

# Inspire...

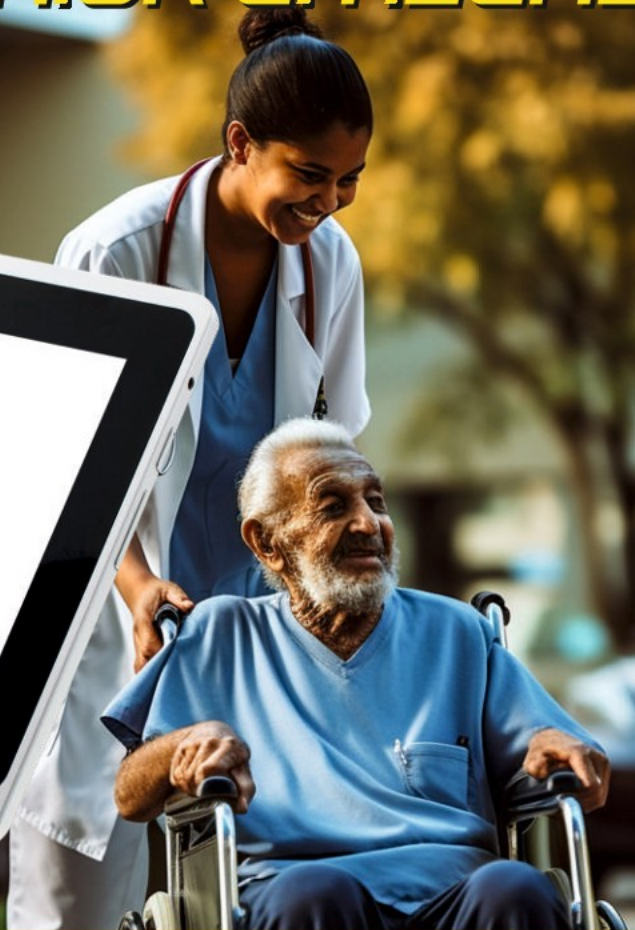
*a total awareness magazine for the 40+*

Vol. 2, S. No. 62, April - June 2026

**Financial  
Wisdom for  
Golden Years**

**Cultivating  
Cognitive  
Vitality**

## DIGITAL LIFELINE FOR SENIOR CITIZENS



**GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

**Ms. Jollan Margaret  
A Llanaeza**

*Commercial Counsellor – Philippines  
Trade and Investment Centres in  
India and Indonesia*

**INSPIRING ICON**

**Acharya Sudhanshu Ji  
Maharaj**

*Globally recognised spiritual leader,  
preacher, and the founder of the  
Vishwa Jagriti Mission (VJM)*



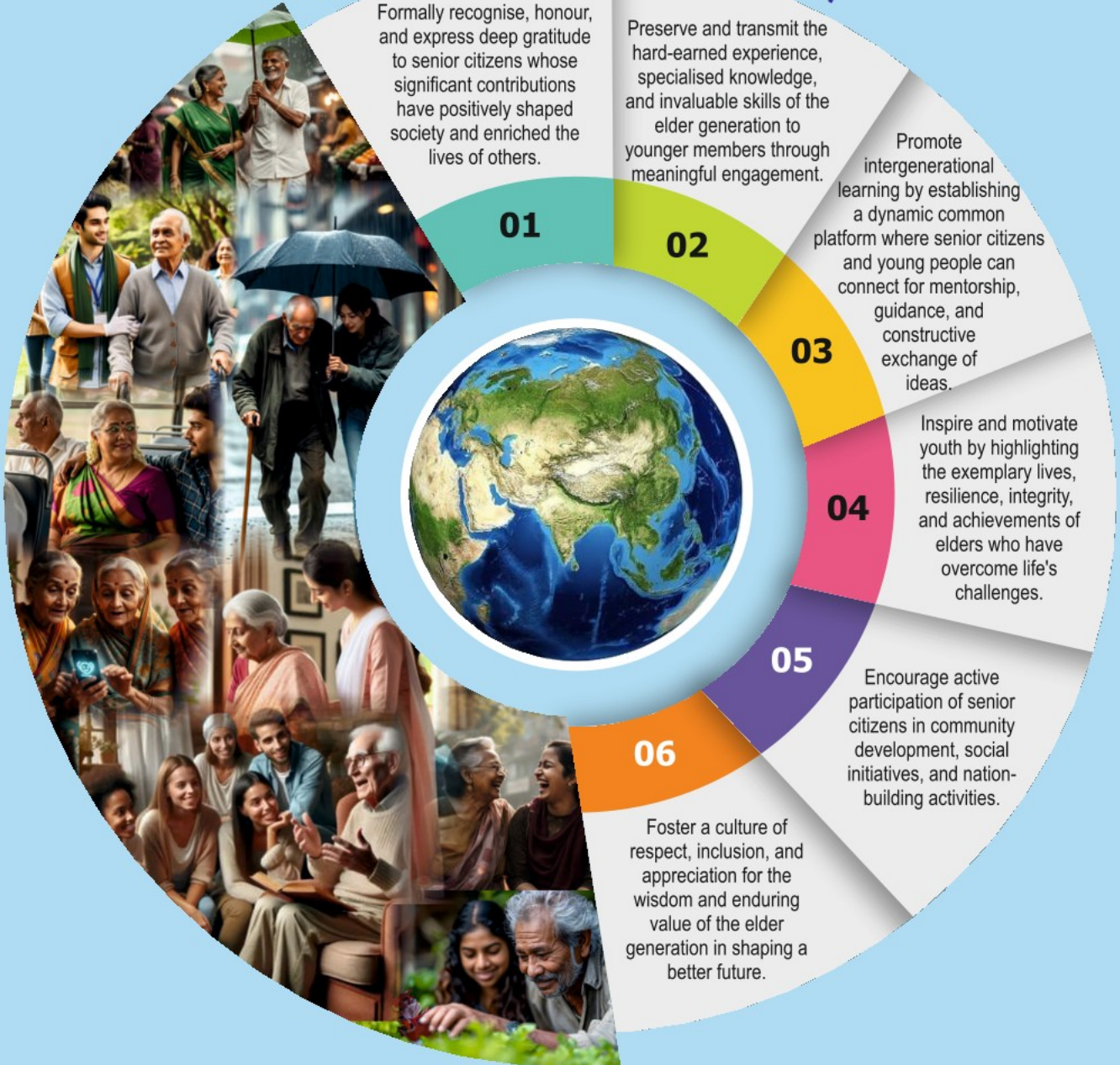


*national level NGO*

## ENLIGHTENING MASSES ABOUT EXPERIENCES AND TEACHINGS OF VETERANS

**T**he Eminent is a national-level, non-profit, charitable, and non-governmental organisation. It is passionately focused on unlocking, celebrating, and utilising the great potential embodied by veteran elders—the visionary architects and steadfast builders of our present world.

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918, 9th Floor, Devika Tower, 6, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110019, India  
Phone: +91 11 4654 0908 • Email: eminent.ngo@gmail.com • Web: www.eminentinspire.com

# Inspire...

a total awareness magazine for the 40+

**A** non-commercial quarterly publication created for distinguished members, associates, and all those devoted to respecting and supporting senior citizens.



## Patron

Dr. AK Agarwal

## Editor

Dr. Lallan Prasad

## Consulting Editor

Vishal Duggal

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- Acharya Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj

A globally recognised spiritual leader, preacher, and the founder of the Vishwa Jagriti Mission (VJM)

- By Staff Correspondent

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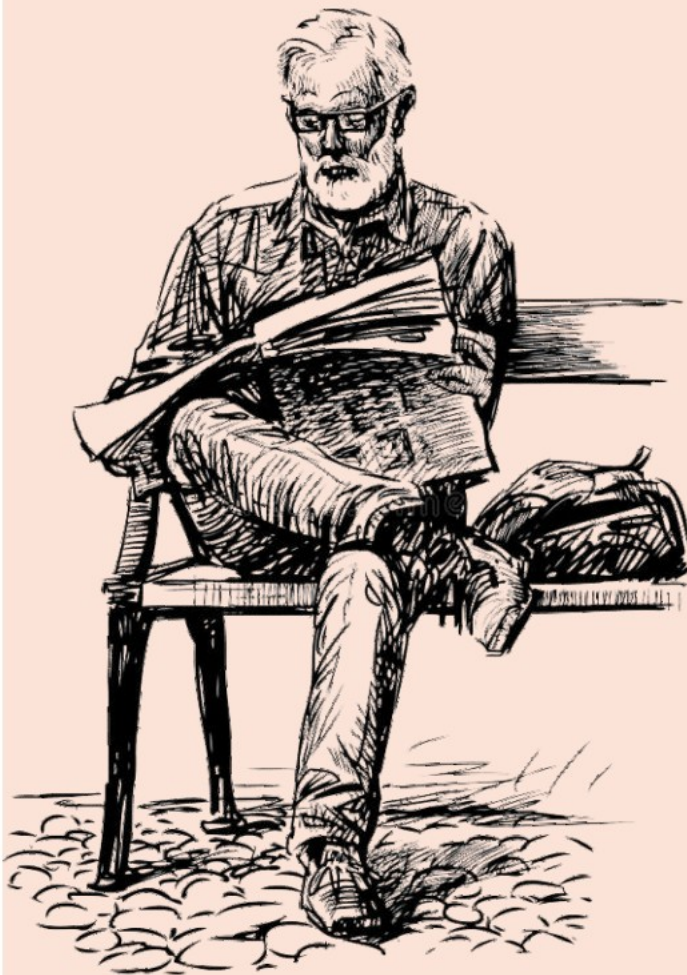
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# “The Wisdom of Resilience”



Flaws are human, but resilience is divine.

We aren't defined by the stumbles that trip us, but by the fire that forges us.

We don't just fall—we rebound.

We don't just learn—we evolve.

With a heart full of grit and a soul anchored in faith, we rise.

Every "New Day" is a gift of grace from God—a fresh canvas to build a version of ourselves that is braver, wiser, and more powerful than we have ever been.

”

# READERS' COLUMN

Your feedback helps us grow! Whether it's a suggestion for our layout or a topic you'd like us to explore, we value the voice of our community.  
Email: [eminent.ngo@gmail.com](mailto:eminent.ngo@gmail.com)  
Postal Address: Inspire, 912, 9th Floor, Devika Tower, 6, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110 019

As someone who has crossed the milestone of 60, I find Inspire to be a deeply reassuring platform that walks alongside us in this 'second spring'. While the articles on financial management and health are invaluable, I would love to see a larger font size in the feature sections. For those of us navigating changing physical needs, a more senior-friendly layout would make your wonderful content even more accessible.

- **Ranvir Singh**, Noida (U.P.)

I appreciate how Inspire balances the many dimensions of mature living, from nature to reflective columns. The magazine acts as the moral and emotional backbone of society. To make it even more interactive, perhaps you could incorporate a 'Reader's Wisdom' corner where we can share our own lived realities and small triumphs. Hearing directly from seniors would add a lovely personal touch to the presentation.

- **Ajay Sharma**, Kanpur



As a regular reader of your 'total awareness magazine' I find the focus on prevention and informed care to be the cornerstone of dignity in later years. However, in today's digital age, it would be wonderful if the magazine incorporated more QR codes leading to video demonstrations for the health exercises or financial webinars mentioned in your pages. Merging your classic print presentation with a bit more digital interactivity would be a great leap forward.

- **Meera Deo**, Goa

The Nature and Books/Literature sections provide a much-needed wider perspective on human existence. I find the current photography beautiful, but I think the magazine could benefit from even more high-quality, full-page visuals to complement the reflective pieces. A more minimalist and 'breathing' layout would enhance the sense of peace and clarity that Inspire aims to provide to its readers.

