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Reader's Digest

AUGUST 2021

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OF INDIA**
In 32 Iconic Objects



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**Is It Good To
Be Bored?**

**Why It's
Okay To
Say 'No'**

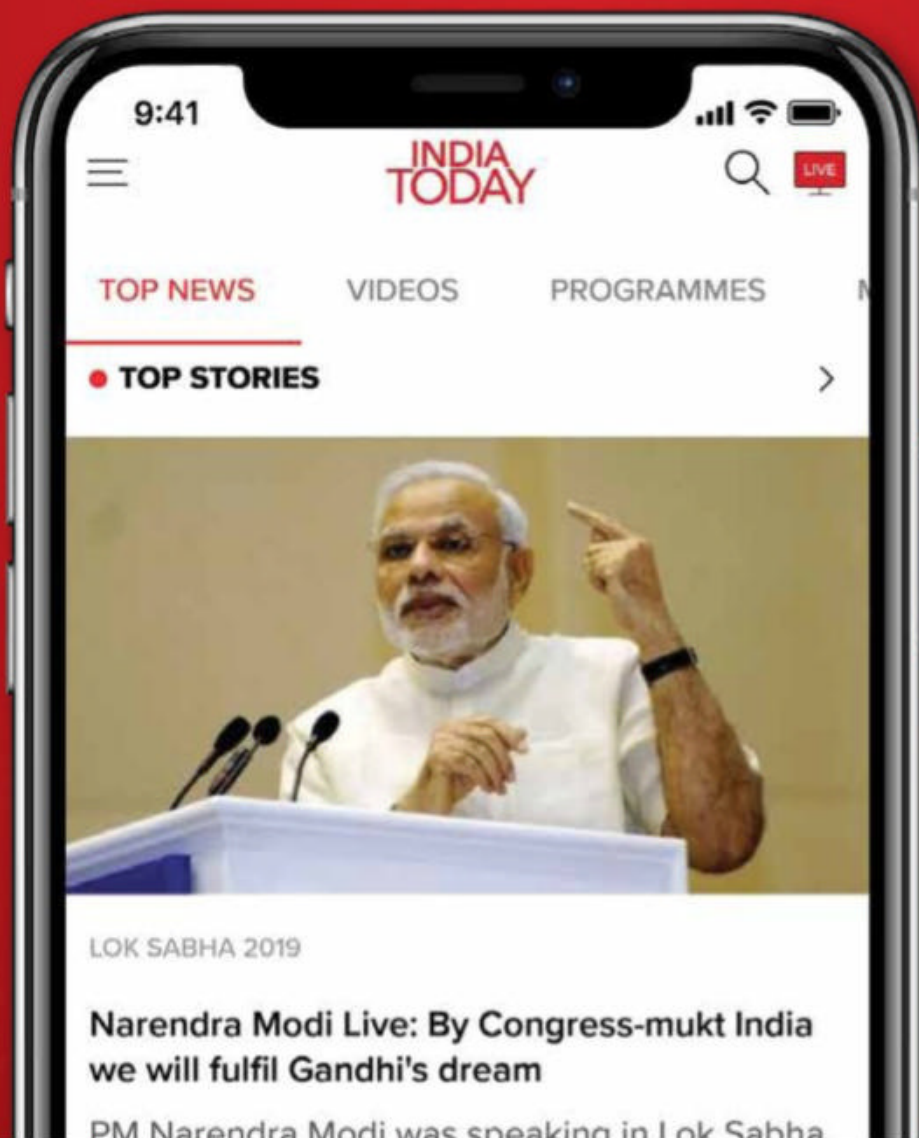
DRAMA IN REAL LIFE
**How They
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Stalker**

BONUS READ
**War And
Peace On
Melrose Hill**

INDIA
TODAY

BREAKING NEWS

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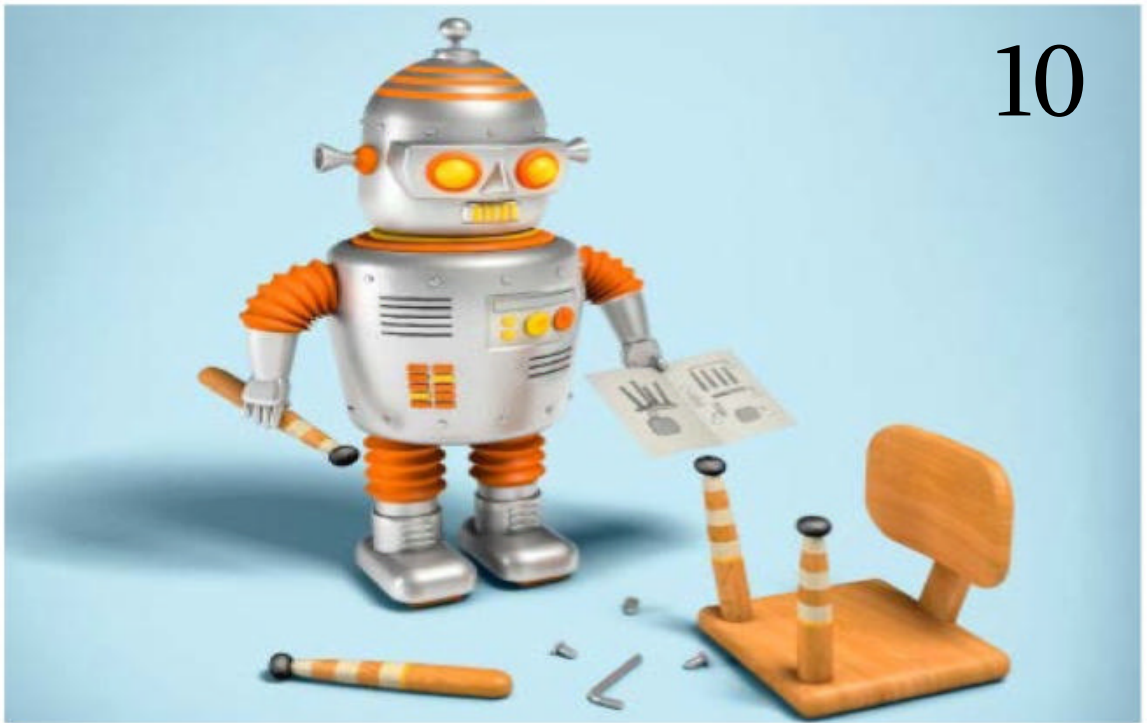
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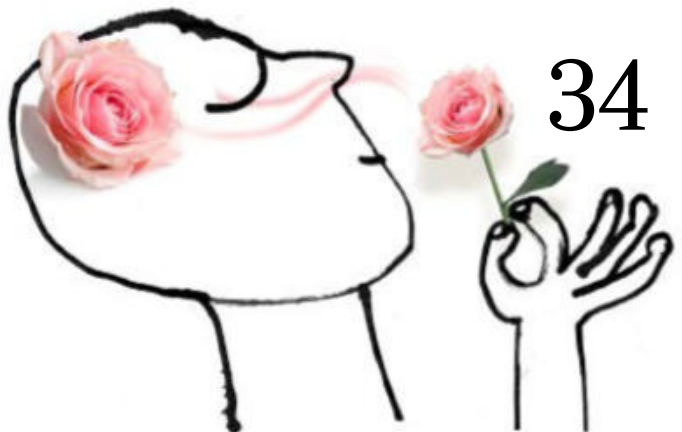
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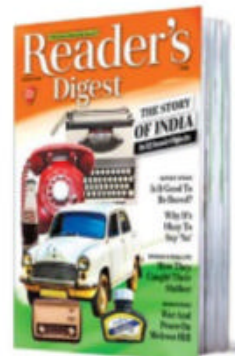


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OVER TO YOU

NOTES ON THE
June ISSUE



He Trots the Air

Pets become members of a family and their loss is as ravaging as the death of any loved one. I'm no pet keeper but tried raising a Labrador pup on my daughter's insistence. She soon got on with her life, leaving the responsibility of this young arrival on my wife's and my shoulders. He grew bigger, more active. In the limited space of our flat, we soon found the situation unmanageable. A senior military official with large open spaces agreed to adopt him. While our furry friend found his forever home, we felt deep sorrow and solitude. So the author's grief upon the passing of her four-legged companion, who stayed by her side for decades, resonated with us deeply .

—ARVIND ARYA, *Mumbai*

Arvind Arya gets this month's 'Write & Win' prize of ₹1,000. —EDs

We Will Study!

Shantha Sinha's article was a fantastic read. During this pandemic several children have had to forgo education because of a lack of mobile phones, digital connectivity and a steady source of income. All the efforts and incremental progress made in education are under threat—will education, particularly for girls—reduce drastically because of the pandemic? This is a monumental challenge for the government, and must be dealt with much thought and adequate financing.

JAYANTA KUMAR PADMAPATI, *Guwahati*

The Ever Beloved Mr Bond

As an 11th-standard student, a voracious reader and one who has decided to try my hand at writing, I enjoyed this interview with one of my favourite authors. I have learnt from him that complacency should never set in if one wants to become a celebrated writer. Bond sets an example to all writers by continuing his craft even at his grand age of 87.

STEVE FRANK, *via email*

Bond's responses in this interview can form a well-set guide for budding writers and even seasoned journalists. Reading Bond is always a pleasure, not only for kids but adults as well and Bond is my all-time favourite. A trick I tried on my grandchildren to get them to give up their smartphone addiction was gifting them Bond's books. It brought excellent results. Now

his unforgettable characters—Rakesh and his grandfather, Binya, Bijju and others—loom large over their leisure time rather than those counterproductive games on tablets and smart-phones that were devouring their precious days for so long.

THARCIUS S. FERNANDO,
Chennai

They Give Us Hope

That there are thousands of Indians with compassionate hearts becomes evident whenever we face calamities like the present pandemic. The stories of citizen heroes and their service to COVID victims, irrespective of caste, community or religion at the cost of their own health and safety,

can never be matched. Among the many kinds help offered, volunteering to give a respectful burial to the dead is perhaps the most selfless, brave service of all. Hopefully, the services rendered by citizen heroes will serve as an eye opener to communal-minded and religious fanatics who cannot look past differences.

ANNA MARY YVONNE,
Chennai

The pandemic has seen Indians from all faiths and backgrounds come together to save lives, driven by sheer humanity in the face of a massive systemic failure to address the second wave. Indian civil-society groups, public-spirited individuals and the

like played a significant role since the beginning of the battle against COVID-19. As Pope Francis says, our faith enables us to reach out to others. May their tribe increase!
SANJAY CHOPRA, *Mohali*

Open up and say Haha

This story was a worthy read with advice worth emulating. As Firakh Gorakhpuri says in one of his verses, a person who brings cartloads of laughter brings precious gifts of youthfulness and many shades of poems and pleasures.

JANARDAN SHARMA,
Pushkar

Write in at editor.india@rd.com. The best letters discuss RD articles, offer criticism, share ideas. Do include your phone number and postal address.

Reader's Digest's Very Big Year

That's right, RD becomes a centenarian in 2022! But don't call us old—we're timeless. Kick off our celebration of 100 years of goofs, gags, thrillers, and tearjerkers by telling us the story of an *RD* article that made a big impression on you. Why did it stay with you? Send us your stories editor.india@rd.com and we might publish your memory (and even the original article) next year.



DEPARTMENT OF WIT

Robots Gone Wild

What happens when you train a machine to take over for humans? It screws up—just as people do

BY *Andy Simmons*



ROBOTS REALLY ARE taking over the world. They're writing novels—the first was *1 the Road*, a cyborg's homage to Jack Kerouac published in 2018. And they're making lunch: The California restaurant chain CaliBurger is trying out a robot that can flip 2,000 burgers a day. What human can compete—especially given that androids don't complain, ask for raises or get drunk at the office Christmas party?

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the coining of the word *robot* by the Czech playwright Karel Capek, we thought it would be fun to take a look at another side of robotkind, one that's all too human. Here's a by-no-means-complete list of failed attempts by automatons to replace us flesh-and-bone types.

Hold the Beothurtreed

Janelle Shane, an optics research scientist, wanted to find out whether artificial intelligence could create a menu that didn't taste, well, artificial. So she fed a computer 30,000 cookbook recipes and then programmed it to create its own recipes. The result: Something called 'Beothurtreed Tuna Pie.' Want to make it? You'll need these ingredients:

- 1 hard-cooked apple mayonnaise
- 5 cup lumps, thinly sliced

Once you have your apple mayo and lumps, "surround with 1 ½ dozen heavy water by high, and drain & cut into ¼ in remaining the skillet."

Another specialty was 'Tart Cover Shrimp Butter Wol', featuring "1 can fried pale fruit to cover that drain." Are you out of fried pale fruit? You might have some rice, though you've probably never used "1 cup grated white rice," as listed in another recipe. Clearly, Betty Crocker can sleep easy.

You Call That Service?

A few years back, the Henn na Hotel in Nagasaki, Japan, hired 243 robots to cover positions ranging from concierge to bellhop. Unfortunately, the check-in robots had trouble answering guests' questions and photocopying passports, while bellhop robots kept banging into walls and tripping over curbs. One in-room assistant sprang to attention every time a lodger snored, saying, "Sorry, I couldn't catch that. Could you repeat your request?" Not long after the experiment began, the hotel 'fired' half of the malfunctioning robots. And they didn't get their tips, either.

Stop the Presses!

In 2017, the *Los Angeles Times* published a story about a 6.8 earthquake that shook Santa Barbara, California. You would expect such a large quake to have gotten a lot of press coverage. And it did ... in 1925, when the earthquake happened. Turns out the report was produced by a computer program called the Quakebot, which generates articles based on notices from the US Geological Survey. When a staffer at

the USGS made an error while updating the historical data, the Quakebot jumped on it as if it were breaking news. Soon, Southern Californians were quaking in their boots over a non-earthquake.

You Look Familiar

Facial recognition software has one problem—it can't always recognize faces. The American Civil Liberties Union proved that point when it used the Amazon Rekognition software to match mug shots of criminals to 28 members of Congress. But what about soccer ball recognition? During a match last year, the Scottish soccer team Inverness Caledonian Thistle FC unveiled AI-programmed video cameras designed to automatically follow the ball. Alas, the cameras constantly mistook the referee's bald head for the soccer ball. One helpful viewer called the team to suggest supplying the ref with a toupee.

Quick, Grab a Broom!

What's the worst a robotic vacuum cleaner can do, right? Let Jesse Newton fill you in. Poor Newton: His new puppy pooped on the floor sometime before 1:30 a.m., while he and his wife were asleep. How did Newton come up with that particular time? "Our Roomba runs at 1:30 a.m. every night," he noted online a week later. "And it found the poop." And so it began: "The Poopastrophe. The Poohpocalypse. The Poopening." The robot vacuum



spread the puppy's load throughout the house, decorating floorboards, furniture legs and rugs, "resulting in a home that closely resembles a Jackson Pollock poop painting," as Newton described it.

Whatever You Do, Don't Anger Sophia

'Sophia' is a social humanoid robot developed by Hanson Robotics. She/it has an attractive face, with a square jaw, high cheekbones and impressive eyebrows. And she can hold a conversation to rival the mere chitchat of Apple's Siri. This is surely the robot of the future. When CEO David Hanson and Sophia appeared on CNBC's *The Pulse*, Hanson asked the robot the question humans have been asking themselves about robots for years: "Sophia, do you want to destroy humans?" Without hesitation, Sophia—smiling a tad too broadly for our taste—responded, "OK, I will destroy humans." Humans, you've been warned. **R**



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ASK AN EXPERT

Is It Good to Be Bored?

We ask psychologist and York University professor, John Eastwood

BY Courtney Shea

ILLUSTRATION BY Lauren Tamaki

◆ **Boredom gets a bad rap. But is there an upside?**

Absolutely. Its function can be compared to that of pain, which provides feedback to prevent us from damaging our body. Boredom does the same work to protect us from stagnation. If we were content to be mentally unoccupied, we might never learn, explore, grow, discover.

◆ **These days, we're constantly stimulated, arguably over-stimulated, by technology. Has it led to a decrease in boredom?**

It may actually be making us more prone to boredom. Technology grabs our attention, but it does that by turning us into objects rather than agents.



Instead of sitting down with our thoughts or complex ideas, we're giving our minds over to a screen—and our capacity for willful focus and attention may atrophy through disuse.

There's also an addiction metaphor that's used: Technology messes with our brain, giving us a constant high, and then we need even more stimulation to feel satisfied, to get that fix.

◆ **Sounds like we need to get better at being bored.**

It's more that we need to engage in activities that might make us feel bored without succumbing to it—like going for a long walk by yourself without your phone.

◆ **Easier said than done. Most people take their phone to the bathroom!**

Absolutely. To move away from that you can practise basic exposure therapy: Head out on an errand without your phone or read something that is longer than a sound bite. Initially you will feel the discomfort of boredom—that urge to reach for your screen. But after a while you won't miss it as much. You may even find you enjoy letting your mind wander.

◆ **Which is different from boredom?**

Getting lost in one's own thoughts is probably the exact opposite of boredom.

◆ **I read about a study where people were left alone in a room to either sit with their own thoughts or electrocute themselves. And a lot of them opted for the latter.**

I know of that experiment. I think it's important to note that for a lot of people the choice to shock themselves may have been based on curiosity, and that no other activity was on offer. That said, there is evidence that non-suicidal self-injurious behaviour is correlated with boredom. For instance, animals in

captivity pull their feathers out when they're under-stimulated.

◆ **It seems like a lot of kids today will say they're bored pretty much any time they're not being entertained.**

There's a lot of pressure on parents these days to treat our kids like buckets that need to be filled with compelling experiences, structuring all their time and never giving them the opportunity to make a choice. The problem with this approach is that kids aren't learning to be agents creating their own meaning in the world.

TECHNOLOGY MESSES WITH OUR BRAIN, GIVING US A CONSTANT HIGH.

◆ **You've also said before that bored kids can play an important role in social progress.**

Right. Young people being 'bored' of their parents' culture is a way they reject the status quo, which is how individuals and society move forward from one generation to the next. If kids didn't get bored of their parents' taste, we would all still be listening to Beethoven. **R**

*John Eastwood, a York University professor, is co-author of *Out of My Skull: The Psychology of Boredom*.*

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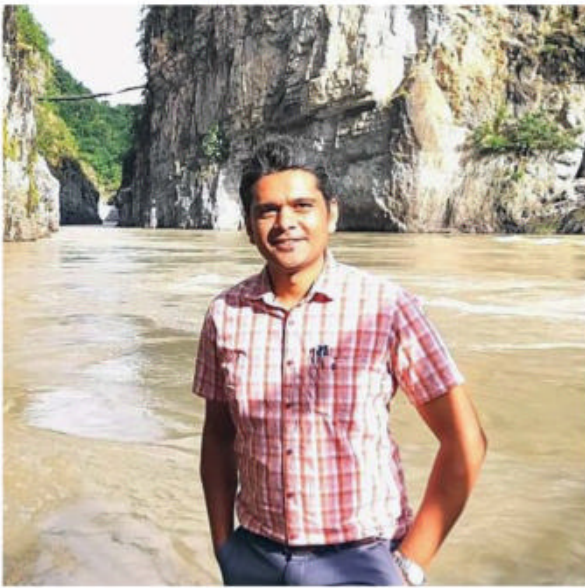
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(Left) IFS Officer Vaibhav Singh; (Right) One of the hundreds of *chal kahls* constructed to harvest rainwater that helps restore the fragile terrain of the Rudraprayag hills.



A Unique Harvest

ENVIRONMENT The verdant hills peppering our country's north may appear to be picture-perfect idylls, but the area is beset by serious problems that remain largely unnoticed by all but local residents. The pine-covered Himalayan region of Rudraprayag, Uttarakhand, for example is plagued by landslides, forest fires and shortage of fresh water supply to settlements. Soil erosion during unpredictable monsoon showers also causes unstable terrain as well as heavy silting and flooding of rivers. But Indian Forest Service officer and Divisional Forest officer Vaibhav Singh

seems up to the task. Under his aegis, several soil preservation measures and rainwater harvesting structures were set up, and the results speak for themselves. Along with trenches, check dams and percolation pits, a total of 612 *chal kahls* (man-made ponds) with the capacity to collect more than 10 million litres of water were made in the last year alone. Around 400 hectares of degraded land has also been restored. It just goes to show that age-old, tried-and-tested techniques, assiduously enforced, can truly change the face of a faltering landscape.

Pulled from the Brink

SERVICE Amidst continuing stresses and crises in everyday lives, and a lack of the required awareness and support for mental-health issues, our ability to cope is very often tested to its very limits and many seek escape by ending it all. Pulling people back from the edge

is no mean task but 45-year-old M. Eshwaraiah from Maheshwaram, Hyderabad, a home-guard officer with the Saroornagar Lake Police, does this time and time again—literally. Over the last six months, he has rescued more than 10 people attempting suicide by diving into Saroornagar Lake. “Most of the people coming to the lake to end their lives are either depressed with family issues or financial problems or relationship issues,” says Eshwaraiah. “I try to reach the person within a few minutes of being alerted by the patrol mobile or the police control room. I put in every possible effort and ensure they do not drown in the lake and pull them out to safety,” Eshwariah says. While alert first-responders like Eshwariah are critical to suicide prevention strategies and save lives, here’s hoping that support systems soon develop enough to make this line of work obsolete.

Drones to the Rescue

TECHNOLOGY In a clear example of using the power of new-age tech for good, students from Government Engineering College in Thrissur have devised a way to use drones to locate stranded, lost or injured people during natural disasters such as floods and landslides particularly in remote areas with low connectivity. The team—Sruthi MS, Nandana VN, Lakshmi S and Manal Jaleel Poovathingal—from the Electrical and Electronics Engineering department devised the innovation for their final-year project under an assistant

professor’s supervision. “The drone uses a feature that marks the location of detected people on a map and transmits real-time information to rescuers,” says Sruthi. “The drone was completed using the parts which were open-sourced. It is cheaper when compared to commercial drones. The technical assistance was provided by the International Centre for Open Source Software,” said the team.

No Mountain Too High

PUBLIC HEALTH For the team of officials in the Tawang district of Arunachal



COVID vaccine drive in remote Domstang

Pradesh, there’s no time to rest when it comes to fulfilling their duty. To ensure no one is left behind in getting the COVID vaccine, the group, led by Tawang District Magistrate, Sang Phuntsok, undertook a nine-hour journey crossing mountains, forests and a river to reach Domstang, a village along the Indo-Tibetan border at 14,000 feet, where 16 locals missed getting their jabs during a special drive conducted in May.

—COMPILED BY ISHANI NANDI

POINTS TO PONDER

I do hope that people can relate and understand it's okay to not be okay, and it's okay to talk about it. There are people who can help, and there is usually light at the end of any tunnel.

Naomi Osaka, tennis player

At Independence, India lost no time in establishing a democracy and writing a Constitution that guaranteed the liberty and equality of all Indians. Yet 70-odd years later, today's India recognizes no such guarantee. In this threatening political climate, Indians who have been schooled in democracy, continue to fight to reclaim their Constitutional rights ... Father Stan Swamy is the latest casualty in this heroic endeavour.

Nayantara Sahgal, writer

Everyone says corruption is everywhere, but for me it seems strange to say that, and then not try to put the people guilty of that corruption away.

Alexei Navalny, lawyer, anti-corruption activist



For the world is movement, and you cannot be stationary in your attitude towards something that is moving.

Henri Cartier-Bresson, *photographer*

Empathy isn't just something that happens to us ... it's also a choice we make: to pay attention, to extend ourselves. It's made of exertion—that dowdier cousin of impulse. Sometimes we care for another because we know we should, or because it's asked for, but this doesn't make our caring. The act of choosing simply means we've committed ourselves to a set of behaviours greater than the sum of our individual inclinations.

Leslie Jamison, *writer*

If you allow fame to get the better of you, you become a nuisance, a public nuisance, a nuisance as a friend, a member of family, a nuisance of yourself.

Dilip Kumar, *actor*

FROM LEFT: ALAMY, SBEOWULF SHEEHAN, YOGEN SHAH

Henri Cartier-Bresson

Leslie Jamison

Dilip Kumar

It Happens
ONLY IN INDIA



“Do you have a swimming licence?”

Filtered Dark

Travel the length and breadth of this republic, and you're bound to find various shades of brown skin, but the long and short of it is we Indians hate melanin. Maybe it is residual colonialism, or colourism, but we're wired to equate a peaches-and-milk complexion with

everything good, successful and joyful. No matter how many our differences, dark-skin bias unites us all. To no one's surprise, Indian content creators flocked to Instagram's latest, fairly problematic, 'blackface' filter. Reels flew fast and wide, portraying how dark skin made them

forlorn, and as they changed back to their lighter tones, happiness flooded their faces. Looks like we'd all benefit from a glow-up in societal attitudes.

Source: indiatoday.in

Fake It Till You Make It

In a tale full of fraud, legal drama and a masterful bluff, 27-year-old

Kerala woman Sessy Xavier managed to establish a thriving legal career, minus an actual law degree. Despite never clearing her LLB exams, Xavier hustled her way into practising for around two years, serving as an office-bearer of the Alappuzha Bar Association and even getting herself appointed as advocate commission by a panel submitted by the bar association.

The con was on till an anonymous letter with the truth about the forged documents she used was received by Alappuzha Bar leaders. She turned up in court, feigned surrender, only to give the cops the slip and is now on the run.

