted green chillies, and enough water to cook. Cook well and add coconut milk.

Sprinkle curry leaves on top and pour coconut oil. Cover and let it sit for two minutes before serving.

Ashgourd And Colocasia Olan





AMARANTH-JACKFRUIT AVIYAL

INGREDIENTS

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp red amaranth

5 jackfruit seeds

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup raw mango pieces

$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp turmeric powder

Salt to taste

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cup coconut grating

1 tsp red chilli powder

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cumin seeds

1 small onion

1 tbsp coconut oil

METHOD

Wash and chop the amaranth leaves, and add the stems according to your preference. Peel the outer skin of the jackfruit and cut it into six long pieces. Cut the mango into pieces of the same length.

Add salt, turmeric powder, and enough water, then cook until tender. Turn off the flame. Grind the coconut, red chili powder, and cumin seeds coarsely, and add this mixture to the cooked ingredients.

Remove the vessel from the flame. Add ground onion and

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup soaked and cooked sago

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cardamom powder

Pinch of ginger powder

Pinch of cumin powder

10-12 cashew nuts and raisins

2 soaked and mashed dates

METHOD

Scrape coconut to collect first, second, and third milk. Soak the almonds and then grate them. Also grate the jaggery.



Flaxseed
And Almond
Pradhaman

coconut oil, and a bit of water if needed. Stir well and serve hot.

FLAXSEED AND ALMOND PRADHAMAN

INGREDIENTS

1 cup flaxseed (powdered coarsely)

10 soaked and grated almonds

$\frac{1}{2}$ kg jaggery

1 tbsp ghee

1 coconut (for first, second, and third milk)

Add 1 tbsp of water and heat it. Strain it into a big, flat vessel.

Put coarsely powdered flaxseed, grated almonds, cooked sago, and mashed dates into the vessel.

Add 1 tbsp of ghee, stir well, and pour the third coconut milk in it. Allow it to reduce slightly. Add the second coconut milk. Stir and boil it for two minutes.

Lastly, pour the first milk and sprinkle cardamom powder, dry ginger powder, and cumin powder. Fry the cashew nuts and raisins in the remaining ghee and add them to the pradhaman. Serve it.

We

Stress

The Good Cop?

A little bit of stress can be good for life.

By Dr. Sanjay Teotia

Stress is a natural part of our modern lives. A little bit of stress is inevitable, but oftentimes, that's the good thing. Stress helps you meet your daily challenges and motivates you to reach your goals, ultimately making you a smarter, happier, and healthier person. That's right—good stress is vital for a healthy life.



You may think any type of stress is bad, but that is not the case. Good stress, or eustress, is the type of stress you feel when you are excited. Your pulse quickens and your hormones surge, but there is no threat or fear. Bad stress, however, is the kind that wears you out, leaves you jittery, and is harmful to your health. Bad stress, or distress, can lead to anxiety, confusion, poor concentration, and decreased performance.

Small amounts of stress have been scientifically proven to stimulate the production of neurotrophins, which strengthen connections between brain neurons. In the short term, this can boost concentration and propel us into action. For instance, a certain level of anxiety and stress helps us prepare more effectively for an exam. Stress can also lead to problems such as erectile dysfunction and pain during sex. So, while sex can help reduce stress, it's essential to find ways to manage your stress levels to improve your sex life.

Stress and sex are linked in several ways. Sex can relieve stress and anxiety by triggering the release

SEX NOT ONLY BOOSTS YOUR HORMONES AND OTHER BRAIN CHEMICALS BUT ALSO REDUCES LEVELS OF STRESS HORMONES. IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT SEX WITH A PARTNER IS NOT YOUR ONLY OPTION. IN MANY CASES, SOLO SEX CAN RELIEVE STRESS AND PROVIDE OTHER HEALTH BENEFITS TOO.

of feel-good hormones, including oxytocin. These hormones promote relaxation and can help reduce feelings of anxiety. Sex not only boosts your hormones and other brain chemicals but also reduces levels of stress hormones. It's also important to note that sex with a partner is not your only option. In many cases, solo sex can relieve stress and provide other health benefits too.



The body's response to stress over time also helps build immunity. Mild stress raises the production of cortisol, which triggers our fight-or-flight response. That stimulates our immune system to fight whatever is attacking it. Mild stress produces a massive mobilisation of numerous immune cells in the bloodstream. However, long-term chronic stress will only weaken the immune system.

Benefits Of Physical Intimacy

Sexual activity and orgasm can relax your body and release many hormones that are supportive of overall health and wellness. Similarly, sex can boost dopamine, a neurotransmitter sometimes called the feel-good chemical because it reinforces feelings of pleasure. A little bit of stress doesn't affect sex life—in fact, it releases the stress. Once the stress lifts, your sex drive shows back up like it never left. Being pressured to be sexual before you are ready can actually increase your stress and diminish your interest even more, creating a self-reinforcing cycle with a partner who wants more sex but ends up getting less.

Some people use sex or masturbation as a way to deal with stress, boredom, loneliness, or other negative emotions. For the vast majority of people, this can be a safe and healthy way of feeling better. A little stress helps you perform better. On the whole, we learn to adapt by being exposed to challenging



experiences in life. This helps build resilience. A certain level of stress can be helpful, provided it doesn't overwhelm us.

Everyone has stress. It is a normal part of life. You can feel stress in your body when you have too much to do or when you haven't slept well. You can also feel stress when you worry about things like your job, money, relationships, or a friend or family member who is ill or in crisis. Stress is a universal human experience that almost everyone deals with from time to time. Learning how to cope with stress can help us feel less overwhelmed and support our mental and physical well-being.

Young adults between eighteen and twenty-four are more likely to suffer from moderate to severe stress, depression, and anxiety symptoms. While heightened stress can feel overwhelming and decrease motivation, a little bit can go a long way when it comes to kickstarting your work. Medium levels of stress can enhance our motivation. This

type of stress can even push us towards performing well and gives us a boost to give our best. Too much stress on the human body can lead to high blood pressure and heart attacks. Small daily stressors could potentially benefit the brain, despite being an inconvenience. It is possible that experiencing stressors creates opportunities for you to solve a problem. The less stress someone experiences, the healthier they will be.

We can manage daily stress with the help of various strategies: do one thing at a time, focus on completing one task at a time, get moving by staying active each day, develop new healthy habits, do something calming, streamline your finances, get creative, and relax the mind by taking slow, deep breaths or trying other breathing exercises for relaxation. Additionally, you can soak in a warm bath, listen to soothing music, practise mindful meditation, or use guided imagery. If your stress is getting out of control

and you need quick relief, then get active—almost any form of physical activity can act as a stress reliever. Eat a healthy diet, avoid unhealthy habits, connect with others, and assert yourself. You can stop stress by taking care of yourself, engaging in self-relaxation, taking breaks when needed, seeking out social support, maintaining a normal routine, and giving back to others.

When a person is stressed, they may experience difficulty in breathing, panic attacks, blurred vision or sore eyes, sleep problems, fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, chest pains, indigestion, and heartburn. The workplace is the number one cause of stress. Women are more likely to report stress than men, who may prefer to suggest they are suffering from back pain or another physical ailment rather than acknowledge stress for fear of appearing psychologically weak. Stress is one of the usual suspects when you can't seem to stop thinking.

We

NEIGHBOURS ALL

FAKE OR REAL

When I moved into my new apartment, many of my neighbours in the apartment complex told me about my next-door neighbour's peculiarities. Initially, I thought they were just joking, but as time passed, I realised there might be some truth to their stories. One day, I witnessed him ringing the doorbell to his own house, waiting for someone to answer, only to remember a minute later that he lived alone and then let himself in. Several similar incidents confirmed what my neighbours had told me. However, one of the most amusing incidents occurred on his 29th birthday.

Surprisingly, he considered us friends and invited us to celebrate with him. I brought along a fake plant as a gift, assuming he wouldn't be able to take care of a real one. I didn't want to waste

money on a plant that would die quickly. A few months later, I ran into him in the hallway, and he excitedly told me how the plant I had given him was thriving, despite his occasional forgetfulness in watering it. I couldn't help but laugh at how even in this simple situation, he managed to be a bit "stupid." As time went by, I couldn't help but appreciate the sense of community in our neighborhood. Despite his quirks, our neighbour brought us all together through laughter and shared anecdotes. We began to see his unique perspective as a refreshing break. We started organising regular gatherings to celebrate our neighborhood's diversity.

– Bhavna Deswal

CO-PARENTS

Starting a new job with long hours meant I couldn't take my dog on walks as often as before, which worried me greatly. I looked for dog sitters to keep him company during my absence, but finding someone

trustworthy was challenging. That's when my neighbour stepped in like an angel and offered to help. She suggested I drop off my dog at her place before heading to the office. I was relieved and grateful for her kindness.

However, my dog struggled with the change. He seemed to think I was giving him away, despite being comfortable with my neighbour. Thankfully, within a week, he adjusted to the new routine. My neighbour and I have become co-parents to him, providing him with love and care from two families. My neighbour's support during this difficult time has been invaluable.

Inspired by our experience, we organised a neighborhood pet care programme, where residents volunteered to help care for each other's pets during busy times. This initiative not only eased the burden for pet owners but also strengthened the sense of unity and support within our community.

– Chahak Patil



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Insightful Idioms And Idiocies

"The World at our Feet"

"On a knife's edge"

"To get ducks in a row,"

"There is an elephant in the room that nobody wants to discuss,"

"Sports Minister for the High Jump"

"Running staff"

"Modi outwits Rahul" and "BJP slams Congress"

"Love is blind"

"Running Room"

"Kick-start"

"The Canterbury Tales"

Revealing the wit and charm
in the fascinating world of words.

By Ritu Kamra Kumar

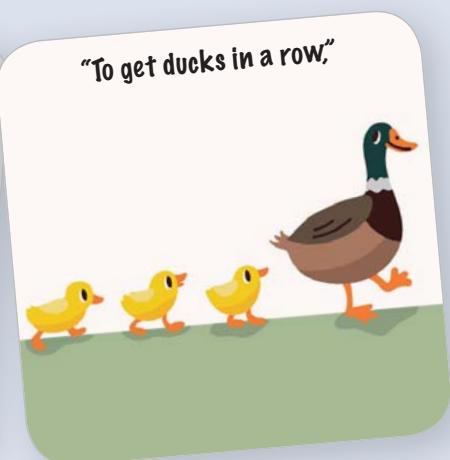
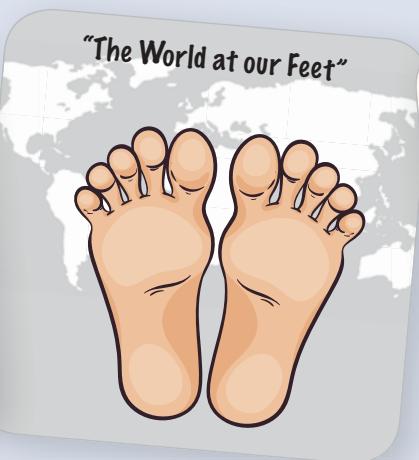


A few days ago, newspaper headlines exulted "The World at our Feet" which actually meant the admiration of crores of Indians as India trumped the World Cup 2024 with its Hollywood Finale.

