

# Reader's Digest

JUNE 2021

₹100



**POWER TO THE PEOPLE**

**Meet the Citizen Saviours Making a Difference**

**INTERVIEW**

**The Ever Beloved Ruskin Bond**

**TRUE CRIME**

**He Robbed Banks— On a Bicycle!**

**FOOD**

**The COVID Recovery Diet**

Volunteers of Khalsa Help International supplied oxygen to COVID patients and hospitals

**HEALTH**

**8 Reasons You're So Tired and What To Do About it**

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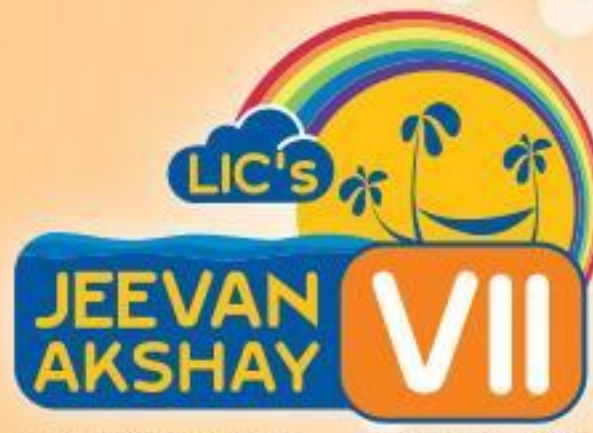
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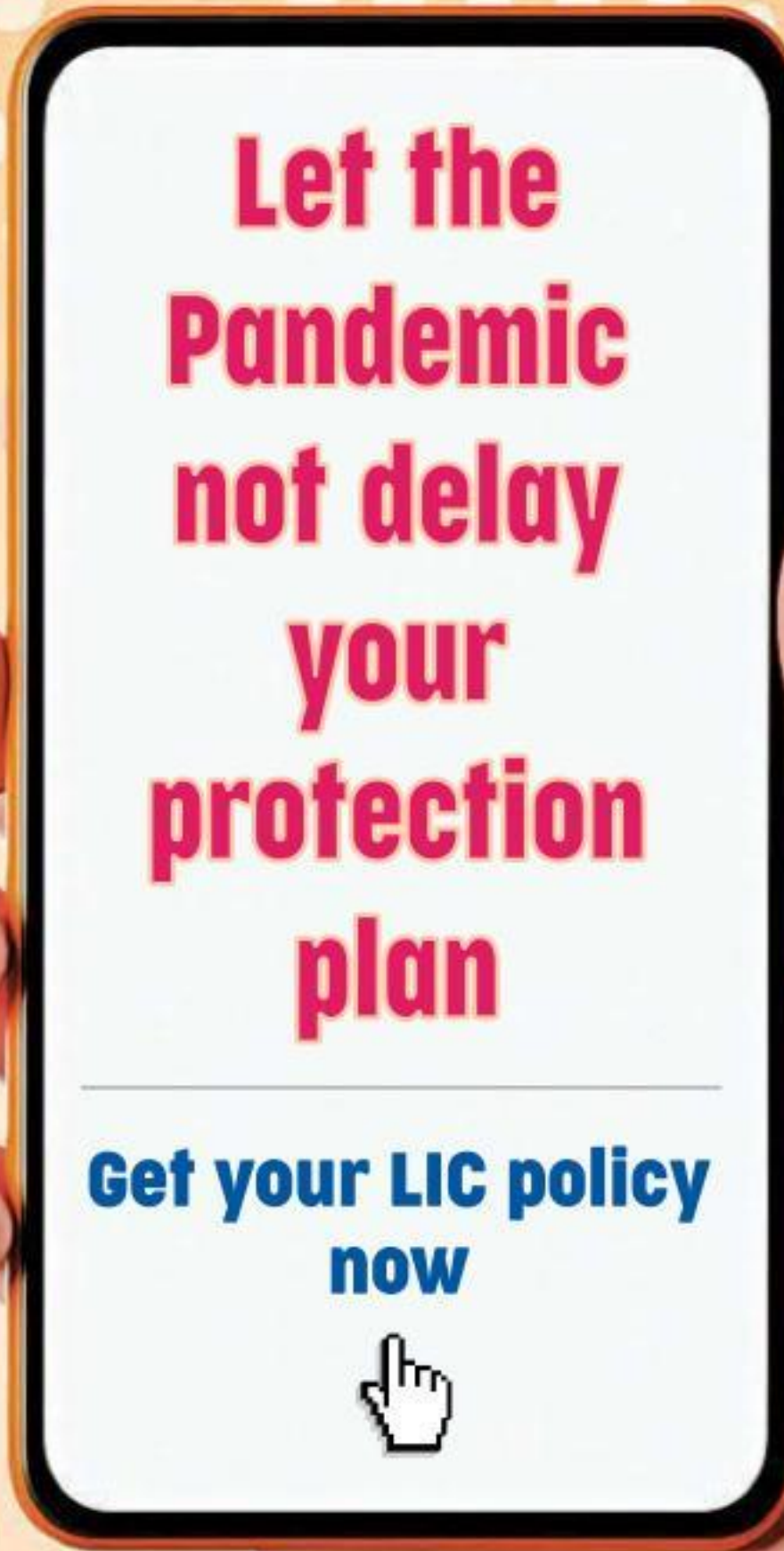
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# Reader's Digest



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“I sure hope the negotiations go well.”

HUMOUR *in*  
**UNIFORM**

JAMES PATTERSON/CARTOONCOLLECTIONS.COM

**My mom** was ex-Army, so during the holidays she and Dad would invite local Marines from Camp Pendleton over for dinner.

One night, my sister came home from work at Kentucky Fried Chicken, still in her uniform. One

of the Marines asked where she'd been.

“I've been to visit the colonel,” my sister joked. The Marine looked confused.

“Colonel Sanders!” she explained.

“Sorry, ma'am,” he said, “I don't know those higher-ups.”

—STEVE CHIALES

**A young airman** showed up at formation needing a shave. When I asked why he hadn't taken care of

that before he arrived, he complained, “Somebody moved my piano.”

“Why would moving the piano cause you to miss shaving?” I asked.

His reply: “My razor was on the piano.”

—ROBERT RHODES

*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](mailto:editor.india@rd.com)*

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# OVER TO YOU

NOTES ON THE  
*April* ISSUE



## Worth Her Weight

Body-image issues have been the bane of my existence. Often, people greet me and say I've lost weight—they think it will make me feel better. Is it so hard to just say hello, and not comment on a person's appearance! Growing up, I would cover up my legs as I considered them 'beefy'. I worried that I was shaped 'like a boy'. My perspective shifted when I discovered the body-positivity movement. Beautiful bodies come in all shapes. I thank the author for writing about her experience; it is hard to love your body the way it is when the opposite has been engraved in your brain for so long. Her story gave me hope that I too will overcome my issues in the future.

—SURABHI S. PATHAK, *Nagpur*

Surabhi S. Pathak gets this month's 'Write & Win' prize of ₹1,000. —EDs

Kanupriya Durve's story was so heartening. Self-love should be taught to children by parents, especially when they are entering adolescence. We all struggle with something at that vulnerable age, even if it's not weight or colour. It should be taught that 'we manifest what we believe'. Often, we are so overwhelmed by judgement on our bodies that we forget to pay attention to what's going on inside it. To all young women: You are beautiful.

ATREYEE SHILL, *Kharagpur*

## The Old Man Versus The Mountain

'Age is just a number' fits Bill McDonnell perfectly. What had me enthralled was his never-give-up attitude; his optimism never faltered. It is a testament to his courage and spirit that despite the life-threatening ordeal he faced, at the end as he is being rescued, he is sure that given half an hour more of daylight, he would have made it out by himself.

RASHIDA BIRMAWAL-WALA, *Indore*

## How To Live To 100, And Love It!

Thanks for an informative article on the secrets of living a longer and happier life. We can certainly increase our lifespan by making smart choices throughout our life. These choices will also ensure that we have better quality of life. We must focus on maintaining a sense of optimism, conscientiousness and kindness as these are just as

significant as diet and exercise in living a long, healthy life. Equally important is maintaining a healthy social network and hobbies—gardening, painting, reading and writing articles or letters to the editor.

BEENA MATHUR, *Pune*

### **Kindness: Pass it On!**

The pandemic has made acts of compassion even more relevant. I experienced kindness of strangers first-hand when my father was admitted to a hospital with COVID. The help I received from people fighting their own battles and the tireless work of the medical staff touched me to my core. Unfortunately my father didn't survive but this has only strengthened my resolution to spread kindness, as life is too short for hate.

DEEPALI JANI, *New Delhi*

### **The Costs of Narrow Nationalism**

Nehru's political views exhibit a marked ambivalence—he equally denounced dictatorial

communism and the aggressive and chauvinistic rules of America and many countries of Europe, which apparently stemmed from the trends of rising nationalism found in Germany and other nations prior to World War II. Nehru sounded particularly brilliant in emphasizing that temporal shifts in attitude are fundamental to the vibrant and dynamic politics of inclusion by comparing the two phases of India, viz., before and after Independence. He was prophetic, as demonstrated by the present state of politics in India, in asserting that it is primarily the narrowness of mind, most often professed by communal organizations, that contributes towards an insidious, destructive form of nationalism.

KISHORE CHAKRABORTY,  
*Kolkata*

The letter written by India's first Prime Minister, regarding the dangers of narrow nationalism is timely. We are currently

facing the terrible consequences not only of narrow nationalism but also of acute intolerance, divisive politicking, religious chauvinism and even fascist tendencies. The letter invokes the realization that builders of post-Independence India had visualized a nation free of pseudo and thrust nationalism and majoritarianism. It is a fact that in addition to known communal organizations, there are others who carry this "narrow influence" and turn people narrow-minded. His exhortation to fight these forces has to be taken seriously by all who have faith in human values and age-old positive traditions of India. For us Kashmiris, this letter generates a lot of hope.

M. Y. G. NAIRANG,  
*Kashmir*

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

## CONVERSATIONS

# We Will Study!

*School closures have pushed rural girls in India back into a life of labour, underage marriage and gendered roles. It's time their voices are heard*

BY *Shantha Sinha*



In March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic took firm hold, government-mandated lockdowns led to a blanket closure of schools and colleges—staying safe by staying home being the need of the hour. Amongst the many groups adversely affected by this policy—and extraordinarily so—were children, particularly girls in rural India, for whom the chance to be educated was the result of hard-won battles against gender discrimination and social pressures to conform to traditional roles earmarked for women.

“I convinced my parents not to

discontinue my classes. They supported me fully and even begun enquiring about where I should go for my next level of education. The closure of schools has changed this situation completely,” says Sandhya from Nuthankal, a small village in Telangana, who had reached the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at her local school. She has now begun farm work since further learning is no longer an option. In the nearby village of Kandagatla, Lakshmi, an 11<sup>th</sup> grader, remembers fighting with her parents for permission to commute to the nearest high school eight kms away, assuring them that she could take care of herself and her safety. Before the lockdown, parents of these children had stopped pressuring daughters to get



**According to a UNICEF report, only one in four children in India has access to the devices and internet connectivity necessary for digital learning.**

married, hopeful that a better future might be in store.

According to the 2021 UNICEF report, *COVID-19 and School Closures*, the pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns in 2020 have impacted 247 million children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools in India. Needless to say, this crisis further exacerbated learning opportunities for many vulnerable sections of an unequal society. In April 2020, the Malala Fund estimated that 10 million girls at secondary education in low and lower-middle income countries would be at risk of

dropping out because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, the research estimates that as a result of the pandemic, 20 million girls in developing countries may never return to the classroom.

With the closure of schools and all residential educational institutions during lockdown, girls' education has become unpredictable. Learning losses have a substantial impact on girls and young women, much of which extend beyond academic progress. For a majority of girls in India, schools are the only channel to meet peers, seek support, access health and immunization

services and eat a nutritious meal. Consequently, uncertainties about the future, lack of food and little to no health support leave families in precarious situations. The result: much against their wishes, girls are being forced into the gendered roles they so vehemently fought against before lockdown. Patriarchal values have rebounded and they are being pushed into more domestic work, forced to abdicate control over their mobility and freedom and compelled to accept a cloistered, disempowered life without choices.

Girls have now joined the farm-labour force along with their mothers, recruited to 9-to-5 work such as cotton-seed picking, ginning, chilli processing and lemon plucking. Large numbers have also been sucked into family-based labour jobs—vegetable vendors, beedi workers, shepherds, cattle-herds and in other such home-based units in the informal sector. They work under the scorching heat, with burnt faces and hands, blisters on their feet and aches and pains—a far cry from a life of packing school bags, doing homework, meeting friends and playtime.

The increasing pressures of early betrothal is perhaps the most difficult to endure. Sirisha, 19, who is in the second year of graduation,

lamented that three of her close friends have gotten married and their dreams of studying further have come to an end. Gugulothu Indu, 17, a 12<sup>th</sup> grader from Yembamla village says, “I have kept in touch with my friends and made calls to Childline to report that their marriages were fixed. I am glad that their weddings have been postponed, if not totally stopped.”

Like Indu, many girls have not yet given up on a brighter tomorrow in spite of dire odds made harsher by the lockdown. Undeterred, they work hard so as to use their earnings on mobile phones that are equipped to access online classes—devices that can cost between ₹7,000 to ₹12,000.

Fifteen-year-old Shailaja, studying in

**GIRLS FROM VULNERABLE FAMILIES' ARE PUTTING UP STIFF RESISTANCE TO PATRIARCHAL NORMS. THEY MUST NOT STAND ALONE.**

10<sup>th</sup> grade, is a leader of the Girls' Committee in her village Istalapuram and is determined to keep up her studies “to make my mother proud”. “My father is an alcoholic, abusive and does no work. My mother has sacrificed a lot to educate my brother, twin sister and myself. I used my savings to buy a mobile phone for ₹10,000 to attend online classes, watch good videos and improve my knowledge. I cannot give up.” Chandana, also from Istalapuram, studying in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, echoes the same determination. “I am taking online tutorial classes to prepare for the





**For Shailaja, a 10<sup>th</sup> grader from Istalapuram, Andhra Pradesh, juggling online classes and her job as a lemon harvester is all in a day's work.**

qualifying examinations for entry into professional colleges. It is very difficult to adjust work and online classes, but I do it.”

Shailaja and Chandana are part of a small minority, however. Online education is a distant dream for most rural children. According to a UNICEF report, only one in four children in India has access to the devices and internet connectivity necessary for digital learning. Moreover, there is a

large rural-urban and gender divide barring the way. According to the *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020*, only 12 per cent of households in the poorest countries have internet access at home, and access to mobile internet is 26 per cent lower for women and girls than for their male peers. These figures are supported by a 2020 UNICEF report which states that at least every seventh girl globally has been unable to access remote learning when schools are closed.

While these girls from poor, marginalized and vulnerable families, daughters of illiterate parents, are putting up stiff resistance to structural inequities and patriarchal norms, it is imperative that they not stand alone. Governments at all levels must propel state action to reach out and relieve them from labour force, stop child marriage and protect freedom and rights of girls. Without this support in terms of educational material, digital tools, food security, health and hygiene provisions and scholarships, such children are being left behind in the worst way—with lost futures they are trapped in generational cycles of poverty and deprivation. Stories of such girls must become visible. Their pleas must be heard. **R**

*Child-rights activist, Shantha Sinha is the founder of MV Foundation and a professor of political science at Hyderabad Central University. She received the 2003 Ramon Magsaysay award and the Padma Shri in 1999.*



# Mom Needs IT Help Again

*I've become her always-on-call tech assistant*

BY *Craig Baines*

ILLUSTRATION BY *Emily Chu*

LATELY, WHEN 'MOM' pops up on my call display, I look at my phone, sigh heavily and think, "What now?" At almost 80 years old, my mother seems to have more tech gadgets than I do, and yet she's hopeless when it comes to basic troubleshooting. Whether I like it or not, I am her dedicated tech support. I field calls about her laptop, smartphone, printer, scanner, universal remote, Wi-Fi network, Bluetooth speaker and ultrasonic toothbrush, just to name a few. Twenty-four hours a day. Rain or shine.

If you have been similarly conscripted, here are some tips from the trenches:

**Always take her call.** I know, I know, it can be painful, but you have to trust me on this and pick up. She is your mom, and she'll play that card. I usually get a "Craig, I am your mother." Plus, if she detects even the slightest hint of my exasperation, she hits me with "I changed your diapers!" Well, Mom, being your personal Geek Squad is a crappy job, too!

**Don't troubleshoot in front of co-workers.** Over the years, Mom and I have developed a familiar, 'unfiltered' tone when we talk to each other. My side of a typical call starts with "Yes, Mom?" and quickly spirals from there to "You can't do what?" to "I would love to help, but I don't think 'thingamajig' is a \$%&# technical term!!!" Such talk, while often justified, doesn't go over well in an open-concept office. Your colleagues will think you're The. Worst. Son. Ever. To avoid raising any eyebrows, take the call from the nearest supply closet. (Pro tip: if you need something to scream into, a roll of paper towel works great!)

**Share the burden.** The next time Mom hands you her smartphone to 'figure out', take a proactive step by creating a new contact called IT Emergency Helpline and encourage her to use it. But instead of inputting your number, use your sister's. (Sorry, Krista!) It's about time she stepped up. Sure, she may be balancing three kids and a new job, but since when is that a

Get-Out-of-Jail-Free card from helping Mom figure out where her Spider Solitaire icon disappeared to? (I have a life, too, Sis!)

**Help mom's Wi-Fi help her.** Recently, while taking a break from looking out her front window, Mom managed to locate that one corner of her home that has a weak Wi-Fi signal. What prompted her to use her tablet in the furnace room I'll never know, but she sure as sugar called me afterwards to complain about it ... followed by an update on her neighbours. Faster than Roto-Rooter, I was over fixing her network and decided to rename it. I felt 'Linda Wi-Fi' was boring. Thanks to me, folks within a five-house radius have seen 'Pick Up After Your Dog Wi-Fi', 'Mow That Lawn Dammit Wi-Fi' and 'Your Powder Room Needs Blinds Wi-Fi'!

**Avoid emojis at all costs.** Finally, a word of caution. I mistakenly introduced Mom to emojis thinking they would liven up our otherwise mundane text exchanges. At first, I needed the Rosetta Stone to decipher Mom's messages. For instance, on one occasion I wasn't sure if she was describing her garden or curious about medical marijuana. But things turned really awkward last August after Mom got home from the local peach festival. Her texts describing plump, lip-smacking peaches still give me nightmares. **R**

*It Happens*  
**ONLY IN INDIA**



**“I think he is prepared for the Third Wave.”**

**Fraudulent in love**

All the world loves a lover? The Assam police would sigh in disagreement, having taken into custody a certain Biswajit Dutta who, tired of being quartered at home on his beloved’s birthday, decided to take matters into his own hands. Surely love is not love, if government-mandated

curfew restrictions get in the way. Dutta’s fix: Rent a car, drive over for a tryst, and, in case he was stopped by the authorities, impersonate a district magistrate. This wasn’t Dutta’s first rodeo—he had previously claimed to be a Juvenile lawyer, a member of the District Child Protection Service and even a doctor during the first

lockdown in 2020. Looks like he wasn’t just answering love’s clarion call!

Source: [sentinelassam.com](http://sentinelassam.com)

**Back to life**

As we live the consequence of the pandemic, the subsequent policy paralysis and the ensuing decimation of our healthcare delivery systems, 76-year-old

Shakuntala Gaikwad's bizarre case scares the bejesus out of us. Gaikwad who tested positive for COVID-19, was being rushed to Baramati by her family in a bid to find a hospital bed, when she was found unresponsive and declared deceased. Much grief and, dare we say, commotion later, as Gaikwad was being prepped to meet her maker, she woke up on the bier visibly terrified. Turns out, she had only passed out in the car due to the long wait. Her happy but shocked family quickly rushed her to a hospital.

Source: [indiatoday.in](http://indiatoday.in)

### Hey Ram

The dominant register of the pandemic response has not only been one of exception, it has often ventured into bizarre. Case in point: In Satna, Madhya Pradesh, sub-inspector Santosh Singh came up with the idea of making people straying outdoors during lockdown write Lord Ram's name and fill up four

pages of a notebook as penance. Lockdown violators have been aplenty, and enforcers have run the gamut of punishments, but this one is for the books.

Source: [indiatoday.in](http://indiatoday.in)

### In sickness and in air

Rules don't apply to the rich, or so it seems thought a couple from Madurai as they took to the skies to solemnize their wedding. In a move that smacks of pure privilege, the duo chartered a Boeing 737, stuffed it with 160 unmasked guests for their wedding ceremony, breaking every COVID-19 guideline in the book. As video and photos of the wedding circulated on social media, SpiceJet claimed the couple told them they were already married and were only taking their guests on a postnuptial joyride. An investigation is underway and the airline crew has been de-rostered. We just think it's a lot of money to pay to get everyone you love, sick.

Source: [hindustantimes.com](http://hindustantimes.com)

### Mask on, Mask off

In our monthly 'Covid-iot' update, we bring you a saffron-clad man of god, wearing a mask of neem. In a viral video, the baba can be seen wearing his precariously constructed mask, replete with wide gaps, stuffed with neem. Further, he instructs we do the same to protect ourselves from the virus, but for premium security we would do well to add a few lemon and tulsi leaves. The logic, if we can even call it that, is "Neem is very useful for any illness." At the pain of gross simplification: Dear reader, do not swap your masks for the neem-lemon-tulsi variant. As for the baba, we wish him good luck: It's bound to come in handy, because the mask sure isn't.

Source: [thequint.com](http://thequint.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](mailto:editor.india@rd.com)**

## POINTS TO PONDER

An old man in Gaza held a placard that read: “You take my water, burn my olive trees, destroy my house, take my job, steal my land, imprison my father, kill my mother, bombard my country, starve us all, humiliate us all, but I am to blame: I shot a rocket back.”

Noam Chomsky, *academic*

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**Every life deserves a certain amount of dignity, no matter how poor or damaged the shell that carries it.**

Rick Bragg, *journalist*

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I think there are two major lessons from this pandemic. One, that the country needs proper planning and decentralised implementation mechanisms to improve our health system. And two, there can be no delay in enhancing public investment in healthcare.

K.K. Shailaja, *Kerala's former health minister*

FROM LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK, ALAMY, ANI



Noam Chomsky



Rick Bragg



K. K. Shailaja

Destiny is a feeling you have that you know something about yourself nobody else does. The picture you have in your own mind of what you're about, will come true.

Bob Dylan, *musician*

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**For, while the tale of how we suffer, and how we are delighted, and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be heard. There isn't any other tale to tell, it's the only light we've got in all this darkness.**

James Baldwin, *novelist*

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Isn't it strange how life won't flow, like a river, but moves in jumps, as if it were held back by locks that are opened now and then to let it jump forwards in a kind of flood?

Anita Desai, *author*

FROM LEFT: ALAMY (3)



Bob Dylan

James Baldwin

Anita Desai

# FIGHT AGAINST COVID WITH TEST-

**Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has continued his efforts to contain the spread of covid infection by working on the strategy of test trace and treat. The aim of this Mantra is to first recognize the infected person then conduct covid test and then provide proper treatment. By continuously increasing the testing of corona, it has been insured that all government and private testing labs must work with full capacity. Under elaborate 'contact tracing', CM Yogi has given strict directions for testing of all persons who came in contact with any infected patient. On the other hand all efforts are on to maintain availability of Health workers, essential medicines, medical equipments and backup of oxygen along with increasing the number of covid hospitals. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is himself monitoring the efforts to contain the covid infection. Along with it special focus is also on covid vaccination. Uttar Pradesh has become the first state to announce free vaccination for the people above 18 years old age in state. So efforts are continue to save lives from coronavirus with an integrated approach.**

In the fight against Corona, on the instructions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, facilities are being increased day by day. The number of beds is being increased continuously to provide treatment to more and more people in hospitals and the availability of beds is continuously increasing in the state. The Chief Minister himself is monitoring the availability of beds in hospitals across the state. CM has given instructions to immediately increase about 33,000 beds in the state to deal with the Covid crisis in the state. He has also instructed to increase 33,000 more beds in addition to about 1.80 lakh beds of L-1, L-2 and L-3 hospitals in the state. Yogi has

given the responsibility of increasing the additional 15,000 beds to the Health Department and 18,000 bed to the Medical Education Department immediately. A total of 25 medical colleges, medical universities and institutes are operated in the state under government and 33 under the private sector. In these, 18,181 beds have been arranged. Of these, 12,659 beds are isolation beds and 5,522 beds are ICU beds. Since last March, 9,000 beds have been additionally increased. Which includes 6,000 isolation bed and 2,705 ICU beds. Chief Minister Yogi has instructed to double the availability of the beds. There are more than 1,16,000 L-1 beds in the state, L-

2 and L-3 have more than 65,000 beds. Two CHCs are being prepared as Covid Dedicated Hospitals in all the districts. Chief Minister Yogi has instructed the general public to make available proper information about the availability of beds. Officers have been told that in all such hospitals in the state where corona infected patients are being treated, the details of vacant beds in the hospital twice every day should be made public. This details should also be uploaded on the portal of Integrated Control and Command Center of the district. Allotment of beds should be done with complete transparency. On the instructions of Chief Minister Yogi, the officers are busy doubling the number of Covid beds in all districts of the state including Lucknow, Kanpur Nagar, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Jhansi, Gorakhpur, Meerut districts. Chief Minister Yogi had ordered to extend 200-200 beds in all districts with immediate effect. All these beds are equipped with oxygen facilities. In this way, about





# TRACE-TREAT AND VACCINATION



15,000 beds are increasing in 75 districts.



## CONTINUOUS FOCUS ON TESTING

Per day testing capacity is being increased rapidly in Uttar Pradesh. Health department is conducting covid testing of more than 2.5 lakh persons daily. State has tested samples of more than 4.5 crore people till date. State has 125 labs in government sector while 104 labs in private sector for covid testing. Yogi government is doing efforts to increase the speed of testing in state also. Yogi government has directed to increase the resources for augmenting the testing capacity in KGMU, RML, SGPGI, JIMS Noida, RIMS Saifai, SSPH greater Noida, Meerut Medical College, BRD Gorakhpur, Prayagraj, Jhansi, Kanpur, Agra, Azamgarh, Kannauj, Ambedkar Nagar, Banda, Saharanpur, Jalaun, Basti, Bahraich, Firozabad, Shahjahanpur and self regulatory state medical College Ayodhya. 83 RT PCR machines costing Rupees 12.45 crores, 35 semi-automatic extractor worth Rupees 14 crore, and 23 biosafety cabinet costing

Rupees 1.61 crore will be purchased for these institutions. Apart from this, 29 autoclaves worth Rupees 4.25 crores, 29 deep freezers of 80 degree, 29 deep freezers of 20 degree and 29 fridges will also be purchased. Along with increasing the resources for testing capacity, manpower is also being increased. 558 scientists, lab technicians, data operators and lab attendant will also be hired and for their honorarium more than Rupees 52 lacs will be spent every month.



## SURVEILLANCE BECAME THE STRONG WEAPON

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's surveillance and contact tracing model is proving effective in the ongoing fight against covid-19. With this model state government is making efforts to break the chain of coronavirus and to control its infection. Uttar Pradesh has become the first state in country where surveillance team are going door to door and conducting survey of people. In state 59,000 monitoring committees are

working in rural areas while 14,000 monitoring committees are working in urban areas. They are going door to door and identifying the infected person on the basis of survey. Its information and details are being shared with Municipal Corporation and health department so that infection can be contained at one place timely. Till date surveillance of more than 3.35 crore homes has been conducted in the state which covers more than 16 crore population of the state. Apart from it, village and mohalla surveillance committees are also keeping an eye over the people who are in home Quarantine. It's their responsibility that people who are in home Quarantine must remain inside their homes. Also these committees are providing the information to the administration about the people who are coming from outside to Mohallas and villages. The large influx of migrant workers and labourers has started to Uttar Pradesh after lockdown in Delhi and Maharashtra. In such situation 349 Quarantine centers have been established in a state to stop the spread of virus. Migrants are being screened after their arrival by district administration and if any symptoms are found they are being put under Quarantine. Once found infected, they are being admitted in covid hospitals or isolated at home. CM Yogi has directed to Quarantine asymptomatic migrant workers for minimum 7 days.

# SHIELD OF VACCINATION AGAINST COVID-19

Vaccination drive is going on rapidly in the state to decrease the effect of Corona infection in State. Till now more than 1.99 crore doses of vaccine have been given in state. On the other hand state has decided to administer free vaccine to the people of more than 18 years age from 1<sup>st</sup> may. For this Yogi government has already placed an order of 50 lakh vaccine doses each from biotech and serum institute. Uttar Pradesh is the first state in the country to announce free vaccination for all. Soon after Prime minister's announcement of vaccination to persons above 18 years age, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced to provide vaccines to everyone in state free of cost. Uttar Pradesh has released a global order for vaccination of each and every citizen of state. Uttar Pradesh has become first state in the country to do so.



## HIGH SECURITY OF VACCINES

There have been elaborate arrangements for the safety of

vaccine during covid vaccination drive. Earlier there was a cold storage of 80,733 litres for the regular vaccination drive in state. For routine immunization and covid vaccination there was need of cold storage of 2,03,938 litres in state. Now Yogi Government has achieved the capacity of cold storage of 2.5 lakh litres in state. Central government has provided 680 large Iceland refrigerators and 716 small Iceland refrigerators to Uttar Pradesh. State stores have been prepared at every divisional headquarter for proper storage of covid vaccine. There are 18 divisions in state so 18 state stores have been prepared for this purpose. From these state stores vaccines are being transported to stores made at district level through insulated vans. From district vaccination stores vaccine is being transported through vaccine carriers with ice pack facilities to primary Health Centers or Community Health centers in rural areas where vaccination points have been prepared.



## ROLE OF VIGILANCE AND FOLLOW-UP GROUPS

To provide relief and medical facilities timely to the common people during Corona pandemic, around 60,569 vigilance and follow up committees have been formed in 58,194 Gram Panchayats of state. While in urban areas 12,016 such groups have been formed. Committees are also working in 22,069 containment zones of different districts of state during second wave of Corona pandemic. In urban areas the Corporator is the head of committee and asha workers, civil defence members, Resident welfare association's representatives and regional employees are members of these committees. While in villages, committees are working under the leadership of Gram Pradhans. Lekhpal, employment workers volunteers, asha workers anganbadi workers and Village Panchayat members are also part of these committees. The vigilance and follow up committees are providing medical kits to Corona infected patients along with other patients with serious diseases in rural and urban areas. They are also helping in vaccination, telecalling following of social distancing uses of mask and providing information on cleaning hands. These committees are managing the arrangement of Quarantine and homes for people with symptoms of Corona infection. Special attention is being paid on the health of senior citizen of more than 60 years age, pregnant ladies,



small children and identification of people with comorbidity at village and mohalla level.



## FOCUS ON SANITIZATION

On the directions of chief minister Yogi Adityanath special sanitization campaign is running during lockdown in state. There are 1,355 wards in the 17 municipal corporations of state while 12,016 wards are in 651 local bodies. To break the chain of covid infection comprehensive sanitization campaign is running in state to make all these wards infection free. Sanitization is being done with mounted spray machines in 26,913 containment zones of the state. Apart from this anti Larva is being sprinkled and sanitization is being done with smog guns and handheld machines. During this campaign garbage collection vehicles are also spreading awareness through their public address system regarding coronavirus Infection. To break the chain of infection more than 1.5 lakh markets, important places, hospitals, Government and private institutions have also been sanitized. In this state wise cleanliness drive more than 83,000 sanitisation workers and 9,576 vehicle are involved. Anti Larva has also been sprinkled in 6,295 wards for prevention of dengue and malaria along with coronavirus infection. To prevent the infection in slums of state awareness is being spread by launching the sanitization and special cleanliness campaign. Government is appealing to the people living in the slums to use masks for prevention of Corona infection and free Masks are also being distributed.

## YOGI BECAME THE TEAM LEADER

- ➔ On April 14, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath himself got infected by Covid during the second wave of Corona infection. During his stay in home isolation, Chief Minister Yogi continued to do all the state work regularly like a team leader. Everyday, not only with senior officials of the government reviewed the corona management in the state, but through the virtual dialogue programs, he got to know about the various sections of the society.
- ➔ On April 30, the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took the front in the field as soon as the Corona investigation report came negative. It started with the inspection of the dedicated Covid Hospital being constructed by the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) in Lucknow and after that Chief Minister Yogi is constantly visiting the spot to take assessment of the Covid control work.
- ➔ Leading the ongoing war against Corona, Chief Minister Yogi inspected 47 districts of 11 divisions including Saharanpur, Moradabad, Ghaziabad, Gautam Budh Nagar, Meerut, Aligarh, Agra, Varanasi, Ayodhya during the last two weeks. The Chief Minister held a review meeting with the officers in the districts and also went to the command center to know the reality of corona control.
- ➔ CM Yogi, worried about the outbreak of corona infection in Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) campus and went to the university campus to take assessment of the situation himself. It was the first time after 37 years that the Chief Minister of the state had come to the AMU campus. The Chief Minister directed the officers to comprehensively manage corona testing and vaccination in AMU.
- ➔ To see the reality of Corona control efforts, Chief Minister Yogi himself selected the village and went there to know the reality of medical kit distribution and cleanliness campaign to the corona victims. The Chief Minister also instructed the officers to make proper arrangements for sanitization and vaccination by deploying the Sector Magistrate in the village.
- ➔ UP has become the first state in the country to make global tender for 40 million vaccines. More than 1.79 crore vaccine doses have been imposed in the state of the age group of above 45 years. From May 17, 2021, the corona vaccination work of people in the age group of 18 to 44 years is being increased, till now more than 19.79 lakh people of this age group have been vaccinated.
- ➔ The Chief Minister has given instructions to set up 100-bed pediatric ICU (PICU) in government medical colleges. Of these, 50 beds will be ICU and 50 beds will be full of oxygen. Instructions have been given to establish 25-bed PICU in each district. The Chief Minister has also given instructions to carry forward the establishment of PICU on a war footing.