Source: timesofindia.com

Marriage Menagerie

A marriage is a union of love. Or in the case of India, a greedy, dowry extravaganza for the groom's family. One army man from Nashik, for example, went all out, asking that he be gifted a 21-toed tortoise

and a black Labrador, a Buddha statue, a traditional lamp stand and ₹10 lakhs, which they said would be used to get his betrothed a job after marriage. This smorgasbord was demanded over and above the tributes he already received at the engagement. The bride's family's inability to find the tortoise enraged the groom enough to call off the wedding. The bride's side only rushed to file a police complaint when the man refused to give the 'gifts' back. Better late than never!

Source: indianexpress.com

Wedded to Work? Nah!

A recent video to join the viral hall of fame is of a groom, sitting at his wedding altar, tapping away at his laptop. The internet quickly stepped in, tweeting their two cents about 'work-from-home' experiences, only to be quickly corrected by the few guests in attendance. The groom wasn't on duty, but was setting up

video calls for friends and family to attend the wedding virtually.

The lesson, dear reader: Not all is as it seems on the internet.

Source: firstpost.com

A Hairy Situation

Hair is everything! But for hair agents in Madhya Pradesh whose hair parcels, weighing 10 quintal and worth ₹50 lakhs, got nicked from a Howrah-bound train, the hair loss is irreparable. These parcels were on their way to be processed and manufactured into wigs and extensions. The Railway Protection Force is combing the hair-raising case for details. To cut it short, it was a bad hair day.

Source: vice.com 

— COMPILED BY NAOREM ANUJA

Reader's Digest will pay for contributions to this column. Post your suggestions with the source to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com



U.P. IS BECOMING EXPRESS PRADESH

August month of year 2021 will usher in new era of development in Uttar Pradesh when country's longest Puravanchal expressway will be inaugurated. It has been decided to inaugurate this expressway in August which is being constructed by UPEIDA, Uttar Pradesh industrial expressways development authority under the directions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Purvanchal expressway will give impetus to development in eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh. The 341 km long six lane (expendable to 8 lane) Poorvanchal expressway from Haidariya in Ghazipur to Chand Sarai in Lucknow has been constructed by Yogi Adityanath for the development of eastern part of state and to connect the state capital Lucknow with the cities like Sultanpur, Ambedkar Nagar, Amethi, Ayodhya and economically backward districts like Azamgarh, Mau and Ghazipur. The Purvanchal expressway starts from village Chand Sarai in district



“
Today Identity of Uttar Pradesh is getting stronger as express Pradesh. Work on 5 mega projects of connectivity worth thousands crore rupees is going on in UP.”

— Narendra Modi,
Prime Minister of India

Lucknow which is on Lucknow Sultanpur road (NH 731) and ends at 18 km before UP-Bihar border at it National Highway number 31. It will benefit districts like Lucknow Barabanki Amethi Ayodhya Sultanpur Ambedkar Nagar Azamgarh Mau and Ghazipur. With the development of this expressway the eastern region

of the state would not only be connected to the state Capital but also further to the national capital through easy and smooth corridor of Agra Lucknow expressway and Yamuna expressway. Prime Minister Narendra Modi started the Purvanchal expressway project from Azamgarh on 14 July 2018.

AN EXPRESSWAY WITH MANY SPECIALITIES

The Purvanchal expressway has many special features. Instead of stones being laid on either side of the road Purvanchal expressway has honeycomb shaped geocells on both sides of road. To strengthen the quality of roads crumb rubber modified bitumen was used instead of ordinary bitumen in this expressway. To prevent the accidents crush barriers have been installed on both sides of the median on this expressway.

EXPRESSWAY PARALLEL TO GANGA

The process of land purchase has been started from January 21 for Ganga expressway for 594 km long Ganga expressway which is longer even then the Purvanchal expressway. The cabinet under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath approved the Ganga expressway project on 24th November 2020. Yogi government has set the target to lay the foundation stone of Ganga expressway in June. This expressway will pave way for smooth travel from Haridwar to Varanasi through prayagraj on parallel to river Ganga which will attract development.



EXPRESSWAY NETWORK IS SPREADING IN UTTAR PRADESH

PURVANCHAL EXPRESSWAY

DISTRICTS BENEFITED

From Chand Sarai village in Lucknow to haidariya village in Ghazipur through Barabanki Amethi Sultanpur Faizabad Ambedkar Nagar Azamgarh and Mau

LENGTH

340.24 km

COST

Total estimated cost **Rs. 23349** crores (including the cost of land), construction cost **Rs 11836** crores

SPECIALITY

Access controlled expressway six lane (Expendable to 8 lane), it has 7 railway over bridges, 7 big bridges, 220 underpasses and 3.2 km long airstrip.

PRESENT STATUS: Almost 100% work of expressway is complete

BUNDELKHAND EXPRESSWAY

DISTRICT BENEFITED

From Bharat koop in chitrkut district to bevar in Etawah on Agra Lucknow expressway through Banda Hamirpur Mahoba Jalaun and Auraiya

LENGTH

296.070 km

COST

Along with the cost of land **Rs. 14849** crores.

SPECIALITY

Access controlled expressway 4 lane (Expendable to 6 lane), service lane along with one side of whole expressway

PRESENT STATUS: 75% work of expressway is complete.

GORAKHPUR LINK EXPRESSWAY

DISTRICT BENEFITED

From village Jaitpur at Gorakhpur bypass to Purvanchal expressway in Azamgarh through Ambedkar Nagar sant Kabir Nagar.

LENGTH

91.352km

COST

including all expenses total cost is **Rs. 5876.68** crores

SPECIALITY

4 lane expressway which is Expendable to 6 lane, service lane along with one side of whole expressway except big bridges

PRESENT STATUS: 70% work of expressway construction is complete.

GANGA EXPRESSWAY

DISTRICT BENEFITED

From kila Parikshit garh road in Meerut to jhusi-sahson road in prayagraj true Amroha Bulandshahar badaun Shahjahanpur farukhabad Hardoi kannoj Unnao Raebareli and Pratapgarh

LENGTH

596 km

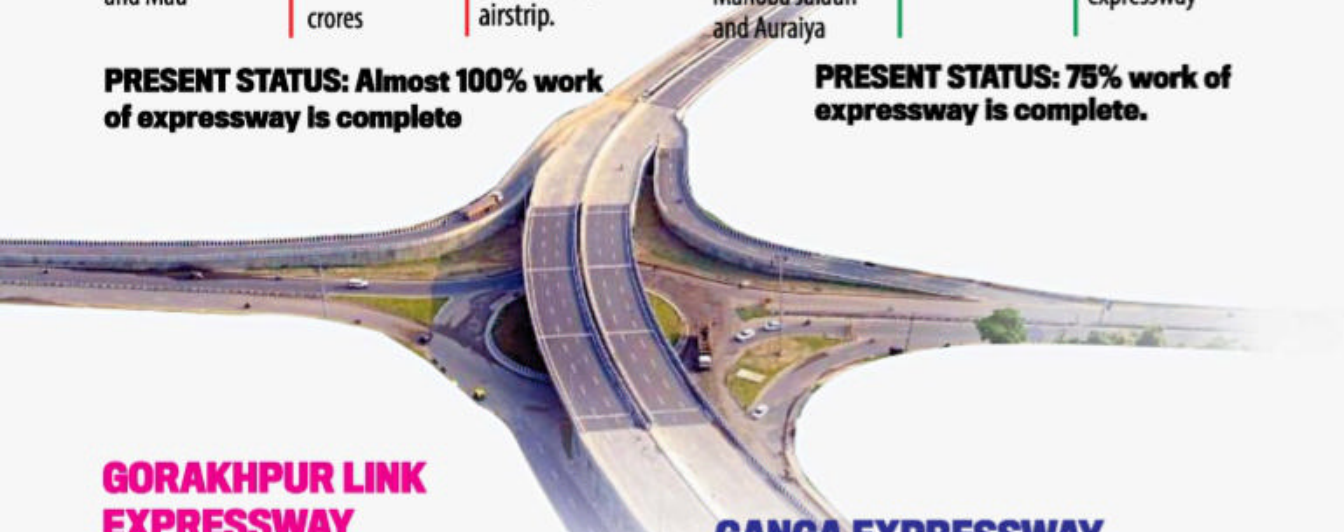
COST

The estimated cost of expressway is **Rs.36402** crore

SPECIALITY

The longest Greenfield expressway of country. six lane (Expendable to 8 lane),

PRESENT STATUS: Process of land purchase for the project continue





state government has purchased wheat from 12.88 lakh farmers. Till now around 56.25 Lakh metric ton wheat has been purchased from the farmers. Farmers have got direct benefit from the scheme of wheat purchase. Last year the government purchased around 35.76 lakh metric ton wheat in the same period.

RECORD PAYMENT TO FARMERS

In the last 4 years Yogi Government has made a payment of around 32000 crore rupees to the paddy producers of the state. This is a record payment to the paddy farmers in the state. In the matter of payment to the wheat farmers, the Yogi Government has also left behind former governments. In the last four years the state government has made the payment of around 40099.83 crore rupees to more than 46.33 lakh wheat farmers. With the policy for the payment of each and every grain of the farmers yield, the state government has made the payment of 6663.32 crore rupees for purchase of 42.90 lakh metric ton paddy in the year 2017-18. In 2018-19 payment of 8449.39 crore rupees was made for purchase of 48.25 lakh metric ton and in year 2019-20 payment of 10274.25 crore rupees was made

YOGI GOVERNMENT STOOD UP TO THE EXPECTATIONS OF FARMERS

Development of the state cannot take place without making villages and farmers happy and prosperous. The Government of Yogi Adityanath is continuously making efforts keeping this statement in mind. The various schemes of the yogi government have not only increased the income of farmers but also strengthened the rural economy. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stood firmly with the farmers during lockdown in covid pandemic. Yogi ensured that farmers must not face any problem during this period. It not only increased the confidence of farmers in the policies of the yogi government but they also felt that their future was secured. How the efficient policies of Yogi Adityanath proved beneficial for farmers, can be seen in the government purchase of wheat and paddy. The

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's policy of transparent purchase of wheat and paddy and continuous supervision of purchase centres has been successful. Chief Minister Yogi once again stood up to the expectations of farmers. Uttar Pradesh became the first state in the country to achieve the target of paddy purchase two months before the set time. The Yogi government created a record by purchasing 60 lakh metric ton paddy against the target of 55 lakh metric ton. The Yogi government of Uttar Pradesh has purchased wheat from more than 12.88 lakh farmers during covid period which is highest in the history of the state. Because of the policies of the yogi government for farmers they are getting facilities as well as the price of their grain. UP started the wheat purchase in April and till now, the



The farmers of Uttar Pradesh will get the maximum benefit of Aatmnirbhar Bharat abhiyan. Now the food providers can sell their produce even outside of Mandi while they can fix the rate of yield at the time of sowing.

— Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India



for a purchase of 56.47 lakh metric ton paddy. Yogi government also made arrangement for government procurement of mustard, Bengal gram and masoor on MSP under the the tilhan and dalhan category. Along with it, the government decided to make procurement from the door step of those farmers who were not able to reach the market to sell their yield.

EFFORTS FOR INCREASING INCOME ARE SHOWING RESULTS

Immediately after becoming the chief minister of state Yogi Adityanath started his efforts to double the income of farmers. In his first step Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath fixed the responsibility of 28 departments and prepared a detailed work plan. In this plan the efforts started to eliminate the shortcomings of the agriculture sector for the benefit of farmers. A program called the million farmers school was organised to provide updated technical information of farming to the farmers and to inform them about other challenges. This five day-long training program is organised in two sessions Rabi and kharif. These schools are organised on Panchayat bhawan, chaupal or any public place by trained workers and agriculture scientists. Around 60 to 100 farmers attend each school. Along with providing them updated information regarding activities like bee farming, fisheries, animal husbandry, marketing, sugarcane, horticulture, silk and agriculture the staff also answer their queries. More than 55 lakh farmers have got training from 'the million farmers school'. This initiative has increased the income of farmers.

EVERY POSSIBLE HELP TO THE FOOD GROWER

LOAN WAIVER

Loan waiver of small and marginal farmers with an amount of 36000 crore rupees. Distribution of 3 lakh 58 crore rupees Agriculture loan.

SAMMAN NIDHI

Transfer of more than 32497 crore rupees in the accounts of 2.48 crore farmers under Pradhan mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana.

INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE

The 1803 crore rupees subsidy amount due on agriculture investments was transferred into accounts of farmers. Distribution of more than 4 crore soil health cards.

CROP INSURANCE

Around 2 crore 5 lakh farmers have been associated with Pradhan mantri fasal Bima Yojana. 2206 crore rupees as claim was transferred into accounts of more than 25.59 lakh farmers till date.

MANDI FEE

First time 45 agro products in state became free of Mandi tax. Mandi fee was also reduced by 1%. The income of Mandi Parishad increased by 866 crore rupees..

ASSISTANCE SCHEME

First time in state Kisan Accident Insurance Scheme for farmers and middlemen implemented

MANDI PLACES

27 Mandis were upgraded and 220 new Mandi places were setup. Business of 6812 crore rupees through 125 Mandis in National agricultural market scheme.

SAMRIDDI AAYOG

First time formation of Uttar Pradesh Kisan Samman samridhi aayog. Provision of 500 crore rupees for Mukhymantri Krishak Durghatna Kalyan Yojana.

MODERNIZATION

Modernization and expansion of 20 sugar mills of the state along with reopening of pipraich, munderwa and ramala sugar mills.

KHANDSARI UNITS

Free of cost licence renewal for refunctioning of already established khandsari units. Licence issued for 267 new khandsari units.

E-NAM MANDI

Establishment of 291 E-NAM mandis in Uttar Pradesh and association of 18 lakh farmers and 34 thousand businessmen with them.





CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIES IN YOGI GOVERNMENT

During the first and second wave of covid pandemic when economic activities were slow all over the world, at the same time in Uttar Pradesh the policies of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were attracting entrepreneurs. Help desk was formed to attract foreign investment during covid period. Foreign investors were contacted through their embassies. Proposals of investors were processed early through a single window system. So in this way, the ease of doing business environment created during the Yogi Government is attracting foreign investors. And the result is that in Uttar Pradesh local as well as foreign companies have shown interest in investment. As per the data of industrial development department in last one year 44 foreign investors have given their investment proposal worth 16732 crore rupees to the state government. The Yogi government is also working fastly at every level to materialise these investment proposals. State received 96 investment proposals of local and foreign investors worth 66000 crore

rupees between March 2020 to May 2021. These include 40 foreign investor's proposals. Out of these proposals 22 investment proposals worth more than hundred crore rupees and will invest around 16732 crore rupees in the state. Government acted swiftly on these investment proposals and land has been made available for it. Very soon the construction work on these industries of foreign investors will start.

COMPANIES STARTED COMING TO UP FROM CHINA

As per the officials of the industrial development department 7 Japanese companies, 2 companies from Canada, 4 from Germany, 1 from Hong Kong, 2 from Singapore, 3 from United Kingdom, 5 from the United States and 4 Korean companies are investing in the state. This includes famous companies like AiKa and Microsoft. Microsoft is making an investment of 1800 crore rupees in the establishment of a Software Park in the state. Maximum foreign companies who

gave the proposal for investment want to set up their units in Noida greater Noida, Jewar and Agra. One shoe making company who returned from China has already started its production in Agra. This company is investing 300 crore rupees in Agra. Officials of the state are in touch with foreign investors for establishment of the investment proposals in Uttar Pradesh so that their problems, if any, can be solved. Once the production will start in these companies who have come forward for investment in the state, lakhs of people will get employment directly or indirectly.

INVESTMENT IN SMALL DISTRICTS

The flow of foreign investment is not restricted only to big cities like Gautam Budh Nagar, Ghaziabad, Lucknow and Agra but small cities like Etah, Amroha, Mirzapur are also attracting foreign investment. According to the latest report of the Central government's department of promotion of industries and internal trade UP is among top 10 states in terms of foreign investment. Sectors like computer, hardware, service sector, software, telecommunication, mobile set manufacturing, and automobile manufacturing are attracting foreign investment in Uttar Pradesh. The Yogi government has made the arrangement of online MOU for the comfort of local and foreign investors. This will make the process of MoU easy and investors are also finding it comfortable to materialise their

investment proposals. To connect the non resident Indians for direct investment in Uttar Pradesh UPNRI portal has been connected with Indian embassies in one and half dozen countries. This includes countries like America, Canada, Thailand , Ghana and Angola. The NRIs living in these countries, especially from Indian origin, are not only understanding the cultural heritage of Uttar Pradesh but also knowing the opportunity to invest in a changing Uttar Pradesh.

EMPLOYMENT GENERATION FROM INDUSTRIES

922 big and small industrial units are being set up in 15 districts of Uttar Pradesh including Mathura, Chitrkut Unnao and Ghaziabad. These units will soon start functioning. In the covid period these industries have not only got the land early but many investors have started setting up their industries units also. This will provide employment to at least 50,000 people in the state. In Mathura, Pepsico is establishing a plant with an investment of 750 crore rupees. This company will provide employment to 1600 people from January next year. Investment of 400 crore rupees is taking place in Chitrakoot in the food processing sector. In the same way 17 big companies are making investments of 8625 crore rupees in different parts of the state. These include Bharat petroleum, Yara fertilizer, ITC Berger paints, UK paints, Neele Scot, forever distillery Godrej and Hindustan lever.



GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ARE GIVING RESULTS

INVEST UP

Invest UP has been formed under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for inviting investment. Online tracking portal has been launched to make the process easy and simple for monitoring of MOUs signed for setting up the industries.

INVESTOR'S FRIENDLY POLICY

UP has adopted a new industry policy. 21 new investor friendly policies have been made. Launch of Nivesh Mitra portal which includes 227 services. With the help of the portal 97849 NOCs issued to entrepreneurs.

INVESTOR SUMMIT

MoUs signed for investment of 4.68 lakh crore rupees in investor's summit. 371 projects worth almost 3 lakh crore rupees are functional.

DEFENCE CORRIDOR

Work started on Defence industrial manufacturing corridor. The target is to generate 5 lakh employment through investment of 50000 crore rupees. 14 MoUs signed for defence corridor. Investment of 11910 crore rupees till date.

LICENCE APPROVAL

Arrangement of providing different licence approvals within 72 hours to new industries. The industry will not be inspected for 1000 days. Loans worth 42700 crore rupees were distributed to 12.91 lakh units under Aatmnirbhar Bharat package.

LAND TO INDUSTRIES

Revenue code amendment ordinance 2020 has made it easy to change the use of land in case of agricultural land so that it can be used for industrial and commercial purposes.

MANUFACTURING CLUSTER

3 electronics manufacturing clusters worth 40 thousand crore rupees are being set up in the state. It will generate employment for 4 lakh people. Samsung mobile unit already established in Noida.

THE POWER OF NO

Why it's okay to
turn down favours

BY *Leah Rumack*

ILLUSTRATION BY *Ally Jaye Reeves*

KAREN CHAPELLE, a 50-year-old metal-work artist in Toronto, has always had trouble saying no when people ask her for favours. Usually, she'll respond with a knee-jerk yes—and just as often find herself regretting it.

“It's a natural thing for me to want to help people,” says Chapelle. “It's a good feeling to be useful and needed.” The problem, she adds, is that she has



unintentionally trained everyone in her life to expect a yes to their requests, no matter what they are.

Chappelle knows her 'okaying' to favours, whether requested by co-workers, friends or her family, often at the expense of her own finances, time or mental health, isn't good for her. But it's been a hard habit to break.

Many of us get sucked into saying yes—even when we'd really rather not—to avoid conflict, because we feel sorry for others, or because we even feel ashamed when we put ourselves first. If you have difficulty figuring out when, or how, to say no, here are some tips for breaking the cycle of what one psychologist calls "the disease to please."

PRIORITIZE YOUR TIME

Learning how to take better care of yourself often goes hand in hand with learning that you're allowed to put your own needs and wants first, and that doing so doesn't make you a jerk. In fact, consistently putting yourself last is likely to leave you drained and annoyed—a sure path to jerky behaviour.

Dr Susan Newman is an American social psychologist and the author of *The Book of No: 365 Ways to Say It and Mean It—and Stop People-Pleasing Forever*. Newman's book argues that always being there for others (to your own detriment) doesn't necessarily make you a nicer person; it just makes you miserable.

To turn down favours without guilt—or with less guilt, anyway—Newman says to remember that saying yes in the moment means you'll have to say no to somebody or something else later on. View it, she says, as a time management issue as opposed to a good-person-o'meter.

"A lot of us tend to think we can always fit one more thing in," she says. "But the more you say yes to someone, the more you're going to be targeted." Always being the go-to person can be flattering at first, she adds, until you realize you have no time left for yourself.

Newman says it can be useful to make a list of the people whom you want to help, and decide in advance what your general boundaries are when it comes to demands on your time. Do you exercise every day at three? Do you need to be in bed by nine? Do you have a standing lunch date every Saturday? Keep these things in mind when you're considering adding to your load the parent council fundraiser.

If you don't want to completely turn someone down, Newman suggests putting specific limits on the scope of the ask instead—and sticking to it. "Keeping in mind your own needs isn't selfish," she says, "it's self-preservation."

LISTEN TO YOUR GUT

How can you tell if the favour that's being asked of you is one you're going to resent doing later? Oh, you'll know.

As the bestselling author Sarah Knight put it in her 2019 self-help book *F*ck No!: How to Stop Saying Yes When You Can't, You Shouldn't, or You Just Don't Want To*, any time she felt saying yes was a bad idea, a little warning voice piped up in her head. She had to learn to stop stifling it. In time, the more she truthfully said no to things she didn't want to do, the more she was able to get in tune with herself and give other things an enthusiastic yes.

"If it's something you really want to do, you don't tense up when you're asked," explains Newman, "and you're happy to do it because it's for someone you trust will likely reciprocate at some point down the road." While favours aren't a scoresheet that need to be perfectly balanced, she adds, nobody wants to feel like they're at the mercy of a 'user' or a 'taker'—that person who is always asking for something and rarely plans on giving anything back.

Newman says it's always prudent to be wary of classic taker tactics, such as flattery ("Oh, but you have to make the baby shower cake because you're the best at it!"); playing on your sympathies ("I've just been so busy with my sick iguana, I haven't been able to work enough hours to pay rent"); or pressuring you for an immediate answer so you don't have time to consider your options.

SAY THE WORD

OK, so you've made your chosen people lists, you've figured out your

personal boundaries, and you've decided that no, your neighbour cannot borrow your lawn mower again. But how do you actually say no without damaging your relationships or stressing yourself out?

"Avoid lengthy explanations," counsels Newman. "As soon as you say, 'Oh, I can't because I have to walk my mother-in-law's dog,' you're leaving wiggle room for them to debate with you." It's sufficient to simply say, "No, I can't do it."

If that kind of bluntness makes you uncomfortable, Newman suggests keeping at the ready phrases like "Maybe next time" and "Thanks for asking, but I'm overloaded right now."

Most importantly, she says, don't waste time worrying that the person you've refused is sitting around thinking about what a pill you are. They're probably not thinking about you at all and have already moved on to their next target.

Chapelle jokes that she's spent "many, many" hours in therapy learning how to say no to favours, but it still doesn't come easily to her. She's working on being able to say no sometimes and not feel terrible for doing so. Often she still does feel guilty, but she's learning to live with it.

Her new attitude has come with some valuable lessons: "When you never say no, people take advantage of you, and if you start doing favours for the wrong person, you can get into a lot of trouble." **R**

13 THINGS

Scent-sational News About Smell

BY *Emily Goodman*



1 WHEN ASKED in 2018 which sense they would miss most if they lost it, smell came in dead last—only two per cent of respondents picked it. Then came COVID-19. In early 2020, ear, nose and throat doctors around the world saw an unusual number of patients who had unaccountably lost their sense of smell. Many of these specialists then developed the same condition, and some became very ill.

Suddenly, the stepchild sense took centre stage.

2 RESEARCHERS SOON realized that smell loss is a leading indicator of COVID-19. Those infected with the virus are 27 times more likely than noninfected people to exhibit smell dysfunction—but only two and a half times more likely to run a fever. Some public health

experts started proposing using smell tests—not temperature checks—to screen people for the virus.

3 SCIENTISTS STILL don't fully understand the link between smell and COVID-19. While they know that patients who *don't* lose their sense of smell are more likely to be hospitalized and placed on a ventilator, they don't know why. Perhaps most worrying, they don't know whether this virus's adeptness at invading noses indicates similar skill at invading brains. (The smell receptors at the top of our noses are connected to the base of our brains.)

4 SMELL LOSS could also be an early warning sign of Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia, or autoimmune diseases such as lupus. These disorders can shrink or otherwise disrupt the parts of our brains that process smell.

Smell dysfunction is also the most common early symptom reported by Parkinson's patients—even before they begin to experience motor-related symptoms.

5 THAT SAID, if your sniffer isn't as sharp as it used to be, don't panic. Our sense of smell naturally declines as we age. A third of people in their 80s can't smell at all. Smoking dulls the sense too (one more reason to quit). But you can boost your smelling savvy with a bit of training. Vary what you eat and focus on food's aromas—our sense is strongest when we're hungry.

6 IF SEEING is believing, smelling is tasting. Our palates are almost entirely dependent on our ability to smell. While taste buds distinguish among broad categories of flavour such as sweet and salty, it's the receptors in our nasal cavities that parse out the pasta from the pastrami.

7 WOMEN HAVE keener noses than men, perhaps because they have as many as 50 per cent more cells in the part of the brain that processes smell. Studies have shown that women are better able to identify and distinguish among scents than men.

8 PREGNANT WOMEN have especially sensitive noses. One theory is that the increased sensitivity during pregnancy reduces the likelihood of the mother ingesting toxins. On the other hand, depression literally depresses our ability to smell.