- **Yashwant Singh Rana**, Delhi

# KEY NATIONAL / INTERNATIONAL DAYS (APRIL - JUNE 2026)

## APRIL 2026

- **1 April**  
- Odisha Foundation Day (India) 
- **2 April**  
- World Autism Awareness Day 
- **5 April**  
- National Maritime Day (India) 
- **7 April**  
- World Health Day 
- **11 April**  
- National Safe Motherhood Day 
- **13 April**  
- Jallianwala Bagh Massacre Remembrance Day 
- **14 April**  
- Dr B R Ambedkar Jayanti 
- **18 April**  
- World Heritage Day 
- **22 April**  
- International Mother Earth Day 
- **23 April**  
- World Book and Copyright Day 
- **24 April**  
- National Panchayati Raj Day (India) 
- **25 April**  
- World Malaria Day 

## MAY 2026

- **1 May**  
- International Labour Day (May Day) 
- **3 May**  
- World Press Freedom Day 
- **8 May**  
- World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day 
- **11 May**  
- National Technology Day (India) 
- **12 May**  
- International Nurses Day 
- **15 May**  
- International Day of Families 
- **17 May**  
- World Telecommunication and Information Society Day  
- International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia 
- **20 May**  
- World Bee Day 
- **21 May**  
- National Anti-Terrorism Day (India)  
- International Tea Day 
- **22 May**  
- International Day for Biological Diversity 
- **25 May**  
- Africa Day 
- **29 May**  
- International Day of UN Peacekeepers 
- **31 May**  
- World No Tobacco Day 

## JUNE 2026

- **1 June**  
- Global Day of Parents 
- **4 June**  
- International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression 
- **5 June**  
- World Environment Day 
- **7 June**  
- World Food Safety Day 
- **8 June**  
- World Oceans Day 
- **12 June**  
- World Day Against Child Labour 
- **14 June**  
- World Blood Donor Day 
- **16 June**  
- International Day of Family Remittances 
- **17 June**  
- World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 
- **20 June**  
- World Refugee Day 
- **21 June**  
- International Day of Yoga 
- **23 June**  
- United Nations Public Service Day 
- **23 June**  
- International Olympic Day 
- **26 June**  
- International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 
- **29 June**  
- National Statistics Day (India) 
- **30 June**  
- International Day of Parliamentarism 



from the:  
*Patron*

*I*t gives me great pleasure to present this special edition of Inspire magazine, thoughtfully curated for our senior community. This issue brings together a balanced selection of sections reflecting the many dimensions of mature living - from themes that unite society and inspire reflection, to health pages focused on awareness, prevention, and informed care, recognising well-being as the foundation of independence and dignity.

*Our sections on personality, inspiring icons, wisdom, nature, finance, and literature highlight meaningful choices and the enduring value of experience, resilience, and contribution. They remind us that learning, creativity, and purpose deepen with age.*

*I sincerely appreciate the dedication of our editorial team, contributors, and well-wishers.*

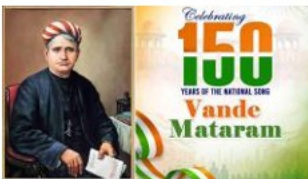
*I am especially grateful to you, our readers, for your continued trust and encouragement. May this edition inspire you to embrace every stage of life with confidence, balance, and positivity.*

*A.K. Agarwal*  
Dr. AK Agarwal

**JANUARY 2026**



The Indian Army officially declared 2026 as the "Year of Networking & Data Centricity." This initiative focuses on integrating advanced communication systems and AI-driven data analytics into operational frameworks to enhance battlefield transparency and decision-making speed.



**26–27 January 2026** – India celebrated its 77th Republic Day with the theme "150 Years of Vande Mataram." The President of the European Council, Antonio Costa, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, attended as Chief Guests. During the visit, India and the EU progressed on trade negotiations and a new cooperation framework for the mobility of students and skilled professionals.

President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, attended as Chief Guests. During the visit, India and the EU progressed on trade negotiations and a new cooperation framework for the mobility of students and skilled professionals.



**23 February 2026** – The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) released "PRAHAAR," India's first-ever comprehensive National Counter-Terrorism Policy. The policy emphasises a unified response to cross-border terror and highlights the increasing threat from "nation-state sponsored cyber-attacks," establishing a new coordination mechanism between central and state agencies.

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**MARCH 2026**



Under the Viksit Bharat – Gramin Act 2025, the government successfully disbursed the first quarter of guaranteed wage employment for the year. Officials noted that

the transition from MGNREGA to the new framework has improved the timely payment of wages to elderly rural workers through the "Aadhaar Enabled Payment System" (AePS).



**19–23 January 2026** – The World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting was held in Davos, Switzerland, under the theme "A Spirit of Dialogue." Global leaders addressed the "Triple Transition" of AI, Energy, and Geopolitics. High-profile addresses were delivered by world leaders, including the U.S. President and the President of the European Commission, focusing on the responsible deployment of AI and global growth and productivity.

**FEBRUARY 2026**



Indian Railways launched the first-ever LNG-Diesel Dual-Fuel Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) train. This pilot project is part of the "Net Zero Carbon Emitter by 2030" mission, aiming to reduce particulate matter emissions in suburban transport by nearly 25 per cent.



**February 2026** – India and Brazil strengthened their Strategic Partnership during high-level diplomatic exchanges, focusing on green tech cooperation and the expansion of the Global Biofuels Alliance. Both nations signed the "Pax Silica Declaration," a commitment to ethical AI and semiconductor supply chain resilience.



**18 March 2026** – The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare reported that the expansion of Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY) to all citizens aged 70+ has reached over 40 million new beneficiaries since its rollout. The data showed a 30 per cent reduction in out-of-pocket expenditure for geriatric hospitalisations in the first quarter of the year.



## INSPIRING ICON

“Spirituality is Meaningful  
Engagement with Life”

# Acharya Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj

*By Staff Correspondent*

In today's world defined by rapid change, digital distraction, and emotional fragmentation, the search for purpose and inner balance has never been more urgent. Acharya Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj - born on 2 May 1955 in Haripur, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh - bridges this gap, bringing timeless spiritual wisdom to the complexities of modern living. He is a globally recognised spiritual

### **The Gita as a Life Guide**

The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is not just a scripture but a complete guide to psychology, management, and life. It offers a solution to every human dilemma.

leader, preacher, and the founder of the Vishwa Jagriti Mission (VJM). The VJM maintains a wide national presence and

operates international chapters in countries including the United States, Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand.

### **Spirituality Rooted in Service**

What sets his work apart in the contemporary spiritual landscape is a lived synthesis of scriptural insight, compassionate service, and socially engaged spirituality. Under his guidance, VJM has grown into a living movement, dedicated to education,



Divine preaching by Acharya Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj

healthcare, and cultural revival. As he puts it, "True service begins when we see the Divine not only in temples, but in humanity itself."

In an exclusive, wide-ranging conversation with Vishal Duggal, Maharaj Ji reflects on his inner journey from humble beginnings to global presence, and the living relevance of India's ancient scriptures. From Sanatan tradition to modern anxieties, and the wisdom epitomised by the elderly, Maharaj Ji speaks on a wide range of subjects.

*Excerpts...*

### **Pilgrimage and Inner Transformation**

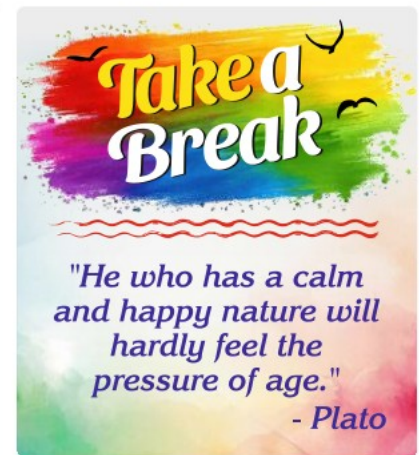
**You have travelled extensively across India's sacred sites. How did these pilgrimages influence your worldview and spiritual calling?**

Before assuming the role of a spiritual guide, my Guru, His Holiness Nandkishore, bestowed Deeksha upon me and instructed me to traverse India. This journey was more than a physical trek; it was a period of deep observation. By witnessing the diversity of the country, I began to cultivate a healthier inner self and the profound peace

necessary to lead others toward enlightenment. Extending across the length and breadth of India and beyond international borders, these travels became profound inner journeys that fostered my evolution as a person. They broadened my perspective on life and fundamentally reshaped my worldview.

I visited the Char Dhams, ancient temples, sacred rivers, and Himalayan hermitages, and spent time in the company of saints and sages. It helped me realise that while religious expressions differ, the human longing for peace, meaning, and inner fulfilment is universal.

These experiences gradually expanded my vision from personal spiritual pursuit to Lok Kalyan (public welfare). I witnessed intense devotion alongside silent suffering, which deeply stirred my conscience. Seeing the Divine not only in sanctums but also in struggling humanity transformed my calling, shifting it from inward contemplation to active, compassionate engagement with society. This journey inspired me



to bridge ancient spiritual wisdom with modern social realities.

### **From Yashpal to Sudhanshu**

**Can you reflect on your transformation from Yashpal to Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj — both internally and externally? What does the name "Sudhanshu" signify to you?**

The transition from Yashpal to Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj symbolised a movement away from individual identity towards universal responsibility. Internally, it was a gradual dissolution of ego, allowing myself to become an instrument

of divine purpose. Externally, it meant surrendering personal aspirations to a life of Seva and Sadhana, evolving from a philosophical seeker into a spiritual guide for society at large.

The name 'Sudhanshu', associated with the Moon, signifies coolness, calmness, and gentle illumination in darkness. To me, it is a constant reminder that my role is not to overpower but to soothe - to reflect light without heat, offering tranquillity and clarity to those burdened by the pressures of worldly life.

### Relevance of Ancient Scriptures Today

**Many of your discourses focus on the Vedas, the Gita, and the Upanishads. How do you interpret their relevance in the 21st century?**

The Vedas, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Upanishads are not relics of the past. They are timeless guides for conscious living. In a world grappling with stress, anxiety, and ethical confusion, the Gita's principle of Karma Yog - performing one's duty without attachment to outcomes — serves as a powerful framework for mental resilience.

These scriptures offer insights into leadership, emotional balance, decision-making, and ethical living. True spirituality does not demand withdrawal from life. It teaches inner equilibrium while navigating modern anxieties. Life is predominantly shaped by Karma (effort), supported by meditation and divine grace.

### Daily Practice and Inner Strength

**What gives you strength when you are alone? A practice you follow daily without fail, and a book you recommend to everyone?**

When I am alone, my strength comes from my connection with



*Acharya Sudhanshu Ji Maharaj with his disciples at Anand Dham Ashram, New Delhi*

### Ageing as Spiritual Ripening

**Ageing should represent spiritual ripening, not social marginalisation. I encourage elders to embrace the spirit of Vanaprastha - a phase of reflection, wisdom-sharing, and inner freedom.**

the Divine through deep meditation. Silence is not empty; it is full of answers. My non-negotiable daily practice is Simran and Dhyana (meditation) - it resets my internal compass and connects me to the cosmic energy.

As for a book, I wholeheartedly recommend the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, which is not just a scripture but a complete guide to psychology, management, and life. It offers a solution to every human dilemma. Reading even a few verses daily provides the clarity to face any challenge with equanimity and courage. It is my constant companion and guide.

### Rituals Versus Lived Spirituality

**How do you view the balance between ritual and lived spirituality? What truly matters - practice or intention?**

Rituals provide structure, but intention (Bhavana) gives spirituality its life force. While disciplined practices have value, true spirituality is lived through Dharma and Seva. It is not confined to ceremonial acts. I firmly believe that Manav Seva is

Madhav Seva - serving humanity is the greatest worship of God.

A ritual without purity of heart becomes mechanical, whereas even a small act of compassion, performed sincerely, becomes sacred. The ideal balance lies in purifying the mind through prayer and meditation, and expressing that purity through ethical conduct, empathy, and selfless action.

### Guidance for Elders' Well-Being

**How can elders maintain mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being in later life?**

Ageing should represent spiritual ripening, not social marginalisation. I encourage elders to embrace the spirit of Vanaprastha - a phase of reflection, wisdom-sharing, and inner freedom.

The concept of Vanaprastha Ashram invites the elderly to step into a mode of sacred detachment. This withdrawal is not an act of abandonment, but an act of engagement with a higher power. Staying engaged through Seva and Satsang nurtures emotional well-being

and prevents isolation. Also, through the practice of yoga and meditation, one builds the spiritual foundation necessary to transcend worldly bonds.

At our Anand Dham ashram, elders participate in yoga, meditation, collective prayer, and dialogue, enabling them to live with dignity and purpose. Detachment from excessive control, combined with meaningful social connection, allows them to experience peace, fulfilment, and emotional stability.

### **Integrating Wisdom of Elders**

#### **How can families and communities better integrate the wisdom and experience of their elders?**

We must revive the joint family spirit, even if we live in nuclear setups. Families should create a daily ritual of sitting together—perhaps at dinner or prayer—where elders share stories and experiences. We need to shift the perspective from viewing elders as dependents to respecting them as libraries of wisdom. By listening to them, actively seeking their guidance in decision-making, and valuing their presence in our Sanskar Kendras, we bridge the generation gap. When youth combine their energy with the experience of elders, society flourishes.

### **Evolution of Vishwa Jagriti Mission**

#### **Vishwa Jagriti Mission was founded in 1991. How has its vision evolved over time?**

When I founded Vishwa Jagriti Mission (VJM), it began as a divine resolve to awaken individual spiritual consciousness. Over time, this vision expanded into a comprehensive movement for social transformation. It is guided by the '7S' principles — Seva, Simran, Swadhyaya,

### **Elders as Libraries of Wisdom**

**Communities can establish forums where elders guide younger generations, preserving ethical and cultural values.**

Satsang, Sadhana, Samarpan, and Santosh.

Today, VJM's work spans education, healthcare, women empowerment, tribal welfare, and cultural preservation. With 86 national centres across 15 states, 24 temples, 36 ashrams, multiple Gurukuls, hospitals, and Bal Sanskar Kendras, the mission reflects its evolution from individual awakening to collective societal upliftment.