## THERE WILL BE NO SHORTAGE OF OXYGEN FOR COVID PATIENTS

Yogi Adityanath government has put all possible efforts to provide oxygen to patients infected with Covid in state. After efforts of Chief Minister, Central government has also increased the quota of oxygen for Uttar Pradesh to 1,050 metric tons. Uttar Pradesh has become the first state in the country to transport oxygen from rail route for the patients. To fulfill the requirement of oxygen in state, arrangements have been made to bring oxygen from plants in Bihar, Orissa, Bengal and Jharkhand. After directions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath control room has started in home department for supply of oxygen to the different districts of state. This control room is working 24/7. UP is the first state which is trying to provide oxygen to every part of state in minimum time through online monitoring system. GPS enabled phones have been made available to all the tanker drivers who are involved in oxygen supply. Process of oxygen audit has also been initiated so that its misuse can be curbed. To save the time for oxygen supply empty tankers

are being transported in planes to refilling station. Also green corridor is being made for the tankers coming from other states so then they reach their destination as early as possible. 84 tankers have been involved for oxygen supply through different mediums and 20 oxygen trains have already reached in state.



### OPENING SHUTTERED INDUSTRIAL UNITS

The shuttered oxygen factory in GEDA sector 13 of Gorakhpur district has been made functional again. Now 1,500 cylinders can be produced daily from this unit. Till now three industrial units of Gorakhpur are producing 2,600 cylinders daily. Now after the start of fourth plant around 4,100 oxygen cylinders can be supplied. The Bharat pumps and compressors limited in Prayagraj district was making oxygen cylinders till 2012 but later it also closed. After the intervention of yogi government it has started functioning again. Company will very soon supply more than 3,000 cylinders. The local youth are also

getting employment after opening of this oxygen production company. Yogi government has already placed an order of 3,000 cylinders to the company. An oxygen plant closed from last three years in darekhu of rohania area in Varanasi has been taken over by government and it will also start functioning very soon. The plant with the capacity of 4 metric tons will produce 400 oxygen cylinders daily. Two refilling plants in Meerut have also started production of oxygen again. Each of these plants has the capacity of 1,000 cylinders daily. An oxygen plant in Agra district will start functioning very soon with the help of State Government and Indian Army. Another oxygen plant of a private sector company is being established in khandauli area of Agra. One equipment intercooler copper tube was needed for this plant. Air force played a crucial role in bringing it from Ahmedabad to Agra.



### ENOUGH OXYGEN IN HOSPITALS

There are already 32 oxygen plants in the different medical institutions of state. Under the PM cares fund orders have been placed by Central Government for



establishment of 39 oxygen plants. The important fact is that all these plants will make oxygen from air with new technique. Proposal for establishing maximum 11 oxygen plants in Kanpur Nagar have been received from private sector. Apart from it proposals have been received for establishment of 4 plants in Bareilly and Prayagraj, 3 each in Jaunpur, Kanpur Dehat, Aligarh and Mau, 2 each in Mathura, Ghaziabad and Varanasi and Chandauli and 1 each in Agra, Kasganj, Barabanki, Budaun, Basti, Sant Kabir Nagar, Gonda, Gorakhpur, Maharajganj, Lalitpur, Unnao, Hardoi, Sitapur and Hapur districts. These plants will produce 20 lakh cubic metre oxygen all together. 8,000 D type Jumbo cylinders are being purchased for refill in medical colleges and other medical institutions of state. One Jumbo cylinder contains 46.7 litre oxygen and as per this calculation 5,000 Jumbo cylinders will carry 2,33,500 liter oxygen. All oxygen cylinders will be stored at Cancer institute Lucknow and Jumbo cylinders will be send to other districts according to their requirement. As per the medical facilities point of view Community Health Centre is a very important and small unit. Apart from augmenting the process of establishing oxygen plants at CHC, Useful technologies like oxygen concentrator which can be used immediately will also prove effective. Keeping this in mind, 10 oxygen concentrators are being provided to all Community Health Centres after directions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

## INTEGRATED EFFORTS WILL PREVENT INFECTION

### COMMAND CENTRE

Covid control rooms, established in all districts have been made more active for supervision of Corona infection. Many arrangements are being done through these control rooms which includes availability of beds in hospitals, availability of medicines and presence of health workers. Nodal Officer has been appointed for 24 hours supervision of control room.

### SECTOR MAGISTRATE

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has implemented sector system for better management of covid prevention in districts. These sector magistrates will move in their areas and will keep an eye over every activity. It will be their responsibility to provide help according to the government policies to the needy persons.

### COVID HOSPITAL

For prevention of covid in rural areas 2 community Health centers each in all districts are being converted into dedicated covid hospitals. These hospitals will have 50 beds with L1 category facilities.

### TELECONSULTATION

Tele consultation facility has been made available to the non covid patients. District wise panel of experts has been constituted for this purpose. All doctors practicing different medical systems are included in these panels.

Numbers, timings and expertise of these doctors is being circulated widely.

### AYUSH DOCTORS

A team of AYUSH doctors is being made in every district. These doctors will work in coordination with local Administration and integrated command and control centre. Ayush department has already distributed Ayush Kadha to more than 20,000 families and arsenic album medicine to more than 6 lakh people.

### SANITIZER PRODUCTION

The 97 sugar Mills and other industrial units have procured around 2 crore litre sanitizer till 26 March during second wave of covid in state. The sanitizer procured in sugar mills of Uttar Pradesh is being supplied not only in state but also to the other parts of country from Ladakh to Kerala.

### REMDESIVIR INJECTION

On the instructions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Remdesivir injections have been distributed to hospitals and medical colleges. It has been made available to district magistrates and Chief medical officers also for the help of needy persons. Central government has given 1.61 lakh vials of this injection to state for use till 30<sup>th</sup> April. From 1<sup>st</sup> May its supply has been doubled. Government is also contacting other suppliers for its availability.



# GO WITH **—** THE FLOW

BY Leah Rumack

ILLUSTRATION BY KATE TRAYNOR

How little acts  
of spontaneity  
can make  
your day

**THE PANDEMIC HAS** made me a more spontaneous person. Weird, I know. Before COVID-19, I was very Type A about my social life: dinner at 6 p.m.—6:30 if I was feeling sassy—usually at a restaurant of my choosing that I'd researched and booked with three other moms, four weeks in advance. The upheaval of this last year completely changed my Virgo approach to recreation.

Now, with so many activities off the table, whenever there's a chance to do anything, I jump. Socially distanced falafel in the park? Sounds glamorous! Walk with an acquaintance who lives around the corner? My new BFF! Lawn cocktails with the neighbour? Why didn't I think of this before?

My new 'Sure, why not?' vibe has been one of the surprising upsides of this time. I've made some new friends, seen parts of my hometown I didn't even know existed and become extremely good at dropping everything at a moment's notice.

I've also learnt that embracing novelty and openness to new experiences can make us happier—even if it's confined to small changes in our daily routines. Here are some easy ways you can give spontaneity a fighting chance to thrive.

## FOCUS YOUR EFFORTS

Someone who's naturally more introverted or anxious doesn't need to revamp their entire approach to life to reap the benefits of spontaneity, says Steve Joordens, a psychology professor at the University of Toronto, Scarborough. The key, he says, is to identify which areas are the ones you feel could benefit from a little more of an off-the-cuff approach and focus on changing your habits there.

"The first step is asking yourself what's lacking in your life," he says. "What's your goal?" Once you identify

your aim—more friends? A new hobby? Getting out of a fashion rut?—you then need to identify which habits are keeping you from getting what you want. Maybe your weekend routine is too packed or too rigid, or you keep making flimsy excuses to not try that new online baking class.

Then you can consciously substitute those spontaneity-killing habits for ones that will help you achieve your goal. If this doesn't exactly sound spontaneous, that's because it isn't—at least not at first. "It's just like going to the gym," says Joordens. "You may have to force yourself in the beginning, but then hopefully it becomes your new habit."

## MAKE SOME ROOM

Having gaps in my day, thanks to the widespread closures of restaurants, bars and movie theatres, definitely helped foster the creation of Brave-New-Why-Not?-Leah. I could accept last-minute invites for bike rides or phone chats, and I quickly learnt the small joys of unexpected fun.

According to Edward Slingerland, a professor of philosophy at the University of British Columbia, the first thing you need to do to nurture spontaneous experiences is to create some space for them. The author of *Trying Not to Try: Ancient China, Modern Science and the Power of Spontaneity*, he became interested in spontaneity while studying Chinese philosophers who wanted to



cultivate a state of *Wu Wei*, or effortless action, and saw spontaneity as an important goal.

“We overstructure our lives and plan too much,” he says. “Most people don’t have any gaps in their day to play.”

And while Slingerland admits that leaving those gaps is definitely trickier if you’re juggling things like work, taking care of family members or a busy volunteering schedule, even just having the mental goal of not overscheduling yourself can help change your approach. Many rabid list checkers (guilty!) might also be initially baffled as to how to put this into practice.

“Spontaneity is this weird combination of trying and not trying,” says Slingerland. He suggests giving yourself a very loose goal—like, say, going for a walk without a particular destination or just put ‘leaving the house’ on your agenda—to help build the scaffolding for interesting things to happen. You just have to get comfortable with the idea that you might not always be ‘accomplishing’ something, *per se*.

Another quick way to give spontaneity a fighting chance? Stop scrolling. Screen time, says Slingerland, is a ‘black hole’ for adults and children alike. “Digital addiction is a real barrier to spontaneity,” he adds. The modern instinct to reach for our devices at the first hint of empty time (guilty again!) eats up both actual time when we could be engaging with our environment in a more present way and the sudden

mental breakthroughs that can occur when we let our minds wander.

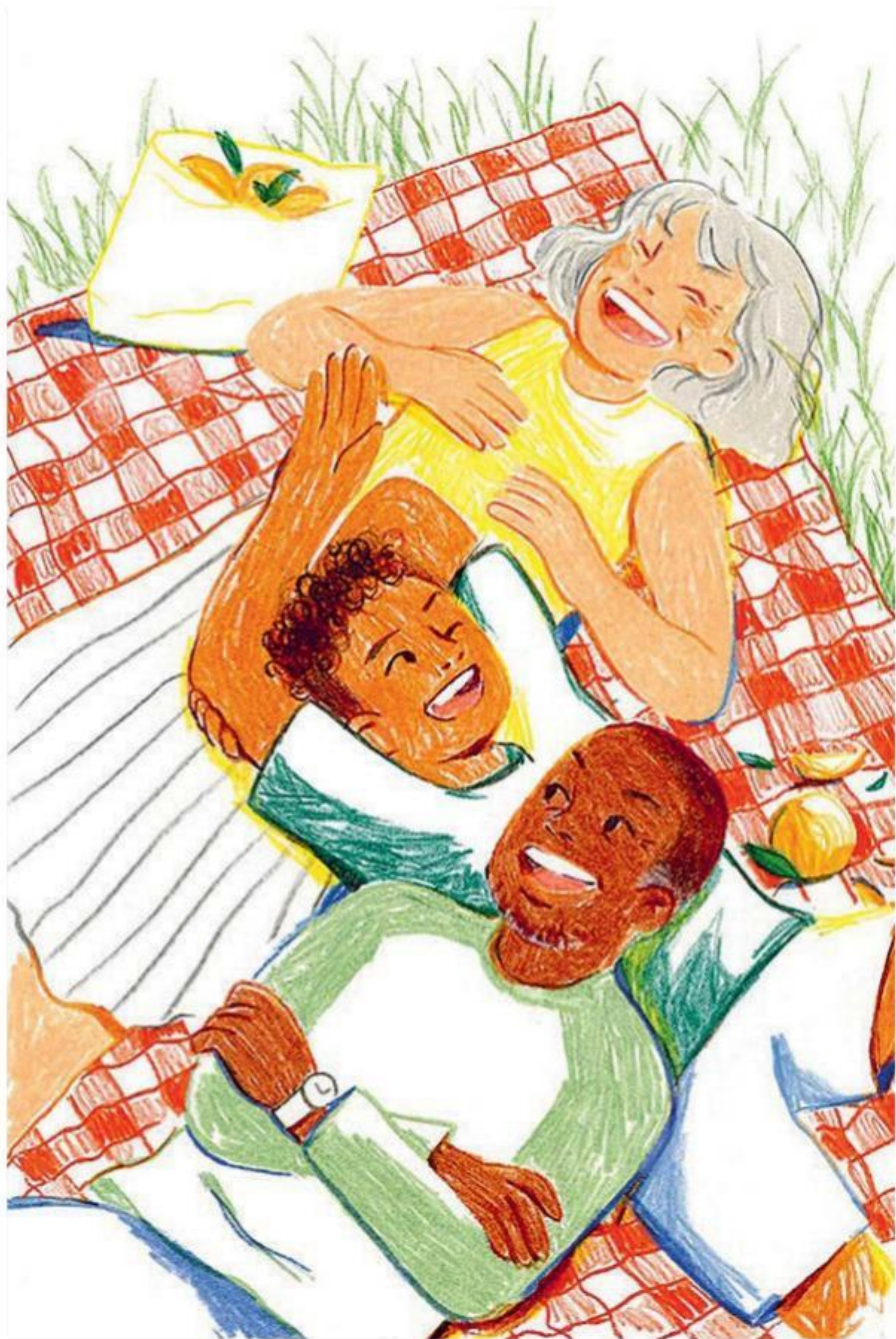
You’re not going to strike up that interesting conversation with the person next to you in line if both of your faces are buried in your phones. And you’re not going to notice that you’ve just passed a cute new bakery if you’re too busy checking email as you scurry by. So put your phone down and embrace the unexpected world around you.

## EMBRACE FAILURE (NO, REALLY)

Learning to not fear failure is a daunting but essential step in the path to becoming more spontaneous.

“The hardest thing for a non-spontaneous person is going to be that risk,” says Joordens. Even though we’re not necessarily talking about capital-B ‘Big Risks’ here, even making small changes to your routine can be enough. Your partner might not like that new bedroom idea; you will perhaps look silly if you take up tap dancing (okay, you *will* look silly); it could be a flop if you stream that movie you know nothing about. The trick, says Joordens, is to take a cue from the entrepreneurial world and try to reconceptualize failure as a learning opportunity.

“Entrepreneurs embrace failure and the notion of learning from it,” says Joordens. “The upside is if you’re spontaneous, you’re more likely to discover something new, and that could turn out to be something you really love.” **R**



# Open Up and Say Ha Ha

*The surprising reasons laughing is good for you*

BY *Rebecca Philips*

ILLUSTRATION BY *Michelle Theodore*

**G**RANDMA ALWAYS SAID that laughter is the best medicine. But what do scientists say? While chuckling can't cure cancer, it does have some measurable health benefits—it's good for your heart, your brain, your relationships and your overall sense of well-being.

Laughing is considered a sign of happiness, but it also brings it on, triggering the brain to release feel-good neurotransmitters: dopamine, which helps the brain process emotional responses and enhances our experience of pleasure; serotonin, which buoys our mood; and endorphins, which regulate pain and stress and induce euphoria. A recent study even showed that laughing with others releases endorphins via opioid receptors, which suggests that laughter-produced euphoria is like a narcotic—but without the obvious drawbacks.

Beyond a mood lift, laughing often may help prevent a heart event. Common daily challenges—big workloads, overdue bills or conflicts with loved ones—can cause chronic stress as they continually trigger our ancient fight-or-flight response, in turn causing our blood vessels to constrict and our blood pressure to rise. That can lead to myriad

health problems, including increased risk of heart attack and stroke. But like cholesterol-lowering drugs and aerobic exercise, a good laugh can actually counteract the effect of stress. In 2005, researchers at the University of Maryland Medical Center found that laughter increases blood flow by dilating the inner lining of vessels. Your heart doesn't have to pump as hard, which reduces your blood pressure.

WE'RE  
**30 TIMES  
 MORE LIKELY**  
 TO LAUGH SOCIALLY THAN  
 WHEN WE'RE ALONE.

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Laughter is also an antidote to pain, and so increases our endurance. A 2011 Oxford University study showed that subjects' pain thresholds were significantly higher after laughing, due to that endorphin-mediated opiate effect. This means that sharing a joke with a friend can help you squeeze out a few extra reps at the gym or go further on your daily walk. A good belly laugh also happens to be a bit of a workout on its own—it exercises several muscle groups, including your abdomen, back, shoulders, diaphragm and face.

Joking around is also a boon to our social life, and laughter is 30 times more likely to occur with others than when

we're alone. These shared giggles act to reinforce and maintain our sense of togetherness by way of endorphin dominoes: when someone starts laughing, others will laugh, even if they're not sure what everyone is on about. Laughter is, quite literally, contagious.

And when you laugh, you're accessing an ancient system that mammals have evolved to make and maintain social connection, according to Sophie Scott, a British cognitive neuroscientist. That social connection is vital to our physical and mental health—it strengthens our immune system and lengthens our life. People who feel more connected to others have higher self-esteem, lower rates of anxiety and depression and are more empathetic.

Babies inherently understand the importance of shared laughs, says Dr Caspar Addyman, a developmental psychologist and director of the Goldsmiths InfantLab at the University of London. "Babies can make you laugh and you can make them laugh almost instantaneously, no jokes involved," he says. "It's all about connection." As Scott points out, even for adults, laughter isn't always connected to humour—we laugh to show people we understand them, that we agree with them, that we're part of the group and that we like or even love them.

So go ahead and be silly with someone you care about—it's the quickest and easiest way to lighten your mental load and improve your physical well-being. It's pretty fun, too. **R**

# THE POST-COVID RECOVERY DIET

*5 best foods to help you bounce back*

BY *Lovneet Batra*

**B**EATING BACK the SARS-CoV-2 virus is no mean feat, but the process of regaining your full health can be a long, arduous journey too. Due to lingering after-effects that vary in intensity from person to person, COVID-19 can continue to make you feel poorly, even after testing negative.

Fatigue, inflammation, pulmonary fibrosis—scarring on the lungs leading to shortness of breath, chronic fatigue and dry cough—hair loss, joint pain, insomnia and feelings of depression and anxiety, are just some of the symptoms you might be feeling. Here are some foods that can help a speedy recovery.

## ALMONDS

Healthy fats in almonds are a rich source of oleic acid, which helps stabilize high blood-sugar levels and fights inflammation—one of the most harmful long-term effects of the COVID virus. Just about 20 almonds a day can provide 37 per cent of vitamin E and 20 per cent of magnesium requirements, both essential for recuperation. Vitamin E helps protect our cells from oxidative damage while magnesium increases energy and muscle strength, boosts restful sleep and reduces stress. Higher magnesium intake is also linked to reduced symptoms of depression.



**AMARANTH**

Muscle wasting, body aches and exhaustion are commonly seen due to hypermetabolism and excessive nitrogen loss during the COVID infection. To overcome this, try amaranth which offers good quality protein, iron, selenium and magnesium. Protein and selenium are also needed for the antibodies we make as an immune response. This pseudo-cereal also provides a balance of nutrients that reduces hair loss after COVID.

**SPROUTED CHICKPEAS**

High bioavailability of nutrients in chickpea sprouts makes this an ideal dietary element during recovery. Not only do sprouted chickpeas have an amino acid profile that is better suited to digestion than unsprouted ones, their phytic acid content is also low thereby enhancing our ability to easily absorb its vitamins and minerals. Chickpeas are also a great source of fibre. Studies reveal that a high-fibre diet is related to lower levels of inflammatory cytokines and enhanced levels of short chain fatty acids—a key factor in maintaining healthy gut microbiota, which plays an important role in better immunity. Sprouts are also rich in critical B and C vitamins, which supports our energy production and tissue-repair abilities.

**GINGER**

Packed with potent metabolites including gingerols and shogaols,

ginger is traditionally used as a flu fighter and has been found to help control high blood sugar post-COVID. Ginger juice helps in reducing mucous and soothing a sore throat. It improves blood circulation and cell oxygenation and is a natural prebiotic, meaning it acts as food for good gut bacteria.



## ANTIOXIDANT-RICH POMEGRANATES CAN HELP RESTORE RESPIRATORY STRENGTH AFTER COVID.

**POMEGRANATE**

Pomegranates are rich in punicalagins and punicalic acid both of which have high antioxidant properties. This nutrient-packed fruit helps restore respiratory strength by boosting the concentration of nitrates in the blood and its powerful anti-inflammatory compounds aid in reducing joint pain and swelling. **R**

*Lovneet Batra is a clinical nutritionist and natural remedies expert.*



News FROM THE  
**WORLD OF  
MEDICINE**

## EXERCISE PROTECTS THE DECLINING BRAIN

It's not unusual for some cognitive decline to occur as you age, and it's nothing to worry about. But if you have more difficulty with judgment, language or memory than is expected for your age, a doctor may diagnose you with mild cognitive impairment (MCI), a condition that raises your risk of progressing to dementia. However, in a Korean study of nearly 2,500,000 people with MCI, participants who exercised more than once a week were 18 per cent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. Physical activity may protect us by increasing blood flow to the brain or by aiding the production of the molecules that help neurons grow.

## Grin (or Grimace) and Bear Your Vaccine

If a needle jab makes you wince, that might be a good thing. American participants in a study were asked to make various facial expressions while getting injected. Those who wore either a grimace or a genuine smile with both mouth and eyes reported about 40 per cent less pain than those with a stoic poker face.

## Alcohol Impairment Begins Below Legal Limits

In many countries, it's illegal to drive with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) above 0.05 per cent. Now new research suggests that the ability to process visual motion can be compromised with a BAC as low as 0.015 per cent. So call a ride even if you've had as little as half a beer.

TOP LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK. RIGHT FROM THE TOP: AKE2008AKE/GETTY IMAGES. MACTRUNK/GETTY IMAGES

# OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNOEA'S TOLL ON THE HEART

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As one of the most prevalent sleep disorders, obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) affects around one billion people worldwide. For those with this condition, the muscles in the back of the throat relax too much during sleep, creating a narrowed passage for air and causing breathing to stop and restart repeatedly. Each time this happens, the sleep cycle gets interrupted, which often leaves sufferers feeling tired all day. But the potential consequences don't stop there. Untreated sleep apnoea may also raise the risk of dying from heart disease by up to five times.

A recent Finnish study explored one of the reasons for this by recording OSA patients' nighttime heart rhythms. When the body runs low on oxygen and suddenly awakens, this causes a surge of activity in the sympathetic nervous system—and releases stress hormones in the body. The longer a participant's breathing was interrupted, the faster the heart raced and the more the short-term heart rate varied. Over time, too much of this strains the cardiovascular system.

Fortunately, there are treatments that work well for OSA. Mild cases may improve with lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking or shedding excess weight.

For more serious cases, the most effective solution is a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine that pumps a constant stream of air into your throat by way of a mask.



## Taking Your Blood Pressure? Check Both Arms

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The ideal way to take blood pressure is by measuring it in both arms, according to international guidelines. In real life, this happens at best only half the time—even at the doctor's office. Checking both arms is important because when arteries stiffen and harden, one side is usually affected more than the other in a way that blood pressure testing may detect. A slight disparity isn't cause for concern, but a difference of 10 mm Hg in the systolic number could be a sign of cardiovascular problems. So the next time you're at a doctor's appointment, if they check only one arm, encourage them to take a few extra moments for the other one. **R**



# THEY GIVE US HOPE

**As the country coped with the trauma of a second COVID wave, a new set of citizen heroes came to its rescue**

*BY Team Reader's Digest*

**PHOTOGRAPH BY**  
*Bandeep Singh*





**With Gurpreet Singh Rummy (centre, in white) at the helm, Khalsa Help International stepped in to provide medical oxygen to COVID patients when hospitals were overwhelmed.**



**Versha Verma, whose free hearse service offered COVID victims a dignified final journey**

**N**o one, it seemed, had warned us about the second COVID wave. A spike in the number of infections set some alarm bells ringing in March, but none were loud enough to prepare us for the devastation we saw barely a month later. As hospital beds and oxygen became scarce, our very Indian rules of privilege ceased to apply. COVID-19 was, suddenly, the great leveller. Regardless of our position on the ladders of caste and class, we all fought hard to access critical healthcare. We gasped together. We were all desperate.

Governments in the country, at the levels of both centre and state, were visibly unprepared. Their complacency created a vacuum.

While some COVID patients needed ambulances and medicine, there were more who, by then, needed hearses. Amidst the ensuing chaos, most of us were left with little idea about which number to call, where to go and what to do. Finally, it was some brave, committed and selfless individuals who stepped in to create that support system. Here were ordinary Indians showing extraordinary courage.

Helping shore up India's frontlines were volunteers and warriors who often put themselves in harm's way just so that they could alleviate distress. Social worker Versha Verma, for instance, transformed a moment of great personal loss into an opportunity

PHOTOS: VERSHA VERMA

to serve her city of Lucknow: “I lost my best friend to COVID in mid-April. I waited at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital with her body for four hours. No middle-class family could afford the ₹10,000 to ₹15,000 that drivers were charging. The crematorium was only four km away.”

The next day, Verma rented an Omni van and returned to the same hospital, holding a placard that read ‘Nishulk Shav Vahan’ (Free Hearse). The 42-year-old remembers performing the last rites of five COVID patients on her very first day. “At the crematorium, there were 70 to 80 bodies burning. I was wearing PPE in the scorching sun. I thought I would melt or faint. Slowly, however, I got used to it.” When people saw her work tirelessly for over 13 hours a day, they decided to fund her initiative. Verma used this money to employ 12 workers, adding to her fleet three more vans and an ambulance.

Ever since the pandemic struck in 2020, Verma hasn’t stopped to either breathe or despair. She has helped distribute food packets, rations, medicines, blood and plasma to those who need it most. Like her, there are others whose efforts are bringing comfort to countless Indians in these dark, uncertain times. From drivers kitting their rickshaws with oxygen cylinders to school children coordinating relief efforts on WhatsApp, these modern heroes all seem to be motivated by a deep sense

of community, not by a want to profit. With every life they save or better, they give us an India to hope and root for.

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## Breathing Life into Us

BY THE THIRD week of April, watching the news had become an anxious, often horrifying experience. Hospitals were turning away severely ill COVID patients. They had no beds, and, in Delhi specifically, many had no oxygen. Pradhan of Shri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara in Indirapuram, Ghaziabad, Gurpreet Singh Rummy remembers exactly when the second wave crescendoed at his doorstep—it was 11:30 p.m. on 22 April. A 55-year-old woman had been brought to the gurudwara. Her SpO2 levels had dipped to 50 per cent. “We, thankfully, had some cylinders, but not a lot of knowhow. We somehow brought up her levels up to 95 per cent in about an hour,” recalls Rummy. “We made a video of this and put it up on social media. In about an hour, 100 to 150 cars showed up. They also had nowhere else to go.”

After Rummy, 44, helped set up Khalsa Help International (KHI) last year, he ensured that the needy get rations, LPG and free COVID tests. The organization even helped patients find hospital beds and treatment. Since April this year, however, the scale of KHI’s operations has increased tenfold. In just three-odd weeks, Rummy and his volunteers had provided oxygen to



**Members of the Oxygen on Wheels team in Shantiniketan, West Bengal**

approximately 12,000 people, but to do this, they had to source cylinders from Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. Rummy remembers weeping when KHI's oxygen stocks once dwindled: "Everyone put up their hands, saying we'll supply hospitals first, but what about those who didn't get a bed, people who can't afford one?"

In the end, it wasn't just individuals who benefited from KHI's unique oxygen *langar*—health-care facilities did, too. "At least six hospitals had us on call in case they ran out of cylinders. The government couldn't help them, but they were able to save lives with the oxygen we supplied." Even though six of KHI's 90 volunteers have tested positive for COVID, Rummy tells

us that none of his colleagues have yet been vaccinated. "The work we do is non-stop. People are sometimes down for two or three days after a vaccine. If we're short even one person, many patients would suffer, patients for whom we're the only hope," he says.

In comparison to Delhi, says Dr Abhijit Chowdhury, chief advisor to Kolkata's Liver Foundation, the second wave peaked later in West Bengal. "When it became clear that oxygen would be needed, we felt we needed to rise to the occasion." On 7 May, using two ambulances which the state government had lent, Liver Foundation volunteers started taking the organization's 11 oxygen concentrators to those who needed it

urgently. It didn't take long for donors to see the merits of this initiative. In less than a month, the organization had received over 140 concentrators, and with them, greater resolve.

Oxygen on Wheels, Liver Foundation's 24x7 oxygen-delivery service, was never meant to be an urban, Kolkata-only drive. Dr Partha Sarathi Mukherjee, the foundation's secretary, says, "News of the oxygen crisis itself created massive panic among people living in small towns and villages. Without big-city facilities, they had no idea about what to do or where to go." As Liver Foundation looked for partners in rural and remote West Bengal, Dr Chowdhury reached out to Manisha Banerjee, headmistress of a school in Shantiniketan. "I told him [Dr Chowdhury] we want to launch an all-women effort." she says.

Made up of teachers, students and homemakers, Banerjee's team of 10 women does everything from running a helpline to driving concentrators around the districts of Bolpur and Birbhum. In villages, says Banerjee, cylinders are either unaffordable or unavailable, "so this seemed like a good initiative". Moreover, she adds, "It is also helping break stereotypes of the ways in which women can contribute."

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## Driving Us to Safety

ON 15 APRIL, Dattatraya Sawant heard someone knocking on his door at two

in the morning. After having fallen seriously ill, an old lady had come to ask if Sawant could take her to the hospital in his auto rickshaw. She had already been turned down by three other drivers in Mumbai's Ghatkopar area. "I took her to a nearby hospital," says Sawant. "I thought *What if it had been my mother, ill and unable to get to the hospital. What if it had been me?* I figured why not use my auto as an ambulance."

In metropolises like Mumbai, there are often more critical COVID patients than there are ambulances. Also, as Sawant saw in the case of his ageing passenger, even non-COVID patients were finding it hard to sometimes make that life-saving journey to the hospital. He decided he would not differentiate between the two: "I take everyone who comes to me." In Sawant's rickshaw, you can now find an infrared thermometer, sanitizers and a pulse oximeter. Sawant protects himself with PPE and a divider he has installed. In just five weeks, he'd ferried 77 passengers, 42 of whom had tested positive for COVID.

Sawant, who is also an English teacher, has not let the dangers of his brave endeavours deter him. "All essential workers such as doctors, nurses, ward boys go to work and stay in contact with COVID patients 24x7. What if they stayed home? What would happen to us then? So, I thought it was nothing for me to ferry a few COVID patients."

Much like Sawant whose initiative has the financial and emotional backing of his wife, Mohammad Javed Khan has also found similar support in his Bhopal home. When he told his wife that the cost of filling the oxygen cylinder with which he had kitted his auto rickshaw was ₹700 to ₹800, she agreed to sell her jewellery.

In April, Khan saw on his WhatsApp chats and Facebook wall, pictures we all did—people carrying their ailing parents on their shoulders, young men and women suffering outside hospitals. “If an ambulance did turn up, it would charge people ₹8,000 for

a distance of five or six km. What is a poor person to do? Get himself treated or pay for the ambulance?” asks Khan. Once the 34-year-old had decided he would use his rickshaw to ferry COVID patients in need of transport, help started pouring in. After a journalist shared his Google Pay details, Khan received enough money to put together and distribute ration kits.