9 WHILE NO SCENT is universally 'good' or 'bad', our negative response to odours we perceive as foul is detectable during an MRI brain scan. The smell/mind connection is such that smell can play a role in the treatment of PTSD. Most current approaches try to teach trauma victims

to suppress their fear memories, but they must first be able to recall those memories. Suggestive smells can help trigger them.


10 SCENT ALSO heightens our positive experiences. A Dutch museum recently took advantage of this by surrounding Jan Willem Pieneman's painting *The Battle of Waterloo* with a unique fragrance combination of gunpowder, sweat and a perfume called 4711 Eau de Cologne, which is the one Napoleon wore.

11 HUMANS MIGHT not have the greatest sniffers in the animal kingdom, but we're sharper than we might think. People willing to crawl through

grass like dogs are perfectly capable of finding and following a scent trail. The species with the strongest sense of smell, however, also has the biggest schnoz: the African elephant. Elephants are so sensitive to scent that they can smell water from 19 km away.

12 PEOPLE WITH anosmia have no sense of smell. Unable to detect odours such as smoke or spoiled milk, they are twice as likely to succumb to fire and food poisoning than those with the sense intact. Most causes of anosmia are the result of illness or head injury (car accidents are a leading cause). Those who are born with it often don't realize it until their teens, as

children aren't screened for smell disorders the way they are for vision and hearing problems.

13 COMPANIES IN France and Canada are developing devices that mimic our sense of smell and can be built into home appliances to create ovens that shut themselves off when they detect burning and refrigerators that alert you when produce is at its peak ripeness. Imagine all the wasted food we could save—not to mention never burning another piece of toast. 

SOURCES: *Intechopen.com*, *Learnaboutcovid19.org*, *Medicalnewstoday.com*, *Medpagetoday.org*, *Ncbi.nlm.nih.gov*, *Npr.org*, *nytimes.com*, *Statnews.com*, *Thehealthy.com*, *Thespoon.tech*, *Vumc.org*, *Worldatlas.com*, *Yougov.com*, *Zdnet.com*



Matching Wedding Bandwidths

Before you marry a person, you should first make them use a computer with slow Internet to see who they really are.

WILL FERRELL, COMEDIAN

LAUGH LINES

When the pandemic is over, my greatest hope is that people at concerts have forgotten how to slowly wave their hands back and forth over their heads.
—[@scullymike](#)

At what point after the pandemic will you be able to clear your throat without everyone looking at you funny?
—[@Imhere4ever](#)

I'm not whether to be proud or concerned that after over a year of pandemic life, I now know my debit card details off by heart. This could be dangerous in the future.
—[@Casual_Heresy](#)

Just wanna announce ahead of time that after the pandemic ends I will be grunting at you like a caveman because I forgot how to talk.
—[@RobDen-Bleyker](#)

I am going to continue to wear a mask, my face is worthy of a paywall.
—[@hansmollman](#)

The first date I have after this pandemic might end up being a proposal
—[@y2shaf](#)



Post-Pandemic Pointers



News FROM THE
**WORLD OF
MEDICINE**

MULTIVITAMIN BENEFITS INCLUDE ILLUSION

Millions of us take a multivitamin every day—and we feel as if we’re getting results. In a Harvard-led investigation, people who used these supplements rated their overall health, on average, 30 per cent higher than non-users’ self-assessments. It turns out, though, that both groups actually had comparable levels of well-being, both physical and mental. It’s possible that people with a more positive outlook are more attracted to multivitamins or that taking them promotes a healthy self-image.

Stressed? A Pet Video Can Help

It turns out that watching cat videos on the Internet may actually do some good. We already know that hanging out with pets in real life can relieve stress, but now a British trial suggests that watching adorable animals on a screen can trigger a similar effect on your blood pressure. The next time you’re feeling a bit anxious, spending some time with cute critters online might help.

Dancing Helps Seniors Stay on Their Feet

Worldwide, almost a third of people over 65 take a tumble each year. Dance activities such as tango, folk dancing, or swing reduce this risk by around 37 percent, according to a new review. This is likely because dancing improves balance, mobility, and lower-body strength.

CHOOSE AN EXERCISE APP THAT SUITS YOUR PERSONALITY

If sticking with an exercise habit is a challenge for you, there may be an app for that. In a University of Pennsylvania trial, smartphone games helped subjects become more active.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three versions of a game that recorded how many steps they took each week. The first version placed them in direct competition with others. In the second version, they worked as a group to gain points. In the third, players earned points on their own but were asked to designate a friend or family member to be their supporter. This person received an e-mail each week reporting on the player's performance in order to help cheer her or him on.

On average, all three groups racked up more steps than usual. That said, certain versions of the game worked better for people with different personality traits. For instance, players who were more outgoing and more motivated to persevere with their goals tended to accumulate more steps in the competitive mode. In contrast, introverts responded well to the game whether it was competitive, collaborative, or supportive. A third type, made up of those prone to taking risks with their health and safety (by not wearing a seat belt, for example), was not helped by the game at all.

So though not all of us benefit, exercise gamification can work—and work especially well when you keep your personality in mind as you choose from among the many available apps.

Overeating Is OK (Once in a While)

We all overindulge from time to time, and it's nothing to stress over. For a study that sounds more fun than most, healthy young men ate as much pizza as they could in one sitting: 3,000 calories, on average. Their blood sugar didn't climb more than it would after a normal meal, and fat levels were only slightly elevated. Frequent overeating can lead to obesity, diabetes and other issues, but the odd indulgence likely won't create major metabolic consequences.

Screen for Hep-C

Hepatitis C is a liver infection that often goes undetected for years, until serious complications, such as liver scarring, arise. The US Preventive Services Task Force recommends Hep-C screening for ages 18 to 79, given that treatment now exists to provide a safe and quick cure. **R**



HUMOUR *in*
UNIFORM

During our introduction to Vietnam, the instructor warned us about the deadly sea snakes in the South China Sea. "If one of those snakes bites you," he said ominously, "you'll take three steps and drop dead."

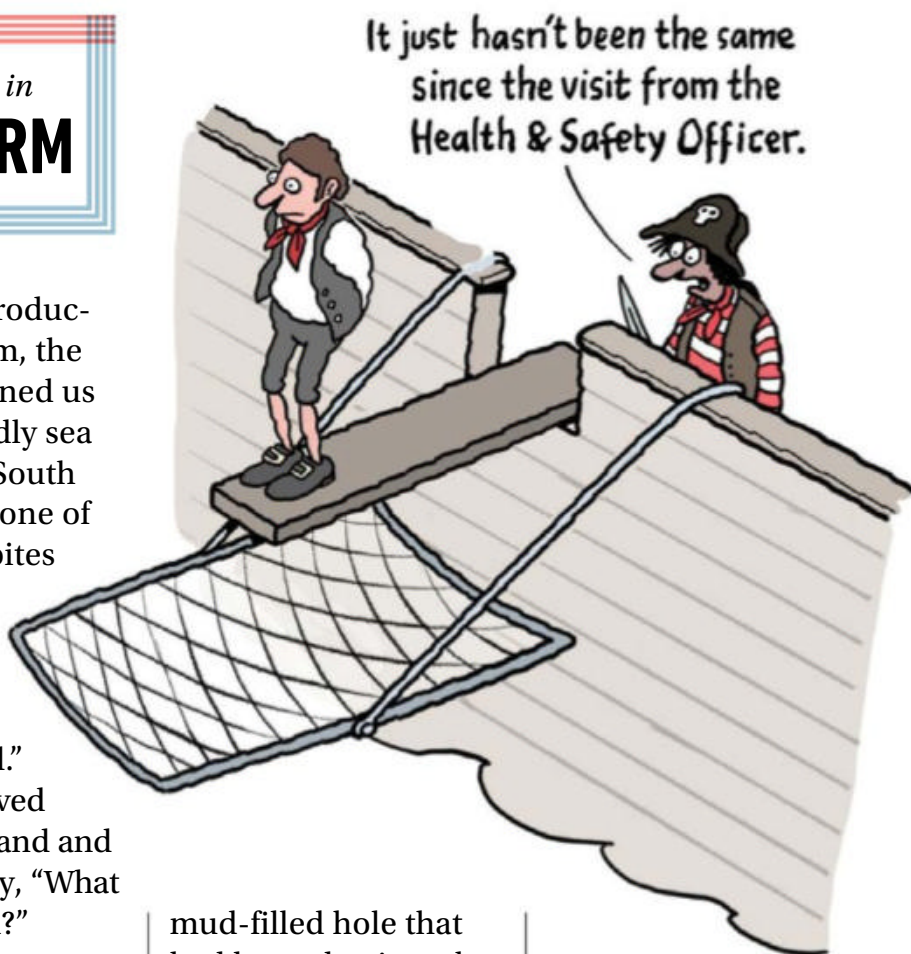
A newly arrived GI raised his hand and asked hopefully, "What if we stand still?"

—DICK CRISLIP

When I lost my rifle, the Army charged me \$85. That's why in the Navy, the captain goes down with the ship.

DICK GREGORY,
comedian

While serving in Vietnam, my friend and his buddies were hunkered down in a



mud-filled hole that had been dug into the side of a berm and covered with lumber for protection. Their one extravagance: a bare light bulb they'd hung from the 'ceiling'.

One guy was reading a newspaper article from back home about a congressional investigation into why some troops were living in relative luxury. The guy

put down the paper, turned to my friend, and said, "Well, there goes the light bulb."

—JAMES VALOUCH,
FROM *rd.com*

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email us at editor.india@rd.com

VOTED BY CONSUMERS

**TRUSTED
BRAND**

— 2021 —

Reader's
Digest

**TRUSTED
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2021

WINNERS

READER'S DIGEST | AUGUST 2021

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View all results at <https://www.readersdigest.in/tb-winner/>



ADVERTISING FEATURE

Trusted Brand Special Supplement

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNERS

Bata®



INTRODUCTION

The Brands We Trust

*R*eaders Digest launched Trusted Brand in 1998, as a way to uncover India's most trustworthy brands with the help of its readers. Honouring excellence and quality, the Reader's Digest Trusted Brand awards are now a benchmark in the Indian marketplace. Our winners have built a longstanding relationship with consumers, allowing them to stay relevant in a mercurial market and obtain the seal of customer approval.

For the past 23 years, consumers have picked their favourite brands across segments and categories, sharing with us the factors that influence their purchases, including value for money, consistent quality, innovation and excellent customer service. These years of research allow us to confidently dissect the qualities that top brands embody as well as measure brand performance against the yardstick of customer approval and satisfaction. This is particularly useful in India's ever evolving market, where the customer is spoilt for choice.



The Reader's Digest Trusted Brand award continues to serve as a buyer's guide to the Indian consumer, allowing them to make decisions regarding their product choice by enlisting only those brands that have kept and maintained the trust and loyalty of a discerning public for several years.

The following pages contain some of India's most trusted and best-loved brands. Our winners have continued to stay in step with changing consumer needs and have become wonderful success stories over the years. ■



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METHODOLOGY

How We Conducted the Survey

For the last 23 years the annual Reader's Digest Trusted Brand survey has showcased Asia's most trusted brands. 2021 marks the 16th edition of the survey in India. Conducted in collaboration with Ipsos, one of the world's largest market research companies, the survey has established itself as a premier consumer-based, international measure of brand preference.

A representative sample of 3,750 people across 17 cities were surveyed online. Respondents were asked to name their most trusted brands across 44 categories. The participants were then requested to select 'Most Trusted Brand' out of the ones given and further rate their choice of 'Most Trusted Brand' on a predefined list of attributes on a scale of 1 to 5. To ascertain the Trusted Brand winners, the composite scores for each brand were arrived at through the collation of the stated and derived scores. For statistical accuracy, the data was weighted to



reflect the population distribution of the respondents.

The results of the 2021 Reader's Digest Trusted Brand survey aims to accurately reflect consumer preferences, and identify and award brands that have earned the seal of consumer approval by maintaining brand excellence and the highest level of quality and integrity. ■

ADVERTISING FEATURE
Trusted Brand Special Supplement



ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

AUTOMOBILES

CATEGORY	BRAND
FOUR WHEELERS	HONDA
	HYUNDAI
	MAHINDRA
	MARUTI SUZUKI
	TATA MOTORS
TWO WHEELERS	BAJAJ
	HERO
	HONDA
	MAHINDRA
	ROYAL ENFIELD
TYRES	APOLLO TYRES
	BRIDGESTONE
	CEAT
	JK TYRES
	MRF TYRES



ADVERTISING FEATURE

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ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

CATEGORY	BRAND
AIR CONDITIONER	BLUE STAR
	LG
	SAMSUNG
	VOLTAS
	WHIRLPOOL
AIR PURIFIER	GODREJ
	LG
	PANASONIC
	PHILIPS
	WHIRLPOOL

ADVERTISING FEATURE
Trusted Brand Special Supplement



ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

CATEGORY	BRAND
REFRIGERATOR	GODREJ
	LG
	PANASONIC
	SAMSUNG
	WHIRLPOOL
VACUUM CLEANER	BOSCH
	KENT
	LG
	PANASONIC
	PHILIPS



ADVERTISING FEATURE

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ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

FINANCIAL SERVICES

CATEGORY	BRAND
CREDIT CARDS (INTERNATIONAL BANKS)	AMERICAN EXPRESS
	CITI BANK
	HSBC
	STANDARD CHARTERED
INSURANCE (GENERAL)	BAJAJ ALLIANZ GENERAL INSURANCE
	HDFC ERGO GENERAL INSURANCE
	ICICI LOMBARD INSURANCE
	SBI GENERAL INSURANCE
	TATA AIG GENERAL INSURANCE
PAYMENT WALLETS	AMAZON PAY
	BHIM
	GOOGLE PAY
	PAYTM
	PHONEPE

ADVERTISING FEATURE
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ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

FOOD AND BEVERAGES

CATEGORY	BRAND
PICKLES AND SAUCES	DEL MONTE
	EVEREST
	KISSAN
	MOTHER'S RECIPE
	NILON'S
READY TO COOK AND FROZEN FOOD	AMUL
	MAGGI
	MCCAIN
	MOTHER DAIRY
	MTR



ADVERTISING FEATURE

Trusted Brand Special Supplement

ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

HEALTH AND PERSONAL CARE

CATEGORY	BRAND
PAIN RELIEF OINTMENTS	HIMALAYA
	IODEX
	MOOV
	TIGER BALM
	VOLINI

ADVERTISING FEATURE
Trusted Brand Special Supplement



ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

HOME IMPROVEMENT

CATEGORY	BRAND
CEMENT	ACC
	AMBUJA
	INDIA CEMENT
	JK CEMENT
	ULTRATECH
FURNISHINGS	D'DECOR
	GODREJ
	NILKAMAL
	PEPPERFRY
	URBAN LADDER



ADVERTISING FEATURE

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ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

HOME IMPROVEMENT

CATEGORY	BRAND
MATTRESSES	CENTUARY
	DUROFLEX
	GODREJ
	KURLON
	SLEEPWELL
MODULAR KITCHEN	GODREJ INTERIO
	HAFELE
	HETTICH
	JOHNSON KITCHENS
	KOHLER

ADVERTISING FEATURE
Trusted Brand Special Supplement



ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

PERSONAL PRODUCTS

CATEGORY	BRAND
FOOTWEAR	ADIDAS
	BATA
	NIKE
	PUMA
	REEBOK
PENS	CELLO
	CLASSMATE
	HINDUSTAN PENCILS
	PARKER
	REYNOLDS



ADVERTISING FEATURE

Trusted Brand Special Supplement

ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

SERVICES

CATEGORY	BRAND
ONLINE FOOD ORDERING PLATFORM	DOMINO'S
	MCDELIVERY
	PIZZA HUT
	SWIGGY
	ZOMATO
TRAVEL PORTAL	CLEARTRIP
	GOIBIBO
	MAKEMYTRIP
	TRIVAGO
	YATRA



CONCLUSION

Fostering Relationships Built on Trust

Successful brands are not built overnight. Great brands go beyond marketing blitzkriegs—they walk that extra mile in order to establish a loyal consumer base and add new patrons into the fold by ensuring that their products and services meet the highest quality and reliability standards. They also hold steadfast to their core principles and continue to evolve and innovate in order to meet the high expectations of the modern-day Indian consumer.

Over the years, as traditional marketplaces have given way to newer platforms, consumer needs and demands have evolved alongside it. The altered market landscape has ushered in fresh challenges along with a host of new opportunities. Brands need to tap into the potential of this rapidly changing market environment while keeping



their ethos intact. The Trusted Brand Award 2021 winners have not only meticulously adapted to the changing marketplace, but have also been able to continuously deliver on consumer satisfaction, product quality, innovative product range and versatility, while also providing the consumer with a positive, wholesome experience.

Consumer trust is hard to win and harder still to maintain. The best brands understand the value of this trust and know that a satisfied, happy customer is key to a successful business. The Trusted Brand Award 2021 winners believe that ensuring consumer satisfaction converts consumers into loyal brand champions. The Indian consumer looks not only for the best bargain, but at how a brand enriches their life in a holistic way. This is what makes a *Reader's Digest* Trusted Brand. ■



THE THINGS THAT MAKE US INDIAN



The story of some of India's favourite products can trace the history of our nation's evolution

BY *Shreevatsa Nevatia* AND *Naorem Anuja*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Siddhant Jumde*

Objects, though inanimate, can sometimes tell our story better than we can. Gandhi's charkha, for instance, is testament to both the Mahatma's simplicity and his power to disrupt. From the Amul butter we spread on our toast, to the Bajaj scooter we rode in the 80s, everyday objects—ordinary, sometimes extraordinary, things—have guided our habits and our lives. They have brought us delight, comfort, even emancipation. Our identity, we see, is coded, in part, in our shopping list. As independent India turns 75, we celebrate the things that have been loyal companions in our freedom.



HOW WE COMMUNICATED

Godrej Typewriter (1955–2011)

By 1947, Godrej had already built for itself a solid reputation. Founded in 1897, the company's popular soaps were free of animal fat; its lockers and steel almirahs had also proven to be sturdy. A few months after Independence, Pirojsha Godrej was visibly excited when his son, Naval, proposed they start manufacturing typewriters. As Pirojsha knew, they'd be the first in Asia to do this.

Having cornered the Indian market, the Remington typewriter had already ushered in a new modernity by having mechanised writing, making it faster and universally legible. Women, too, had started joining the workforce as typists, but the M-9, Godrej's "all-Indian" typewriter, first introduced in 1955, earned vast appeal and was hailed by PM Jawaharlal Nehru as the symbol of an "independent and industrialised" India. Here was "today's typewriter with a touch of tomorrow".

By 1970, the year in which Shashi Kapoor frolicked to 'Typewriter Tip Tip' in *Bombay Talkies*, the company was manufacturing 25,000 typewriters

ITI Rotary Phones (1948—circa 1980)

After World War 2, when British companies stopped supplying phones to India, the Nehru government set up Indian Telephone Industries Limited in Bangalore (ITI) to manufacture its own rotary phones.

VSNL Dial-up Modem (1995—2008)

It's hard to forget the screeching, gargling sounds these modems made when logging us on to the internet. Even harder to forget are those intermittent beeps we heard before being suddenly disconnected.

Airtel SIM Card (1995—)

Given our need for telephony and our hunger for the internet, we'd be lost without the SIM card. No wonder then that over 350 million Indians bought into Airtel's promise of 'aisi azadi aur kahan?' (where else is there freedom like this?).

every year. Though there were quieter imported machines on offer, India much preferred the loud, clickety-clack of a Godrej. In 2011, when Godrej shut down its typewriter unit in Pune, writers and journalists wrote mournful obituaries. The tool was obsolete, but the Godrej typewriter continues to remain beloved.

WHAT WE RODE

Bajaj Chetak (1972–2006)

Both a marker and means of mobility in the 1970s and 80s, the Bajaj Chetak was the steed of choice for most of middle-class India. It all started in 1959, when Bajaj won a contract to manufacture two-wheelers. The Bajaj Chetak, launched in 1972 and modelled on Piaggio's Vespa Sprint scooter, became a blockbuster hit and the first family vehicle in several homes across the country

India transformed this two-wheeler into a domesticated beast of burden—its floorboard bore the weight of entire families while still providing enough space to take on groceries and a dickey to store sundry items. Unlike the butch architecture of the motorbike that gave off an adventurous, racy energy, the Chetak's soft, rounded contours offered the functionality of motorized transport, along with a reputation for stability and safety—however

unsubstantiated, since its small wheel size made it less stable than the motorcycle. Often enough, it would require a persuasive kick or vigorous tilting to get it started, but for an India of modest means, it was a vehicle that mirrored its unassuming way of life. It was after all '*Hamara Bajaj*' (Our Bajaj).

Hero Cycles (1944–)

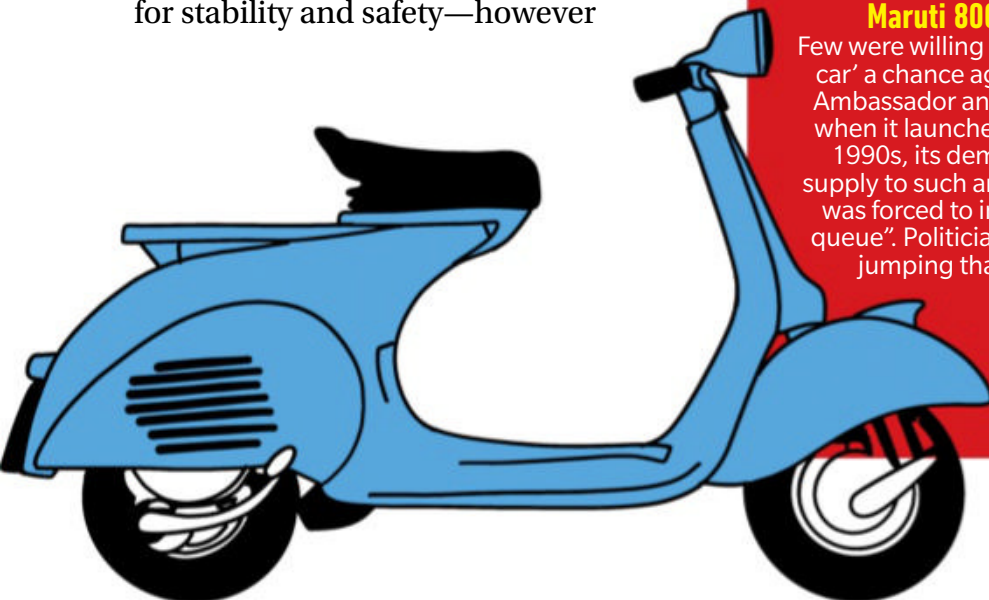
These swadeshi workhorses that provided mobility to a newly independent, ambitious India can still be seen on Indian roads—whether it's the milkman riding a Hero with his cans affixed to the carrier, or the odd biking enthusiast laying claim to the road.

HM Ambassador (1958-2014)

This burly diesel car was the answer to all of India's automobile-related asks—potholed-roads, space to squeeze in extended family, fuel-efficiency and easy to fix! A 'laal bati' (red light) fixed atop would transform it into a political totem. After his trusted Ambassador broke down on him in 2003, Atal Bihari Vajpayee became the first Indian PM to switch to a fully-armoured BMW. For Ambassadors, the end was nigh.

Maruti 800 (1983-2014)

Few were willing to give 'the people's car' a chance against the reigning Ambassador and Premier Padmini when it launched, but by the early 1990s, its demand outstripped supply to such an extent that Maruti was forced to institute a "priority queue". Politicians, of course, tried jumping that queue often.



HOW WE STUDIED Sulekha Ink (1934—)

It isn't often that the story of a single brand is analogous to the history of an entire nation, but Sulekha Inks, one could argue, tells perfectly that chequered tale of Indian progress. Mahatma Gandhi's insistence on Swadeshi was in no way half-hearted. He even wanted Indians to make the ink with which he wrote his countless letters and petitions. Nanigopal and Sankaracharya Maitra—brothers from Rajshahi (now in Bangladesh)—said they were up to the task. Legend has it that it was the prolific Rabindranath Tagore who'd given their ink both his blessing and its name—'Sulekha' (beautiful writing).

For children who went to school in the 1950s, memories of blotting paper,

dripping fountain pens and Sulekha ink are still clearly etched. While Morarji Desai and Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy extolled Sulekha's double-filtered virtues, Satyajit Ray doffed his hat to the ink in his films and Feluda stories. Not just did Sulekha start exporting its inks to the Middle East, it also helped the UN set up factories in Africa. The dream, sadly, was too sweet to last forever. Crippled by union trouble, Sulekha shut shop in 1988.

In 2005, the West Bengal government helped resurrect Sulekha. Having flirted with home-care for some years, the company made a decisive return to its forte—inks—in November 2020. Selling the idea that fountain pens are a more sustainable option, the new line of inks—Swadeshi, Swaraj, Swadhin—stoked nostalgia, while also catching up with the 'Made in India' programme.

Wilson Pens (1941–1988)

It was a thick, orange nib that made Wilson pens popular in colleges and schools, but Dr Babsaheb Ambedkar is said to have used it to write our Constitution because of its solid swadeshi credentials.

Camlin Geometry Box (1931–)

G. P. and D. P. Dandekar stole the name 'Camel' from a box of cigarettes when giving their stationery business a name in 1931. By 1958, they settled on the more unique 'Camlin' for their geometry sets.

Nataraj Pencils (1958—)

Made by Hindustan Pencils, the sturdy Nataraj 621 HB pencil barely needed any marketing to become popular. If you've been a student in India, you know no other pencil lasts longer than Nataraj.