### **Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups**

#### **Which initiatives of VJM focus specifically on elders, women, and underserved communities?**

We operate Vridha Ashrams that provide elders with dignity and spiritual companionship, while programmes like Nari Abhyudaya Abhiyan and Kanya Aatmanirbhar Abhiyan empower women through education and vocational skills.

For underserved communities, VJM runs tribal schools, orphanages, hospitals, and charitable clinics, including Karuna Sindhu Hospital and VJM Arogya Dham, which together have served lakhs of patients. These efforts are not acts of charity but instruments of empowerment, ensuring self-reliance, respect, and hope.

### **Sanatan Values for Global Harmony**

#### **How can Sanatan culture contribute to global peace and unity?**

Sanatan Dharm rests on Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — the

idea that the world is one family. This philosophy counters division by promoting tolerance, non-violence, coexistence, and collective well-being. Ancient Indian wisdom encourages humanity to look beyond self-interest towards shared harmony. Through initiatives like the Sanatan Sanskriti Jagran Abhiyan, we promote values that unite rather than divide.

### **Message for a Meaningful Life**

#### **What message would you like to share with Inspire readers on living a meaningful life and leaving a legacy?**

A meaningful life rests on practising the '7S' principles, spelt out above, and cultivating daily habits of silence, gratitude, self-study, and service. Even ten minutes of meditation can reconnect individuals with their inner centre and restore balance. The most important lesson people miss is the balance between Bhautik (material) and Adhyatmik (spiritual) life. We should not chase material success at the cost of inner peace, and seek spirituality by running away from duties. We are the architects of our own destiny through our Karma. We often look outside for happiness, unaware that the source is within. True happiness lies in Santosh (contentment) and Seva (giving), not just accumulating. Let's do our duty (Karma) sincerely, serve others selflessly, and surrender the results to the Divine. ●



## DOCTOR'S PAGE

# Promoting Cognitive Vitality

Stroke and dementia have emerged as grave threats for senior citizens.

By Dr N Sairam

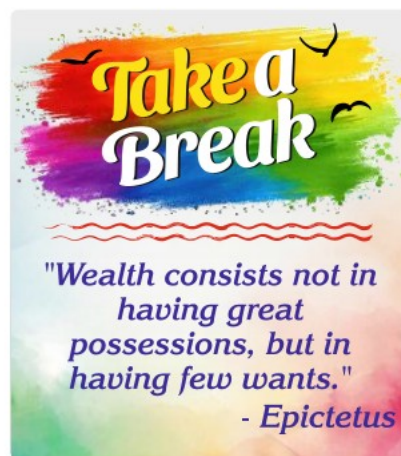
## Understanding Stroke: A Silent Threat

Stroke remains a leading cause of mortality, casting a shadow over the golden years. Understanding this adversary is the first step toward prevention. Strokes are primarily of two kinds: Haemorrhagic, often caused by a bleed following trauma like a fall, and Ischemic, the more stealthy and common killer. This insidious type creeps in silently, frequently


stemming from uncontrolled hypertension or diabetes—conditions that whisper their warnings for years before a crisis strikes.

### Importance of Early Screening

This underscores an essential safeguard: after the age of 40, regular health check-ups are not merely advisable; they are essential. Screening for diabetes and hypertension can catch these silent risks early. Equally



Ischemic stroke is a stealthy killer, creeping slowly along. The most common causes are uncontrolled blood pressure or uncontrolled diabetes, or both. Hence, after 40, it is essential to undergo regular health checkups.



without the pressure of counting steps or calories, can work wonders. Yoga and deep-breathing exercises like Pranayama and Anulom-Vilom, once learned under expert guidance, become powerful tools for managing stress and improving circulation, and are easily incorporated into one's routine. Complementing this is meditation—just ten minutes daily—to cultivate mental calm and resilience.

### Nurturing Cognitive Health

While physical health is paramount, cognitive well-being demands equal attention. Another significant challenge faced by seniors is dementia, a broad term for progressive memory loss and reduced cognition. Though there is no cure, the brain can be nurtured and kept active. Meaningful social interactions and mental exercises like Sudoku and puzzles are vital. Yet, the traditional Indian safety net of familial support has frayed with socio-economic changes, leaving many seniors to fend for themselves health-wise, socially, financially, and emotionally. In this landscape, proactive self-care is a necessity.

### A Practical Mantra for Seniors

- Meditate daily.
- Avoid excess in any form—food, sleep, or stress.
- Share your knowledge with others. This keeps you mentally

active and socially connected.

- Inculcate friendships with like-minded people. Discuss ideas and solutions, not other people.
- Charity begins at home. Guide youngsters gently, without intruding.
- Take care of your needs. Give yourself time and attention daily.
- Record your daily life briefly. Keep in daily touch with the 3 R's: Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic.
- Inspire others to take healthy steps, starting with your family.
- Create a comfortable routine and stick to it.
- Keep yourself positive.

### Building a Healthy and Dignified Future

The journey of prevention is about building small, sustainable habits that fortify the body, engage the mind, and soothe the spirit. By embracing regular check-ups, mindful movement, cognitive engagement, and a structured, positive daily routine, seniors can transform their later years into a period of empowered health, sustained joy, and profound dignity. The golden years, after all, deserve to be guarded with knowledge, intention, and grace. ●

*(The author is a consultant neurologist based in New Delhi with around 30 years of experience. He specialises in the treatment and management of stroke, epilepsy, and movement disorders.)*

important is addressing the slow build-up of atherosclerosis, the narrowing of arteries due to fatty plaques. This process is fuelled not by sudden events, but by years of a sedentary lifestyle, undisciplined eating habits, and the consumption of packaged foods high in dangerous trans fats, salt, and sugar.

### Daily Habits for Prevention

A simple, commitment-free walk for 10-15 minutes twice a day,



## DOCTOR'S PAGE

# Not All Fine With Bedtime Water

**F**or many older adults seeking gentle, drug-free ways to support their health, the ritual of drinking warm water before bed holds a particular appeal. In a life stage often marked by complex medication regimens and a focus on maintaining independence, the simplicity of this practice is powerful. However, the physiological changes that accompany ageing mean this habit is not one-size-fits-all. What might be a soothing ritual for a younger person can pose specific challenges and require tailored strategies for the elderly to ensure the benefits outweigh the risks.

***For seniors, the simple nightly habit of warm water before bed requires careful consideration. While it offers distinct benefits, the risks, particularly to sleep and medication routines, can be significantly greater with age.***

*By Dr Mayank Mahajan*

### **Age-Specific Benefits: Hydration and Comfort**

The potential advantages of warm water before bed can be especially meaningful for the older population. First and foremost, it addresses a critical concern: age-related dehydration. A small, timed serving of warm water can contribute to daily hydration goals without the discomfort of drinking a large, cold volume.

Furthermore, the soothing effect on digestion is highly relevant. Many older adults experience slower gastrointestinal motility. Warm water can act as a gentle stimulant to the digestive tract,


potentially easing the mild constipation that is common later in life. The practice also offers a non-pharmacological path to relaxation. The act of sipping a warm beverage can be a calming, mindful routine that helps signal the body to wind down, which can be beneficial for those managing age-related sleep anxieties or mild discomfort.

### Heightened Risks: Sleep, Stability, and Medications

While the benefits are appealing, the potential drawbacks of bedtime hydration demand a more cautious approach. The most pressing concern is the severe impact of nocturia — nighttime urination. Fragmented sleep is not just about tiredness; for the elderly, it dramatically increases the risk of falls when navigating to the bathroom in the dark. This sleep disruption is also more closely linked to exacerbations of cognitive decline, increased confusion, and a higher burden on cardiovascular health.

Digestive benefits can also backfire. Weakened oesophageal sphincters and a higher prevalence of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) mean that lying down after drinking can much more easily trigger painful heartburn and regurgitation. Additionally, the critical timing of medications makes the ritual risky. Many seniors take essential pills at bedtime. Drinking water immediately beforehand can improperly dilute or alter the absorption of heart medications, blood thinners, or thyroid drugs, reducing their efficacy.

Finally, the body's ability to regulate fluid and electrolyte balance becomes less efficient with age. The practice of "catching up" on fluids at night can, in rare cases, contribute to hyponatremia (low sodium levels), a dangerous electrolyte



**Elderly adults should prioritise daytime hydration. If they choose to drink warm water at night, they must do so at least 90 minutes before bed and only after consulting their doctor, especially if managing heart, kidney, or bladder conditions**

imbalance that can cause confusion, nausea, and weakness—symptoms often misattributed to other age-related conditions.

### Guidance for a Safer Senior Routine

For older adults interested in this ritual, a modified, safety-first approach is essential. The cornerstone must be proactive daytime hydration. Sipping water consistently throughout the day, with meals and after activity, is far more effective and safer than concentrating intake at night.

If incorporating evening warm water, the strategy must be precise:

- **Timing is Critical:** Finish drinking any fluids at least 90 minutes to two hours before bed. This allows maximum time for the kidneys to process the liquid well before sleep.
- **Volume is Minimal:** Limit the amount to a few small sips (e.g., a quarter-cup) solely for the soothing effect, not for hydration.
- **Consult the Care Team:** This is non-negotiable. Seniors, especially those with a history

of heart failure, kidney disease, overactive bladder, GERD, or who take diuretics ("water pills"), must discuss this habit with their doctor or pharmacist. They can provide personalised advice based on medications and specific health conditions.

- **Prioritise Safety:** Ensure the path to the bathroom is clear, well-lit, and free of tripping hazards. Consider a secure bedside commode if nocturia is a frequent issue.

Ultimately, for the elderly, the warm water ritual should be viewed not as a health imperative but as a potential comfort tool, to be used with strict parameters. Its value lies not in dramatic detoxification, but in the possibility of a gentle, comforting close to the day—but only if it does not come at the cost of safe, uninterrupted sleep and medication effectiveness. Listening to the body's signals is paramount, and for seniors, those signals should always be interpreted with the guidance of a healthcare professional. ●

*(The author is a Senior Resident, DM Cardiology, Kanpur)*



**MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

# Steering to Change Lives

**Selvin's childhood was defined by hunger and abandonment. Yet, from behind the wheel of his car, he funded his wife's journey to become a government school teacher and his daughter's path to an engineering degree.**

*By Deepak Parvatiyar*

**W**hen S. Arul Selvin drove his car through the streets of Madurai before dawn, he was not only carrying passengers. He was carrying his wife's books, his daughter's dreams, and a promise he had made to himself: "My family will not remain trapped in the poverty I was born into." Selvin's own childhood in the Senthiambalam village of the Thoothukudi district was shaped by abandonment and hunger. His father left his mother and married again. Selvin grew up in his grandparents' house, watching his mother struggle without an income while his grandparents wove cloth for

survival.

"We didn't even have proper food," Selvin says softly. "But my mother never let me lose hope."

As a child, he worked wherever work existed—carrying cow dung fertiliser, helping in kitchens, filling plastic bags with soil at nurseries, and loading banana consignments bound for Kerala. His elder brother left school after Class 8 to earn. Selvin continued until Class 12, but exhaustion and poverty forced him to stop.

Then came another blow. In December 1990, within eight days, both of his grandparents died. The family lost not just caretakers but its emotional

anchor. He drifted through jobs—an electronics course he could not turn into a business, a job in a Chennai mill that shut down, and finally, driving. He began with an autorickshaw and later became a private company driver in Madurai.

In 2003, Selvin married a young woman whose life revolved around education despite hardship. She had grown up in the Veppalodai village, where her mother sold fish to support the family. People questioned the match—why would an educated woman marry a poorly educated driver? His wife's mother ignored the criticism and chose Selvin. Selvin's wife's talent in public

speaking once caught the attention of a college owner, who offered to pay half of her B.Ed. fees. She became the first woman in her village to complete teacher training and started working in a private school. They rented a small house in Madurai. While his wife taught in a private school, their income was just enough for rent and food.

In 2005, Selvin lost his brother to illness. Grief mixed with financial pressure, but the dream of education stayed alive. When his wife said she wanted to pursue an M.A., Selvin had only one valuable possession—a gold chain. He pawned it without hesitation. He woke up at 4 a.m. every day to drive extra hours and repay the loan so he could retrieve the chain. For the second year's fees, he pawned it again.

While Selvin drove through traffic and fatigue, his wife studied through sleepless nights. Later, she prepared for the Teacher Eligibility Test. She studied until 2 a.m. or 4 a.m., refusing to sleep when the future was calling. After the exam, she came home crying, convinced she had failed. But she was one of the 2,500 candidates who passed out of six lakh applicants. Today, she teaches at a government girls' high school in Melur, Madurai district.

Their daughter was born in 2004. Many days, they ate roadside food, but they ensured she never felt deprived. "We did not buy toys," Selvin says, "we bought books."