Although Khan now has an e-pass that helps him move across the city during lockdown, he recalls a bitter experience with the Bhopal police. On his way to ferry a patient from one hospital to another, he was



**Mohammad Javed Khan began ferrying COVID patients for free and set up an oxygen cylinder in his auto rickshaw to help sustain critical cases on the go.**

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD JAVED KHAN

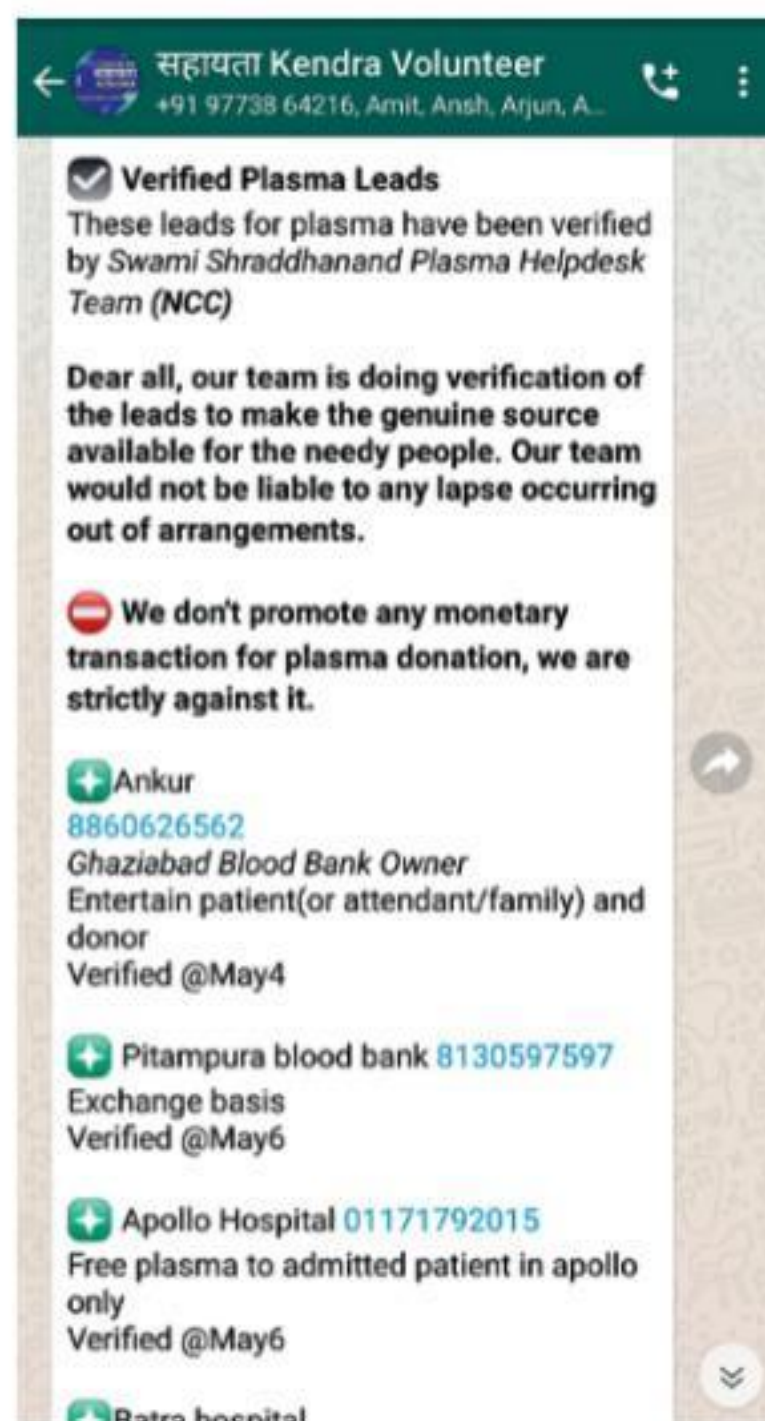
apprehended by city cops. They accused him of illegally selling oxygen. By the time this ordeal was over, the patient had passed away. “Why harass those who try to work for a good cause? People need to rally together, not leave each other alone to fend for themselves,” argues Khan.

In Dhar, a tribal district in Madhya Pradesh, Aziz ul-Rahman Khan had also seen harrowing pictures on his social media—husbands carrying on their shoulders their deceased wives, a man pulling a COVID patient in a *thela* (cart). “I thought I have to invent something that is within everyone’s reach,” says the engineer. The 46-year-old Khan’s invention—portable ambulances that can be attached to motorbikes—will soon be provided to 16 community health centres in Dhar. At the peak of the second wave, Dhar’s 10 ambulances were in no way enough for its thousand-plus COVID patients. Khan is helping plug that gap.

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## Marshalling Our Resources

WHILE IT WAS possible to foresee a spike in our collective distress in March, no one had predicted a sudden collapse of the nation’s health systems. With testing kits and oxygen cylinders both in short supply, people soon took to social media. Some were looking for medicine, others for hospital beds. The pleas that circulated on Twitter and



**(Clockwise from top) School students Rishay Gupta, Ansh Garg and Avani Singh set up a lead verification and resource management effort to help connect people in need with reliable information for COVID treatment through WhatsApp.**



**The medicine bank started by doctor couple, Marcus Ranney (second from the right) and his wife Raina, services impoverished communities in seven cities.**

on WhatsApp groups made one fact clear—the few resources that were still available needed to be managed. Samaritans, one saw, stepped up before governments.

Seeing havoc unfold around them, Ansh Garg, Rishay Gupta and Avani Singh, three students freshly entering class 12, decided they must do something. The teenagers from Meerut and Saharanpur had a student organization—they put it to use. In the melee of appeals for medicines, beds, oxygen and other requests, there was also a lot of information that was either outdated or false. The trio set up two WhatsApp groups—COVID-19

Sahayta Kendra and Sahayta Kendra Volunteers—to verify various leads. “India is a country with a large youth population,” says Garg, 16. “If not us, then who will work?”

The groups, now overseen by more than 300 volunteers, check information from across the country to help connect people in distress to those who can help. The students work in shifts, with calls coming in until two a.m., then abating for a few hours before resuming at five a.m. Garg says that as 16- and 17-year-olds it’s sometimes tough to deal with this much pain and grief on a daily basis, but they do their best.



Efforts such as these have sprung up across geographies. In Mumbai, doctor couple Marcus and Raina Ranney began collecting unused medicines in early May. It started with trying to help someone they knew, so they put the word out over WhatsApp in their housing society, asking if anyone had unused and unexpired medicines to spare. This simple effort then became an initiative, one which soon metastasized to cover seven cities where dedicated collection centres and logistics are all now in place.

“If one building can save a life, then imagine what a city or a country can do,” says Marcus Ranney. They have collected more than 200 kg of medicines so far—mostly medication required for light to moderate COVID treatment, including Fabiflu, Dolo, anti-allergics and other drugs for pain-relief. With the help of non-profits, these medicines are then sent to areas or communities that need them. “Others have also been inspired by this template and we are happy to share it,” says Ranney. The doctors hope to continue running their medicine bank in some form even after the pandemic abates.

In Jammu and Kashmir, a group of volunteers called SOSJK offers a motley list of services—connecting people to resources, liaising with hospital authorities, arranging tele-medicine consultations, sourcing RT-PCR tests and medical equipment. “We are a one-stop shop for all COVID-related things,” says Khushboo Mattoo, a volunteer.

“We don’t just amplify requests, but do our best to not let a case go without a resolution.” The 180-odd volunteers, divided into eight sub-groups, have successfully assisted more than 300 people in the state, including those in underserved parts. “We try to be a bridge between patients, the administration and available resources,” says volunteer Umesh Talashi.

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## Dignifying Our Dead

HAVING WORKED AS a hospital supervisor for 10 years, Majeed Bilal had grown used to death, but last year, he was moved to tears when he saw an old woman die of COVID. “This happened during the first lockdown,” he tells us. “No one was ready to touch her dead body, not even her children.” After having seen municipality officials throw the lady’s body in a pit, Bilal decided he would start conducting the last rites of COVID patients himself. “Soon after starting, I quit my job. No one wanted to be near me.”

Though Bilal’s organization, Humanity First Foundation (HFF), was given two hearses by a donor, he found that not many people in his area—Karnataka’s Bidar district—were similarly generous. “We needed food and new PPE kits. I knew I’d have to raise the money myself, so I sold my two plots of land.” With the ₹10 lakh he received, Bilal has already facilitated 790 funerals. In the last two

**Jatinder Singh Shunty  
began cremating COVID  
victims in March 2020.**



months, the 31-year-old feels his work has doubled. “Earlier, we used to only take bodies from hospitals. Now we are also getting calls from people’s homes. All the villages here know about HFF. They rely on us.”

Wanting to protect his family, Bilal has been living in a boarding house for over a year. He sometimes sees his wife and children from a distance. “I don’t mind hardship as nothing matches the contentment I feel. If I die for this cause, I’ll consider myself a martyr.” Thankfully, Bilal says, he has tested negative for COVID all of 29 times. He then discloses a figure he holds close to his heart. “We’ve buried only 150 Muslims. The others all belonged to different faiths. We stay true to our name. We put humanity first.”

Much like Bilal, Syed Jalaluddin Zafar has helped give 1,900 COVID patients a respectful farewell. What irks Zafar, a Hyderabad-based publisher, is the lack of official help. Despite having worked since 2020, his organization, Youth Welfare Telangana (YWT), is yet to receive any government support. “We have faced problems on all fronts,” he says. “The government didn’t give us vehicles. Hospitals would first not give us the bodies. Graveyards wouldn’t allow COVID patients to be buried, and the rates charged by crematoriums continues to be exorbitant.” In some cases, adds Zafar, a single cremation can cost as much as ₹20,000. “We use donations to help poor people

get their loved ones cremated.” In 2020, YWT would receive 25 to 30 calls in a week. After 15 March this year, they were fielding 25 to 30 calls every day. “After the second wave hit, there was a day when we got 120 calls,” informs Zafar. “In all of 2020, we conducted the last rites of 900 people. This year, we have already touched 1,000. What’s worrying is that it’s only May.”

Speaking on the phone from Delhi, Jatinder Singh Shunty shares similar figures. Of the 3,500-odd bodies his Shaheed Bhagat Singh Sewa Dal (SBSSD) has cremated since 23 March 2020, around 2,200 were bodies they cremated between 1 April and 16 May this year alone. As Shunty saw the second wave peak, he decided to sleep in his car: “I would spend all day packing bodies, sanitizing them, lighting pyres. In the event I’d picked up the infection, I didn’t want to give it to my family.” Shunty remembers his phone ringing through the night. “I’d get calls from NRIs, wanting me to arrange funerals for their loved ones. I’d sometimes show them the last rites on a video call,” says the Padma Shri recipient.

Not one to give in to despair, Shunty prefers silver linings. “I started SBSSD with one old car I’d bought in 1995. Today, we have a fleet of 25 vehicles that have all been donated to us. Someone gives diesel, another petrol. People in India all have a big heart. Why worry?” **R**

— REPORTING BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA, ISHANI NANDI, NAOREM ANUJA AND BHAVYA DORE



“Scotch and toilet water?”

## LIFE'S

*Like That*

**On a trip to** a rural Irish village, a friend of mine stopped off at the only shop in town to buy a newspaper. However, all it had was the previous day's edition. “Excuse me,”

he asked the shop owner, “do you have today's newspaper?”

“Yes, I do,” answered the man. “It'll be here tomorrow.”

—H.H. *via rd.com*

**My wife often** surprises me with her unusual perspective on life, but never more so than when she walked outside one breezy afternoon, threw open her arms, and

announced, “I love living on a planet with wind!”

—BILL SPENCER

**After our** Siamese kitten ran up our expensive curtains, snagging them, my wife took him to the veterinarian to have him neutered, hoping it would calm him down.

A few weeks later, my sister-in-law brought her new boyfriend over to meet us. Before entering

**A friend is someone you can text “Do I look good in yellow?” and three dots appear and disappear twice before you get back “No.”**

— @BESSBELL

the house, she offered him this bit of advice:

“Whatever you do, don't touch the curtains.”

—JAMES BELL

**Update:** My husband is mad because I didn't warn him the cake I PUT IN THE TRASH CAN

doesn't taste good.

— @BRAVETART

**I was visiting** my sister in Tennessee when we noticed a sign placed by Civil War re-enactors that announced, “Civil War Battle 6 November, 10 a.m.”

My disappointed

sister asked, “Whatever happened to the element of surprise?”

—JAMES METZ

**My daughter turned** five today. She's currently having a meltdown because, according to her, she “still looks four.”

— @AOTAKEO

*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](mailto:editor.india@rd.com)*

## THANKS, KIDS ...

We love our mothers, and they love us back but let's not forget just how much Mum has had to put up with over the years.

✦ No one makes more observations than a child sharing a stall with his mother in a public restroom.

— @Lhlodder

✦ While I was applying face cream, my husband asked our daughter what I was doing. She yelled back, “She's applying Oil of Delay.”

—MJ Robarts

✦ **Scene:** Family at the dining room table

**Daughter:** Mom, is there any more open wine?

**Me:** In the wine fridge.

**Daughter:** There's a wine fridge?

**Son:** That's what she calls the fridge.

—Kathy Nieman

✦ My four-year-old threw a wrapper on the floor. I told him to pick it up and



put it where it belonged. He put it in my purse.

— @mommajessiec

**Five-year-old:** Just one more question! What are the lines on your forehead?

**Me:** ...

**Five-year-old:** Now they look angry.

— @PaigeKellerman



# WHY AM I SO TIRED?

If you feel  
pooped all day,  
the solution  
isn't always  
more sleep

BY *Vanessa Milne*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
*Chanelle Nibbelink*

**Carol Heffernan**, a 43-year-old marketing writer from Wisconsin, Canada, regularly felt worn out from her busy life of working, shuttling her two kids to elementary school and play dates, and taking care of housework. But when COVID-19 hit last March and the kids were suddenly at home all day, learning remotely, she noticed that her run-of-the-mill weariness quickly turned into full-on exhaustion.

“All the extra responsibility and the mental load—it just added up,” she says. “I felt grumpy and tired—and it wasn’t due to lack of sleep.”

Heffernan didn't have any time in the day to exercise off her stress. She was short on energy, and she started becoming short with her kids. "After I put them to bed at 8 p.m., I would just crash on the couch," she says.

If there's one thing many of us have in common, it's that we're tired. In fact, lethargy is so pervasive that it's one of the issues people ask their doctors about the most. Doctors even have a name for it: 'tired all the time', or TATT for short. The solution isn't always as simple as getting more sleep; nearly a quarter of people who get seven or more hours of rest a night report they still wake up feeling tired most days of the week.

Here are eight reasons your energy is low—and what you can do to bring it back:

## BECAUSE YOU'RE SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME ON THE COUCH

When you're feeling sluggish, it can be tempting to plop down and binge-watch TV. But doing something active will actually give you more energy, not consume the little that you have. In fact, researchers at the University of Georgia found that just 10 minutes of low- or moderate-intensity exercise gave study participants a noticeable energy boost.

Starting a regular exercise routine is even more beneficial. In another recent study, people who committed to an

exercise regimen—working out for 20 minutes, three times a week—boosted their energy levels by 20 per cent in six weeks. "When we don't work out regularly, our muscles can become weakened, so when we do use these muscle groups in everyday activity, we're more tired," explains Dr Yufang Lin, an integrative-medicine physician at the Cleveland Clinic's Center for Integrative and Lifestyle Medicine.

Exercise also works its magic at the cellular level: the mitochondria—the parts of your cells that provide energy to your muscles—actually grow more powerful and numerous after aerobic exercise, providing a continuous source of increased energy.

## BECAUSE YOU'RE PUSHING YOURSELF TOO HARD

People who feel overcommitted—whether from volunteering for one too many causes or shouldering too much at work or at home—often try to squeeze in more tasks so they can get everything on their to-do list crossed off. But it might be wiser to take a break.

"When it comes to optimizing energy over the long haul, it's about getting into a rhythm of periods of exertion and rest," says Dane Jensen, CEO of Third Factor, an organization that helps companies' employees perform better under pressure. "In fact, to stay energized over the course of the day, you need a 15- to 20-minute break every 90 minutes."



Not all downtime is equal: a 2016 study looked at office workers in South Korea and found that those who looked at their smartphones during breaks were significantly less recharged than those who went for a walk or chatted with friends.

Jensen suggests choosing breaks that balance out what's taxing you. If you've been working at a computer, take a walk outside. If you've been doing spring cleaning, sit down and call a friend.

## THE PILE-UP OF GLOBAL CRISES IS HAVING AN EFFECT ON PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH—AND ENERGY LEVELS.

For more inspiration, Jensen suggests considering four categories of breaks, based on how they can benefit you: physical (walking or stretching); cognitive (crossword puzzles or Sudoku); emotional (phoning a loved one); and spiritual (walking in the woods or practising a religion).

"It's just not enough to say, okay, I'm going to take a break every once in a while," he explains. "You want to do it intentionally and spend that time on something that's actually going to give you energy."

## BECAUSE YOU'RE ANXIOUS

Anxiety is draining. When you're distressed, your body is on high alert and produces adrenalin. Your muscles might tighten up, and your brain shifts into overdrive to try to work through all possible scenarios. That all takes energy—and will leave you feeling tired.

And right now, the pile-up of global crises—political instability and the pandemic being the most notable—is having a measurable effect on many people's mental health. One study published in the *British Journal of Psychology* found that participants who watched a negative news bulletin were more likely than those who watched a neutral or positive one to feel anxious or sad—and to then feel worse about their personal problems, too.

One antidote to all the bad news is cultivating your friendships. Scientists have long known that socializing decreases the risk of developing mental-health issues like depression, and avoiding loneliness also lowers stress-hormone levels in your body. One study from researchers at Arizona State University found that university students who had spent more time socializing had lower cortisol levels the next day—and they slept better, as well.

Dr Vincent Agyapong, director of the Division of Community Psychiatry at the University of Alberta, says that his research has demonstrated that nurturing relationships is a mood booster.

“Maintaining social contacts is one of the ways to maintain your mental health,” he says. “It doesn’t necessarily have to be face to face—it can be via social media, telephone call or video conference.”

All that said, if you think you might have clinical levels of anxiety—for example, if you’re having panic attacks or completely avoiding doing everyday tasks—speak to your health-care provider about talk therapy or medication.

## BECAUSE YOU'RE LOW ON VITAMINS

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Fatigue is often connected to not having enough of two key nutrients, says the Cleveland Clinic’s Lin: iron and B vitamins. When you don’t get enough iron in your diet, it can lead to iron-deficiency anaemia, which means your body doesn’t produce enough healthy red blood cells.

“When there are not enough red blood cells around, less oxygen gets carried to the cells to allow them to generate energy, which causes fatigue,” says Lin. People with anaemia might also experience shortness of breath, dizziness and cold hands and feet.

Having a B-vitamin deficiency, especially B<sub>12</sub>, also affects energy levels, since vitamin B<sub>12</sub> is another key to creating enough red blood cells. Since iron and vitamin B are commonly absorbed from red meat and shellfish, people who follow a vegetarian or vegan diet are at more risk. But

anaemia can also occur during pregnancy or stem from gastrointestinal problems such as ulcers or Crohn’s disease. These and other less common vitamin and mineral deficiencies can all be identified with a blood test and treated with supplements and a change in diet.

However, Lin warns that supplements and drinks that are advertised as

## IF YOU'RE DRAGGING YOURSELF THROUGH EVERYDAY TASKS, YOU MIGHT HAVE SLIPPED INTO DEPRESSION.

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energy enhancers can be dangerous. “A lot of those ‘energy’ supplements are laced with caffeine, ginseng or other stimulants at a high dose,” she says. Lin also cautions that they can cause serious side effects, like heart palpitations, insomnia and anxiety.

## BECAUSE YOU'RE DEPRESSED

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If you’re feeling excessively fatigued—dragging yourself through the normal tasks of daily living, or are unable to complete them—it could be a sign that you’ve slipped into depression.

Some people are genetically predisposed to the condition, and others develop it as a result of difficult circumstances; rates of depression in the



## 60-SECOND FIXES: BOOST YOUR ENERGY IN A MINUTE OR LESS

### 1. Pour some peppermint tea

According to a study published in the *North American Journal of Psychology*, sniffing peppermint helped reduce fatigue while driving. And researchers have also found that those who drink peppermint tea are more alert and complete mental tasks faster.

### 2. Open the blinds

Exposing yourself to natural sunlight, especially right when you wake up in

the morning, can help suppress melatonin, the chemical in your body that makes you sleepy.

### 3. Take a few deep breaths

When you're stressed, it's natural to breathe a little bit shallower, which can decrease the amount of oxygen that reaches your cells. To counteract that, try breathing in through your nose for four seconds, holding your breath for four seconds, then slowly exhaling for four seconds.

### 4. Chew a piece of sugar-free gum

Though it's not exactly clear why, numerous studies have shown that chewing gum increases alertness. Even before science confirmed it, during the First World War, American soldiers were issued gum to help them focus.

### 5. Sing along to a song

Listening to music can increase levels of happy chemicals like serotonin and oxytocin—and belting out lyrics makes you breathe deeper and take in more oxygen, boosting your energy.

United States, for example, tripled after the coronavirus arrived, rising from eight per cent to 28 per cent.

“It's expected that so much fear and uncertainty will increase people's levels of stress, anxiety and depression,” says Agyapong. “With how long the pandemic is going on, it's becoming

pathological for a lot of people.”

Other symptoms of depression include loss of appetite and irritability. If you're feeling tired all the time and suspect depression might be to blame, ask your doctor for a mental-health screening. Talk therapy can help, as can antidepressants.

## BECAUSE YOU'RE EATING AN UNBALANCED DIET

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We often think about how our diet affects our weight, but what you eat has a large effect on your energy levels, too. When your body digests food, it turns it into glucose, which is then sent by way of your blood to all of your muscles and organs, including your brain. Our blood sugar naturally fluctuates during this process, and when it's low, we can feel sluggish.

### SLEEP APNOEA, A CAUSE OF CHRONIC FATIGUE, IS ON THE RISE, LIKELY BECAUSE OF GROWING RATES OF OBESITY.

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A simple way to keep your blood sugar consistent is to eat regularly. "If you go more than several hours without a meal or snack, that's probably too long of a stretch," says Cara Harbstreet, a Kansas City-based registered dietitian.

Another common error, Harbstreet says, is eating too many simple carbohydrates—juice, candy bars or white bread. Those can lead to an increase in blood sugar, prompting your body to produce insulin, which then makes your blood sugar drop. "You get an energy spike and then you come crashing down and eat more of the same

kinds of foods," she explains. "And that cycle can repeat indefinitely."

Instead, reach for complex carbs—like whole grains and non-starchy vegetables—which are more slowly digested than simple carbs, giving you a steady stream of energy. To make sure you're getting enough nutrients to fuel your body, Harbstreet recommends trying to get three food groups at every meal and at least two at snacks.

## BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT BREATHING WELL AT NIGHT

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Before going to the effort of changing your lifestyle to deal with fatigue, it's important to make sure it's not a symptom of a more serious, undiagnosed condition. If you've been unusually tired for more than a month, ask your doctor if an underlying problem could be behind it.

One common culprit is sleep apnea, a condition that causes breathing to start and stop throughout the night. Sleep apnoea affects more than 20 per cent of Americans—and those numbers are on the rise, likely because of growing rates of obesity.

Since sleep apnoea causes sufferers to rouse multiple times a night to keep breathing—often without knowing it—they don't get enough deep sleep. The condition, which often comes with daytime exhaustion and nighttime snoring, can also lead to other issues, including cardiovascular disease and

diabetes. If diagnosed, sleep apnoea can be treated with a machine that pushes pressurized air into your nose or mouth during the night to make sure your airways stay open.

## BECAUSE YOUR THYROID IS STRAINED

Another underlying problem to watch out for is hypothyroidism, which affects about five per cent of the population and almost always includes tiredness as a symptom. The condition is caused when your thyroid, a butterfly-shaped gland inside your neck, produces too few hormones.

“Thyroid hormones control your metabolism, which is like the engine in your car,” says Lin. “When your engine runs too low, the car drives too slowly.” Along with fatigue, hypothyroidism may also result in weight gain, slow movement and speech, and sensitivity to cold. The condition is most common in women over 60 and can be

treated by taking a medication that contains either natural or synthetic thyroid chemicals

**A few weeks after** her fatigue set in, Heffernan knew she needed to do something to feel better. Finally, one day she decided to drop everything and go for a walk—something she hadn’t done since the pandemic began. “I just wanted to be by myself,” she says. “I needed a break.” When she returned, she felt recharged and decided to make a habit of it.

Now, every afternoon, she leaves her kids and husband at home, puts on an uplifting podcast and goes for a 45-minute stroll through her neighbourhood. “The walks really feed me, spiritually, emotionally and physically,” she says. “I have something to look forward to every afternoon. I’m in a better mood. And after putting the kids to bed, I have the energy to stay up, talk to my husband and have some more time for myself.” **R**



### Hitting the Road

**Most runners run not because they want to live longer, but because they want to live life to the fullest.**

HARUKI MURAKAMI, AUTHOR

**There is an expression among even the most advanced runners that getting your shoes on is the hardest part of any workout.**

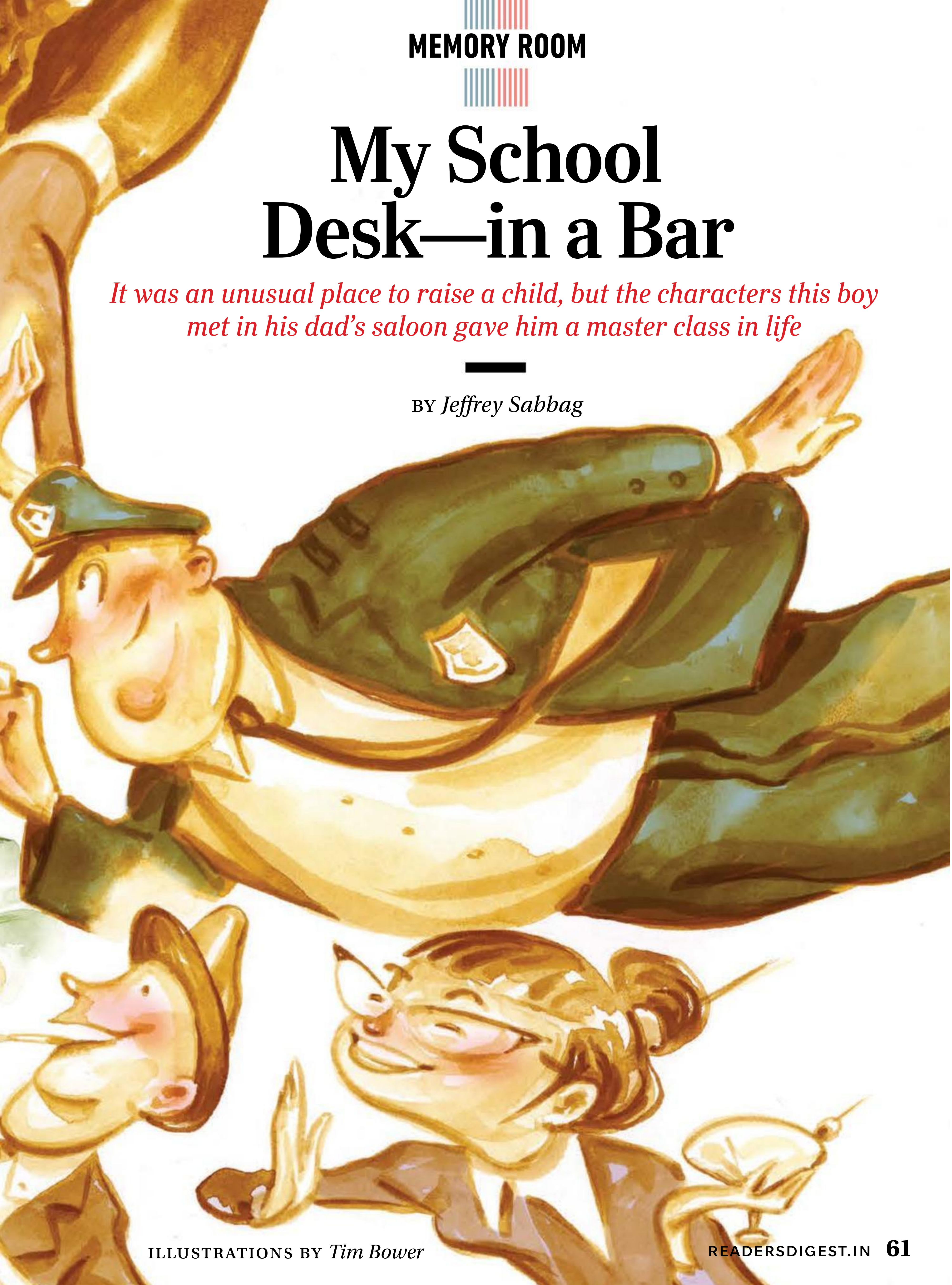
KATHRINE SWITZER, ICONIC MARATHONER



# My School Desk—in a Bar

*It was an unusual place to raise a child, but the characters this boy met in his dad's saloon gave him a master class in life*

BY Jeffrey Sabbag





**I** grew up in a bar. When most kids my age were at the park playing ball or riding bikes, I was watching old men shoot pool and play shuffleboard. I saw a barroom fight before I ever saw a sporting event on TV. I don't imagine that Dr Spock's book on child rearing, which was so popular 50 years ago, advised exposing children to dimly lit drinking at an early age. But lessons can be taught by unlikely teachers in unusual environments. All that is needed are instructors with pure hearts. Clear eyes are optional.





My parents owned a neighborhood bar called the M Ninety-Seven, named for a nearby highway, on the corner of State Fair and Hoover Avenues in Detroit. Built in the '30s, it had a long wooden bar that was on the right as you walked in. It was curved at the end, with four-sided lamps, the kind you might see in an old movie about 18<sup>th</sup>-century London, hung low over the bar every three or four feet. Customers sat on stools with burnt-orange vinyl seat backs or at one of six tables against the wall. Miller was always on tap.

My father spent his entire life serving drinks and bringing cheer to an eclectic clientele. There were the white-collar executives who would stop in to unwind from the day's stress. They would bend elbows with the blue-collar and day labourers on either side of them. It always surprised me that they were able to mingle. Of course, eight ounces of draft—and/or any liquor splashed over ice—have a way of helping two parties find common ground. I would sit at the last table by the kitchen, sipping Cokes and eating a bag of Better Made potato chips with my twin sister, watching it all.

It was the 1960s version of a reality show. There was Cran, the school-teacher, who always said he graded his sleep-deprived students on an 'S' curve, handing out passing grades even to those who nodded off because he knew they were making up for the sleep they lost in their troubled home lives. If the students stayed awake, they received a B. If they slept through class, they got a C.

Then there was Big Bill, the tough-talking policeman who stood six and a half feet tall and weighed just shy of the beer truck he drank daily. Bill was not what you would call politically correct. In fact, his views on society could be hard to listen to at times. But one night, he showed that he was all talk. While Bill was on patrol, a call came over the radio about an apartment fire just blocks from his location. He

raced his scout car to the scene, beating even the fire crew. The building was ablaze. He ran up three flights of stairs through smoke and flames to rescue two frightened children. The burly cop carried them out in his arms like each was a carton of eggs. The man with an explosive mouth but a keg-sized heart had saved the day. It is just too bad that Bill wasn't at the bar to stop the man who ate a full ashtray of cigarette butts to win a bet!

Without a doubt, the most memorable guest of the establishment was a man dubbed the Mayor of State Fair Avenue. His parents had named him Frank, but throughout the neighbourhood, everyone called him Mr Mayor. He lived just a rolling beer bottle from the back parking lot, and the bar would light up when the Mayor brought the room to session. He had a smooth tongue, smooth enough to talk my teetotaler grandmother into hoisting a beer with him.

Frank was balding and bespectacled and often wore a cardigan over his slim frame. He was retired from his tool-and-die job by the time I got to know him. He and his lovely wife, Eleanor, had nine children, who



blessed them with 48 grandchildren and, well, let's just say *several* great-grandchildren. Frank and Eleanor raised their large brood on his meagre salary. But together these two people scraped by in the little bungalow that had more bodies than doorknobs.

Frank often said, "I don't have a pot to pee in or a window to throw it out of." Still, no matter how much he had to drink, he never went to bed without saying a prayer for "the other guy." He told me, and his wife confirmed this, that he never once asked the Lord for anything for himself. A guy without a pot or a window, and with more mouths to feed than the Brady Bunch, never thought to slip a request in to have a C-note or two slide under the front door to make things a bit easier around the old bungalow. Instead, through bloodshot eyes, Frank prayed

for someone else every night of his life. They could not bottle enough Kessler whiskey to make him forgo his nightly ritual.

Years passed, my father died, and the bar was sold. Like secondhand smoke, the words and the ensemble from that bar stayed with me.

One day years later, I heard the sad news that the Mayor of State Fair Avenue had died. I knew that I had to go to the funeral home to pay my respects to the man who had always put the other guy first. I was two decades removed from the little boy at the back table and now working for the post office. The parking lot was full, the streets were lined with cars and the sidewalk was packed with people waiting to get in the front door. That Sunday afternoon, I couldn't get within two blocks of the funeral home. I stood in line smiling in the summer sun and began reflecting on those long-ago smoky days when I had a front-row seat, at the back table, to the greatest show on earth.

I thought about Cran, the teacher, who realized that tough circumstances can make it more beneficial to rest a weary head on a book than to have a nose planted inside it. I pondered

how people can talk one way and act another, even risk their lives, as Big Bill the cop did, and how it benefits us all to pay little attention to what people might sometimes say—and absolute attention to what they do. A

## I HAD A FRONT-ROW SEAT TO THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH.

man with few worldly goods showed me how important it is to care more about another's burden than your own. The line of people waiting to pay their respects was the proof.

I remembered all those old-timers who would flop down in a chair at my table to dole out wisdom above the din of the jukebox. They often told me the same thing, that I would get a better education in the bar than I would ever gain from school.

These men were right. I certainly have retained more of the wisdom that they imparted to me in the barroom than I ever have from what I learnt in a classroom. **R**



### Party Foul

To the person who brought multigrain chips to the party—you could have just said you didn't want to come.