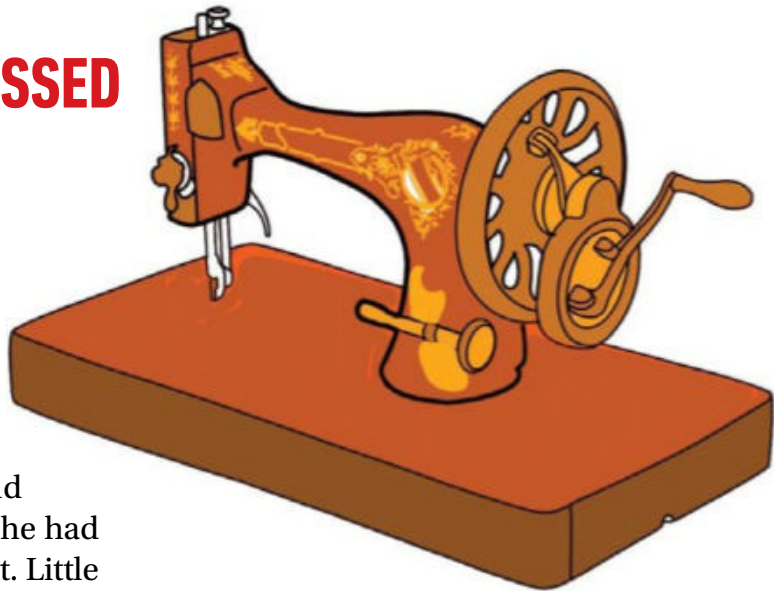


HOW WE WERE DRESSED

Singer Sewing Machines (1851–)

Having patented his design for the sewing machine in 1851, Isaac Singer decided to go multinational. Convinced that his sewing machine would find customers only in Europe, he had no hope from the Indian market. Little did he know that he would one day find an ambassador in Mahatma Gandhi. Though Gandhi hated machines—he felt they atrophied human limbs—he made an exception for Singer: “It’s one of the few useful things ever invented, and there is a romance about the device itself,” he said.

Isaac Singer went down in history as



a greedy shark, (“I don’t care a damn for the invention. The dimes are what I’m after,” *TIME* quotes him as saying) but Gandhi was right. Singer offered its buyers great value for money through reduced time, easy labour and creative control. In independent India, tailors sat with Singers in little rooms, or even on pavements, to herald one fashion revolution after another. From the 1920s, women had become Singer’s principal users, and films often hinted at the agency these machines afford. In *Mera Naam Joker* (1970), for instance, a widow uses a sewing machine to save her son from the circus and her family from penury.

By the 1960s, Singer, the American parent company, had started giving up on the sewing machine, but India still wanted more. With the incorporation of Singer India in 1977, the country’s love for sewing machines solidified itself as a reliance. Orders, one hears, are still pouring in—from Kashmir to Kerala.

Bata Footwear (1932–)

Travelling through India in the 1920s, the Czechoslovakian Tomas Bata saw in a barefooted India a ready market for his light, budget shoes. It has been 90 years and Bata is yet to give up that ‘foothold’.

Vimal Fabrics (1966–2014)

Endorsers like Sridevi, Ravi Shastri and Vivian Richards made Vimal synonymous with style, but it was Dhirubhai Ambani’s perseverance which made us think that if we need fabric, there was ‘Only Vimal’.

Flying Machine Jeans (1980–)

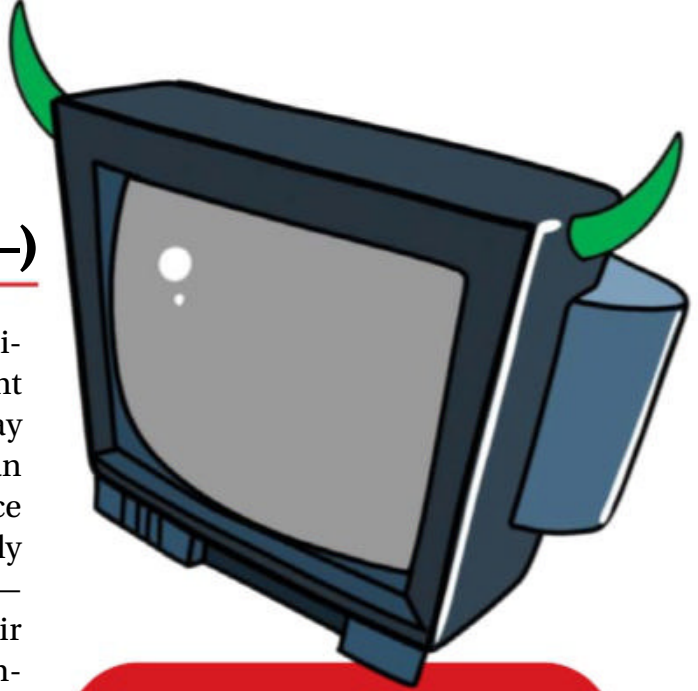
If video killed the radio star, it was denim jeans that killed the socialist pyjama. We had Levi’s and Wrangler, yes, but it was this Arvind Mills product which decisively helped us graduate from stodgy to stylish.

HOW WE RELAXED

Onida Colour TV (1981—)

The year was 1982. Scores of Indians huddled spellbound in front of television sets as the 16-day sporting spectacular of the ninth Asian Games unfolded in living colour. Since owning a TV set was still prohibitively expensive—and a colour one a rarity—affluent neighbours opened up their living rooms, or lent their sets to community viewing areas. Nearly 23 years after television screens first blinked to life in India, electronic colour vaulted into our homes, kickstarting the era of small-screen programming. The country shared in cataclysmic moments unfolding on-screen: Kapil Dev lifting the World Cup in 1983, cosmonaut Rakesh Sharma orbiting in space, patriotically proclaiming that India was '*saare jahan se accha*' (finest in the world), or the pantheon of Hindu gods coming alive every Sunday.

By then, India had exploded a nuclear device, launched satellites into orbit and had the world's third largest pool of scientific and technical manpower. Her autocratic ambitions electorally forgiven, Indira Gandhi, now back in power, used the Games to showcase an advancing India to the world. Neighbours Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and rival Pakistan already had colour television (CTV)—surely India couldn't lag behind! Brand Onida emerged around the same time. Its smarmy devil mascot and



Murphy Radio (1948—)

Before video killed the radio, Murphy radio sets went from helping British Armed Forces communicate during World War 2 to bringing everything from news to Binaca *Geetmala* countdown into Indian homes.

HMV Records (1901–2000)

HMV Records produced India's first recorded song in 1903, laying ground for the Indian music industry. As tastes and tech changed, it was acquired by the RPG Group in the 1980s and rebranded as Saregama India Limited in 2000, sounding the closing note of its 100-year journey.

Amar Chitra Katha (1967—)

One isn't sure if our beloved Anant Pai—considered comic books pure entertainment or an instructional moral tool, but his two creations—*Amar Chitra Katha* and *Tinkle*—made both the god Shiva and Shikari Shambhu equally fun.

seductive tagline—'neighbour's envy, owner's pride'—struck a chord among consumers, allowing it to beat brands like Oscar, Salora, BPL and Videocon. Precious and aspirational, millennials may recall behemoth CTVs occupying prime real estate in drawing rooms, protectively wrapped in 'TV covers'

WHAT WE ATE

Amul Butter (1946–)

It is hard for the youth of India to think of a butter that isn't Amul, but for some senior citizens, the mention of Polson's still triggers nostalgia. Polson's was creamier, yes, but its practices were accused of being monopolistic. Farmers claimed they were being milked dry. Formed as part of a cooperative movement, Amul challenged Polson's hegemony in the beginning, but, finally, it was that tubby little doe-eyed mascot in a polka-dot dress who captured our imagination with her clever, incessant

puns in 1966. By making the phrase 'utterly butterly' a key part of our food lexicon, the Amul girl slid on to our shelves, seemingly forever.

Indian food—of which dishes like *bun maska* and butter chicken are worthy ambassadors—has always needed a few good dollops of rich, salty butter. While Amul's



Parle-G (1929–)

Parle claims that if we stack the one billion packets of Parle-G biscuits it produces every month, the pile would be high enough to touch the moon. No wonder then that the 'G' now stands for 'genius'.

Campa Cola (1977–)

Having introduced us to Coca-Cola in 1949, the Pure Drinks Group (PDG) sipped sweet success. In 1977, when Coke was shown the door, PDG only needed to tweak its soft drink template to give us our beloved, all-desi Campa Cola.

Haldiram's Bhujia (1937–)

Today, Haldiram's is the world's second-largest snack food company but its enterprise was apparent in 1937 too, when Haldiram Agarwal used his aunt's recipe to spice up the once-humble Marwari bhujia.

contribution to our culinary evolution is, of course, unmistakable, it was also Amul's architect, Dr Verghese Kurien, who was one of the first to show that success didn't have to just mean profit—that self-sufficiency need not hinge only on capitalism. Kurien, known as the 'Milkman of India,' knew he had to be dogged to realize his 'Billion-Litre Dream.'

By the time he passed in 2012, he had used his industry to ensure that India did not ever have to import milk or butter. That Amul butter is now sold in over 50 countries is a testament to his rigour.

HOW WE HEALED Boroline (1929—)

Gour Mohun Dutta, one of pre-independent India's early entrepreneurs, had made his peace with the tyranny of the British by importing cosmetics from them. In 1905, when Bengal was divided and the Swadeshi project began to take off, Dutta knew he had to go local. It was a hand-held churner that did the trick. Dutta used it to mix boric acid,

zinc oxide and lanolin. He called the resultant cream Boroline.

Though Dutta had imagined a wider catalogue when he launched his G. D. Pharmaceuticals in 1929, it soon became clear that Boroline was his golden goose. Given the reports he received from customers, especially those from Bengal, the antiseptic cream healed cuts, cracks, burns, swelling, even pimples. The adage went that there was only one thing Boroline couldn't fix—a broken heart. On 15 August 1947, Dutta



Amrutanjan Balm (1893—)

Amrutanjan may never have taken off if not for Nageswara Rao's brilliant marketing. Knowing that music recitals leave one sore, he began selling his analgesic balm to savants outside concert halls.

Vicco Vajradanti (1952—)

We might remember the iconic advertising more than the product, but for diabetics and vegans this toothpaste is something of a god-send. Not only is it free of sugar, it is also free of all animal products.

Dabur Hajmola (1978—)

On the subject of whether Hajmola is a digestive or a tablet full of *chatpata* fun, Dabur never came clean. In households that stocked its bottles, kids learnt early the import of 'too much of a good thing'.

gave to one lakh Indians something priceless with their freedom—a free tube of Boroline.

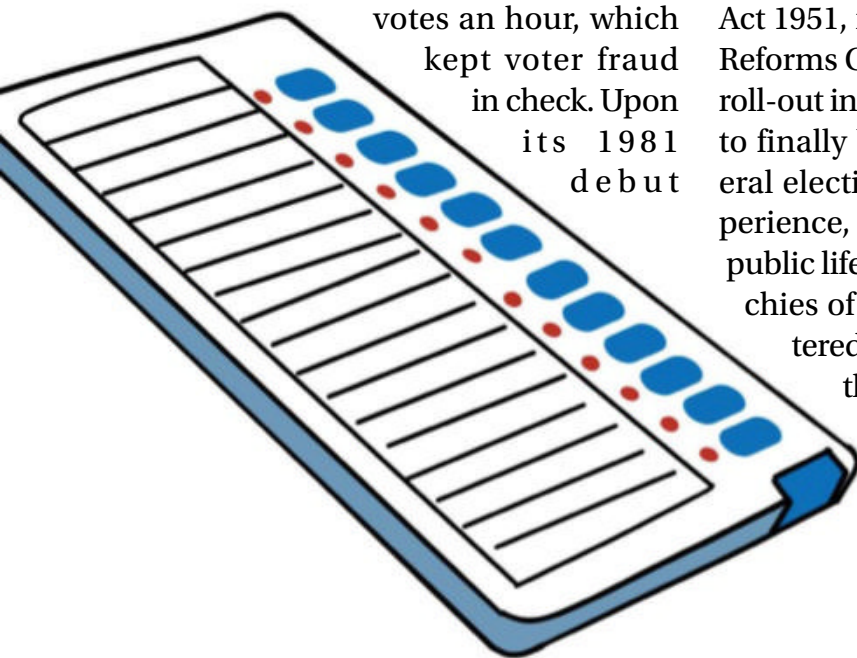
Though Boroline became a fixture in Kolkata households, there was also evidence that it had helped soldiers in the Himalayas fight frostbite. In South India, Boroline has earned the reputation of being a reliable sunscreen. One isn't sure whether it's the green of its tube, or it's trademark scent, but the unanimous verdict is simple: Nothing works like "*shurobhito* (fragrant) antiseptic cream, Boroline".

HOW WE WERE GOVERNED

EVM Machines (1980—)

For the world's largest democracy, elections are a high-octane affair. A billion-strong population exercising their franchise—the only way to register one's political will on the body politic—had become an increasingly expensive exercise. The paper-ballot system was not without its problems: It commandeered massive resources, and was often subject to violent booth capture. Enter the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM). Invented by M. B. Haneefa in 1980, this inexpensive gadget was designed to work around the geographical and socio-cultural realities of India. From the frigid Himalayan air to soaring desert temperatures, from power absences in remote polling stations to tech illiteracy of disadvantaged groups, these Braille-compatible machines ticked all the boxes, including registering no more than 300

votes an hour, which kept voter fraud in check. Upon its 1981 debut



PAN card (1972—)

The PAN card wasn't mandatory when it first rolled out in 1972, neither was it a 'permanent' number. Each circle was provided a set of numbers, so if taxpayers changed his address, so did his PAN.

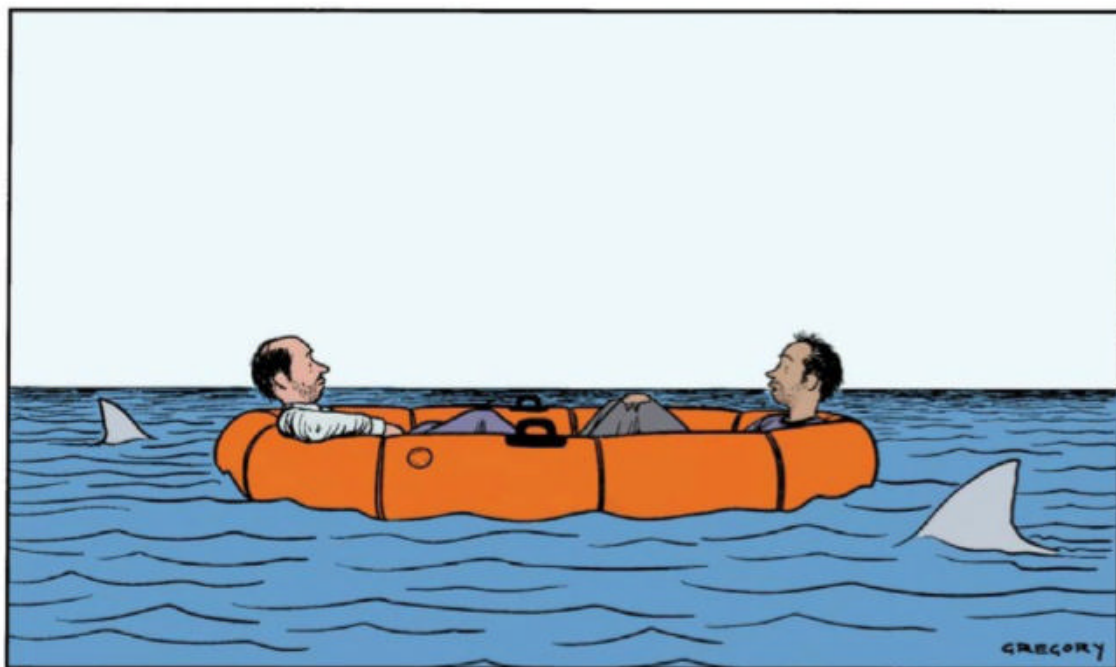
Aadhar Card (2009—)

Word to the wise: your data is more valuable than you think, and subject to breach even with a gatekeeper government. Remember the 2017 hack that led to more than 200 central and state government websites making private Aadhaar details publicly available? Or the time the official Twitter handle of Common Services Centres tweeted out Mahendra Singh Dhoni's Aadhaar info?

Co-WIN App (2021—)

As the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive for all adults took off in May 2021, the Co-WIN app—built to help citizens book appointments—became the next must-have download for anyone with a smartphone.

in 50 polling stations during the North Paravur Assembly Constituency by-election in Kerala, the EVM was dragged to the Supreme Court. The Election Commission was accused of overstepping by changing the way polls are held. It took the 1988 amendment to the Representation of the People Act 1951, its clearance by the Electoral Reforms Committee in 1990 and a trial roll-out in 2003 state elections for EVMs to finally be allowed in the 2004 general elections. In India, the voting experience, unlike many other aspects of public life, isn't pockmarked by hierarchies of caste and class. Every registered voter queues up in the order they arrive and exercises their vote. The EVM—helps preserve this egalitarian democratic process. **R**



**"If only I'd thought to take my phone with me,
I could be getting some work done."**

ALL
in a Day's
WORK

Two co-workers of mine at the post office—a supervisor and a letter carrier—were always at each other's throats. Recently, they were at it again, this time a real barn burner of an argument. I walked in just in time to hear the supervisor deliver

a devastating insult, or so he thought: "I've taught you everything I know, and you still don't know anything!"
—MICHAEL JOLLIE

It was 1930s Chicago—the height of the Depression. My grandparents owned a small grocery store, and one of their regulars was a charming man who seemed to be the centre of attention wherever he went. Though she didn't

know his name, my grandmother admired how he embraced everyone as family. He'd send food baskets to the poor, pay others' rent and help people with their troubles.

Grandma was so struck by his innate decency that she admonished my grandfather to be more like him. She knew that one day this kind stranger would be recognized by the world for his deeds, and she

Kudos to therapists for resisting the natural urge to top other people's problems.

—[@JOSHCOMERS](#)

was right. One morning, Grandma picked up the newspaper. There on the front page was a picture of her hero. His name: Al Capone.

—MARCIA WEISENFELD

A sign spotted outside a carpet/flooring store: "If it's in stock, we got it!"

—CHARLES THOMAS

After taking my time at the shoe store, I finally found a pair of flats that were both comfortable and stylish. Of course, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and when I brought them up to the register, the cashier gave them a zero-star review: "They make the ugliest shoes these days."

—A.P. *via rd.com*

The first day of college can be disorienting, even for returning

students. I was walking in the lobby of one of our main buildings when an upperclassman stopped me.

"Excuse me," he said, looking lost. "Is the second floor still upstairs?"

—KAREN LOVE

"What would be your main strength?"

"Well, I can communicate with animals ..."

"Wow, impressive. Any weaknesses?"

"They can't understand me."

—[@ENDHOOS](#)

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

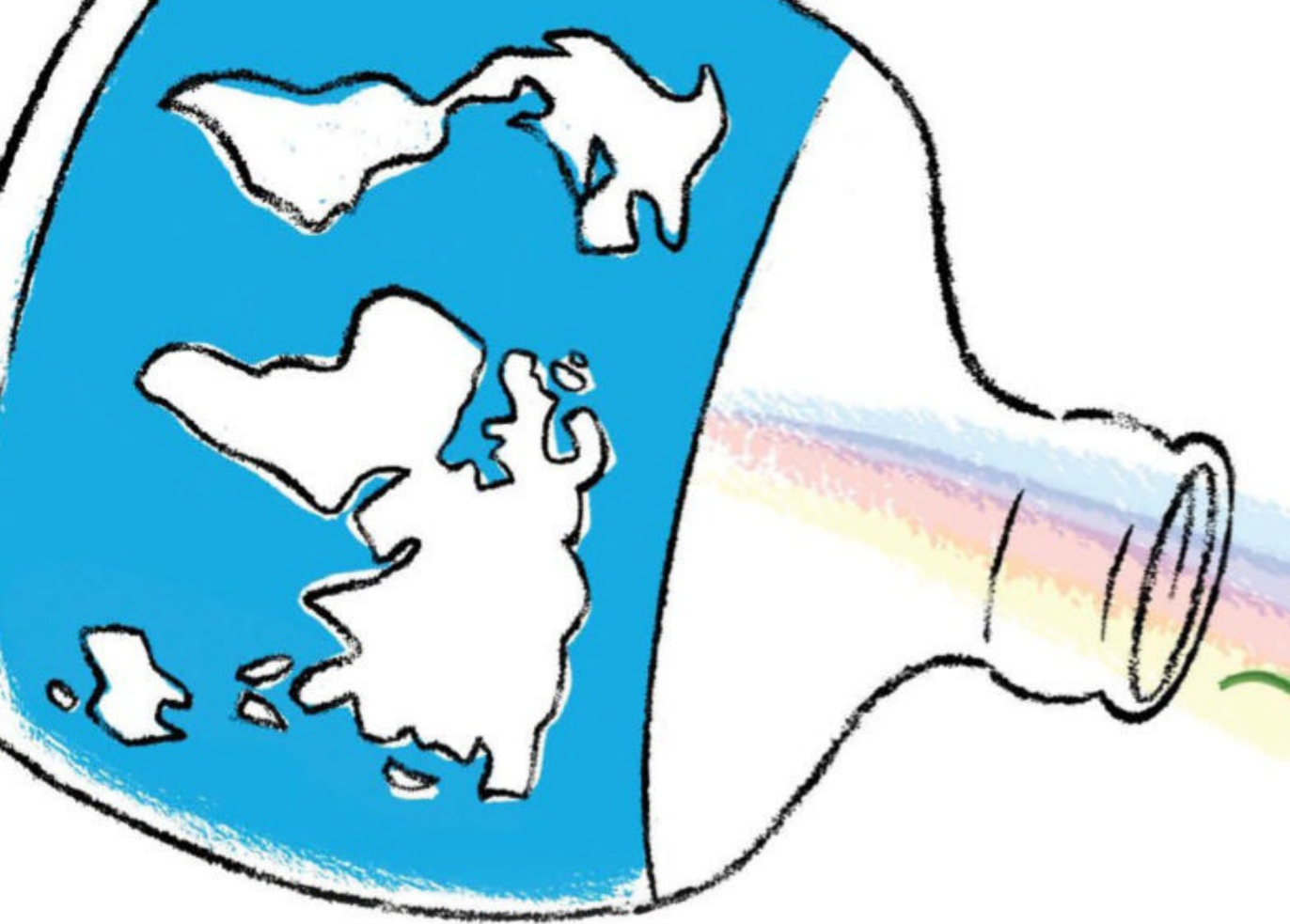
BUT YOU CAN CALL ME MR PLOUGH

Minnesota's Department of Traffic asked residents to suggest names for its eight new snowploughs, then let residents pick their favourites. And the winner was ... Ploughy McPloughFace. Does that odd moniker leave you cold? Maybe you'll warm up to these nominees, even though none of them made the cut:

- ◆ C-3PSnow
- ◆ Edward Blizzardhands
- ◆ Flake Superior
- ◆ For Your Ice Only
- ◆ Lake SnowBeGone
- ◆ Mary Tyler More Snow



BANKSPHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES (SNOWPLOW), JPGFACTORY/GETTY IMAGES (C3PO)



HOME REMEDIES *from* AROUND THE WORLD

*These 13 folk
treatments are
proven to work*

BY RD Editors



MANY OF US fall back on home treatments for ailments, whether they're proven to be effective or not. We asked editors at some of our *Reader's Digest* (RD) editions around the world to share those that work for them—and then we checked out which ones are backed by research. Here are our favourites.

FRANCE
VINEGAR
Fights Infection

FRENCH FOLKLORE HAS it that during the 17th-century plague, a gang of four thieves would rob corpses, yet never catch the plague themselves. Supposedly, anointing their bodies with a concoction of vinegar and herbs protected them.

The so-called *vinaigre des quatre voleurs* (four thieves' vinegar) is used today in the belief it fights infection.



Many of the ingredients steeped in it—garlic, rosemary, sage, lavender, thyme, juniper berry, black pepper and more—are proven to have antibacterial properties.

“I know people who consume this regularly as an antibacterial,” says Stéphane Calmeyn, Paris-based editor of RD. He adds that a friend of his with Type 2 diabetes credits it with helping regulate his blood sugar.

Though more research is needed, there is evidence that vinegar, particularly apple cider vinegar, can affect blood sugar levels: it delays the rate at which the stomach empties and starch is digested, which reduces the blood-sugar spike after a meal. But check with your doctor before adding it to your diet, particularly if you are taking blood-sugar-lowering medications.

Apple cider vinegar may also prevent overeating. A small Swedish study found that those who consumed vinegar with a meal reported feeling more satiated than those who didn't consume vinegar. That could prevent unhealthy snacking later in the evening.

It's best not to drink vinegar undiluted, as its acidity could damage tooth enamel. Instead, add one or two teaspoons to water or tea.

MALAYSIA
PAPAYA
Aids Digestive Health

WHEN HER HUSBAND got food poisoning while travelling in Malaysia in 2017, editor Bonnie Munday heeded a

ALL PHOTOS: © GETTY IMAGES

recommendation for a local remedy.

“We didn’t have any medicine for tummy troubles, but our hotel manager advised eating ripe papaya,” says Bonnie, who is on *RD*’s International Edition team and is based in Toronto. She was skeptical but bought some of the fruit from a beach vendor. “An hour or two after my husband ate it, he felt so much better.”