Another newspaper reports today on a politician who has been accused of breaking parliamentary rules. His career, it writes, is "on a knife's edge" meaning it is very uncertain and could end in failure.

In the journalistic register, idioms are used extensively in news headlines. Idioms are manipulated to achieve certain effects such as irony or humour to intrigue the reader who instantly comprehends the correct meaning in relation to the context.

Headlines such as "Modi outwits Rahul" and "BJP slams Congress" are evidently curated by the need to convey emphatically maximum in minimum possible words. However, sometimes they arouse curiosity and make the reader appreciate the journalist's delightful intelligence as idiomatic headlines lead to a juxtaposition of expressions like this: "Sports Minister for the High Jump" which actually means he is in serious trouble or "New CBI Director is a Party Animal" which means he is much into socialising.



Referring to the NEET examination controversy, an MP said in parliament, “There is an elephant in the room that nobody wants to discuss,” which simply meant that there is a huge and grave issue that is being avoided for discussion in the House. To this, a minister replied in the same tone that they are sitting in the House “to get ducks in a row,” i.e., they would organise and settle the issue and don’t want their colleagues to think them lousy in their jobs.

The trend to report with catchy idioms and phrases is in. You don’t commence a project but “Kick-start” it, though the process of kick-starting has become almost a thing of bygone era with the advent of push-button starters in two-wheelers.

At a railway station, when inquired about the whereabouts of the loco pilot as our little nephew wanted to meet the one who runs the train, we were told that he is in the “Running Room” which we decoded as the loco pilot being busy with his workout schedule but were told, bolt from the blue, that “Running Room” is a place for taking rest for the “running staff” i.e., for loco pilots and guards who operate trains.

GREAT LITERATURE HAS ALWAYS BEEN REPLETE WITH IDIOMS TO DESCRIBE CHARACTERS AND SETTINGS IN VIVID AND ENDEARING TERMS. HOW THIS IDIOM “BEAUTY LIES IN THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDER” EMPHASIZES THE SUBJECTIVITY OF BEAUTY.

R. Moon in his book *Fixed Expressions & Idioms in English* defines idioms as those “fixed & semantically opaque or metaphorical expressions.” Off-the-cuff idioms along with witty remarks in text amuse readers as well as the writer or speaker. However, these idioms

are part of the rich heritage of the English Language and hold an important place in our daily lives. When in the classroom, in the initial years of my teaching, I hadn’t comprehended the nuances of teaching students belonging to the interiors of Haryana.

I shouted at a student, “Hold your horses!” The boy started looking around for a horse to hold. Though I simply meant, “You need to stay put or slow down.” So idioms are phrases that have their own special meanings. They help us to think out of the box.

Great literature has always been replete with idioms to describe characters and settings in vivid and endearing terms. How this idiom “Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder” emphasises the subjectivity of beauty.

“Love is blind” first seen in the writings of Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* — “For love is blind and may not see” — this phrase means that true love isn’t superficial and also captures the idea that love can be unexpected and random.

Without beating about the bush, I say that idioms add wit and sparkle to the conversation and writings, making us believe “The World is my Oyster.” What do you say?



Touching Lives

A reflection on the impact of an educator.

By Ritu Kamra Kumar



“Nostalgia is a file that removes the rough edges from the good old days,” observes Doug Larson, and how right the worthy columnist is. Recently, when I attained superannuation after serving as a professor of English in a reputed college of Yamunanagar, Haryana, I received videos sent by my old PG & UG students, even from the ones whom I taught decades ago. They are now living in different countries, and they all virtually got connected with me through these videos.

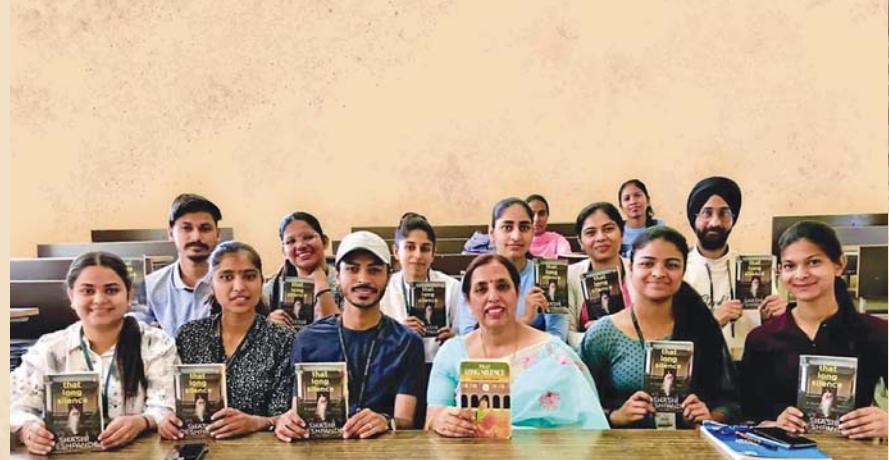
It took me back to the times when I had been young and never thought of getting old. Students’ videos were like looking back to one’s early days, like looking down a kaleidoscope and seeing a jumble of colours, the rainbow, trapped at the end of it.

Their referring to the long-forgotten anecdotes made me smile, laugh, and cry tears of joy. Since my teaching career spans three decades and seven years, many of my students looked middle-aged, and when they narrated classroom tales with childlike innocence, it was sheer nostalgia that I partook with pure delight.

Yash, a student now living in Germany and working as a teacher in a college there, said that he bows with folded hands at the threshold of his institution before entering inside, and he has learned this from me as he watched me bowing to the mother earth before entering the portals of college. Another thing that he mentioned was that the fountain pen I had given him on the last teaching day as a souvenir was the one with which he put his signatures on his appointment letter in Germany.

It was like getting nostalgic for a time that wasn't yet over. I could feel the sound of my footsteps trotting the globe as Neha, a psychology teacher now settled in Sydney, said that she remembers my lessons on social realism and psychological realism and found them quite helpful in her preparing lessons of psychology. In my mellowing years, Yash's and Neha's words made me recall the words of T.S. Eliot: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins." How observant Yash must have been since nobody knew about this gesture of mine as I did it a bit slyly.

Another beautiful and brilliant student, Joshita, who is also serving as a professor in a reputed university in Mumbai, reflected on the times when our discussions on literature continued beyond the classroom, in corridors, libraries, staff rooms, and many a time at my home, which involved poets, writers, anecdotes, relating real-life situations with written words, reveling in the aesthetic beauty of insightful literary works. My home has always been a second home to my students. She further said how my teachings impacted her thinking, making her



WHAT HAVE I ACHIEVED BY WRITING THIS? THE CONTENTMENT OF A GUILTYLESS, STAINLESS, AND FEARLESS JOURNEY FOR WHICH MY DOTING FAMILY ALWAYS SUPPORTED ME TO FOLLOW MY PASSION. I JUST PAUSED AND PONDERED FOR A MOMENT...

comprehend that she should make her choices independently and follow her passion. Humbled by her words, I honestly admit that she too taught me to adjust in odd and challenging circumstances as the ups and downs in her personal life had been many to push her into a corner. Well, the apt words of the Roman philosopher Seneca are, "While we teach, we learn."

Inspiring The Generation

Many such videos of students highlighted their journey with me, which made me realise how moments, already past, have become alive, and re-living them was quite rejuvenating and rejoicing. Akansha, presently serving as an assistant professor in Chandigarh University, Department of English, made me recall the words I often spoke to the students as they appeared in the National Eligibility Test and couldn't clear it in their first attempt. The words were, "Defeat is not when you fall down; it is when you refuse to get up." A bibliophile, she cleared her NET Examination

on the second attempt. Daksh, a student of English (Honors), made me chuckle as he smilingly delineated the secret that the way I cared for him (he was living in the college hostel), his classmates called me his college mom and warned him when I was prowling around. Various and veritable anecdotes recorded by dear students, to name a few—Anjali, Parul, Samarian, Surbhi, Anamika, Ritu, Neeru—was like getting into one of those multicoloured patchwork quilts the grandmothers made for any new baby in the family. So many bits and pieces—a crazy conglomeration of shapes, sizes, and colours put together. And I was fortunate to get a souvenir portraying the different hues of my life in beautiful artwork created by my students Shelja and Radika.

What have I achieved by writing this? The contentment of a guiltless, stainless, and fearless journey for which my doting family always supported me to follow my passion. I just paused and pondered for a moment, and Maya Angelou's words came as an epiphany: "Your legacy is every life you've ever touched." I believe I have done my best for my students as their teacher. I wish I had done better, yet I am told by many that I inspired them, made them fall in love with literature, shaped their minds, and struck a chord with their souls.

Yes! They too were always receptive and respectful, avid and agile listeners, and their critical abilities had been my touchstones. Gratitude galore, I express to my parents and teachers who inculcated in me values that I could nurture my students with positive vibes that got inscribed in them. All I can pray is may the tribe of such students increase!



Broken To BOLD!

What holds more strength – vulnerability or resilience?

By Aditi Maheshwari

Strength. It's a word we associate with power and the ability to overcome any obstacle. But in the human experience, true strength lies not in an impenetrable facade, but in the courage to be vulnerable.

Vulnerability is often seen as weakness, a chink in our armour. We strive to appear strong, to hide our cracks. But vulnerability is the fertile ground where resilience grows. It's the openness to feeling, to acknowledging our pain and limitations. It's the honest conversation with a friend, the tear shed in private, the humbling admission of "I don't know."

Here's why vulnerability is the hidden ingredient to strength:

Connection: Vulnerability fosters connection. By sharing our struggles, we create bridges with others who have walked similar paths. This sense of belonging and shared experience fuels our emotional reserves.

Growth: Vulnerability allows us to learn from our mistakes. When we shy away from admitting our flaws, we remain stagnant. Owning our vulnerabilities opens us up to feedback and growth.

Empathy: Vulnerability breeds empathy. By acknowledging our own struggles, we become more attuned to the struggles of others. This empathy allows us to connect with them on a deeper level, fostering a supportive network.

Resilience, the ability to bounce back from hardship, isn't about brute force. It's about the flexibility to bend with the wind, the adaptability to learn and grow from challenges. Vulnerability allows us to acknowledge the hurt, to seek support, and build the emotional strength to rise again.

Imagine a mighty oak. It appears strong, unyielding. But a strong wind can snap a rigid tree. A resilient oak, however, bends with the wind, its

roots anchoring it deep in the earth. It weathers the storm and emerges stronger.

So, the next time you feel the urge to put on a brave face, consider this: true strength lies in embracing your vulnerability. It's the courage to feel, to connect, and to grow. It's the foundation upon which resilience is built, allowing you to weather any storm life throws your way. In contemporary discourse on personal and professional development, the concepts of vulnerability and resilience are often presented as key attributes of strength. While they might seem like contrasting traits—one implying openness to harm and the other suggesting a capacity to

VULNERABILITY ALLOWS INDIVIDUALS TO CONFRONT THEIR FEARS, ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR LIMITATIONS, AND SEEK HELP WHEN NEEDED. THIS HONEST SELF-ASSESSMENT IS A CORNERSTONE OF RESILIENCE.



withstand challenges—they are both crucial in the journey towards a well-rounded, robust life.

