

# Reader's Digest

NOVEMBER 2021

₹100

## **BRAIN GAMES** That Really Work

By SARI HARRAR

DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

**The Woman  
Who Wrestled  
a Cougar**

INTERVIEW

**Amitav Ghosh's  
Mission to Forge a  
Better World**

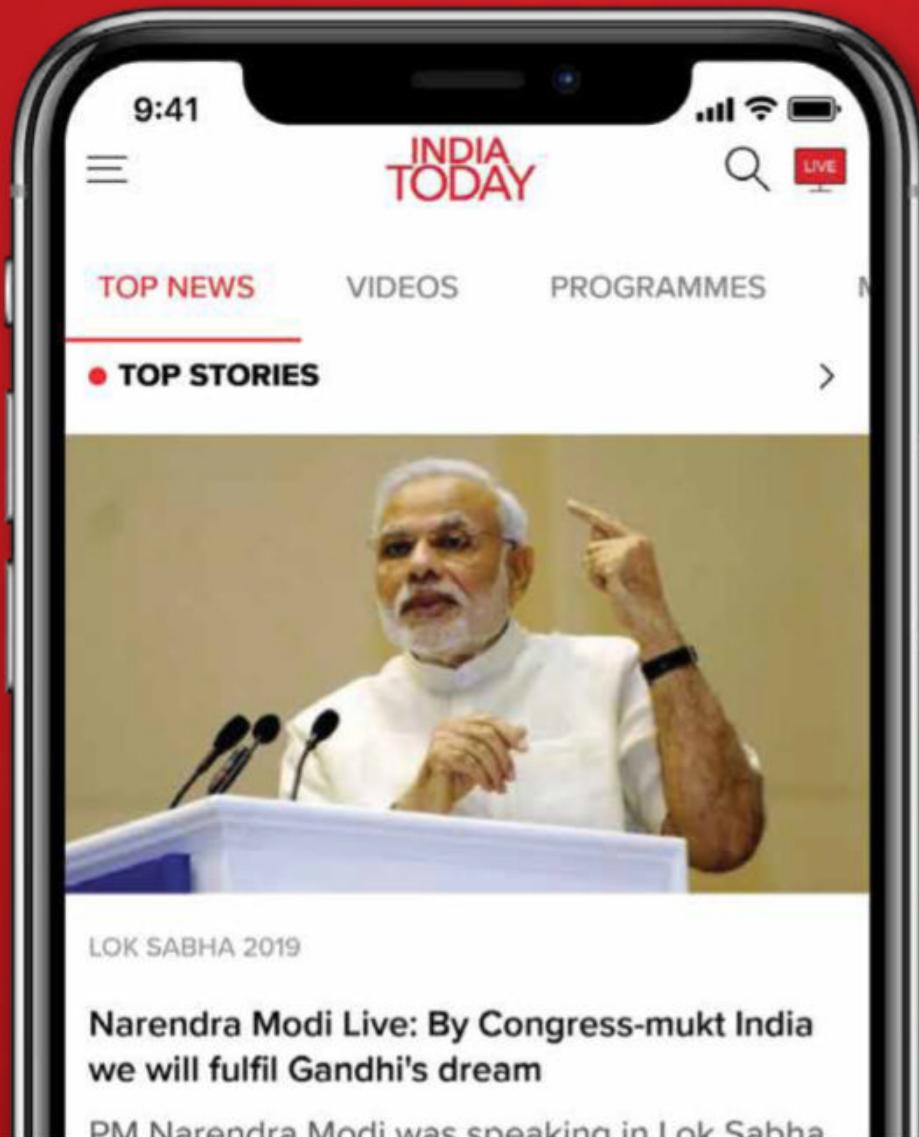
HEALTH

**Covid-19:  
Is Victory  
at Hand?**

INDIA  
TODAY

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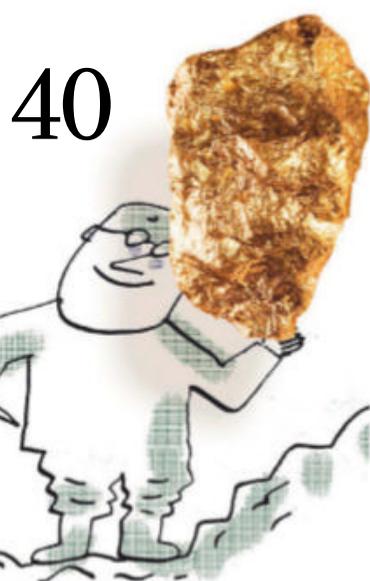


PHOTO: (TOP) THE LAST TRUTH FOUNDATION (BOTTOM) ILLUSTRATION BY SERGE BLOCH; SCYTHERS/GETTY IMAGES (GOLD NUGGET)

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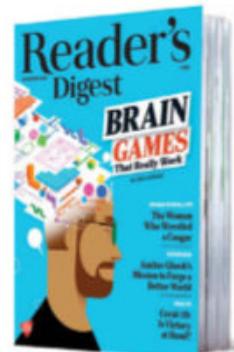
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# OVER TO YOU

NOTES ON THE  
*September* ISSUE



## Lets Talk About Sex

Dr Tanaya Narendra's excellent piece shows the ground reality of sexuality education (a better term for sex education) in India. Both in medical education and regulation, sexual health is one of the most neglected. Currently, there is no specific post-graduation course in India to become a sex therapist. Most sexual disorders are attended by a psychiatrist, urologist or a gynaecologist. With sexual health not even being discussed in the MBBS curriculum, how can we expect primary-care physicians to address the sexual health of the population? This lack of experts also confuses patients about where to seek care. Disorders related to female sexual health continue to be sidelined and are rarely touched upon even in the post-graduation course of related specialities. It's time India revised its medical curriculum to help address the sexual health of the people.

DR ANKIT CHANDRA, *New Delhi*

*Dr Ankit Chandra gets this month's 'Write & Win' prize of ₹1,000. —EDs*

The anecdotes shared by Dr Narendra shows how the lack of sex education clearly has a serious effect on the health of our children and causes grievous damage to our human capital. We must learn from countries like the Netherlands. While visiting a Swedish friend, back in 1987, in a village near Gothenburg, their eight-year-old girl came back from school, blushing and

wanting to speak with her parents because she had been taught about condoms! Notwithstanding our Health Minister's desire to ban sex education in schools we must make it a compulsory subject. Hopefully the New Education Policy will ensure that, and help educate and protect thousands of children and create well informed adults. And with 600 million of us on the internet, social media can certainly help spread the word.

KRISHAN KALRA,  
*Gurugram*

## How to Keep Your Heart Young

With age, the human heart too grows old and some changes are indeed irreversible. The only viable plan is to leave no stone unturned to keep it fighting fit. But that's easier said than done, especially in today's highly competitive world, where managing stress is no easy task. Apart

from the tips listed in the story, we should compulsorily take care of our obesity and hyperlipidemia as well.

DR SUNIL CHOPRA,  
*Ludhiana*

### **The Unkindest Cut**

Reading *The Unkindest Cut* reminded me of my own tonsorial experiences! I have progressively lost hair from 1958, and during my bachelor days would enjoy a massage and the pleasurable movement of the precious little on my head. With marriage and more hair-loss (the two unrelated, I rush to state), Mallika, my spouse, became my hairdresser and remains so to this day. She is our tailor, civil engineer, adept at all of these avatars besides being the perfect hostess and chef for decades! We both enjoyed the humour and humanity of this column.

DR N. GOPALAKRISHNAN,  
*Bengaluru*

### **From Sir, With Love**

Congratulations to Ranjitsinh Disale on

winning the Global Teacher's Prize. His story is a lesson on why privatization of education must never take place. Ranjit, himself, admitted that it is because he teaches in a Zilla Parishad school that he got the freedom to transform the life of his countless students. In a private school he would not have enjoyed the freedom to tailor his methods to the local context. Moreover, not all families can afford private school expenses. His story is a reminder that some of India's best teachers are from government institutes.

ANIRBAN BANERJEE,  
*Burdwan*

### **A Life in Buttons**

The story struck a nostalgic chord. When I was a little girl, on days I was taken ill, mother would let me play with her cookie tin. Pulling the lid off that round time-tainted brown tin container, was like entering a magical world—full of colourful beads, buttons, sequins, dress

hooks, bits of lace, a silver anklet, a thimble and odd knick-knacks. For hours I would immerse myself in a world of possibilities, stringing buttons, making necklaces or odd little toys. In retrospect, I realize how it fuelled my creativity, paving way for my current vocation. The story has inspired me to put together a box of my own and start filling it with button-sized memories.

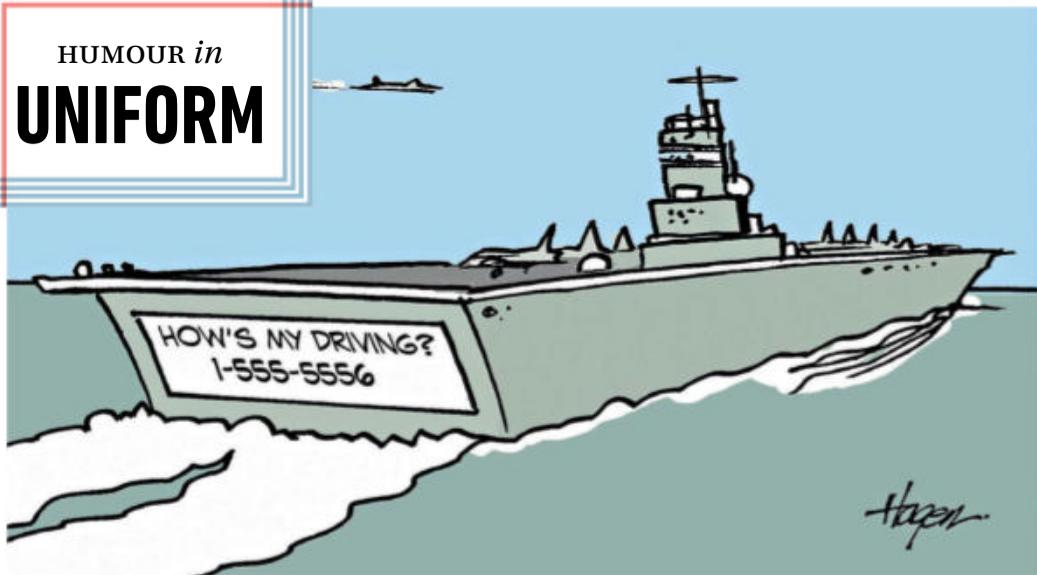
SUNANDA SATWAH,  
*Mumbai*

### **The Day the World Came to Town**

Such a reassuring tale of human bonding in the face of adversity. One can hardly imagine the mental state of passengers stranded in their grounded planes for days while coming to terms with the enormity of the World Trade Centre tragedy. The relentless efforts of the people of Gander is a wonderful example of the kindness of strangers.

BHUSHAN CHANDER  
JINDAL, *Mumbai*

HUMOUR *in*  
**UNIFORM**



**My buddy** and I—two freshly minted second lieutenants—were invited to dine with the base commander and his wife at their home. We agreed that before dinner my friend would stop by the PX [the government department store for US Army and Air Force personnel] to pick up a nice box of candy for our hostess and that we'd split the cost.

The next day, as we walked to the colonel's home in our Army dress

uniforms, I asked what he'd bought. I was anticipating a fancy box of truffles or assorted chocolates. Instead, he'd bought his personal favourite.

"Reese's Peanut Butter Cups!" he said, beaming. "You owe me 88 cents."

—JR PAWLOWSKI

**A month into** my stint in the Army, I was assigned to guard prisoners. The fact that I was very raw was made abundantly clear to me the first time I accompanied

an inmate to the military prison. After we walked side by side for a few feet, the prisoner, who had a few years on me, pointed to my weapon and said, "You know, you should really walk behind me and have your rifle ready to fire in case I try to escape."

—HOWARD HEIN

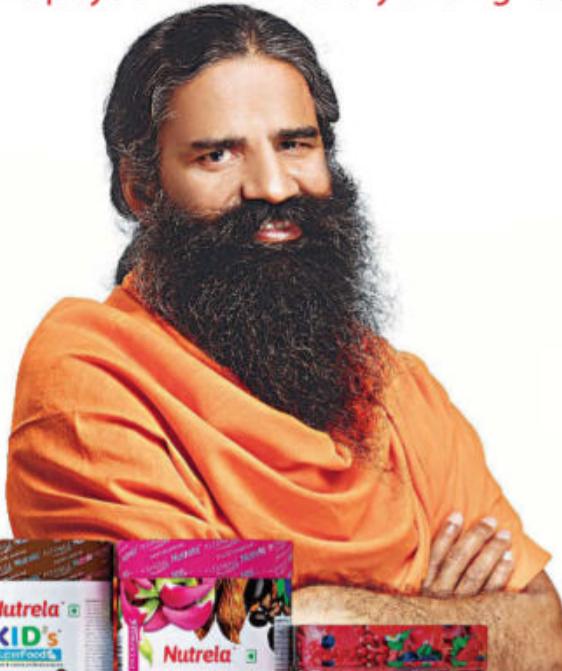
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**BIG IDEA**

# LESSONS IN GIVING

*Teaching children how to give may just result in a more compassionate world*

BY Naorem Anuja

There is little to deny that giving is the currency of compassion and kindness, but it is in the act of giving that we receive something far more valuable—a full, happy heart. DaanUtsav, started in 2009, celebrates just that. Unlike most philanthropic campaigns geared to achieving certain specific metric-driven goals, this annual week-long festival that runs from 2 to 8 October—celebrates the joy of giving by creating a platform through which millions in India from all walks of life come together to donate whatever they can—skills, resources, time—to help those less privileged. Such has been its impact that it has travelled

to India's hinterlands prompting a change in its name from The Joy of Giving Week to the more relatable DaanUtsav.

The Reading Revolution, part of the 2021 chapter of this festival of fellowship, is an effort to include children as active participants in the act of giving. Says 38-year-old Ashish Shrivastava, founder of Shiksharth, one of the host organizations of this initiative, “The idea driving Reading Revolution was to explore how can children celebrate giving, primarily in rural and tribal areas. People, mostly see them as beneficiaries and never as contributors. We believe we could change that narrative.” Shiksharth



The Reading Revolution enables children to experience the joy of giving.

joins forces with Swatantra Talim—a group that co-creates learning spaces for children with children—and SwaTaleem—an NGO that provides education to minority girls all over India.

Despite the unassailable fact that the healthy development of children is crucial to the future well-being of the world, children are rarely acknowledged as individuals. Primarily viewed as their guardian's

property or reduced to objects of charity, there persists a lack of true engagement regarding what they deem vital. Adults, however well-intentioned, cannot always serve as authentic voices for how children see the world. The Reading Revolution is designed to give children not only access to reading resources, but to foster creativity by encouraging them to devise ways to engage with their communities and

hopefully inspire a generation of future leaders.