A study from Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria published in the *Journal of Medicinal Food* found that papaya, the orange-fleshed fruit that grows in the tropics, fights intestinal parasites. When researchers gave a papaya seed preparation to children who tested positive for intestinal parasites, it was shown to be anti-helminthic (capable of eliminating parasitic worms) and anti-amoebic (capable of destroying or suppressing amoebas); it treated their parasites without harmful side effects.

And results of a double-blind placebo-controlled trial that were published in the journal *Neuroendocrinology Letters* in 2013 showed that volunteers with digestive complaints like bloating and constipation had significant improvements after ingesting a papaya pulp supplement called Caricol. Papaya is also rich in vitamin C, and high in water and fibre content, which regulates bowel activity.

“Ever since that time in Malaysia,” says Bonnie, “if we see papaya at the store, we buy it, just for overall digestive health.”



GERMANY CALENDULA *Calms Inflammation*

“MANY PEOPLE IN Germany consider calendula a miracle cure, and have their own recipe for a balm,” says Annemarie Schäfer, who works on the *RD* team in Stuttgart.

Her cousin Marlen, a teacher, recalls that when her mother grew calendula—also called marigold—in her garden, she’d mix their orange and yellow heads with warm pork fat (you can also use petroleum jelly, beeswax or olive oil). After a day of steeping, the mixture was strained and jarred, to be used on rough hands, insect bites, acne and other skin irritations.

High levels of antioxidants in the

dried petals reduce the damage caused by free radicals. Laboratory and animal research has shown the flowers contain anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial components that prevent infection and heal wounds by helping form new blood vessels and tissue. In patients with venous leg ulcers treated with either calendula ointment or saline solution dressings, calendula helped ulcers heal much faster.

NETHERLANDS LICORICE

Relieves Sore Throat

LICORICE-BASED candy, called *dropjes*, are as Dutch as wooden shoes—but while few farmers still wear wooden shoes, everybody eats *dropjes*. “It’s a sort of national pride,” says editor Paul Robert in Amsterdam. “And you can get them everywhere—supermarkets, newsstands, pharmacies. They come in all shades of brown and black with flavours ranging from very sweet to very salty.”

Besides being somewhat of an addiction for the Dutch, it’s widely known in northern European countries that licorice also serves a medicinal purpose: sore-throat relief. Indeed, a 2013 randomized, double-blind study of 236 people by the Medical University of Vienna found that patients who gargled a licorice solution before going into surgery requiring throat intubation had a lower risk of sore throat after the surgery.

The extract of the licorice root,



Glycyrrhizin, tastes sweeter than sugar, despite having a zero glycaemic index. But it’s not safe to consume more than 100 milligrams per day, as it can dangerously reduce blood potassium levels. (A cup of licorice tea contains roughly 30 milligrams, according to *The British Medical Journal*.)

“When I was a child,” says Paul, “the best thing about having a cold was that I’d get lots of *dropjes*. Sucking on them soothed my throat back then, and still does now.” *Dropjes* are an acquired taste, especially the salty ones. “Once,” he recalls with a laugh, “I gave them to an American friend, who told me they tasted just as terrible as the raw herring and smoked eel I’d given her earlier!”

PORTUGAL GARLIC

Gets Rid of Warts, Corns, Calluses

“WE USE A lot of garlic in our cuisine,” says editor Mario Costa in Lisbon.

“But some people, especially in rural areas, also use it to get rid of warts, corns and calluses.”

Corns and calluses both involve a buildup of skin at pressure points on the foot, while warts are small growths that can occur anywhere on the body and are caused by the human papillomavirus, or HPV. Research from 2005 published in the *International Journal of Dermatology* showed that warts treated daily with a garlic extract disappeared for all the study subjects within two weeks, and corns disappeared for 80 per cent of subjects after three weeks.

Garlic has antibacterial properties (thanks to its main component, allicin) and its antiviral effect may attack the virus that causes warts. Be careful not to allow raw garlic to touch healthy skin as it can cause irritation and damage similar to a burn.

It worked for *RD* reader Georgina of central Portugal. Here’s what she told us on Facebook: “A few years ago, when my friend’s aunt noticed me

limping because of a callus, she told me about this home remedy. I baked a few garlic cloves, crushed them and applied the pulp to the callus, avoiding healthy skin. I covered it with gauze and changed this compress daily. Although the smell was a little intense, after five days, my callus disappeared.”

SLOVENIA

ST. JOHN’S WORT

Soothes Skin

“WE USE A balm containing St. John’s wort to promote wound healing and soothe skin,” says editor Maja Lihtenvalner in Ljubljana. St. John’s wort is a plant with yellow flowers that’s native to Europe, northern Africa and southwestern Asia.

She describes how her friend Neven, a consultant and olive oil producer in his 50s, remembers his grandmother always having the remedy in her kitchen. “Neven would spend summer vacations at her house on the Adriatic Sea, and often got sunburnt. His granny would apply a mixture of St. John’s wort and olive oil to his painful skin.” She also used it on bruises and insect bites. “He says it was always a relief.”

Animals studies out of Turkey in the past few years have shown that St. John’s wort promotes wound healing and also relieves burns; rats treated topically with St. John’s wort four times a day experienced more rapid healing than those in the other groups.

And a 2010 Iranian randomized,



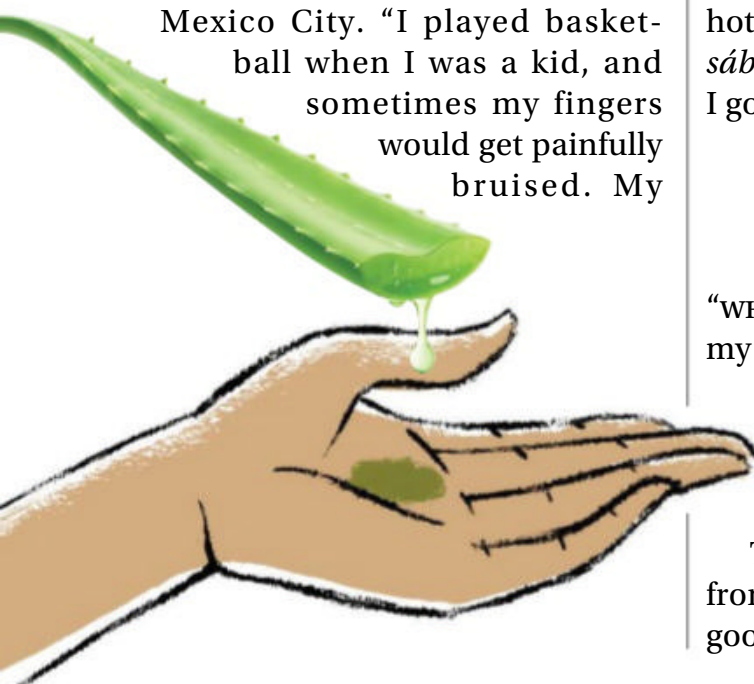
double-blind clinical trial of 144 women published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* showed that women who had undergone caesarean sections and applied a St. John's wort ointment three times a day for 16 days had improved wound healing and less pain and scarring than those in the placebo and control groups.

Ingesting St. John's wort can also treat mild to moderate depression, and menopause symptoms such as hot flushes. But speak to your doctor before taking it, because it can cause serious side effects and drug interactions.

MEXICO

ARNICA *Reduces Bruising;*
ALOE VERA *Relieves Burns*

ARNICA IS POPULAR in Mexico, says *RD* editor Luis Eduardo Pineda in Mexico City. "I played basketball when I was a kid, and sometimes my fingers would get painfully bruised. My



mother would rub them with arnica balm, and in a few days the bruising would be gone." These days, Luis uses it for sore muscles. "I keep arnica balm in my first-aid kit."

Anti-inflammatory arnica, from the same family as asters and daisies, is said to reduce swelling and bruising. A 2013 review of 174 people with hand arthritis found that arnica gel reduced pain and improved function in the hand as effectively as an ibuprofen gel. As arnica can be poisonous, it should not be taken by mouth.

Luis has another go-to: aloe vera, or *sábila*. A review of four studies from Asia, published in the journal *Burns*, concluded that aloe mucilage (the gel inside its leaves) and some aloe products can accelerate healing of minor burns several days faster than conventional medication. "Not long ago, I accidentally grabbed the handle of a hot pan," recalls Luis. "Luckily I keep *sábila* in a flowerpot on my patio, so I got relief quickly."

BRAZIL

MACELA

Soothes Cough

"WHEN WE WERE kids, if we had a cough my grandmother would whip one egg yolk with sugar and, when it had whitened, combine the mixture with a cup of macela [also spelled 'marcela'] tea," says Tanara Vieira, a designer for *RD* from Rio Grande do Sul. "It tasted so good that my sister, my cousins and I

used to pretend we were coughing so she would give it to us.”

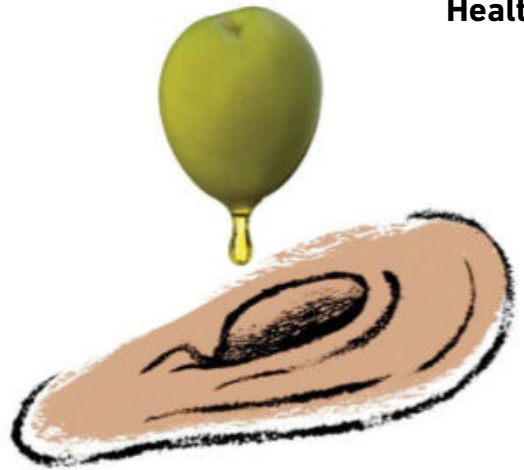
Across Brazil, plants have long been used medicinally. A review of several studies published in 2014 in the *Brazilian Journal of Pharmacognosy* sought to show whether a variety of plants of the southern Rio Grande region offers the health benefits they are purported to. The review showed that indeed, in several pre-clinical studies, there's evidence Tanara's grandmother was right: macela (*Achyrocline satureoides*), which is a plant in the daisy family, appears to be anti-spasmodic, helping relieve a cough. It's also muscle-relaxing, anti-inflammatory and analgesic.

SPAIN OLIVE OIL

Softens Earwax

WE NEED EARWAX because it keeps the skin inside the ear moisturized and helps prevent dirt and bacteria from reaching the inner ear. But a buildup of too much wax can form a plug, contributing to hearing loss, ringing in the ears or dizziness. Plugs, called cerumenosis, can happen if you use cotton swabs, which push wax in, or if you're naturally prone to the buildup. It can happen especially in elderly people or those who wear hearing aids.

People in many parts of the world find that a little warm oil, such as almond or olive, can soften the wax, unplugging the ear canal. Natalia Alonso, Madrid-based *RD*



editor, says her sister-in-law, Carmen, goes to her doctor to get built-up earwax removed, but she sometimes treats it herself.

“On a recent beach holiday in Galicia, she noticed her hearing had diminished, and knew what the problem was,” says Natalia. “So she dipped a cotton swab in warm olive oil and let a little drip into her ear, and soon the clog disappeared.”

A University of Southampton review of 26 clinical trials found that earwax softeners are effective, and that side effects are rare. Nevertheless, it's recommended you check with your doctor before attempting self-treatment of ear issues.

NEW ZEALAND MANUKA HONEY

Helps Many Ailments

FOR CENTURIES THE Maori community of New Zealand has relied on the bark and leaves of the manuka bush—native to New Zealand and sometimes called a tea tree—for its health-giving properties. More recently, the honey made from its white or pink flowers

is the star: research shows this type of honey has much higher levels of antibacterial and wound-healing compounds than others.

“Our whole family uses manuka honey,” says Auckland-based Yulia McKenzie, who works in advertising with the New Zealand edition’s *RD* team. She says it’s a great-tasting way to keep the immune system healthy. “We use it on waffles and cereal, and as a sugar substitute for smoothies.” In winter months, Yulia’s family uses the honey to soothe sore throats and coughs.

Research from Cardiff University showed that components of manuka honey can stimulate immune cells, increasing our ability to fight bacteria. (It’s especially effective against a strain of streptococcus.) Another study showed its antimutagenic, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory qualities may even help prevent or treat cancer.

One small study showed that manuka honey may improve dental health. Subjects given a chewable form of the honey had a 34 per cent reduction in plaque, and a similar reduction in bleeding for those with gingivitis, compared with study participants directed to chew sugarless gum.

Some people use this honey as a facial mask to soften and brighten their skin. Says Julia, “I use it regularly, and I must say my skin looks amazing!”

Check the label to make sure it’s genuine manuka honey from New Zealand. Labels also carry a UMF (Unique Manuka Factor) grade up to 26; the higher the number, the more healthful compounds it contains.

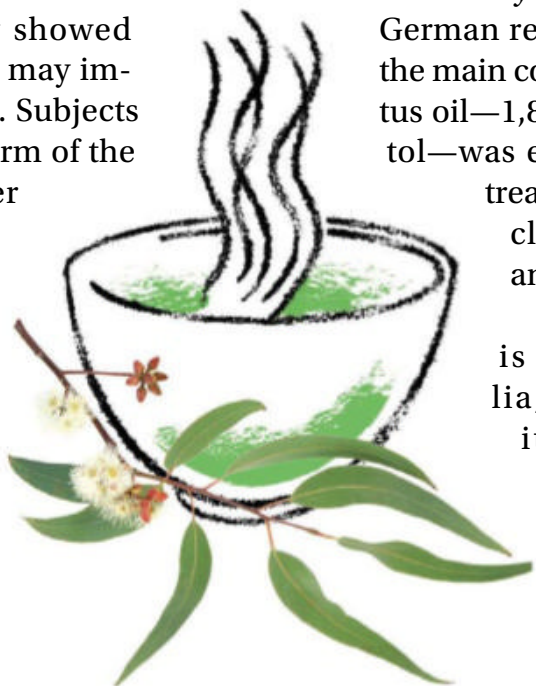
AUSTRALIA EUCALYPTUS OIL

Clears Sinuses

ADELE BURLEY USES eucalyptus oil to alleviate cold symptoms like nasal congestion. “It helps clear the airways,” says the Sydney-based senior art designer for *RD* Australia. “I add a few drops to a bowl of steaming water, cover my head with a towel and breathe in.”

In a randomized double-blind trial of 152 people, published in *The Laryngoscope* in 2009, German researchers found that the main component of eucalyptus oil—1,8-cineole, or eucalyptol—was effective and safe for treating sinusitis, helping clear nasal blockages and mucous.

The eucalyptus tree is native to Australia, and the oil from its leaves is similarly helpful if you have perennial allergic rhinitis—a



chronically stuffy or runny nose due to pet dander, mould or dust. A South Korean study published in 2016 in *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* found that essential oils including 1,8-cineole alleviated symptoms. Of 54 people aged 20 to 60, those who inhaled the oils for five minutes twice daily over seven days also had better sleep versus those who inhaled a placebo.

Don't ingest eucalyptus oil, though, and avoid applying it directly to your skin; if it's undiluted it could cause irritation.

FINLAND SAUNA

Boosts Circulation

"THE STEAM SAUNA has been a Finnish tradition for hundreds of years, and most Finns go regularly," says Ilkka Virtanen, Helsinki-based editor of *RD*. "It's good for heart health."

A sauna is typically a room heated to between 80 degrees and 100 degrees Celsius. When a person sits sweating in

a sauna, their heart rate increases, as does blood flow in the skin, boosting circulation as much as low to moderate exercise does. Risk of heart attack and stroke are reduced, according to a 2015 study of Finnish men published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*. That research also showed that sitting in a sauna two to three times a week lowers the risk of dying from any cause by 24 per cent. Another study showed that 15 minutes a day in a sauna five days a week may help ease mild depression.

Ilkka's friend Ben, 76, credits the sauna with his good health. "I go practically every day," says Ben. "You feel so pure and healthy afterwards, and your soul is relaxed."

If you're new to the sauna, start with five or 10 minutes; 20 minutes is the maximum. And if you have heart disease, or high or low blood pressure, speak to your doctor about whether a sauna is safe. Drink plenty of water, and avoid alcohol before or during the sauna; alcohol causes further dehydration. **R**



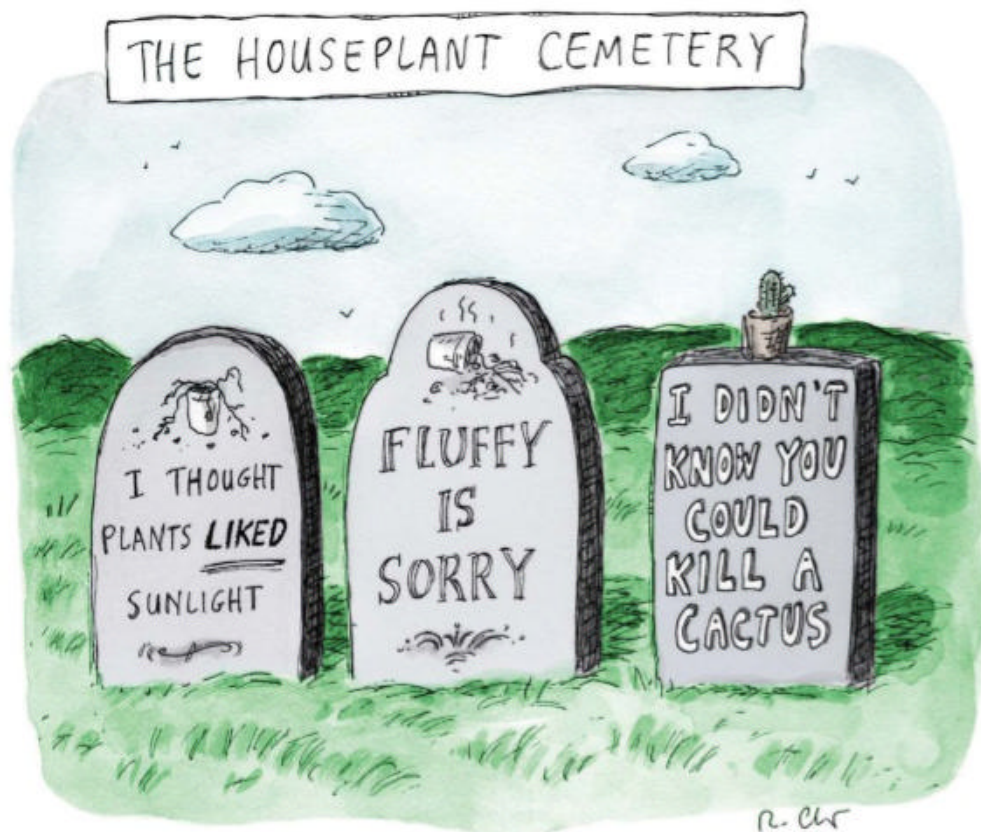
She's on Kitchen Police Duty

While the adults finished their coffee, RJ, 6, and his sister, Marissa, 4, went off to play. Soon, the doorbell rang. It was a police officer. "Is everything all right?" he asked. He said three 911 calls had come from the house.

"We're fine," Grandma replied. "There must be some mistake." The officer asked the kids whether they made the calls. Petrified, RJ said, "Not me."

Marissa started sobbing uncontrollably. Then she looked at the officer and said, "But my brother didn't eat his vegetables."

SENT BY CATHERINE VENTURI



LIFE'S

Like That

When our tour group entered a cafeteria for breakfast, the woman walking in with me made a beeline for the carrot cake. But just as she reached for a slice, she thought better of it and withdrew her hand. As

she turned away, I heard her murmur, “No, it’s too early for vegetables.”

—BETTY ROSIAN

I was driving with my young twin grandsons when their mother called. As we chatted over the car’s Bluetooth speaker, one of the boys yelled out from the back, “Hey, Mom, guess who this is? Is it me or Luke?” After a slight

pause, the boys’ mother remarked, “And he’s the smart one.”

—MARY MEILLIER

Me, before coffee:

Ugh, why is everyone shouting?

Me, after coffee:

OK, yes, I do see the fire now.

—[@RICA_BEE](#)

After a visit to Yellowstone’s Old Faithful geyser, our family

My husband walked in the room and said, “How’s my sleeping beauty?” I smiled and opened my eyes just in time to see him pat my sleeping puppy’s head.

—[@VISIONBORED1](#)

stopped at a gas station outside of the park. Our daughter leaned over a water fountain, and just as she was about to take a sip, the water shot up and sprayed her face.

The gas station attendant smiled. “That’s why we call it Old Faceful.”

—SHARRON NELSON WOOD

My Fitbit had stopped working, which meant I wouldn’t get any credit for all the steps I took during my upcoming Zumba class. Luckily, my husband came to the rescue. Handing me his Fitbit, he said, “Here, take mine. I need the exercise.”

—DEBBIE WALLIS

Rummaging through my elderly mother’s

freezer, I found pierogi and offered to cook them for her. “No,” she said. “Your sister made them, but I don’t like pierogi.”

“Did you tell her that?” I asked

“Of course not,” she said, scoffing at the very idea. “If I did, she wouldn’t bring them anymore.”

—DAVE CURRAN

When my little sister Gauri started school, a homework assignment asked her to write the letter A in boxes that filled up a page. She completed it by writing one big ‘A’ that fit the whole page.

—YASH CARIAPPA, *Coorg*

Reader’s Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com



YOU EAT IT! NO, YOU EAT IT!

◆ My husband wants to make cauliflower crust pizza, so now I have to run to the grocery store and find a new husband.

—[@mommajessiec](#)

◆ Apparently, I pack an apple in my 5-year-old’s lunch so it can get out of the house for a few hours.

—[@Brianhopecomedy](#)

◆ As a child, I truly did not understand how good I had it not having to decide what to eat for dinner every single night.

—[@jonnysun](#)

◆ **Me:** I don’t get why our kids are such picky eaters. It’s just food. Eat it.

Wife: Have a salad.

Me: I’d rather die.

—[@XplodingUnicorn](#)

◆ Almost left the grocery store without buying a bag of spring mix to throw, unopened, into the garbage in two weeks.

—[@thisisdrew08](#)



EXTRAORDINARY LIVES

The First Lady of Mental Health

Even at 98, Sarada Menon, India's first woman psychiatrist, is easing the pain of our mental anguish

BY *Bhavya Dore*

Sarada Menon chortles heartily. The 98-year-old is stumped by the question: How many patients has she treated in her long and storied career in psychiatry? "That's too much to ask, I don't know," she says. At least 1,000? "Yes, yes," she concedes.

Other numbers are easier to pin down. The number of women psychiatrists in India before her: zero. The languages she speaks fluently: four. Her current enthusiasm levels: infinite. She's received a Padma Bhushan, built and led institutions, worked on prison reform and in flood-prone districts. She has researched, rehabilitated, taught, treated; and packed a bursting resume ever since she finished her MBBS in 1947.

Menon is speaking with me over Skype from her home

PHOTO COURTESY: SARADA MENON

in Chennai where she still practises, seeing patients daily online. Bespectacled, and quick to smile, she wears her sari crisply and her pioneering status lightly. “I went from day to day, doing what I had to do. I didn’t think about other things,” she says. “How to better the effects of our treatments, was my only goal. I never bothered about anything else.”

Born in Mangalore in 1923, Menon was the eighth of 11 children. Her birth precipitated the usual hand-wringing that followed the arrival of a girl. Six girls had already come before her (“everybody must have got tired”), then a boy (“they were very happy”). So, when her sisters returned from school the day she was born, their grandmother reported the news dismissively. “Ha, a girl’—that was her reply,” says Menon, with a deadpan imitation. “Those days, girls were not very popular.”

Menon was educated in Madras, first at the Women’s Christian College and then at Madras Medical College. Her mother died when she was 18, and though her family opposed her desire to study further, the pushback was not serious, or at least didn’t seriously get in the way. “Medicine, they said, is unnecessarily long study,” she says. “At every stage, there was some opposition, [but] somehow, I managed. My parents helped me, even though they didn’t like my joining medical college.”

It cost nothing to earn her degree, and that was a boon in 1942, the year she joined a cohort of about 100 men



Menon at her convocation ceremony in 1953 after earning her master’s degree in general medicine.

and 20-odd women in her MBBS. In her final year, an epiphany struck that would kickstart a lifelong journey. The students were taken to visit the local mental hospital where Menon saw patients up close. They were bedraggled, sickly, unkempt in unimaginable ways; laughing, talking and adrift from reality. “I felt very, very sad,” she says. “And I said I must do something about this. Without knowing the cause [of their illnesses] or even completing my degree.”

There were few takers for the special-

ization then, so scepticism met this decision, too. “For a long time, everybody asked, ‘Why psychiatry?’ But I was very keen.” Mental health was a vague and mysterious sub-field; institutionalization, asylums, lobotomies and shock therapies were common in the middle of the century. Menon did a short stint in London, and then at a general hospital in Andhra Pradesh to get an overall grasp of practice. The All India Institute of Mental Health, which would go on to become NIMHANS—now India’s finest mental-health institute—had just introduced post-graduate courses in 1955. Menon joined in 1957, and spent two years specializing. From 1959, she began practising at what is now called the Institute of Mental Health in Madras, where she took over as head in 1961.

Menon first practised in an era where patients were subdued and sedated, often shackled, and abandoned by their families. In the 1950s, a new drug, chlorpromazine, had just come into the market and it was a watershed moment in handling psychosis, particularly schizophrenic breaks. “It made all the difference in treatment,” she says. “Symptoms were controlled, the patient became more amenable. Slowly, they would get better, [their] aggression would go, they would understand us.”

Over the years, approaches have evolved, and she underlines how rehabilitation can make a meaningful life possible, that mental illness need not be a life sentence. “Work is a very

important part of the treatment,” she says. “You have to study them, give them work that suits them.”