Vulnerability is often perceived as a weakness, a susceptibility to emotional or physical harm. It involves openness, honesty, and the courage to express one's true self, even at the risk of criticism or rejection. The seminal work of researcher Brené Brown has rephrased vulnerability as a powerful form of courage, emphasising that it is through being vulnerable that we connect deeply with others and experience genuine growth.

Resilience, on the other hand, is typically associated with toughness and endurance. It is the ability to recover from setbacks, adapt well to change, and keep going in the face of adversity. Psychological resilience is built through experiences, support systems, and a positive mindset that collectively enable individuals to bounce back from difficulties.

The Intriguing Interplay

At first glance, vulnerability and resilience may appear to be at odds. However, a closer examination reveals that they are interdependent, each enhancing the other in profound ways.

Building Resilience Through Vulnerability

Vulnerability: Vulnerability allows individuals to confront their fears, acknowledge their limitations, and seek help when needed. This honest self-assessment is a cornerstone of resilience. By admitting one's struggles and accepting support, a person can build a stronger foundation to cope with future challenges. For instance, sharing personal setbacks with trusted friends or mentors can lead to valuable insights and strategies that fortify one's resilience.

The Strength In Embracing Weakness

Weakness: Acknowledging vulnerability requires immense inner strength. It is a recognition that perfection is unattainable and that seeking connection and understanding is more powerful than maintaining a facade of invincibility.

This acceptance fosters a resilient mindset that embraces failure as a learning opportunity rather than a defeat.

Emotional Resilience Through Connection: Vulnerability fosters deep, authentic connections with others, which are vital for emotional resilience. When individuals feel understood and supported, they are better equipped to handle stress and recover from adversity. Social connections provide a network of support that reinforces resilience, offering comfort and perspective during tough times.

The False Dichotomy! The notion that one must choose between vulnerability and resilience is a false dichotomy. Instead, they should be viewed as complementary forces. Vulnerability without resilience can lead to despair and helplessness, while resilience without vulnerability can result in emotional suppression and isolation. Balancing the two

enables individuals to navigate life's complexities with grace and fortitude.

Practical Applications: Leaders who embrace vulnerability by admitting mistakes and uncertainties can inspire trust and loyalty among their team members. This approach not only humanises the leader but also encourages a culture of openness and collective problem-solving, enhancing the organization's resilience.

Why Vulnerability Wins?

Individuals who practise vulnerability by acknowledging their fears and seeking growth opportunities develop a resilient mindset. This proactive approach to personal development fosters a continuous cycle of learning and adaptation, essential for long-term success. Vulnerability strengthens relationships by fostering intimacy and trust. These strong bonds create a support system that enhances

emotional resilience, enabling individuals to face life's challenges with greater confidence and stability.

Resilience is the armour that protects the heart; vulnerability is the key that unlocks its true power.

In the debate over whether vulnerability or resilience holds more strength, it becomes evident that the true power lies in the interplay between the two. Vulnerability is not a sign of weakness but a courageous act that builds the foundation for resilience. Together, they create a robust framework for personal and professional growth, enabling individuals to face adversity with courage and recover with tenacity. Embracing both vulnerability and resilience allows for a more authentic, and empowered existence, proving that true strength is not about choosing one over the other but about integrating both into the fabric of our lives. To be resilient is to endure; to be vulnerable is to grow. Together, they create a symphony of strength.

We

CAMPUS RUMPUTS

PROUD ACHIEVEMENT

I was in Intermediate First year and I had a huge crush on my chemistry lecturer. One day the teacher asked me about simple question, but I didn't know the answer. He asked the same question to another girl and she answered correctly. The lecturer didn't scold me but told me to study hard. The girl who answered the question was a brilliant student and he often appreciated her performance. After two months, we had a chemistry exam and he was the invigilator of the exam. He was signing the hall ticket and when he came to me, asked me "Have you made sure to prepare it thoroughly

as I advised you last time?" I thought he might not remember me, but in our class, we have around 80 students. I completed my exam and submitted my answer sheet. He checked my answer sheet and complimented me you wrote well. I felt so happy and first time he complimented me. I secured an excellent grade in chemistry.

– Aditi

TEACHER'S ENCOURAGEMENT

I was not fluent in English to speak upto Matriculation due to my study in Kannada till then. When Pre-degree classes started with English medium and a new English lecturer with no knowledge of our Kannada language, it became very much problematic until we both got a hold over one another's language. I was the first class student, so I did very well in the first unit test. But to my utter surprise with a remark on my answer sheet, "try to write for yourself. Don't copy from others"

notes & guides." I was in tears as I never did refer any guides/notes nor could I afford them due to my poverty. I was very upset for the first ever adverse remarks of my school career. When I expressed annoyance, the co-lecturers supported me and he issued an apology and cancelled remark. On a later day, when the local Rotary Club hosted the English verification competition among students and lecturers, that lecturer encouraged me to write something and I tried in poetic work. He became the first winner and I stood second. He withdrew his entry to 'inspire' me, I argued, but he said there may not be exaggeration, he being a lecturer and I really deserved the prize as the poem was very good. Of course, his inspiration of that day paved the way to trace my hidden talent and today whenever I write any anecdotes/stories/articles, I remember him heartedly.

– Suvarni mohanam

Child Challenges



Q & A

EVERY MORNING, I STRUGGLE to get my seven-year-old son ready for school on time. He drags his feet getting dressed, refuses to brush his teeth, and dawdles at the breakfast table, causing us to rush out of the door in a panic.

Creating a visual morning routine chart for your son can help him understand what needs to be done and in what order.

Include pictures or drawings of each task, such as getting dressed, brushing teeth, and eating breakfast, to make it more engaging. Set timers or alarms for each activity to help him stay on track and provide positive reinforcement when he completes tasks on time. Establishing a consistent morning routine and allowing him some autonomy in getting ready can reduce stress and promote a smoother start to the day.

DURING SOCCER GAMES, MY TEN year-old son often displays poor sportsmanship. He argues with teammates, sulks when his team is losing, and sometimes refuses to shake hands with opponents after the game, causing tension and embarrassment.

Teaching your son the importance of good sportsmanship is crucial. Discuss with him the values of respect, fairness, and teamwork in sports. Role-play positive behaviours, such as congratulating opponents and supporting teammates, to help him understand appropriate conduct. Encourage him to focus on effort and improvement rather than just winning, and praise his positive actions both on and off the field. Consider involving him in team-building activities or leadership roles within his sports team to foster a sense of responsibility and sportsmanship.

LATELY, MY FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD son has been feeling pressured by his friends to engage in risky behaviours like underage drinking and skipping school. Despite our discussions about making good choices, he seems torn between fitting in with his peers and staying true to our family values.

Navigating peer pressure can be challenging for teenagers like your son. Maintain open and non-judgmental communication with him about his social experiences and concerns. Help him develop assertiveness skills to confidently say 'no' to peer pressure without feeling alienated.

Encourage him to choose friends who share similar values and interests, and provide opportunities for positive social interactions in structured settings, such as clubs or community activities. Role-play different scenarios with him to practise assertive responses to peer pressure, and reinforce his decision-making skills by acknowledging and praising his positive choices.

MY ELEVEN YEAR OLD daughter spends excessive amounts of time on her smartphone and social media. This affects her sleep patterns, concentration on schoolwork, and interpersonal relationships, leaving me concerned about her overall well-being.

Setting clear boundaries and limits around her screen time is essential for her health and development. Establish specific rules for when and how long she can use devices, and enforce a 'tech-free' period before bedtime to promote better sleep hygiene. Encourage her to engage in alternative activities, such as reading, cultivating hobbies, or physical exercise, that

foster creativity and social interaction. Model healthy screen habits yourself and create designated 'device-free zones' in the home to encourage face-to-face communication and family bonding. Openly discuss the benefits and risks of technology with her, and involve her in setting and reviewing screen time guidelines to promote responsible use.

MY THIRTEEN YEAR OLD daughter is struggling with peer relationship pressures. She feels torn between maintaining friendships, fitting in with social expectations, and staying true to her values and beliefs, causing her emotional distress and confusion.

Navigating peer relationship pressures involves fostering self-awareness, assertiveness, and healthy boundaries.

Encourage her to reflect on her values and beliefs, and discuss the importance of surrounding herself with friends who respect and support her. Teach her assertive communication skills to express her thoughts and feelings respectfully, and role-play different scenarios to practise setting boundaries and saying 'no' to negative influences. Foster opportunities for her to engage in activities and hobbies that align with her interests and values, helping her build confidence and self-esteem.

Support her in developing a diverse network of friendships based on mutual respect and shared interests, and reassure her that it's normal to experience ups and downs in relationships. Encourage open communication and provide a non-judgmental space for her to discuss her concerns and seek guidance when needed.

Readers are invited to send their problems of child care and child rearing. Woman's Era will provide the answers, solutions to problems usually encountered by mothers, young and old. Address your letters (neatly written on white paper) to:

Woman's Era E-3, Jhandewala Estate,
New Delhi-110 055.

My Anniversary

The memories now cherished alone. By Arunamohan Mantrala

It's my anniversary today. Even though these memories keep coming every day, today it feels like they are just taking me into a shell where all these memories are playing one after the other continuously. No work seems important. I do not want to give attention to anyone, including my son. I have so many memories around my anniversary. Each is different from the other. Some are happy, some are sad, and some are surprising. Now that I do not have my life partner to celebrate my anniversary, all these memories are the only ways to keep my husband with me.



On one such anniversary, we were going through a tough phase. We were struggling financially, so celebrating seemed impossible. Every year, I used to buy a collectible porcelain doll of a couple. I could not even buy that. I was incredibly sad, but somehow at the last moment, I felt I could manage buying a small one. I wanted to go out and buy it before my husband returned from the office. My in-laws never remembered our anniversary, so they did not like the idea of me going out as they felt that I have not completed all the work in the house. I told them I would be back in an hour. It was going to be almost 7:30.

"Who will make the rotis if you go at this time? Don't you know that your father-in-law has dinner by eight?" "No need. You can go some other day." That was the reply I got from my mother-in-law. I did not want to remind her that today was our anniversary as they did not remember. I kept quiet and waited for my husband to come home. He came by nine, and he was expecting the anniversary couple doll gift as I gave one every year. It was like a tradition to us. As I told him I could not get it this year, tears rolled down my eyes.

He said, "Let's go get it together." We both went, and he waited in the car while I bought it and came back before the shops closed. We somehow celebrated our anniversary that day and were finally happy that we did not break our tradition.

The Closest Bond Often Cause Deep Wounds

Another year, my elder sister-in-law was there during that time. Four days before our anniversary was my second sister-in-law's birthday. The elder one came to me and said, "We will give a surprise to her. We will celebrate, get cake and all." I was excited and celebrated her birthday happily. After four days, our anniversary came. No one even remembered. My husband wanted to go for breakfast so that we could spend time with each other. I made breakfast and told everyone at home

that we would be going out for breakfast. I thought that they would understand by this and get that today was a special day. Normally, we never went out for breakfast. No, they had no clue. They asked me why. I said my husband wanted to go. They said okay, unwillingly, thinking why they must go out and made faces. But still, we went. By the time we came home, they were all smiling and welcomed us. We were surprised and felt happy that finally, they remembered. They gave a photo album as a gift and wished us. I was happy and said, "I am glad you

I HAVE LEARNED SO MANY LESSONS AND STILL LEARNING. IT IS EASY TO SAY AND HEAR SOME THINGS BUT EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT TO IMPLEMENT. ONE OF THOSE THINGS IS - LETTING GO... AS A PERSON, I MAKE VERY FEW RELATIONSHIPS, FRIENDS, OR RELATIVES.



remembered. Thank you so much." Just then the phone started ringing. At that time, only landline phones were there. There were no mobiles. I received the call, and my best friend called to wish me. She told me that she called before and told my sister-in-law that she called to wish me on my anniversary when we were away to have breakfast.