To that end, the participating organizations received library kits containing 100 books and set about encouraging children to set up libraries, to further both a love of reading and learning and use their learnt skills and knowledge to give back. Over 63 grassroots NGOs and government schools spanning the length of the country, encompassing 30,000 children, joined in the initiative to set up children-run community libraries. Empowered to decide how they wanted to give back, the children choose to host story telling sessions where they read aloud to members of their communities, put up skits, conduct art sessions and giving parents story books to read for a day.

Shrivastava's emphasis on children from rural and tribal geographies in this initiative stems from his own work. His organization is based in heavily militarized Sukma in Chattisgarh—part of the 'red corridor', a moniker given to regions in the country that are severely hit by Naxalite-Maoist insurgency. Their mission is to provide education solutions to children whose everyday lives are marred by conflict.

"Children are the most vulnerable in any adverse situation. For our partner organizations, access to these books and materials is extremely valuable. Once the festival is over, these books would have seeded small libraries that local communities can continue to build and cherish. And hopefully we would have provided children here an experience unlike any other they have had—one that may spark a desire to give and a lifelong practice of working to improve their communities," he says.

For Shrivastava, a volunteer with DaanUstav for 10 years, the decision to pick children to spearhead a giving-back initiative was simple. Any talk of re-imagining the world isn't complete without enabling children. And there is little else that teaches

**A RE-IMAGINING  
OF THE WORLD  
CAN NEVER BE  
COMPLETE  
UNLESS CHILDREN  
GROW UP AMIDST  
A CULTURE OF  
COMPASSION.**

compassion and strengthens inner goodness, believes Srivastava, like the practice of giving.

"When you learn to give, you turn more compassionate. Without experiencing compassion or inculcating empathy how can a child grow up into an adult who feels responsible towards others? For me, this initiative isn't simply philanthropy—it is a value-system, one in which we would have propelled children into a habit of compassion." **R**

**MODERN ROMANCE**



**“Honey, if you don’t mind, I’d prefer to keep the details of our marriage more analog than digital.”**

**I once gave** my husband the silent treatment for an entire week, at the end of which he declared, “Hey, we’re getting along pretty great lately.”

— BONNIE MACFARLANE, *comedian*

**My wife just** got mad at me for fast-forwarding through a commercial

because she wanted to use that time to look at her phone.

— @THECATWHISPRER

**Her:** Are you going to walk around all day without a shirt on?

**Me:** Just giving you a show.

**Her:** Can I change the channel?

— @XPLODINGUNICORN

**If you like** getting angry at the way someone turns a doorknob, marriage may be right for you.

— @BOOMBOOMBETTY

**Labourers of Love**

I’ve come across so many of the same people on dating apps over the years that I’ve started to see them as co-workers.

— ANNE SUNDELL, *writer*

**It’s crazy to think** that my boyfriend existed and had a life before we met. How did he live without me for all those years?

— @ISABELASERAFFIM

**Financial Savvy**

I moved in with my girlfriend after one year of dating. People say we’re rushing in, but we’re both so in love with saving \$900 per month.

— @MONDAYPUNDAY

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



(Left) Hyderabad's 'Bicycle Mayor' Sanathan Selvan. (Right) At a rally with the Happy Hyderabad cycling club.

## GOOD NEWS

FOR A  
*Better Planet*

### Wheeling into the Future

**URBAN LIVING** In a bid to steer cities towards more sustainable goals through the use of bicycles for inner-city transport, BYCS, an Amsterdam-based social enterprise has created a 'Bicycle Mayor' programme wherein local cycling enthusiasts across the world drive their message at the local level. Hyderabad's 'mayor', Sanathana Selvan has now initiated Project Diya, in which volunteers collect and refurbish of old, discarded bicycles for new users. "The whole idea looks at reworking these damaged cycles and giving them to those in need like paper boys, vendors, etc. who use it

for livelihood purposes," explains Selvan. "Affordability is a key problem for many in the city. We connected with paper boys, and realized that they have to spend a lot on repairs. An initiative like Project Diya helps them immensely," adds Selvan.

### The Power of Play

**COMMUNITY** Two decades ago, pickup autorickshaw driver Dinesh Kumar T began to notice the youth in his village of Payambra, Kerala, falling deeper into the downward spiral of alcohol addiction. To help combat a grim fate, he found a way to help drive change in community adolescents and guide them to a better path through sports. In 2001, he converted part of his own land into a volleyball training centre and started the Volley Friends Sports Centre. Since then, the centre has launched four national level and six state level players as well as took their

(LEFT) TWITTER @SSELVAN; FACEBOOK (HAPPY HYDERABAD CYCLING CLUB); (RIGHT) YOUTUBE

girls' team to the state inter-school championship in 2019. "The change volleyball has brought to our village is beyond my expectations. We have three volleyball courts, including an indoor one, besides a gym and an office," says now 49-year-old Dinesh.

## Taking the High Road

**EDUCATION** Like millions of migrants, Vishnu Teli left his home in Kudal Mangon in the Konkan region to work in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation in Mumbai, 100 km away, to make a life for himself and his family. But his own experience of watching his father lose his job due to a labour strike at a textile mill had left an indelible mark on him. If only educational prospects were better in his hometown, the people of his community could strive for more stable livelihoods.

Determined to help others realize a better future, Teli and his three daughters spend weekends and holidays, teaching the children of blue-collar labourers in the Konkan region. With jobs in finance, insurance, banking and IT proliferating with the times, the family conducts classes in English, Math and in competitive service exams.

"After long hours of working in their fields, children found little time for free classes. But we convinced their parents about the importance of education, which led to better enrolment. Its the only way to change the lives of the rural poor," says Vaishnavi, Teli's elder daughter.

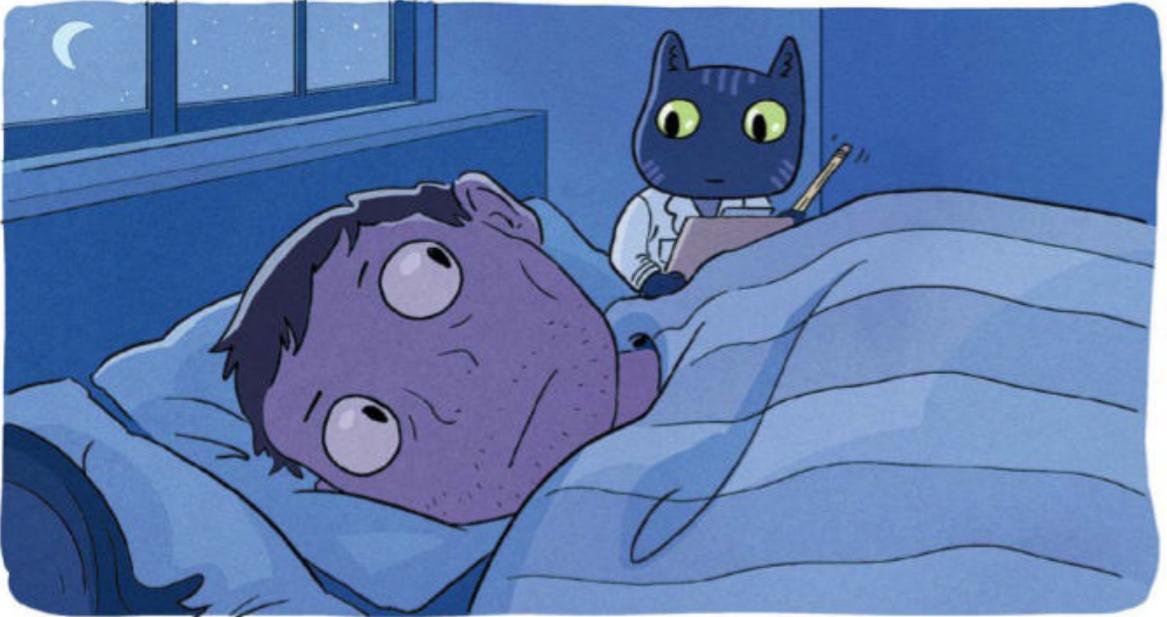
## HEROES: An Amazing Rescue

Hiking along Golden Ears Provincial Park in British Columbia, Canada, Kuljinder Kinda and his four friends were alarmed to discover that two men had slipped off a rockface and fallen into a pool below a large waterfall. Calling the emergency services for help was to no avail with no network coverage in the area. The friends, however, came up with a plan—make a rope



out of their turbans—and pulled off an amazing rescue. "We were trying to think how we could get them out, but we didn't know how to," said Kinda, an electrician from Punjab. "We walked for about 10 minutes to find help and then came up with the idea to tie our turbans together." **R**

**SMILE**



# INTER-PURR-SONAL COM-MEOW-NICATION

BY *Your Cats\**

ILLUSTRATION BY  
*Irma Kniivila*

\*ACTUAL AUTHOR:  
CASSIE BARRADAS

HUMAN,

We, your most excellent and unbiased cats, have been experiencing ongoing relational issues with you, which we'd like to resolve promptly. We have compiled legitimate scientific litter-ature below. We trust it will help to guide you in improving your behaviour.

**WHEN A MEOW BECOMES A ME ME MEOW** Your cats meow not to call attention to themselves but to your self-ish 'me, me, me' attitude. When you 'have' to spend a solid three hours staring at your laptop screen because you're 'working', that's time your cat isn't getting pet or fed—which is rude, and many studies have proven so.

**HAVE YOU HURT THEIR FELINES?**

It's not your cats' responsibility to withdraw their claws—rather, every human in the home should instead wear thick, protective pants. When you ask your felines not to use your legs as scratching posts, you ask them to deny themselves one of life's greatest joys. This is basic statistics.

**SOMETIMES JOKES ARE MORE THAN JUST KITTEN AROUND**

Should your cats step on your computer keyboard during an important video meeting, that is a hilarious joke and it is your responsibility to find it funny. If they knock your laptop off the table while doing so, it is not 'destructive behaviour', it is simply commitment to the bit. Fact.

**DON'T ASSUME IT'S HISS-TERIA**

It is extremely important that your cats express themselves loudly and at 4 a.m. When you shut them out of your room, you shut them out emotionally. Evidence suggests that a cat's sleep is directly proportional to a human's lack of it.

**ADDRESSING CALICO-DEPENDENT TENDENCIES**

Do not rely on your cats to fulfill superfluous needs such as affection, or for your glassware to remain intact. But please note that if a cat is sleeping on or near you, it is best practice not to disturb them ever (source: *Health Canada*).

**REMEMBER TO HAVE ALL DISCUSSIONS IN A NEUTER-AL PLACE**

So often your cats meet you where you're at: on the bed, on the toilet or on a crucial phone call. But when do you ever meet them where they're at: on a cat tree, on a countertop or on a windowsill? The answer, according to a recent survey, is never. Come on, human!

**ARE YOU PRACTISING FUR-GIVENESS?**

If something breaks—let's say, hypothetically speaking, a bowl you once described as 'the only worthwhile thing I ever made in pottery class'—that bowl is certainly of less value compared to the unbroken trust between you and your cats. An unbiased study on this exact topic states, "The bowl was boring and immobile. Then for three seconds it was unspeakably interesting. Now it is in pieces. Get over it."

**FINALLY, WHENEVER POSSIBLE, REMEMBER TO COMPRO-MICE**

Your cats bring you joy, comfort and the occasional prey. In return, it is recommended you bring them treats, scratches and unyielding loyalty. Remember, 10 out of 10 therapists agree that you are wrong and your cat is right.

**P.S.** Okay you figured it out, human. We, your most cherished and feared cats, made up all those expert studies. We are not proud of our deception. Oh wait, we misspoke. We are very proud of it. To be honest, it was pretty cat-thartic. **R**

## POINTS TO PONDER

The way that news organizations have lost our gatekeeping powers to technology platforms, which have made facts available, has rippled through our society. ... this is a recognition of the importance of facts in any shared reality. With journalists holding that line. This recognizes not only how difficult it has been to continue doing what we used to do—the job of holding power to account.

Maria Ressa, journalist, *Nobel Peace Prize winner, 2021*

**We can no longer let the people in power decide what hope is. Hope is not passive. Hope is not blah, blah, blah. Hope is telling the truth. Hope is taking action**

Greta Thunberg, *environmental activist*

A culture ever more sensitive to slights—and ever more disposed to fling violent insults in every direction—seems perfectly suited to shooting itself in the foot it places so confidently in its mouth!

Pico Iyer, *writer*



FROM LEFT: ALAMY (2); BANDEEP SINGH

Dissents speak to a future age. It's not simply to say, 'My colleagues are wrong and I would do it this way' ... that's the dissenter's hope: That they are writing not for today but for tomorrow.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, *American lawyer and jurist*

**... I cannot tell if what the world considers 'happiness' is happiness or not. All I know is that when I consider the way they go about attaining it, I see them carried away headlong, grim and obsessed, in the general onrush of the human herd, unable to stop themselves or to change their direction.**

Thomas Merton, *American Trappist monk and writer*

Life will break you. Nobody can protect you from that, and living alone won't either, for solitude will also break you with its yearning. You have to love. You have to feel. It is the reason you are here on earth. You are here to risk your heart.

Louise Erdrich, *author*

FROM LEFT: ALAMY



Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Thomas Merton

Louise Erdrich

*It Happens*  
**ONLY IN INDIA**



**“What’s an Insta-worthy honeymoon if there’s no network?”**

**Gift of the Gob**

We’re just spitting facts: However we choose to dissect the Indian public behaviour, spitting, unfortunately, seems hard-wired into it. Swacch Bharat Abhiyans notwithstanding, behavioural shifts are elusive still. They say everyone is allowed to change at their own pace but the Indian Railways surely

wishes we would pick up the pace, given the monies it has to spend annually cleaning up spit stains and paan marks on its premises. Recent estimates place the costs at ₹1,200 crore! Chew on that!

*Sources: indiatimes.com*

**Hollow Heist**

When burglars broke into the home of one

Trilochan Gaur, currently posted as sub divisional magistrate in Dewas, Madhya Pra-desh, they had high hopes for a hefty heist. But after finding only ₹30,000 in cash and some jewellery, the disappointed thieves felt robbed. Unhappy at the paltry haul, they made sure the resident knew he should have

made it worth their while with a crisp note of their own. Said the message left behind: "If there wasn't any money in the house, you shouldn't have kept it locked, collector." Such injustice, indeed.

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

### Family Fraud

Mr Tejpal Singh, a resident of Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, received a text message from his son, Sushant's phone one day. Sushant, it said, took a loan of ₹1,50,000 and had returned only ₹75,000. If the remaining amount wasn't repaid soon, junior would be in a lot of trouble. Fraught with panic and despair, Singh rushed to the police station to report him missing. The twist: Delhi police found Sushant, safe and unharmed. But, upon interrogation Sushant revealed that he had staged his own abduction as he needed funds to pay back his loans. Children—the pride and joy of their hapless parents.