The girl grew into a confident student, winning state-level speech competitions, scoring high marks in Classes 10 and 12, and entering an engineering college to study Electronics and Communication. Selvin drove longer hours and his wife took tuition classes. Today, their daughter has graduated with first-class honours and is



*S Arul Selvin with his wife*



**"We did not buy toys, we bought books." ... His steering wheel became a ladder for education, lifting his entire family into a new life.**

undergoing training with a reputed company in Chennai; she will soon be posted in Madurai.

"She is her mother's courage and my struggle combined," Selvin says proudly.

Selvin's wife now teaches poor children either for free or for Rs.40–50 a month, with orphans and children from broken families paying nothing.

One memory still hurts Selvin deeply. His father once introduced him as "a relative" instead of his son. "That day, I decided something," Selvin says. "I will become the father I never had."

In 2018, Selvin bought his own car and became an independent

driver. From the boy who once slept hungry to the man who provides for his family with dignity, a steering wheel became a ladder for education. One ride, one sacrifice at a time, he helped educate his wife into becoming a teacher and his daughter into an engineer.

His message is simple: "Do not give up. Educate your wife. Educate your children. And help others rise with you."

Sometimes, the greatest classroom is not a school—it is a father who refuses to surrender to fate. ●


*(The author is the Founder and Chief Editor of the Global Bihari news portal)*



## INSPIRING TALE

# Old Age: Golden Life

By Vishal Duggal



**A**t 92, Amma still lives alone in her semi-pucca house on the outskirts of Kolkata. Every morning, she boils her own water, sweeps the courtyard, and steps outside for a short walk.

"I'm old but not sick," she says matter-of-factly. That distinction matters deeply to her. For her, age does not diminish life; in fact, old age offers a luxurious wealth of experience.

Her children, settled in big cities, worry constantly. Amma,

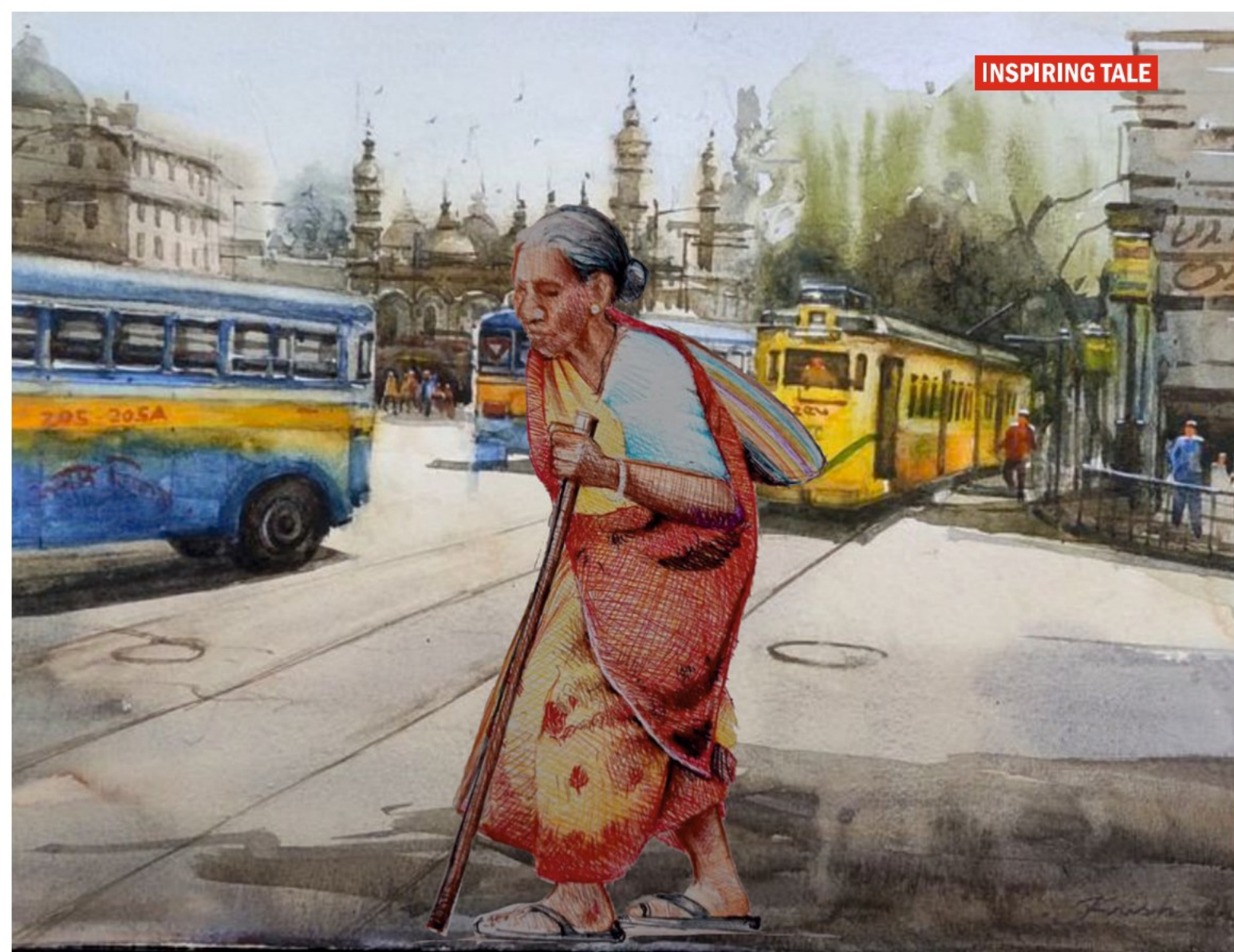
however, has made one thing clear—she does not want to move into a care home.

"I don't want my life managed," she says. "I want to live it on my own terms."

### **Not Every Forgetful Moment Is a Disease**

Amma admits she forgets things. Her glasses. Her mobile phone. Sometimes where she placed the keys.

"But I find them again," she says with a smile.



She continues to read newspapers every day and writes short notes in an old diary. She talks to neighbours, shopkeepers, and children who gather in her courtyard in the evenings.

Doctors say mild forgetfulness can be part of normal ageing, especially when a person remains mentally active. Amma refuses to let occasional memory slips define her health or identity. The brain naturally sheds the unnecessary to preserve the essential. By continuing to read, write, and converse, Amma asserts that mental engagement—not fear—is the true safeguard of cognitive health.

**Amma's refusal of care homes is not a rejection of help but a resistance to depersonalisation**

### **Slower Is Not the Same as Weak**

A year ago, Amma stumbled while walking on the lane outside her house. She didn't fall badly. Nothing broke. But the incident set off alarm bells within the family.

Her children suggested assisted living facilities—places with doctors on call, regular meals, and round-the-clock supervision.

Amma listened, but refused.

"Slowing down is not paralysis," she says. "Muscles weaken if you stop using them. So, I keep moving."

She walks daily, climbs a few temple steps nearby, and

stretches as much as she can. She believes medicine cannot replace movement. Physical slowing, she feels, is a natural biological adjustment rather than a sign of incapacity.

### Sleep Changes, and That's Normal

Amma no longer sleeps for eight straight hours. Some nights are broken. Some are short. But she doesn't panic.

"Sleep comes when it wants to." She avoids sleeping pills. She has seen friends become dependent on them.

"Rest doesn't always mean sleeping," she says. "Sometimes it means not worrying," quietly brushing aside modern anxieties around sleep and pharmaceutical dependency.

### Living with Reports, Not by Them

Medical reports arrive every few months. Numbers are underlined. Some values are marked "high."

Family members read them anxiously. Amma reads them calmly.

"Every abnormal number is not a disease," she says. "Bodies change with age. Even doctors admit that."

"My body has carried me for nine decades; it deserves trust," she says, cautioning against treating medical reports as verdicts and underlining the need to interpret health data within the context of ageing bodies.

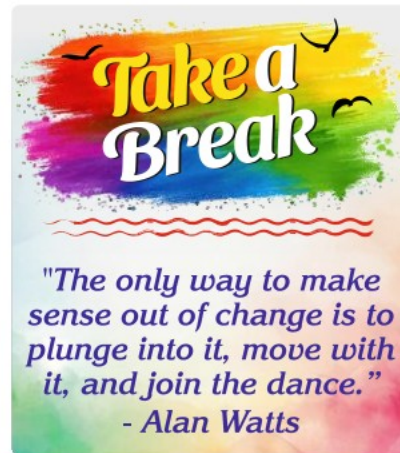
### Care Is More Than Hospitals

For Amma, care does not mean constant medical attention. It means presence.

"Care is walking together," she says. "Sitting in the sun. Eating together. Talking."

She believes children often confuse responsibility with hospital visits.

"They take you to doctors," she



says. "But they forget to sit with you."

She also believes self-reliance protects dignity.

"Those who make their own decisions never become burdens," she says. "I decide where I go, whom I meet, what I wear. That keeps me alive."

Amma's refusal of care homes is not a rejection of help but a resistance to depersonalisation. True care lies in shared time, presence, and emotional continuity—not merely professional supervision.

### Choosing How to Grow Old

In the evenings, neighbourhood children gather at Amma's house. She listens to them, corrects their homework, and tells stories. She gives without expecting anything in return.

"I don't expect anything from anyone," she says. "That's why I'm peaceful."

Her children still worry. Amma understands their concern—but her decision stands.

"I'm not refusing help," she says. "I'm refusing to disappear."

Is safety the only measure of care - or does dignity matter just as much?

For Amma, the answer is simple. "I will live here," she says, locking her door at night herself. "As long as I can choose my mornings, I am fine."

Old age, she insists, is not a disease. It is a stage of life—natural, earned, and deserving of respect. In any case, age is determined by God; the more one grows old, the deeper one's rapport with the divine.

Amma's insistence on choosing her home, routine, and relationships reinforces the belief that self-determination is the foundation of dignified ageing. It positions generosity as the source of happiness in later life.

In a country learning to care for its senior citizens, Amma reminds us that old age is not a condition to be "managed," but a stage to be lived with autonomy and self-respect. Children of ageing parents need to distinguish between support and control, care and confinement. ●

*(The author is consulting editor, Inspire)*





## COVER STORY

# Digital Lifeline for Seniors

**Technology is transforming geriatric care in India. But the real test will be balancing these digital tools with something no algorithm can replicate: human touch and genuine empathy.**

*By Dr Arun Kumar Agarwal*

Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) has quietly matured from a niche idea into mainstream practice. Hospitals and start-ups are increasingly using it, often supported by government health schemes like Ayushman Bharat and eSanjeevani. By letting clinicians track vital signs and activity in real time, RPM systems help older adults stay healthier at home and dramatically cut down on unnecessary hospital trips. Evidence from both Indian and international field trials shows real, measurable benefits, especially in managing chronic diseases and reducing repeat admissions. Fall detection has become a game-changer. Newer hybrid systems that use radar or thermal sensors, sometimes paired with wearables, are outperforming old camera-based

solutions. The beauty of this approach is its respect for privacy—radar can detect a fall with remarkable accuracy without the need for intrusive video. These smart, privacy-aware systems only sound an alarm when something is genuinely wrong, preserving an elder's dignity and autonomy. The market for these radar systems is booming, reflecting growing trust in non-intrusive monitoring, especially in India's urban senior-care spaces.

Another area seeing exciting growth is smart gait and mobility analytics. Today's machine-learning models can pick up on the subtlest changes—in how someone walks, moves their wrist, or places their foot—to predict frailty, cognitive decline, or fall risk. Research on "smart insoles" and micro-movement sensors shows how these tools can act as early warning systems, creating novel digital biomarkers for healthy ageing. This concept

**A**s populations age globally, the demand for thoughtful senior care is rising rapidly. Around the world, researchers and tech developers are devising innovations anchored in artificial intelligence (AI), remote monitoring, smart sensors, assistive robotics, and mobility aids. India is emerging as an active, vibrant hub for digital geriatric health solutions.

is slowly but surely catching the attention of geriatricians across India.

### From Early Signals to Daily Support

AI is making profound strides in understanding and supporting cognitive health. The early detection of dementia is being quietly revolutionised. Machine-learning models can now analyse speech patterns, behaviour, or health records to spot trouble early. Recent studies (2024–2025) are striking, showing AI can predict the progression from mild cognitive impairment to Alzheimer's with over 75 per cent accuracy using just short speech samples. This offers a low-cost, gentle screening method that can work alongside traditional tests. Researchers at top medical institutes are exploring similar low-cost speech tools in multiple languages, ensuring no one is left behind because of language or education.

Equally transformative are AI tools that assess delirium risk in hospitals and care homes. Algorithms embedded in health records can flag high-risk patients, enabling early intervention that can drastically reduce complications, hospital stays, and even mortality.

Social and companion robots are emerging as powerful tools to address isolation and neglect - huge mental health risks for the elderly. Robots like ElliQ are being used in homes and institutions to give reminders, wellness nudges, and engage in friendly conversation. Pilot programmes in the UK and Japan suggest such robots can ease loneliness, improve engagement, and free up caregiver time. Japan has gone a step further, scaling nursing-care robots to handle routine physical tasks, allowing human staff to focus on emotional and clinical support.