Then I understood that they came to know through this call from my friend that today was our anniversary. They never mentioned it. I felt a bit sad, but it was okay. I used to remember all their birthdays and anniversaries and wish them all first thing in the morning. But no one remembered my anniversary. That was not that important to them even though it was their son's or brother's anniversary also. It is okay; we were happy with each other. We took it very lightly like all the other things that were happening to us.

Another year, on our anniversary, my father-in-law called us, wished us, and gave my husband a shirt on his anniversary. He told us that he has ordered something for me, and it will come later, which did not come till now. My husband felt bad as the anniversary is supposed to be a couple thing. They felt I was not earning and not important. On the anniversary also, they could just gift their son and happily just live with that without the slightest embarrassment or guilt or any kind of feeling. Good for them.

Now that I am alone and as usual, nobody remembered to talk to me and see if I was okay or needed someone to share. Life is like that. I have learned so many lessons and still learning. It is easy to say and hear some things but exceedingly difficult to implement. One of those things is - Letting go... As a person, I make very few relationships, friends, or relatives. I let very few people come close to my heart. Life has taught me that relationships come and go. Some people stay, some leave, and some regret ever knowing you. But losing my husband hurts the most, and I do not think that I can ever let go of the feeling of missing him. **We**

In Praise Of The Japanese

An immersive journey
highlighting their unparalleled
discipline, humility, and
dedication.

By Deepak Bhatia



The Japanese are outstanding and stand apart anywhere, in any situation. I started travelling when I was 15, visited many countries on four continents, met and interacted with people from all over the world.

My recent tour in March 2024 of Japan was one of or perhaps THE BEST!

Japanese people stand out and are in a class apart from all others, at a different higher level.

Distinct Traits And Mannerisms

Some of their distinct traits are:

- They are not rude or crude
- They are very disciplined
- They take pride in their jobs
- They always show humility and grace
- They have a strong sense of appreciation of beauty
- They are firm believers in Team Work
- Their sense of National Pride is evident on all occasions in all locations and situations

A photograph of a woman from the side and slightly behind. She is wearing a light tan or beige trench coat with a belt and a small pocket on the left side. Her hair is pulled back into a bun with a dark blue hair tie. She is looking down at something in her hands. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a city street at night with some lights.

**IMAGES ARE
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AND SO ON.**

- They are very polite and courteous, all the time bowing, thanking, and apologising
- Images are embedded in my mind about their humble behaviour, noble gestures, sacrifice, care of others particularly those less fortunate or in difficulty, and so on.
- Fans and spectators cleaning a stadium after a match, even if their team lost.
- Customers putting back items on shelves of a supermarket in case of a power failure during a national calamity when the teller machines, weighing scales, etc. were not working.
- Airline staff clean arriving passengers' baggage assiduously and meticulously before it is loaded onto the conveyor belt in the arrivals hall, even though no one may be observing them.
- Airline staff take excellent care of baggage in all respects. For example, Osaka airport has a record of never having misplaced or lost any item.

ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THINGS ABOUT JAPAN IS THAT NO ONE EVER RETIRES IN THIS COUNTRY – THERE IS NO RETIREMENT PLAN. ONE CAN SEE 80 – 90-YEAR-OLD PEOPLE GOING TO WORK BY METRO OR OTHER FORMS OF TRANSPORTATION OR DRIVING OTHER PEOPLE TO THEIR RESPECTIVE DESTINATIONS BY TAXI, EARLY IN THE MORNING. NO WORK HERE IS CONSIDERED BIG OR SMALL.

- They show up for appointments or work before time and remain even after closing hours.
- While boarding or alighting from a train or plane, they do not push or shove, but allow others to proceed calmly and patiently.
- Shop assistants go out of their zone or line of duty to help customers locate an item they may be looking for.
- Even unknown persons will not hesitate to show the way to a new person.

No Retirement Plan

One of the most beautiful things about Japan is that no one ever retires in this country – there is no Retirement Plan. One can see 80 – 90-year-old people going to work by Metro or other forms of transportation or driving other people to their respective destinations by taxi, early in the morning. No work here is considered Big or small. They do what they



like, and keep themselves mentally and physically active. It gives them a sense of fulfilment, purpose, and belonging. They are neither lonely nor depressed. This is based on the principle of *Ikigai* which means the reason for being, the reason to wake up in the morning, a reason to not retire.

Big B also replied in similar words and tone when asked why he continued to work, and so hard. He said it keeps him busy and well, whereas he could or would fall sick if he did not work.

Japan has one of the highest life expectancies in the world. Their philosophy is that if you want to be happy, remain healthy and live long, forget about retirement. Find something which you like and continue to do it till the last day of your life.

The Curious Case

Japanese people (JPs) are keen adaptors of new technology. They are also motivated by a desire to reduce their impact on their fellow citizens while maintaining high standards of hygiene. It has been observed that the percentage of smokers in Japan has reduced more





sharply than in other countries, and Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs) have gained popularity. JPs were very much amenable to try out a new electronic gadget which produced neither the smoke associated with combustible cigarettes nor the smell and ash. This has become known as The Curious Case of Japanese Cessation! It is reported that cigarette sales halved in favour of HTPs. Alternatives to cigarettes like HTP heat sticks of tobacco to a temperature of not more than 350°C have gained popularity. Heating tobacco to this level causes nicotine to be released as a vapour without combustion. This means that the level of toxic chemicals in the resulting vapour is much lower than in cigarette smoke.

Resilience, Perseverance, Determination And Dedication

Despite having to bear the brunt of two atomic bombs – the impact as well as the after effects – Hiroshima recently hosted a meeting of religious leaders to discuss The Call of Rome to finalise a Code of AI Ethics for Peace.

A visit to towns like Kobe and Hiroshima showed how they were



THE INFLUENCE OF JAPANESE WRITERS HAS SPREAD FAR AND WIDE. CLOSER TO HOME, THE DEVOTION OF SUSPECT X WAS ADAPTED AND MADE INTO A FILM JAANE JAAN, STARRING KAREENA KAPOOR KHAN, JAIDEEP AHLAWAT, VIJAY VERMA AND OTHERS.

rebuilt and re-established after the devastation of natural (earthquakes) and man-made calamities (bombing). Everything appears new – buildings, bridges, roads, houses et al.

Japanese Writings

The influence of Japanese writers has spread far and wide.

Closer to home, *The Devotion of Suspect X* was adapted and made into a film *Jaane Jaan*, starring Kareena Kapoor Khan, Jaideep Ahlawat, Vijay Verma and others.

The story of *Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window* speaks of unconventional schooling that children during the second World War underwent. Since it was difficult to run schools during the war,

classrooms had been set up in old railway coaches. This story fascinated Mr. C. Jim Jesudoss, Executive Director of an NGO, Sakthi-Vidiyal. He converted and refurbished an old school bus, which was worn out and unfit for use, into a library. The bus seats were used as chairs, and the 'bus' library was set up at the campus of Sakthi-Vidiyal at Muthupatti in Madurai. Children from underprivileged backgrounds often don't have the luxury of buying

books to read in leisure, so such a library with more than 300 books is a boon to them. It is also a good way to turn their attention away from phones and encourage and inculcate the habit of reading.

Fun Factoid

I wish I could have been to Japan earlier and had spent more time than a mere nine days. Even then, I collected and brought back very many happy and pleasant memories of the outstanding, memorable time for which I was there. I hope to return at least once more, sooner than later.

Viva Japan! Chapeaux!

We



Import

From nautical origins to medical innovations and beyond.

By S. Radha Prathi

Sometime ago, the word PORT was being used randomly in the outpatient foyer of the oncology department in a hospital. My ears perked up to catch the word right. It was indeed PORT. I wondered what the import of the word could be. I had heard of docks and ports, but “docs and ports” were quite unusual.

Well, maybe some of you are aware of it. I learnt that the concept or should it be contraption (?) is a common word in Crab country. The “chemo port” which appears like a “button idli” in a nondescript shade of grey with a little silicon tube hanging out of it is supposed to be medical research’s special gift to the Kingdom of Carcinoma. The device apparently makes life easier for the “curers” and the “to be cured” alike in Cancer Country. It is strategically inserted into the body of the honorary Cancerian through a minor surgical procedure and is

expected to facilitate the process of chemotherapy!

Words have a way of teasing the mind when ruminated upon. It can open whole new vistas of knowledge when inspected from various angles. However, what fascinated me the most about the information was the versatility of the word “port” which had innocuously sailed into the portals of medical parlance after meandering through variegated venues.

Ports have come a long way from launching thousands of ships in the hope of conquering exotic lands and exotic damsels from the hoary times of “Helen of Troy”. Histories of countries have changed when enterprising seafaring pioneers landed on geographically natural ports.

The intense marine activities lent the lean word its portliness by using it as a nautical term. One can hardly find a word in this genre of

vocabulary without the haloed affix or suffix attached to it. Seaport, porthole, home port, cargo port, cruise port, container port, and breakbulk port are but a few terms to make my case.

Ports that initiated trade and commerce encouraged “import” and “export” altering the portfolios of many a Mogul took new dimensions when “Dry port” which initially suggested a cargo yard gained portability and started representing invigorating and in some cases intoxicating liquid variations. Port wines in different shades such as pink, white and crusted port besides the vintage varieties relegated the original connotation of dry port to the back burner. Simultaneously the porter gained nouve portage as he luggered around the Portland cement to build a new world!

When the idea of transportation transcended *terra firma*, the humble port lost rapport with gravity as



it conveniently attached itself to aeronautical terms and terms like airport, heliport among others. It has not left rocket scientists alone as it keeps their fingers crossed hoping that their plans with the port fire should not backfire.

The worldwide web lives in the mercy of the sublime port which deals with every bit of valid and invalid information and communication lest the universe comes to a standstill. Today, it is simply impossible to e-connect if the port on the computer does not get portative. Cellular phones have gained new dimensions with a new feature called portability thus lending another dimension to the world of communication.

THE WORLDWIDE WEB LIVES IN THE MERCY OF THE SUBLIME PORT WHICH DEALS WITH EVERY BIT OF VALID AND INVALID INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION LEST THE UNIVERSE COMES TO A STANDSTILL.

The import of this seemingly simple four-lettered word which has attained portly proportions by accreting a whole lot of meanings over the ages has made it amply clear that it is time to take a “port of call”

on the subject. More recently ports refusing to take responsibility when innocent fishermen have been shot down are grabbing media space by miles.

So also the story of illegal mining along coastal regions, putting little known ports prominently on the world map. This information may not exactly be in tune with the subject from an etymological point of view, nevertheless it certainly deserves a mention.

Perhaps if Whitney Port the MTV star hosted a show on the journey the port it will be easy to keep tab on it as it ventures into “less trodden paths” (or is it ports) with Portamento scoring in the background!

We



Fruitful Inspirations

A symphony of bold creations from sweet to savoury.