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

### Past Life-Present Woes

Running afoul of rhyme or reason, Rajkumar Yadav, a deputy engineer for MGNREGA projects in Madhya Pradesh asked that he be excused from work as he had chanced upon divine revelations of his past life. Following his "spiritual awakening," he wrote to the panchayat CEO. His request: Getting Sundays off as he wants to spend the day reading the Gita and go door-to-door seeking alms, in order to 'erase ego'. As far as leave applications go, the spirit of this particular one is definitely novel, but it wasn't enough. Pat came the CEO's reply: it is out of ego that people want to spend Sundays as per their own wish and this ego needs to be destroyed at its root. So, Mr Yadav must work Sundays, for the sake of his soul no less.

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

### Those who can, do

We suppose a general requirement for life is a

certain instinct for enterprise. For two rival educators aspiring to the same school principal's post in Bihar's East Champaran district, matters came to blows while displaying this go-getter spirit. Furthering their individual bids to the job, Shivshankar Giri and Rinki Kumari went to the district education department to submit documents of their qualifications, when the duo began arguing. When the verbal blows felt lacking, matters were quickly elevated to the physical plane. Grappling and general fisticuffs broke out between Shivsankar and Kumari's husband, who even tackled Giri in the wrestling classic, 'guillotine choke'. May we suggest some lessons on conflict resolution?

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

—COMPILED BY NAOREM ANUJA

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

# UTTAR PRADESH'S LICKETY-SPL

**When Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath came into the power of Uttar Pradesh on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2017 he inherited a state which needed a complete overhaul in every sector. Law and order was pathetic, because of which investors were hesitating in coming to the state. Forget about opening new industries, even the old industrial setups were shutting down and unemployment was on peak among youth. Just after reaching at the helm of affairs Yogi Adityanath had dreamed about an Uttar Pradesh where no one will have any kind of fear, where everyone will have work to do and the industries should flourish in the land of Ganga and Yamuna. Without wasting much time, chief minister Yogi Adityanath prepared visionary schemes and implemented them at ground level. It was the effect of such impressive schemes that within a time span of 54 months, the state shed the baggage of BIMARU state and has moved towards becoming a prosperous state.**

People in the state are eagerly waiting for the opening of the country's longest Purvanchal expressway connecting state capital Lucknow to the eastern tip of the state Ghazipur and the wait is going to end very soon. Among these people is Rashmi Patel, a 26 year old software developer working in a multinational company in chak ganjaria area on the Sultanpur road in Lucknow. Rashmi hails from Mohammadabad area of Ghazipur district which is close to the Bihar border. Purvanchal Expressway connecting Lucknow to Ghazipur, will be a boon for people like Patel. The expressway

is projected to cut travel time between Lucknow to Ghazipur to a mere four hours. Rashmi is quite elated for Purvanchal expressway, she says that on Saturday I can complete my office work and leave for Ghazipur and on Monday morning will depart from Ghazipur around 5 a.m. in morning and will reach my office around 10:00 a.m.

## AN EXPRESSWAY WITH MANY SPECIALTIES

Purvanchal Expressway does not have stones installed on the slopes on either side of the road (except on the banks of the river or in the water areas). In their place, beehive-like 'Jio cells' made of plastic have been used. In order to increase the quality of the road, instead of normal bitumen, rubber pieces mixed with 'crumb rubber modified bitumen' have been used.

Besides rubber, bitumen mixed with polymers has also been used in some places. Rubber and polymers do not allow water to stand, due to which the road does not deteriorate quickly and vehicles do not slip on it. In order to prevent accidents crush barriers have been installed on both sides of

the median (the space between the incoming and outgoing road). A 3.2 km long airstrip has also been built in the Kudebhaar area of district Sultanpur on the Purvanchal Expressway. This is notable because a canal is passing under the airstrip—this will be the first airstrip in the country constructed on a bridge.

## AIRPORTS GIVING NEW IDENTITY TO THE STATE

Kushinagar, the Mahaparinirvana site of Lord Buddha, has got direct international connectivity. Along with this, the tourism sector has also got wings along with getting a new pace of development here. By getting the facility of direct flight to foreign tourists, cultural ties at the international level will also be strengthened. All this has been possible with the efforts of CM Yogi Adityanath from October 20, when the third functional Kushinagar International Airport of UP was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. On the request of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Kushinagar Airport was recognized by the Union



# IT ON THE PATH OF DEVELOPMENT

Cabinet for international level flight services in the year 2020. Built at a cost of Rs 260 crore and spread over 589 acres, Kushinagar Airport has the largest runway in the state which is 3200 meters long and 45 meters wide. Kushinagar Airport is also a big gift from the Yogi government for the followers of Buddhism living all over the world.

## PIPED COOKING GAS TO EVERY HOUSE

The people of UP are soon going to get rid of the problem of carrying and refilling LPG cylinders for domestic use. The Yogi government is preparing to provide piped cooking gas directly to their kitchen. Government is going to provide PNG connection to almost 20 lakh families of eastern Uttar Pradesh. The plan is to lay a 2,050 km long gas pipeline from Haldia in West Bengal to Jagdishpur in Uttar Pradesh for this purpose. State government is already working on the project which is being assisted by the central government. With the availability of PNG connections, people will get rid of the problem of carrying LPG cylinders. It will be economical and secure and will also rule out the possibility of shortage. The state government has started working on this scheme under the Urja Ganga Yojana of the Centre.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had started the supply of PNG in Gorakhpur on 3rd October by providing connections to 101 people. On the occasion, the chief minister had said that PNG would be cheaper than conventional gas cylinders and could save around 35-40 per cent of the consumers' money.

## NUMBER ONE IN COUNTRY

- Highest number of covid test and vaccination in the country
- First rank in PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana
- For the 4th consecutive year, Number 1 in government purchase from gem portal
- Highest in sugarcane, ethanol, sugar and sanitizer production
- Maximum 4143 units established under PM rojgar srijan karykram
- Free of cost power connection to 1.38 crore houses under saubhagya scheme
- Number one in food grain, wheat, potato, mango and milk production
- On the top position in the country by giving permission and construction of more than 42 lakh houses under PM aawas Yojana
- 1.67 crore eligible families got free of cost LPG connection under Ujjwala scheme
- First state in the country to establish women help desk in all police stations
- Maximum number of 7.02 crore accounts opened under PM Jan dhan Yojana
- benefitted 36 lakh 60 thousand 615 people under Atal pension Yojana
- First state in the country to implement state health policy and skill development policy
- Constructed highest number of 2 crore 61 lakh personal toilets in the country

1,23,000 स्मार्टफोन

बच्चों के स्वास्थ्य परीक्षण के लिये

1,87,000 इन्फैंटोमीटर का वितरण



## YOGI GOVERNMENT FULFILLING THE DREAMS OF YOUTH

In Uttar Pradesh tablets and smartphones will be given to 68,30,837 youths, which includes students of graduation, post graduation, technical and medical education along with trainees of skill development and MSME. On 6 October, Yogi Adityanath government issued the government order and named UPDESCO as the nodal agency for this purpose and also constituted the committee of experts for this. This purchase will be done through the GeM portal. State government has also included the male health workers of the medical and health department along with the trainees of community health officers under the ambit of this scheme. The selection of beneficiaries will be done through the heads and heads of the department of concerned educational and other institutes.

Only those will be selected, who have not received any smartphone or tablet under any other scheme barring the school going student. A dedicated web portal will be created to collect the database of the beneficiaries from all departments. An expert committee has been constituted and special secretary of IT department is its head. For the selection of beneficiaries, a committee will be constituted at district level whose head will be the district magistrate.

### GOVERNMENT COMMITTED FOR EMPLOYMENT

The state government, committed to providing employment to the youth, has launched a career counseling program in the offices of the employment department across the state from 19th March 2017. Youths were apprised about the opportunities available in the

employment market. They were also enrolled into employment oriented and training curriculums. This paved the way for the opportunities of employment to the youth who took the benefit of the scheme and helped them in becoming self-reliant. Government is continuously helping the youth of the state in getting employment by organising the employment fairs and connecting them with the mission employment scheme. These programs which run till 31st August 2021 helped more than 1115513 youths. Not just that, during covid scenario the government also formed help desks for the career counseling of migrant workers who returned from different states. Information regarding the different government schemes was given to the migrant workers through the help desks. Government also helped them in getting the benefits of schemes and along with them they were apprised about the different benefits and employment opportunities which were being provided to the labourers. During this period the government also conducted skill mapping of these workers and labourers. From the last financial year to 10 September 2021, employment was provided to 10,45,755 labourers in different apartments.

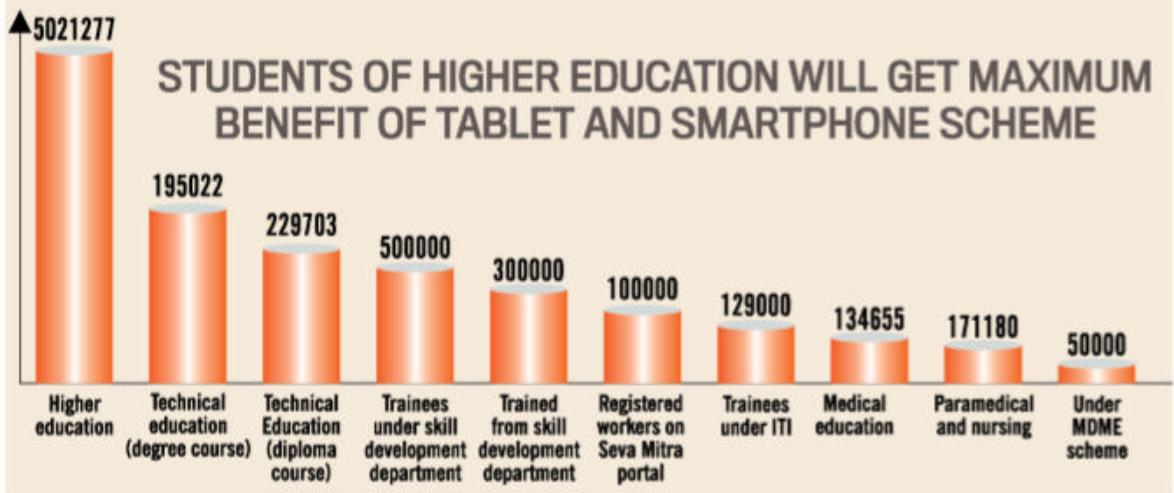
### ASHA WORKERS GOT SMARTPHONES

Considered as the backbone of the health system in rural areas, ASHA workers popularly known as ASHA bahan will now have smartphones for their daily routine

works. Government is going to provide smartphones to around 80000 ASHA workers under the direction of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Chief Minister Yogi thinks that the way ASHA workers have worked at ground zero during covid period is indeed inspirational and worth praising. Asha workers posted in rural areas play an important role in making health services available to everyone, providing information regarding the vaccination of children along with conducting the regular check up of pregnant ladies. The data provided by them becomes the foundation stone of many policies of the government. Giving smartphones and connecting them with the technology is quite essential. This will not only help them in their routine job work but will also add transparency in the work culture. The Yogi government has provided 1,23,000 smartphones to the Anganwadi workers and after getting connected with the technology their work became easier.

## YOGI GOVERNMENT'S MISSION ROJGAR IS GETTING NEW DIMENSIONS

- 4.5 lakh youths have got government jobs till date. Government appointment of 3.5 lakh youths on contract
- Loan of 2.1 lakh crore rupees disbursed among 82 lakh MSME units and around 2 crore people got employment.
- 20 lakh people got employment under one district one product scheme. The Yogi government helped 60 lakh people in establishing their own business.
- Jobs were given to more than 40 lakh workers who had returned from other states to their places.
- Selection of 18000 women mates of self help groups under MGNREGA scheme. Self help groups increase livelihood in rural areas.
- Record recruitment of 12,5987 teachers in the basic education department. Increase of 50 lakh students in primary schools.
- Appointment of 250 professors, assistant professors and associate professors in government engineering colleges. Recruitment process underway for 200 more posts.
- Work in progress on the defence industrial manufacturing corridor. 5 lakh job opportunities will be created by an investment of 50000 crore rupees.
- State data centre would be set up in Noida with an estimated investment of 6000 crore rupees which will create job opportunities for 50,000 people.





## YOGI GOVERNMENT ADDING SWEETNESS TO THE LIFE OF FARMERS

Taking care of the welfare of sugarcane farmers of the state, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has increased 25 rupees per quintal in the state administered price of sugar cane. This increase is for the crushing session started from 1<sup>st</sup> October. Chief Minister Yogi announced that the cane price for the early maturing variety which was being purchased at the rate of Rs 325 a quintal will now be purchased at Rs 350 per quintal. Likewise the price for the common variety cane has been raised from Rs 315 to Rs 340 per quintal. The government has also decided to buy the rejected variety of sugarcane, of which barely one per cent is left, at an increased price of Rs 335 per quintal from Rs 310 per quintal. The hike will provide additional income to 45.44 lakh sugarcane farmers in the state and will result in an additional payment to the tune of Rs 4,000 crore.

Uttar Pradesh has 51 per cent of the total cultivated area, 50 per cent of the crop and 36 percent of sugar production of the country. Of about 48 lakh sugarcane farmers,

more than 45.44lakh supply their crops to mills. The industry itself employs about 6.5 lakh people directly and indirectly.

### SUGAR MILLS GOT NEW LEASE OF LIFE

After assuming power in March 2017, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath gave a big relief to the farmers of basti who were agitating for the last two decades, by restarting the sugar mill of munderwa. This Sugar mill of the British period was shut down by previous governments. The expansion of sugar mills is also being done on war footing to provide maximum benefit to the farmers. Sugar cane department of state has already started expansion work of 13 sugar mills. The expansion of sugar mills will benefit more than 5 lakh farmers and it will also increase the crushing capacity of the sugar mills. The department has also constituted a committee for physical inspection of the expansion of sugar mills. To provide relief to the sugarcane farmers the functioning of 120 sugar Mills is almost certain in the

Along with providing payment of 35898.85 crore rupees for crushing season 2019-20, 33048.06 crore rupees for crushing season 2018-19 and 35443.38 crore rupees for crushing season 2017-18, government also cleared the dues of previous crushing seasons which amounts to 10661.38 crore rupees. So the government has made payment of a total of 144000 crore rupees to the sugarcane farmers till date.

For First time in 25 years, 272 licences for new khandsari units have been approved by the government whose total crushing capacity is 68350 TCD. Against those approved units till now 176 units have started functioning which has generated additional crushing capacity of 43802 TCD.

current crushing season. The cultivation land has increased by 27.75 lakh hectare in the state. That is why the expansion work of crushing capacity has been started in 13 sugar Mills including munderwa so that maximum sugarcane can be crushed in the season. According to the sugarcane development department the increase in crushing capacity will also increase the income of farmers and in turn benefit farmers. In the wake of this, the repair work has also started in the sugar mills. If

sources are to be believed, the crushing will start in sugar mills after 25<sup>th</sup> October.