🐦 @ANNIEMUMARY



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IN OTHER WORDS, WE DON'T KNOW

ALL  
in a Day's  
**WORK**

**Our teenage** grand-daughter was thrilled when she landed her first real job waiting tables. But after one shift, the excitement seemed to have waned.

“How do you like being a waitress?”

I asked. She shrugged, “It would be OK if people wouldn’t keep asking for stuff.”

—CHARLES FINLON

**We were dining** with my husband’s colleague, a therapist, who told us that her seven-year-old daughter had recently asked, “Mommy, what’s normal?” Our friend gave a response that only a mother who’s

analyzed one too many patients could give:

“Honey, normal is what people are before you get to know them.”

—MARY-ANNE REED

**A customer** called our Los Angeles travel agency asking how much a round-trip flight to Hawaii would cost. Evidently, she didn’t care for the price I quoted her, because

I can't believe Zoom gives away their best feature, limiting meetings to 40 minutes, for free.

—DANIEL JALKUT, *founder of REDSWEATER.COM*

the next thing she asked was, "How far is it if we decide to drive?"

—GLORIA MELVILLE

**At a mall** in Brooklyn, I watched as a gentleman was approached by a kiosk vendor. "Excuse me," said the vendor, "can I ask you a question?"

The gentleman smiled as he replied, "You just did," and kept right on walking.

—JOHN LEWANDOWSKI

**Reddit.com contributors** remember colleagues who got axed fast.

Guy slept through two meetings on his first day. The second meeting, he started snoring.

—XSITED1

As a teenager, I worked at a bowling alley. Within an hour of starting, a new girl was fired on the spot for dropping a ball

on the foot of a complaining patron.

—JEFF\_THE\_NURSE

I work construction. We had two new hires who were friends. Boss told one to take a coffee order and come back. He took everyone's money and said he needed his friend to go with him because it was a big order. They never came back.

—DENDAD1218

**I called my** local second-hand bookstore to ask when it opens. The owner said, "Usually it's 11, but I'm in the middle of a lovers' quarrel, so today it's more like 12."

—[@SARATARDIF](#)

*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](mailto:editor.india@rd.com)*

## THE OFFICE-LINGO-TO-ENGLISH DICTIONARY

### ◆ **KEYBOARD PLAQUE:**

The disgusting buildup of dirt and crud found on computer keyboards.

### ◆ **MOUSE POTATO:**

The online, wired generation's answer to the couch potato.

### ◆ **STRESS PUPPY:**

A person who seems to thrive on being stressed out and whiny.

### ◆ **TOURIST:**

Someone who takes training classes just to get a vacation from his or her job.

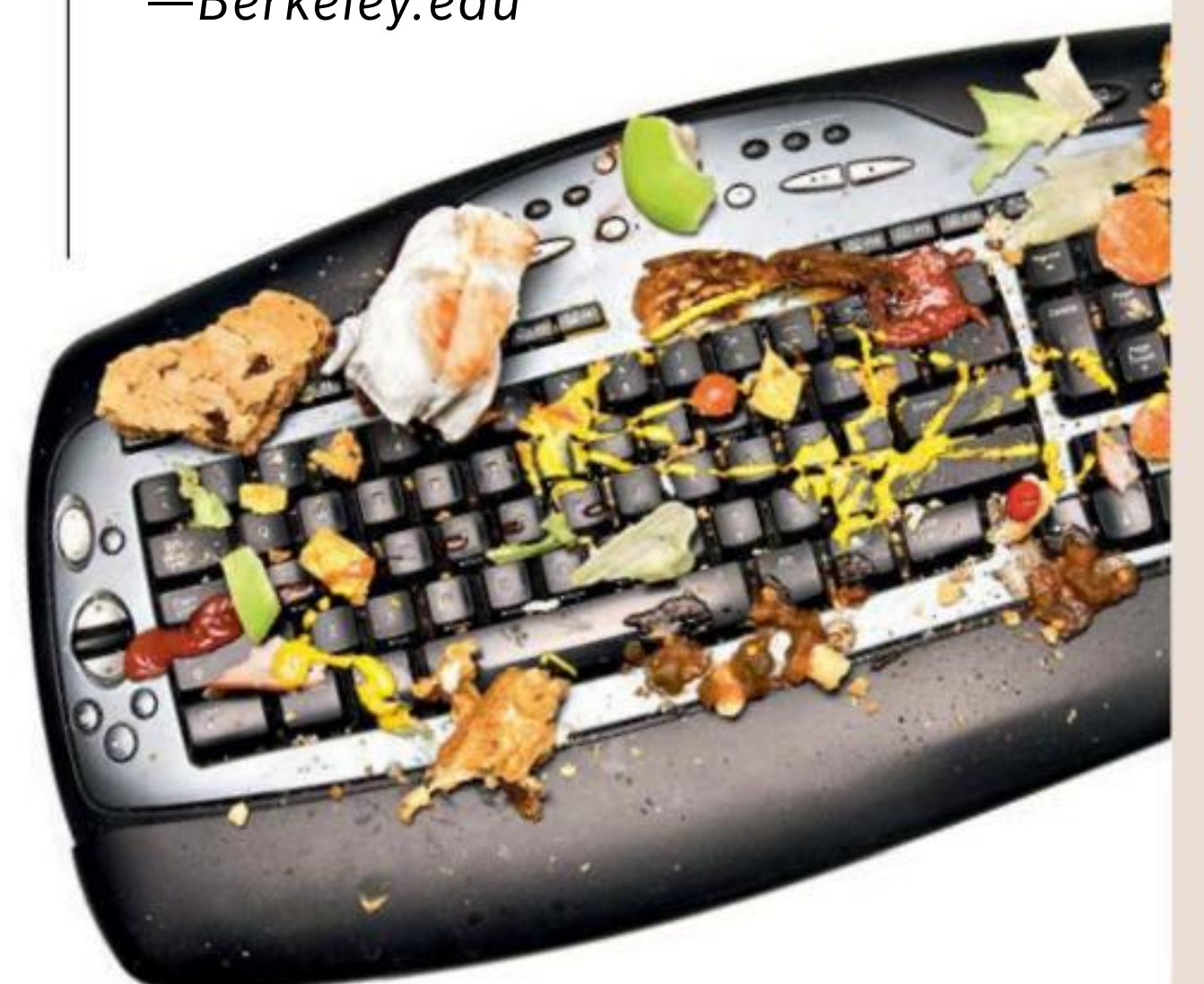
### ◆ **TREWARE:**

Hacker slang for printed documentation.

### ◆ **UNINSTALLED:**

A euphemism for being fired.

—*Berkeley.edu*

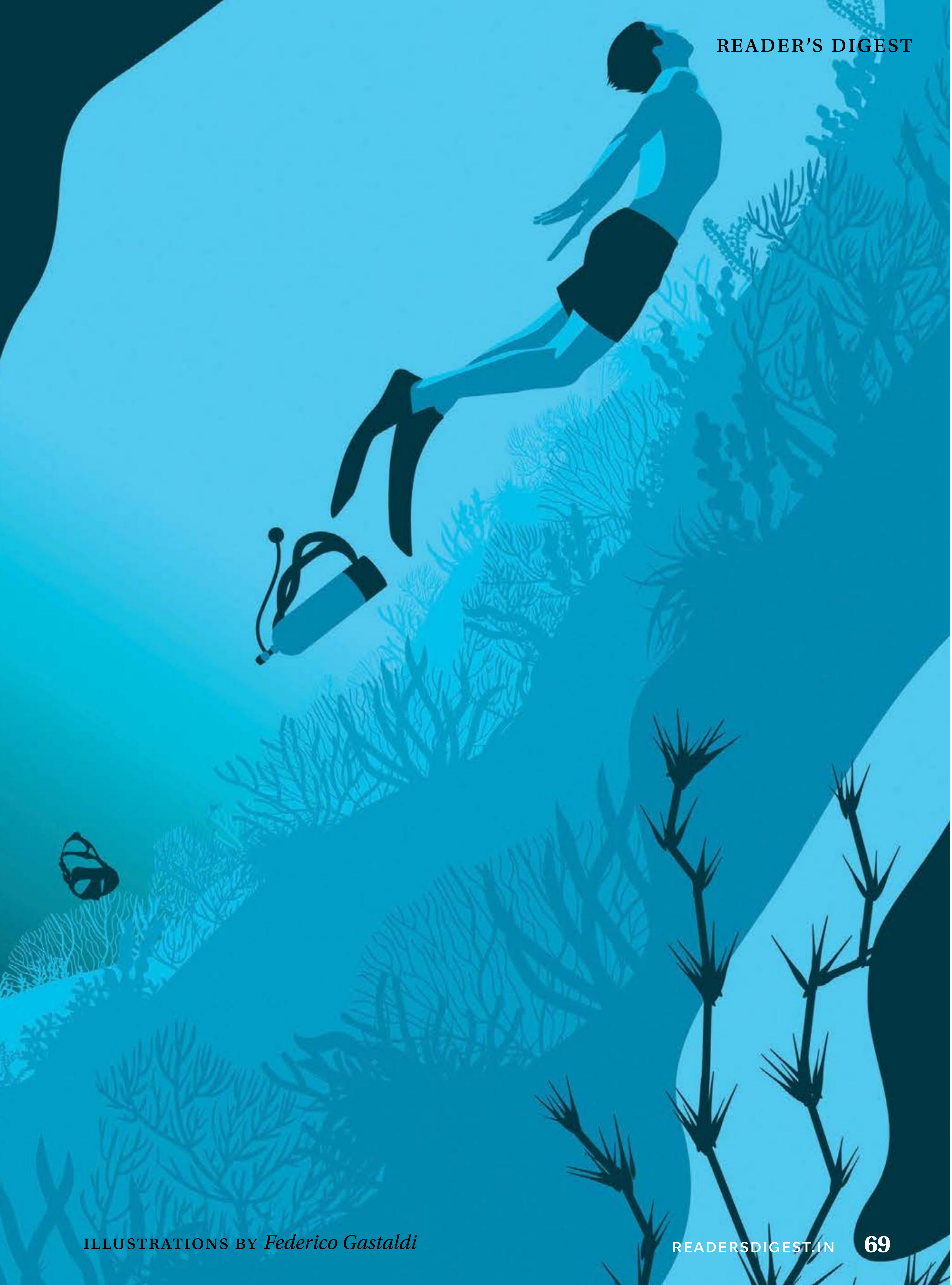


CLASSIC DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

# ***UNDERWATER NIGHTMARE***

*It seemed impossible that anyone could be left alive. But an inner voice kept telling Nico that there was hope*

BY *Christopher Matthews*



**T**HE HANDSOME 30-FOOT-LONG CABIN CRUISER bobbed at anchor in the crystal-blue water of the Adriatic, about 180 metres off the southern Italian coast. “You’ll see, it’s an incredible sight,” Antonio Giovine was telling his German friend Horst Hartmann. The day before, Antonio had gone scuba diving off the small coastal village of Polignano a Mare where they were vacationing. In an underwater passage in the reef, he had found a cave where fresh and saltwater mixed, creating strange optical effects.

On board the boat with Antonio and Horst was a group of relatives and friends, including Luciano, Antonio’s brother and the owner of the boat. Horst, a cheerful airport employee from Frankfurt, Germany, and Antonio, both 27 years old, had been friends for years and often spent holidays together. Both shared a passion for scuba diving. Antonio was self-taught, while Horst had completed a diploma course back home.

Luciano and Antonio had double air tanks, holding around 100 minutes of breathing time. Horst and a German friend had only one tank, or 50 minutes’ worth of air. But since they would dive no deeper than 30 feet, it was more than enough to take a quick look at the cave and get back to the boat. Horst was

bringing his underwater camera and a flashlight. It was 3:30 on a beautiful August afternoon.

“Okay, let’s go!” Antonio shouted, flipping backwards over the side. With Antonio in the lead, the four divers moved parallel to the reef for almost half an hour, while Antonio searched for a gap. He was about to give up when he found it and signalled the others to follow. Now they’d been underwater for 45 minutes. Horst and his friend were already using their emergency air supplies.

Antonio pointed to the tunnel as if to ask, “Are you going in?” Horst’s friend shook his head and motioned he was going back to the boat. Luciano would go with him. But Horst nodded enthusiastically. Antonio hesitated, but



decided there was no problem. The cave was only a few metres inside the tunnel. It would take his friend little time to reach it, shoot a couple of pictures and resurface.

Antonio remained below, and watched Horst approach the cave entrance and switch on his flashlight. Then, with a thumbs-up sign to his friend, he slid into the inky darkness.

As the minutes went by, Antonio started to feel a hard ball of tension in his stomach. Horst is sure taking his time, he thought. *What on earth is he doing? Has he forgotten he is on reserve?*

Then: *Something's wrong!*

***HE HAD TAKEN A WRONG TURN AND WAS TRAPPED. HE COULD ONLY WAIT FOR DEATH. ANTONIO STARTED TO SCREAM.***

Kicking out with his fins, Antonio started into the hole. Just then he caught a glimmer of light ahead. It grew stronger. It was Horst.

*Thank God ...* Antonio started to think but stopped in mid-thought. Horst was only three or four metres away, but the flashlight beam was dancing erratically. *There is something wrong!*

Before he knew it, the German was on Antonio, grabbing for his air hose, trying to pry it from his mouth. Instinctively Antonio tried to pull away. Then he realized Horst wanted to share his air. It's called buddy-breathing—one mouthpiece is passed between two

divers, one exhaling while the other breathes in. *He must be out of air,* Antonio thought. He opened his mouth to release the hose, but Horst, in his frenzy, knocked Antonio's mask off. Unable to see or breathe, his lungs almost bursting, Antonio turned to his last resort: sucking the air directly from his reserve tank.

On the verge of blacking out, Antonio wriggled out of his backpack harness and opened the tap on the tank. A jet of air geysered out. He tried to inhale it but coughed on a mixture of air and water. The regulator's outlet valve must have gotten fouled.

Antonio pulled on his air hose, and it came back. He inserted the mouthpiece but immediately started coughing again. He couldn't last much longer. *Where is Horst?* He prayed his friend had made a breath-held dash for the surface.

Paddling through the muddy water, his backpack clutched to his chest, Antonio found Horst's flashlight, lying on the bottom, and picked it up. Ahead the tunnel floor sloped gently upwards. It had to be the way out. His legs thrashing, Antonio made for the exit. Any moment he would see daylight.

The tunnel began climbing almost vertically. Antonio sucked hard on the

mouthpiece, but there was nothing left. He dropped the useless tanks and swam for the exit with his last strength.

Antonio's head broke the surface, and he gulped huge breaths of air into his burning lungs. But where was the bright blue summer sky? Looking up, he saw only solid rock. The space around his head was not much larger than an upside-down washbasin. He'd taken a wrong turn and emerged in a tiny air pocket in the reef. Without air tanks, he was trapped. He could only wait for death. He started to scream and went on screaming until he had no voice left.

**A**S THE MINUTES passed and Antonio and Horst failed surface, Luciano knew he had to get help. He swam back to the boat and used his cell phone to call the nearest rescue squad, the fire brigade in Taranto, some 64 kilometres away.

Shortly after 6:30 p.m., Taranto's head diver, 52-year-old Cataldo Paladino, entered the tunnel. Twenty-five feet inside, his heart missed a beat as the beam of his flashlight caught a dark shape floating against the roof of the passageway. It was Horst. He was dead.

Cataldo, used all his strength to push and pull the body out of the tunnel. He knew two men had entered the reef, and his years of experience told him the other diver, lost even further in the maze, must be dead too. He considered going back in but decided against it because of the incoming dark, the muddy

water and the lack of help. Too risky.

Nico Fumai, chief frogman with the Bari Fire Brigade, was at home on his way to bed at 11:30 p.m. when the phone rang. It was headquarters calling: "Did you hear what happened out at Polignano?" the duty officer asked.

"Yes," Nico answered, "I got it on the radio link."

"We need your help," the officer told him.

"No problem," he replied.

He called his three other dive team members. "Rendezvous tomorrow morning at 5:30 am," he told them.

At his kitchen table, Nico began planning the next morning's operations. The muscular 45-year-old veteran diver knew that hasty preparation could be fatal. He had had narrow escapes from death in the past. Each time, though, training and a cool head had saved him.

The thought that now entered Nico's mind struck him with the force of a falling brick. *Who said there's a corpse inside the tunnel? That guy may be alive!*

He called his team again. "Rendezvous an hour earlier, at 4:30."

By 6:41 on Sunday, Nico's team was positioned outside the tunnel on board a 20-foot inflatable dinghy. Nico was suited up and ready to dive. He had connected two air hoses to his twin tanks, so two people could breathe off them. His deputy would stay at the cave entrance and pay out the lifeline tied to his waist. As always before a dive, Nico prayed. Then he went overboard.



**A**NTONIO 'DREAMED' he was drowning. Then he forced himself awake to find he was gagging: his throat was full of water. His head must have slipped underwater when he dozed off. He couldn't feel his limbs anymore. The cold was taking over his body. *I'm dying*, he thought. He was too tired to feel scared. *Dying was like turning off a computer*, he decided. *You switch it off, and the screen goes blank. No reason to be frightened.*

Nico turned on his flashlight and entered the tunnel. Three metres, four. A fork ahead. He caught his breath. From a hole in the rock to the right, a huge, shining black eye stared at him. A conger eel. He tugged the rope twice to let his deputy know everything was okay and, keeping his gaze fixed on the eel, cautiously advanced down the first right fork. Ahead there was something

glinting on the tunnel floor. A diver's mask. *I'm on the right track*, Nico thought, pocketing the mask. Then he found Horst's camera caught under a ledge. Getting closer.

The tunnel started climbing. He should be more than 18 metres into the reef, he judged. The walls around him now widened, and he found himself inside a narrow chamber. What his flashlight beam showed next stunned Nico.

Dangling between two massive rocks above him was a pair of pale legs wearing black fins. And one of the legs was moving! When Nico reached out to touch it, a hand came down and closed around his left wrist.

Nico knew the young man must be kept from panicking. Gently he passed the mouthpiece of his reserve regulator up over his head, through the surface of the water to where Antonio's face

must be. He heard him take a couple of breaths before handing the air hose back down. *Antonio is trying to buddy-breathe with me*, Nico realized. *How incredible that, after 17 hours in this hole, he is still lucid!*

Nico had to show Antonio he could keep the hose. He took the mouthpiece out of his own mouth and, holding this and the reserve, passed them both up. This time Antonio kept one hose and handed back the other. Pulling on Antonio's arm, Nico coaxed him underwater. Now he saw the young man's face: pale, boyish features with a stubbly beard and flowing, shoulder-length hair. Antonio shook his head, his eyes

they had to move like Siamese twins. Finally, they came to the eel, which surveyed them from its den. Seconds later they were out in the blue-grey light of the open sea.

"He's alive! He's alive!" Nico screamed as they broke the surface. "Get some warm clothes." The frogmen lifted Antonio's limp body from the water and radioed for an ambulance. As they waited, the men rubbed and massaged Antonio. "You can't die now," Nico told him. "You've got to live."

At the closest hospital, Antonio was treated for exposure, exhaustion and an oedema caused by near drowning. Doctors said he would not have

## ***ANTONIO HADN'T THE STRENGTH TO SWIM, SO NICO PUSHED HIM ALONG, TOWARDS THE EXIT.***

wide with terror, and retreated back to the surface. Nico understood. Antonio wouldn't submerge unless he could see where he was going. Luckily there was the mask he'd found. He handed it up. Antonio put it on and returned under the surface.

Nico slipped the guide rope into Antonio's hand and pushed him headfirst into the tunnel. Antonio hadn't enough strength to swim, so Nico had to keep pushing him from behind, checking at the same time that he was still breathing. The guide rope stayed taut as, outside the tunnel, his deputy picked up the slack. They made agonizingly slow progress. Linked to the same tanks,

survived more than another hour in the cave—hypothermia would have stopped his heart. When Nico finally climbed back into his van to head home, he doubled up, sobbing. He felt he had taken part in a miracle. Somehow an unseen hand that had guided Antonio to a tiny air pocket had guided him there too. Where he should have found death, he had met life.

*On 13 September 1992, Nico Fumai and his men were awarded the prestigious international 'Captain Courageous prize for bravery at sea. This article originally appeared in the June 1994 edition of Reader's Digest. **R***

VOTED BY CONSUMERS

**TRUSTED  
BRAND**

— 2021 —

Reader's  
Digest

**TRUSTED  
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**2021**

**WINNERS**

READER'S DIGEST | JUNE 2021

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

Trusted Brand Special Supplement

# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNERS

**BLUE DART**



India's No.1 Windows & Doors Brand

ADVERTISING FEATURE  
Trusted Brand Special Supplement



Bank Aisa Dost Jaisa



IndianOil





ADVERTISING FEATURE

# Trusted Brand Special Supplement







## 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. ■



ADVERTISING FEATURE

Trusted Brand Special Supplement

## 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
LUBRICANTS	CASTROL
	GULF OIL
	HP
	MAK BHARAT PETROLEUM
	SERVO
PETROL STATIONS	BHARAT PETROLEUM
	HP
	INDIAN OIL
	RELIANCE
	SHELL



ADVERTISING FEATURE

## Trusted Brand Special Supplement

# SERVO: India's Most Preferred Lubricant Brand

**S**ERVO is India's biggest lubricant brand with a turnover of nearly ₹8000 crores and a market share in excess of 27% in the Finished Lubes segment. Launched in 1972, SERVO boasts of 5300 lubricant and grease formulations and 1600 commercial grades of lubricants. It is no surprise that it has earned the coveted 'Superbrand' status.

SERVO serves as a one-stop shop for complete lubrication solutions in the automotive, industrial and marine segments. It has made inroads into the highly competitive global markets, with a presence in over 30 countries across South-East Asia, Middle East, Africa and neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Formulated at IndianOil's world-class R&D Centre with its cutting-edge technology, these high quality grades conform to global standards.

The SERVO range of lubricants is available across the country through various retail channels including SERVOPRESS stations, IndianOil fuel stations, Bazaar outlets and thousands of auto spare parts



shops. 'Gramin SERVO Stockists' and tie-ups with leading e-commerce platforms like Amazon & Flipkart have ensured that SERVO has a dominating presence—physical as well as online—in all cities, towns and the rural hinterland of India. SERVO plays a crucial role in powering India—supplying lubricants to meet the requirements of core industrial sectors of India like railways, cement, coal, steel, power, marine, fertilizers and defence. SERVO lubricants have serviced the requirements of these core sectors for five decades now.

Backed by a dedicated team of expert technical service engineers offering on-site lube-related consultancy and value-added services, extensive knowledge of processes and the state-of-the-art infrastructure, the SERVO team is always ready to provide solutions for just about anything! ■

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

## Trusted Brand Special Supplement

# IndianOil: Securing India's Energy Future

Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IndianOil) is India's leading Fortune 'Global 500' company. It accounts for nearly half of India's petroleum products market share and owns and operates 11 of India's 23 refineries. IndianOil has provided energy access to millions across the country through its network of over 50,000 customer touchpoints. It took the lead in helping India become Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) compliant, directly from BS-IV, much ahead of the deadline.

With its belief in customizing its offerings as per customers' requirements, IndianOil has recently launched several pathbreaking products like ClearBlue (Diesel Exhaust Fluid), Nanocut (additised LPG for metal-cutting applications) and XP100 (India's only 100 Octane petrol), to name a few. With the largest customer interface in India, IndianOil reaches petroleum products to every part of the country, braving

inhospitable terrain and climate. Over 32,000 fully automated IndianOil fuel stations provide Quality & Quantity assurance to customers. Indane LPG cooking gas reaches more than 13 crore households through a network of nearly 12,500 distributors. IndianOil Aviation commands a 60% market share in aviation fuel, serving national and international flag carriers, and the Indian defence services. With a focus on clean energy, IndianOil is leveraging its R&D expertise to move into horizon technologies like 2G & 3G ethanol, bio-fuels, H-CNG, battery technologies, etc. IndianOil also intends to scale up its presence in e-

mobility by equipping its customer touchpoints with turbo-charging and battery-swapping facilities for EVs and plug-in hybrids.

IndianOil's success lies in its endeavour to touch and transform the lives of millions of people across the country. A brand identity that is focused on bringing 'Energy to Life'. ■



## IndianOil

**FROM THE NORTHERN HILLS  
TO THE SOUTHERN SHORES.**



**PEHLE INDIAN  
PHIR OIL**



**IndianOil**  
*The Energy Of India*

From delivering fuel at the highest peaks of the nation to delivering Indane cylinders to the remotest corners of the country, you can rely on IndianOil no matter where you are.



ADVERTISING FEATURE

# Trusted Brand Special Supplement

ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

## CONSUMER DURABLES

CATEGORY	BRAND
FANS	BAJAJ
	CROMPTON
	HAVELLS
	ORIENT
	USHA
LIGHTING	BAJAJ
	CROMPTON
	HAVELLS
	PHILIPS
	SYSKA
WATER PURIFIERS	AQUAGUARD-EUREKA FORBES
	BLUE STAR
	HAVELLS
	KENT
	PUREIT



ADVERTISING FEATURE  
Trusted Brand Special Supplement



ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

## CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

CATEGORY	BRAND
COMPUTERS	ACER
	APPLE
	DELL
	HP
	LENOVO



ADVERTISING FEATURE

# Trusted Brand Special Supplement

ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

## FINANCIAL SERVICES

CATEGORY	BRAND
BANKS (NATIONALIZED)	BANK OF BARODA
	BANK OF INDIA
	CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA
	PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK
	STATE BANK OF INDIA
BANKS (PRIVATE)	AXIS BANK
	HDFC BANK
	ICICI BANK
	IDBI BANK
	KOTAK MAHINDRA

ADVERTISING FEATURE  
**Trusted Brand Special Supplement**



ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

## FINANCIAL SERVICES

CATEGORY	BRAND
CREDIT CARDS (INDIAN BANKS)	AXIS
	HDFC
	ICICI
	KOTAK
	SBI CARD
INSURANCE (LIFE)	BAJAJ ALLIANZ
	HDFC LIFE
	ICICI PRUDENTIAL
	LIC
	SBI LIFE
MUTUAL FUNDS	AXIS
	HDFC
	ICICI PRUDENTIAL
	SBI
	TATA



ADVERTISING FEATURE

## Trusted Brand Special Supplement

# SBI CARD: Riding High On Innovation And Customer Centricity; Making Life Simple!

Today, with a base of over 11 million cards in force, SBI Card is India's largest pure play credit card player. Product portfolio, technology and customer centricity are the main factors for the brand, 'SBI Card'.

SBI Card, as an adaptive and agile organization, has played a key role in the transformation of credit cards as a ubiquitous digital payment instrument. SBI Card has ensured that all its customers have a contactless card. Customers can use SBI Card Pay to create a virtual version of the physical credit card on their mobile and simply use it to 'tap and pay' on NFC-enabled PoS

terminals. Such initiatives make the payment process simple, seamless, secure and hygienic, as is the need of the hour.

SBI Card is redefining the user experience, by innovating and using the power of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Robotics Process Automation, besides varied digital tools. Technology has been meticulously deployed to digitize the customer journey at every step, for instance, VKYC for on-boarding, AskILA chatbot to address varied queries, highly rated mobile app, websites for self-servicing and cutting-edge IVR for hassle free on-call resolutions.

Accepting the Readers' Digest award, Mr Rama Mohan Rao Amara, MD & CEO, SBI Card, said, "My thanks to the *Reader's Digest* audience for their continued trust. Being conferred with the award for the 10th consecutive year is a validation of our customer centric focus. We stay committed and will continue to make focused efforts to delight our valued customers". ■

# SBI card



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# Trusted Brand Special Supplement

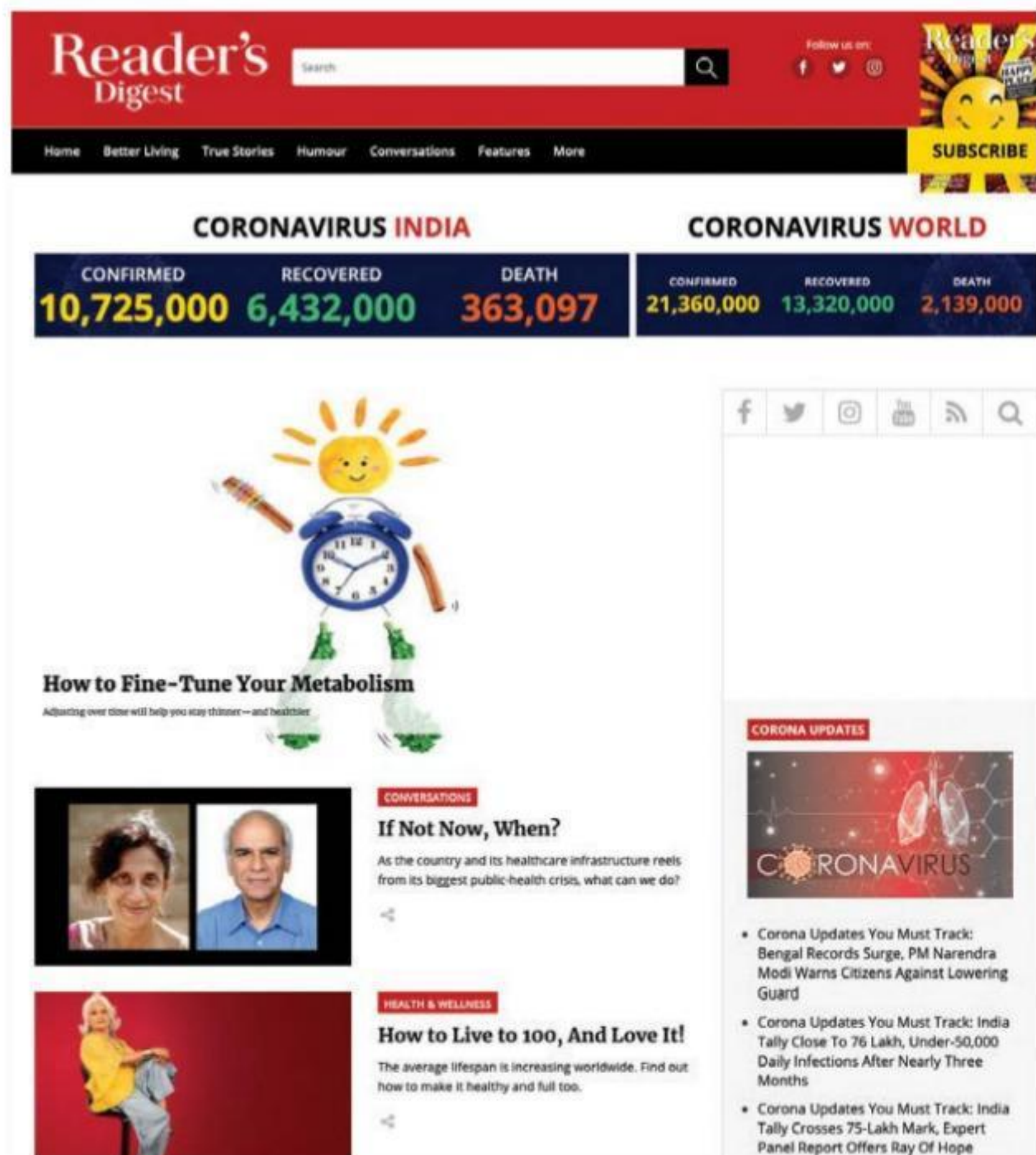
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## FOOD AND BEVERAGES

CATEGORY	BRAND
COOKING OILS	FORTUNE
	NUTRELA
	PATANJALI
	SAFFOLA
	SUNDROP
PACKAGED JUICES	FROOTI
	MAAZA
	PAPER BOAT
	REAL
	TROPICANA

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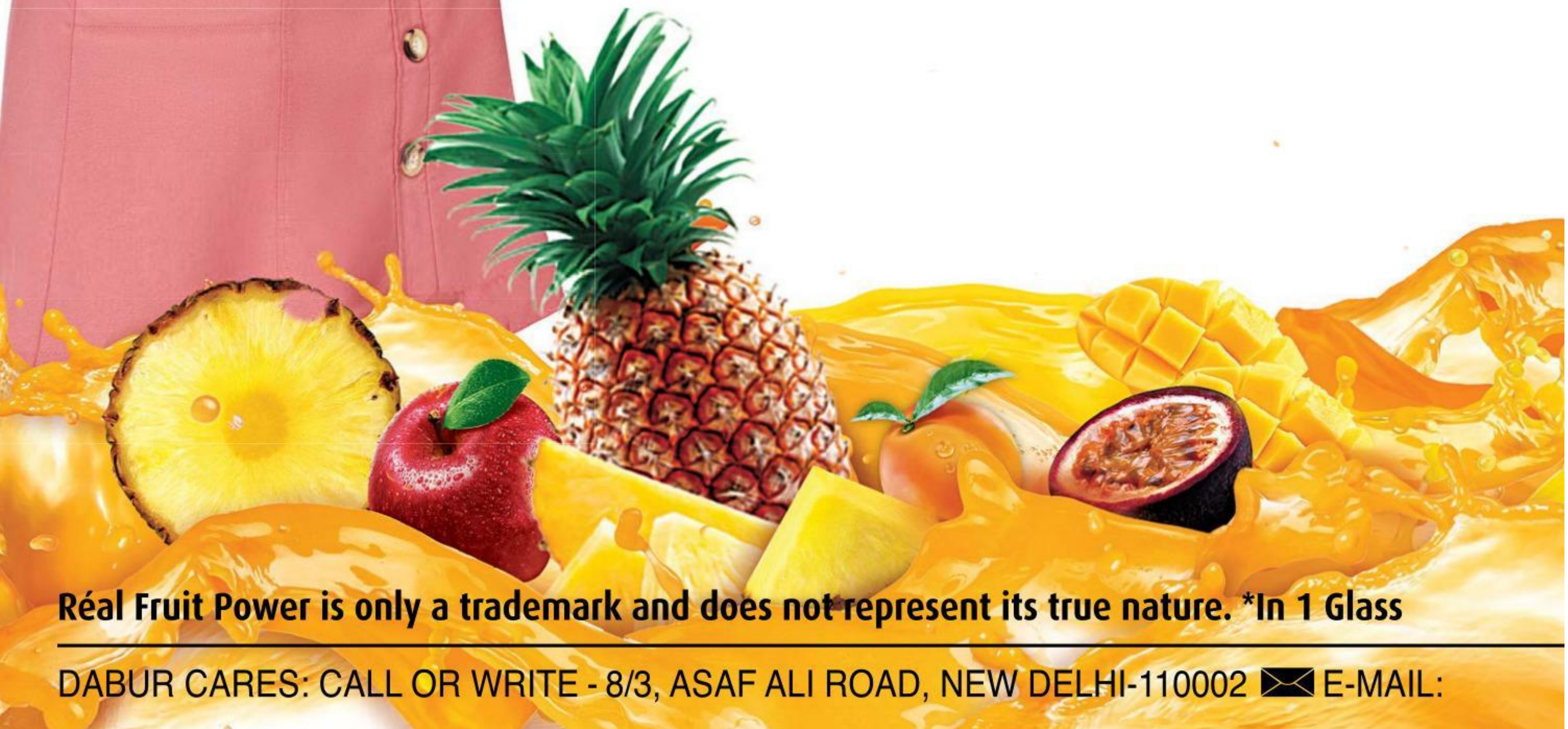
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ADVERTISING FEATURE

# Trusted Brand Special Supplement

ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

## HEALTH & PERSONAL CARE

CATEGORY	BRAND
COSMETICS	DOVE
	LAKME
	L'OREAL
	NIVEA
	PONDS
HEALTH DRINKS	BOOST
	BOURNVITA
	COMPLAN
	HORLICKS
	PROTINEX

ADVERTISING FEATURE  
Trusted Brand Special Supplement



ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

## HEALTH & PERSONAL CARE

CATEGORY	BRAND
HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS	AMWAY
	DABUR
	HIMALAYA
	PATANJALI
	ZANDU
TOOTHPASTE	COLGATE
	DABUR RED
	ORAL-B
	PEPSODENT
	SENSODYNE



# RED PASTE

# Kills 99.9%

## Germs\* and Virus##



*Dabur Red Paste is clinically proven to fight 7 dental problems#. Its 13 ayurvedic ingredients kill germs and keep you protected. Give your family complete oral care and keep dental problems away.*



**Fights  
Dental  
Problems**



**Germs  
Cavity  
Plaque  
Bad odour  
Toothache  
Yellow teeth  
Bleeding gums**

\*In-vitro lab data on indicative organism. ^AC Nielsen Data (March 2021)



##Based on invitro lab data tested on Herpes Simplex Virus type I (HSV type1).