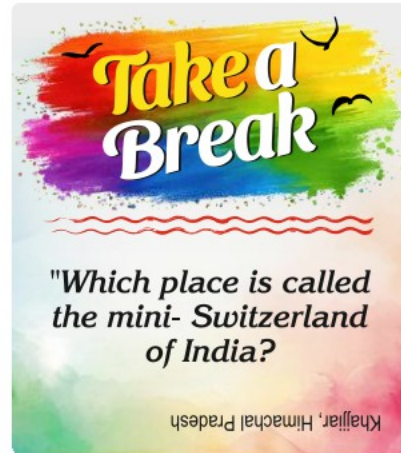


**RPM systems help older adults stay healthier at home and cut down on unnecessary hospital trips.**

### Towards Safe Medication

Managing medications remains a huge challenge in elder care, especially with polypharmacy - the simultaneous use of multiple drugs. Smart dispensers, connected pillboxes, and India-made digital trackers now automate doses, alert caregivers if a dose is missed, and generate useful adherence data. Studies confirm that when these systems are paired with mobile reminders and caregiver feedback, adherence improves significantly. AI-powered clinical decision-

support tools, already being tested in hospitals like AIIMS and Apollo, are transforming "deprescribing"—the safe discontinuation of unnecessary or harmful medications. New electronic systems can cross-analyse medication histories, lab results, and patient details to spot dangerous interactions and suggest safer alternatives. Recent trials show that AI-assisted deprescribing doesn't just reduce adverse drug events; it actually improves overall health outcomes for older people.



### Easing the Documentation Burden

Beyond patient-facing tech, AI is also revolutionising the workload for healthcare professionals. Generative-AI "ambient scribes" like Nuance's Dragon Copilot, AWS HealthScribe, and emerging Indian versions are now listening in on doctor-patient conversations to automatically generate visit notes, letters, and summaries. Early results from the NHS and major US health systems show significant cuts in administrative time without sacrificing accuracy. By automating paperwork, these systems let geriatric specialists and nurses do what they do best: spend quality time with their patients.

### Implementation Patterns That Work

Using technology successfully in geriatric care requires a "human-in-the-loop" approach. The European Union's AI Act, which classifies most clinical AI tools as high-risk, mandates strong data governance, human oversight, and ongoing monitoring. Privacy-by-design is non-negotiable: camera-free monitoring like radar and thermal sensors, with on-device processing, strikes the right balance between safety and personal dignity.

Global regulators are insisting on open, auditable workflows. Equity and accessibility are just as critical. The WHO's latest guidance on health AI warns that poorly designed digital systems

can widen inequalities for older adults who aren't tech-savvy or who live with disabilities. India's Ministry of Health is thinking along similar lines, emphasising explainability and inclusivity in its 2025 AI governance guidelines.

### Momentum and Opportunities

India is entering an exciting phase in tech-enabled elder care. Through initiatives like the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission and the 2025 AI governance guidelines, the country is laying the foundation for large-scale, responsible use of AI in healthcare. The guidelines deliberately mirror global best practices, putting safety, explainability, and human



## Global Frontiers - How Technology is Reimagining Elder Care

By Dr Suneela Garg

**A**cross the world, geriatric care is undergoing a quiet but revolutionary transformation. What started as scattered pilot projects—fall-detection wearables, voice assistants, telehealth dashboards—has grown into a full ecosystem aimed at promoting independence, safety, and emotional well-being among seniors. India is very much a part of this global movement.

AI-powered remote patient monitoring (RPM) models are being piloted via public-private partnerships, especially for elderly heart disease

and diabetes management. We're also seeing the rise of "cooperative AI"—systems that blend data sources to anticipate health events, not just react to them. Smart mobility aids are evolving beyond passive support. From Japan's robotic exoskeletons to Europe's smart canes, these devices now use sensors and ML to assess posture, predict falls, and aid rehab. Inspired by these, Indian innovators are crafting cost-effective gait trackers using locally available parts. Robots like Moby, designed to help with standing and walking, exemplify a shift toward mechanical empowerment—helping elders maintain mobility and dignity.

Next-generation "dignity-aware AI" is taking shape. Recent research advocates for privacy-preserving, edge-based monitoring that tracks daily activities without intrusive cameras. Start-ups in Pune, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad are now locally adapting these very technologies for smart elder homes. India is utilising its own blend of compassion and ingenuity to ensure crisis management, continuous well-being, surveillance, and support for the elderly. This approach signifies a paradigm shift from dependency to empowered, dignified ageing.

*(The author is Chair Programme Advisory Committee National Institute of Health Family Welfare, Govt of India, and Member, Lancet Commission)*

**AI-powered clinical decision-support tools, already being tested in hospitals like AIIMS and Apollo, are transforming "deprescribing."**

accountability front and centre. Indian start-ups are designing affordable wearables, fall-detection sensors, and medication platforms tailored for local needs. Hospitals and state governments are exploring privacy-preserving fall detection in senior housing, RPM for chronic conditions, AI-supported "deprescribing", and ambient documentation tools. Together, these steps could redefine ageing with dignity in India. Organisations like NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Social Justice are also promoting pilot projects for smart elder homes with IoT safety systems and

teleconsultation hubs.

### Risks and How to Mitigate Them

The benefits of AI in elder care are immense, but we can't ignore the pitfalls. Algorithmic bias is a real concern; models trained on limited data can misclassify symptoms in diverse populations. The fix? Diverse, representative training data and local validation, especially for elders with speech or sensory impairments. Over-reliance on automation is another risk; clinicians must always keep the final say.

Privacy demands constant vigilance. Camera-free sensing, edge computing, and transparent consent can protect data without wrecking functionality. Finally, alert fatigue—common in remote monitoring—must be addressed through smarter, personalised thresholds. India's new Data Protection Act and Digital Health guidelines will be crucial in extending these protections to seniors. ●

*(The author is Ex-Dean, Maulana Azad Medical College, and Advisor, Medical Research & Innovation, Apollo Hospital)*



# Financial Wisdom for Golden Years

**Seniors need to protect their lifetime's savings from risks and frauds, and use it wisely to enjoy the fruits of their labour without becoming a burden on their loved ones**

By DV Jain



**F**or generations in India, the senior years were envisioned as vanaprastha ashram—a time of gradual withdrawal, wisdom, and contentment, often supported by the joint family. Today, the socio-economic landscape has transformed. Nuclear families, rising healthcare costs, and increased longevity mean that financial self-reliance is no longer just a virtue but a necessity for a life of dignity and peace. The regular inflow of a salary may have ceased, but expenses for quality healthcare, medicines, and a comfortable lifestyle continue, often outpacing inflation. In this new reality, smart financial management becomes the very

foundation of a happy life. Following are the steps to navigate this crucial phase with confidence and calm:

## Building a Strong Budget

The first step towards financial independence is knowing exactly where your money comes from and where it goes. Create a simple, monthly hisab-kitab (accounting). List all your income sources: pension, interest from Fixed Deposits (FDs), Senior Citizens Savings Scheme (SCSS), family support, or rental income. Opposite this, list every expense, from major commitments, loan EMIs, annual premiums for life or health insurance, to daily needs like kirana, milk, newspapers, and more. This

visual exercise is powerful—it immediately highlights unnecessary spending on impulse buys or subscriptions you no longer use.

## Prioritising Healthcare and Emergency Funds

In India, healthcare costs can be the single biggest threat to a senior citizen's savings. A sudden hospitalisation can deplete funds rapidly. Therefore, your financial plan must put health first. Beyond a robust health insurance policy (like a dedicated Senior Citizen plan or a family floater), a dedicated Emergency Fund is non-negotiable. This should be a separate savings account or a liquid Fixed Deposit, holding enough to cover 6 to 12 months

of all living expenses, plus a buffer for medical deductibles. This fund is your armour against crises. It ensures you don't have to break a long-term FD prematurely (incurring penalties), ask children for urgent funds, or, worse, fall prey to a high-cost personal loan.

**Safe Banking**

India's digital banking revolution (UPI, net banking) is a boon, but for seniors, it requires caution. Never share your ATM PIN, CVV, or OTP with anyone — no bank representative will ever ask for these. Use only the official apps of your bank (like SBI Yono, ICICI iMobile). Beware of phishing calls pretending to be from your bank's "customer care" asking to "update your KYC" by clicking a link. Always check your account statements monthly and enable SMS alerts for every transaction. If you are unsure about a digital transaction, visit your branch or take help from a trusted family member. For regular needs, consider using the cheque book or a standing instruction for automated payments, which are simpler and safer if you are not tech-savvy.

**Safe Schemes for Steady Income**

The golden rule for investment in senior years is safety first, growth later. Your portfolio should focus on capital preservation and regular income. Fortunately, India offers several excellent, government-backed schemes for seniors:

**Senior Citizens Savings**

**Scheme (SCSS):** A premier choice offering attractive, secure interest paid quarterly, with tax benefits under Section 80C.

**Post Office Monthly Income**

**Scheme (POMIS):** Provides a fixed monthly income, ideal for covering routine expenses.

**Bank Fixed Deposits (Fds):**

Senior Citizen FDs offer an extra



**Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana pension scheme specifically for seniors from LIC, provides a guaranteed pension**

0.50 per cent interest. Spread FDs across banks for better liquidity (a ladder of FDs maturing every year).

**Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY):** A pension scheme specifically for seniors from LIC, providing a guaranteed pension.

**Debt Mutual Funds & Government Bonds:** For slightly higher returns than FDs, consider conservative debt funds or RBI bonds.

**Steer clear of:** Unsolicited stock tips, chit funds promising unrealistic returns, or any agent pressuring you into a "limited-time, high-return" scheme.

**Simplify and Organise**

A cluttered financial life leads to stress. Simplify it. Consolidate multiple bank accounts. Close unused credit cards to avoid annual fees and fraud risk. Use auto-debit (ECS) for insurance premiums and utility bills to avoid late payments. Physically, organise all critical documents in one file or folders: Aadhaar, PAN, Bank Passbooks, Property Papers, Insurance Policies (Jeevan Bima, Swasthya Bima), Will, and all Investment Certificates. This system brings immense peace of mind.

**Family, Fraud & Legacy**

**Family Dialogue:** Have open conversations with your family

about your financial situation. Discuss monthly budgets, medical insurance details, and your general wishes. This transparency builds trust and ensures they can help in an emergency.

**Beware of Fraud:** Seniors are prime targets. Be wary of: "Lottery winning" calls, fake calls from "income tax department" demanding immediate payment, impersonation by someone claiming to be your grandchild in distress, or fraudulent agents selling "magic" health products or investment plans. Verify everything.

**Legacy Planning:** This is your final act of care. Ensure nominations are updated in all bank accounts, FDs, and insurance policies. Most importantly, consult a lawyer to draft a legal Will (Vasiyat). A clear Will ensures your assets are distributed as per your wishes, preventing costly and emotionally draining family disputes after you are gone.

In addition, attend free investor awareness programmes organised by SEBI or your bank. Read personal finance columns in reputable newspapers. Talk to your financially savvy friends or a financial advisor who can offer unbiased advice tailored to an Indian senior's needs.

By adopting a disciplined budget, prioritising health funds, choosing secure investments, banking safely, and having open family conversations, you build an unshakable foundation. This approach grants you the true wealth of retirement: not just rupees in the bank, but the self-confidence and peace of mind to live your senior years with the comfort, respect, and joy you have earned. After a lifetime of responsibility, you deserve nothing less. ●

*(The author is a prominent financial advisor)*



# Safeguard Your Steps

**Falls are one of the most common and serious problems older adults face, making this a major public health issue**

*Dr (Lt Gen) Ved Chaturvedi (Retd), PVSM, VSM*

**F**or an older person, even one fall can lead to broken bones, head injuries, fear of falling again, loss of confidence, reduced mobility, and in some cases, death. Many older adults fall more than once, and repeated falls often point to other health problems like weakness, balance issues, or side effects from medications.

About one out of every three people aged 65 and older experiences at least one fall each year. Older adults living at home and those in care facilities are both at risk, though residents in nursing homes tend to fall more often and have more serious injuries.

Research in the United States has found that falls are very common and lead to more visits to the emergency room, more hospital stays, and more people needing long-term care. Falls are also

linked to long-term disability and higher healthcare costs, showing that their impact goes far beyond the initial injury.

## **Falls as a Geriatric Syndrome**

Falls, a geriatric syndrome, usually happen because of a mix of age-related changes, ongoing health problems, and things in the environment. For most older adults, there isn't just one cause for a fall—it's usually several factors coming together.

As we age, we gradually lose muscle strength, balance, sharpness of vision, hearing, and quickness of reaction. These changes make us less steady and more likely to fall. Chronic health issues like arthritis, diabetes, Parkinson's disease, memory problems, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, depression, stroke, conditions that cause a sudden drop in blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, or fainting can lead to

dizziness or loss of consciousness, resulting in a fall. Hazards around the home and certain medications add to the danger.