By Roma Ghosh

TOMATO AND ORANGE FLAVOURED SAVOURY MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

400 gms tomatoes
60-70 ml orange juice
150-160 gms maida
100 ml white oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cinnamon powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cardamom powder
1 cup shelled peas
Salt to taste

3 beaten eggs
Oil for lining muffin molds
60 gms thick fresh cream
Pitted prunes/black currants (for garnishing)

METHOD

Sift together the maida, cinnamon powder, cardamom powder, and baking powder. Set aside.

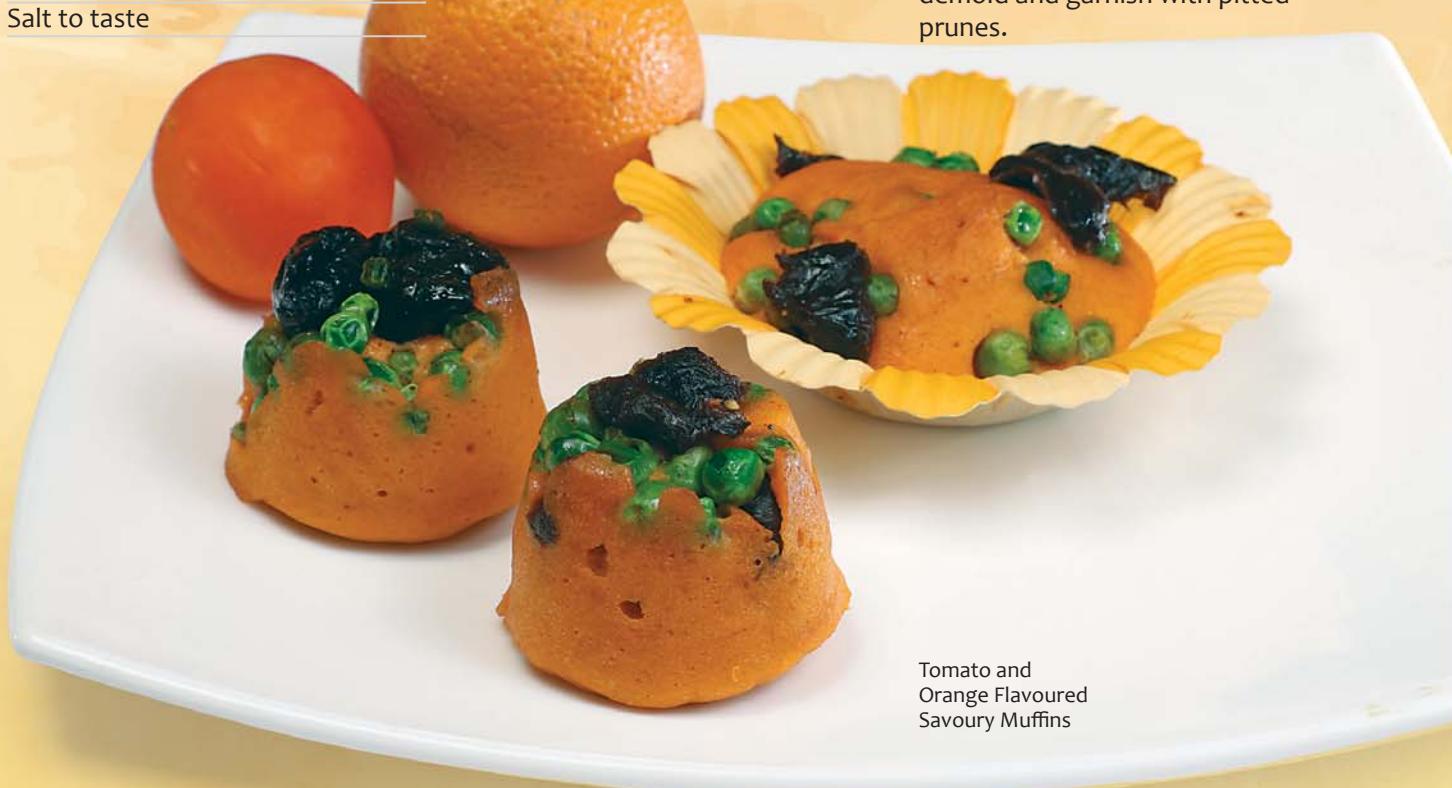
Blanch the tomatoes, remove the skin, and puree the pulp. Strain and mix with the orange juice.

In a mixing bowl, blend the beaten eggs, tomato puree, orange juice, and oil. Add the dry ingredients and mix well. Then add the cream, peas, and chopped pitted prunes or black currants. Ensure there are no lumps.

Line muffin molds with oil and pour the mixture into the molds, filling them halfway.

Preheat the oven to 180°C for 8-10 minutes. Bake the muffins for 15-18 minutes, or until they have risen. Check by inserting a knitting needle in the center; if it comes out clean, the muffins are done.

Allow to cool in the oven, then demold and garnish with pitted prunes.



Tomato and
Orange Flavoured
Savoury Muffins

FRUIT-FLAVOURED IDLI PLATTER

INGREDIENTS

300-400 gms idli batter

For the Fruity Flavours

- 3 tsp kiwi slush (ready-to-use)
- 2 medium-sized chikoo (sapota)
- 3 tsp mango pulp
- 2 tsp grated beetroot
- 2 tsp concentrated apple juice
- 3 tsp sun melon puree
- 2 tsp tutti frutti

METHOD

Green Idlis: Mix kiwi slush with 4-5 tsp of idli batter. Pour into a few idli moulds.

Brown Idlis: Peel chikoos, remove seeds, and puree. Mix with 4-5 tsp of idli batter and pour into moulds.

Wine-Coloured Idlis: Mix grated beetroot and concentrated apple juice with 4-5 tsp of idli batter. Pour into moulds.

Saffron Idlis: Mix mango pulp with idli batter, blend well, and pour into moulds.



Colourful Fruit-Flavoured Idli Platter

White Idlis: Mix sun melon puree with idli batter and pour into moulds.

Tutti Frutti Idlis: Add tutti frutti to idli batter, mix well, and pour into moulds.

Steam the idlis in an idli steamer for 15-18 minutes. Allow to cool slightly before unmoulding.

Serve the colourful idli platter

with pav bhaji masala, chili flakes, or chaat masala, accompanied by green chutney or tomato chutney.

KIWI CHILI HALWA

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup sago (soaked for 6-7 hours)
- 1 cup kiwi slush
- 1 cup milk
- Sugar (if required)
- 1 tsp elaichi powder
- 1 tbsp ghee
- 1 chopped green chili
- Almond flakes (for garnishing)

METHOD

Bring milk to a boil and add the soaked sago. Cook on low heat, stirring occasionally. Mix in elaichi powder, kiwi slush, and chopped chili. Stir and add sugar if needed.

Continue to cook and stir until the halwa thickens. Remove from heat, add ghee, and stir gently.

Allow to cool completely and serve garnished with almond flakes.

Woman's Era • September 2024

Jamun Pancakes



JAMUN PANCAKES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup flour
- Pinch of salt
- 2 tsp jaggery powder
- 2 pinches cinnamon powder
- 1 beaten egg
- 3-4 tbsp milk

- 2-3 tbsp jamun jam
- 3-4 tbsp apple juice
- Jamun jam (for serving)
- Butter (for frying the pancakes)

METHOD

Sift together the flour, salt, and cinnamon powder.

Slowly mix in the beaten egg, milk, and jamun jam to form a wet mixture.

Mix the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients to obtain a smooth batter. Add more milk if needed for the right pancake consistency.

Heat a non-stick pan or tava, spread a bit of butter, and ladle out a small portion of the batter to form a pancake. Cook on medium heat on both sides.

Prepare all pancakes this way and serve with jamun jam.

BANANA JELLY

INGREDIENTS

- 1 packet jelly crystals (any flavour)
- 2 ripe bananas
- Pomegranate seeds (for garnishing)

METHOD

Prepare the jelly as per the instructions on the packet, using slightly less water to ensure firmness.

Peel bananas, cut into circles, and drop into the jelly mixture.

Pour the mixture into a glass bowl and allow it to set in the fridge.

Garnish with pomegranate seeds once set and serve chilled.

Banana Jelly



CHAAT WITH TOMATOES AND FRUIT JUICES

INGREDIENTS

For Tomato Chaat

- 500 gms tomatoes
- 100 ml orange juice
- 50 ml pomegranate juice
- 6 cloves garlic
- 2 medium-sized boiled mashed potatoes
- 3 tsp gingelly oil
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 2-3 tsp pav bhaji masala
- Salt to taste
- Savory for garnishing
- Pomegranate seeds for garnishing
- Chopped coriander

METHOD

Cut tomatoes into halves, remove eyes, and boil in a pressure cooker until mushy. Cool, remove skin, and blend into a pulp.

Heat oil, add mustard seeds, and allow to splutter. Lower the heat and add chopped garlic.

Mix in the tomato pulp, orange juice, and pomegranate juice. Cook on low heat for 2-3 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Mix in the spices and mashed potatoes, stir, and cook on low

Burgers/Sliders with Grilled Pineapples



Chaat with Tomatoes and Fruit Juices

heat until a fine aroma is emitted and the chaat has a red colour.

Add chopped coriander and serve topped with savoury and pomegranate seeds.

medium-sized pieces)

- 1 tbsp ghee (for grilling)
- Chaat masala and red chili powder (for garnishing)

For Burgers

- 2 burger buns

For the Spreads

- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 2 tbsp mixed fruit jam
- 2 tsp tangy tamarind chutney (optional)
- Basil leaves (for garnish)

METHOD

Cut the buns in half horizontally. Spread maple syrup and mixed fruit jam on each half.

If a mixed sweet and tangy flavour is desired, spread tangy tamarind chutney on the buns as well.

Grill the pineapple pieces in ghee on a grill pan, cooking for 1-2 minutes, and sprinkle with spices.

Place a grilled pineapple slice on the bottom bun half, cover with the top half, and serve as a snack. Garnish with basil.



Sun Melon and Chives Soup



SUN MELON AND CHIVES SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium-sized sun melon (around 400 gms)
- 100 ml vegetable stock
- 2-3 cloves garlic
- 1 tsp cornflour (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3 pinches cinnamon powder
- 2 tsp chopped chives

METHOD

Peel the sun melon, remove seeds, cut into small pieces, and blend with garlic in a mixer.

Place the mixture in a thick-bottomed pan with vegetable stock and bring to a simmer.

Add chives, salt, pepper, and cinnamon powder, and simmer for 2-3 minutes.

For a thicker soup, mix cornflour with water and add to the soup, simmering for another minute.

Serve hot, at room temperature, or cold, garnished with chives and pepper powder.

FIGS, DATES, AND APPLE RELISH

INGREDIENTS

- 300 gms dried figs (anjeer)
- 200 gms dates
- 500 gms apples (peeled and cut into small pieces)
- 200 gms brown sugar

- ¼ tsp cinnamon powder
- 2 green chilies (chopped)
- Salt to taste
- 2 tsp vinegar

METHOD

Soak dried figs in lukewarm water for an hour until soft and mushy. In a thick-bottomed pan, heat 100 ml water, add figs, apples, and dates, and bring to a simmer.