# As per Clinical Trial No. DRF/AY/5004/CT-2 carried out by Dabur India Limited. \*\*Helps fight 7 dental problems with regular brushing.



ADVERTISING FEATURE

# Trusted Brand Special Supplement

ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

## HOME IMPROVEMENT

CATEGORY	BRAND
BATH FITTINGS	CERA
	HINDWARE
	JAQUAR
	JOHNSON
	KOHLER
	ROCA PARRYWARE
ELECTRICAL SWITCHES	ANCHOR
	HAVELLS
	ORIENT
	POLYCAB
	WIPRO
KITCHEN CHIMNEYS	BOSCH
	BUTTERFLY
	FABER
	HINDWARE
	SUNFLAME

# kuch pal ghar ke naam

When your home looks so beautiful with  
the stylish range of CERA products,  
why go anywhere else? Stay in, soak it in.



Sanitaryware | Faucets | Tiles

# CERA



ADVERTISING FEATURE

## Trusted Brand Special Supplement

# Johnson Bathrooms: Leader In Aesthetics And Quality

**H**& R Johnson (India) a division of Prism Johnson Limited was established in 1958. A pioneer of ceramic tiles in India, the brand expanded its offerings over the last 63 years adding Sanitaryware, Faucets, Wellness products, Cabinets and Engineered Marble & Quartz.

The Johnson Bath Division started operations in 1998 with Milano as their brand. Milano was the first to introduce Instant Showers, Shower Panels and Bath Enclosures in India. Following its success with showering units, the company expanded its product range. This led to a change in the brand's positioning and it was renamed Johnson Bathrooms—a complete bathroom solutions provider.

Johnson Bathrooms over the past decade has grown immensely and now offers a comprehensive range of Sanitaryware, Faucets and Wellness products.

One of Johnson's innovative solutions is the introduction of Germ-free Sanitaryware that helps maintain hygiene and health of customers. And one of its



latest introductions is Johnson International, a premium range of exquisite Faucets & Sanitaryware designed and developed in-house at Johnson's manufacturing facility. Some of the unique features of the Johnson International range include Water-Saving Technology—all Faucets come with International Grade aerators that reduce water consumption. It also has 4D-360 Degree Flushing, a new mechanism that creates a powerful swirl for efficient flushing, Rim-free Toilets that are easy to clean and prevent germ build-up, a Smooth Zircon Opacified glaze that resists the build-up of stains due to usage, Durashine chrome plating on faucets for a long-lasting dazzle finish and Faucets with Tilting aerators that enable controlled flow of water by simply adjusting the aerator. ■





## NOT JUST A BATHROOM, IT'S YOUR GERM-FREE COMFORT ZONE.

Germs often choose bathrooms to be their breeding ground. Not anymore! The Johnson Bathrooms Germ-Free range of sanitaryware ensures that germs can't strike no matter how hard they try.

Patented by H & R Johnson, the unique germ-free technology with silver ions protects against over 99% germs and lasts the lifetime of the product making your comfort zone hygienic and safe.

 **JOHNSON**  
**BATHROOMS**  
FIND CLARITY

\*H & R Johnson's GERM FREE sanitaryware are made using patented Silver - ion based Antimicrobial Compound. # As per ISO 21702 & JIS Z 2801 Test Protocol.

Toll Free No.: **1800 22 7484** | [www.johnsonbathrooms.in](http://www.johnsonbathrooms.in)

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## Now enjoy cleaning too.

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**We've got the dishes covered for you.**

**3D**

**Oil Clean  
Technology**



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Can clean  
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ADVERTISING FEATURE

# Trusted Brand Special Supplement

ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

## HOME IMPROVEMENT

CATEGORY	BRAND
MODULAR WINDOWS AND DOORS	AIS WINDOWS
	FENESTA
	LESSO
	LINGEL WINDOWS
	WINDOW MAGIC
TILES	BAJAJ
	CERA
	JOHNSON
	KAJARIA
	SOMANY

ADVERTISING FEATURE  
Trusted Brand Special Supplement



ALL BRANDS LISTED HERE ARE IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

## SERVICES

CATEGORY	BRAND
FREIGHT AND COURIER	BLUE DART
	DHL
	DTDC
	FEDEX
	INDIAN POSTAL SERVICES



ADVERTISING FEATURE

## Trusted Brand Special Supplement

# Fenesta: Innovation, Passion, Perseverance Driven by Legacy

Established in 1889 as a family-owned business, DCM Shriram Ltd., is now a global conglomerate with diverse business interests. Fenesta is one among the several innovative ventures of this ₹ 8,308 crore company.

A lot has changed in Indian homes since Fenesta forayed into the market 18 years ago with ready-to-install Windows and Doors. Moving beyond market and sales competitions, it has changed people's perception of windows and doors in their homes and shifted their focus to living spaces that shuts off the menace of pollution. Backed by science and eco-friendly practices, Fenesta has brought about a profound makeover in people's lifestyles with far reaching impact on their

health and wellness. The change has won a million hearts. **Fenesta raises a toast to celebrate 18 years of innovation, customer love, and success!**

Traditionally, most homeowners would spend time and money on a selection of sanitaryware to kitchen amenities, but windows were always an afterthought. Windows and doors were handmade and no carpenter could guarantee their quality and performance. The vagaries of weather would take a toll on wood, revealing chinks in the windows and doors. They would shrink in the monsoons, gradually fade and eventually lose their sheen. When Fenesta launched uPVC windows in India, it did not replicate European technologies. It took into account that Indian climatic conditions needed robust technology and advanced scientific inputs to address concerns of ultraviolet rays, tropical heat, monsoon storms, coastal winds and 100 per cent relative humidity to create products that withstand these weather conditions.



India's No.1 Windows & Doors Brand

Call: 1800 102 9880 | Web: [www.fenesta.com](http://www.fenesta.com)

READER'S DIGEST | JUNE 2021

100% VOTED BY CONSUMERS

## **PROTECTING MILLIONS OF HOMES**

Homes with Fenesta windows are completely insulated from air, dust and noise pollution. Rainwater seepage through windows is a thing of the past. Significant energy savings and reduction in carbon footprint are made possible. In addition to this, Fenesta offers its customers customized solutions, exceptional durability, zero maintenance and round-the-year proactive service.

## **INNOVATION, QUALITY AND PRECISION MERGE WITH THE NEW ALUMINIUM SERIES**

After uPVC, Fenesta took another technological leap when it introduced its ultra luxury Aluminium Windows and Doors. Aluminium is highly tensile and malleable, and it is 100 per cent recyclable. Furthermore, using aluminium instead of wood in windows and doors reduces deforestation and global warming. Fenesta's ultra luxury Aluminium series is a style statement that enhances the luxury quotient of living spaces.

## **DOORS TO PEACE OF MIND**

From the Fenesta portfolio comes the elegant, state-of-the-art Internal Doors made of hybrid polymer that combines the aesthetics of wood and the durability of polymer. Available in 4 colours—White Oak, Natural Oak, Teak and Walnut, they come in plain and designer

finish. Termite- and water-resistant, they can withstand temperature extremes, and require negligible maintenance. Fenesta doors are available as ready-to-install integrated door solution systems, which includes the frame, trim, panel, lockset, handle, hinges, stopper, buffer, transportation, installation and post-sales service which makes them a One-Stop Door Solution. The hassle-free installation is done by well-trained company professionals. Fenesta also offers its customers prompt and comprehensive after-sales service, to ensure maximum peace of mind!

Today, Fenesta is reaching out to its customers with a vast network of Dealers and Signature Studios in India and the subcontinent. The brand footprint now covers 327+ cities with a product portfolio of over 1,000 design options to both retail and institutional customers. An in-house customer service centre operates 365 days a year, offering assistance and resolving customer queries. Now customers can also visualize the windows for their living spaces through the AR-enabled Fenesta APP and a 360° VR-enabled Studio walkthrough also helps customer experience the products in a showroom-like environment within the safety of their homes. The brand endeavors to make it more futuristic while adding newer technologies for better customer experience. ■



ADVERTISING FEATURE

## Trusted Brand Special Supplement

# Johnson Tiles: Offering 'Smart' Solutions

Established in England in 1901, Johnson Tiles came to India in 1958. Today, H & R Johnson (India) is one of India's leading names in tiles, sanitaryware, bath fittings and engineered marble & quartz.

Tiles from H & R Johnson are creations with a range of features that makes them the first choice of millions. Focusing on the key lifestyle elements of health, hygiene, environmental safety, Johnson is transforming the tiling industry with their unique offering of SMART Tiles. Among these, the germ-free feature stands apart. Johnson introduced India's first range of Antimicrobial tiles back in 2009. This range of wall and floor tiles are infused with the brand's patented, non-toxic Germ-Free technology which is 99 per cent effective against germs. Johnson's R&D wing, Industrial Products & Natural Resources (IPNR), approved by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Government of India, has driven several such innovations in the tile industry.



The other tiles in the SMART category include Solar Reflective tiles which lowers room temperature thereby improving indoor comfort and saving air-conditioning costs. Other innovations include the patented Anti-static tiles, which grounds static electricity and reduces the risk of fire or explosion, Tactile-warning and directional tiles for the visually impaired, MaxGrip, India's first R-Value-rated slip-resistant tiles. Another addition to the Johnson portfolio is Stepping Stone, a range of ready-to-use staircase solutions.

Many of Johnson's tile collections are Green Pro certified, helping the customer make an environmentally-conscious choice. Johnson's focus on innovation has earned the brand awards such as the Superbrand title, the Golden Peacock Innovative Product Awards and Brand of the Decade, to name a few. ■





**JOHNSON**<sup>®</sup>  
*Not just tiles, Lifestyles.*<sup>®</sup>

WELCOME TO  
A **GERM-FREE**  
LIFESTYLE.



Presenting a wide range of germ free wall & floor tiles from Johnson that ensures health, hygiene and safety at one go! Infused with the germ free technology patented by Johnson close to a decade ago, these tiles can be used across a broad spectrum of spaces, including residential spaces, schools, hospitals & healthcare facilities.

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

## Trusted Brand Special Supplement

# Blue Dart: The Nation's Trade Facilitator

**B**lue Dart, a Made in India brand, continues to reign as South Asia's premier express air & integrated transportation and distribution company. Part of the DPDHL Group's DHL eCommerce Solutions division, Blue Dart drives its market leadership through its passionate Blue Darters, cutting-edge technology, a wide range of vertical-specific products and value-added services. Blue Dart's network stretches across 35,000 locations in 220 countries and territories worldwide.

As the national lockdown was imposed, Blue Dart leveraged its extensive ground network and market differentiator fleet of six Boeing 757-200 freighters to ensure supply chain and business continuity. As part of the government's 'Lifeline Udan' initiative, Blue Dart aircrafts were operated to Guangzhou, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Dhaka and Yan-



**BALFOUR MANUEL,**  
Managing Director,  
Blue Dart

gon, carrying COVID-relief aid. The brand has formed Blue Dart Med-Express Consortium to operate experimental Drone Flights for delivery of critical medical supplies in Telangana.

Balfour Manuel, Managing Director, Blue Dart says, "We are all surrounded by challenging times where TRUST plays a very important role. The fact that Blue Dart has been recognized as a Trusted Brand for the 15th year is a matter of pride. We follow a simple approach based on our 'People First' philosophy and customer centricity. Happy Blue Darters translates to happy customers and this has helped us to continue to be an Employer of Choice, a Provider of Choice and the most trusted Investment of Choice." ■

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

## Trusted Brand Special Supplement

### 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. ■



**AS KIDS SEE IT**



Conan

**“Are you sure I’m not allergic to broccoli and Brussels sprouts? Maybe you should check again.”**

**During the pandemic,** my two granddaughters—six and eight years old—were being home-schooled by their mom. One day, the eight-year-old had a spelling bee with her sister. “Spell ‘elephant,’” the older one said. “Let her spell small animals, not big ones,” said her mom.

The older sister paused, then said, “Spell ‘mosquito.’”  
—MISIR DOOBAY

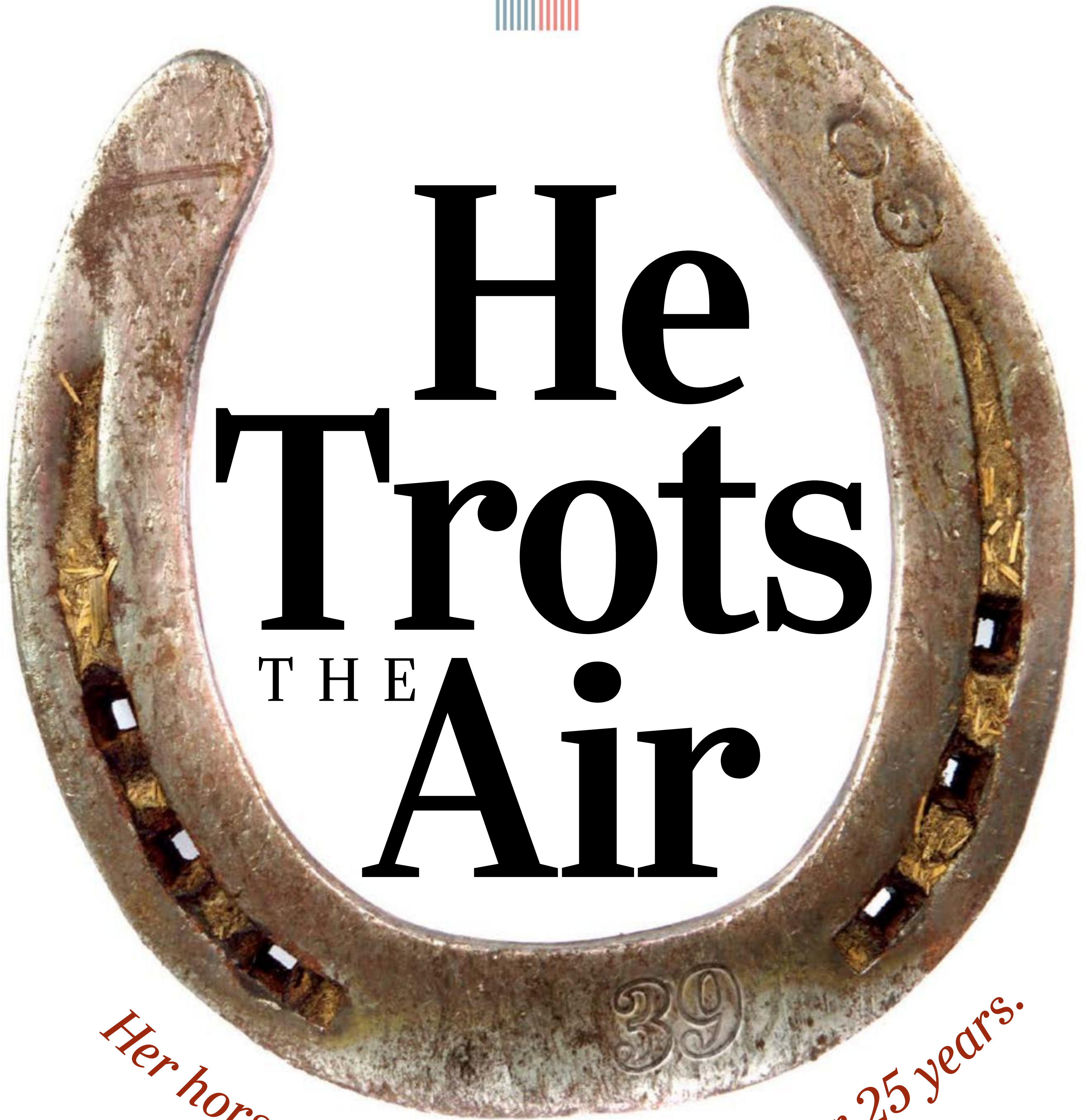
**There is no** stronger acting performance than a kid who pretended to fall asleep in the car so they could be carried into the house by their parents.  
—@DADMANN\_WALKING

**One day,** my seven-year-old was staring at my face. **Me:** What is it, sweetie? **My seven-year-old:** Is my nose weird, too?  
—@THISONESAYZ

*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*

CONAN DE VRIES





# He Trots THE Air

*Her horse had stayed by her side for 25 years.  
Now it was time to let him go*

---

BY Pam Houston  
FROM *OUTSIDE*

**I**N THE SUMMER of 2019, I put my old roan horse in the ground. But there's way more to the story than that. Thirty-nine years on the planet, 25 of those with me.

The first thing I noticed about Roany was that he had a kind eye; the second was his size—just under 17 hands (five foot eight) at the shoulder. The cowboy from Santa Fe, New Mexico, who sold him didn't tell me much apart from his age, which likely had a year or two shaved off. Within days, I came to understand Roany's intensely good nature. Each morning when I went out to feed him, he greeted me with a just-happy-to-be-here chortle.

He was as solid a trail horse as I've ever ridden, never flinching in strong winds, or while crossing water, or when mule deer twins who'd been stashed by their mother in some willows leaped in front of him. He was so bombproof that the county search-and-rescue team enlisted his help a few times a year to find and deliver a wayward hiker.

I bought Roany the same year I moved to a ranch in Creede, Colorado, because Deseo, my other horse, was deciding that Colorado was the scariest place he'd ever been. First off, there was snow—a whole lot of it. The predator-to-livestock ratio was not to his liking, and the pasture was surrounded by 100-foot spruce trees that often sang in the wind.

I grew up in an unpredictably

violent household, so my temperament ran a little closer to Deseo's. I counted on Roany to keep the whole barnyard calm, not just Deseo and the mini donkeys but also the ewes and lambs, the recalcitrant rams, the ageing chickens and me.

I called Roany "the horse of a different colour." In the dead of winter, he was burgundy wine with tiny white flecks. In March, he would shed to a dappled grey with rust highlights. By midsummer he was red again, but not such a rich red as

## **ROANY BLEW BUBBLES IN HIS WATER BUCKET BECAUSE HE KNEW IT MADE ME LAUGH.**

in wintertime. And when his heavy coat grew back in October, he was solid grey for most of a month.

For two and a half decades at the ranch, Roany's coat marked the changing of the seasons. I stopped riding him when he turned 33, because I thought he deserved a lengthy retirement, though he stayed well muscled and strong until a few months before his death.

He had a bout of lameness in April and a longer one in May. By late June, he was limping more often than not. When Dr. Howard came for a ranch call, he said, "There's a number associated with this lameness, Pam, and it's 39."





**Roany's coat marked the changing of the seasons: burgundy with white flecks in the dead of winter, dappled gray in the spring, and red again in summer.**

**I** DID THE THINGS there are to do: supplements, an ice boot, DMSO gel to reduce swelling, Adequan shots, even phenylbutazone on the most painful days. We'd had very little snow and no spring rain, and for the first time in my tenure the pasture stayed dormant all summer, the ground extra hard on sore hooves.

Roany loved nothing more than the return of the spring grass, and it seemed radically unfair that in what was looking to be his last year, there wouldn't be any. I watered, daily, a thin strip of ground between the corral and the chicken coop

and named it Roany's golf course. He had some good days there, but mostly he hung around the corral.

The downside of Roany having the best head on his shoulders of any animal I'd ever owned was that he never got the bulk of my attention. But that summer, between me, my fiancé, Mike; and my ranch helpers, Kyle and Emma, he hardly had a moment's peace. We iced his legs and groomed him twice daily, mixed canola oil into his grain to help keep weight on him, and hugged him constantly.

He seemed bemused, maybe even touched, by all the attention. Every

time we set the water in front of him, he took a giant drink, and I suspect it was more for our sake than his. One day, Kyle, not knowing I was out there, set a bucket down next to Roany not three minutes after he had drunk three fourths of a fresh bucket for me. Roany looked at Kyle for a minute, glanced over at me, then lowered his head to drink again.

My biggest fear was that he would fall and break something during one of the weeks I was away from the ranch and would have to be put down immediately. This was accompanied by a lesser but still palpable fear that the same thing would happen on a day when I was there all alone.

As his condition deteriorated, I worried that we would pass the point when we could ask him to walk far enough across the pasture to a burial site where his grave wouldn't invite trouble to the remaining animals who lived in and around the barn.

I had made difficult decisions a dozen times in my life with beloved dogs, but the length of a horse's life and the sheer size of its body made the timing even trickier. I knew I didn't want Roany rendered with a chainsaw. I knew that if we had to drag his body across the pasture behind a piece of heavy equipment, it would tear him all to hell.

Roany was stoicism defined. As his condition worsened, he learned to pivot on his good front leg—and would, for an apple or a carrot or to

sneak into the barn to get at the winter's stash of alfalfa. He blew bubbles in his water bucket because it made me laugh, and he would sometimes even give himself a bird bath by splashing his still-mighty head.

I also knew that just because he could handle the discomfort didn't mean he should. He had been so strong so recently, a force of nature thundering back and forth across the pasture. There was no chance I was going to ask him to make another winter, but as long as he was hobbling to his golf course and chortling to me each morning, it seemed too early to end his life.

**T**HAT SUMMER, I was getting ready to marry Mike, a US Forest Service lifer who was teaching me, in my 56th year, what it meant for a man to show up in a relationship. More than one of my friends suggested that Roany had held on so long to deliver me safely to Mike, and I had no reason to argue.

Among Mike's other gifts is a deep intuition about the suffering of people and animals, so I paid attention when he said, on a Monday night in mid-August less than two weeks before the wedding, "This is entirely your decision, but if you want to put Roany down this week, I could take Wednesday afternoon off."

I was not surprised, on Tuesday morning, to see a slight downturn in Roany's condition. He ate his food,

drank his water, stood for his treatments, but there was something a little lost in that kind eye, in the way he held his body up over his aching feet. I called Doc and made the appointment for Wednesday afternoon, with the caveat that I could cancel if Roany's condition improved or I lost my nerve.

By Tuesday night, Roany was swaying just slightly over his feet. He ate his gruel of Equine Senior horse food, bute powder and oil, but with a little less enthusiasm than usual. I went out

**“IF YOU WANT TO PUT ROANY DOWN,” MIKE SAID, “I COULD TAKE WEDNESDAY OFF.”**



to check on him at 8 p.m. and then at 10 p.m. The moon was bright and the coyotes were singing; there was a tinge in the air that suggested a light morning frost. Even by moonlight I could see that Roany was holding his body like he didn't feel right inside of it.

I woke at 4:30 a.m. with the kind of start that always means something has happened. The moon had set by then, so I grabbed a flashlight and rushed to the corral, but Roany wasn't there, nor on his golf course, nor in the yard.

I called his name and heard hoofbeats coming hard across the pasture. I allowed myself to indulge the fantasy

that after all these weeks of suffering he was miraculously cured. Then I heard Deseo's high whinny. My hot-blooded alarmist, my early-warning system, my tsunami siren. Deseo skidded to a stop in front of me and butted his head against my chest, seeming to say: About time you got here.

The flashlight batteries were already dying, but my eyes were adjusting to the dark. I started out across the pasture with Deseo beside me, heading for one of Roany's favorite spots—the wetland (though dry this year) at the back of the property. When I turned at the quarter pole, Deseo whinnied again: Not that way, human. By this time, Mike was crossing the pasture to meet me. Deseo whinnied again, and we followed him to another favorite spot—a shady stand of blue spruce at the base of the hill where the ranch's original homesteaders are buried. It was the first time since last summer that Roany had been out that far.

He was still standing when I got there. But the minute he saw me, he went to the ground with relief. He curled up like a fawn, and I could hear that his breathing wasn't right. Mike and I sat beside him and petted his handsome neck.

Above us, stragglers from the Perseid meteor shower, which had peaked over the weekend, streaked the blackness. Pegasus, the biggest horse of all, galloped across the sky, carrying Princess Andromeda away from her mother, Queen Cassiopeia, with her



The author and Mike on their wedding day, with the excitable Deseo (right) and a donkey named Isaac serving as the four-legged members of the wedding party.

future husband, Perseus, alongside.

Eventually, a lighter blue tinted the eastern horizon. Deseo stood nearby, head lowered. We listened to Roany's breathing and the coming of dawn. In the distance, the hoot of a great horned owl, the sheep stirring in their pen clear across the pasture; even farther away, tires crossing a cattle guard.

In the gathering light, Roany stretched out his long legs and put his head in my lap. I thanked him for taking good care of the ranch animals, including the humans, including me. I told him I'd be OK, that we'd all be

OK, and he could go whenever he needed to, but he went on taking one slow breath after another.

ON ONE OF Roany's first bad days, a bank teller in town, a compassionate horsewoman named Debbie Lagan, had quite innocently asked me how I was. My answer was no doubt more than she'd bargained for, but on that day she became my adviser and advocate in horse elder-care and pain relief. She also promised that, when the time came, she would send her husband out on his

track hoe to dig the hole, never mind that they lived off the grid more than 32 kilometres away.

It was finally daylight, but the sun hadn't risen. Mike and I were shivering hard, so he slid into my place to hold Roany's head and I ran to get sleeping bags. I called Debbie to say I thought we were close, and Doc to say I thought we might not need him. When I got back across the pasture, Roany's head was still in Mike's lap,

## “AN OLD COWBOY DOESN'T TAKE MONEY TO BURY AN OLD HORSE.”



but now he was struggling for breath.

“Touch him,” Mike said. I knelt and put my hand on his big red neck, and he took one breath and then another and then the last breath he would take forever.

“I was helping him go,” Mike said. “I was with him in that place, you know?” I nodded. I did know. I had been in that place with several dogs and more than one human. Mike said, “I think he was waiting until you got back.”

A moment later, the first rays of sun came over the hill, turning the sky electric. I crossed the pasture one more time to get Roany's brushes to groom him up for burial. I grabbed a flake of hay for Deseo so that if he

wanted an excuse to stay near his old friend for a while, he would have one.

Debbie's husband, Billy Joe Dilley, had a dozen things to do that morning, but he arrived at the ranch before the first vulture (or even fly) made its appearance. I don't know Debbie very well, and Billy Joe hardly at all, but as much as anything else this is a story about them and about the way people in my town care for one another.

When I tried to pay Billy Joe for his time, or even for gas, he shook his head and said, “An old cowboy doesn't take money to bury an old horse.” He buried Roany respectfully and efficiently, the cowboy way, with his tail to the wind.

If there is such a thing in the world as a good death, Roany had one. It was almost as if he had heard Mike's offer, looked at his watch, and said, *All right then, Wednesday, and how about in that stand of spruce on the other side of the hill?* What I've always said about Roany is that he was a horse who never wanted to cause anybody trouble. He remained that horse till the last second of his life and beyond.

Late that night, I watched the Perseids burn past my window and imagined my old Roany up there, muscles restored to their prime and shining, burgundy coat alongside the white of Pegasus, both of them with their heads held high, and galloping. **R**

From *Outside* (May 2019), Copyright © 2019 By Pam Houston, [Outsideonline.com](http://Outsideonline.com).



PHOTO BY: SANDEEP SAHDEV

# THE EVER BELOVED MR BOND

*In conversation with the grand old man  
of Indian storytelling*

BY *Naorem Anuja*

Few writers can make the old mountains sing like Ruskin Bond. His timeless stories have introduced countless readers to the mountains of Garhwal, its tall deodars, and to the lively characters and ghosts that people his Himalayan universe, transporting readers back to simpler times. As a writer who seems endlessly delighted by children and their world, Bond's writing is bracingly real, often relaying the knottiest ideas about loss and loneliness in granular detail that resonates across ages. *Reader's Digest* spoke with the grand old man of Indian storytelling over a lively phone call, just after his 87<sup>th</sup> birthday last month.

**Your first book was published when you were 21—almost right after school. At 87, you are writing still. Is it safe to say that, for you, the joys of writing outweigh the anguish?**

Oh yes! For me there is no anguish to writing at all, or I wouldn't be writing. I like to enjoy my work and I think I have succeeded. That's why I have been able to continue writing without a break for 70 years.

I was 17 when I wrote my first novel—it took me a couple of years to find a publisher. Over the years there have been lots of ups and downs but I have kept going simply because I truly love writing. And I have been fortunate in that, for most of those 70 years, I have been able to make a living off it. To be able to live off doing something you enjoy, that's what makes it so worthwhile for me.

**Much of your work draws heavily from your own life. Is it good writing advice to say that people should stick to writing what they know? Or could that potentially be limiting?**

No two writers are the same. The subjective writer is someone like myself, who writes a lot about his or her own life—about the people you know, your own experiences. Emily Bronte wrote passionately out of her own life. On the other hand, you'd get the objective writer, someone who is a good storyteller, like a Somerset Maugham, a Dickens or a Balzac who writes about people rather cynically and could tell

a good story but won't tell you much about himself really. So, there is room for all kinds of writers and I wouldn't say one is better than the other.

**How do story ideas come to you? Do they sail in unannounced, or is there some sort of method you follow?**

In different ways. For one thing, the longer you live, the more memories you have—provided your memory is good. You'll have met so many people and seen so much happen around you. You pick up little anecdotes here and there and then you can develop them. I keep a notebook, where I put down ideas and thoughts that I might not use immediately, but they may come in use some time. I also keep a dream book. When I have an interesting dream, I make a note of it. I don't try to interpret the dream—I'm no Freud. He got it all wrong anyway!

**Stories and characters can sometimes take on a life of their own. Have you ever been surprised by one of your fictional creations? At their trajectories or final forms?**

Sometimes a character can run away with you—actually, they usually do. Very often I will start with an episode but when I start writing it, the story will go on in a different direction, a character will change. One of my early stories called *The Woman on Platform Eight* is based on a memory of being stranded at Ambala station on my way to school in Shimla when I was eight or



nine. I was on my own, feeling lost. A lady came up to me—she had her own son with her—and she was very kind. When the next train came in, she put me on it. In the story version, I tried to explore why she was being so nice to me, and started seeing her as a sort of substitute mother, imagining that she perhaps had a small boy or girl, whom she lost. I ended up creating a sort of mother-son relationship there. But all that hadn't really happened. When I was writing, I could just remember this



**Bond at a meet-and-greet in Mussorie with his young fans, in pre-COVID-19 times.**

person's kindness. So sometimes the story carries you away towards something quite different from what you set out to do. Not always, but often.