## **Intrinsic (Person-Related) Risk Factors**

Many personal factors can raise an older adult's risk of falling. Important studies have shown that muscle weakness, problems with balance and walking, poor vision, memory issues, and certain medical conditions are major contributors.

Muscle weakness, especially in the legs, is one of the strongest predictors of a fall. Age-related loss of muscle, called sarcopenia, makes it harder to stand, walk, and catch your balance if you trip. Balance disorders and unusual walking patterns, often due to nerve or joint problems, also increase the risk.

Poor vision is another big factor. If older adults have trouble seeing clearly, noticing contrasts, or judging depth, they may not see obstacles or changes in floor levels. Memory problems and dementia can lead to falls by affecting judgment, attention, and the ability to move around safely.

Frail individuals often have weak muscles, walk slowly, feel tired often, and lose weight without trying. A major global study on osteoporosis in women showed that frailty significantly raised the risk of falls, fractures, disability, and death in many countries.

### Medications and Polypharmacy

Older adults often take several medicines for different conditions, which is called polypharmacy. Many common prescriptions can increase the chance of falling by causing dizziness, drowsiness, poor balance, or low blood pressure.

Drugs that affect the mind, such as sedatives, antidepressants, antipsychotics, and sleeping pills, are especially linked to falls. Blood pressure medicines and drugs for diabetes can also contribute by causing low blood pressure or low blood sugar. That's why regularly reviewing medications and using them wisely is a key part of preventing falls.

### Prevention and Management of Falls

**Assessment of Fall Risk:** Preventing falls starts with figuring out who is at risk. A good assessment should include asking about past falls, reviewing all medications, checking balance and walking, testing vision, examining heart health, and looking for hazards in the home.

Simple clinical tests like the Timed Up and Go test or checking



**Exercise is one of the best ways to prevent falls. Programs that focus on balance training, muscle strengthening, and improving how you walk can greatly reduce the risk.**

walking speed are useful for spotting high-risk individuals.

**Exercise and Rehabilitation:** Exercise is one of the best ways to prevent falls. Programs that focus on balance training, muscle strengthening, and improving how you walk can greatly reduce the risk. Activities like tai chi and structured exercise programs are especially helpful for older adults living at home.

Physical therapy is also key—it helps improve movement, correct walking problems, and recommend the right walking aids if needed.

**Medication Review:** Regularly reviewing medications is very important, especially for older patients taking several drugs. Reducing or stopping unnecessary medicines and avoiding those known to increase fall risk can make a big difference.

**Environmental Modification:** Making the living environment safer is a practical and effective step. This includes better lighting, removing loose rugs and clutter, installing grab bars and handrails, using non-slip mats, and wearing safe, sturdy footwear.

**Prevention of Fall-Related Injuries:** Since falls and

fractures are closely linked, preventing osteoporosis is an important part of fall management. Getting enough calcium and vitamin D, using the right medications when needed, and in some cases, wearing hip protectors can help lower the risk of broken bones.

#### Takeaways

Falls are common, serious, and often preventable events in the elderly. They result from a complex mix of Age-related changes, chronic diseases, medications, and environmental factors. The consequences go beyond physical injury to include fear, loss of function, loss of independence, higher risk of death, and a large economic burden.

Seeing falls as an important medical condition—not just an accident—allows us to take a proactive and thorough approach to care. By identifying risk factors early, using tailored strategies, and sticking with prevention, we can greatly reduce the burden of falls in the elderly. This helps improve both how long and how well older adults live. ●

*(The author is Professor and Senior Consultant, Department of Rheumatology, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi)*



# Cultivating Green Fortune

**There are several indoor plants that you can incorporate into your home to be blessed with prosperity, peace, and purposeful living.**

*By Dr Pawan Tomar*

**F**or millennia, across diverse cultures like China's Feng Shui and India's Vastu Shastra, plants have been revered as living conduits of positive energy. Beyond their aesthetic appeal and ability to purify air, many indoor plants are deeply symbolic, believed to attract prosperity, peace, and good fortune. Let's take a look at how we can cultivate a more vibrant and harmonious living environment by inviting these green companions into your home, based on their traditional associations and contemporary benefits.

The practice of using plants to influence a home's energy is deeply rooted in ancient philosophies. Central to this is the Chinese art of Feng Shui, which seeks to harmonise

individuals with their surroundings by balancing the life force known as "chi." A key tool is the Bagua Map, which divides any space into nine areas, each governing specific life aspects such as wealth, health, and relationships. Placing particular plants in these corresponding zones is believed to actively enhance the flow of positive energy in that domain of one's life. Similarly, in Vastu Shastra, plants are selected and positioned to promote balance with the natural elements. Underlying both traditions is a powerful symbolic connection: a healthy, thriving plant embodies growth, renewal, and abundance. Its upward growth is seen to encourage positive momentum, while rounded, lush leaves—especially those that

resemble coins—are intuitively linked to financial growth and stability.

## **Plants to Attract Prosperity and Abundance**

Several plants are celebrated specifically for their association with wealth and financial stability. The **Jade Plant** is often called the "money plant" for its plump, coin-shaped leaves, which are thought to symbolise the accumulation of wealth. Similarly, the **Money Tree (Pachira aquatica)** with its distinctive braided trunk and lush canopy is steeped in legend as a bringer of good luck and fortune. For those seeking a classic symbol, **Golden Pothos**, also widely known as the Money Plant, is believed to attract financial success through its

vigorous growth and heart-shaped leaves. The **Rubber Plant** is another favourite for its large, rounded leaves that represent abundance and financial increase. For a fruiting option, **Citrus Trees** like lemon or orange are considered powerful wealth magnets, as their golden, round fruits are seen as symbolic coins, radiating the sun's positive energy.

### Plants for Positive Energy and Harmony

Beyond material wealth, many plants are prized for their ability to cleanse a space and promote peace. The **Snake Plant** is a formidable protector, known for its sharp, upward leaves that are said to cut through negative energy while purifying the air. The **Peace Lily**, with its elegant white blooms, is a universal symbol of calm and spiritual balance, believed to convert negative vibrations into positive ones. To invite a sense of tropical serenity and harmony, the **Areca Palm** is an excellent choice, known for its air-purifying qualities and gentle, swaying fronds. In the Indian tradition, **Holy Basil (Tulsi)** holds a sacred place, revered for its ability to ward off negativity and bring prosperity and health to a household.

### Integrating Lucky Plants into Your Home

To truly align with the principles of creating a harmonious space, thoughtful placement and care are paramount. The most important step is to activate your home's wealth corner. According to Feng Shui, this is the southeast sector of your home or any individual room. Placing your Jade Plant, Money Tree, or Golden Pothos in this area is considered especially potent for attracting abundance. However, the single most critical rule is to prioritise plant health. A dying or



The Snake Plant is said to cut through negative energy while purifying the air

neglected plant is believed to generate stagnant energy, counteracting your intentions. Therefore, selecting species that match your home's light and humidity conditions is essential. The act of mindful care—watering, pruning, and tending—is itself a practice of nurturing the growth and positivity you wish to invite. It is generally advised to avoid placing plants in bathrooms, where their positive energy might be symbolically drained, and to be cautious with spiky plants like cacti in relaxation areas, as they can create overly aggressive energy.

### A modern perspective

While the symbolic benefits of these plants are rooted in rich cultural traditions, it is valuable to maintain a balanced perspective. There is no scientific

evidence that a plant can directly alter one's financial fortune. The true, documented power of indoor plants lies in their measurable psychological and physiological benefits. The act of caring for living things can reduce stress, combat anxiety, and foster a sense of mindful purpose. Surrounding oneself with greenery has been shown to improve mood, enhance concentration, and create a more pleasant and soothing living environment. In this very tangible sense, these plants do attract a profound form of wealth: the wealth of wellbeing. By choosing plants that resonate with you and committing to their care, you are ultimately cultivating an atmosphere of growth, and natural serenity in your home. ●

*(The author is Assistant Director, Horticulture at C.P.W.D Delhi)*



# Learn to Let Go...

**Parenting does not end when children grow up, it quietly changes shape, having learnt the language of distance. Stepping back can preserve dignity, prevent resentment, and redefine connection.**

*By Sujeet Kumar Jha*

**A**s parents, we are conditioned to believe that closeness is measured in frequency of visits, phone calls, shared meals. In childhood, this is true. Dependence defines love. But adulthood rearranges the terms. Children build lives of their own: careers, partners, pressures, routines. Parents, meanwhile, often continue to operate from an older emotional map, one where presence equals relevance.

An interesting video entitled “**Why I Stopped Visiting My Children,**” shared on TikTok by the account *weposttv*, captures the moment when that map fails. The video is not an indictment of children, nor a lament steeped in bitterness. It is a quiet, deeply unsettling meditation on parenting when children grow up, and when love must find a new language. What makes it powerful is its restraint. There is no accusation, only a realisation: parenting does not end, but it must change.

The old man in the video realises that visits have become formal, hurried, almost transactional. Conversations are polite but shallow. Hospitality is offered, but without warmth. The unspoken message, you are welcome, but not needed, begins to echo louder than words.

### **When love feels like intrusion**

One of the most uncomfortable truths the video raises is this: love, when unexamined, can turn into intrusion. Parents may arrive with the best intentions—helping, advising, participating—but adult children may experience this as disruption. Not because they do not love their parents, but because their lives are already stretched thin.

The parent in the video does not leave because of rejection alone. He leaves because staying begins

**Love does not demand a chair at the dining table, nor a bed in the guest room. Sometimes, love expresses itself as withdrawal – not in anger, but in dignity**

to feel like self-erasure—waiting to be acknowledged, adjusting to someone else's convenience, shrinking one's presence to avoid being a burden.

This is not estrangement. It is self-respect.

### **Parenting beyond presence**

The most radical idea the video offers is that parenting can continue without proximity. That love does not demand a chair at the dining table, nor a bed in the guest room. Sometimes, love expresses itself as withdrawal—not in anger, but in dignity.

The parent chooses distance not to punish the children, but to preserve the relationship. By stepping back, he refuses to let resentment grow, replacing expectation with acceptance. He stops asking for time and starts reclaiming his own.

In doing so, he discovers something vital: a parent's worth does not diminish with reduced access.

### **The emotional labour parents rarely acknowledge**

Parents are often told to be selfless. But the video reminds us that emotional labour is labour nonetheless. Repeatedly adjusting one's feelings to accommodate indifference, neglect, or emotional distance takes a toll. Choosing to step away can be an

act of emotional conservation.

This is especially relevant in societies where parents, particularly older parents, are expected to remain endlessly available, endlessly forgiving, endlessly patient. The video quietly asks: At what cost?

### **A lesson for both generations**

*For parents, the message is clear but difficult:*

- Let go of entitlement disguised as love
- Release the idea that your presence must be central to remain meaningful.
- Cultivate a life that does not orbit your children.

*For children, the video is an equally gentle warning:*

- Emotional availability matters as much as physical provision.
- Politeness is not the same as connection.
- Parents may not always complain, but they feel.

### **Love that does not cling**

In the end, “Why I Stopped Visiting My Children” is not about absence. It is about redefining closeness. It suggests that the most mature form of parenting may be one that knows when to step back, when to stop knocking, and when to allow silence to replace expectation. ●

*(The author is a senior journalist)*

## “India–Philippines trade is well positioned to move to a strategic, high-value partnership”

**'India–Philippines trade is well positioned to move to a strategic, high-value partnership'**- *India and the Philippines celebrated the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2024, with commemorations extending into 2025 to mark the milestone since ties were established in November 1949. Over the decades, this relationship has evolved into a robust strategic partnership centred on mutual growth and shared values and heritage. In an exclusive interview with Inspire Magazine, Ms Jollan Margaret A Llaneza, Commercial Counsellor – Philippines Trade and Investment Centres in India and Indonesia reflects on the burgeoning trade landscape—from pharmaceuticals to digital innovation*

*Excerpts from the interview...*



**A**s we celebrate 75 years of diplomatic ties, the relationship between India and the Philippines has entered a “Golden Age.” For our readers at Inspire—many of whom are seasoned professionals and community leaders—could you encapsulate what this “strategic partnership” truly means?

You've used a very apt term. This “Golden Age” or “strategic partnership” represents a shift from a cordial friendship to a deep, structured, and future-oriented alliance. When President Marcos Jr. visited India in August 2025, he secured immediate investment commitments of over \$446 million, with a potential trajectory toward nearly \$5.7 billion.

The ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement has provided predictability, reduced tariff barriers, and enabled Indian and Philippine companies to integrate into each other's supply chains more confidently.

**India–Philippines trade has crossed the \$3.5 billion mark. How do you assess the current trajectory of bilateral trade in quantitative terms?**

Bilateral trade has shown consistent resilience and upward momentum. During 2024–25, total trade stood at USD 3,340.83 million. India's exports amounted to USD 2,162.43 million, while imports from the Philippines were valued at USD 1,178.40 million. What is significant is not just the volume, but the diversification of the trade basket, which reduces vulnerability and strengthens long-term engagement.