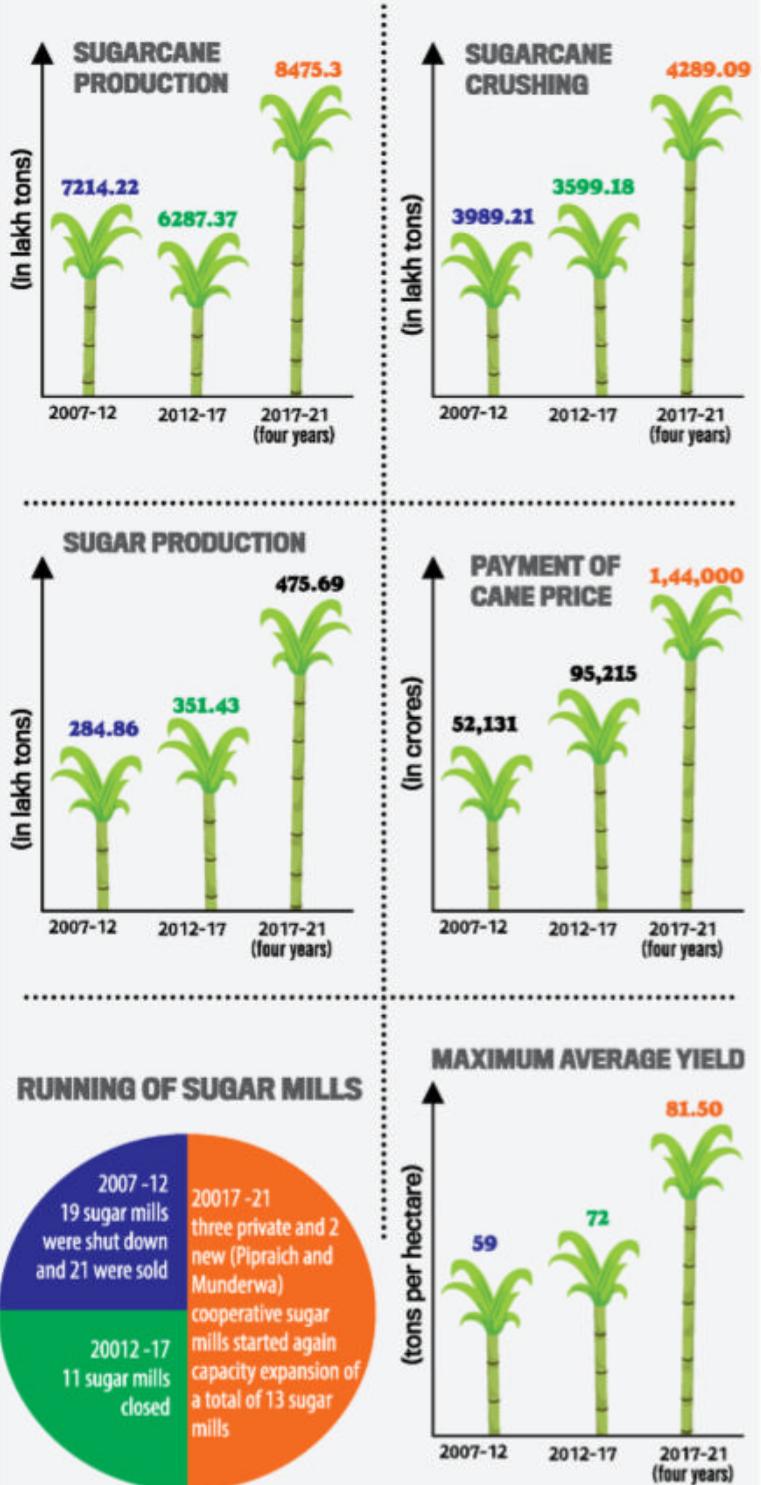
**MAXIMUM POSSIBLE HELP TO THE SUGARCANE FARMERS**

Farm machinery banks have been setup and functioning in all 146 cooperative sugar cane societies and sugar mills societies of state and agriculture machinery for crop residue management has also been made available. Under the agricultural expansion program all sugar cane providing farmers are being connected to M Kisan portal and Kisan call centre of Central Government for providing scientific techniques to the sugarcane farmers. Till now 43.24 lakh farmers have been connected with these portals and centres. Apart from it, training is also being provided to 75000 sugarcane farmers annually with the help of Ganna Kisan Sansthan. An arrangement of the toll free number 1800-121-3203 is also there at sugar cane commissioner office level for fixing the problems of sugarcane farmers and with it's help sugarcane farmers are registering and resolving their problems 24\*7.

**SUGARCANE FARMERS BECAME 'SMART'**

The Yogi government has helped sugarcane farmers a lot through modern technology portals and mobile apps. Now instead of paper slip, farmers are getting their slip on their mobile through sms. They are also getting timely information of payments.

**YOGI GOVERNMENT WAY AHEAD OF PREVIOUS REGIMES**



# Remind Your Manners

*How to navigate friends,  
family and social outings  
in a vaccinated world*

BY *Karen Stiller*

ILLUSTRATION BY *Vesna Asanovic*

At a recent socially distanced gathering, I found myself in an unwanted conversation with a person I barely knew. With my actual friends standing on the same lawn, the idle chit-chat felt like a waste of my visiting time and energy. I grew increasingly hot and twitchy. Soon, to my deep surprise, I

had to bite my tongue to avoid blurting “I don’t want to speak with you.”

Luckily, I didn’t say it out loud, and the rude thought stayed in my head where it belonged. The encounter made me realize that spending so much time wandering listlessly around my own tiny household bubble had eroded my social skills. I wondered if my manners were also becoming a relic of the past, just like eating indoors at restaurants and nights out at the movies.



Many of us may be feeling similarly rusty as we prepare to open our homes and our hearts again to family, friends and neighbours. It's an exciting time, but also a good moment to reflect on what we've longed for most and what we haven't missed that much at all during the pandemic. Those insights can help shape our social re-entry plan. Here are some tips for getting back into social shape.

## BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF

Just as our jurisdictions have distinct phases of gradual reopening, we can take things one step at a time as we re-enter a busier, more normal life. We don't have to leap from sitting at the window watching the cat across the street, straight into packed parties and noisy barbecues. We might be surprised to discover we have some new mental and emotional limitations after having lived at a slower, quieter pace.

Nafissa Ismail is an associate professor of psychology at the University of Ottawa. She confirms that we, and our brains, need to get back into shape, socially speaking. "Socializing is a skill and we get better at it as we practise it," says Ismail. "With the isolation and the restrictive measures we didn't get much time to practise."

Those of us who spent the pandemic in smaller households, working from home, may require more practice than others before we can easily maintain a

long conversation in a room full of people. "We need to relearn those in-person social skills," says Ismail. "It's a lot for the brain to coordinate, knowing who to listen to, monitoring our movements, our own speech production. It will take some time."

## BE PATIENT WITH OTHERS

Going to public events, however much we might want to, may also be more tiring than we expect. Ismail says that new fatigue is normal. "Our brain is working overtime," she explains. "With time, we will relearn how to coordinate everything and get over the exhaustion. We will have to take it slowly."

Some friends will take longer than others to experience the relief and joy of society opening up again. And, as we do gather together again, we will need to be sensitive to the ways in which the pandemic has affected us all differently, whether it's a job loss, relocation, long separations, anxiety, depression or the deaths of loved ones. "We hear people say we're returning to normal, but those who lost loved ones will never return to normal," reminds Ismail. "We need to be aware of that, too, as we are socializing."

## START SMALL AND BE SELECTIVE

It's possible that the pandemic has been a powerfully clarifying event in our lives. We know who we missed seeing, and we might also have a short list of people we

didn't pine for quite so much. This is important information to have and it can help us create some new priorities.

"When everything was mediated by phone or video chats, who did I hear from? Who did I want to hear from?" asks Sharon Ramsay, a registered marriage and family therapist in Toronto. "Who regularly nourishes us, and could we maybe pour into those relationships a little bit more?" Relaunch your social life with those friends first, says Ramsay.

## EMBRACE NEW FORMS OF VISITING AND ENTERTAINING

When we do meet again with our social circles, whatever their new shape, we may also discover we're no longer as interested in our old go-to activities. The pandemic has taught us that we can enjoy a visit with a friend by taking a walk together or by sitting on opposite ends of a park bench, eating sandwiches we brought from home. Simple can be good, and that can remain true as we move forward.

Lucy Waverman, cookbook author and a food columnist for *The Globe and Mail*, believes that smaller scale hospitality will continue for some time, and she says that's just fine. "It has to do with exhaustion in general and specifically exhaustion with cooking," says Waverman, nodding to one of people's favourite lockdown activities. "I like cooking but I'm fed up with it myself."

Keep it simple, at least as you start to

have people over again, she advises. "Put a nice piece of salmon on the grill," she says, by way of an example. "There's no need to make salmon Wellington." Ordering takeout for you and your company from your favourite restaurant is also officially okay.

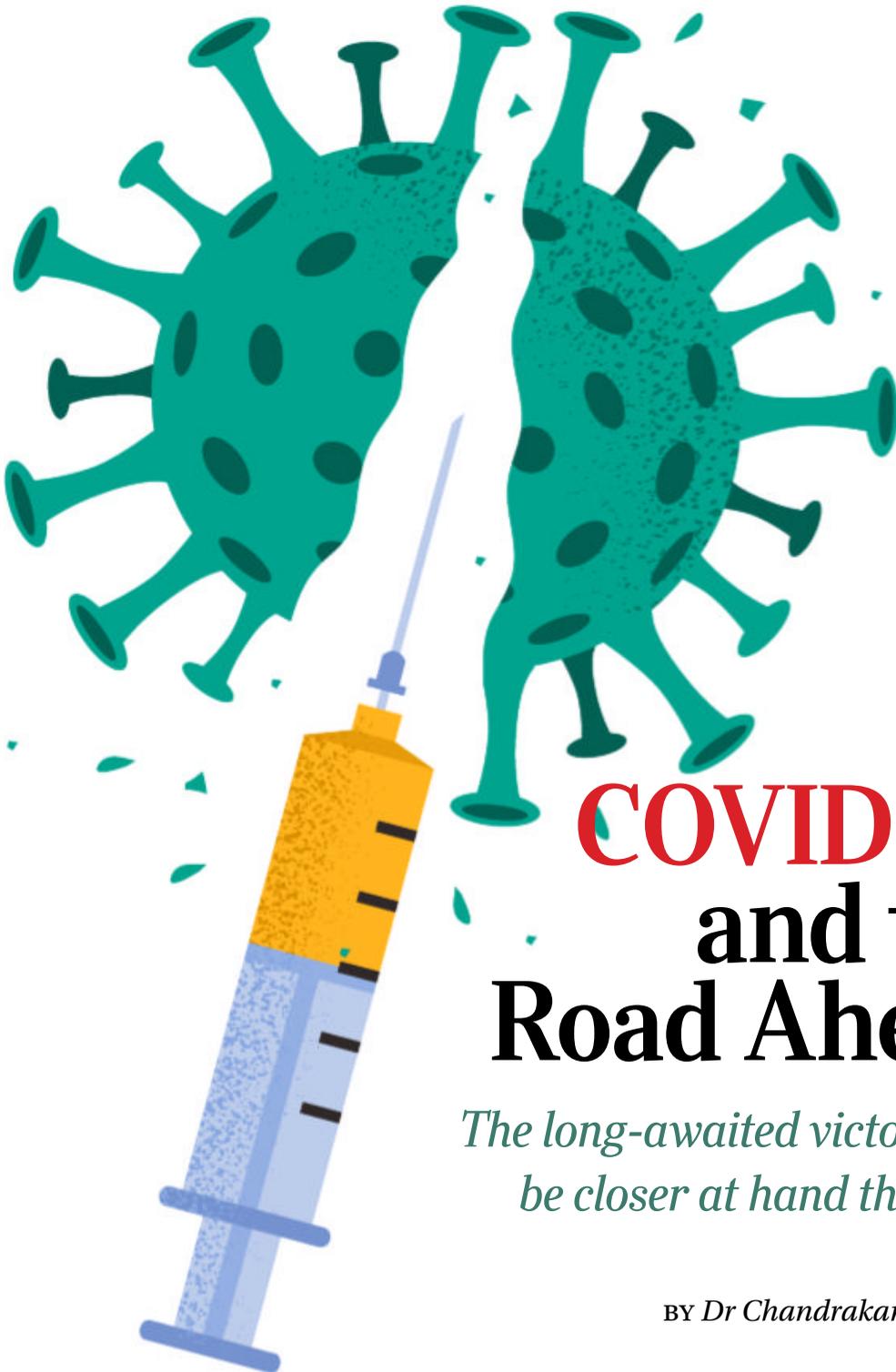
## TAKE TIME NOW TO REFLECT AND RECORD

During the pandemic, Nafissa Ismail finally took the piano lessons she never had time for. Sharon Ramsay purchased beautiful stationery and regularly mailed letters to friends and relatives. I tried yoga, and found I loved it.

Eventually, life will start to pick up its pace, and if we're not careful, we might find ourselves running around in circles once again. "One of the gifts of the pandemic has been to reconsider how we live," says Ramsay. "Some folks might have taken to walking and cycling. Is that a habit you want to continue? What have been the splashes of joy in the cesspool of the pandemic?"

Ismail suggests sitting down with a piece of paper and making an actual list of the practices that brought some happiness during what might have been one of the most difficult experiences of our lives. Don't forget the good things we've learned, she advises. It's okay to rest and to keep doing the hobbies we discovered during lockdown. "We don't need to constantly please others," she says. "It was a good life lesson to realize it's okay to slow down." **R**

**HEALTH**



# COVID-19 and the Road Ahead

*The long-awaited victory may  
be closer at hand than ever*

BY Dr Chandrakant Lahariya

India's experience of a ferocious second wave of COVID-19 through April and May 2021 won't soon be forgotten. But since then, the number of cases has steadily declined. By mid-October, the daily count of new cases came down to around 15,000—the lowest since the start of the second wave in the country. This is a relief for everyone. While the pandemic is far from over—in India or the world—there seems to be a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel.

Public-health experts and epidemiologists have reached a consensus that as long as the SARS-CoV-2 virus is circulating in any part of the world, there remains a possibility of the emergence of new variants, which can fuel a fresh wave. The practice of handwashing, face masks and physical distancing in public places along with full vaccination are the proven ways to prevent infection and reduce transmission.

A devastating second wave in India also meant that a large proportion of the population was infected and developed natural immunity, as was noted in the fourth nationwide sero-prevalence survey conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research in June–July this year. The survey estimated that nearly 68 of every 100 Indians above the age of six years had developed antibodies against SARS-CoV-2. Children between six and seven years had antibodies at a nearly similar rate as adults and thus were protected. Since then,

India's COVID-19 vaccination drive has accelerated and by now, nearly 80 per cent of the eligible adult population has received at least one shot of the COVID-19 vaccines.