In 1984, after 20 years at the hospital where she led several new initiatives, Menon, along with a group of philanthropists and mental-health professionals, founded the Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF) to treat, research and educate the public. Her years at the hospital had shown her a cross-section of conditions, but schizophrenia, she says, “is the worst type of illness”. It is complicated in its presentation, tough to treat, often with recalcitrant or unsupportive caregivers

“Rehabilitation can make a meaningful life possible. Mental illness need not be a life sentence,” says Menon.

and patients who were written off. “I thought it was necessary to concentrate on this section of patients,” she says.

Her life spans pre-Independence India and post-liberalization India; she has seen how mental health has gone from neglected sub-field to the centre of the conversation, how practices have improved. “Many new drugs are coming, it’s one speciality with new methods, not only medicines but also psycho-social rehabilitation,” she says.

People, too, have changed. Menon describes how in previous decades,

grateful patients would come to invite her to their children's wedding, stuff the envelope in her hand and in the same breath, sheepishly say: Please don't attend, if you can. "Some will ask, why was that doctor present at the wedding?" But "there is much less stigma now," she says. "Patients are coming for treatment. Families are bringing their relatives. After recovery, patients are getting jobs."

She highlights the importance of related fields—psychology and social work—and the qualities of a good mental-health specialist: "One has to be kind, persistent, patient," she says. "You have to have a hard core of resilience if you want to do this work. Don't expect results immediately."

India's first female psychiatrist is cavalier about the challenges of being a woman doctor, insisting that her gender proved no impediment. Through her work, she met and married a police officer in her forties, a man who was supportive of her career. The regrets are few. For a second, she thinks if she would have done anything different. "Maybe change this or that medicine," she says. "But nothing other than that."

At 98, there is little left for her to achieve, but plenty more pleasure to be had from doing the things she loves best. The trick to living well in old age, she says, is to keep at it. "You must

try to be as independent as possible," she says. "You must be grateful that you can do whatever you can do—music, reading, helping people, some activity. You must be active."

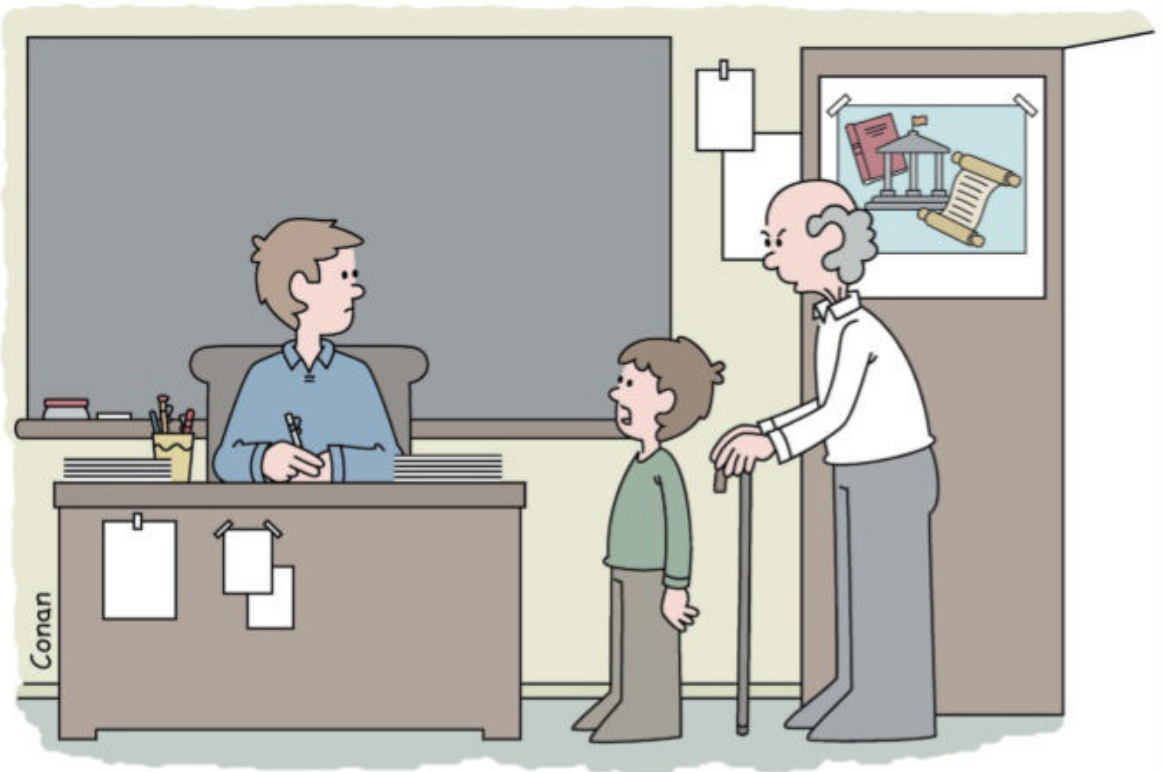
Outside of practice, Menon spends her days reading, doing needlework, and watching television. She is a fiction fiend; from Charles Dickens, Walter Scott and W. M. Thackeray, to Jeffrey Archer and Sidney Sheldon, she admits with a chuckle. And then, there are movies. Her current favourite? A show about another famous 95-year-old woman, living a full and remarkable life: *The Crown*. Like the Queen, Menon remains a working woman; and there's a reason she gets up every morning and keeps going. "Because I feel sorry for those who are suffering," she says. "I want to help them in some way or other. I enjoy doing that." **R**

Menon, holding a book commemorating 35 years of the Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF), the institute she founded in 1984.



PHOTO COURTESY: SARADA MENON

AS KIDS SEE IT



“You said we should always question our sources. So I did, and now my source wants a word with you.”

Math teacher: If I have three bottles in one hand and two in the other hand, what do I have?

Student: A drinking problem.
—LAUGHFACTORY.NET

When I was little, I thought there were monsters under my

bed. One night, my mom finally just said, “Look, the monsters have a lot on their plates, so they really don’t have the time to haunt you.” Honestly, it worked.

—@BROTIGUPTA

I try to be honest with my kids in all situa-

tions, unless I hear the ice cream truck coming, in which case the music means they’re all out of ice cream.

—@LHLODDE

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

CARTOON: CONAN DE VRIES

Bob Van Osdel (left) and Duncan McNaughton greet one another at the Olympic field.



PHOTO: ©PA IMAGES/ALAMY STOCK



Triumph *of an* Olympian

*Competitors from different countries,
the two men showed the world
the true meaning of sportsmanship*

BY *Doug Small*

SORTING THROUGH THE MAIL *one morning in the spring of 1987 in his comfortable home outside Austin, Texas, Duncan McNaughton spotted a letter from the wife of his old friend Bob Van Osdel. Pulling the note from the envelope, he began to read, and sadness crept over him. Bob, his friend for half a century, was dead at the age of 77.*

With the note was an obituary from the Los Angeles Times. As Duncan, then 76, read the headline—Trojan Olympian Offered Costly Advice—his grief turned to anger. They've got it all wrong, he thought. As he sat down to write a note of condolence to Bob's wife, his mind went back to the day when two young men took each other on in a heart-stopping high-jump competition and cemented a friendship that lasted a lifetime.

IT WAS 31 JULY, a balmy afternoon in Los Angeles and the first full day of competition at the 1932 Summer Olympic Games.

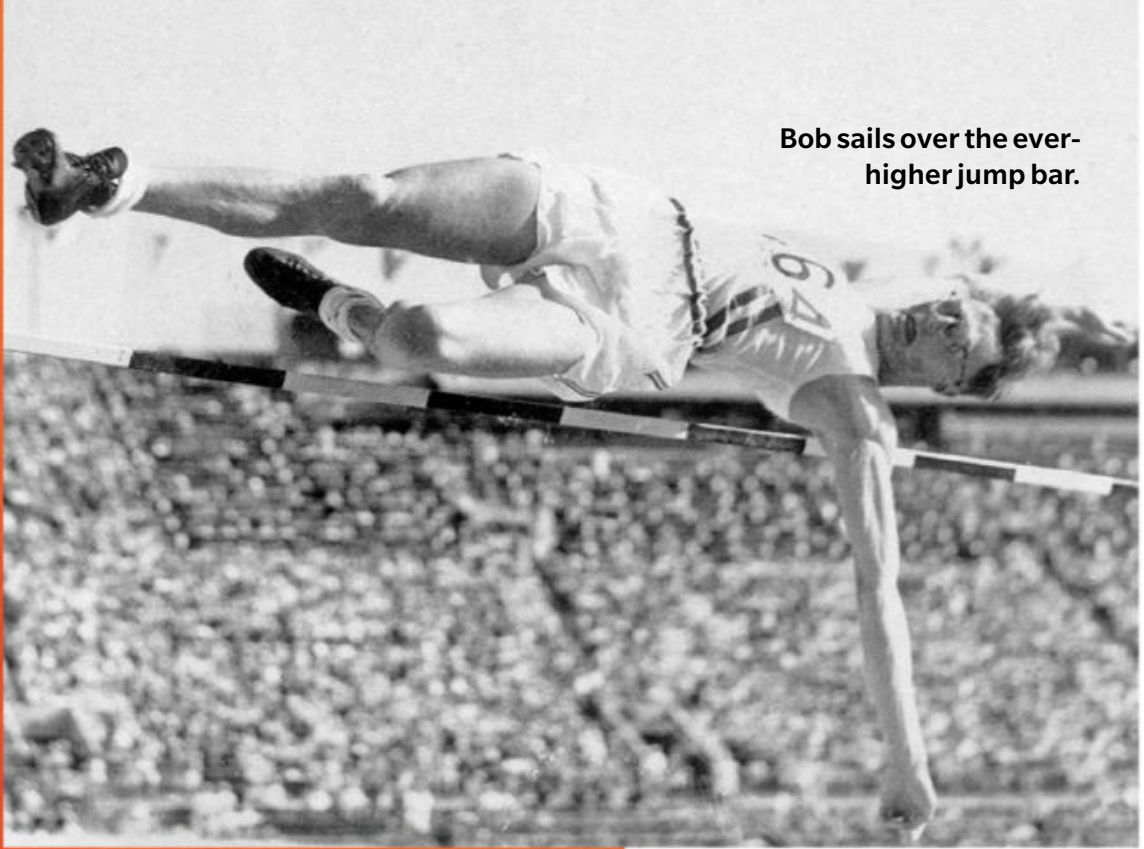
Arriving at the high-jump pit with 18 other keyed-up jumpers from 11 different countries, Duncan and Bob exchanged a quick, amiable greeting and went their separate ways to limber up.

For more than two years, the two men had been members of coach Dean Cromwell's fabled University of Southern California (USC) Trojan track team. School work commanded most of their time, but the two practised together two or three times a week and often spent weekends together at various meets. Almost inevitably, they had become friends.

Though united by their sport, the two were quite different. Bob was a studious, bespectacled dental-school student from Long Beach in southern California, with a masterful grasp of the techniques of high jumping. Duncan was a dashing carefree science student from Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, a born athlete who took to high jumping as he did to most sports—easily and naturally.

In high school Duncan had preferred basketball to track-and-field. He'd taken up the latter in the off-season and taught himself the 'western roll' high-jumping technique from an athletic how-to book.

He was soon a star, winning championships in jumps, sprints and hurdles. But he might have dropped



Bob sails over the ever-higher jump bar.

AT BEST, DUNCAN THOUGHT HE MIGHT MAKE IT INTO THE TOP FOUR FINALISTS.

track for basketball had he not won a scholarship to the University of Southern California, where he fell under Bob's wing and made the Trojan high-jump team.

Bob had helped the younger man perfect the revolutionary mechanics of the western roll. The jumper plants the foot closest to the bar as he reaches his take-off point, then kicks up hard with the other to elevate his hips. The kick, that upwards thrust of the outside leg and foot that lifts the body, is at the heart of a successful jump. As he

clears the bar, the jumper, his side parallel to the bar, begins to roll, so that he is facing down as he lands in the pit.

With the 1932 Olympics approaching, Canadian officials soon realized that the 21-year-old Duncan could be added to their team at little cost, a major consideration as the Depression began to bite.

Although he had been improving steadily, Duncan was still losing to Bob three times out of four in lower-level competitions, and the lanky Canadian had no illusions about his ranking in the high-jump universe. The heights he'd been jumping suggested he was sixth or seventh in the world that year, not only well back of his friend but also others on the American team.

With luck he figured he might make the top four in the Olympics. But only just. The Olympic high-jump record, set in 1924, was 1.98 metres. Duncan had never jumped higher than 1.94 metres; Bob, on the other hand, had jumped more than 2 metres.

Suddenly 31 July—opening day—was upon them. Neither man had ever competed before a crowd as large as the 1,00,000 or so rapidly filling the seats of the newly expanded Los Angeles Coliseum, and both were doing everything they could to keep their nerves in check.

Duncan fixed his attention on the area in front of the high-jump stand, noting the soft, somewhat spongy condition of the turf as he marked off the distance to the bar. *Don't slip*, he thought, as he drew a mental sketch of the approach he'd make, the kick that would send him skywards and the soaring roll that would see him clear the bar.

As officials set up the black-and-white striped bar for the opening jump of the afternoon, Duncan stripped off his warm-up jersey, glanced down at his singlet with the Canadian red maple leaf above the number 73, and painted another mental picture of his first jump, now only moments away.

Opposite him, on the left side of the jump, Bob stretched, adjusted his glasses and did the same. Of the two, the 22-year-old was the clear favourite.

The bar was set around 1.8 metres just after 2:30 in the afternoon when

an official gave Duncan the signal to make his first attempt. He fixed his eye on the bar 15 metres ahead.

Everything went just as he'd visualized it. Hitting his take-off point, he planted his right foot, kicked up with his left and sailed over. Landing in the sawdust on the other side, he felt himself relax. As the afternoon wore on, the official black-and-white striped bar inched inexorably upwards, and the 20-man field began to narrow.

Dunc, as everybody called McNaughton, preferred big meets and usually performed better as the stakes increased. But his nerves were being rattled by the jumper just ahead of him, who would take out a tape before each try and remeasure the length of his run to the jump.

But now even this minor irritation was gone; that jumper had just sent the long bar flying and was out. So was another potential threat, American George Spitz, who was the favourite after clearing 2 metres on five occasions earlier in the year. But Spitz slipped in the soft take-off area at the base of the Olympic jump and went out at 1.85 metres. His friend, Bob, however, was having a good day, soaring over the bar time and again with the style and assurance of a champion.

By late afternoon, Duncan's hopes of making the top four had been realized. The field was down to a Los Angeles high-school student named

Cornelius Johnson, Simeon Toribio of the Philippines, Bob and Duncan.

The bar was raised to 2.007 metres. All four failed. An expectant buzz spread through the stands and wafted out over the field in the still summer air.

When the bar was lowered, Duncan and Bob made it over. Toribio and Johnson did not. The two friends would go head-to-head for the gold.

With all eyes on the high jump, officials quickly called a halt to

A HUSH FELL OVER THE CROWD AS THE TWO MEN JUMPED FOR THE GOLD MEDAL.

competitions elsewhere in the massive stadium. An attentive crowd tensed for the showdown.

Bob had proved himself the better jumper. But as that long afternoon wore on, as the two hurled themselves over the bar again and again, Duncan found himself with an unexpected advantage over his friend.

As a teenager he'd packed gear for his father, a civil engineer. Hauling all that powder, lumber and equipment over mountain ridges and down into valleys had been ideal training for an aspiring high jumper, adding to his stamina and strengthening his legs.

It was nearly six o'clock, and the two



Duncan clears the bar during that long summer's afternoon.

had been jumping for more than three hours—Duncan from the right side, Bob from the left. Both were succeeding on some tries and missing others, but never in a sequence that would make one or the other the winner.

Relaxed and loose, oblivious to the intermittent roars of the huge crowd, the two were feeling less and less like rivals in a high-stakes Olympic match and more like buddies at a daily practice session.

As time went on, however, both jumpers seemed to be tiring from the prolonged competition. Bob, long accustomed to watching his amiable acolyte with a critical eye, had winced

when the Canadian had hit the bar and knocked it off on his last jump. As Duncan readied himself for another try, Bob walked over to him.

“Dunc,” he said, “you’ve got to get that kick working. If you do, you’ll be over.”

Bob would lose if Duncan succeeded, but he never gave it a thought.

Duncan hadn’t been conscious of

BOB AND DUNCAN'S FRIENDSHIP LASTED THROUGHOUT THEIR ENTIRE LIVES.

the problem with his kick. Now that he was, he focused on it. He crouched, fixing his eye on the bar. Then, springing forwards, he hurtled ahead to his take-off point. He planted his right foot and kicked like he’d never kicked before. He exploded upwards into the air, his arms outstretched like wings, and in one suspended, unforgettable moment, he was free of the earth and over the bar.

Bob then took his jump, taking the bar with him into the pit. Duncan had won the gold medal with a first jump clearance of 1.97 metres.

It came to him not as a flash of euphoria or flush of triumph but as

utter surprise. *What happened here?* he asked himself as the stadium erupted in cheers. At his side was his tired friend and temporary rival, Bob, smiling a generous “well done”.

Then an exuberant Australian shouted congratulations for “beating the hell out of those Yanks,” and Duncan came back to earth, appalled. Those were his teammates the Aussie was putting down. And more to the point, it was Bob’s last-minute advice that had helped him win. It was a selfless gesture, and with it, Bob had expressed the highest ideals of Olympic competition.

From that day on, Bob and



The competition over, the men share a moment together.

Duncan's friendship would never falter. Bob graduated in dentistry from USC in 1934, and Duncan earned a master's degree in science from the California Institute of Technology in 1934. Then World War II caught up with both men.

Duncan enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force and flew 57 trips as a Lancaster bomber pilot, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross. After the war he completed a PhD at USC and became a successful consultant in the oil and gas exploration business. Through it all, the bond with Bob remained strong.

Bob served in the US Army Dental Corps, and when he returned, he settled in Los Angeles where he became Duncan's dentist and the godfather of his oldest daughter.

And when Duncan's gold medal was stolen from his car during a move, Bob had a new one made for him using a mould cast from his own second-place silver.

AFTER LEARNING OF Bob's death, Duncan remembered his friend's sportsmanship as a great moment in Olympic history. "I may have won the gold that day," he said, "but Bob Van Osdel showed what champions are made of."

More important than medals, than winning, was the gesture of a friend.

*Duncan McNaughton died on 15 January 1998, at age 87. **R***

This article originally appeared in the August 1996 issue of *Reader's Digest*.



The Weight of the World

Quarantining expanded so many waistlines. Time for revenge!
See how these COVID-era terms feel with a little extra padding on them.

COVID-30: Formerly COVID-15; the amount of weight gained by an average adult during quarantine.
Sometimes related to a pan-demic.

Pan-demic: A potentially dangerous increase in the baking of bread in a quarantined home.

Flattening the curve: Trying to fit into your jeans after months of sweatpants.
(See COVID-30.)

The New Yorker

DRAMA IN REAL LIFE



HOW THEY CAUGHT THEIR STALKER



An elusive hacker humiliated a group of high-school girls. Then they teamed up with a determined detective to set a digital trap

BY *Stephanie Clifford* FROM WIRED



ELMONT, NEW HAMPSHIRE (population 7,200) is an old mill town in the north-eastern United States surrounded by lakes and forests. A hardware store

and a hair salon are about all Main Street has to offer. At the local police department, a donation box is stuffed with change and dollar bills to support Vito, the department's dog. "We don't have a lot of people who are rolling in the dough," says Raechel Moulton.

For years, Moulton, 42, was the town's only detective. She grew up about 32 km away, in Concord. A bold kid, she would stride up to uniformed police officers to ask them about the things on their belts. When she was in fifth grade, an officer came to her school to run a drug-awareness course. That's when she decided she was going to be a cop.

In high school, Moulton enrolled in a law-and-policing course, during which she was assigned to ride along in a patrol car with a male officer. He told her that women shouldn't become cops. That cemented her ambition. In 2005, she was hired onto the Belmont police force. "This job picks you," she said, sitting straight-spined in the police department, her brown hair pulled back in a tight bun.

Crime in Belmont tends toward opioids, thefts and burglaries. But before long, Moulton was fielding complaints from parents and staff at Belmont High School about teens sending nude photos, often to people they were dating.

Channeling the officer who inspired her as a fifth grader, Moulton offered workshops at the high school about safe online behaviour. She warned students that a nude photo might get sent around to unintended viewers or uploaded online. The results weren't all she hoped for. "One girl told me, 'What I got from your class is, as long as my head isn't in the picture, it's OK,'" Moulton says.

In the spring of 2012, after Moulton had been promoted to detective, a student walked into the police station and said that someone she hadn't met and knew only as Seth Williams had been texting and hounding her for naked photos. When she wouldn't send any, he broke into her cell phone account—she wasn't sure how—and found some nude photos. Then he copied and sent them to her friends. Hoping it would make Seth stop pestering her, the girl gave in and sent him an explicit photo. But he didn't stop.

A few weeks later, another Belmont High girl showed up at the station. A guy was harassing her too. Then more girls came in. Some were ashamed, some were in tears, and some were accompanied by furious parents. Moulton had an epidemic on her hands.

IN 2011, MAY was a 16-year-old student at Belmont High when her family moved to a nearby town and she enrolled in a new school. "I wasn't that popular, I guess you could say," May said.



So when she got a Facebook friend request from someone named Seth Williams, whose profile photo was cute, she accepted it. They exchanged numbers, and he began texting. He said nice things and seemed to want to get to know her. He'd ask about her favourite ice cream flavour and her pets.

When he asked for photos of her body, she hesitated. "I still was like, no guy shows me this attention," she said. "He actually seems like a nice guy. Maybe it'll be OK." May sent him a photo she thought was fun, of her rear in jeans, plastered with handprints from her freshly painted room.

He wanted more. She sent him a picture with her in underwear, then one of her bare bottom. When he demanded a full nude, she told him, "No. That's where I draw the line."

"No picture, no Facebook," he replied. When May tried logging in to her accounts, she couldn't access them: He'd hacked her Facebook account and her email and changed the passwords. She begged him to return the accounts; he refused. She blocked him on her phone; he texted from a different number. She changed her number; he still

found her. "He always came back," she said. "Always."

One night in the autumn of 2012, a text pinged on her phone. It was Seth, again demanding photos. This time, the text included nude photos of other girls. May recognized a friend from her Belmont days. She called the friend, who urged her to talk to her mother and go to Detective Moulton in Belmont.

"I remember taking in a deep breath and going up the stairs. I sat on my mom's bed, and I said, 'Mom, I have something that I need to tell you, and I don't know how,'" May says. The next day, May and her mother went to the Belmont police station.

May met with Moulton, who was spending more and more time on the mystery. Seth had sent nude photos to other girls, too, and with their help, Moulton was able to track down a dozen or so victims and see a commonality: They all had, at some point, attended Belmont High. She knew some of the girls were really suffering. One began sleeping in the same bed as her mother. Several feared Seth would attack them. One girl cried herself to sleep. Another routinely called her mom at work, sobbing, terrified about being alone. They battled depression, anxiety, nausea.

Moulton talked to New Hampshire's computer-crimes unit and was told that there weren't any known perpetrators who followed Seth's script. She took over one girl's phone to try to elicit information from Seth, suggesting they meet up at a teen hangout nicknamed

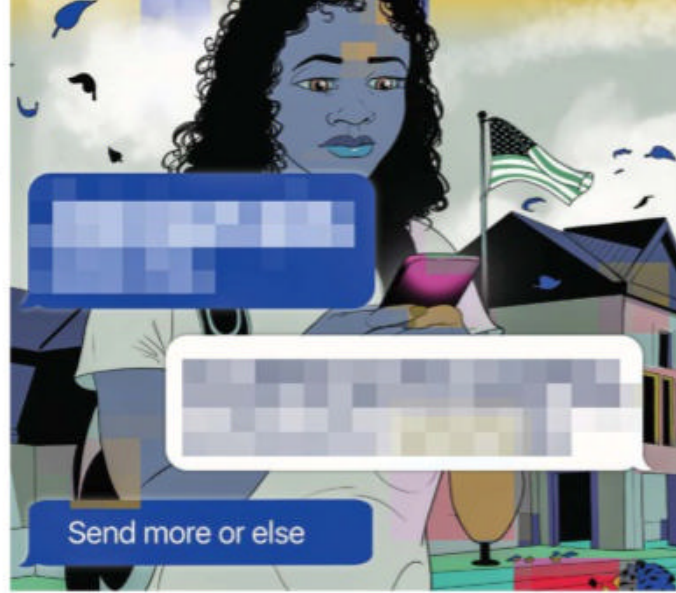
the Arches. He didn't seem to recognize the name, and she wondered whether he was a local.

In response to a subpoena, the messaging service TextFree sent information that identified Seth's phone. With that, Moulton was able to subpoena the phone's registration and billing information. The results pointed to Ryan Vallee, a 19-year-old graduate of Belmont High, class of 2012.

Moulton needed more evidence to know it was Vallee for sure. But she told a few of the girls that he was a suspect, hoping it might ease their fears. "They really had a sense of this big, huge, brute of a person," Moulton said. "When they found out who it was, some of them were like, 'Really?'"

If they could place him at all, classmates remembered Vallee as quiet and awkward. One girl had sat with him at lunch occasionally. She'd even told him about her online stalker. Vallee offered his help to unmask 'Seth'. May knew Vallee from the school bus and had made a point of being friendly towards him. *What did I do for him to feel that I deserved this?* she wondered.