**The natural world is a consistent and important participant in many of your stories. How would you describe your connection to nature?**

Like most of us, I took nature for granted when I was boy and in my

twenties. It was only when I got older and came to the mountains that I came closer to nature. For about 10 years, I lived near the forest above a mountain stream, surrounded by different trees, birds and small animals that came there. The stream was just about a 20-minute walk down the hill and I would visit it quite often. So, daily life changed considerably. It came into my writing more and more as time went by. Today, whatever I am writing, the natural world comes into it, even though for the last year and a half I have been home-bound like everyone else. Most writers write from home anyway. I have been fortunate in the sense that this current catastrophe hasn't stopped me from working, as it has so many people.

**You've been quoted as saying that as a boy you wrote for adults, and for children once you were grown. How and why did that happen?**

**Was it a conscious shift? Which do you enjoy more?**

That's true. Although as a boy, I was writing for adults, or rather for the general reader, I was writing about childhood—my own, or that of boys and girls I knew—and about friendship. It's only when I was about 40 that I started writing stories specifically for children. Since I was quite at ease writing about children, I could now write for them too. It happened quite accidentally: I wrote a sort of novella called *Angry River* and sent it to a publisher



**Ruskin Bond, with his family at home in Landour, Uttarakhand**

in England and the editor there said, “Mr Bond, this is too short to be published as a novel for adults, but if you could make a few changes, we could make a great story for children.” I did that and it worked.

**Day to day, what does a disciplined writing routine look like for you? Is having one important to the writing process?**

It helps to be a bit disciplined. I don't tie myself down to any particular time of day, and sometimes two or three days may pass, without my having written anything. But it is nice to be fairly regular. If you keep missing out,

then you are inclined to get a bit lazy. And you get used to a certain time of the day. For me, it is fairly early in the morning, after I've had a cup of tea. The sun comes into my room, it's bright and cheerful and I will sit at the desk for half an hour or an hour at the most. For the rest of day, you feel happy that you've done something. If, in the middle of the night, I wake up with a great idea, I switch on the light and jot it down. It will come in use later on.

**Do you use a laptop to write?**

I don't use any technology. I still write by hand. In fact, I've got fairly decent

handwriting, so the publishers don't complain too much. I enjoy writing by hand. There is something fairly sensuous about it—the feeling of the paper, the pen. When I was younger, I used to type but [typing] gives me a stiff neck now. I wouldn't be able to write very long, hunched over anything. And I rather like the business of holding a pen and watching it flow against the page, the words coming to life in nice purple ink. I use purple ink.

### **That's quite specific!**

Well, I must confess the ink doesn't make me a better writer! But, long ago, I was in love with this girl in Delhi. She and I used to go to India Gate and eat jamuns. There were those jamun trees there—lovely fruit that stain your lips purple. Purple was my favourite colour, and she would ever so often wear *jamuni* dupattas as well. So I feel a bit nostalgic when I use jamun-coloured ink.

**V. S. Naipaul said that no one quite writes about solitude the way you do. What distinction do you draw between loneliness and solitude? Did writing ever leave you lonely?**

Writing doesn't, but I'd say that loneliness is, of course, in a way thrust

upon us. We are never looking for it, it's not something you enjoy. Solitude on the other hand, we seek. A writer, particularly, wants a certain amount of solitude. You can call it a matter of temperament—not everybody enjoys solitude. I was a lonely boy. I lost my father when I was 10 and had to adjust to a stepfather and a completely different life. I've since learnt to cope with loneliness, while at the same time appreciating being alone sometimes. I think, as someone who makes a living as a writer, an artist of any kind would need solitude from time to time. It helps you in your work, you can be more reflective. In a way, you are communing with yourself.

**You've often said that you are an Indian not only by birth, but by choice. Did India ever force you to look at yourself as the 'other'?**

Yes. I went to England after finishing school, but I could never feel at home there—I was always longing to come back. India was very much in my blood. I missed everything I had known as a boy, from friendships to the things that I could write about like the monsoon rain, dust storms and mangoes in season—everything that was India. These were things I couldn't write about

**IT HELPS TO BE A BIT DISCIPLINED WITH YOUR WRITING. IT IS NICE TO BE FAIRLY REGULAR. IF YOU KEEP MISSING OUT, YOU ARE INCLINED TO GET LAZY.**



**Ruskin Bond, who turned 87 in May rang in his birthday with a new book.**

sitting in a room in London. Apart from being happier here, you can never run out of stories in India.

But I guess at times I did feel like the outsider looking in over the years. Some people see me as an outsider of sorts, because obviously I am not everyone's ideal of an average Indian. But the thing about India is that over centuries, all sorts of people have come and made their home here and become Indian—even though they might have been something else before. India is a wonderful—and at times troublesome—mix of ethnic, racial and religious and language differences of all sorts, which, at times, makes for

problems. But, by and large, it also makes for some sort of homogeneity in itself. It's a land of contradictions. You wouldn't get anything like it anywhere else in the world. It is different and I think we should appreciate that difference.

**One assumes anybody who has gotten to your age has been knocked around a bit. With time, do you find yourself developing a growing pessimism about the world?**

At times. As we get older, we become a little critical of the changes that take place. We don't like change so much, but one has to accept the world is

going to change—some things change for the better and some for the worse, I would say. We have to sort of balance them together. At times, I am pessimistic, and at times I feel, well, it's not such a big, bad world after all.

**You have a phenomenal body of work, dating back several decades.**

**Was it hard to pick the stories in your latest collection (*All-Time Favourites For Children*)?**

This is a selection of some of my more popular children's stories. I've added three or four new ones, so the reader won't complain. And while making the selections, I tried to include a few that aren't so well-known. This new book is a blend of what's popular, what I like and a couple of new ones.

**For an Indian kid reading in English, you are essential reading. Who are some of your favourite writers and what are you currently reading?**

I am reading a lot—much more than I normally do. Sometimes I read old favourites—I like going back to books I have enjoyed before. I also read quite a lot of current writing. I am just finishing this book that I couldn't put down, called *An Officer and a Spy* by Robert Harris. I've read half a dozen of his novels recently. I have also been reading classical ghost stories by writers like M. R. James, Edith Wharton, Oliver Onions, Algernon Blackwood. Kids often send me books—very sweet of them. They send me books I've

read because they might find a story or memoir of mine in which I say one of my favourite books is *Alice in Wonderland*. Over a year, I have received six copies of *Alice in Wonderland*. The good thing is that usually the illustrations are different, so I have something different to look at.

**I cannot resist a cliché: What advice would you give budding writers?**

For people or children who want to write but have problems with language, the best way to improve is to read more—read well, write well. So many people want to have their name on a book, or feel they have got a book in them that they dash off sometimes without any regard to the language itself—not just the rules of composition but a feel for the language. Be patient and work on your writing. Be professional about it rather than rushing into print just to say you've written a book. In the long run, it will pay off.

**After writing for almost seven decades, do you sometimes not want to put your feet up and relax?**

I have my feet up right now and I am relaxing! There is a heater on in front of me—we've had a lot of rain and it's a bit cold today. A cup of tea is just being made for me, along with a ham sandwich.

**That sounds wonderful.**

See how well I am looked after! **R**

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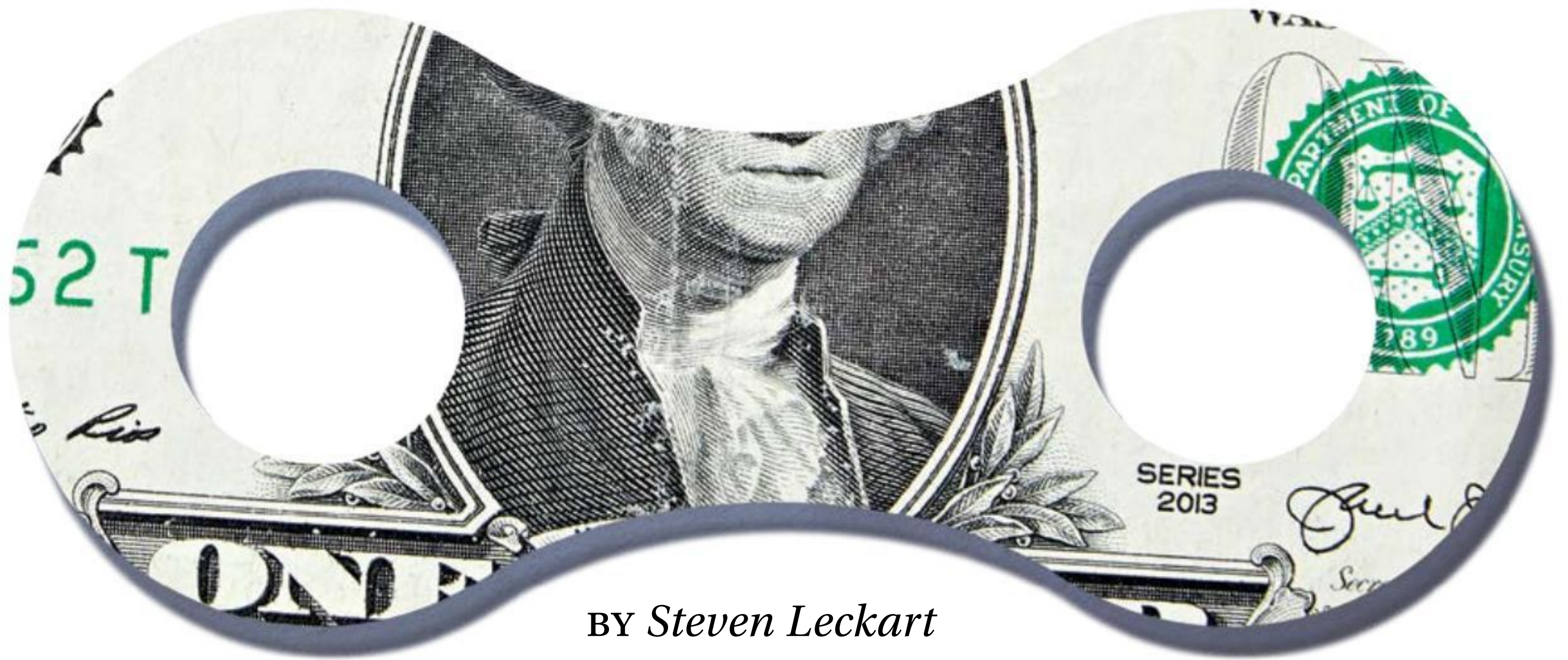


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WASHINGTON, D.C.



BY *Steven Leckart*

From *Chicago*, published in  
partnership with *Epic Magazine*

# THE BANK ROBBER ON THE BICYCLE

*Tom Justice chased Olympic gold on his bike.  
Then he used it as a getaway vehicle*

JOLEEN ZUBEK (MONEY)





THE MAN IN the baseball cap and sunglasses waited for the teller to notice him. The morning of 26 May 2000, was quiet inside the LaSalle Bank in Highland Park, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago.

“May I help you?” said the young woman behind the counter. The man reached to the back of his khakis as if to fish out a wallet. Instead, he presented her with an index card. The teller’s smile wilted as she stared at the words: “THIS IS A ROBBERY. PUT ALL OF YOUR MONEY IN THE BAG.”

The robber, a slender man wearing a blue oxford shirt, returned the card to his pocket. “Nice and easy,” he said coolly, handing over a plastic shopping bag. While the teller anxiously transferred bundles of cash, the man gently pressed his palms together as if he were about to whisper “Namaste”.

“Thank you,” he said, and walked out the front door.

Less than two minutes later, he emerged from an underground parking lot carrying a bicycle on one shoulder and a messenger bag over the other and wearing a red, white and blue spandex bodysuit. He climbed on to the bike and began to ride leisurely.

He cruised up to a trash can. After fishing two crisp \$20 bills out of the plastic bag, he held it upside down over the can. Several bundles of cash—\$4,009 in all (around ₹1,74,390 at the time)—tumbled into the trash. The man returned the empty sack to his messenger bag and pedaled away.

SEATED IN THE BLEACHERS, 13-year-old Tom Justice watched in awe as the cyclists careened around the outdoor



track of the Ed Rudolph Velodrome, outside Chicago. Every time the pack whirled by, it cut the air, unleashing a concentrated whoosh.

Before that summer of 1983, Tom had never seen a bicycle race, let alone a velodrome. But from the moment he entered the stadium, he was transfixed.

He returned a week later with his maroon Schwinn [bicycle]. As the stadium lights buzzed, a dozen suburban kids gathered on the track. Everyone was wearing T-shirts and gym shorts except for Tom, who stood out in the professional-grade jersey and padded cycling shorts his father had just bought him.

Tom won the 12- to 14-year-old heat handily. Straddling his bike, his chest still heaving, he felt a surge of adrenaline. He had finally found something at which he excelled. His father, Jay Justice, a Navy veteran with an abundance of athleticism, was thrilled.

By Tom's junior year at Libertyville High School, his identity hinged on cycling. In 1987, just four years after his first velodrome victory, Tom was selected to attend the Olympic training camp in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

In the school's 1988 yearbook, one page asked, "What will your friends be doing in 10 years?" Tom Justice's caption read: "On the cover of a Wheaties [cereal] box, with his bike."

But after high school, Tom's commitment to cycling—and

everything else—lapsed. Instead of training, he broke into empty houses to smoke cigarettes and chug beers with his buddies.

Somehow Tom still harboured grandiose expectations. And since nothing else ever clicked for him the way cycling had, after graduating from college, he moved to Los Angeles to train alongside the US Olympic team. He did little to distinguish himself. The other sprinters could tell he lacked discipline. "Tom's fast, but he doesn't train right," one noted. "He needs to apply himself." He soon

**HE PRESENTED HER  
WITH AN INDEX CARD:  
"THIS IS A ROBBERY.  
PUT ALL OF YOUR  
MONEY IN THE BAG."**



washed out, returned to Chicago and found a job as a social worker. Helping people was a welcome distraction from his own issues. But after a while, it felt like a pointless slog.

As Tom's Olympic dream slipped away, he fantasized about identities he could substitute for the thrilling instant gratification of cycling. He made a list, and then wandered from interview to interview, growing increasingly unhappy with his mundane life.

Late one night in 1998, Tom revisited the list he'd added to over the





Tom's fascination with bikes started early. He had this one when he was four.

years. Under 'helicopter pilot' and 'lock picker,' he'd scrawled two letters: 'B.R'—Bank robber.

Several notorious American bank robbers had spent time in Chicago. That history added to the allure for Tom. At a wig shop in the same neighbourhood where gangster John Dillinger hid out, Tom considered his options. Ultimately, he settled on black braids with short bangs that made him look like 'Super Freak' singer Rick James.

On 23 October 1998, Tom entered his parents' garage, grabbed his messenger bag and Fuji AX-500, and pedalled towards downtown Libertyville. He coasted up to a tree-lined fence

between two houses and slid on a pair of khakis and a blue oxford button-down over his cycling spandex. He slipped on his wig and dark oversized sunglasses reminiscent of Jackie O's and then continued on foot to the American National Bank branch.

When Tom approached the teller, she perked up immediately. Halloween had apparently come early this year. Then the love child of Rick James and Jackie O handed her an index card but wouldn't let go of it. As an awkward tug-of-war ensued, the teller leaned in and read the message. Tom slid his plastic bag across the counter, and she loaded it up with cash.

Tom strode outside, bag in hand.

His heartbeat surged. His legs tingled. Two minutes later, he was beside his bike, feverishly stripping down. He shoved his disguise and the money into his messenger bag.

Then he casually cycled back to his parents' house. He parked his bike in the garage and tiptoed into the basement. Kneeling on the shag carpet, he looked at the money and began to weep. It had been a long time since Tom had felt this alive—or this important.

FOR MONTHS, that \$5,580 (₹2,30,230 that year) he'd stolen sat in a gym bag inside the closet of his old room at his parents' house. Tom assumed the bills were traceable, so he kept only two \$20s as souvenirs. Late one night, he tossed the remaining cash into a few dumpsters.

Nearly one year after his first robbery, Tom committed his second. This time, he discarded the bills in alleys where he knew homeless people would find them. Robbing banks and giving away the money were intoxicating. Tom saw himself as both mischievous and righteous.

But that feeling faded. Tom's real life seemed mediocre and unfulfilling. He wrestled with depression and brooded over the realization that at 29, his window of opportunity to become a world-class cyclist had nearly passed. If he wanted to pursue his Olympic dream, he had to do it now.

He told his girlfriend, Laura, he

was moving to Southern California to train for the Olympic trials. He had retained his classification as a Category-1 cyclist, so he would automatically qualify for the trials.

When he arrived in California, Tom looked in the mirror and told himself, "I'm not going to rob any more banks."

"HOW'S IT GOING?" asked Laura, calling from Chicago.

"Well!" replied Tom. His skin was tan from his time at the San Diego Outdoor Velodrome. Every morning, he worked through the Olympic

## **TOM'S HEARTBEAT SURGED. IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE HE'D FELT THIS ALIVE.**



strength-training regimen to build muscle mass. His already explosive dead start was getting deadlier. As the weeks passed in early 2000, Tom rounded into the best shape of his life.

But the monotony of training was setting in. The day after Valentine's Day, he hit a bank in Encinitas. On 29 February, one in Solana Beach. The next day, another in Encinitas. Two weeks later, one in San Diego. On 24 March, Tom robbed two banks, nabbing his biggest score yet: \$10,274 (₹4,61,713 at the time).

Then one morning, an intense pain surged through Tom's lower back. He'd thrown it out overtraining. It would take weeks before he could pedal without waking up in agony the day after. His plan to race in the Olympic trials was over.

Soon after he returned to Chicago, Laura dumped him. He moved into an apartment with George, a 104-kilo Greek hulk who worked nights.

"What do you do?" asked Tom.

"I'm a cop," said George.

Once his lower back recovered, Tom robbed the LaSalle Bank in Highland Park—the heist in which he dumped his \$4,009 haul in a trash can. The next week, he hit three banks in three days. George had no clue his roommate had just knocked over his 13<sup>th</sup> bank.

In the summer of 2001, Tom joined a club cycling team run by Higher Gear, a bike shop not far from the LaSalle Bank. One day, the shop's manager mentioned to Tom that a local rider was selling a used Steelman. Steelman bicycles are exceptional. Tom, whose own bike had recently been stolen, was looking for a replacement. As soon as he saw the Steelman, he was torn. It was painted a garish Day-Glo orange. But he knew that a used Steelman didn't just magically appear every day, so he bought it.

By this point, Tom had stopped giving away the cash from his robberies. He was becoming

dependent on drugs. He had no job, but he had pockets full of cash and cocaine. As he increased dosages, his post-high depression deepened.

Tom started attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings. When it was his turn to share, he talked about merely experimenting with drugs. He was in denial. "This is gonna be my last meeting," he announced after just six weeks. He said he was moving back to California. He was planning to apply to grad school there. Everybody in the room wished him luck.

"TWO-ELEVEN IN PROGRESS." The voice crackled through the radio in Officer

## HE BOLTED IN A DEAD START AS HELLACIOUS AS ANY HE HAD EVER MUSTERED.



Greg Thompson's squad car. Someone had just robbed a Union Bank in Walnut Creek, California. It was 7 March 2002, a drizzly day. Thompson was passing a parking garage when a bicyclist shot out of the driveway and flew behind the cruiser. Thompson squinted into his side mirror. The cyclist looked like every other weekend warrior, except for one detail: the messenger bag draped over his shoulder.



As a teenager, Tom qualified to compete in the Olympic trials as a track cyclist.

An 18-year police veteran, Thompson taught new recruits to thrive on instinct. This was one of those moments. But before he could flash his lights, the cyclist pulled over, hopped off his bike and started fidgeting with his back wheel. Thompson parked a few feet ahead and walked back to the cyclist. Tom pretended to adjust his brakes before climbing on to the bike and clicking his left foot into the pedal.

“Do you mind if I take a look in your bag?” Thompson asked.

“Yeah, no problem. I just have to unclip,” replied Tom. “These pedals are actually counterbalanced, so I need to click into both in order to get out at the same time.”

There’s no such thing as counterbalanced pedals. But Thompson didn’t know that. He watched as the cyclist

lifted his right foot, clicked down into the pedal and—*whoosh!*—bolted into the street in a dead start as hellacious as any Tom had ever mustered on a velodrome.

A few blocks away, Officer Sean Dexter was sitting in a squad car when he spotted a cyclist on an orange bike charging through traffic towards a red light. Dexter pulled into the intersection, but the cyclist didn’t stop.

Tom swerved around the police car, crossed two lanes and hopped the curb. Darting through a parking lot, he headed towards a tall fence bordering a thicket of 15-foot-high bamboo.

Dexter reached for his radio, but before he could even open his mouth, another cop hopped on the channel. “A guy on a bicycle just ran from me!”

“I’ve got him right here!” Dexter shouted into the radio.

Dexter got out of his car and paced towards the fence. He slowly cracked the gate and peered into the jumbled mess of vegetation. A creek flowed 30 feet below, amid fallen tree branches, dry brush, and piles of wet leaves.

Sirens blared as officers secured the perimeter. While Dexter and Thompson walked the upper banks, police dogs combed the creek. After about 15 minutes, a detective spotted something in the leaves: an orange bicycle. Then a German shepherd from the K-9 unit led them to a pair of cycling shoes hidden under a concrete retaining wall beneath a bridge.

As the sky grew bleaker, the search



was called off. They had one good clue, though: the orange bicycle.

Tom was lying facedown in a cold, damp dirt tunnel. Hours earlier, as the orange Steelman tumbled through the brush, Tom had slid down the embankment, crashing violently through the leaves. He trudged 50 feet upstream and took cover underneath a bridge, where he discovered a two-foot-wide hole at the water's edge. He crawled in headfirst and squirmed 11 feet to the narrow tunnel's end. Panting in the dark, he heard sirens, then faint voices and the jingling of a dog's tags. Tom assumed that was the end. But then—a miracle. The cops gave up the search.

It was dark when Tom emerged. He had parked his 1983 Mercedes-Benz about three kms away. He found it and drove to his apartment in Oakland.

"Is everything OK?" asked Tom's roommate at the time, Marty.

"Yeah, just a rough couple of days," Tom replied.

A six-foot-five opera singer, Marty wasn't looking for a new friend, but he'd found one in Tom. Marty knew Tom was snorting cocaine, but he was unaware of his other vices.

"What's going on?" asked Marty.

"I can't say," Tom said.

"Tom, you can tell me anything."

Eventually, Tom reluctantly told Marty everything.

"What are you gonna do?" Marty asked.

"I need to buy a ticket home," Tom

said. He wanted to see his parents before the cops found him.

ALTHOUGH HE DIDN'T know anything about bikes, Officer Dexter had a hunch that the orange 12-speed was special. He walked it from the station to a nearby bike shop. A guy behind the counter said the frame was custom-made by a man named Steelman. Dexter called the company and spoke to Steelman's wife, who handled the bookkeeping. She told Dexter that the serial number he had might be for a 1996 orange bicycle sold at a shop called Higher Gear in Chicago.

Dexter called Higher Gear, but the guy who answered said they didn't keep records that far back.

Meanwhile, the FBI was doing its own investigating.

A month later, the manager of a bicycle shop in Chicago called the Walnut Creek police. In 1996, he'd assembled the orange bike. He knew the original owner and the guy who'd bought it secondhand.

TOM AND HIS father sat in the kitchen. It was less than a week since Tom had confessed to Marty.

"How's that job of yours?" Jay asked his son. "What's your plan for the future?" As far as he knew, Tom was working as a bike messenger.

"I'm gonna apply to some new grad school programmes," Tom replied.

Jay nodded. *Sounds familiar.*

Tom headed out the door. "See you



Left: Tom while he was living with a cop—and robbing banks. Right: the Steelman bike.

guys later,” he called, and he climbed into his car.

When the first police car appeared behind him, Tom didn’t think much of it. Then there were three more. Red lights were now flashing. Tom pulled over and glanced back. Five cops were aiming their guns at him.

As the handcuffs tightened around his wrists, Tom wanted to cry, not out of despair or fear but out of a much heavier sense of something he wasn’t expecting: relief. After four years, his self-destructive cross-country loop was finally coming to an end.

In the interrogation room, an FBI agent placed a photograph on the table. It was a security-cam shot

of Tom. The orange Steelman had led them right to him. Riding an average bicycle, Tom might never have been caught.

He gave a full confession. In all, he had robbed 26 banks and stolen \$1,29,338 (₹62,87,120). He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 11 years.

After being released, Tom returned to cycling at his local velodrome. He also eventually found a job at a doughnut shop. Little do the cops know that the 49-year-old handing them their chocolate glazed is one of the most prodigious bank robbers in history. **R**

CHICAGO (29 JANUARY 2019) IN PARTNERSHIP WITH EPIC MAGAZINE. © 2019 BY VOX MEDIA, LLC.



## Don't Do That, Please

Life hack for parents: Convince your kids you hate something you actually like.

My five- and seven-year olds just spent 10 minutes ‘tormenting’ me by massaging my shoulders.

🐦 @LEXMOBILEGAMING

## CULTURESCAPE

BOOKS, ARTS AND *Entertainment*

# HAVING FINALLY ARRIVED

*Fresh off the success of web series Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story, actor Pratik Gandhi talks about how he suffers a “multiple passion disorder”—how he wants to now do many things*

---

BY *Suhani Singh*

**Has your phone been busier than ever post *Scam 1992*? What kind of offers have come your way?**

Oh, yes! After *Scam*, my phone has been buzzing non-stop with lots of messages and calls. The best part is that many are good offers for mainstream Bollywood films or web series or even brands. There's some interesting content coming my way. It's an exciting time.

**You have won multiple awards for your performance. Did you imagine the series would enjoy this much success?**

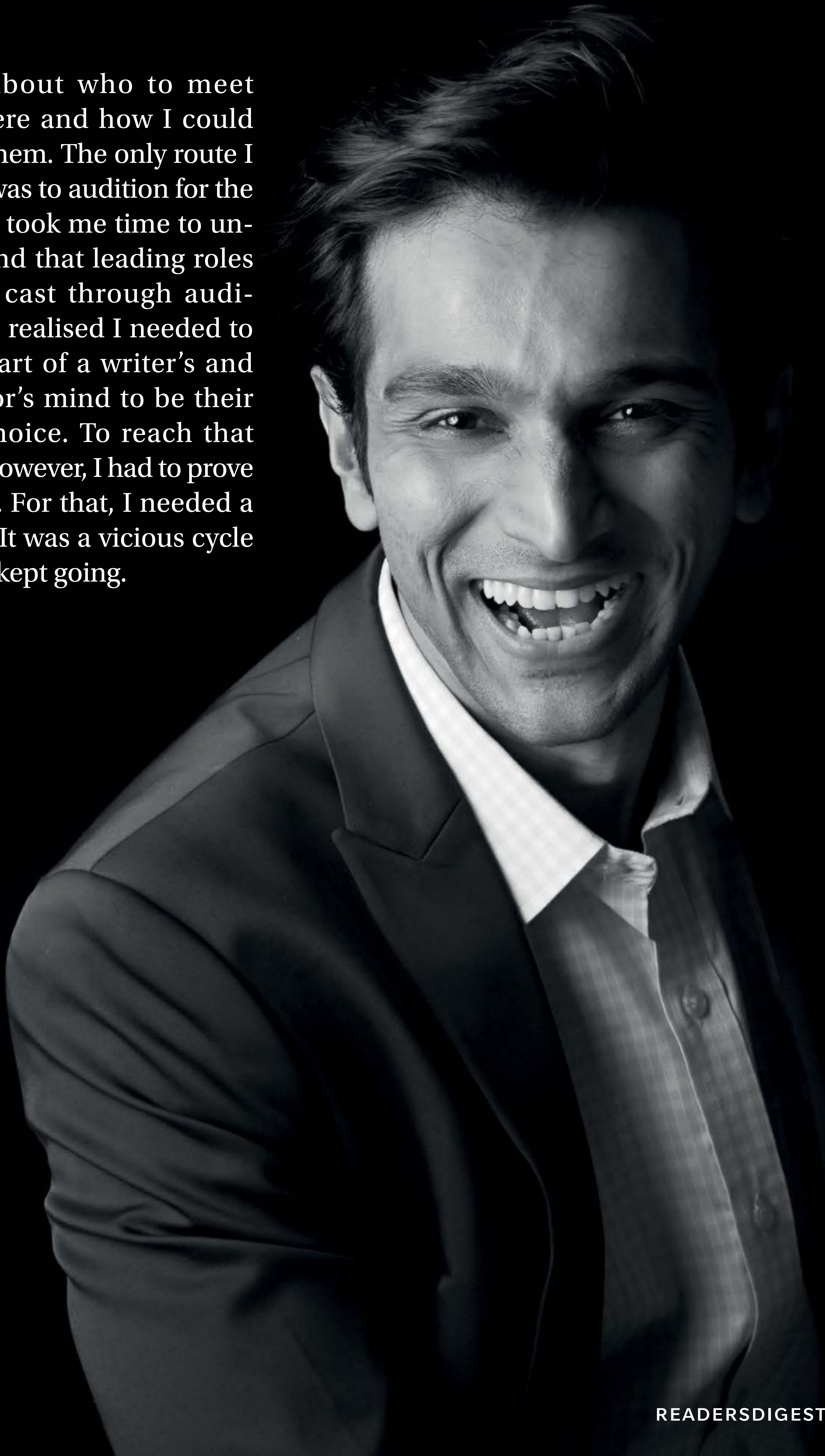
The one thing I was sure of was that we were on to something really good, something we will be proud of. None of us had thought that it'd be so big that it would change lives, like it has mine. It was not my first project, but in Hindi mainstream, it was my biggest. Before that, I was only the hero's friend in projects like *Mitron* and *Loveyatri*.

**It has taken you a while to find a break like *Scam* ...**

I had been trying to get something better in Hindi cinema for a long time, but I had no



idea about who to meet or where and how I could meet them. The only route I knew was to audition for the part. It took me time to understand that leading roles aren't cast through auditions. I realised I needed to be a part of a writer's and director's mind to be their first choice. To reach that level, however, I had to prove myself. For that, I needed a break. It was a vicious cycle which kept going.



**Now that you've established yourself, is there pressure to be more judicious with what you do next?**

I felt this pressure for five days after *Scam* released. Many people said that the next thing you do will define your career. But there is no process or thumb rule. I still have to go with my gut. I have been doing that all this while and it has helped me in everything I have done. *Scam* helped me prove to myself that I can be the lead. The format gave me that chance. It changed the belief that you may be good on stage or in regional cinema, but for mainstream Hindi, you need a name to get audiences in.

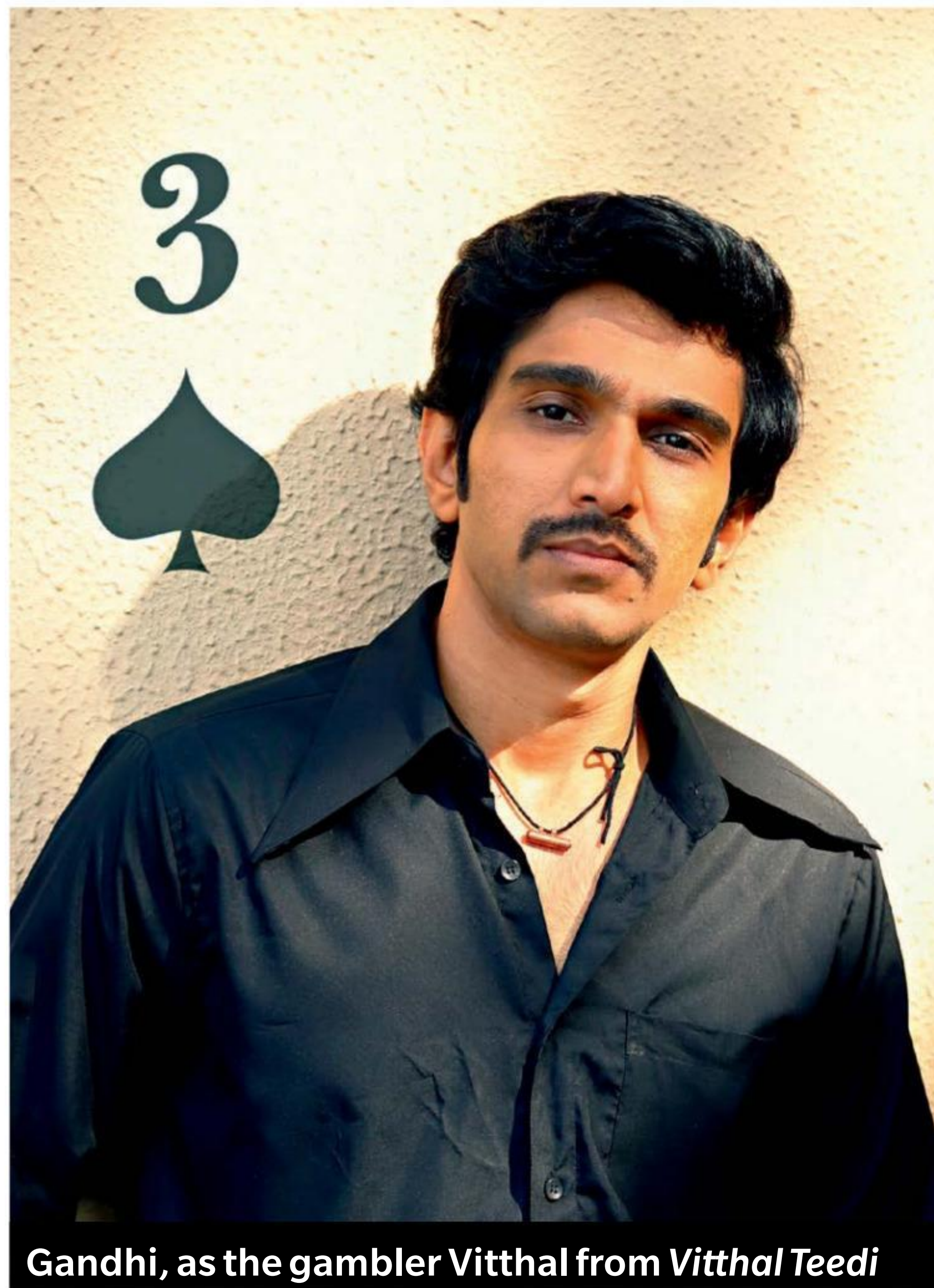
**Your upcoming Hindi films see you as the lead. Do you think it shows that producers believe in actors more, that once actors have had their breakthrough on OTT, they enjoy a mass appeal which can translate to box-office success?**

There are a lot of aspects to this. I feel that having proven myself in a web series—almost nine-and-a-half hours of screen time, which, in turn, is the equivalent of three to four films—filmmakers will now have a lot of confidence about doing something more with me. That's what OTT has given me. But then again, I have been told by a lot of people—even I am thinking on similar lines—that you may have already proven yourself on the streaming front, but the box office is a different ballgame altogether. At the end of the day, the audience for the two mediums—theatri-

cal and OTT—is the same. Everybody seems to be open to experiments now.