### Should We Expect a Third Wave?

With high sero-prevalence and increasing vaccination coverage, epidemiologically speaking, the probability of a third nationwide wave of COVID-19 in India is low. However, state- and district-specific smaller waves are possible till the pandemic is declared as over. Without confirmed knowledge on how long immunity after natural infection or vaccination lasts, it is important we continue all possible COVID-appropriate precautions.

The long festive and holiday season has started in India. Globally, in the last 21 months, we have witnessed that soon after festivals, sporting events or any instances involving large gatherings of people, a rise of fresh COVID-19 cases occurs. With approximately one-fifth of India's adult population still susceptible and unvaccinated, this could easily fuel a new wave. While most vaccines are safe and effective, vaccination does not result in absolute immunity: a few vaccinated people are still at risk of disease. Even antibody formation is not a guarantee of protection. However, what is certain is that a vaccinated individual is at far less risk of contracting a moderate or severe form of the diseases than the unvaccinated.

### **Full Vaccination for Adults**

The single dose of the COVID-19 vaccines is known to provide some protection, however, every eligible adult needs to get both shots. More importantly, the vaccines used in India are not proven to reduce the risk of contagion or disease transmission. The COVID-19 vaccines are disease-modifying, meaning they reduce the risk of moderate to severe disease and death. So, with the vaccination rate going up, even if cases rise, the proportion of cases with moderate to severe illness—those who would need hospitalization—is likely to be small.

**WITH INCREASED PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES, CASES WILL DECLINE BUT WE CANNOT EXPECT OUR CASE-LOAD TO REACH ZERO ANYTIME SOON.**

### **Children can Attend Schools**

One of the major population sub-groups indirectly affected by this pandemic has been children. Soon after the start of the pandemic, schools in India were closed and learning and education of children was severely compromised.

Over the last few months, there is better understanding of the virus and disease in the children. Scientific and epidemiological evidence shows that children are protected from moderate to severe disease. This is good news.

In fact, the sero-survey has shown that school-age children in India have already developed infection without developing clinical diseases. The COVID-19 vaccine may be initially recommended for high-risk children but healthy children may not need one, until different types of vaccines or more data on the safety of currently licensed ones becomes available.

Scientific evidence demonstrates that children need not be vaccinated to attend school. In nearly all countries children have been attending classes without being vaccinated, As schools are re-opening for in-person sessions, it is the right thing to send kids to school—with strict adherence to age appropriate COVID-19 precautions and safety measures—even without waiting for the start of child vaccinations.

Many times, people and parents in India get apprehensive after reading global news coverage but it is time we develop a better understanding and perspective on these reports. In case of diseases, local context matters. The epidemic pattern of the US or the UK is not necessarily applicable for India. The epidemiological situation in India is very different owing to various factors such as age group, co-morbidities, adherence to COVID appropriate behaviour and prevalence of protective immunity against the Delta variant.

### **Has COVID-19 become Endemic?**

Virologists and infectious disease experts agree that SARS-CoV-2 will

stay with humanity for the foreseeable future. With increased vaccination and other public health measures, COVID-19 cases will decline but we cannot expect case-loads to reach zero anytime soon. A number of countries such as Singapore, New Zealand and Australia that once planned and implemented 'zero-COVID' strategies have since abandoned them.

Experts now agree that a realistic strategy is to achieve a low number of COVID-19 cases through high vaccination coverage and adherence to public health measures. Once the number of vulnerable individuals falls, transmission and the number of daily cases will decline. At that point, the disease can be considered endemic. The decision on when the pandemic should be considered over will be taken by the expert committee formed by the World Health Organization. COVID-19 has not turned endemic in India, yet.

### Preparing for the Days Ahead

While the worst of COVID-19 in India seems to be over, we must remain vigilant and respond quickly to any future spike in cases. Adherence to COVID-appropriate behaviour and adults getting fully vaccinated remain key. Until both doses are received, unvaccinated or partially vaccinated people should avoid large gatherings. Taking care of mental and social health, eating and sleeping well as well as keeping fitness levels high will help support us during the critical months ahead. Individuals

with post-COVID or long-COVID conditions, should not ignore their symptoms and seek timely medical advice.

The pandemic has taught us a few lessons. First, consistent good health practices is the best protection from any disease, COVID-19 included. We should all pledge to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Second, responding to public-health crises require citizen and community participation for effective implementation of countermeasures. We need to keep doing our bit to ensure India's victory against the pandemic. Third,

**WHILE THE WORST OF SEEMS TO BE OVER, WE MUST STILL REMAIN VIGILANT AND RESPOND QUICKLY TO FUTURE SPIKES IN CASES.**

vaccines are proven public health tools and citizens can contribute by tackling vaccine hesitancy and convincing every eligible person to get vaccinated.

The day when the pandemic will be declared as over, is not very far. The only way forward, is together. **R**

*Dr Chandrakant Lahariya, a medical doctor and epidemiologist, is the Executive Director of Foundation for People-centric Health Systems, New Delhi. His forthcoming book Pause is an Opportunity: The Transformative Potential of Schools Re-opening in India is scheduled to release in 2022.*

## 13 THINGS



# 24-Karat Nuggets About Gold

BY *Emily Goodman*

**1** PURE GOLD is so ductile (translation: stretchy), a mere 28 grams of it can be drawn out into a thread 80 km long without breaking (at which point it also would be too thin to see). If you did this to all of the existing gold in the world, it would wrap around the earth 11 million times.

**2** CONTRARY TO popular belief, biting on gold is not a reliable way to tell whether it's genuine—other metals are also soft enough to show teeth marks. And though many champs chomp down on their prizes, Olympic gold medals haven't been made from that metal since the 1912 Summer

SCYTHERS/GETTY IMAGES (GOLD NUGGET)

Games in Stockholm. Modern gold medals are mostly silver; those from the 2016 Games in Rio contained only 1.2 per cent gold.

**3** THE NOBEL Prize medal is still made of gold, though it was downgraded in 1980, when it went from 23 karats (24 is pure) to an 18-karat core coated in 23-karat gold. The gold in each medal is worth about \$8,000 (₹6,00,700).

**4** A NATURALLY yellow element, gold changes colour when mixed with other metals, which also gives it added strength. White gold contains nickel or palladium. Rose gold gets its hue from copper. There's even green gold, which has silver and sometimes zinc or cadmium. To determine how much gold is in any piece, divide the karat content by 24 and multiply by 100. The resulting percentage is the amount that is gold.

**5** GOLD HAS been used in medicine for millennia. The ancient Romans made dental bridges out of it, a practice they learnt from the Etruscans. For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, doctors reduced their rheumatoid arthritis patients' pain and swelling with intramuscular injections of gold compounds that have anti-inflammatory properties. Today, some oncologists use gold compounds to shrink cancerous tumours.

**6** THE TERM 'bullion,' which refers to gold bars or coins ready to be traded, comes from the Latin word for 'boil.' That's how to remove gold's impurities—at a mere 2,856 degrees C.

**7** THE U.S. Treasury currently holds 147.3 million ounces of gold bullion. About half of it is stored at Fort Knox, a stash that's worth more than \$130 billion. Security at Fort Knox is so tight,

only one president has ever been inside the vaults: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the same president who effectively took us off the gold standard in 1933. (The United States didn't fully abandon it until 1971.)

**8** MOST OF the world's gold is now mined in China. The country overtook South Africa for total historical gold production in 2017. But the world's largest gold crystal—an extremely rare geometric formation that can appear on gold specimens—weighed 7.7 ounces and was found decades ago in Venezuela.

**9** AMONG THE more surprising—and unpleasant—sources of gold: treated sewage. In 2015, after analyzing sewer sludge from local treatment plants, researchers at Arizona State University concluded that the sewage produced each year in a city of a million

people includes, on average, \$2.6 million [₹1,94,59,817] worth of gold and silver.

**10** WE HAVE already extracted about 80 per cent of the world's 2,44,000 mineable tons of gold. Ocean waters and seabeds contain about 20 million more tons, but this treasure remains largely untouched because of the prohibitive costs to tap it. But the biggest trove is in outer space. One asteroid alone (called 16 Psyche) has a few hundred quintillion dollars' worth.

**11** BUT SO far, we've only brought gold to space, not taken any from it.

Space suits and spacecraft are coated in gold to reflect harmful infrared radiation from the sun. Any instrument NASA wants to keep cool gets a gold coating as well (since radiation is also a great source of heat). This includes the James Webb telescope, the world's most powerful space telescope, set to be launched later this year.

**12** PYRITE, THE mineral better known as fool's gold, has fooled many, including the famed English seaman and founder of the Jamestown colony, Christopher Newport, who sailed a shipload of it to London in the 1600s. Although pyrite can be

a disappointing find, it is often discovered near sources of real gold, so a miner who stops digging once he finds a piece of pyrite may be the real fool.

**13** DON'T GO looking for a pot of the precious metal at the end of a rainbow. One version of this legend is more of a cautionary tale: When a poor Irish husband and wife pull the last carrot out of their garden, they catch a leprechaun dangling from it. The leprechaun agrees to grant all their wishes if they find his pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, leaving them to forever chase a fictitious fortune. 



### From the Island of Unfit Toys

In 1951, the A. C. Gilbert toy company stopped selling its U-238 Atomic Energy Lab to aspiring nuclear scientists. Why? The kits cost about \$500 (₹37,544) in today's money—and they used actual radioactive uranium ores. (Though to be fair, they contained about as much radiation as a child would get from a day in the sun.) More dangerous was Professor Wacko's Exothermic Exuberance chemistry kit. The chemicals in this one started a few house fires. In 1994, the Consumer Product Safety Commission got them pulled from the shelves.



**RED PASTE**

# Kills 99.9% Germs\* and Virus\*\*

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



**WORLD'S  
NO.1**  
AYURVEDIC PASTE

\*\*Based on in vitro lab data tested on Herpes Simplex Virus type I (HSV type1).

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

\*\*In-vitro lab data on indicative organism. \*\*As per the Value Share by 'Mordar Intelligence' in the Global Oral Care Market Report for the year 2020.



## **STROKE RECOVERY: NERVE STIMULATION CAN HELP**

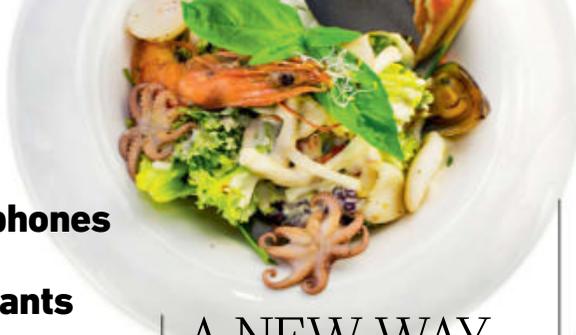
Stroke survivors have a 50 to 60 per cent chance of losing arm function. In addition to physical therapy, some patients with this symptom are benefiting from a treatment called vagus nerve stimulation. The procedure requires implanting a small box-type device under the skin on the chest. When activated using a wireless transmitter, the device stimulates the left vagus nerve, which runs from the abdomen to the brain stem. Scientists think this type of artificial stimulation helps to strengthen certain neural circuits, making it easier for the brain to relearn lost movements.

## **Is Work Shortening Your Life?**

When the COVID-19 pandemic sent office workers home to get their jobs done, many say they previously didn't have that option. Now, 71 per cent of employees who say they can do their jobs from home are actually teleworking—but there is a downside. Working from home can lead to overworking, as it blurs the line between professional life and home life. The World Health Organization cautions that regularly working more than 55 hours per week is associated with a 35 per cent higher risk of stroke and a 17 per cent higher risk of dying from heart disease. This is compared to maintaining boundaries around work and clocking 35 to 40 weekly hours. So establish start and stop times for work-from-home days, and share them with colleagues to help keep your hours in check.

## Keep Smartphones Away from Cardiac Implants

Some smartphones, including the iPhone 12, contain strong magnets. Unfortunately, these magnets can temporarily suspend the normal operations of many pacemakers and cardiac defibrillators. While these lifesaving implants continue working normally once they're back outside of the magnetic field, in the meantime they won't necessarily send the electrical pulses or shocks needed if a heart starts to beat too quickly, slowly, or irregularly. The US Food and Drug Administration advises people to keep electronics with strong magnets at least 6 inches away from medical implants and suggests carrying them in a hip pocket instead of a breast pocket.



## A NEW WAY TO SLOW PROSTATE CANCER

Healthy eating habits may slow the progression of prostate cancer, preliminary evidence suggests. This news is especially good for patients who choose to monitor their disease rather than opt for immediate tumor-removal surgery, an invasive procedure that can cause sexual dysfunction and loss of bladder control. In a Texan study of patients with tumours that weren't yet large or aggressive enough to make surgery a strict necessity, those whose meals resembled the Mediterranean diet (high in fruit, vegetables, legumes, grains, and fish, and low in red and processed meat) had a lower risk of cancer progression.

## Eating Out Frequently Is a Health Hazard

In a new study led by the University of Iowa, people who ate restaurant food twice a day had a 49 per cent higher risk of mortality at any point in time, compared to people who dined out less than once a week. Previous studies might help to explain why: One of them, a 2015 analysis published in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, reports that even though some establishments provide healthy food, restaurant fare is usually less balanced than home-cooked meals. It tends to contain more calories, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium—even when it's not fast food. And while it's hard to know exactly what cooks are putting into your food at a restaurant, at home you're aware of your meals' ingredients and their proportions. **R**

ALL  
*in a Day's*  
**WORK**



**“You don’t get an office. You get cargo pants.”**

**The driver** I stopped for speeding insisted he had a valid excuse. “Sorry, officer,” he said. “I just had the car washed and was drying it out.”

—CHARLESDUNNING

**My 14-year-old’s** first job was as a dishwasher

at a restaurant. After his first shift, he came home upset, saying his co-workers had laughed at him.

“Why would they do that?” I asked.

“Because our boss posted my application on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Where it

asked how I learnt about the job, I wrote, ‘My mother taught me.’”

—VERONICA BARNARD

**More First-Job Woes**

♦ Had a job walking five Chihuahuas. When they got tired, I had to carry them home. Two in my arms, two

A guy in my office is shaking his protein shake, and this woman poked her head around the corner and said, "Do I hear margaritasssss?"... No Janet, it's 10 a.m.

—[@TJKILBRIDE](#)

on my shoulders, and one on my head.

—[@WHOOPIEPIE10](#)

◆ A woman yelled at me for watching her swim. I was a lifeguard.

—[@REAGANPITROWSKI](#)

◆ I earned \$30 (₹2,200) working construction for a temp agency. When I finished, there was a \$35 (₹2,600) parking ticket on my car.

—[@DONNYJ44](#)

**Me (texting boss):** We still on for work today?

**Boss:** Yes. You don't have to text me this every morning. We're 'on' for work every day, Mon. to Fri.

—[@DLICJ](#)

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

## WOULD YOU HIRE THEM?

A job interview is your chance to make a good first impression on hiring managers. Don't screw it up the way these people did.