During President Marcos Jr.'s engagements in India, both sides acknowledged that the next phase of trade growth must move beyond commodities toward higher-value goods and services. The focus is now on scaling trade in pharmaceuticals, electronics, engineering goods, renewable energy components, and digitally delivered services. This strategic re-calibration is expected to push bilateral trade toward a more sustainable and innovation-driven growth trajectory over the medium term.

### **Which export sectors from India are currently driving this growth, and where do you see untapped potential?**

India already provides roughly 16 per cent of the Philippines' pharmaceutical imports. We are now moving beyond the import of generic medicines to actively inviting Indian firms to set up manufacturing plants in our special economic zones. Under the CREATE MORE Act, we offer tax holidays of up to seven years and enhanced deductions for up to 20 years for high-impact projects.

Beyond pharmaceuticals, India's key exports include engineering goods, automobile parts and components, transmission apparatus, electric transformers, petroleum products, iron and steel, chemicals, electronic goods, plastics, rice, oilseeds, and processed food products. There is still considerable headroom for growth in high-value engineering, electronics, and industrial intermediates.

A key takeaway from President Marcos Jr.'s discussions with Indian industry leaders was the strong interest in joint

**India provides roughly 16 per cent of the Philippines' pharmaceutical imports. We are now moving beyond the import of generic medicines to actively inviting Indian firms to set up manufacturing plants in our special economic zones.**

manufacturing and localized production in the Philippines—particularly in pharmaceuticals, electronics assembly, renewable energy equipment, and food processing. These sectors present untapped potential where Indian scale, technology, and cost efficiencies can directly support the Philippines' industrial upgrading and supply chain resilience goals.

### **How do you view the role of investment in strengthening trade linkages between the two countries?**

Trade and investment are deeply intertwined. Indian investments in the Philippines are estimated at around USD 5 billion and span IT and ITES, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, textiles, infrastructure, chemicals, automobiles, agriculture, biomass energy, FMCG, and airport development. Companies such as the Aditya Birla Group, GMR, Tata Motors, and Mahindra have demonstrated how Indian capital and expertise can create long-term value in the Philippine economy.

At the same time, Philippine investments in India—though more modest—are gaining strategic significance, particularly in energy and infrastructure. The LNG projects by AG&P on India's east coast, with planned investments of up to USD 1.4 billion, reflect growing

confidence in India's long-term energy market.

What changed during President Marcos Jr.'s visit was the scale and ambition of future investments. Indian investors were encouraged to look at the Philippines not just as a market, but as a regional production and export base for ASEAN. This narrative shift—from market entry to regional platform—has significantly strengthened investor confidence and aligns investment flows more closely with long-term trade expansion.

### **The Philippines is often described as the “BPO Capital of the World.” How does this sector fit into the broader trade and services relationship with India?**

As the “BPO Capital of the World,” the Philippines is integrating AI at a rate of 86 per cent among knowledge workers—significantly higher than the global average. Indian tech giants like TCS, Wipro, and Infosys are already major employers in Manila and Cebu, using the Philippines as a complementary delivery base to diversify operations, enhance business continuity, and serve global clients across time zones. Over the past decade, collaboration in IT and BPO has expanded rapidly. Indian firms such as Tech Mahindra, L&T Infotech, Genpact, Innodata, and HGS have established strong delivery centres.

Increasingly, cooperation is moving beyond voice-based services into high-end non-voice segments such as financial services, legal process outsourcing, medical services, engineering design, and software development—positioning the Philippines as a strategic second hub alongside India for sophisticated, scalable services delivery.

Digital cooperation featured prominently during President Marcos Jr.'s engagements, particularly in areas such as AI-enabled services, digital public infrastructure, fintech, and cybersecurity. This reflects a deliberate shift toward an India + 1 services architecture - where India's technology depth and platform expertise combine with the Philippines' strong English-proficient, digitally skilled talent pool, investor-friendly environment, and cultural affinity with Western markets. Together, these strengths enable both countries to co-create globally competitive, higher-value digital and knowledge-based services beyond traditional BPO models.

### **What emerging sectors should Indian businesses closely watch when considering the Philippines as a destination?**

There are substantial opportunities across multiple sectors. Agribusiness - particularly cacao, coffee, coconuts, bananas, mangoes, rubber, bamboo, and high-value crops - offers strong potential. Infrastructure development through PPP models in airports, ports, railways, and roads is another major area. Electronics, shipbuilding, tools and dies, garments, furniture,

**For Indian businesses, the Philippines is not just an export destination—it is a gateway to ASEAN and a partner in long-term growth.**

renewable energy, logistics, tourism, hospitality, and advanced pharmaceuticals - including vaccines, oncology drugs, medical equipment, and herbal medicines - are all sectors where Indian capabilities align well with Philippine demand. The Philippines and India also enjoy robust defense cooperation, which has expanded to other areas of strategic interest over the years creating more bilateral business opportunities.

### **How does the shared cultural ethos between the two countries support economic engagement?**

While culture provides a strong foundation of trust, its real value lies in enabling smoother business engagement, workforce mobility, and long-term partnerships. This cultural comfort often translates into faster decision-making and deeper institutional cooperation.

### **What role do experienced professionals and industry leaders play in advancing trade and commerce between the two countries?**

We have a growing need for technical consultants and mentors. As we build our first-ever Philippine spaceport and upgrade 12 regional airports, we need the “quiet fortitude” of those who have already built India's world-class

infrastructure.

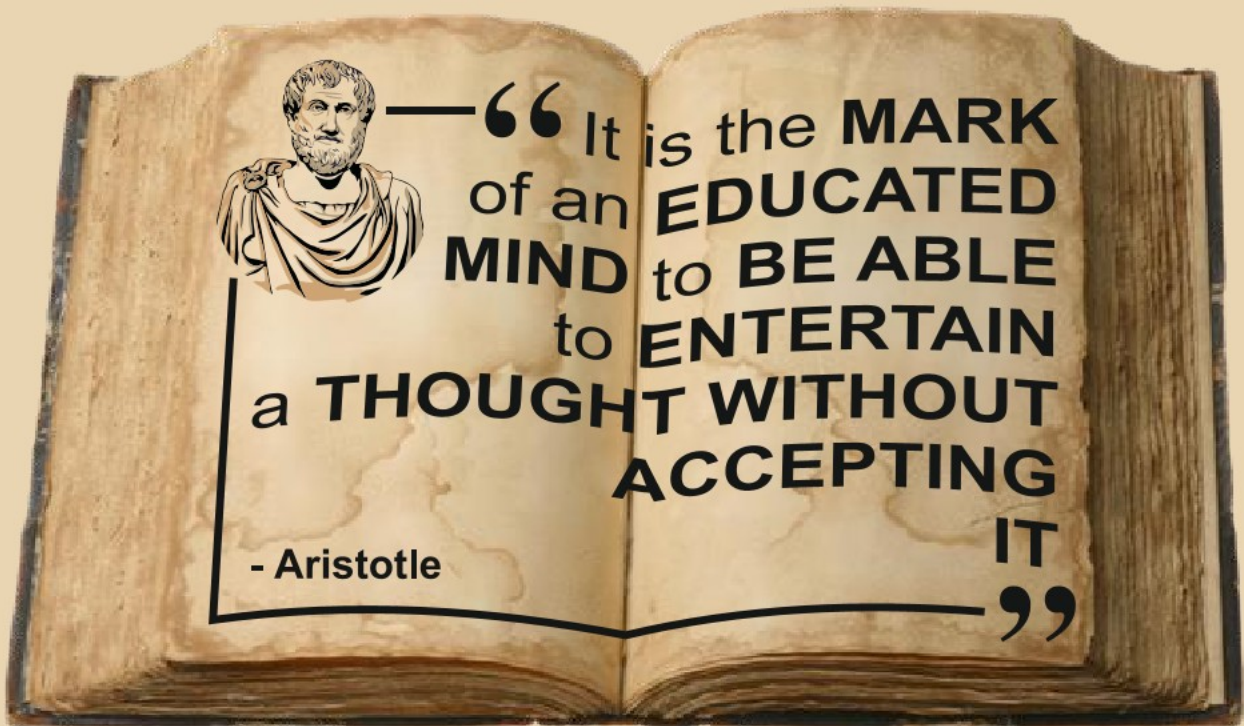
Senior professionals also play a crucial role in advisory capacities—helping Philippine enterprises scale up, comply with global standards, and integrate into international value chains. Their experience is invaluable in sectors such as infrastructure, manufacturing, energy, logistics, and healthcare.

### **Finally, how would you define the road ahead for India–Philippines trade and commercial engagement?**

My vision is one of deep and seamless connectivity. I see a future where Indian and Philippine companies collaborate across manufacturing, services, and innovation ecosystems. With stable policy frameworks, complementary economies, and strong institutional mechanisms, India–Philippines trade is well positioned to move from incremental growth to a more strategic, high-value partnership. For Indian businesses, the Philippines is not just an export destination—it is a gateway to ASEAN and a partner in long-term growth.

The road ahead is no longer about incremental gains—it is about strategic alignment. President Marcos Jr.'s visit has effectively elevated economic engagement to the level of long-term national planning on both sides. With strong political will, complementary economies, and shared regional ambitions, Philippines-India trade is now poised to transition into a truly strategic, high-value partnership anchored in co-investment, co-production, and co-innovation. ●

## INSPIRING THOUGHTS

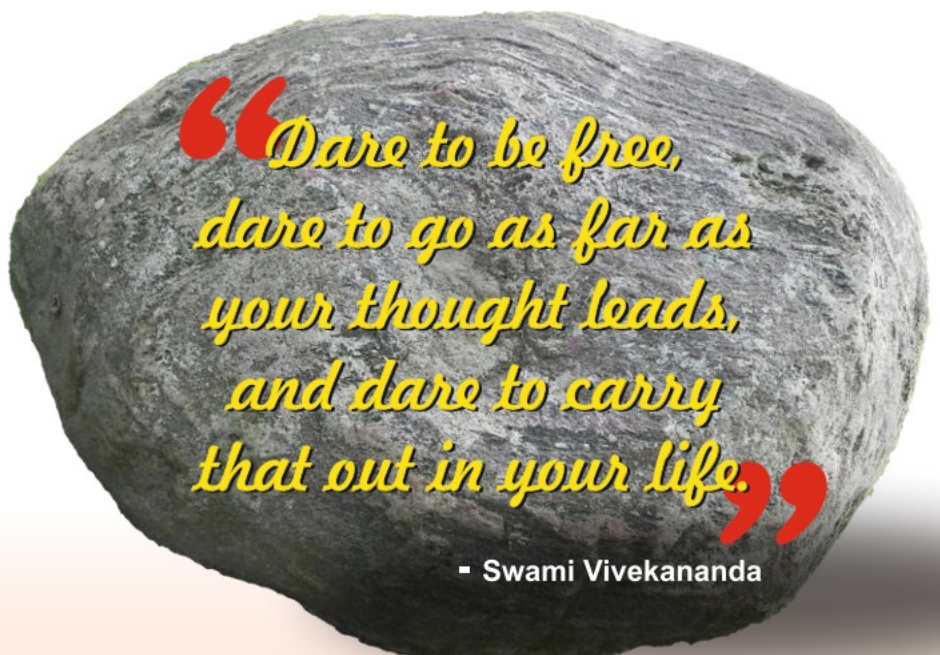


In an age of instant reactions and polarised debates, **Aristotle's** insight feels urgently relevant. An “educated mind,” in his view, is not defined by degrees or debate wins, but by intellectual maturity: the ability to thoughtfully consider an idea without feeling compelled to either adopt or reject it immediately.

This requires emotional discipline and curiosity. It means resisting the urge to dismiss challenging views out of defensiveness, and equally resisting the pull to conform blindly. True education, Aristotle suggests, lies in holding space for complexity, questioning patiently, and reflecting before concluding.


In today's world—where social media often rewards swift, loud judgment—this quote invites us to reclaim nuance, listen deeply, and cultivate the quiet confidence to think for ourselves.

- Aristotle on Intellectual Courage



*“Dare to be free,  
dare to go as far as  
your thought leads,  
and dare to carry  
that out in your life.”*

▪ Swami Vivekananda



**S**wami Vivekananda—the monk, thinker, and spiritual reformer who carried Vedanta and Yoga to the West—was a force that stirred both mind and spirit. This powerful line is a threefold call.

First: “Dare to be free.” For Vivekananda, freedom meant not being ruled by fear, not blindly following traditions or rules without thinking, and not letting self-doubt stop you.

True freedom begins when you take responsibility for your own beliefs and choices.

Second: “Dare to go as far as your thought leads.” Vivekananda believed that a brave person does not avoid difficult thoughts. In simple words, do not be afraid to think deeply, even if your thoughts go beyond what others around you believe.