Add green chilies, salt, vinegar, and cinnamon powder. Continue to simmer and stir until the relish is mushy and paste-like.

Mash the relish with a wooden spoon, mix in vinegar and sugar, and stir until sugar melts.

Once thickened, cool and store in the fridge. Use as a spread.



Figs, Dates, and Apple Relish

CHILI AND CHIVES FLAVOURED FRUIT COCKTAIL WITH SUN MELON CHUSKI

INGREDIENTS

200 ml sun melon crush
60 ml coconut milk
2 tbsp milk powder
60-70 ml sugar syrup
100 gms fruit cocktail
2 finely chopped chilies
1 tsp chopped chives

METHOD

For Sun Melon Pulp: Peel 300 gms sun melon, cut into pieces, blend to a smooth paste, and strain. Bring coconut milk to a simmer, mix in milk powder, and stir to avoid lumps. Add sugar syrup and sun melon pulp, blend well, and remove from heat.

Cool completely and mix in fruit cocktail pieces. Pour into molds and freeze overnight.

De-mould when fully frozen and serve.

Sweet Mango Kadhi with Green Mango Pakoras



Chili and Chives Flavoured Fruit Cocktail with Sun Melon Chuski

SWEET MANGO KADHI WITH GREEN MANGO PAKORAS

INGREDIENTS

For Kadhi
1 cup sweet mango pulp
3 tbsp gram flour
3-4 tbsp sour curd
Few curry leaves
1/4 tsp fenugreek seeds
Salt to taste

1 tsp haldi powder

2 tsp white oil

For Pakoras

1 cup gram flour (besan)
3 tbsp raw mango paste
1 tsp green chili paste
Salt to taste
2 inches turmeric powder
Oil for deep frying

METHOD

For Kadhi: Blend sweet mango pulp, curd, gram flour, haldi powder, and 2 cups water.

Heat oil in a thick-bottomed pan, add fenugreek seeds, and allow to splutter. Lower heat, add mango mixture, and bring to a simmer.

Stir and simmer for 10-12 minutes, adding curry leaves and salt.

For Pakoras: Mix gram flour with mango and chili paste, turmeric powder, add water to form a thick, fluffy batter.

Deep fry small portions in hot oil until cooked on all sides.

Add pakoras to kadhi and serve hot with steamed rice.





Pears and Bell Peppers Sabji

PEARS AND BELL PEPPERS SABJI

INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium-sized pears (nashpati)
- 1 bell pepper (red or yellow)
- 1 capsicum
- 200 gms tomatoes
- 3 cloves garlic (chopped)
- 1 tsp grated ginger
- Few curry leaves
- 3 tsp vegetable oil
- Salt to taste
- 2 tsp pav bhaji masala/curry powder
- 3 tsp lemon juice

METHOD

Cut pears into long thick strips, removing seeds. Cut capsicum and bell pepper into strips.

Heat oil, add mustard seeds and curry leaves, and allow to splutter. Lower heat, add pear pieces, and cook for 2-3 minutes until tender.

Mix in tomatoes and spices, cover, and cook on low heat for 2-3 minutes. Add capsicum and bell pepper, cover, and cook for another 2 minutes.

Stir in lemon juice and serve as a sabji.

ICE CREAM STUFFED PLUMS

INGREDIENTS

- 4-5 red plums
- 150 ml ice cream (any flavour)

METHOD

Carefully remove the seeds from the plums without breaking the skin, creating a hollow inside.

Fill each plum with ice cream and freeze until the ice cream is firm inside the plums.

Serve frozen.

Ice Cream Stuffed Plums





Mini Samosas with
Plum-Flavoured Stuffing

MINI SAMOSAS WITH PLUM- FLAVOURED STUFFING

INGREDIENTS

For Samosas

- 1 cup maida
- Salt to taste
- 2 tbsp ghee

For Stuffing

- 100 gms chana dal (soaked overnight)
- 3 tsp ghee
- 1 tsp pav bhaji masala
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp amchur powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp chili powder

2-3 tsp chopped fresh plums
3 tsp pomegranate juice
3 tsp plum juice
3 tsp apple juice

METHOD

Grind soaked chana dal to a fine paste. Heat ghee, fry chana dal on low heat, adding spices and salt.

Gradually mix in juices, cooking until all juices are absorbed and the mixture is smooth and dry.

Sift together flour and salt, add ghee, and knead into a hard dough with water. Divide into small

portions, roll into circles, and cut into halves.

Fill each half with stuffing and fold into mini samosas. Deep fry on low heat until crispy.

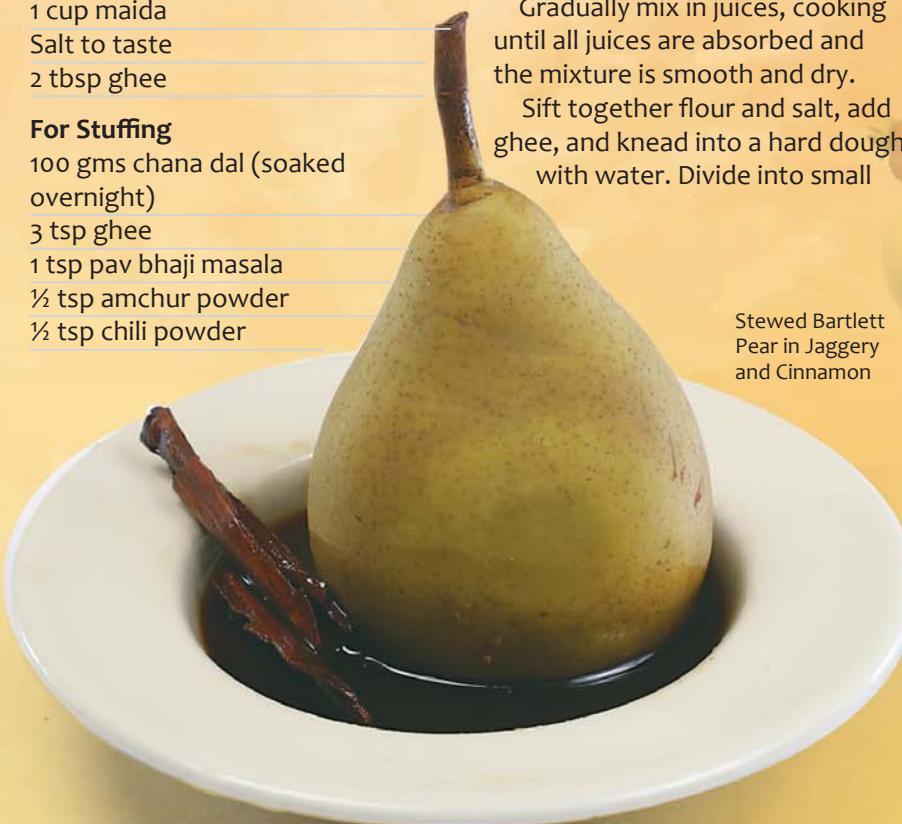
STEWED BARTLETT PEAR IN JAGGERY AND CINNAMON

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium-sized Bartlett pear
- 3 tbsp jaggery powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ inch cinnamon stick
- 1 star anise
- 2 pinches salt

METHOD

Bring 200 ml water to a boil, add jaggery, cinnamon, star anise, and salt. Simmer on low heat. Place the pear in the syrup, simmering for 6-7 minutes and turning the pear to stew all sides. Cool and serve with syrup, optionally on a scoop of ice cream.



Stewed Bartlett
Pear in Jaggery
and Cinnamon

A TIME TO DIE

A darkly ironic twist of fate and a haunting farewell. By Moorthi Swami

I could feel grief thick in the air. The whole prison looked weird. It seemed that the walls were wailing. Nights like this are macabre and everyone is on tenterhooks. Dread holds no prejudice. It takes all. The keepers and the kept reel alike under the pressure. All know that Death is waiting at the scaffold and the noose is kept ready. Duly and officially tested. Death smells. It smells all over the place. An odourless odour. We the jail people, the staff, and the convicts can smell that smell, the smell of death! . . .

I was with Dayanand in his cell. He was having his food for the night. The last supper! He looked at me and there was a faint flicker of some feeling in those weary deep-set eyes. Reflection of friendliness or show of gratitude for the extra care? He had not asked for anything particular. Yet I had personally gone and bought his favourite dishes from Greenlands. That was the hotel of his liking, he had once

told me. He was calm and seemed to be relishing the food.

"I have one last request to make, Sir!" he said.

"What?" I was quite startled.

A whimsical sort of smile was on his lips which made me uneasy. All the worst last desires took hold of my imagination. It was his most desperate moment. He could ask for anything impossible just for that queer personal pleasure of making us feel guilty of our incapability to honour the last wish of a desperate dying man. Kidding the authority at a time like this might give some convicts the kicks, I had heard.

"Hey, Sir! Your blood has dried up. Your face has gone pale!" he was teasing me. But I kept my cool.

"You thought I'd ask for some Bollywood damsel for the night?" he asked and his eyes were probing me. I didn't utter a word.

"No, Sir! No dirty demands from me! A very

"You thought I'd ask for some Bollywood damsel for the night?"



We both should be happy about that. Don't we? I am the crop. You the harvester," he laughed aloud.

simple, reasonable request I have to make!"

"Tell me, Dayanand. Let us see whether it is possible for me to accept..." I asked him, with much relief.

"When you are at the end game you should tell the hangman to be a little kind to take extra care! Sir! You see, there is a boil on the back of my neck. The rope should not press over my precious boil!" And he laughed.

It was a hearty laugh and I was really amused that he could joke at this hour. And that too on his own predicament!

My eyes moved to the back of his neck. It was true. There was a boil at the back of his neck. A red swelling. Poor fellow, it might have been quite painful. I felt pity for him for making fun of himself and his fate. "Excuse me, Sir, I was joking. Some joke like this I had read somewhere!" Again he laughed.

There was a pang in the deep of my mind. I could not conceal my despair any more. I wanted to tell him what I felt. "Dayanand, I didn't expect it would come to this. I was hopeful of a favourable communication till six in the evening. Then..."

"The rest, let me tell you, Sir," he was telling. "You switched on the TV and there was the President leaving for Moscow. Then you realised that no good message was to arrive! And you felt sure, you had to hang me in the morning!" I heaved a sigh.

My assistant Joseph might have told him or someone else who relayed the news to him. Joseph was in the room while I watched TV and lost hope. In the jail, there is a kind of utopian openness. Everyone knows everything. You can't even think your breath your own!

"Take it easy, Sir! Think about those people who are going to get my body parts. My death will save five or six persons from misery. We both should be happy about that. Don't we? I am the crop. You the harvester," he laughed aloud.

Suddenly I felt nervous. He had made a point. Then only I remembered the will he had made a few weeks back. And it was he who took the initiative. If capital punishment was not waived and the law took his life, he desired his organs harvested for the needy.

He had already donated his eyes while he was in college itself. The rest, he was committing now. Without any parting words, I came out of the cell and walked to my office. I tried hard to engage myself with other things. Checked various accounts. Pondered over the petitions of some convicts. Went through the Parole File. In an hour,



Suddenly I felt nervous. He had made a point. Then only I remembered the will he had made a few weeks back. And it was he who took the initiative. If capital punishment was not waived and the law took his life...

nothing was left to set my mind on. Again it was Dayanand in my thoughts. Criminal psychology notes that there is a streak of mischief and violence in everyone. In defeat and despair, the mind goes for the extremes. It is a kind of escape from self-persecution.