◆ My colleague and I interviewed a very nervous guy. When he got up to leave, he opened the wrong door and walked into the closet. We waited for him to emerge, and when he didn't, my co-worker went to investigate. The poor man was so mortified, he was trying to climb out a window rather than go back in.

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN

◆ The candidate stated that his career goal was not to work.

SOURCE: INC.COM

◆ Pointing to the employment application question "Have you ever been convicted of a felony?" a job-seeker asked, "You only want the felonies?" This was for a banking position.

SOURCE: MONSTER.COM

◆ I went to greet an interviewee in the lobby. I should point out that I am five foot one and she is much taller. Anyway, the moment she saw me, she stood up, stuck out her hand, and said, "Well, hi there, Shorty!"

SOURCE: INC.COM





# COVER STORY



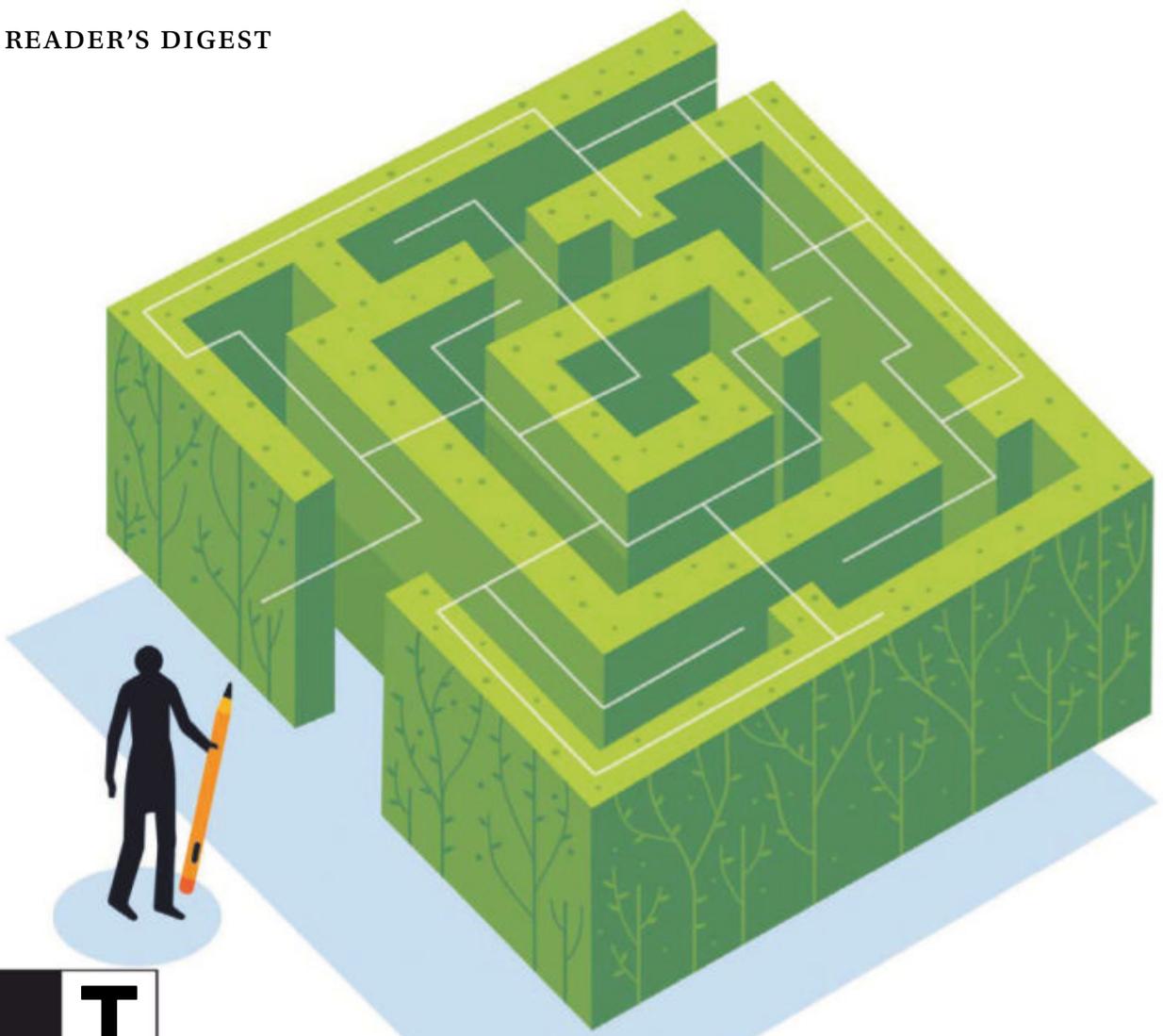
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<b>W</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>K</b>	



Researchers know more than ever about how puzzles and twisters keep your mind sharp (Hint: Start with games that are tough!)

BY *Sari Harrar*




**T**

ONYA BRIGHAM COULD never resist a good sudoku—or any sudoku. A 50-year-old smoothie-store owner and mother of two, from a suburb of Washington, DC, Brigham wrestled with the puzzles while waiting in lines, and raced to solve them in record time using strategies plucked from YouTube videos. “If it’s a 30-minute puzzle, I try to figure it out in 12,” she says. “Sudoku lets me challenge myself, take a breather, and then go back into the world’s chaos.”

After several years of sudoku-mania, Brigham noticed something

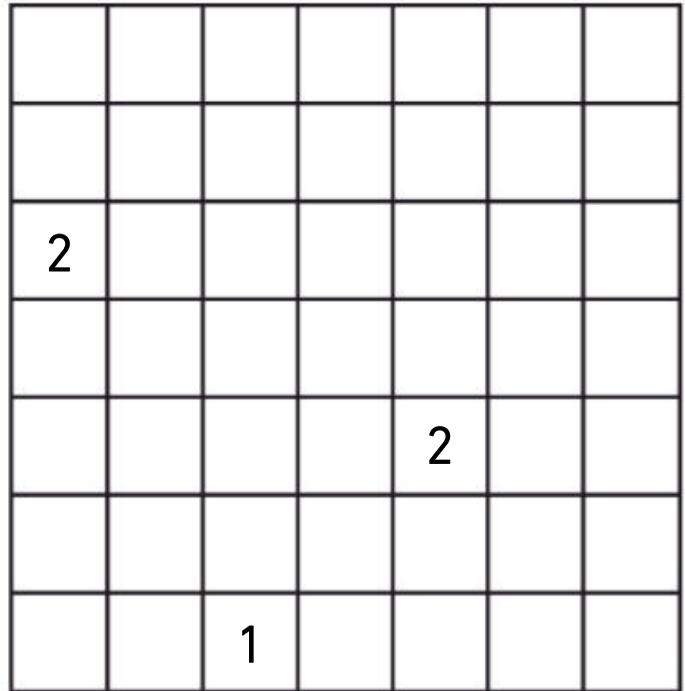
unexpected: Her brain seemed sharper and more focused. “I didn’t have much, if any, brain fog during menopause,” she says. At her Smoothie King shop in Bowie, Maryland, she found she could easily put together employee work schedules in her head. “A lot of stores use an electronic scheduling tool, but I have all the data in my mind,” she says. “I can very quickly see the holes and how to fill them. It’s the same with inventory. I think I have that capacity because of the game.”

We call them games, but for many people, brainteasers and challenging

puzzles are serious business. Tom Brady credits his seven Super Bowl championships in part to high-tech brain-training games he performs on an app called BrainHQ. Queen Elizabeth keeps a crossword puzzle stashed in her royal handbag. Half the midlife and older adults in a 2019 University of Michigan survey said they play mentally challenging games to maintain or boost memory.

The games do seem to work. In one 2020 study, researchers at the University of Edinburgh found that 1,091 women and men who frequently played cards, bingo, or chess or did crossword puzzles had sharper thinking and memory skills—equivalent to an IQ up to 5.6 points higher—than those who rarely did. The study doesn't prove that the puzzles directly led to the higher IQs, but it does show that even people who increased their game-playing in their 70s seemed to get brain benefits within a few years. "In our older sample, it appears that the cognitive exercise provided by playing everyday games staved off a bit of the natural process of cognitive aging," says lead study author Drew M. Altschul, PhD, a research psychologist at the university.

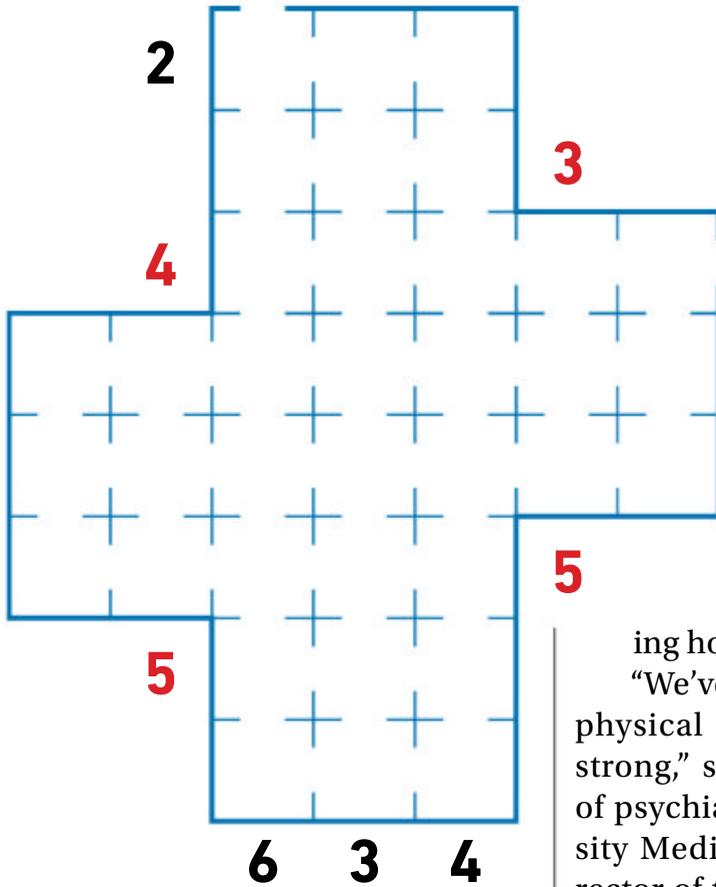
Exactly how games sharpen memory and cognitive function is still something of a mystery. But advances



### ■ CHALLENGE: Latin Square

**WHY IT MAY WORK:** Latin square puzzles involve shading in blocks in a grid according to a set of specific rules. In a University of Sydney study, doing difficult Latin square puzzles activated brain regions that hadn't been activated in participants when they were working on easier versions of the puzzle.

**PLAY IT:** Shade in exactly seven of the empty squares in this grid so that: (1) there is only one shaded square in each row and in each column, (2) no shaded squares touch each other, even diagonally, and (3) the number of shaded squares bordering on the squares containing figures is equal to the figure in each particular square.



line of boxes. The red numbers indicate the total number of cells the path passes through in both its vertical and horizontal lines.

in neuroimaging allows researchers to study how the brain reacts to all sorts of outside stimulation, edging them closer to understanding how noggin challengers work.

“We’ve known for many years that physical exercise keeps our bodies strong,” says Gary Small, MD, chair of psychiatry at Hackensack University Medical Center and former director of the Longevity Center at the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). “And now scientific evidence suggests that mental exercise keeps our brains young and limber too.”

*Exercise* really is the key word. To get significant cognitive benefit, you need to tackle a variety of word, number and spatial-reasoning puzzles, and they need to be tough. Does Brigham’s sudoku habit really deserve the credit for her powerful memory? Perhaps. But for the activity to be really effective, you have to up the difficulty level pretty consistently. Our brains are pretty smart. They adjust to problem-solving patterns quickly and easily slip into a kind of automatic pilot. That default

### ■ CHALLENGE: Path Finder

**WHY IT MAY WORK:** We use visuo-spatial skills constantly, for instance, when navigating the grocery store, using a map, or figuring out how to use a tool. In a recent study from Japan’s University of Tsukuba, people who did visual-reasoning exercises regularly for several weeks improved their thinking skills.

**PLAY IT:** Draw a path that leads from one of the maze’s openings to the other. The path can move up, down, left, or right but not diagonally and can pass through any cell only once. The black numbers tell you how many cells the path passes through in that single horizontal or vertical

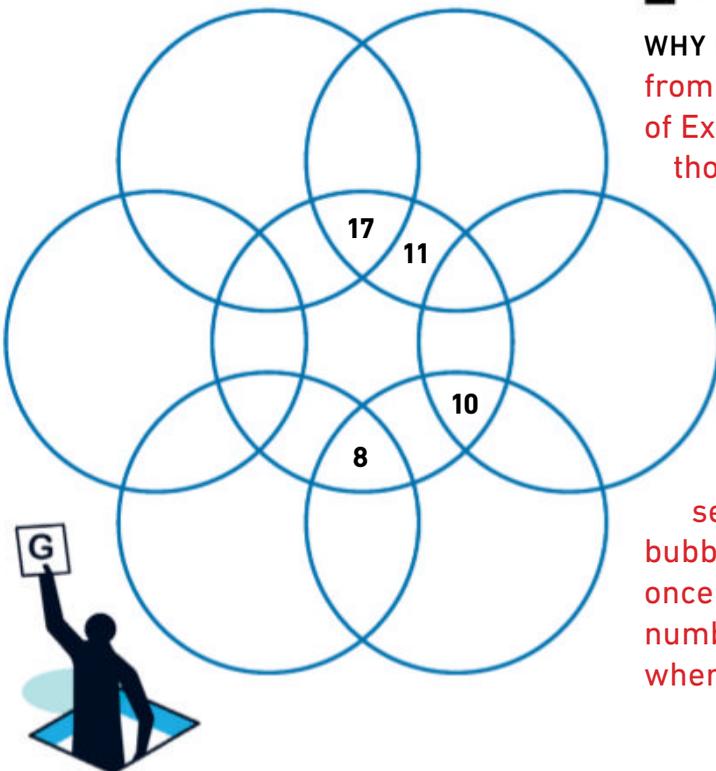
mode—researchers call it the low-dimensional manifold—is great for helping us take care of daily business, such as folding laundry or catching a ball, without having to figure out each time how to do the task. But low-dimensional challenges aren't tough enough to grow your brain. "Choose challenges that make you think harder," says University of Sydney neuroscientist James Shine, PhD. "I know that's not easy. It's uncomfortable and frustrating. We make mistakes. Stress hormones kick in—and that's actually helpful for getting your brain onto new routes. Learning happens when you feel a little uncomfortable—in that zone where you get some things wrong, but it's not so difficult that you can't get anything right."