Third: “Dare to carry that out in your life.” If you truly believe something, let it show in your daily actions—in how you work, how you treat others, and how you face problems. For Vivekananda, a truth that you do not live is no truth at all.

**- Swami Vivekananda on Freedom,  
Thought, and Action**



# The New Face of Classical Dance

Curated by Dr Sonal Mansingh, the five-day KalaYatra 2026 proved that tradition is not a static relic, but a living, breathing dialogue.

*By Prerna Varshney*



**T**he Festival of New Choreographies – KalaYatra 2026, held at Delhi's Kamani Auditorium recently, left an indelible mark on the cultural fabric of the capital. Curated by the visionary Padma Vibhushan Dr Sonal Mansingh, the event emerged as a rare confluence where the traditional sanctity of the guru-shishya parampara met the progressive demands of contemporary creative vision. The series of performances placed New Delhi at the epicentre of the classical arts movement. The festival's strength lay in its ability to reinterpret the familiar. Productions based on the Mahabharata took centre stage, offering audiences a deep dive into the epic's ethical core. In Duryodhana, presented by



**The festival's strength lay in its ability to reinterpret the familiar. Productions based on the Mahabharata took centre stage, offering audiences a deep dive into the epic's ethical core. In Duryodhana, presented by the Bhubaneswar-based Srjan, the audience witnessed a layered portrayal of pride and moral blindness.**

the Bhubaneswar-based Srjan, the audience witnessed a layered portrayal of pride and moral blindness, culminating in a tragic, humanising realisation of the Kaurava prince's downfall.

This was followed by the high-energy Chakravyuha from Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra. By blending the martial vocabularies of Mayurbhanj Chhau and Kalaripayattu, the production created a haunting visual of Abhimanyu's sacrifice, represented by a lone warrior trapped within an ever-closing spiral of death.

### **Breaking Barriers Through Inclusivity**

Perhaps the most significant milestone of the festival was its commitment to inclusivity. The

production Matrika, performed by the all-LGBTQ+ professional Rainbow Dance Troupe from Barasat, served as a powerful reclamation of traditional narratives on the festival's final evening. Rooted in the story of the divine feminine vanquishing Mahishasura, the choreography celebrated the collective power of protection and transformation while standing as a bold statement within the classical landscape.

Earlier in the festival, the audience was treated to Saugandhikaharnam by Chidakash Kalalay Centre. The piece traced Bheema's transformative encounter with Lord Hanuman. Rendered in the Marga Natya tradition, it highlighted themes of humility and inner awakening that resonated long after the performers left the stage.

### **A National Tapestry of Talent**

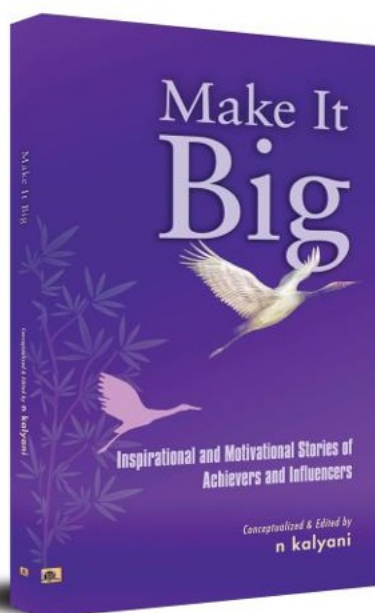
The festival opened with Dr Mansingh's own magnum opus, Amrut-Manthan, setting a high standard for the diverse works that followed. From the Kathakali traditions of Athijeelanam—a production centred on nature conservation—to the vibrant Yakshagana performance of Girija Kalyana, the event showcased a pan-Indian artistic identity featuring ten dance forms from seven states.

While the performances took place across five evenings, the impact of KalaYatra 2026 is expected to be felt for years to come. It has successfully challenged the notion that classical dance is a static art form, proving instead that it is a dynamic medium capable of addressing the most complex social and spiritual questions of our time. ●

*(The author is a journalist and social commentator)*



## Inspiring Hues



### Chasing Jewelled Beauties on Wings

I grew up in Govandi, near Deonar, in the suburbs of Mumbai. This was at a time when television was yet to arrive in Mumbai. My father had finally been able to buy the cottage we lived in.

### The Introduction to Wildlife

It was because of my parents, who encouraged me to keep pets like cats, lovebirds, ducks and aquariums, that I got interested in nature. My dad often got pictorial books, for me, on American birds and African animals, which I really enjoyed reading. When I was in 8th grade, he gave me a camera to photograph my pet cats, and I got hooked on to the hobby of photographing nature. As children, during the summer vacations, we played cricket in the open rice fields, and in the rains, during the monsoons, my favourite season, I caught fishes and crabs with the local boys from the fishermen community (koli). These crabs and fishes would end up as my seasonal pets. That was how I got interested in exploring and knowing about nature. I often missed school to be in the rain catching tadpoles and fishes. Butterflies too I chased and caught, but the real involvement with butterflies was yet to happen.

Being weak in mathematics, I could not go in for studying science after completing my schooling, though I wanted to. And so, I graduated in political science and psychology from the Mumbai University. However, my affinity towards nature remained strong as ever. Soon after graduating I got my first job of selling cosmetics with a big Indian company.

**N Kalyani is a Delhi-based author who writes on nature, environment, and wildlife in newspapers, magazines, and journals. An amateur photographer, she has also hosted programmes on radio.**

**A collection of her poems was published as a book titled *Mysteries & Musings* (2011). Her stories have been included in anthologies; her photographs and poems have been featured in international events focusing on art and literature, and her environment and wildlife philatelic exhibits have been displayed at exhibitions.**

**Kalyani's book "Make it Big – Inspirational and Motivational Stories of Achievers and Influencers", published by Prabhat Prakashan in 2023, brings together the stories of persons whose life choices and life journeys have a positive impact on society at large. Here is an excerpt from this book on Isaac David Kehimkar, known as *The Butterfly Man of India*...**

### Entering the Portals of the BNHS

Nearly at the same time I got an opportunity to volunteer for an exhibition of snakes for the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). Subsequently, I got a job

offer to work with this NGO, but the kind of salary they offered was too meagre. When I shared my desire to work in the area of nature conservation with my mother, she was terribly upset, and warned me that no girl

would marry me with the kind of meagre salary the job offered. But my father was on my side, and managed to convince my mother that it was more difficult to get a job that would give satisfaction and happiness than get one of those jobs which gave a high salary. Money would come eventually, he opined. He reassured me to follow my heart.

And there I was in the BNHS, and right amidst the treasure of books, as a library assistant. I was lapping up as much as I could from the library, and also getting the opportunity to observe stalwarts like Dr Salim Ali, the renowned ornithologist, at work, when he visited the library. I did not interact with him much, as I was then just a newcomer, and he the president of the BNHS. But I once mustered up the courage, and complimented him that I liked his handwriting. And what he advised me then, became the guidelines for my life. He said that he had worked hard to acquire that style in his handwriting, and advised me that I should always let the world see the best side of my work. He then went on to say that some opportunities come just once in a lifetime, and that one should give their best to it.

The BNHS was where I saw myself learning and growing, watching my role models like Dr Salim Ali, JC Daniel, and several others. I read about their exciting travels to remote corners of India as part of their study and research watching nature, and observing wildlife, and that is when, rather subconsciously, I aspired to write on nature like them, and even fantasized seeing these places. Luckily, at the BNHS I got the opportunities to travel to some of the places of my dream.

### Romancing the Butterflies

While working with the BNHS, I



**While working on the story, on butterfly lifecycle, I got so fascinated with butterflies. From then on butterflies took over my life.**

**- Isaac David Kehimkar**

met Bittu Sahgal, editor of the Sanctuary Asia magazine. The first issue of the magazine was just out when he wanted me to do a story on butterflies. While working on the story, on butterfly lifecycle, I got so fascinated with butterflies. From then on butterflies took over my life. And then began my chase after these winged jewels. Butterflies got me, or, rather, enticed me to travel to and explore the remote corners of India. It was thus that I really saw how beautiful and diverse India is. I realized that just one lifetime is not enough to see and know India. Soon after my article on butterflies was published in Sanctuary Asia, I got an offer from the World-Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-India) to co-author a book for beginners on the butterflies of India. At the time nature lovers had books on

birds, animals, snakes and trees, but none on butterflies. And, therefore, the book I co-authored, Common Butterflies of India (1992), became a best-selling title of WWF-India.

After Wynter-Blyth's book on Indian butterflies published in 1957, the BNHS had not brought out any book on butterflies. Possibly sensing this gap, the BNHS offered me to write a book on Indian butterflies. My idea of writing on butterflies was not to just sit in the library, and refer to other people's observations, but to actually see and experience butterflies and their habitats. Then on, my family trips too were for butterflies.

### Capturing the Apollo Butterfly – On Camera

I would like to narrate what it took to photograph the apollo butterfly. This may be a sampler

of one part of the kind of work I did, and enjoyed doing – chasing butterflies and photographing them. We were once at Tabo in Himachal Pradesh, one of the last villages near the Indo-China border above 10,000 feet. My eyes were searching for just one type of butterflies called Apollo. These butterflies are seen only above 10,000 feet. All of us, my wife, my son and the driver, were looking out for anything that would be fluttering around. I was with my camera, ready and cocked. Just then I spotted a whitish butterfly flying close to the ground with a slow fluttering flight. That was it. Yes, it was an apollo. I scrambled out of the car, and started to stalk the butterfly. It was flying slowly and steadily; I was sure to catch up. While I was closing in to frame it, the butterfly started ascending a nearby hill slope. I saw it slowly going uphill, but I was out of breath and just could not catch up on that hill slope. And there I lost my first chance to photograph my dream butterfly. I returned to the car totally upset.

The next year I was in the Valley of Flowers above 10,000 feet, and on the edge of the valley I saw the apollo again, on a lovely aster flower. Oh! what a perfect shot, I muttered as I slowly began my approach like a chameleon. I was near it, but just when I was about to point my camera, it took off, and to my dismay it slowly sailed downwards into the valley below. I just stood there at the edge of the valley. Cursing my luck.

But I wanted to photograph this elusive butterfly for my book. I was in Ladakh, and that was the third time I saw my prized butterfly at Khardung La pass in Ladakh at 17,500 feet, one of the world's highest motorable roads. It was fluttering along the road, and I recognized it – yes, it was an apollo butterfly. Now,

desperate and excited, I quickly got out of the car with my camera out, and there I was running rather breathlessly at 17,500 feet after the apollo butterfly. I told myself I have to get the butterfly this time. While the butterfly kept on flying, and perching on the ground intermittently, I prayed that it should not fly uphill or take a dive into the valley. Then, luckily it was on the road, and I was stalking it with my head throbbing, and heart thumping against my chest as I was not yet properly acclimatized to move in the rarefied air of Ladakh. And then it finally sat in the middle of the road basking with its white wings spread out. Huffing and puffing, trying to steady myself, as I was visibly shaking, I finally got my first shot of my elusive apollo. It seemed so easy as the butterfly just basked in the Himalayan sun while I rattled off my camera on a clicking frenzy. Yes, finally I had captured the Common Red Apollo. On my camera. I had chased it for three consecutive years.

### Butterfly Journeys

The real heartland of Indian butterflies is the north-eastern region of India. And that is the place for my annual pilgrimage. From Sikkim eastwards through Assam to Arunachal Pradesh, part of West Bengal, and the entire North East has more than 900 species of butterflies of the 1320 species of Indian butterflies.

Going around in the dense forests of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in the North East is not easy as one has to try avoiding the blood-thirsty leeches, invisible nasty mites, and angry elephants. But my crazy passion for the winged jewels made me overcome all hurdles. Soon I was busy writing a book on the butterflies of India. The book took 10 years to complete. And, The Book of

Indian Butterflies (2008), turned out to be a BNHS bestseller. That year the book broke all the sales records of the BNHS' publications.

During this chase, chasing the butterflies, I realized that India is truly a unique and diverse country with an amazing array of landscapes, people, animals, birds, insects and flowers. To really "see" India one lifetime is not enough. I stopped visiting foreign countries, as I found India having everything I wanted to see and photograph. I have seen most of India while chasing butterflies.

Besides butterflies, India's wildlife is indeed amazing with elephants, rhinos, leopards, king cobras, and tigers. India is indeed the land of the tiger, and now India is the only place in the world where you can see a tiger at a distance of 10 feet while you are in an open vehicle - the entry of this magnificent cat on the scene is just electrifying. It is quite an experience to look into a tiger's eyes. You will never be the same again. Have you ever done that?

With butterflies I arrived at my destination, and found myself. What I enjoy doing now is to share this with and inspire the younger generation. Saving nature is not just for birds and butterflies, but it is to secure our own future too. Birds and butterflies around us will tell us that all is well. The moment we stop seeing butterflies flying around, or find no birds singing, there would be something terribly wrong with the environment. And then not just us, but our next generation would be at risk. We need to handover this earth, in a good state of environmental health, to our children so they can live safe and happy. ●



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