That is why the gentle and innocent, when provoked, commit the most heinous crimes. Dayanand was gentle and innocent.

Provoked, he killed his wife and the little daughter. In short, that was his story. I remembered everything. The double murder was shrouded in mystery like a typical crime fiction. And Dayanand was a Page-3 personality. Eventually, the crime was spiced with sentiment, suspense, and drama and it took plenty of airtime and column centimetres.

First it was the ad Dayanand had placed in a popular daily. "I miss you Shyama & Srij! Please come home at once. I'll never drink again. Promise. D." Two days later, the dead bodies were found on a suburban railway track. Everything was confusing and it took time for the police to find out the culprit. It was Dayanand!... He had found out that his wife had another man and their affair was going on for years behind his back. And that man was the real father of the seven-year-old girl...

'What a man, what a life, and what an end!' I could not help brooding. Then boots clicked and I turned.

"Sir!" It was Nariman. He looked unkempt and pathetic. His eyes were bleary and bloodshot. He smelled of cheap



"Sir! Kindly save my body from mutilation of a postmortem. Let the organs God gave me reach the needy..."

I fancied the whole prison heaving a sigh. The death had left without its toll, and with it, the gloom, grief, and fear had gone. Soft fragrance of incense was in the air, probably from Swamy Divyanath's cell.

liquor and sweat. His hoarse voice had gone shrill. The dirtiest part of the nasty job had fallen on his head. "Better we do a final checking, Sir! So that in the morning..." He could not complete his words, but I understood. It is always wise to be sure. I went with him. We had to go through the corridor of the death row. While crossing that cell, unconsciously my eyes stole a glance. Dayanand was asleep. I heard myself breathing heavily.

Everything was perfect and in place. While testing the strength of the rope and its noose, I had a feeling that Dayanand was behind me laughing. I remembered his awkward joke about the boil on the back of his neck. Suddenly I was tired and uneasy. I wanted to throw up. It was then the miracle happened!

Joseph materialised before us, like a benign angel. My good old assistant Joseph! There was a kind smile on his lips and I saw grace in the depth of his eyes like a glimmer of candlelight.

"Sir! Anwar Sahib phoned just now. Sentence waived! No death for Dayanand! Now it is life term for him! No hanging in the morning, Sir! Anwar Sahib himself bringing the order! Sir, you happy?" He stumbled with his words.

I was happy. Melancholy over, I felt myself light, light like a feather. I was retiring next month. VRS. It was heartening to think that I was leaving the world of crime and punishment, sin and repentance, torture and pain, sorrow and tears, oh, all that without a hanging on my conscience! Thirty-seven years, seven prisons, and no blood and dirt on my memory lane. Great! I fancied the whole prison heaving a sigh. The death had left without its

toll, and with it, the gloom, grief, and fear had gone. Soft fragrance of incense was in the air, probably from Swamy Divyanath's cell. Also, I could hear the eighty-three-year-old criminal Keshavlal humming his favourite song, "Mein Avaara Hoon..." Normalcy had quietly returned with its abnormalities.

When we woke him up, Dayanand looked frustrated. He frowned and blinked. He wiped his eyes with his hands and looked at us. I could discern grief behind those eyes. I was with Joseph in his cell.

"Oh, Sir! Good Morning. So the time has come for me. For my appointment with the inevitable!" he asked and then smiled. A mirthless smile.

"No good morning, Dayanand. This is night and this night has become quite good. Time is 11:45. Here's great news for you. You have escaped the rope," I told him.

"Lucky man! Be happy! We got the communication just now. Your punishment waived! It's life for you!" Joseph continued.

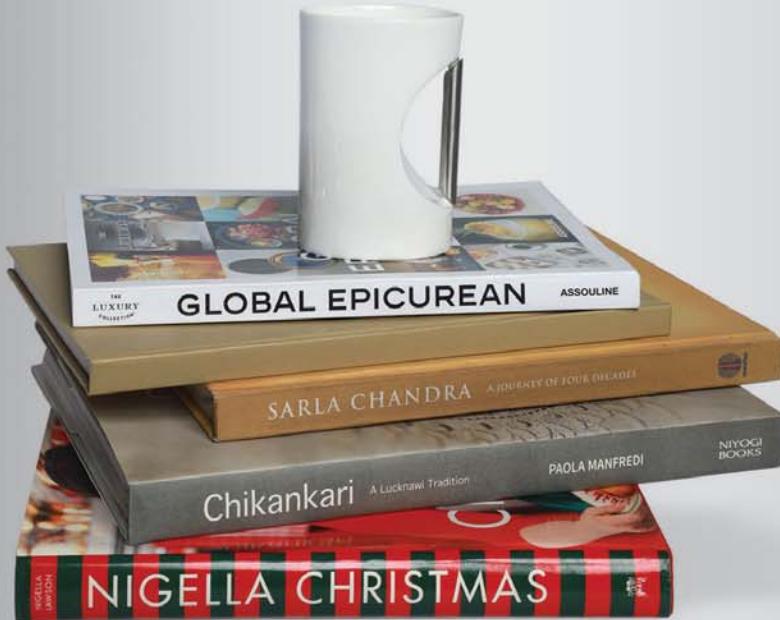
"Oh! A twist in the tale! Okay! Then let me sleep. Good night for both of you!" He closed his eyes as if nothing great had happened. He was neither happy nor unhappy. And he was dismissing us. I was quite amused. We stepped out of the cell.

I went home. It was about to dawn. With nothing heavy on my senses, it was sound sleep that I was enjoying after some sleepless long nights. My mobile rang and I was angry. Thought it was a wrong number that usually interrupts at the most unusual hours. But it was Joseph.

"Sir... Dayanand... I don't know how to say... Please come..."

When I reached, Dayanand was lying, eyes closed, in the prison hospital. He had kept his appointment with death. In a voice choked with emotions, Joseph told me in detail what had happened. Late in the night, when the whole prison was asleep, Dayanand sharpened the edge of a plastic cup. And he had cut his wrist with it. When a guard happened to look at his cell, he was in a pool of blood. Dead.

"Sir! Kindly save my body from mutilation of a postmortem. Let the organs God gave me reach the needy, without any damage. Remember, I told you: I am the crop. You the harvester. Thanks for your kindness and affection. D." He had scribbled on the back cover of a novel he had taken from the prison library the day before.



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Kuttichathans of Kerala

A trail of fear and fascination. By Padmaja Menon



My skin crawled and a tingling shivered down me. Gosh, what a story! My husband's relative, Kuttettan, had just finished talking about how Chathan, or Kuttichathan, or a child poltergeist, had invaded their Tharavad in Palakkad and made their lives miserable. In fact, the entire Tharavad had become deserted. This particular relative, Kuttettan, was sure he and his family had escaped from the Chathan, but when he lost his son, an Air Force officer, in a plane crash, he felt that the evil had followed them to Bangalore. That could not be true because this poltergeist, or Kuttichathan, just troubled you but did not take lives.

Now, what exactly was this Chathan? I remembered seeing a 3D film (oh, it broke all records) called *My Dear Kuttichathan* in Malayalam, and it was about a child devil who loved to disturb others. This diminutive child demon of Malabar must have been a remnant drawn from the Buddhist traditions which existed in the Chennadu. But how did this Chathan reach Kerala? How did he manage to enter homes and harass the members? Who controlled the Chathan and why? Google Baba says...



Chathan Seva (propitiating the Chathan) was originally done by the lower castes of Kerala. In some places, he was elevated as the guardian of villages and a hunter who would help others in times of need. This little imp or household elf type is a nuisance and would do terribly unhygienic stuff to take revenge on those he was asked to. Which meant that some of these low-caste folks, like Pulayans and Velans, had the power to control Chathan. They are Chathan worshippers, and you could take their help to unleash Chathan on somebody. It's like wreaking vengeance on your enemies.

Chathan could be a corrupted form of Satan, but in no sense is he a God. He is much like Puck in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or a dwarf. But he can take any shape he wants and even remain invisible. His most famous form of insult is pelting stones at the house or person nonstop until it becomes unbearable. He would drop shit

or hair into cooking vessels and anywhere he pleases. So, if you are not careful, you could end up with stinky stuff in your food or bed. Yuck! This torment goes on until the people living there have to move out or get a cleansing done. Those who know how to tackle this menace say that he has no fingers, so keep things tied up so that he cannot untie the knot and beyond his reach so he cannot steal money or valuables.

Menace Of Kuttichathans

PT Nair, historian of Kolkata, says that this Kuttichathan can be controlled. He is a 12-year-old boy, and he can be tamed by magicians and bribed with food to do the wish of his patrons. Those who worship him stealthily at home can become healthy, wealthy, and powerful. And as remuneration, Kuttichathan wants only food and drinks.

So, the desire to worship this kutti demon led to the establishment of Kottils (special places of worship).

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In Triprayar and Trissur, there is a famous Kuttichathan Seva Madham where you could propitiate him by invocation and gifts. Non-vegetarian food, arrack, and ganja were his favourites. Kuttichathan could be so mischievous that people could go crazy with anxiety. Imagine cooked food at the table garnished with shit! Mothers would not know what to do when their children went hungry. It was troubled times when Kuttichathan unleashed his anger.

There are real instances recorded by KVK Aiyar, who had the experience of seeing a family suffer anxious, harassed, and agonizing months because of shit, hair, soil, and cow dung in many places, especially the kitchen in their house. The drinking water stank of urine, the kitchen hearth had a huge heap of shit, clothes would go up

in flames, and pots and pans would be hurled around the house. Mirror breaking was a daily affair. According to KVK, one day the bangles were removed from the baby's hands too. He actually saw a brass lamp that had been locked up in a box hurled at an old lady of the house.

**KUTTICHATHANS
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MOPLAH STORIES,
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SPIRITS. MANY STORIES
OF THEM ARE SAID
ACROSS KERALA ...**

The people who lived there were not aware that Kuttichathan could not open knots and had not tied strings around boxes and trunks. But then they had not anticipated this fellow's arrival either!! Unable to bear the torment, an astrologer was called. He predicted that this particular Chathan was sent by someone who wanted revenge. Only two families could get rid of Chathans. One was from the aboriginal tribes, the Tolanurs, and the other, the Namboodiri clan of Kallur. The Tolanurs managed to do so in a ritual. KVK heaved a sigh of relief.

Another story was related by L Anantha Krishna Iyer, a famous anthropologist. His article is about his visit to Quilon or Kollam. His office key kept disappearing. New keys made post-haste also kept vanishing. Police were deployed to search for the thief, but even with eyes on the target, the keys vanished. It was definitely Chathan. When valuable material started disappearing, a meeting of sorts was called, and it was decided that Kuttichathan had descended on the family. Exorcists were called, the imp was appeased, and peace was restored.

The Kuttichathans Legends

Interestingly, Kuttichathans were found in Moplah stories, also known as Chekuttyappa or Kanjirakudam. Many had rooms dedicated to these spirits. Many stories of Kuttichathan trouble are said across Kerala in hush-hush tones. Kuttettan and his family also had been harassed to such an extent that they had to leave their Tharavad. I absorbed all this and asked Kuttettan if all these things could be believed or were they old wives' tales or myths. Kuttettan looked far ahead with his memory eye and shook his head. "They are real, we have suffered." And he sighed. He continued, "I wonder who wanted revenge on us, who did we harm?" That question hung in the air. Today we have "Quotation" to kill our enemies; earlier, we had KUTTICHATHAN and ODIYANS. ODIYANS, who are they? But that is another story....