That said, the challenges don't have to be the kind of high-tech, personalized games that Tom Brady uses. For instance, a sudoku fanatic could benefit by switching things up and trying a game called Latin square, in which players shade squares in the grid rather than inserting numbers. A few years ago, 60 women and men in Australia completed Latin squares as part of a study. As the puzzles grew more difficult, with fewer clues in each grid, players slowed down and made more mistakes. That's when Shine and his team discovered something surprising: The players' brains had made a shift. "More regions of the brain got involved, especially in the prefrontal cortex, an area involved with problem-solving, judgment and

### ■ CHALLENGE: **Bubble Math**

**WHY IT MAY WORK:** In a 2019 study from the United Kingdom's University of Exeter of people ages 60 to 93, those who did number puzzles at least once a day scored higher for working memory, verbal reasoning and learning than those who tried them once a month or less.

**PLAY IT:** Assign exactly one whole number from one to seven to each of the seven bubbles. Each number occurs only once. The sums of some of the numbers are revealed in the areas where their bubbles overlap.



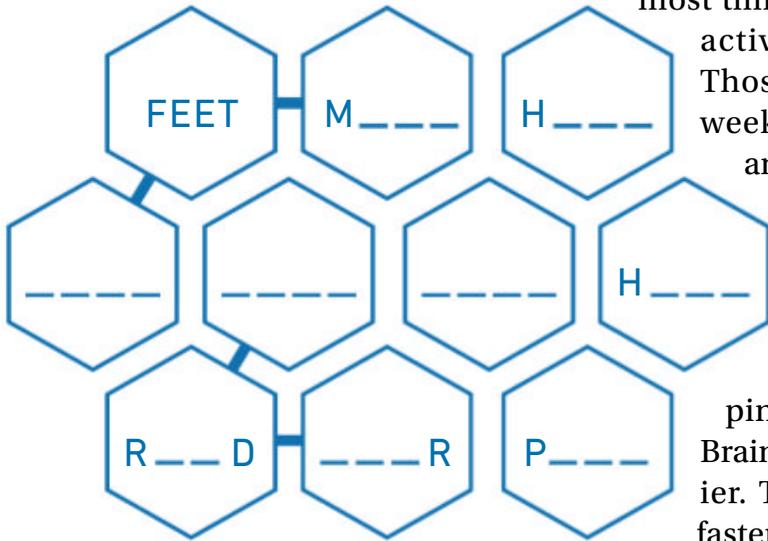
memory,” Shine says. “The brain was moving out of the usual patterns we follow every day, exiting the major highways it normally takes when solving problems, and taking less-travelled back roads.”

Another easy way to up your brain game is to play with friends. When

University of Pittsburgh researchers performed detailed brain scans of 293 older adults for a 2020 study, they found healthier grey matter in the orbitofrontal cortex, middle frontal gyrus and temporal pole—areas where cell loss contributes to age-related dementia—in those who spent the

most time doing brain-stimulating activities with other people. Those who met seven times a week with friends, neighbors, and family for activities such as playing board games; going to lectures, concerts or movies; or just chatting had fewer tiny holes and spaces in these pinkish-grey clumps of cells. Brains without holes are healthier. They process information faster, are more flexible and are

linked to sharper memory in older adults. Cynthia Felix, MD, MPH, a geriatrician and postdoctoral associate in the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health’s department of epidemiology, thinks that brain-stimulating social activities may encourage the growth and maintenance of connections between the cells because the activities keep brain signals moving. That said, even a little socializing can help keep your grey cells in the pink. “To get brain health benefits, social activities can be performed with at least one other person at least once a week,” Dr. Felix says. Online virtual get-togethers may help too.



**CHALLENGE: Word Worm**

**WHY IT MAY WORK:** In a 2019 UK study, regular word puzzles bested those who rarely try these brain twisters on 14 tests for attention, information processing, executive function (planning and decision-making), and working (short-term) and episodic (a type of long-term) memory.

**PLAY IT:** Join the hexagons by creating words that are only one letter different from the connecting words. Each hexagon must connect to exactly two adjacent ones, as shown with FEET and R \_ \_ D. The result forms a continuous loop.



Kent Brody, a 73-year-old attorney from the Chicago area, exemplifies the game-player who incorporates his habit into a full life. By 6:30 a.m., he is hard at work on the *New York Times* mini crossword puzzle with a cup of coffee and Mozart playing on the smart speaker in his study. “I do three or four puzzles a day—from the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times* and other places,” says Brody, who has competed 15 times in the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament. “I do it for fun, not for the cut-throat competition,” he says.

He also relishes the head-spinning difficulty of cryptic crossword puzzles, a type popular in the United Kingdom that features very challenging clues. “The feeling of accomplishment is wonderful when you get that aha moment and see the cleverness of the person who constructed the puzzle,” he says. Brody also enjoys Words with

Friends, an app that lets you play a Scrabble-like game online with other people. He hopes his puzzle habits will help forestall age-related thinking and memory declines that have affected others in his family. “Everyone has moments when they can’t come up with a name, but I want to avoid bigger problems,” he says.

A word about fun: While specific games seem to tickle specific parts of our brains, researchers have long touted the more general benefits that come from giving the mind an enjoyable time-out. “You have to play because it is relaxing and enjoyable, and it challenges you at the same time,” Dr Small says. “There are neurochemical changes involved in every mental experience. A positive mood is better for brain health. In contrast, depression and stress increase risk for cognitive decline. That’s why, when playing a game, you have to ask yourself, Is

this fun?" In fact, Brigham recently stopped playing sudoku in favour of something she found more enjoyable: Bible study apps. This fun new activity might deserve some credit in helping her brain work better too.

If you're willing to put down your pencil for something more high-tech—and potentially more effective—take a page from gamers. Two studies, published in 2015 in the *Journal of Neuroscience* and in 2020 in *Behavioural Brain Research*, found that adults young and old who played the *Super Mario 3D World* video game for 30 minutes a day for two to four weeks improved on tests of associative memory, which includes remembering things such as what you had for lunch or what you told your spouse a few hours earlier. "It's a kind of memory that starts declining in our 20s and is associated with Alzheimer's disease later in life," says the lead author of the study, Craig Stark, PhD, professor of neurobiology and behaviour and director of the Facility for Imaging and Brain Research at the University of California, Irvine. "The change we saw in older adults in memory ability was equivalent to someone 15 years younger." The study also found that a solitaire app did nothing to affect memory and that the older study volunteers who played the simpler game *Angry Birds* got only a little boost.

What's so super about Mario? Stark believes that complex, three-dimensional video games have the

## ■ CHALLENGE: Points of View

**WHY IT MAY WORK:** Playing all sorts of brain games at home for fun boosts memory, thinking speed, and other mental skills, according to a large 2016 UK review of 19 studies. And you don't have to play on a computer. Some research suggests using paper and pencil engages the brain in more ways than using a keyboard, and that could have memory benefits.

**PLAY IT:** Put the pictures in the grid so that the descriptions on the edges are true for the first picture in each row or column in the direction of the arrow. There can't be more than one picture per cell, each picture is used once, and some cells remain empty.

same effect as when our brains are forced to navigate new, immersive environments. A study of Stark's, published in 2020 in *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*, found that people who went on scavenger hunts—following clues for signs, benches, towers and gates in several California parks—scored significantly higher for memory skills. Both experiences seem to stimulate the seahorse-shaped hippocampus, which plays a starring role in learning and memory. Ageing and chronic health conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes diminish its powers, contributing to age-related lapses and even

A crossword puzzle grid with the following clues:

- Across:
  - 1. plant life
  - 2. has windows
  - 3. flies
  - 4. often sits on water
- Down:
  - 1. found on land
  - 2. in animal kingdom
  - 3. is attached by a stem
  - 4. goes underwater

Below the grid is a list of words with corresponding icons:

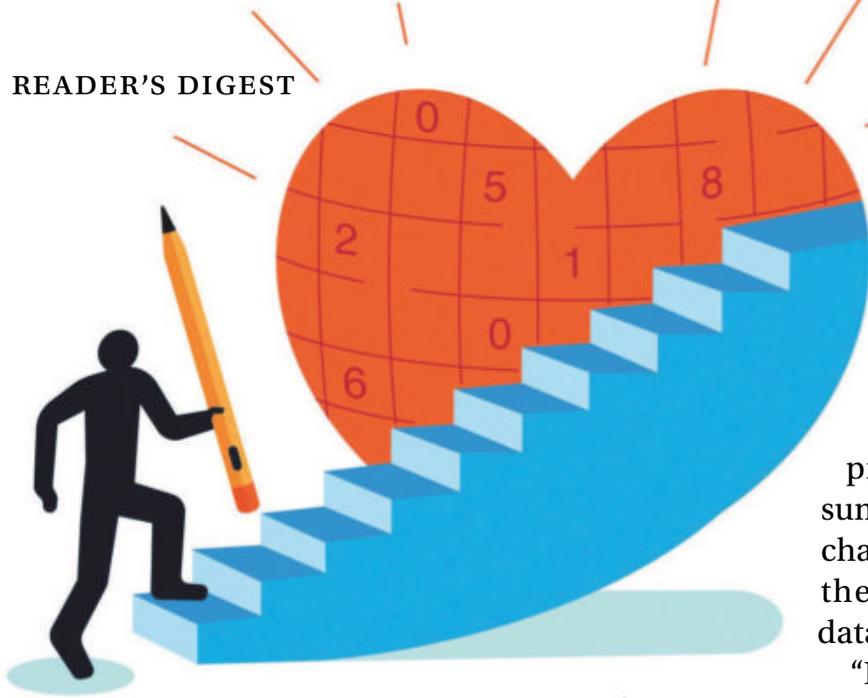
- house (house icon)
- submarine (submarine icon)
- birchbark canoe (canoe icon)
- duck (duck icon)
- airplane (airplane icon)
- tree (tree icon)
- fish (fish icon)
- bird (bird icon)
- leaf (leaf icon)

dementia. Stark thinks that exercising the hippocampus could counteract these things. He's seen something similar in studies on mice and other animals that play with new toys and then experience a boost of chemicals that carry signals from one brain cell to another.

There's good news and bad news related to these findings. The good news: "Even just carefully looking around you at everything in a room, at where objects are placed in relationship to one another, can help. So can getting outdoors and going to new places," says Stark. The bad news: "The *New York Times* Thursday

crossword puzzle won't do for you what putting yourself in a new environment can," he says. "Humans didn't develop a whole hippocampus and memory system to sit on a porch playing crossword puzzles."

Perhaps, but that doesn't mean your preferred puzzle isn't helping you. Truth be told, there is considerable debate in the world of neurobiology about what does and doesn't work to grow our brains. "People don't respond to physical exercise programs or diets in the same way. We have evidence they don't respond to brain challenges in the same way either. One type of game or training



may work well for some people but not for others," says Aaron Seitz, PhD, director of the Brain Game Center for Mental Fitness and Well-Being at the University of California, Riverside. Seitz is in the process of recruiting 30,000 volunteers for what may be the world's biggest brain-game study. Funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, it will look at the effects of a variety of games and trainings on working memory in people of various ages, personality types, and levels of game experience and with different conditions such as diabetes and heart disease that can affect brain health. "The challenges won't all be games," Seitz says. "We think some people respond better to plain training programs without the extra distractions of a game." Subjects will play a free 20-to-30-minute game or take a training program twice a day for a total of 11 days on a smartphone or tablet. They will fill out a questionnaire beforehand and take an assessment

months later. (Learn more at [bgc.ucr.edu/trainmymemory/](http://bgc.ucr.edu/trainmymemory/).)

"The results could help brain scientists build better brain-fitness programs and aid consumers in choosing brain challenges best suited for them," Seitz says. That data is sorely needed.

"Finding out how games and brain trainings work and exactly how much they help is complicated," Dr. Small notes. For one thing, a game may train you only to play that game better, not to remember the grocery list or your new neighbour's name. And studies of brain benefits for long-term game players may not fully factor out their other habits. "People who play games regularly also tend to have more education and be more likely to exercise, eat a healthy diet and not smoke," Dr. Small says. "All those factors also influence brain health."

One fact all researchers embrace: Your brain loves pampering. If your goal is to slash the risk for dementia, ongoing research suggests that your little grey cells will work better if you eat well, exercise and pay attention to artery health in addition to playing brain games. Following a Mediterranean-style diet packed with produce and good fats, getting regular exercise and maintaining healthy blood pressure and body weight along

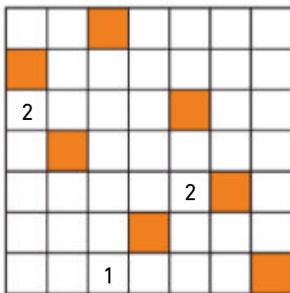
with brain-training games slashed risk for the thinking and memory declines that lead to dementia by 25 per cent compared to a control group in a 2015 Finnish study. Participants in the study, called FINGER (Finnish Geriatric Intervention Study to Prevent Cognitive Impairment and Disability), also boosted memory by 40 per cent and increased mental processing speed by 150 per cent. An American version of the study, called U.S. POINTER, is underway at several universities. Cosponsored by the Alzheimer's Association, the two-year study will involve 2,000 older adults who don't have thinking and memory lapses but are at risk for declines.

Dr Small agrees that an all-around brain-health strategy can be powerful. In research at UCLA, he found that just two weeks of eating and sleeping

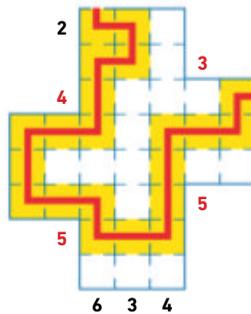
better made volunteers' brains function more efficiently. "There was less activity in certain areas," he says. "The brain didn't have to work as hard."

In fact, Dr Small suggests that if you find yourself debating whether to spend the next 20 minutes taking a walk or playing a brain game, you should choose the walk. Physical activity can help keep the arteries that deliver oxygen and fuel to your brain cells healthy and can even promote the growth of new brain cells and connections between them. "If you do one thing to help your brain, I'd say it's exercise," he says. "Reducing stress and getting good sleep and a healthy diet are also important. Brain games work best as part of a whole package of brain-healthy strategies." And remember: A little fun never hurts. 

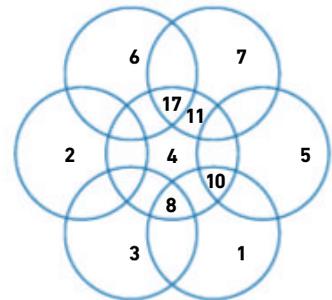
PUZZLE ANSWERS



Latin Square



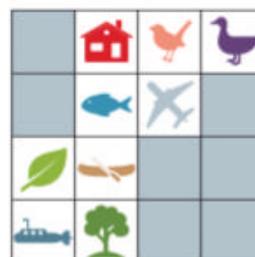
Path Finder



Bubble Math



Word Worm



Points of View

# KNOCKING OUT





# DIABETES



Striking new studies show how you can control or even reverse this common disease

BY *Anita Bartholomew*



HEN MICHAEL TRAILOVICI of Stuttgart, Germany, began feeling unusually hungry and thirsty, the 42-year-old editor didn't imagine they could be symptoms of a condition, let alone a serious one. He didn't see his doctor.