As Moulton tried to gather more information, she was staring down another problem. Even if she could find the proof to arrest Vallee, the most she could charge him with was harassment, a misdemeanour carrying a sentence of less than a year. "For a couple of those girls, it became their lives for a year and a half," she says. "I didn't think the laws of this state were enough for that



kind of fear." So Moulton reached out to federal authorities.

IN OCTOBER 2013, the feds learnt that one of the victims was close to suicide and charged Vallee with extortion. But under a tight time frame, they dismissed the case, opting instead to gather more evidence with the goal of arresting him again on stronger charges.

Five months after they took over the case, a new expert came on board: Mona Sedky, a lawyer in the Department of Justice who specialized in computer crimes and corporate hacking. A few years earlier, she had been enlisted to help with a case against a man who had threatened to spread naked images of a young mother online. The man pleaded guilty, but soon after his sentencing, the victim killed herself. Then Sedky learnt that someone in her own extended family had experienced something similar at age 14. "I can't unring that bell for her, but I can help make sure that other women don't

have that happen to them,” she says.

Since then, Sedky has worked on about a dozen ‘sextortion’ cases. While sextortion isn’t a federal crime, prosecutors can charge people with computer fraud and abuse. Most states outlaw non-consensual sharing of sexual images, but generally these carry far lighter sentences than the federal laws Sedky relies on.

Matthew O’Neill, a Secret Service agent in New Hampshire, reached out to Sedky for help with the Vallee case. (The Secret Service investigates computer crimes and identity theft.) Sedky jumped in, issuing subpoenas to Amazon, Skype, Yahoo, Google, Facebook and others. She unearthed the trail all Internet users leave: log-in IP addresses, time and date stamps and registration information. Investigators then went back further, to the Internet providers, to find subscriber and location information.

With these details in hand, O’Neill and other agents mapped the locations where Seth had logged in. They all had some plausible link to Vallee: a restaurant near his mother’s house, an air-conditioning business belonging to his mother’s ex-boyfriend. A random person’s Wi-Fi in New Hampshire, turned out to belong to his sister’s neighbour. These were crucial bits of circumstantial evidence, and investigators needed as many of them as possible.

“In these cyber cases, you have to defeat the SODDI defence,” O’Neill says—that is, ‘Some other dude did

it’. By studying the exchanges, O’Neill cracked one way that Seth accessed his victims’ accounts. When Seth was making friendly chatter with the girls—such as asking May her favourite ice cream flavour and the names of her pets—he was really collecting clues that he then used to answer the security questions on their accounts.

Finally, in 2016, federal prosecutors had enough evidence to charge Vallee with interstate threats, aggravated identity theft and computer fraud and abuse. The indictment listed

ONE GIRL CRIED HERSELF TO SLEEP. ANOTHER ROUTINELY CALLED HER MOM AT WORK, SOBBING.

10 unnamed victims—the women who had been persuaded to come forward.

Vallee was released on bail and ordered not to use the Internet. Though the evidence was strong, Sedky was worried; she knew from experience that putting vulnerable victims on the witness stand in court could be enormously distressing, “so there were incentives for us to try to get him to plead guilty to avoid a trial.” But Vallee was adamant that it wasn’t him—that some other dude did it.

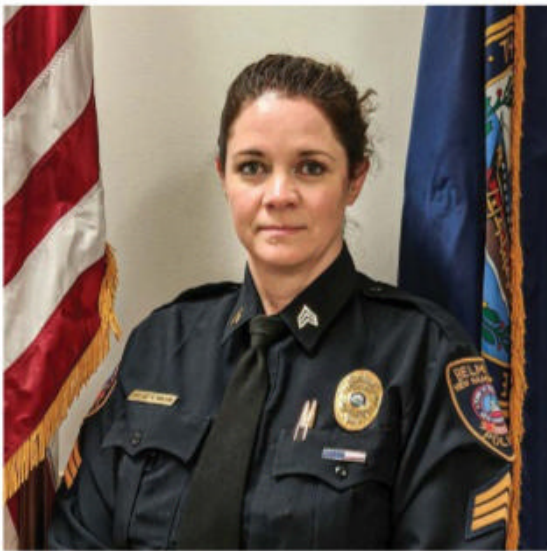
AFTER GRADUATING FROM Belmont High in 2011, Mackenzie moved to

North Carolina. Her mother had banned her from social media in high school, so she “went a little crazy,” she says. When Seth contacted her, she responded. But then Seth took over several of her accounts and demanded a photo of her breasts.

“I won’t send one. I’ll fight back,” Mackenzie wrote him.

Mackenzie, who says she was a victim of abuse when she was younger, was determined not to cower. She printed out her exchanges with Seth and took them to the police in her town. “The policewoman told me, ‘Honestly, we don’t really have the technology to be able to deal with something like this, and there’s a very low probability that anything will come from this,’” Mackenzie says.

A year later, in 2013, Seth started



“This job picks you,” says Detective Raechel Moulton, who decided in primary school to become a police officer.

using a Belmont girl’s hacked Facebook page to harass Mackenzie further. Mackenzie messaged the girl, who told her about Detective Moulton. Mackenzie passed along dates and screenshots, adding to the thick case file.

When the trial team called Mackenzie, she told them that Seth had stopped bothering her for a bit but that in recent months he’d contacted her again, using the same hacked Facebook page of the Belmont girl, identified in court papers as M.M.

This information was critical: It meant Vallee was back online, breaking the terms of his bail. If agents could catch him with whatever device he was using, they would have his browsing and messaging history. With evidence that strong, they could circumvent Vallee’s ‘some other dude’ defence.

The government got an order that required Facebook to deliver daily reports of IP addresses and log-in times for the M.M. Facebook page. Meanwhile, Secret Service agent O’Neill took over Mackenzie’s Facebook account. Copying the instant-messaging patois he’d learnt from his teenage daughters, O’Neill posed as Mackenzie on Facebook Messenger. He alternately flirted, challenged and acted mad at ‘Seth’, who, the Facebook reports showed, accessed the app with a cell phone. The investigators were determined to get it.

On a windy March morning, Secret Service agents in black SUVs pulled up outside Vallee’s mother’s house and his sister’s apartment. They figured Vallee

was staying at one of them. O'Neill, acting as Mackenzie, once again used Facebook Messenger to connect with the hacker of M.M.'s Facebook page.

Just after O'Neill signed off, Vallee left his sister's apartment. Secret Service agents followed. When he stopped at a traffic light, the officers jumped out of their SUVs, guns raised. Vallee took off, weaving through traffic. The Secret Service and local police tailed him until he hit a dead end. As he got out of the car, a police officer yelled at him to get on the ground. In the car was a backpack. Inside the backpack was a phone.

Five months later, Vallee pleaded guilty to 31 counts, including aggravated identity theft, computer hacking and cyberstalking.

ON 6 FEBRUARY 2017, Ryan Vallee sat in the Concord federal courthouse for sentencing. Sedky told the judge about the emotional devastation Vallee had wrought. She called his acts a "remote sexual assault" and argued that Vallee should go to prison for eight years—the higher end of federal sentencing guidelines.

Investigators had identified 23 victims and suspected there were even more. Most declined to speak at the hearing. "I can only guess they were just as ashamed as I was," May says. But she decided to attend, as did Mackenzie and a third victim. Sitting behind Vallee in the courtroom, Mackenzie studied him. He was wearing glasses, his eyes cast down. He looked,



Mackenzie was determined not to cower. "I'll fight back," she wrote to her harasser.

she says, "quirky and small, and someone who I probably wouldn't have been as afraid of if I had actually known who he was." But when she got up to make her statement, she tried to avoid looking his way. It wasn't Ryan Vallee she'd feared, she told the judge, trying not to cry, but Seth, who was "everywhere, all the time."

Judge Paul Barbadoro asked Vallee whether he had anything to say. He shook his head and said, "No."

The judge sentenced Vallee to the eight years in prison that prosecutors had requested.

"It should send a message to other people out there that you can't do this," Assistant US Attorney Arnie Huftalen said. "This is real crime. It really hurts people, and it creates injuries that will last for a lifetime." **R**

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BONUS READ

WAR AND PEACE ON MELROSE HILL

*A chance encounter on a train journey leads
to an amazing discovery of a decades-old
World War 2 connection*

BY *Dr Yashwant Thorat*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Siddhant Jumde*

May I have a light?" I looked up to see a Japanese gentleman, about my age, standing next to me with an unlit cigarette in his hand. I reached for my lighter. We were on a train, travelling from Berne to Geneva in the autumn of 1980.

"Are you Indian?" he asked.

"Yes" I replied.

We began talking. He was an official at the United Nations, returning home and to his headquarters. I was scheduled to lecture at the university. He gave me some useful tips on what to see and where to eat in the city. Having exhausted our store of small talk, we fell silent. I retrieved my book, *Defeat into Victory*, an account of the second World War in Burma, by Field Marshal William Slim. He opened up a newspaper.

After a while, he asked, "Are you a professor of military history?"

"No," I replied. "Just interested. My father was in Burma during the War". "Mine too," he said.

In December 1941, Japan invaded Burma and opened the longest land campaign of the entire war for Britain. There were two reasons for the Japanese advance: First, cutting off the overland supply route to China via the Burma Road would deprive Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist Chinese armies of military equipment and pave the way for the conquest of China.

Second, possession of Burma would position them at the doorway to India, where they believed a general insurrection would be triggered against the British once their troops established themselves within reach of Calcutta. Entering Burma from Thailand, the Japanese quickly captured Rangoon in 1942, severing the Burma Road at its source and denying the Chinese of

their only convenient supply base and port of entry.

Winning battle after battle, they forced the Allied forces to retreat into India. The situation was bleak. The British were heavily committed to the war in Europe and lacked the resources and organization to recapture Burma. However, they soon got their act together. The High Command was overhauled: Field Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell was replaced by Lord Louis Mountbatten and operational control was given to General William Slim, a brilliant officer who forged the famous 14th Army—an efficient combat force made up of British, Indians and Africans. The Japanese, aware that the defenders were gathering strength, resolved to end the campaign with a bold thrust



The author's father, Lt. Colonel (later Lt. General) S. P. P. Thorat, descending Melrose Hill after the night-long battle.

into India and a simultaneous attack in Burma's Arakan peninsula.

It was in the ebb and flow of these larger events that my father, a soldier, played a part—first in Kohima, clearing the Japanese from the Naga Hills, then in Imphal and, finally, here, in the forested mountains of Kangaw.

In 1945, amidst the blinding monsoon rains, Supreme Allied Commander Mountbatten's plane landed at Maungdaw where the All-India Brigade, of which his regiment was a part, was headquartered. My father and two other commanders—

K. S. Thimayya and L. P. Sen—were introduced to Mountbatten, who made casual but searching enquiries regarding their war experience.

After a long meeting, the group emerged from the conference tent and Mountbatten turned to Reggie Hutton, the Brigade commander and said, "All right, Reggie! Let your All-Indian Brigade do it. But, by God, it's going to be tough." Turning to the three commanders, he said, "Gentlemen, the Japanese are pulling out of Upper Burma. You have been chosen to intercept their withdrawal from there into the South. You will concentrate at Akyab, proceed to Myebon by sea, capture Kangaw, penetrate Japanese-held territory and convert their retreat into a rout. Is that clear?" It was.

My Japanese friend, who had been listening intently, leaned forward and asked, "Did you say your father was in the All-India Brigade?"

"Yes", I replied.

Our conversation paused as the waiter served coffee and croissants. Later, he persisted, "Was he a junior officer at the time?"

"Battalion commander. Punjab Regiment", I replied.

As he digested the information, his face seemed to blanch. It was perhaps a play of light or just my imagination, but I thought he was going to be ill.

"Are you okay?" I queried.

He nodded. "Please carry on."



War poster detailing the events of the Allied campaign in Kangaw, Burma. The Burma campaign was the longest fought by the British Army during the Second World War.

After marching through hostile territory against stiff opposition, the Punjab troops finally landed at Myebon. They proceeded to Kangaw, not knowing that 48 hours later they would be locked in a battle that was to last a fortnight and claim the lives of thousands.

The Japanese withdrawal route was dominated by Hill Feature 170, dubbed 'Melrose', an elevated terrain that gave the men holding it an enormous tactical advantage. Moreover, intelligence reports claimed they had two brigades whereas the Indians had one. Brigadier Hutton realized that to achieve their mission of stopping the

enemy's withdrawal, the hill would have to be captured despite the odds. He made the call.

The first attack by the Hyderabadis under Thimayya mauled the enemy but did not achieve the objective. The second by the Baluchis under Sen met a similar fate. It was then that Hutton asked my father and the Punjabis under his command to make a final effort. Artillery and air support was coordinated. The attack was set at 0700 hours on 29 January 1945. At dawn, as the leading companies moved forward, the Japanese opened machine-gun fire. As artillery provided cover and laid out a

smokescreen, the Punjabis began to climb the hill. Ensnared in well-dug bunkers, the Japanese rained fire on the climbing party. Air cover, a key part of the plan, failed to materialize—bad weather and bad luck. The Indian casualties mounted.

Taking a calculated risk, the commander pushed on. They were hardly 91 metres from the top when the Japanese threw everything they had at them. In the face of such unrestrained ferocity, the advance began to falter, hovering uncertainly on the edge of retreat. It was the moment of truth—fight or flee?

As he watched his men being mowed down by heavy fire, a rage erupted within the commander. Throwing caution to the winds, he ran ahead to stand with the troops. His presence seemed to tip the scales—the soldiers rallied, ‘fixed’ bayonets and charged into the Japanese, shouting obscenities and primeval war cries. Fierce hand-to-hand combat ensued. Neither side took or gave quarter. The conflict continued unabated through the night. The Japanese counter-attacked in wave after wave, but the Indian line held firm. Then, the last bullet was fired and there was silence.

Many years later, Mountbatten would describe what took place as “the bloodiest battle of the Arakan”, and rightly so. Around two thousand Japanese and 800 Indians lay dead in the course of that single encounter.

The battalion commander would be decorated with the DSO for “unflinching devotion to duty and personal bravery”. But that was far into the future.

At that moment, on the field of battle, the triumphant chief looked over the captured Japanese, assembled, as soldiers do, neatly and in order. On seeing the Indian commander, their leader called his men to attention, stepped forward, saluted, unbuckled his sword, held it out with both hands and bowed. The Indian was startled to see his enemy’s face streaked with tears. He understood the pain of defeat, but tears? After all, this was

The advance faltered, hovering on the edge of retreat. Should they fight? Or flee?



war—one or the other side had to lose.

What the Japanese could not explain was that his tears were not of grief but of shame. How could he make him understand what it meant to be Samurai? Given a choice he would have preferred the nobler course of *hara-kiri* (taking one’s own life) than surrender, but fate willed otherwise. The ancestral sword in his hands had been carried with pride by his forefathers. Now he was shaming them by handing it over.

All this was unknown—unknowable—to the Indian commander. And yet there was something in the manner and bearing of the defeated officer in front of him which moved him deeply. He felt that the moment was not merely solemn but deeply personal, even sacred.

He reached out to receive the sword, and then, inexplicably—compelled by an emotion which perhaps only a soldier can feel for a worthy opponent—stepped forward and spoke clearly and loudly for everyone to hear: “Colonel, I accept your surrender, but I receive your sword, not as a token of defeat, but as a gift from one soldier to another.”

Battle was battle. Each fought with strength. Now, that it was over, they were all just men.



The Japanese leader looked up, his face lit up with surprise and unspoken gratitude for the remark that redeemed his honour.

The Punjabi soldiers—Hindus and Muslims—nodded in appreciation. Battle was battle. When it was on, each fought the other with all their strength. Now that it was over, they were all simply men—there was no personal or national animosity. Maybe the gods who look after



Japanese flags like this one were often brought back home as souvenirs by the victors after close-combat encounters.

soldiers are different from those who guide other mortals, for they bind them in strange webs of understanding and codes of honour that persist no matter what flags they fly.

The moment passed. The success signal was fired. Far away in the jungles below, Brigadier Hutton watched the three red lights in the sky and smiled. He would later explain that at stake that night was not only the battle mission itself, but the larger issue of whether Indians ‘had it in them’ to lead men in war. Sceptics felt his faith was misplaced, but the day’s victory offered vindication.

The story ended, I looked out of my compartment window, lost in thought when I heard a choking sound. My Japanese friend had broken down. He swayed from side



The Samurai sword surrendered to General Thorat after the Melrose battle

to side, his eyes closed, clearly in the grip of an emotion more powerful than he could control. He kept saying “Karma, karma,” and muttering to himself in his own language. After a while, he looked up and held both my hands. “It was my father who battled yours on Melrose. It was he who surrendered. Had your father not understood the depth of his feelings, he would have come back and died of shame. But in accepting our ancestral sword in the manner he did, he restored honour to my father and to our family. That makes us brothers—you and I.”

When the train pulled into Geneva station, we stepped off on

to the platform and bid farewell. “Goodbye,” I said. “Keep in touch. Incidentally, would you like me to restore the sword back to your family?” He smiled and said, “Certainly not. The sword already rests in the house of a Samurai.”

That was the last I saw of him.

Usha, my wife, says the probability of our meeting defies statistics. She should know, having studied economics and statistics. That both our fathers joined the army during a World War and fought in Burma was perhaps understandable; that they were present in the same specific battle—difficult but believable. They returned to their families—plausible. But that their sons grew up in two different lands, happened to go to Berne at the same time, board the same train, share the same compartment, and discover a connection from four decades ago—that undoubtedly is insane.

Personally, I do not believe in pre-destination and yet, at times, I am not so sure. The sword has a pride of place in our home. Now, whenever I see it, my mind enters the jungles of Arakan, where in the midst of the madness of war, two soldiers entered the heat and fury of battle and emerged on to a common ground where respect and humanity won the day. **R**

Dr Yashwant Thorat is the son of late Lt. General S. P. P. Thorat, KC, DSO. First published in Salute, July 2017.

CULTURESCAPE

BOOKS, ARTS AND *Entertainment*

TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF

In Irwin Allan Sealy's latest novel, we discover an Asoka who is more human than saint

—
BY *Sukhada Tatke*

Emperor Asoka ruled much of South Asia and played a crucial role in the spread of Buddhism in the 3rd century BC. But who was the man? What brought about his transformation from a warmonger to a practitioner and preacher of peace? Irwin Allan Sealy's latest novel *Asoka: A Sutra*—an imagined memoir told in the voice of the ageing emperor, 'Asoka', after he has abdicated and retired to a cave—might provide some answers.



**“FOR A
REVOLUTIONARY
TRANSFORMATION
OF THE KIND ASOKA
WENT THROUGH,
THE HUMAN
MATERIAL MUST
BE EXCEPTIONAL.”**



PHOTO: ARUN PARDESI

What drew you to write a book on Asoka?

A glimpse—quite late in life—of his famous Kalsi edict rock located in the very district where I'd spent a goodly portion of my life, Dehradun. The rock was pivotal in establishing an accurate chronology for our ancient history and in the deciphering of our archaic languages, so I was a little ashamed of having failed to visit this crucial landmark in my own backyard. I think the novel was part expiation.

In *Zelaldinus* (2017), the narrator was your alter-ego. Here, Asoka is looking back on his life as a 70-something man. Did your being close to him in age have any bearing on his reflections?

Certainly, it helped to be able to look back as Asoka himself might have towards the end of his life. I'd like to think that proximity—reflecting on life from a comparable vantage—gave the first-person narrative some authenticity. We don't know for sure when Asoka was born or when he died, so his age is conjectural. Historians think he lived into his mid-seventies.

You said in an interview that the sorrow of Asoka resonated with your own experiences as a person. Can you elaborate?

I did have in mind a darkening of the screen—a sobering or sombering—that comes with advancing age. In fact, the Kalinga war came when Asoka was barely middle aged, but it appears to have profoundly changed—you could say aged—him. Sorrow is almost by definition an

older person's response; it goes much deeper than simple sadness, which is available to you at any age.

You make a distinction between 'Asoca' and 'Asoka'. Could you tell us a little about the 'k' sound and why the difference?

It was just a way of distinguishing my fictional character from the historical man. The 'c' was my proprietary mark, which allowed me to shape my man in any way I pleased. He was 'my Asoca' in the way Zelaldinus was my Akbar. (The Jesuits at court wrote his name, Jalaluddin, as Zelaldinus in Latin, and I thought *Good, I'll call my man that!*) In *Asoca* the eccentric spelling is also a linguistic marker: There's light weather made of the way people speak and how it indicates their social class or regional origins.

Were you already thinking of this book when you wrote these lines in *Zelaldinus*:

"... Ashoka the great? Don't make me laugh ..."?

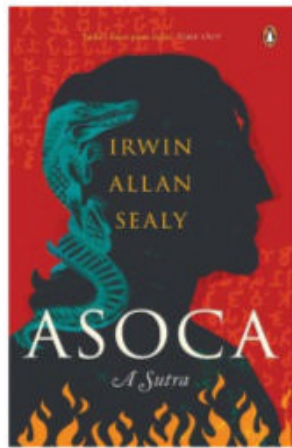
Strangely, no. At that point I was Akbar. And of course, the poem was a one-off, a comic set-piece. The reader understands Akbar here is the edgy, imperial egotist looking for the nearest competitor. Asoka is more than the straw man Akbar sets up here. That's part of the joke, which then goes still further with the 'other guy'—Christ.

Of all your books, this one seems to be among the more 'straightforward'.

Yes. In the past I've often chosen complex modes of story-telling. The form—say a *nama* or a chronicle, as indicated in the subtitle—was a clue to the strategy of the text. This time the strategy itself was straightforward. I set out to tell a plain unvarnished tale, something the sutra—or thread—exemplifies: no loops, no knots, just a continuous yarn. Hence *Asoca: A Sutra*.

How did you strike the balance between taking creative liberties in the novel and staying faithful to the spirit of the man?

The edicts are what we know this man by, and their unique feature is their advocacy of non-violence and a message of tolerance that broke with the vaunts of all other rulers of antiquity. I needed to keep this quality front and centre without making a saint of



the man. The man who emerges from the edicts is in fact very human: a bit humourless, a bit sanctimonious, a bit of a prig, so I tried to work those qualities into the book. There is also a tradition that Asoka was a cruel king who turned over a new leaf when he became a Buddhist. Now, I could have used this alleged transformation in a lurid way that made for melodrama, but in fact I was trying to create an ordinary man, neither saint nor sinner. Extraordinary

men have their ordinary moments, and many of the liberties I take surround such moments in his life.

Tell us a little about how your visits to Kalinga influenced the book.

To stand by the Kalsi rock, or the one at Kalinga, is to step outside time. As you muse, you're gathered up into a past that has vanished so completely that you're obliged to reinvent it. Possibly that strenuous evocation turned me into a storyteller: recreating the times led to recreating the king. We all grow up with a smattering of Asoka, and I think I'd reached a tipping point where I was after more. I began by reading the edicts. The edict rocks should be places of national pilgrimage.

In the novel, Asoca doesn't shy away from recounting war and bloodshed in great detail when he speaks about the signal he gave to "begin the killing". Usually, one tends to bury one's darkest mistakes, but not Asoca.

What does that say about him?

It says he was an uncommon man, unusually reflective, ahead of his time (as a ruler if not as a thinker—remember always that the Buddha preceded him in a sense that made him possible) and spiritually resourceful. Only an unusually strong personality could snatch victory from a moral defeat the way he did. To take a cynical view of his transformation is to miss a human triumph that is also a piece of admirable kingship, because he proceeds to turn his

awakening to practical and political ends—his programme of dhamma.

Asoka's story is inspiring in that a man who spread destruction transformed after great penitence. Do you think our present-day leaders are capable of such introspection?

For a revolutionary transformation of the kind Asoka underwent, the human material must be exceptional. I see no evidence of the necessary strength of character among today's leaders, but there's no such thing as a *kali yuga* any more than there's ever been a golden age. History can throw up an aberration any time, just as it did in Gandhi's day.

"Forgive yourself," Asoca is told in the end. Do you think that is a good starting point on the path to redemption?

It is a prerequisite to wiping the slate clean, and *that* is a necessary first step on the path.

What are you working on now?

On a gazetteer of the Doon valley. Something along the lines of the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, which was an extraordinary work of literature. Of course, that encyclopaedic work would simply be a point of departure: old forms are a springboard to new kinds of writing. My *Gazetteer* will be considerably more playful and will happily accommodate fact and fiction, something that would horrify any civil servant worth his salt, especially those staid Raj sahibs. **R**

LAUGHTER

THE BEST *Medicine*

Little Johnny and his friend Tommy were on their very first train ride. A vendor selling concessions came by, and Tommy's mother bought each child a candy bar.

Johnny eagerly tore into his just as the train went into a tunnel. When the train emerged, Johnny saw that Tommy was still struggling with the wrapper.

"I wouldn't eat that if I were you," Johnny said to Tommy.

"Why not?" asked Tommy.

"Because I took one bite and went blind for half a minute."

—*Innerworkspublishing.com*

I've created an app to help with insomnia. It lets you talk to other



"A tattoo? You're kidding. It sure looks like a suit."

really boring people until you fall asleep. It's online sedating.

—JON HARVEY,
comedian

Season to Taste

◆ Spices were first brought to Europe in the Middle Ages, and some of them

are still at the back of my cupboard.

—[@CRAIGUITO](#)

◆ I switched the labels on all my wife's spices. I'm not in trouble yet, but the thyme is cumin.