**Your first Gujarati web series, *Vitthal Teedi*, released recently. Is shuttling between Hindi and Gujarati projects a priority?**

I will be working in Hindi and Gujarati projects, and if given a chance, in other languages too. Every language has its own grammar when it comes to writing or speaking it. I believe it has a different grammar for performance, too. I am curious to explore different regional



Gandhi, as the gambler Vitthal from *Vitthal Teedi*

## THEATRE IS AN ACTOR'S GYM, A PLACE WHERE YOU MASTER YOUR CRAFT. BECAUSE, ULTIMATELY, ACTING IS A PRACTISING ART.

cinema, also. I have a multiple passion disorder—I want to do many things.

**We have seen actors from other languages break the geographic barrier. Would you like creators to cast you in non-Gujarati roles, too?**

I don't want to put myself in any one category or cage. I am ready to explore characters from all walks of life and from different parts of the world. India is such a diverse country that each region has lots of stories and I want to be part of them. That way, I can create characters that are absolutely different from me as a person, characters that will help me grow as an actor. In whatever work I have done, no two characters have been the same. My constant effort is to think like the character. I don't want to put Pratik into them.

**You love theatre. How instrumental a role has the stage played in the artist you are today?**

All credit to whatever, wherever and whoever I am today, goes to theatre. It has given me everything. I stepped on stage for the first time when I was in the fourth standard. Since then, I felt that's where I belong. It has taught me a lot of things about life and the performing arts. The most basic and beau-

tiful part of theatre is that an actor gets multiple opportunities to create the same character. When I perform the same play five times, or the 500<sup>th</sup> time, living through the same journey, there are a lot of things I learn on each occasion. Theatre is an actor's gym, a place where you master your craft. Because, ultimately, acting is a practising art. You cannot learn it only by watching or listening to somebody or by reading about it. You have to fail multiple times to get that move or emotion right. Only the stage gives you that opportunity.

**Looking back on your journey so far, which has had its share of struggle, would you do anything differently?**

Somewhere I always felt that if I had got this success a little earlier, I'd have had a long run in this industry. But that thought came from sheer immaturity. Now I am fully convinced that the universe gives you the opportunity when you are absolutely ready. So, there is no better time than this, even if it has come when I am 40. There are no complaints and regrets whatsoever. Also, I stopped using this word 'struggle' long ago. I never saw what I did as a struggle. To put my journey in proper perspective, I use the word 'experience'. **R**

# LAUGHTER

THE BEST *Medicine*

**Sandy began a job** as a school counsellor and was eager to help. One day during recess, she noticed a girl standing by herself on one end of a playing field while the rest of the kids enjoyed a game of soccer at the other.

Sandy approached the girl and asked if she was all right.

The girl said she was.

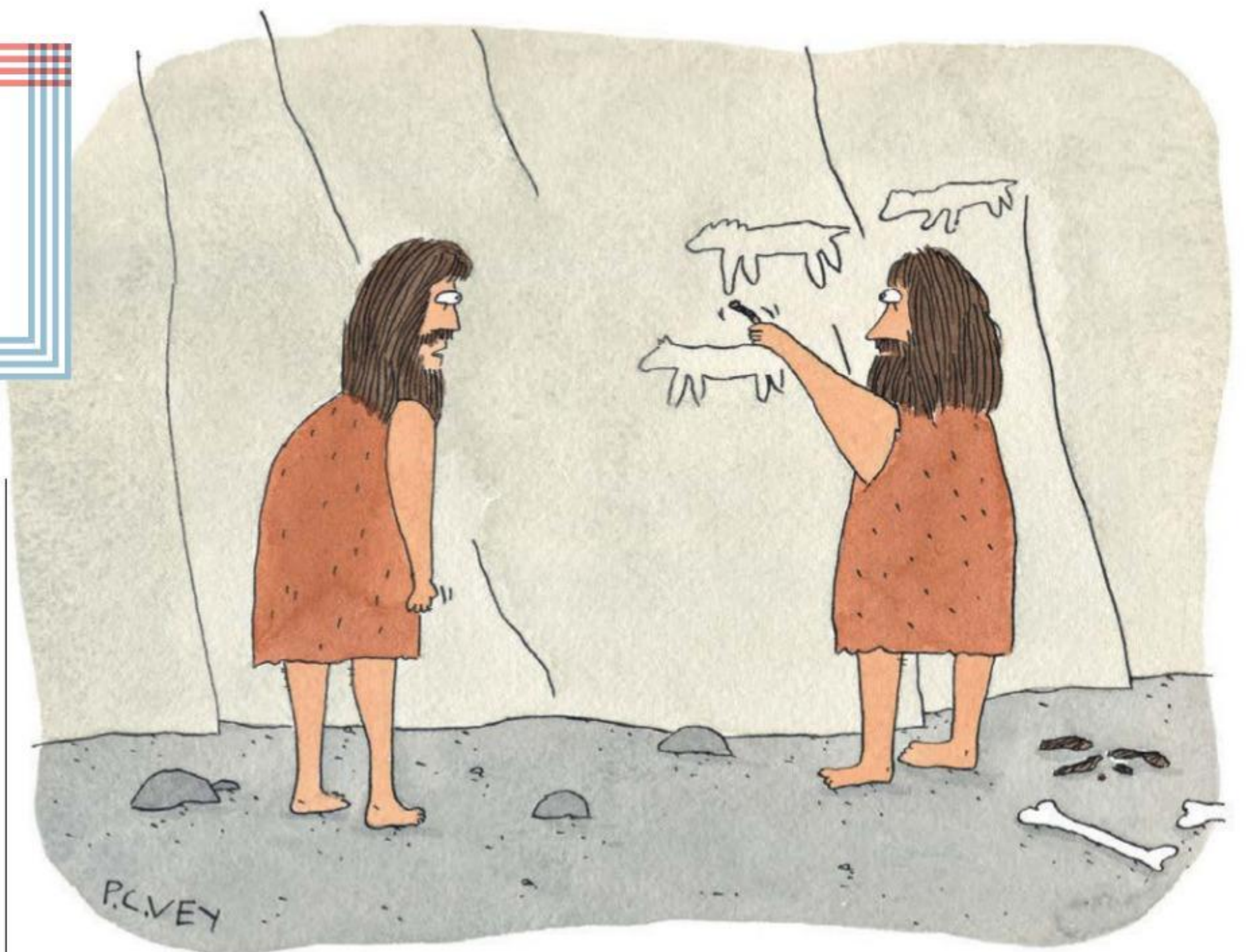
But a little while later, Sandy noticed the girl in the same spot, still by herself.

Approaching again, Sandy offered, “Would you like me to be your friend?”

“OK,” said the girl,

**When I find myself walking through the valley of the shadow of death, I remind myself not to trust Google Maps again.**

—Submitted by WILLIAM PETTICREW



**“My doctor says you should be drawing more fruits and vegetables.”**

looking at Sandy suspiciously. Feeling she was making progress, Sandy then asked, “Why are you standing here all alone?”

“Because,” said the girl with great exasperation, “I’m the goalie!”

—Coursehero.com

**When the spirit doesn’t move a thing**

I’m so lazy, I’m more of an atrophy wife.

—[@ANGRYRACCOON2](#)

I don’t spring into action. I dead of winter into action.

—[@SONDRADEEME](#)

**A plane** is heading to Washington, D.C, when a politician in the economy section gets up and takes a seat in first class. The flight attendant

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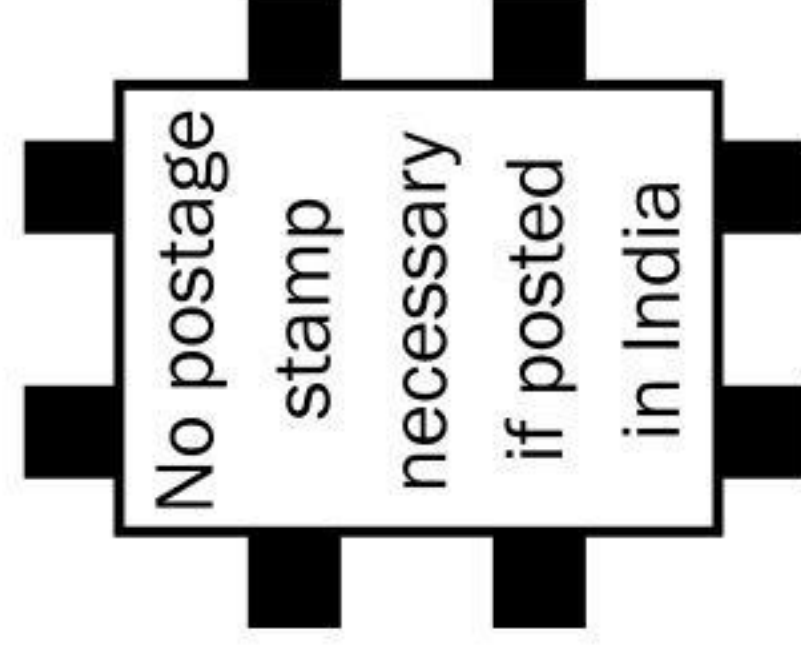
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sees him do this and asks him to return to his original seat in economy. But the politician says, "I'm an elected official, I'm important, I'm on my way to D.C., and I'm staying here!"

The flight attendant tells the pilot and the co-pilot about this. The co-pilot then goes to ask the politician to return to his original seat. But the politician insists again, "I'm an elected official, I'm important, I'm on my way to D.C., and I'm staying here!"

The co-pilot returns to the cockpit and tells the pilot that the politician just won't listen.

"I fly the D.C. route all the time," the pilot says. "I'll handle this."

The pilot walks back to the politician and whispers something in

his ear. The politician says, "Oh, I'm sorry," and then gets up and goes back to his original seat in economy.

The flight attendant and the co-pilot are

amazed and ask the pilot what he said to make him move.

"Easy," he says. "I told him that first class isn't going to D.C."

—GREG LINDSAY

## YOU KNOW THE FEELING?

*Hangry*, a portmanteau that describes the irritability that arises from hunger, succinctly gets at a very particular human emotion. Shouldn't we have more of these terms? Here are some clever nominees.

**BURALYSIS:** The paralyzing anxiety you feel when confronted with bureaucracy.

**PRETEDIUM:** The mixture of frustration, ennui and anxiety that washes over you when you realize you've been cornered by a known long-talker.

**CINE-VOID:** The guilt that follows browsing Netflix and seeing an 'important' film that you know you should watch but choosing *John Wick: Chapter 2*, a movie you'll convince yourself you've never seen.

**REMBARRASSMENT:** A feeling of humiliation at the memory of an awkward or shameful experience from long ago, often unrelated to current circumstances.

**CREDITPHORIA:** The pleasure, denial, delusion and mania of being in a store you don't belong in and buying an item you cannot afford.

**PREMOJI:** The feeling of searching on your smartphone for an emoji that doesn't exist.

—Thecut.com

GETTY IMAGES (3)

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](mailto:editor.india@rd.com)



## RD RECOMMENDS

# Films

**ENGLISH:** Like all good Disney animation films, **RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON** is set in a fantasy world, Kumandra. As monsters turn all living creatures into stone, dragons sacrifice themselves to save humankind. When Kumandra is again threatened, only the princess Raya can save the world with Sisu, the last dragon. Premiering on Disney+Hotstar on 4 June, the film promises to take the breath away.

**HINDI:** The warm, insightful stories of Satyajit Ray have, for long, been essential reading for Bengalis, but **RAY**, an anthology film releasing on Netflix on 25 June, gives the rest of the world a chance to



A still from *Raya And The Last Dragon*

access the wonder that is his literature. Directed by Abhishek Chaubey, Srijit Mukherji and Vasan Bala, the anthology's four shorts are each inspired by the legendary filmmaker's literary oeuvre.



Vidya Balan in *Sherni*

With his much-acclaimed *Newton*, Amit Masurkar captured brilliantly the loneliness of upright government officials in India. With **SHERNI**, the director seems to be hoping to repeat that award-winning performance. This time, a forest department officer, played by Vidya Balan, seeks to balance animal preservation and human needs. The film is all set to release on Amazon Prime Video this June.

**TAMIL:** Witty dialogue is as essential to a gangster film as thrilling action.



Premiering on Netflix on 18 June, **JAGAME THANDIRAM** has a bucketful of both. Dhanush plays the protagonist, Suruli Rajan, the 'original gangster', who is hired by London-based mafia boss Peter Sprott (James Cosmo) to infiltrate a rival gang. As Suruli travels from Madurai to London, he is left with a choice—good or evil?



Dhanush in the Tamil gangster film *Jagame Thandiram*

## #WATCHLIST: ON OUR RADAR

**Loki Season 1:** Of all the antagonists in the sprawling Avengers universe, Loki is, perhaps, the only one who proves impossible to forget. He disrupts the moral status quo while



Tom Hiddleston in Marvel's *Loki*

leaving you in splits. It should come as no surprise then that Marvel has given Loki (Tom Hiddleston) his own series. Releasing on Disney+Hotstar on 9 June, *Loki* will see the God of Mischief encounter alternate versions of himself.

**Dom Season 1:** Coming to Amazon Prime Video on 4 June is *Dom*, a much-awaited Brazilian thriller-crime series. Inspired by true events, the show tells the story



Poster for *Dom Season 1*

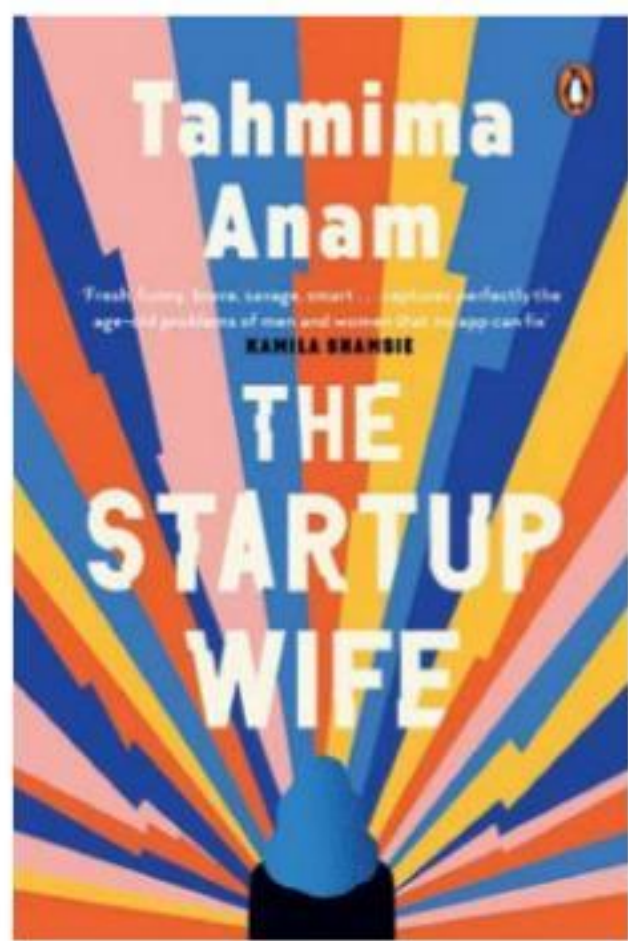
of Victor and Pedro, a father and son who find themselves on opposite sides of the law in Rio de Janeiro. Victor is an upstanding cop, trying to rid his city of cocaine and crime, while Pedro starts making his way up from drug runner to gangster. **A still from *Space Force***

# Books

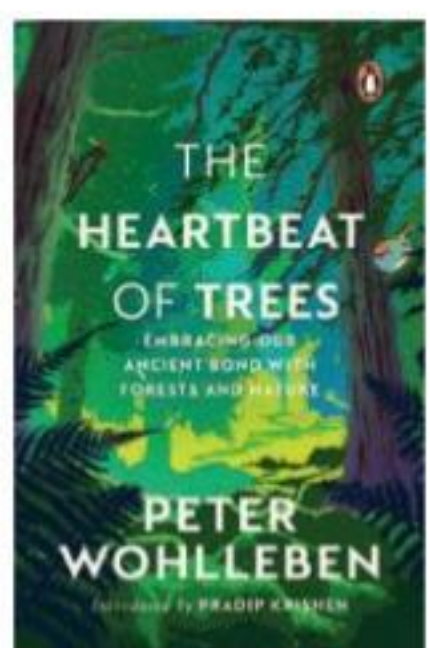
## ***The Startup Wife* by Tahmima Anam, Hamish Hamilton**

Tahmima Anam's first novel, *A Golden Age*—a book about the Bangladesh Liberation War but, also, ostensibly, about her par-

ents—was as beautiful as it was moving. Its sequel, *The Good Muslim*, was longlisted for the Man Asian Literary Prize. Those who have been in love might find her 2016 novel, *The Bones of Grace*, devastating. It really is good news

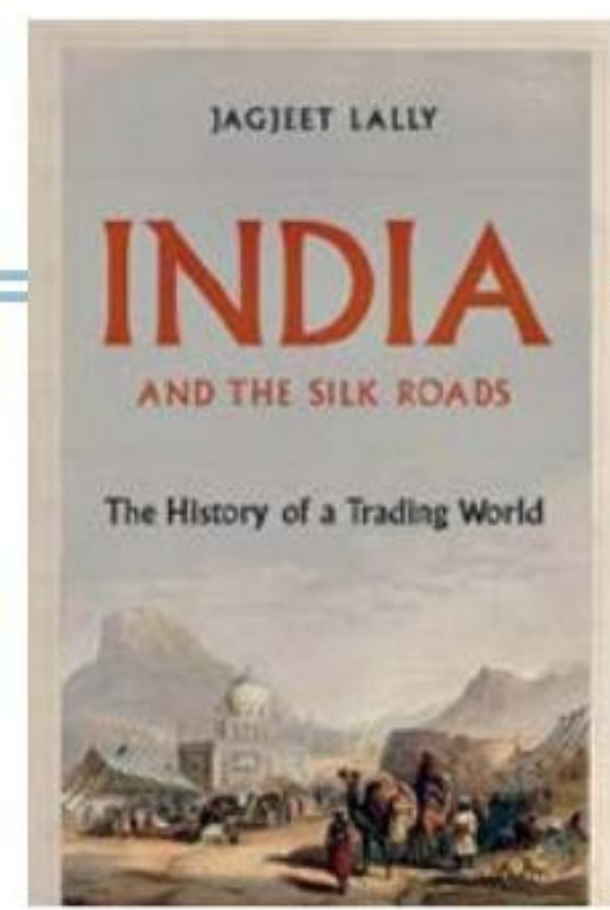


that Anam is now releasing her fourth novel. *The Startup Wife* tells the story of Asha Roy. A brilliant coder, Asha is well on her way to becoming the harbinger of an AI revolution, but then love happens. She marries Cyrus. They create a platform that personalizes the everyday rituals of millions. They strike gold. Cyrus becomes famous, Asha plaintive.



**YOU MAY ALSO LIKE ... *The Heartbeat of Trees: Embracing Our Ancient Bond with Forests and Nature* by Peter Wohlleben (Penguin Viking):** News about climate change might make you feel that we have lost our connect with

nature altogether but Peter Wohlleben assures us that our relationship with the natural world, forests in particular, is too old to be so ruthlessly and suddenly broken. The forester argues that nature speaks a language we do, and that consciousness sees no difference between flora and fauna.



## **Scope Out**

***India And the Silk Roads: The History of a Trading World* (HarperCollins):** Jagjeet Lally asks a key question—what happened to India's prosperous caravan trade once sail and steam came into vogue?

***The House of Scindias: A Saga of Power, Politics and Intrigue* (Roli Books):** Rasheed Kidwai writes about the Scindias, a royal family that has given us some of our more enigmatic and canny politicians.

***Keeping in Touch (Context):*** Written by Anjali Joseph, winner of the Desmond Elliot Prize, this is a novel about Anjali, who is charming but commitment-phobic, and Ved, who is smitten but a tad toxic.

# Music

## TUNE IN

**Song: 'Kali Teri'**

**Artists: Hari & Sukhmani**

Listening to Hari & Sukhmani perform 'Kali Teri', one thinks it belongs on the *Monsoon Wedding* soundtrack. It's not just that the video of the song features marigolds, it's also because the sensibilities of Hari Singh Jaaj and Sukhmani Malik seem to mirror that of Mira Nair's 2001 film—it makes Punjabi culture accessible and also cool. Hari and Sukhmani fuse folk and electronica to create 'folktronica'—a sound both urban and earthy. We've all heard 'Kali Teri Gut', but the Chandigarh duo imagines it anew.

In order to successfully create a crossover music, the kind that takes



**Sukhmani Malik and Hari Singh Jaaj**

as its inspiration aesthetics of more than one culture, musicians need to be mindful of the rules that make each of their influences great. Hari and Sukhmani don't ruin 'Kali Teri Gut' by slowing it down. They, instead, give us a chance to hear the melodic potential of a tune we only thought of as peppy. This is an experiment done right.

## LISTEN



Ferrante's latest novel, **THE LYING LIFE OF ADULTS**, was described by *Elle* magazine as a

**AUDIO-BOOK:** Set in a divided Naples, Elena

“literary event”.

Hear actress Marisa Tomei read it and you see why.

**PODCAST:** After spending 25 years hosting *Late Night*, Conan O'Brien realized that no celebrity he'd interviewed was his

friend. He's started the podcast **CONAN O'BRIEN NEEDS A FRIEND** to correct that.



—COMPILED BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

## REVIEW

# Everyone's Got a Story to Tell

Heartwarming and humorous, *Cinema Bandi* pays tribute to unsung storytellers and the magic of movie-making

BY Jai Arjun Singh

In a village, an auto-rickshaw driver named Veera finds a big video camera that someone accidentally left in his vehicle. With the help of his friend Gana, he sets about trying to make a film himself. Who knows, it might become a pan-India hit?

The charming new film directed by Praveen Kandregula, *Cinema Bandi* (Netflix) perhaps derives inspiration from the fact that in recent years, thanks to mobile-phone technology and apps like Tik Tok, it has become possible for



A still from *Cinema Bandi*

people to become 'filmmakers'—often displaying remarkable creativity as they work and learn on the job.

Things get complicated for Veera and Gana as they gather a suitable crew (including a girl who sneaks away for the shoot on college time because her father won't let her act), but slowly they figure out the vagaries of shot-taking, continuity and costume. Everyone is infected by the project—in one scene Veera and his wife even behave a little 'filmi' when they quarrel. And in one of the wittier touches, the 'writer' of the amateur movie is an old man

who is always around for the shoot, but quiet and summarily overshadowed by what is going on around him. He does get to speak the film's hilarious last line, though.

Fittingly, this tribute to small filmmaking is itself a small, low-budget one, with first-time actors (only a little more polished than the hired-on-the-fly 'performer' in the story). This requires one to have a bit of patience with *Cinema Bandi*, its more raw moments, clichés and an over-earnestness in some of the storytelling. Ultimately, though, its sincerity and gentle humour carry the day. **R**

## STUDIO

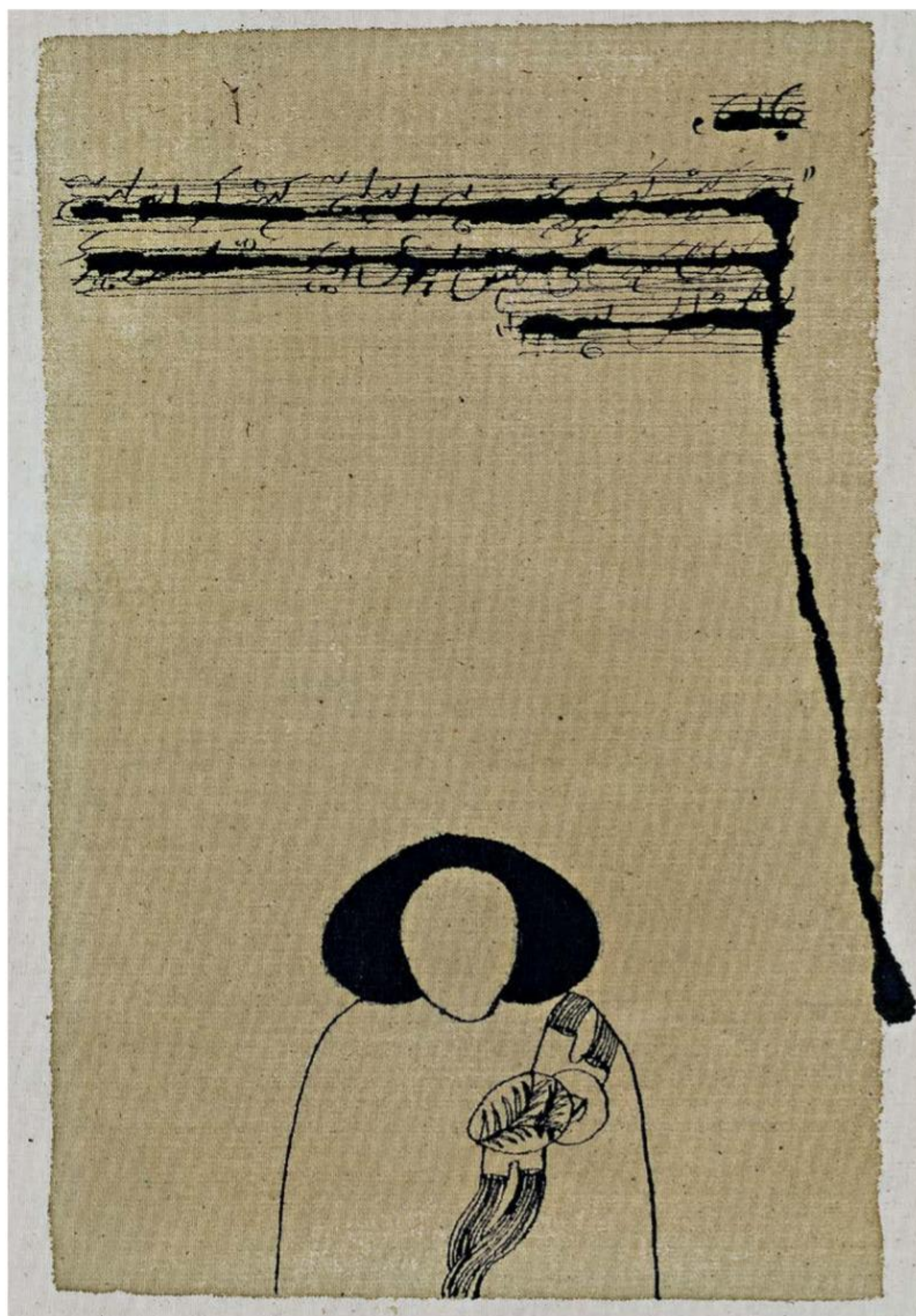
**May 11, Ek Adhuri  
Baat ka Mitna  
(Erasure of the  
Unsaid)**

by **Arshi Irshad  
Ahmadzai**

*Ink and flower-dye  
paste on Manjarpat  
fabric, 2020*

*40 x 23 cm*

THE WORD 'isolation,' much like the word 'love,' means different things to different people. For Arshi Irshad Ahmadzai, it was clearly an opportunity. She used the COVID lockdown to create 128 pieces of art. It's only when you dig a little deeper and look a little longer, do you perceive the anguish that has informed them. Each of these artworks is a letter she wrote to her Kabul-based husband from Delhi, a city where she found herself stranded when India closed its borders and bazaars in March last year.



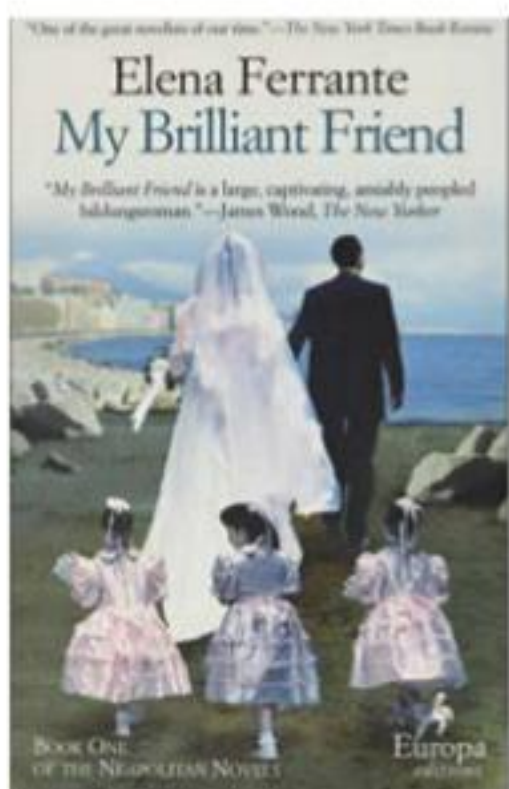
All letter writers know that editing is a violent act. The lines we draw across our words can come to seem brutal, often making the reader more curious about what was left out. In *Ek Adhuri Baat ka Mitna*, we see that Ahmadzai has crossed out all that she has

written. The ink has blotted, and, like blood, it drips on her fabric canvas. The woman drawn by the artist has no face. She can't see, hear, smell or taste, but Ahmadzai gives her a heart, one that beats and blurts words that need to be erased. **R**

— BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

## ME & MY SHELF

A communications consultant and former photojournalist with Reuters, **Farah Bashir** is the author of *Rumours of Spring*, her debut coming-of-age memoir about growing up amidst the political turmoil and violence in Kashmir.



### **My Brilliant Friend**

BY ELENA FERRANTE

*Europa*, ₹999

The first of the Neapolitan novels is a fantastic read about the different shades of female friendship. I re-read this *bildungsroman* to conceive an ordinary childhood and adolescence that girls may experience in a no-war zone.

### **The Year Of Magical Thinking**

BY JOAN DIDION, *RHUS*, ₹945

Didion's memoir is about the ability to process loss after the sudden death of her husband at their dinner table. It reinforces the ephemerality of life and is a testament to the human spirit that carries on despite enduring an intimate tragedy and preparing for an impending one.

### **Home Fire** BY KAMILA SHAMSIE,

*Bloomsbury India*, ₹599

In this adaptation of *Antigone* by Sophocles, Shamsie creates a portrait of young

Muslims clashing with the policies of the Western world and offers us a peep into clashing identities from the perspective of different characters. The attempt by a sister to fight for her brother's rights, to restore his dignity in death, in a world increasingly spinning out of control, is heart-stopping.



### **Beloved**

BY TONI MORRISON,

*RHUK*, ₹499:

It was not the pivotal event of a violent act of love that Sethe, as a mother, demonstrates by killing her own children rather than give them up to a slave-catcher—what stayed with me for a very long time was the way characters existed in their present and their history all at once, relevant even to this day.

### **Sharon and My Mother-in-Law**

BY SUAD AMIRY, *Pantheon*, ₹4,581:

A reflection of the larger political reality,

Amiry anchors her book on the 40 days she spent in curfew. She reveals the absurdities of living in an occupied land by describing mundane, everyday life, rendered extraordinary by dint of it being in Ramallah, while trying to stay equanimous during a time of siege.