Teenache



Q & A

I'M A BOY OF 13. THERE'S THIS PERSON in my class who I've developed feelings for, but I'm unsure if she feels the same way. I want to find out, but I'm afraid of rejection and the potential awkwardness. I decided to confide in a close friend for advice. He suggested subtle ways to gauge the person's interest, like starting conversations and finding common interests. Each interaction left me more confused, as her responses were friendly but unclear. It's been a rollercoaster of emotions, but I'm grateful for the support of my friends who remind me that being honest about my feelings is important, regardless of the outcome. I really like someone, but I'm not sure if they like me back. What should I do?

Navigating feelings for someone can be a rollercoaster. Start by engaging in conversations and finding common interests to gauge their interest. When you feel ready, express your feelings honestly but gently. Remember, rejection is a possibility, but it's part of the journey of learning and growing. Seek support from trusted friends who can offer advice and comfort. Being honest about your feelings is important, regardless of the outcome.

I'M A BOY OF 15. I FIND MYSELF constantly scrolling through social media feeds and playing video games late into the night. It's impacting my academic performance and relationships with friends and family. Recently, I missed an important family gathering because I was too engrossed in my phone. It was a wake-up call that made me realize how much time I was wasting and the negative impact it was having on my life. With support from my family, I set

boundaries for screen time, started using apps to track usage, and found alternative activities like reading and outdoor sports. Breaking the cycle hasn't been easy, but each small step has helped me regain control over my habits and prioritise meaningful connections over digital distractions. I spend so much time on my phone and gaming that it's affecting my grades and relationships. How can I break this cycle?

It's great that you're recognising the impact of excessive screen time. Start by setting clear boundaries for your screen usage and use tracking apps to monitor it. Find alternative activities that you enjoy, like reading, sports, or hobbies. Involve your family



and friends in your efforts to reduce screen time and keep you accountable. Taking small steps will help you regain control over your habits and prioritise meaningful connections.

I'M A BOY OF 14. LATELY, I'VE BEEN experiencing overwhelming feelings of anxiety and sadness that affect my daily life. I'm hesitant to open up to friends or family for fear of being judged or misunderstood. One day, my best friend noticed my mood swings and encouraged me to share what was bothering me. It took a lot of courage, but I confided in them about my struggles.

Their support and understanding made me realise that I wasn't alone. With their encouragement, I sought help from a counselor who provided strategies to manage my emotions and improve my mental well-being. It's a journey, but I'm grateful for the support system that's helping me navigate through tough times. I often feel anxious and sad, but I'm afraid to talk to anyone about it. What should I do?

It's important to address your feelings of anxiety and sadness. Start by confiding in a trusted friend, family member, or counselor. Seeking professional help can provide you with strategies to manage your emotions. Practice self-care by engaging in activities that promote your well-being. Surround yourself with a supportive network. Remember, you don't have to navigate this alone; help is available and you are not alone in this journey.

This column is especially for teenagers. Adolescence can, we know, be a trying and confusing time. There are so many questions which seem to evade solutions. A wrong decision, or an indiscreet move, can spell disaster and ruin a life. Share your problem, worry or doubt with us and WE will help you find a way out — to a happier, healthier and more successful adult life.

Send your problems to:
Woman's Era E-3, Jhandewala Estate,
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NEWS IN PICTURES

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle Announce 'Faux Royal Tour'

The Royal couple is set to embark on a four-day "faux-royal" tour to Colombia following their successful visit to Nigeria. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex will travel at the invitation of Vice-President Francia Márquez. The trip aims to promote the Archewell Foundation's initiatives.



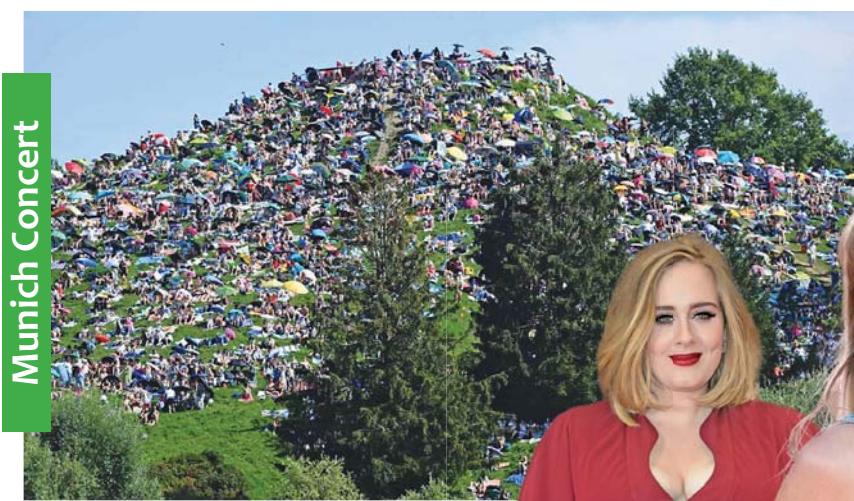
S2O Japan Music Festival

Epic Beats and Stellar Performances Ignite The Festival

The S2O Japan Music Festival kicked off with electrifying performances from top DJs and a mix of local and international artistes. Notable performers included Don Diablo, Madeon, Vini Vici, Yellow Claw, and KSHMR. The festival, known for its unique blend of dance music and water immersion, attracted an enthusiastic crowd.

Adele and Taylor Rock Munich with Huge Spectators

Music lovers in Munich enjoyed a double treat from global superstars Taylor Swift and Adele. Swift's high-energy performance at the Olympiastadion and Adele's soulful show at the Allianz Arena attracted more than 70,000 spectators, making for an unforgettable weekend.



Munich Concert

Malaysia Crowns New King as 17th Monarch

Malaysia's billionaire King Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar was officially sworn-in as the 17th king in a grand coronation ceremony at the national palace. The event captured the attention of 34 million Malaysians and international spectators. Sultan Ibrahim's family has significant investments in industries such as palm oil, real estate, and telecommunications.



Royal Coronation



World Rapid Team Championship

Al-Ain Wins the World Rapid Team Championship

Al-Ain ACMG UAE secured victory at the World Rapid Team Championship, defeating Theme International Trading in a nail-biting finish. The Decade China team, featuring world champions Ding Liren and Ju Wenjun, took the silver, while WR Chess, led by Magnus Carlsen, claimed the bronze.

Callum Voisin Achieves His First F3 Victory at Spa-Francorchamps

Callum Voisin secured his first Formula 3 victory at Spa-Francorchamps, overcoming three safety car periods and winning by 0.9 seconds. PREMA clinched their fifth championship title with a round to spare in Belgium.



Indonesia's Largest Fashion Show Displays Splendour, Innovation

The Jember Fashion Carnival 2024 showcased a spectacular parade under the theme "Algorithm: Beyond Binary of Our Soul." The event featured intricate displays from local artists and designers, combining dance, fine arts, and musical arts. Celebrities such as Denny Caknan and Harashta Haifa Zahara attended the carnival.



Jember Fashion Carnival

Colombia Fashion Week



Copenhagen Fashion Week Displays Sustainable Fashion

Copenhagen Fashion Week highlighted sustainable fashion with a blend of Nordic charm and global flair. The city's street style showcased versatility and practicality, with an emphasis on eco-friendly labels and vintage finds, reflecting the Danish capital's commitment to sustainability.



Copenhagen Fashion Week

Medellin: Colombiamoda Drew 70,500 Attendees

Colombia Fashion Week, known as Colombiamoda, generated an economic impact of US\$13.3 million for Medellin. The event featured 600 brands, including Lafayette and Colors, with a focus on sustainability and eco-friendly practices. Buyers from countries like Brazil, Mexico, and Panama attended the fashion week.



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AS YOU SAY

URGENT REFORMS NEEDED

There is something terribly wrong with the NEET examination system due to paper leakage and other irregularities, which led to the cancellation of exams held in May. This has eroded public faith in the nationwide entrance examination conducted by the NTA. Although the centre has entrusted the CBI with probing the irregularities and has constituted a committee to suggest overhauls, the 23 lakh students registered for the entrance examination are perplexed and perturbed about their future in pursuing medicine. Despite the matter being under the scrutiny of the Supreme Court, no concrete measures have been taken to address the loopholes in the system or to fix the inadequacies that frequently occur, much to the dismay of students. The persistence of such malpractices, without proper checks and balances, undermines the credibility of competitive examinations and jeopardises the future of countless brilliant students.

— R. Srinivasan

A HARROWING EXPERIENCE

In the article *The Narcissist Trap* by Dr. Arshia Sheikh (July 2024), the writer has presented the true characteristics of a narcissist, describing the traumatic experience of living with one. A narcissist, whether

a man or a woman, is a self-centered person with an egoistic nature, lacking empathy and harbouring a false sense of superiority. They control their partner, belittle them, and if the victim reacts with resentment, they shift the entire blame onto her. Narcissists are manipulative and skilled at emotionally hurting their partners, showing no remorse even when the victim is in tears. Their sole purpose is to use their partner to fulfill their own needs. They often insult their partner publicly but quickly apologise in private, as they do not want to lose her.

Only a few have the courage to walk away to find personal freedom. Surprisingly, a narcissist may appear charming to others, including strangers, but mentally tortures their own family. The best way to deal with a narcissist is to stop correcting them, stop reacting to their provocations, and stay calm. Engaging in creative activities can provide some peace.

— Harinder Kaur

A HEART-WRENCHING TALE

Rajni Gupta's *Broken Reflections*, in July 2024, is a deeply moving depiction of Siya's tormented life as an overburdened working woman married to the controlling Vikas. Siya's dual responsibilities at work and

home, compounded by Vikas's constant criticism and humiliation, paint a stark picture of her suffering. The story resonates with many, reflecting the plight of women who are expected to manage household duties despite their exhaustion and emotional turmoil.

Ultimately, Siya's decision to leave her oppressive marriage sends a powerful message about seeking personal peace amidst unbearable circumstances.

— Yashaswi Singh

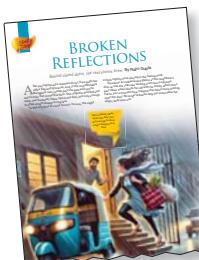


FACELESS DIGITAL ERA

Referring to the article *Living in Faceless Times* by Rameshinder Singh Sandhu (July 2024). It is true that we are often glued to our mobile phones, tablets, and laptops, engaging with social media platforms. We love interacting on Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms, but this has led to a decline in our interactions with those around us—relatives and friends. People regularly post personal photos and details about their lives, including their meals, which can sometimes be irritating. Some individuals are motivators and inspire us with positive thoughts, while others are obsessed with creating reels and videos, sometimes leading to dangerous situations and even fatalities.

The obsession with gaining followers and friends on social platforms can distance us from reality. What if you have thousands of friends on Facebook but none will visit you in the hospital except for neighbours, relatives, and close friends? Ironically, some relatives who never interact with your posts keep a close watch on them.

— Harinder Kaur



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