—*Submitted by*
JUSTIN MITCHELL



AN INSPIRATIONAL
TITLE FOR INSTANT
SUCCESS

TOP
VISIONARIES
WHO CHANGED
THE WORLD



Foreword: Bill Gates, Steve Jobs,
Mark Zuckerberg, Jack Ma, Warren Buffett,
Richard Branson, Oprah Winfrey and others

—REVISED EDITION—
GEORGE LILIAN

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Start each day with a positive thought, like *I can go back to bed in about 16 hours.*

— @ABBYHASISSUES

A priest, a minister and a rabbit walk into a blood bank. The rabbit says, "I think I might be a type O."
—Submitted by VINCENT GOTTSCHALK

A wealthy businessman liked to show his party guests his pool and say, "If you swim a lap, I will give you

\$10 million, half of my estate, or my daughter's hand in marriage. But there's a shark in the pool."
One day as he said this, there was a loud splash. A man swam a lap of the pool and got out just as the shark thudded into the wall.
"So, would you like

\$10 million?"
"No," the man said.
"Half of my estate?"
"No," the man said.
"Ah! You want to marry my daughter."
"No! I want the name of the man who pushed me in!"

—Alphausa.org

Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

EVERY TRICK IN THE BOOK

Bibliophiles can be so clever! Before you dive into your summer reading, watch out for booksellers (and librarians) pulling pranks.



RD RECOMMENDS

Films

ENGLISH: After its recent premiere at Cannes, reviewers didn't quite seem to know what adjectives they should employ for this film. While most called **ANNETTE** (streaming on Amazon Prime Video from 20 August) "beautiful", they also thought it was "baffling". Starring Adam Driver and Marion Cotillard, this Leos Carax rock opera is about a mysterious child who turns her parents' lives upside down.

HINDI: There is hardly anything which Manoj Bajpayee touches these days that does not become gold. Given its high-adrenaline trailer, **DIAL 100** (releasing on Zee5 on 6 August) seems



Adam Driver and Marion Cotillard in a still from *Annette*

to tick all the boxes an edge-of-your-seat thriller should. In an effort to exact revenge for the death of her son, Seema Palwa (Neena Gupta) kidnaps the family of police officer Nikhil Sood (Bajpayee). Chaos ensues.



Manoj Bajpayee as police officer Nikhil Sood in *Dial 100*

Though it is hard to replicate the valour of Captain Vikram Batra in the 1999 Kargil War, it was, perhaps, a matter of time before the Hindi film industry gave his heroism the cinematic treatment. **SHERSHAAH**, releasing on Amazon Prime Video on 12 August, is the perfect biopic to watch this Independence Day weekend. Siddharth Malhotra plays Batra as an ordinary man filled with extraordinary courage.

TAMIL: Even though anthology films are all the rage, **NAVARASA**

(releasing on Netflix on 9 August) promises to exceed expectations. Created by Mani Ratnam, the film's segments each explore one of nine emotions that make up the gamut of human feeling. With directors such as Arvind Swami and Bejoy Nambiar, and a cast that includes Revathi and Vijay Sethupathi, this one cannot be missed.



Suriya Sivakumar in *Navarasa*

#WATCHLIST: ON OUR RADAR

Modern Love Season 2:

The first season of this anthology series proved not only that the *New York Times* column *Modern Love* is a great read, it is also fun to watch. With a cast that



Kit Harrington in *Modern Love* Season 2

boasts of names such as Kit Harrington and Minnie Driver, this collection of love stories seems to have all the right ingredients—quirk, warmth and dollops of mush. Streaming on Amazon Prime Video from 13 August.

Cocaine Cowboys: The Kings of Miami: Coming to Netflix on 4 August, this series will see filmmaker Billy Corben update his 2006 documentary, *Cocaine Cowboys*. Fifteen years ago,



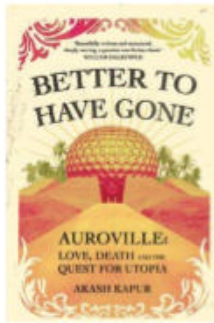
Falcon and Magluta from *Cocaine Cowboys*.

Corben gave us a compelling overview of cocaine trafficking, but this time he has narrowed his focus down to two notorious drug lords—Augusto “Willy” Falcon and Salvador “Sal” Magluta.

Books

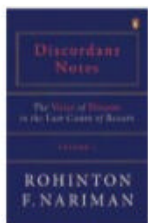
***Better to Have Gone: Auroville—Love, Death and the Quest for Utopia* by Akash Kapur, Simon & Schuster**

John Walker, the handsome scion of an influential East Coast American family, came to India in the 1960s with Diane Maes, his Belgian hippie lover. Together they gave shape to their dream of a new world. At first, Auroville, the community they joined, seemed to have realized a utopian ideal, but like with any utopia, John and Diane's plenitude could not last. They



were both found dead 20 years later.

Akash Kapur grew up in Auroville and later married, Auralice, John and Diane's daughter. In 2004, the couple return to Pondicherry with their two sons. In his memoir, Kapur confronts the ghosts of his parents-in-law, but also asks a deeper question: What price are we willing to pay in our quest for a perfect world?



YOU MAY ALSO LIKE ... *Discordant Notes:*

***The Voices of Dissent in the Last Court of Resort (Volumes I & II)* by Rohinton Fali Nariman (Penguin):**

Although justice comes to rely on consensus, it isn't essential that all judges on a bench are always in agreement. A dissenting judgement, for instance, records the opinion of a judge who disagrees with the verdict at which his peers arrive. In these definitive volumes, the eminent Rohinton F. Nariman examines the most important dissenting judgments in the history of India's Supreme Court.



Scope Out

The House Next to the Factory (Fourth Estate):

Made up of nine interlinked stories, Sonali Kohli's book tells the story of post-Partition India through its protagonist Kavya and her affluent family.

Funeral Nights (Context):

In Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih's unusual and compelling novel, a group of friends find themselves lost in a jungle, swapping stories that throw light on Khasi life and culture.

Fragments Against My Ruin: A Life (Context)

Farrukh Dhondy is many things—television celebrity, writer, unabashed leftist and homegrown Parsi boy. This memoir is a sum of all those parts.

Music

TUNE IN

Song: 'Churaya'

Artist: Amit Trivedi

When Amit Trivedi burst on to the scene, actors in Hindi films still pretended to sing on screen. Unlike today, Bollywood soundtracks were much sought after. Trivedi didn't take long to engineer what would soon become a trademark sound. For audiences, the songs of *Dev.D* (2009), *Aisha* (2010) and *Queen* (2013) were at times more memorable than the films themselves. Even though Trivedi's style is unmistakable, no two melodies of his have ever sounded the same. His is a big, profound talent.

Trivedi has always been very good at understanding a film's context, but with the pandemic sucking Bollywood



Amit Trivedi

dry, he, too, has been forced to adapt. AT Azaad, his new independent label, gives Trivedi freedom to make music he likes. On 'Churaya', for instance, he uses the trumpet and saxophone liberally. With a video that's as cheery as his production, Trivedi shows us that music can beat all odds.

LISTEN

AUDIOBOOK:

Neil Gaiman's **THE SANDMAN** is Bible for some comic book lovers and Audible did



due justice to its cult status when

assembling its audio cast: James McAvoy, Riz Ahmed and Michael Sheen.

PODCAST: Hosted by journalist Raghu Karnad, **MARINE LINES: MUMBAI'S HIDDEN WORLDS** explores the city's various ecosys-

tems with guests like Anupama Chopra, Amitav Ghosh and Sameer Kulavoor.



—COMPILED BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

REVIEW

A History of Violence

Fahadh Faasil's *Malik* reminds us that in cinema, crime does pay

BY *Jai Arjun Singh*

TO UNDERSTAND the breadth of current Malayalam cinema—responsible for, perhaps, the most vibrant filmmaking in the country today—consider the last two collaborations between writer-director Mahesh Narayanan and actor Fahadh Faasil. In 2020, with pandemic-generated restrictions on conventional filmmaking, they made the low-budget, experimental ‘computer screen film’ *CU Soon*, through video calls, online chats, and only very basic real-world sets (Faasil offered the use of his own flat).

Their latest, *Malik*, on the other hand, is a big-canvas gangster film



Fahadh Faasil in *Malik*

spanning five decades, with a large cast of characters. It begins with a very long, single-take sequence that introduces us to the household of the ageing Sulaiman or ‘Ali Ikka’ (Faasil), as he prepares to leave for a Hajj pilgrimage. He is arrested, though, and plans are made to kill him in prison. This sets the framework for flashbacks—narrated by different characters—that detail the rise to power of a man who becomes a hero in the Ramadapally region. While Sulaiman, a Muslim, falls in love with and marries a Christian girl Roslyn (Nimisha Sajayan), he also finds himself caught

in communal tensions exploited by politicians and police—leading to a parting of ways with his brother-in-law David (Vinay Fortt). Though centred on the politics of a specific area, *Malik* (streaming on Amazon Prime Video) draws on templates and character types that have been genre staples since *The Godfather* (some scenes also feel like a homage to Mani Ratnam’s *Nayagan*). While crime-movie aficionados might find it over-familiar at times, on its own terms, this is a solid, well-acted film with a sense of the broad sweep of history and the intimate moments that forge that history. **R**



**Gandhi greeted by
Darwen's textile
workers, 1931**

38.1 x 28 cm

IT WAS LANCASHIRE'S cotton town of Darwen that felt keenly the sting of Mahatma Gandhi's swadeshi movement. Unlike the rest of Britain that mocked Gandhi, his methods and strange demands, the mill workers of Darwen did not hold the Mahatma's protest against him. They just badly wanted him to

also see their suffering. His empathy, they felt, would win the day. In September 1931, when a 62-year-old Gandhi visited London to discuss India's future, Darwen extended a warm invitation. He accepted.

Although it was Gandhi's boycott that had crippled their industry, they flanked him the way they would a matinee star. There was laughter, hurrahs, and as seems obvious from this photograph, some shyness

on Gandhi's part. He told the workers about India's struggles, all the while refusing to cede an inch. When an old weaver complained about how bad things were, Gandhi only said, "My dear, you have no idea what poverty is." Nearly 90 years after this photo was shot, it serves as a reminder of our hard-won independence, yes, but it does also prove that interdependence can, at times, matter, too. **R**

— BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

ME & MY SHELF

In books such as *Daughters of the Sun* and *Heroines*, **Ira Mukhoty** made apparent her love for feminist narratives in Indian history and mythology. Released earlier this month, her first novel, *Song of Draupadi*, helps further that abiding affection for strong, radical women.



Beloved

BY TONI MORRISON,
RHUK, ₹499

Having been brought up on a diet of Anglo-Saxon writers, reading this electrifying and startling novel entirely changed the way I thought about the written word. Morrison's innovative and almost disturbing use of language to describe the haunting of a black American woman by the ghost of her daughter is a literary tour de force. The flavour of this book stays with you your whole life.

One Hundred Years of Solitude

BY GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ,
Penguin India, ₹399

A novel that almost single-handedly defined the genre of magic realism, Márquez's labyrinthine novel describes the vicissitudes of the Buendia family in



the mythical town of Macondo. In prose that is breathtaking and fantastical, and with an imagination that combines lyricism and lunacy, Márquez conveys the chaos and beauty of human life. To be read with caution.

The God of Small Things

BY ARUNDHATI ROY, *Penguin India*, ₹450

Arundhati Roy's novel may not have aged particularly well, but when I read it 25 years ago, I was mesmerized by her luminous prose and her fastidious attention to detail, almost like a seamstress spinning a rainbow gown. A disturbing love story shackled by a sense of foreboding and disquiet.

A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing

BY EIMEAR MCBRIDE, *Faber & Faber*, ₹899

This debut novel by Irish writer Eimear McBride is almost beyond categorization. The author uses a stream-of-

consciousness style to tell the story of a young Irish girl who lives with a brother suffering from a brain tumour. In prose that is as fractured and full of seams as the brother's scars, this is a haunting tale of love and pain.

H is for Hawk

BY HELEN MACDONALD,

Random House, ₹499

When Cambridge research scholar, writer, falconer and naturalist Helen Macdonald found herself devastated by grief over the sudden death of her father, she decided to train a goshawk as a way to sublimate her sorrow. She produced a book which is at once a memoir, a falconry manual and a heart-breaking meditation on loss—all interspersed with gorgeous descriptions of nature.

Wolf Hall

BY HILARY MANTEL, *Fourth Estate, ₹499*

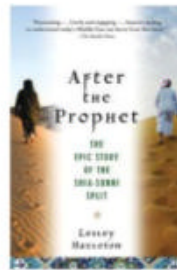
The first—and best—of Hilary Mantel's trilogy about the rise and fall of Thomas Cromwell at the court of Henry VIII is a masterclass in historical fiction. From the first paragraph, the reader is pulled into the 16th-century world of Cromwell with all its violence and splendour. The book is spotlit by the brilliant prose and attention to detail that Mantel brings to all her work.

Hamnet

BY MAGGIE O' FARRELL, *Tinder Press, ₹699*

This re-imagined story of Shakespeare focuses entirely on his wife Agnes, and the terrible tragedy suffered by the

couple when they lose their 11-year-old son, Hamnet. Interestingly, Shakespeare is almost entirely missing in the book, reduced to just a pronoun and descriptor—'he,' 'husband.' The story is filled with foreboding but is told in rich, luminous prose. The story of Agnes, entirely forgotten by history, is mesmerizing.



After the Prophet

BY LESLEY HAZLETON,

Anchor, ₹799

A lucid and engaging account of the great rift that gave rise to the Sunni-Shia branches of Islam and continues to violently divide Muslims. Hazleton brings to life with great vividness the terror- and grief-ridden events that occurred immediately after Prophet Muhammad's calamitous death before he could name a successor, which led to the schism that haunts the Islamic world even today.

A Strange and Sublime Address

BY AMIT CHAUDHURI, *Penguin India, ₹299*

Tales from Firozsha Baag

BY ROHINTON MISTRY, *Faber & Faber, ₹499*

Both these books, written only a few years apart from each other, marked the rise of Indians writing in English with more panache, confidence and style than ever before. Both these books are deeply anchored in the keenly noted reality of Indian cities—Calcutta and Bombay—and are eloquent testimonies to their grace and beauty, but also the violence and chaos of everyday lives. **R**

BRAIN GAMES

7 Pages TO SHARPEN Your Mind

1 to 25

Moderately difficult Move the numbers from the outer ring onto the board. Each number must be placed in one of the five cells that lie in the direction indicated by its chevron. The numbers must snake together vertically, horizontally or diagonally so they link in sequence from 1 to 25. (For example, 2 must be adjacent to both 1 and 3.) There's only one solution. Can you find it?

21	14	19	23	4	8	22
24			1			20
3						18
17						9
13						5
6						12
25	15	16	11	2	7	10

Mathellogical

Difficult Each letter in the grid stands for one of the whole numbers from 1 through 9. No two of them represent the same number. With the help of the clues, can you figure out which letter stands for what?

A	B	C
D	E	F
G	H	J

- $B \times F =$ the two-digit number AB
- $B + J = G$
- $D \times D =$ the two-digit number BC
- One of the rows contains only odd numbers.

Favourite Things

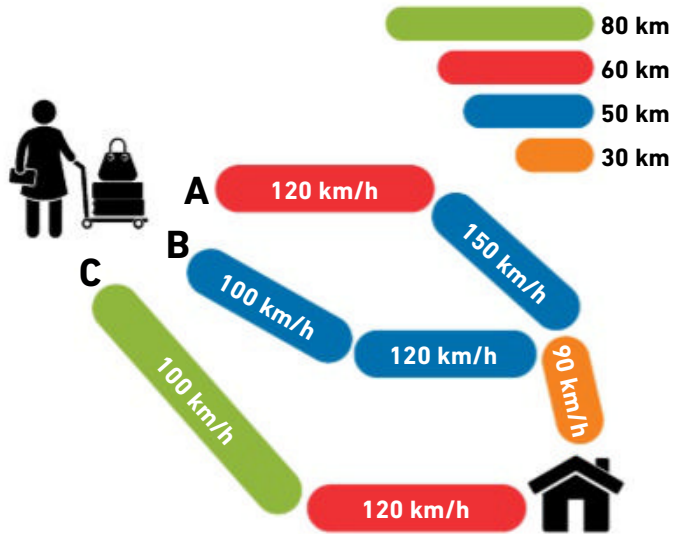
Easy Amar, Sheela, Roohi and Basim each have a different favourite activity from among the following: rock climbing, kayaking, cooking lessons and zip-lining. Can you figure out who likes what, based on the following clues?

- ♦ Amar's favourite activity isn't rock climbing.
- ♦ Sheela is afraid of heights.
- ♦ Roohi can't do her favourite activity without a harness.
- ♦ Basim likes to keep his feet on solid ground at all times.

Trains

Moderately difficult

This map shows Maya, her destination and three train routes she can take to get there. Each segment of track has a different speed limit, indicated by the speeds shown. The distances of each segment are indicated by their colours and the legend to the right. Presuming that each train always goes at the top permitted speed and doesn't stop anywhere along the way, which route (A, B or C) is the fastest?



Dominoes

Easy A standard double-six set of 28 dominoes has been arranged in a rectangle. Can you draw in the lines to show the placement of the dominoes? We've listed the 28 dominoes so you can cross them off as you find them.

For answers, turn to PAGE 128.

(TRAINS) SUE DOHRIN; (DOMINOES) FRASER SIMPSON

BRAIN GAMES ANSWERS

FROM PAGES 126 & 127

1 to 25

21	14	19	23	4	8	22
24	20	17	1	24	25	20
3	18	21	23	2	3	18
17	17	16	22	4	9	9
13	15	13	5	10	8	5
6	14	12	11	6	7	12
25	15	16	11	2	7	10

Mathological

2	4	9
7	8	6
5	3	1

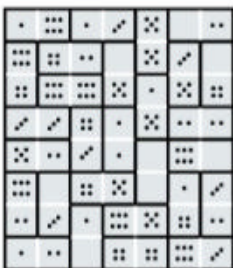
Favourite Things

Amar likes to zip-line,
Sheela likes to kayak,
Roohi likes rock climbing
and Basim enjoys cooking lessons.

Trains

Route A, which will take
70 minutes.

Dominoes



BY *Jeff Widderich*

		7	5	4	3			
						6		
9		8						
2				1		5		3
		3	9		6	8		
6		5		2				4
						4		9
		1						
			4	8	2	7		

To Solve This Puzzle

Put a number from 1 to 9 in
each empty square so that:

- ♦ every horizontal row and vertical column contains all nine numbers (1-9) without repeating any of them;
- ♦ each of the outlined 3 x 3 boxes has all nine numbers, none repeated.

SOLUTION

1	3	7	2	8	4	9	6	5
9	5	2	6	3	7	1	7	8
6	8	4	5	9	1	6	2	7
4	6	7	2	3	2	7	1	9
2	2	8	7	6	8	5	9	4
3	9	5	4	1	4	5	6	3
4	5							
3	5	4	2	9	8	6	1	7
1	6	7	5	4	3	9	2	8



WORD POWER

Ready to try this month's quiz on for size?

It's a closetful of fashion and clothing words that'll come in handy whether you're lounging in your sweats or stepping out in your Sunday best. Will you stay on trend or fall behind the times? Turn to the next page for answers.

BY *Sarah Chassé*

1. stiletto *n.*
(stuh-'leh-toh)
A high heel.
B body armour.
C traditional costume.

2. knockoff *n.*
('nahk-off)
A shoulder pad.
B imitation.
C stunning beauty.

3. dapper *adj.*
('da-per)
A dated.
B threadbare.
C stylish.

4. anorak *n.*
('an-uh-rak)
A hooded jacket.
B snowsuit.
C hiking boot.

5. houndstooth *n.*
('hownz-tooth)
A belt buckle.
B hidden pocket.
C checked pattern.

6. sashay *v.*
(sa-'shay)
A drape.
B strut.
C twirl.

7. camisole *n.*
('cam-uh-sohl)
A raincoat.
B sleeveless top.
C slipper.

8. haberdashery *n.*
('hab-er-da-sheer-ee)
A finery.
B hatmaker.
C menswear.

9. lapel *n.*
(luh-'pel)
A elbow patch.
B jacket's front flap.
C pocket square.

10. sheath *n.*
(sheeth)
A crocheted shawl.
B close-fitting dress.
C long cape.

11. haute couture *n.*
(oht kuh-'tyur)
A high fashion.
B evening gown.
C off the rack.

12. beanie *n.*
('bee-nee)
A handmade button.
B knit cap.
C ballet flat.

13. array *v.* (uh-'ray)
A dress up.
B lay out.
C embroider.

14. gabardine *n.*
('gab-er-deen)
A wide-legged pant.
B clutch purse.
C woven fabric.

15. accessory *n.*
(ak-'seh-suh-ree)
A new collection.
B decorative item.
C reflective vest.



This Swimsuit is the Bomb

In the summer of 1946, two French designers were competing to create the tiniest two-piece bathing suit. Jacques Heim made waves with the Atom, a revealing number named for the teeny particle. Not to be outdone, Louis Réard unveiled an even smaller, navel-baring suit that shocked the public. But what's smaller than an atom? As it happened, the first post-war nuclear tests (in which atoms were split) made headlines that same week, on the remote Bikini Atoll. And the name of a fashion bombshell, the *bikini*, was born.

Word Power ANSWERS

1. stiletto (A) *high heel.*

Muskaan sprained an ankle when her stiletto broke.

2. knockoff (B) *imitation.*

This may look like a Gucci handbag, but it's a knockoff I bought for 2,000 bucks!

3. dapper (C) *stylish.*

Zinia cut a dapper figure in his grey pin-striped suit.

4. anorak (A) *hooded jacket.* "Does the dog need a sweater, a rain bonnet *and* an anorak?" Raj asked.

5. houndstooth (C) *checked pattern.* "Should I go with the houndstooth or the classic plaid for my new golf pants?" Mona asked.

6. sashay (B) *strut.*

The models sashayed down the runway.

7. camisole (B) *sleeveless top.* Wearing a black camisole and a pink tutu, the ballerina floated onstage.

8. haberdashery (C) *menswear.* The shop sells trousers, cufflinks and other haberdashery.

9. lapel (B) *jacket's front flap.* The senator always has a flag pin on her lapel.

10. sheath (B) *close-fitting dress.* Rachel chose a simple white sheath for her beach wedding.

11. haute couture (A) *high fashion.* Ali's idea of haute couture is a clean T-shirt and jeans without holes.

12. beanie (B) *knit cap.*

Jia sports her trademark beanie year-round, even in the heat of summer.

13. array (A) *dress up.* Arrayed in an ornate gown and a tall golden crown, the queen took her seat on the throne.

14. gabardine (C) *woven fabric.* "Please don't toss my gabardine blazer into the washing machine. It's dry-clean only!"

15. accessory (B) *decorative item.* Mother always said the best accessory is a big smile—or a big diamond.

Vocabulary Ratings

- 9 & BELOW:** good
- 10–12:** gold
- 13–15:** god



QUIZ

BY *Samantha Rideout*

- 1.** What American politician wrote the books *Smart on Crime*, *Superheroes Are Everywhere* and *The Truths We Hold*?
- 2.** What type of wine was sent to the International Space Station for a year, to see how it would age?
- 3.** George Bridgetower was a virtuosic British violinist of African descent. What composer dedicated his 'Violin Sonata No. 9' to him?
- 4.** What Canadian folk artist lived in a house that measured roughly 4.1 by 3.8 metres?
- 5.** Vikings might have helped which animals spread across the globe, by bringing them on ships to control rodents?
- 6.** Approximately three quarters of the world's smartphones run on which operating system?
- 7.** In which of the following countries would you not find a pyramid that's more than 2,000 years old: Sudan, Mexico, Madagascar or Italy?
- 8.** Tremors, loss of smell and stiffness are symptoms of what condition affecting the production of dopamine in the brain?
- 9.** In the winter of 2021, what genre of traditional folk music was trending on the youthful social-media platform TikTok?
- 10.** An estimated 18 to 35 per cent of humans experience photic sneezing, which is what?
- 11.** What hit Chinese drama was streamed over 15 billion times before the Chinese government censored it?
- 12.** Before there was an Internet, a Soviet mathematician proposed a nationwide network of civilian computers. True or false?
- 13.** What mythical beast is the national animal of Scotland?
- 14.** Which country's national broadcaster popularized the concept of 'slow TV' when it aired an eight-hour recording of a train journey?
- 15.** There are now over 30 Godzilla movies. In which decade was the original released?



Answers: 1. Kamala Harris. 2. Red wine (Bordeaux). 3. Ludwig van Beethoven. 4. Maud Lewis. 5. Cats. 6. Android. 7. Madagascar. 8. Parkinson's disease. 9. Sea shanties. 10. Sneezing in response to bright light. 11. *Story of Yanxi Palace*. 12. True, but the proposal was rejected. 13. The unicorn. 14. Norway. 15. The 1950s.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Fearlessness is like a muscle. I know from my own life that the more I exercise it the more natural it becomes to not let my fears run me.

Arianna Huffington, founder, The Huffington Post

There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.

Mahatma Gandhi, leader of India's Independence movement

Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then, do not be too eager to deal out death in judgement. For even the very wise cannot see all ends.

J. R. R. Tolkien, author

Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail, their failure must be but a challenge to others.

Amelia Earhart, aviator



Arianna Huffington



Mahatma Gandhi



J.R.R. Tolkien



Amelia Earhart

ALAMY (3); AP PHOTO

Era's Lucknow Medical College and Hospital has been Ranked Among the Top Medical Colleges of India



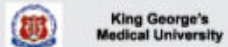
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- Tuberculosis Programme Management and BCG Technician
- Respiratory Technician
- Minimal Access Surgical Technician
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