## Things Fall Apart

BY CHINUA ACHEBE, *Penguin*, ₹519

Achebe merges the loss of a culture and the transformation brought on by the beginnings of colonialism in the fictitious village, Igbo. While he spells out the fractures induced in its society, the true act of resistance was in his use of the natives' language interspersed with English, at a time when there were apprehensions about publishing an African writer. To enforce an identity threatened by potential erasure demonstrates courage.

## Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward Said,

*Vintage*, ₹1,310

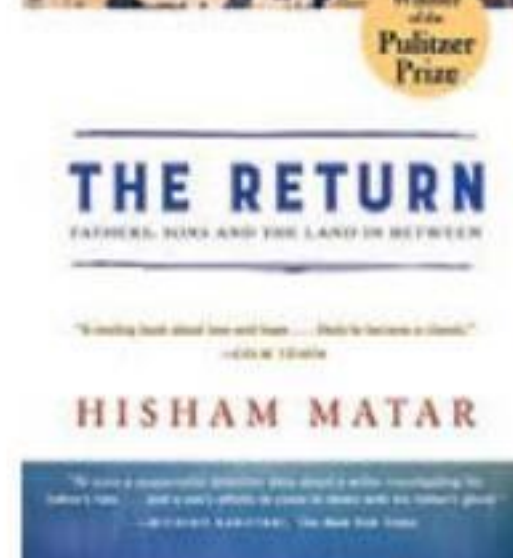
This collection is a vast canvas of Said's ideas on politics, culture, music, activism and scholarship, the mixing of the two, nationalism and even Salman Rushdie's underground existence. I often dip in and out of these short lucid lessons.

## Known and Strange Things

BY TEJU COLE, *Faber and Faber*, ₹499

This collection of essays establishes Cole's place as a writer of intellectual depth on non-African subjects. In one of his essays (*A Reader's War*), he shows us how façades are maintained under the

garb of sophistication while destruction is carried out in the world. What it reveals transcends nationalities; he goes beyond his own worlds and becomes a writer whose words are at once applicable to a Palestine, an Iraq, an Africa, a Kashmir.



## The Return: Fathers, Sons and the Land In Between

BY HISHAM MATAR, *Random House Trade Paperbacks*, ₹1,309

The heart beats and stops at the command of the author while reading this memoir. No unconscionable act of the Libyan regime is enough to diminish the hope that Matar carries in his heart to find his disappeared father. It's a devastating ledger of love, loss and hope. The non-linearity of the narrative reveals the events from his younger angry self to the measured older self, and the humane and dignified writer that he is.

## The Late Bourgeois World

BY NADINE GORDIMER, *Bloomsbury*, ₹899

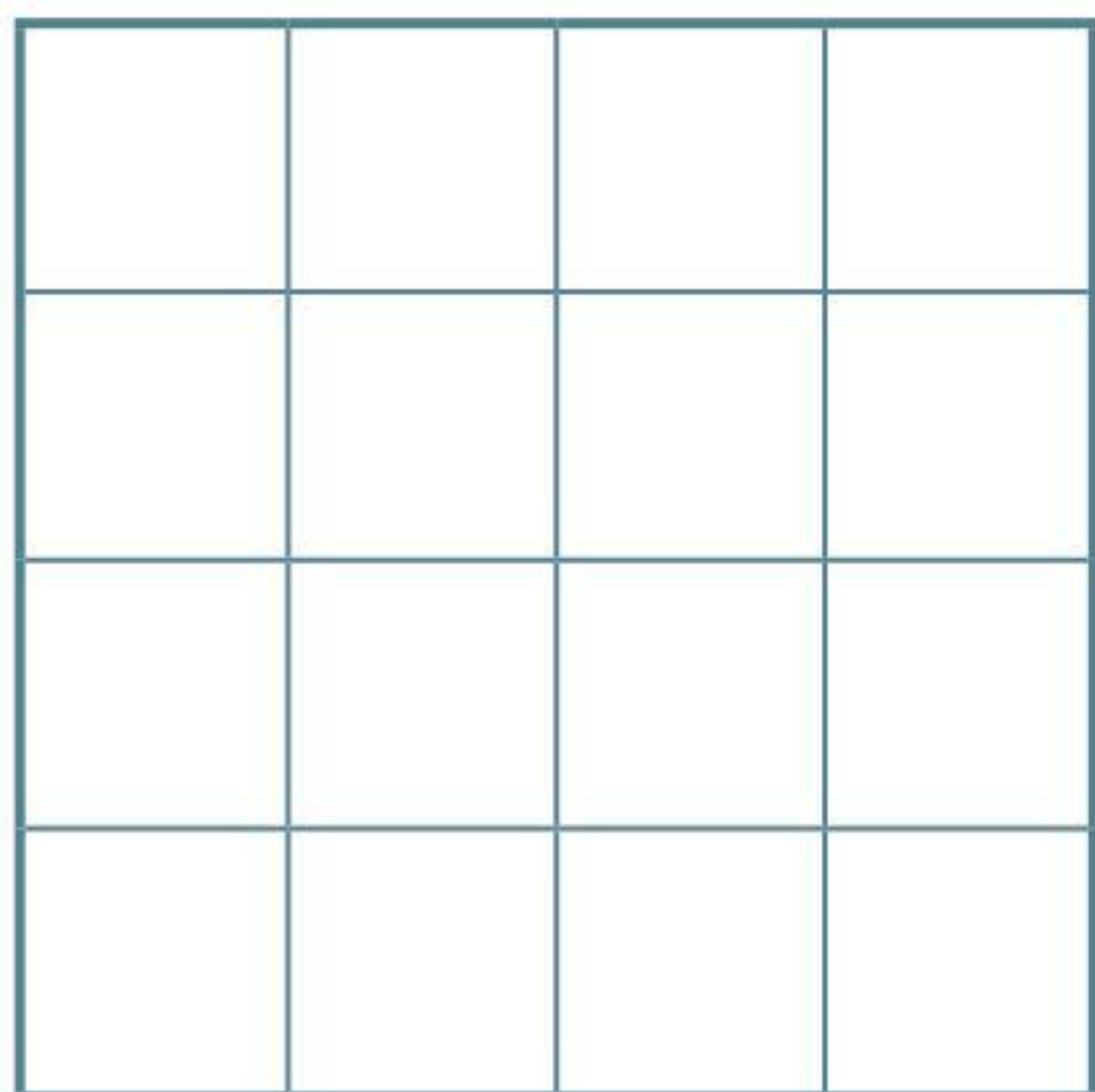
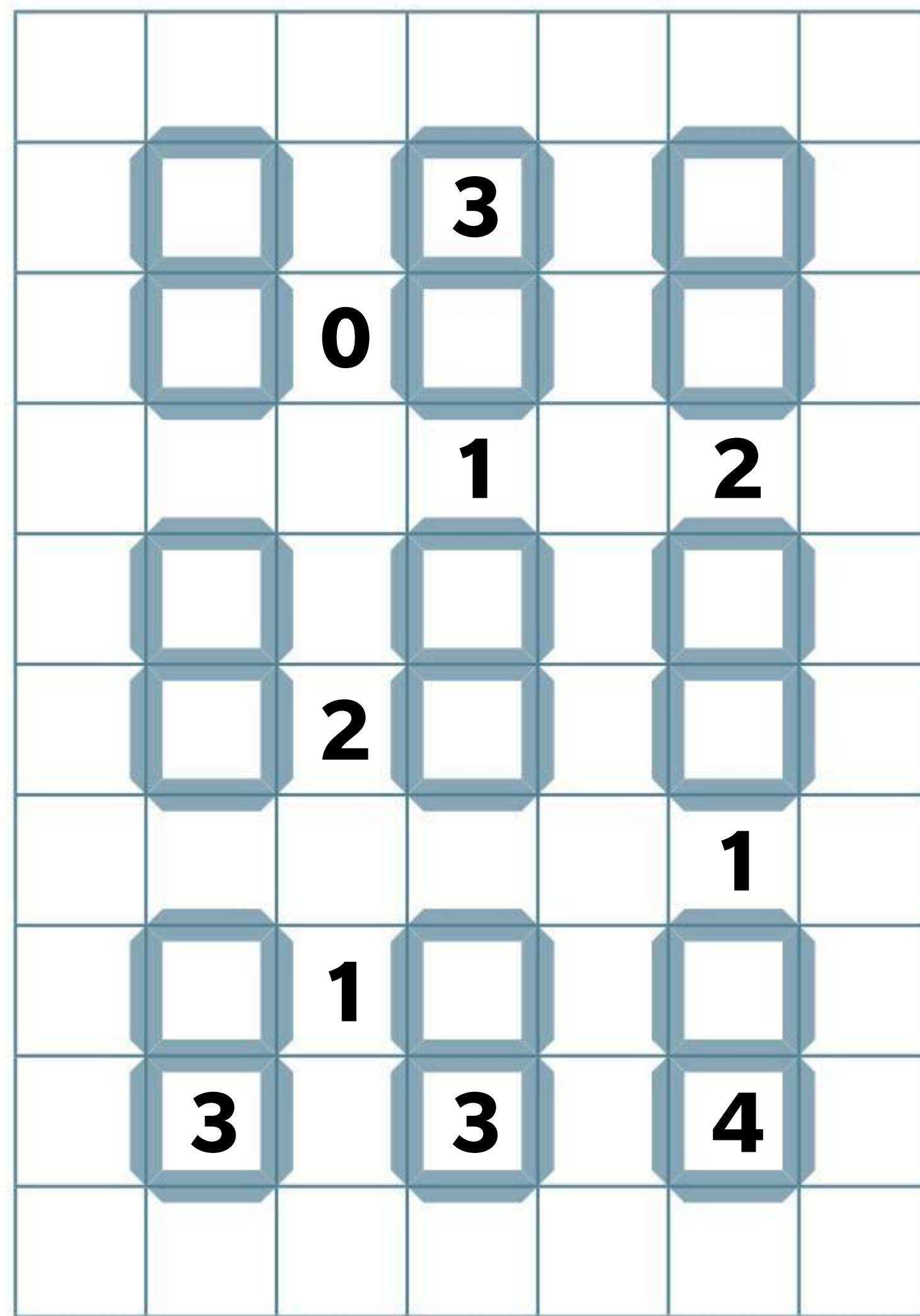
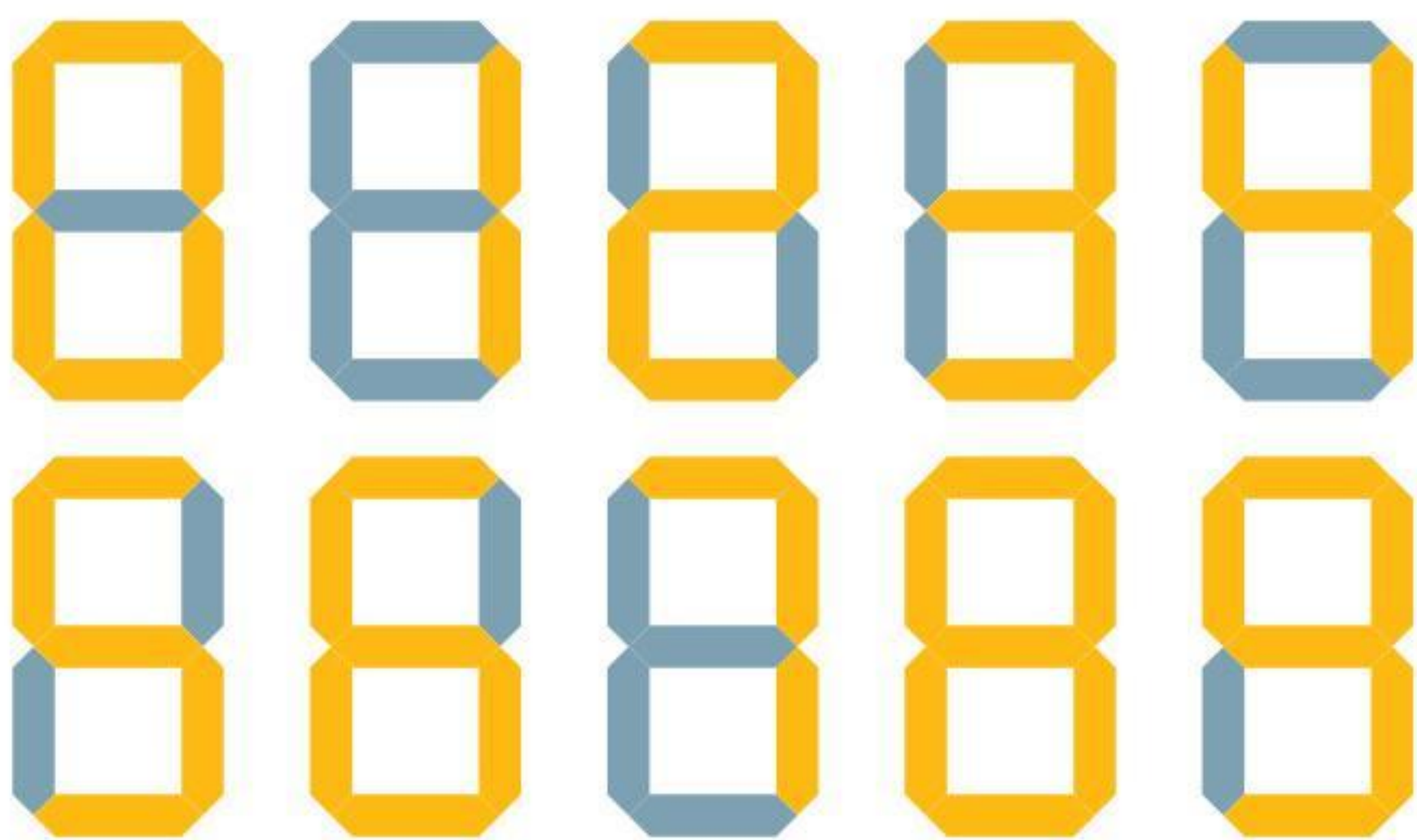
On the surface of this novella, Nadine Gordimer paints an intimate portrait of her failed marriage to an ineffectual rebel, single parenthood and half-hearted affairs, the crevices of which she fills with the deep apparatus of apartheid. She weaves a mesh of the political and personal with ease and cleverness to expose the interiority of it. There is a quiet force in this book that compelled me to write. Each time, I'd get stuck while writing, I'd return to it. **R**

# BRAIN GAMES

7 Pages TO SHARPEN Your Mind

## Lighten Up

**Difficult** Three digital alarm clocks are sitting in a pile. The numbers inside the squares of this grid indicate how many of the lines adjacent to that square are lit. Can you fill in three numbers (with three digits each) so that the numbers on the two top clocks add up to the number on the bottom clock? The digits 0 through 9 are shown for your reference.



45

16

98

54

48 63 42 30

## Times Square

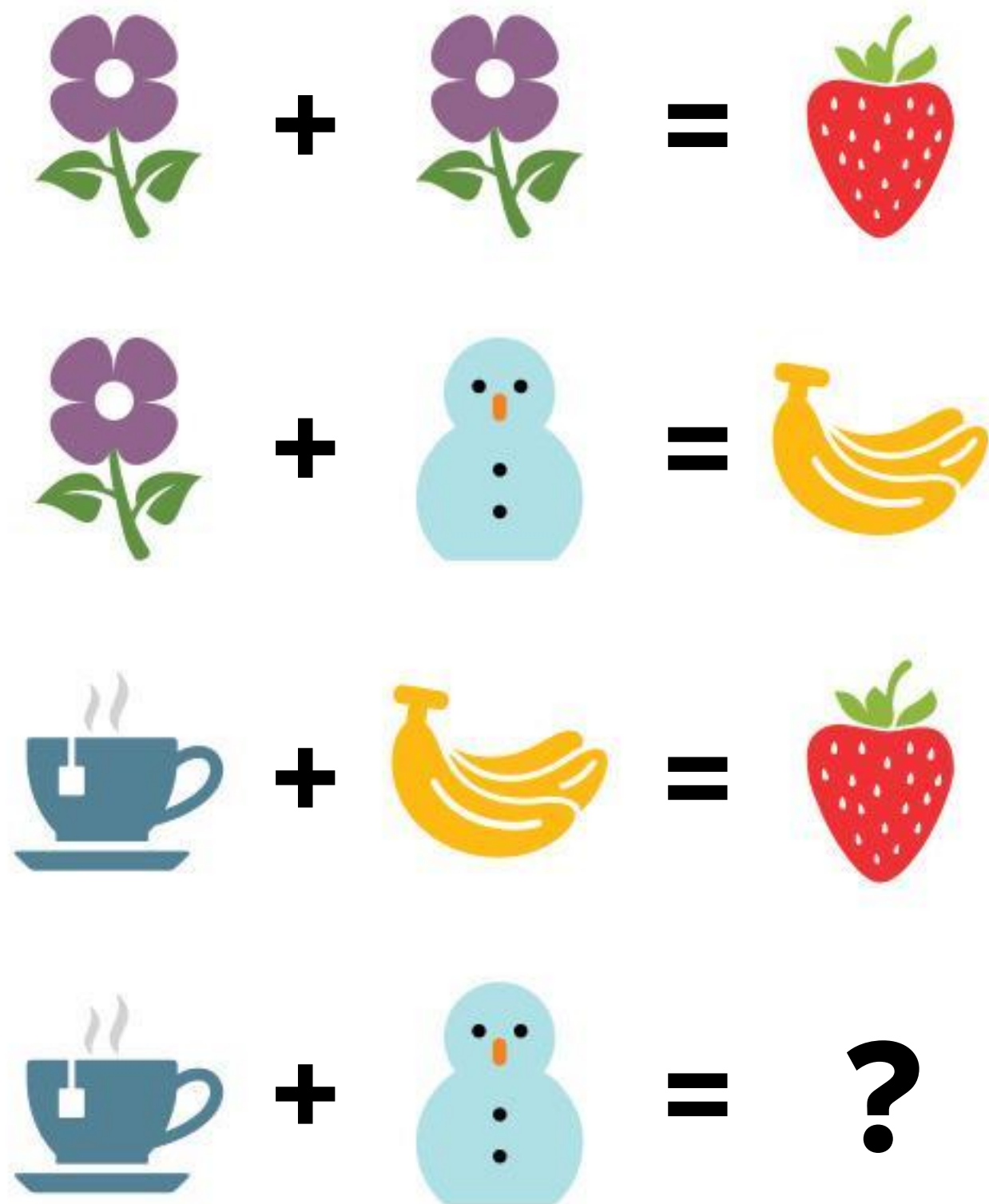
**Moderately Difficult** Fill in each cell of the grid with a digit from 1 through 9. Each number outside the grid is the product of multiplying the digits in its row or column. The number 1 will appear exactly once in each row and column. Other numbers can be repeated, and not every digit from 1 through 9 will be used. Can you complete the grid?

(LIGHTEN UP) DARREN RIGBY; (TIMES SQUARE) FRASER SIMPSON



**Symbolism**

**Moderately difficult** Based on these equations, what's the missing symbol?



**Feeling Lucky?**

**Easy** You enter a casino and are presented with a game where you must draw the ace, king, queen and jack of diamonds, in that exact order, out of a standard deck of 52 playing cards. What's your probability of winning?

**Str8ts**

**Difficult** Fill in the white cells with digits from 1 through 9 so that no number repeats in any row or column. Black cells divide the rows and columns into 'compartments'. Each compartment needs to contain a 'straight'. A straight is a set of numbers that have no gaps between them, but they can appear in any order (for example, 2, 3, 5, 4). A clue in a black cell removes that number as an option in the cell's row and column, but it is not part of any straight.

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

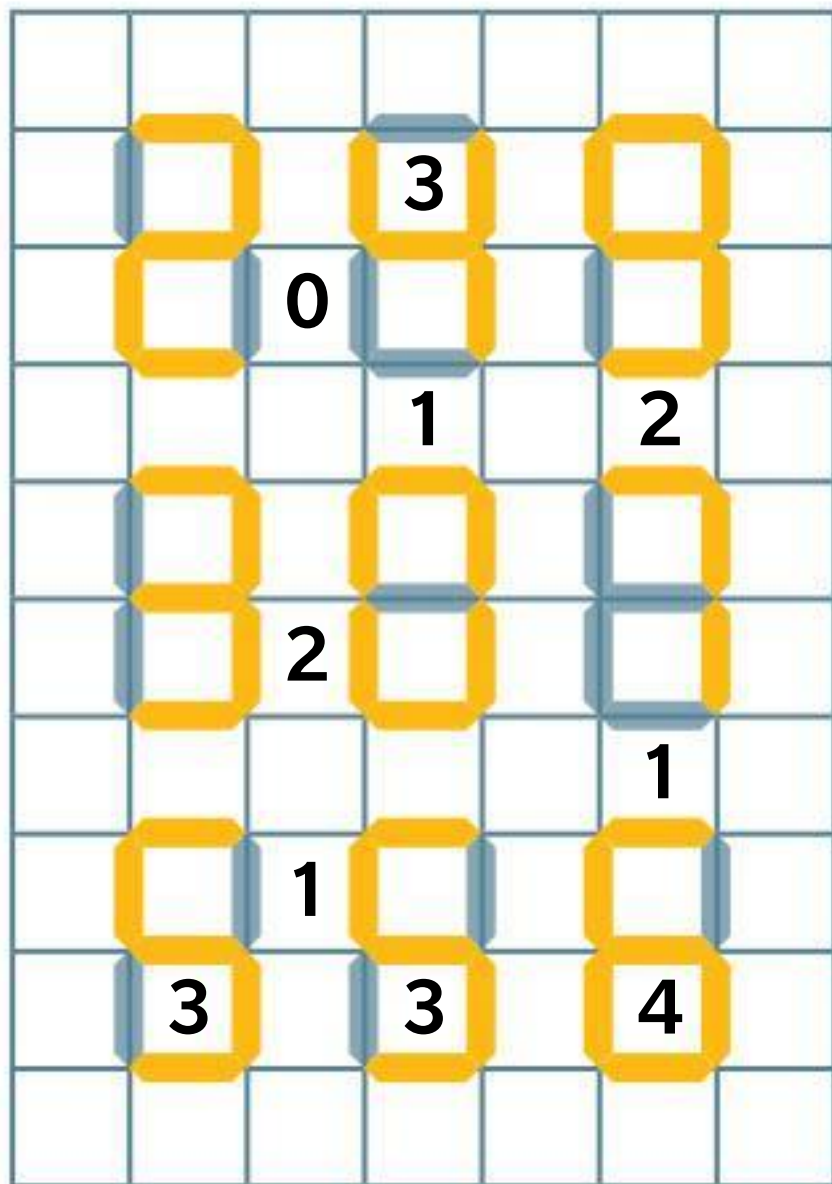
For answers, turn to PAGE 160.

(SYMBOLISM AND FEELING LUCKY?) SUE DOHRIN; (STR8TS) JEFF WIDDERICH

# BRAIN GAMES ANSWERS

FROM PAGES 158 & 159

## Shape Up



## Times Square

1	3	3	5
4	1	2	2
2	7	7	1
6	3	1	3

## Symbolism



## Feeling Lucky?

1 in 6,497,400.

## Str8ts

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



BY *Jeff Widderich*

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

## 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

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


**WORD POWER**

**This month**, we're celebrating words with Hebrew roots. You may know more than you think: *balm*, *cherub*, *cider*, *kosher* and *Sabbath*, for starters. See if you can *schmooze* your way through our quiz, and then say *shalom* to the next page for answers.

BY Sarah Chassé

**1. pharaoh** *n.*

('fair-oh)

- A ancient grain.
- B small boat.
- C Egyptian king.

**2. jubilee** *n.*

('joo-buh-lee)

- A 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- B candied fruit.
- C lucky charm.

**3. cabal** *n.*

(kuh-'bahl)

- A secretive group.
- B prayer shawl.
- C city-state.

**4. golem** *n.*

('goh-luhm)

- A set of rules.
- B artificial human.
- C poached fish.

**5. hosanna** *n.*

(ho-'zan-uh)

- A mountaintop.
- B shout of praise.
- C eldest daughter.

**6. babel** *n.*

('bab-uhl)

- A noisy confusion.
- B skyscraper.
- C naughty child.

**7. matzo** *n.*

('maht-suh)

- A flatbread.
- B ceremony.
- C card game.

**8. scapegoat** *n.*

('scayp-goht)

- A one who swears.
- B herdsman.
- C one unfairly blamed.

**9. philistine** *adj.*

('fih-luh-steen)

- A allergic.
- B uncultured.
- C foreign.

**10. maven** *n.*

('may-vuhn)

- A expert.
- B matchmaker.
- C rebel.

**11. messiah** *n.*

(muh-'sy-uh)

- A follower.
- B savior.
- C traitor.

**12. jezebel** *n.*

('jeh-zuh-bel)

- A hoopskirt.
- B immoral woman.
- C ram's horn.

**13. behemoth** *n.*

(bih-'hee-muth)

- A something huge.
- B something old.
- C something holy.

**14. chutzpah** *n.*

('hut-spuh)

- A cookie.
- B nerve.
- C blessing.

**15. manna** *n.* ('man-uh)

- A godsend.
- B great-aunt.
- C winged beetle.

## A Not-So-Mighty Hunter

It wasn't always rude to call someone a 'nimrod'. In the Hebrew Bible (aka the Old Testament), Nimrod was the name of an exceptional hunter, and 'nimrod' would later refer to any hunter. So how did his name become an insult? One popular theory: Cartoon character Bugs Bunny often sarcastically called the bumbling Elmer Fudd 'Nimrod' in 1940s cartoons, teaching generations of Looney Tunes fans that it meant *idiot*.



### Word Power ANSWERS

**1. pharaoh (C)** *Egyptian king.* The pharaoh commanded that a giant pyramid be built in his honour.

**2. jubilee (A)** *50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.* Our town celebrated its jubilee with a parade down Main Street.

**3. cabal (A)** *secretive group.* The mayor and her cabal of insiders have ruled this city for decades.

**4. golem (B)** *artificial human.* In *Frankenstein*, a young scientist brings a hideous golem to life.

**5. hosanna (B)** *shout of praise.* The new production of *Wicked* opened to hosannas from theatre critics.

**6. babel (A)** *noisy confusion.* "I can't hear myself think over all this babel!" Nusrat shouted.

**7. matzo (A)** *flatbread.* The only matzo I eat is the kind that's been covered in chocolate.

**8. scapegoat (C)** *one unfairly blamed.* Though the whole team played badly, the starting pitcher became the scapegoat for the loss.

**9. philistine (B)** *uncultured.* Call my taste philistine if you like; I still think that *The Three Stooges* was hilarious.

**10. maven (A)** *expert.* Jaden is the financial maven of our group, advising everyone on saving for retirement.

**11. messiah (B)** *saviour.* The self-help guru has been hailed as a messiah by his followers.

**12. jezebel (B)** *immoral woman.* "In my day, you'd be labeled a jezebel for showing your knees!" Aunt Rita said with a laugh.

**13. behemoth (A)** *something huge.* The merger would create a tech behemoth that could crush all competition.

**14. chutzpah (B)** *nerve.* "I can't believe he had the chutzpah to say that to me!" Tanmay fumed.

**15. manna (A)** *godsend.* This cancer breakthrough might be the manna that so many patients have been waiting for.

### Vocabulary Ratings

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



BY *Beth Shillibeer*

**1.** Actor Morgan Freeman turned his 50-hectare property into a sanctuary for what species recently labelled ‘the most important living beings on earth’?

**2.** After she successfully climbed the Matterhorn in 1895, the press debated whether Annie Smith Peck should be arrested for what reason?

**3.** Where in our solar system might it rain diamonds?

**4.** What writing implement can be made out of eggshells?

**5.** The Central Public Library in Vancouver is modelled after what type of building, famously found in Rome?

**6.** Which northeastern European capital city offers its residents free public transit?

**7.** Adherents of what religion have practiced langar—feeding those in need—throughout the pandemic?

**8.** Heron of Alexandria invented the first vending machine in the first century AD. What did it dispense?

**9.** The Bios Urn, created by Spaniard Gerard Moline, transforms the remains of loved ones into what?

**10.** Which disease, affecting roughly 422 million people globally, did University of Alberta researchers recently cure in mice?

**11.** What kind of dancers traditionally perform at an English May Day celebration, accompanied by bells, sticks and sometimes a white handkerchief?

**12.** What German vehicle once favoured by hippies will be available in an electric form in 2023?

**13.** Which Irish writer said, “We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars”?

**14.** What milestone did Chris Nikić achieve when he crossed the Ironman finish line in November 2020?



**15.** Which European general was attacked by rabbits, forcing him to retreat from a hunt?

**Answers:** 1. Bees. 2. She wore pants while climbing. 3. In the outer planets (Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus). 4. Chalk. 5. A coliseum. 6. Tallinn, Estonia. 7. Sikhism. 8. Holy water. 9. A tree. 10. Diabetes (types 1 and 2). 11. Morris dancers. 12. VW Bus. 13. Oscar Wilde. 14. First person with Down's syndrome to complete the Ironman triathlon. 15. Napoleon Bonaparte.

# QUOTABLE QUOTES

What modest dreamers we have become.

Zadie Smith, *author*

**Home is not where you were born; home is where  
all your attempts to escape cease.**

Naguib Mahfouz, *nobel laureate*

The only solutions that are ever worth anything are the  
solutions that people find themselves.

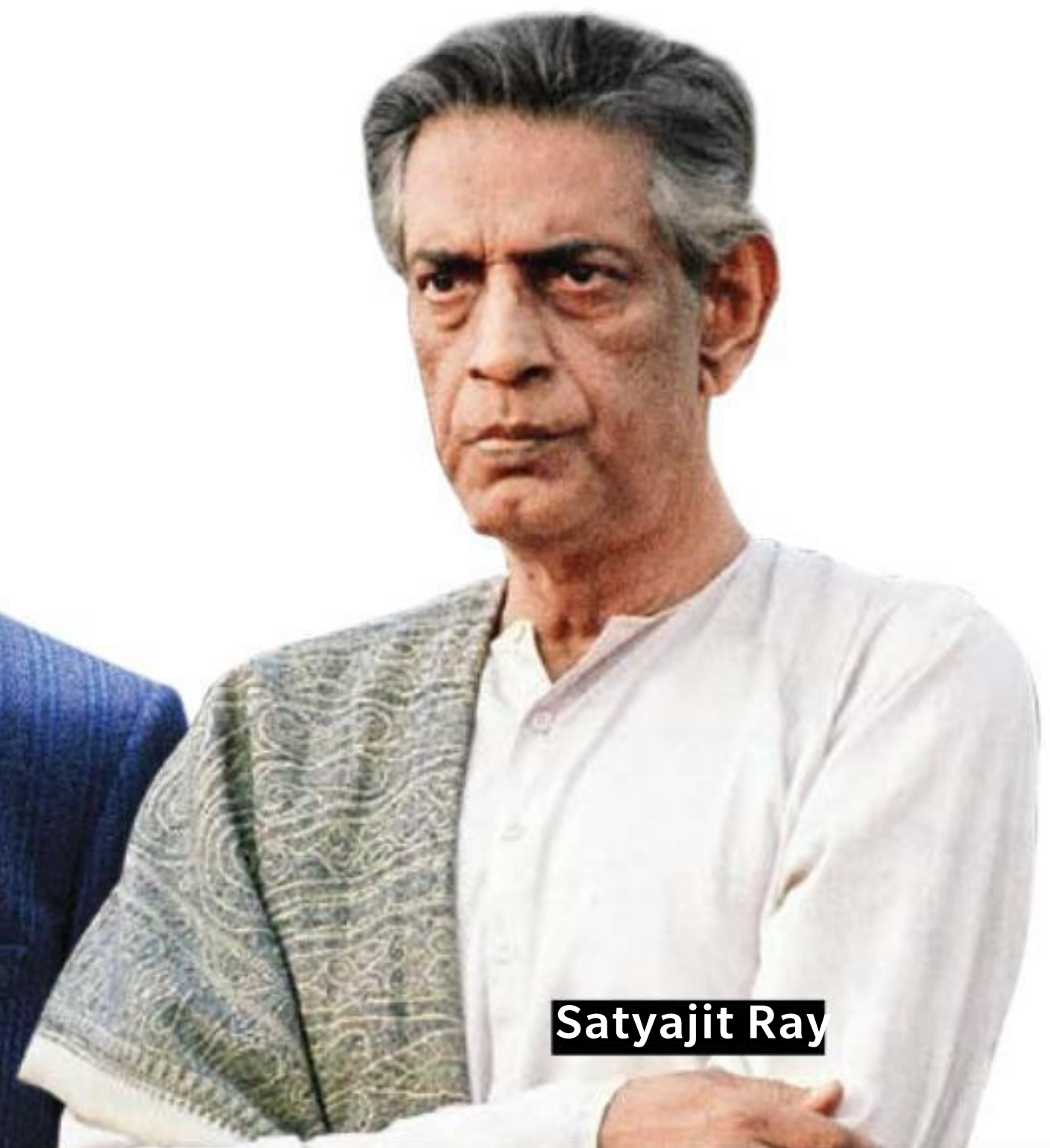
Satyajit Ray, *filmmaker and writer*



Zadie Smith



Naguib Mahfouz



Satyajit Ray

ALAMY (2); SAIBAL DAS (INDIA TODAY)



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