That was in 1997. Today Michael, now 66, is one among millions with type 2 diabetes, and 40 per cent of them, like Michael, were initially unaware they had it. The disease is so prevalent that the World Health Organization (WHO) calls it an “epidemic”.

If type 2 diabetes is left untreated, or not well managed, the consequences can be devastating. It risks damage to the blood vessels, heart, liver, kidneys and eyes. It can increase the risks of Alzheimer's disease. It can lead to amputation, and even death.

But there is hope. Experts say that the numbers of type 2 diabetes cases are so high and climbing so fast due largely to our modern diet; this means the disease and its severity are mostly within our control. Recent research has found that with attention to lifestyle and diet alone, these numbers can be reduced, and future cases prevented. In some cases, we could even be able force the illness into remission.

Here is the latest research on type 2 diabetes and diet. There are some actions you can take to help reduce your chances of developing it, and if you have already been diagnosed, how to maintain control.

## What It's All About

It starts with sugar. Cells throughout your body need it, in the form of glucose, as fuel in order to function. But for the glucose to get past the cells' membranes, it needs a 'key' to get in. Insulin is that key. When a person has type 2 diabetes, their body produces enough insulin, at least at first (unlike in type 1 diabetes, when the pancreas fails to produce much or any insulin). But though they produce insulin, their body is 'resistant' to it. The insulin key doesn't work. The cells have trouble recognizing insulin and resist the call to open up. When glucose can't get where it's needed, it circulates in the blood, acting as an inflammatory agent, slowly, relentlessly causing damage.

## How Can I Have Diabetes?

Although Michael at first ignored his increased hunger and thirst, some

weeks later he began getting dizzy, and decided to see his doctor. His diagnosis: type 2 diabetes. And his was a serious case. His blood glucose level, tested after he had fasted overnight, was above 300 mg/dL (normal fasting levels are below 100 mg/dL; see page 66). Left untreated, that amount of circulating glucose, over time, would wreak havoc throughout his body. His doctor immediately admitted him to the hospital where he was prescribed insulin, an injectable treatment reserved for advanced cases.

Michael's case is a classic one. Because his symptoms were so subtle he dismissed them. As well as hunger and thirst, early symptoms can include fatigue, weight loss, frequent urination, blurry vision. And sometimes, there are no symptoms at all. Because symptoms often aren't alarming, explains Dr Rozalina McCoy, MD, of the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, USA, younger people will ignore them. But the damage continues. His diagnosis shocked Michael. However, he soon learnt that his diet, which included a lot of processed food, white bread and sweets, wasn't healthy. He hadn't realized his lifestyle put him in such danger.

"Usually, younger people will have worse blood glucose control, and be harder to manage," says McCoy. "For a young person to have enough insulin resistance to develop type 2 diabetes, it must be a severe case." And that's true, even with milder symptoms.

If Michael wanted to avoid serious

long-term complications, his doctor explained, he needed to completely change his lifestyle.

## Diet and Diabetes

For decades, when recommending dietary changes to combat type 2 diabetes, doctors focused on reducing sugar and other carbohydrates. But researchers have now found it's not enough to simply cut out sugary foods; ultra-processed foods (those convenience foods that so many of us with busy lives rely on for sustenance) also contribute to the illness, as recently reported in a French study published last year in the *European Journal of Public Health*.

The riskiest of these processed foods, surprisingly enough, was found to be processed meat: salami and sausages, for example. And, perhaps more surprisingly, a Spanish review and analysis of earlier studies also published in 2019 found that meat in general—the mainstay of the low-carb diets that many with type 2 diabetes have followed—also appears to both promote the illness and make it worse.

But what does meat have to do with blood sugar? Our cells' membranes are comprised, in part, of fat, which comes from what we eat. "So, if we eat a lot of meat, then we end up eating a lot of fat that will make our cell membranes more rigid," explains Dr Hana Kahleova, MD, a consultant endocrinologist at the Institute for Clinical and Experimental Medicine in Prague.

“And if they become more rigid, the insulin receptor embedded in the cell membrane cannot function properly.” In other words, the cells become ‘insulin resistant’.

By contrast, says Kahleova, the fats in olives, nuts and seeds make the cell membrane more pliable, and as a result, their insulin receptors function better. Michael committed to eating healthier foods, substituting whole grains and vegetables for his former poor diet choices. He exercised more. After a few months, his blood glucose had come down enough for him to switch from insulin to metformin, a diabetes medicine in pill form that is typically used for milder cases.

Study after study confirm this relationship between meat and type 2 diabetes. Oddly enough, that still holds true for leaner meats. A 2017 meta-analysis of numerous earlier studies found a strong association between eating any kind of meat, including lean cuts, and type 2 diabetes. Meanwhile, this and other studies found eating whole grains was protective and, when included in a diet that relied on fruits, vegetables, dairy and minimizing sugar, lowered risk of developing diabetes by 42 per cent.

There is also research that indicates that a healthy, meatless diet might also reverse diabetes. In a 2006 study by Dr Neal Barnard, MD, adjunct Professor of Medicine at the George Washington University School of Medicine in Washington, DC, and his team of

researchers divided people with type 2 diabetes into two groups. One was put on a completely plant-based diet and the other group was instructed to follow the American Diabetes Association (ADA) diet, which included animal products. Those on the plant-based diet were allowed to eat as much as they wanted. No limits. Those on the ADA diet had restricted calories.

At the beginning of the study, participants had A1c (glucose) levels of 6.5 to 10.5 per cent with an average A1c of about eight per cent. After 22 weeks, among those who adhered to the plant-based diet, with no changes in their medication, A1c had been reduced by an average of 1.48 percentage

## DIABETES RISK FACTORS

Being overweight or obese or carrying more weight in the abdomen (a waistline of 101.6 or more centimetres for a man, or 88.9 centimetres for a woman).

A diet heavy on sugar, especially sugar-sweetened drinks; processed foods; and/or meat, especially processed meat

Taking statins

Family history of type 2 diabetes

African, Asian, American-Indian, Hispanic or Pacific Islander descent



**An AC1 test measures the sugar in your blood. A measurement of 5.7 per cent or lower is normal; 6.5 per cent or higher indicates diabetes.**

points, versus only 0.81 percentage points for the ADA group. For some on the meatless regimen, their A1c levels dropped to 5.7 per cent and that meant their diabetes was, effectively, reversed. “A reduction of that magnitude is bigger than you would see with typical oral medications,” says Barnard.

That’s not to say that all those who try veganism will reverse their diabetes or avoid getting it in the first place. A 2016 study of about 2,00,000 people, age 25 and up, by Harvard researchers suggests a possible reason why: it’s not enough just to go animal product-free. It has to be a healthy diet, too. People who ate a mostly vegetarian diet based on healthful foods had a 34 per cent lower risk of developing diabetes. But

people who ate a mostly vegetarian diet that included unhealthy foods—sweetened drinks, fruit juices, refined grains, potatoes and sweets—had a 16 per cent *increased* risk of developing diabetes.

Diabetes is strongly associated with obesity. Being even a little overweight can increase the risk. But losing weight, early in the disease, can sometimes reverse it, even if you just lose 10 per cent of your weight, where it’s been found to reverse diabetes for up to five years.

What about the low-carb and keto diets that are popular today—can they play a role in managing the disease? Yes—with caveats. Low-carb diets can sometimes result in rapid weight loss and with it, a reduction in high blood sugar. When followed for no more

than three months, the benefits could be worth the risks. But for long-term diabetes management, such diets can increase risk because of the diets' reliance on animal products.

## Older Diabetics Take Note

Everything that's true for younger people with diabetes—diet and lifestyle—is also true for age 65-plus diabetics, except for one very important difference. If you have type 2 diabetes, are older, and have other serious chronic conditions, intensive or aggressive treatment can lead to significant problems.

### ABOUT BLOOD TESTS

Two different tests are used to determine the level of glucose (sugar) in your blood.

The fasting glucose test in people without diabetes should ideally be lower than 100. If fasting glucose is above 125, it signals diabetes.

The A1c test measures the average amount of sugar in your bloodstream over the past three months. A measurement of 5.7 per cent or lower is normal and at 6.5 per cent or above it indicates diabetes.

The target for most people under age 65 with diabetes is less than 7 per cent and for younger people, less than 6.5 per cent.

The more ailments an older person has along with diabetes, the greater risk she faces from bouts of severe hypoglycaemia (big drops in blood sugar) that can lead to increased risk of heart disease, falls and bone fractures—even death.

Even lesser instances of hypoglycaemia brought on by aggressive treatment can decrease the quality of life while not offering much, if any, benefit. That's one reason why older people who have other serious, chronic conditions are usually better off trying to keep A1c no higher than 8 per cent, says McCoy. Treatment should be individualized, so, those 65 and over, with no other chronic conditions, would probably aim for a A1c of 7.5. But generally speaking, aiming for an A1c of 8.0 instead of trying to keep it lower after age 65 with other illnesses leads to better outcomes.

## Don't Let Diabetes Win

Today at 65, Michael Trailovici is a trim 78 kilos, still needs only metformin, and feels great. And he enjoys a sense of accomplishment, knowing that he took control of the disease instead of letting it control him. If you're one of the millions who've been diagnosed with the illness, you've heard the dire warnings. But the good news is how much you are in control of what happens.

Changing one's your diet and getting enough exercise can assure a better, healthier future. And if you've only recently been diagnosed, lifestyle changes might even lead to remission. **R**

# LAUGH LINES

If I ever rob a bank, I won't resort to guns or violence. I'll bring in sizzling fajitas, the one distraction no human being can resist.

—[@samgrittner](#)

**My dad and** I went to a restaurant and the waiter pointed at the QR code on the wall and said, "That's our menu". And my dad looked at it really close and said, "Is this some kind of joke?"

—[@johnistoasted](#)

**I have an idea** for a hot wings restaurant: The wings are free, but napkins cost \$100.

—[@lunch\\_enjoyer](#)

**Restaurants** drastically overestimate how much I care about which wood they smoke my bacon over.

—[@SLOnans](#)

**When I tell** people I "tried a new restaurant," I mean I went to a place which is different from where I normally get fettuccini alfredo—and I tried their fettuccini alfredo.

—[@notviking](#)

**Waiter:** Would you like to know the one thing on the menu we're out of tonight?  
Me: No, no, I'll find it, thanks.

—[@whatsjo](#)



# Amuse Bouche

# Appealing to Our Better Nature

BY Shreevatsa Nevatia

**A**MITAV GHOSH'S novels—*The Shadow Lines*, *The Glass Palace*, the Ibis trilogy—were always things of delight. We savoured his prose while losing ourselves in the expanse of the worlds he had imagined. It was *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, published in 2016, that introduced us to a new Ghosh. No longer content to simply invent new worlds, Ghosh was urging his fellow writers to join him on a mission—the forging of a literature that will not just try and understand our reality, but one

that might even better it. His 2019 novel, *Gun Island*, was a step in that direction.

Earlier this year, Ghosh released *Jungle Nama*, the verse adaptation of a Bengali folktale. Set in the Sundarbans, the book cautioned against human greed and excess. His latest, *The Nutmeg's Curse*, employs a scholarly non-fiction framework to further those warnings. In telling the story of how Europeans robbed the Indonesian Banda Islands of its nutmeg, Ghosh shows us how colonialism exploited human life and nature, reducing both to inert resources.

PHOTOGRAPH BY *Bandeep Singh*



As he joins the dots between imperialism, capitalism and climate change, he demonstrates just how destructive a mechanistic view of the earth proves to be. The author explained his thoughts to *Reader's Digest*.

**The nutmeg doesn't just look like a planet, it is also a stand-in for it. Given the hyper-nationalism and individualism of today, how hard has it been to try and begin a 'planetary discourse'?**

One of the effects of the planetary crisis is exactly this sort of hyper-nationalism that we see growing all around us. As the crisis deepens, it's only going to get worse. At the same time, though, we know that this is a crisis that can only be addressed at a planetary level. It's a crisis that requires us to really try and create transnational forms of cooperation. Here, we have only to look at India to see that the world is going exactly in the other direction. We have become so profoundly alienated from our closest neighbours, even Nepal. There's a Nepali speaking part of Bengal, and to think that this kind of alienation has happened, is a matter of deep personal sadness.

**The fate of the Banda islands can, of course, be a template for the present, but might it also be a likely model for the future. Is our tomorrow going to be as predicated on the idea of forgetting as our today is?** This book is an attempt to resurrect

Ghosh (right) at the 2016 International Book Fair in Turin, Italy.



history so as to root our present predicament in the past. But, you know, what history shows us so very clearly is that humans have never learnt from it. Humans always repeat the worst mistakes of the past. And, sadly, I think that's exactly what is happening today.

**You write about how the colonial project hinged on this idea of 'extermination'. How do you respond when apocalyptic end-of-the-world ideas are employed in the climate change discourse?**

I have a great antipathy towards apocalyptic thinking and writing. This goes back to the beginning of my career as a writer, because even back then it was very fashionable to write books that ended with apocalypses of various kinds. I always resisted that temptation. I felt that for someone like me, who comes from Bengal, one of the world's poorest, most unfortunate



regions, it would be ethically unacceptable to imagine an apocalypse for so many people. So, I've always tried to steer clear of that.

But I do think what your question implies is actually true. A lot of apocalyptic thinking arises out of a sublimated exterminationism. I say 'sublimated' because exterminationism cannot speak its name today. That aspect of Western culture is unacceptable in a wider global discourse. But, you know, the ghosts of that extermination are ever present. You see it when people talk of a Malthusian correction. You see it when billionaires are getting into their jets and planning to race off from the earth. They are really implying that billions and billions will die. There's an expectation that this will happen. And there is, also, I'd say, often an eagerness for it to happen. Because they imagine that the people who die will be overwhelmingly black

and brown and poor. This is one way in which they are deluding themselves.

**We sometimes hear of people talking about nature as 'vengeful'. You yourself once describe Gaia as 'monstrous'. Isn't this counter-productive? Aren't we only exaggerating our opposition to Earth and its environment by inadvertently thinking of it as an avenging 'other'?**

The earth is neither vengeful nor nurturing; it is supremely indifferent to us. It has absolutely no use for us, you might say. But what has happened is that over a period of a few hundred years, we have gone and significantly altered various kinds of Earth systems. And now they're lashing back at us in so many ways. To indigenous peoples, this does not come as a surprise, because they have always ascribed an agentivity to the earth. There are many indigenous peoples who believe that forests and glaciers can feel and think. Today, even botanists have begun to think that forests communicate. One sees various kinds of non-human entities actually acting in ways that show humans are not in control.

**There's a radical passage in *The Nutmeg's Curse* where you say that we should ask 'where did it happen' instead of 'when did it happen'. Are you saying that we got it all wrong? That geography should have mattered more to us than history did?**

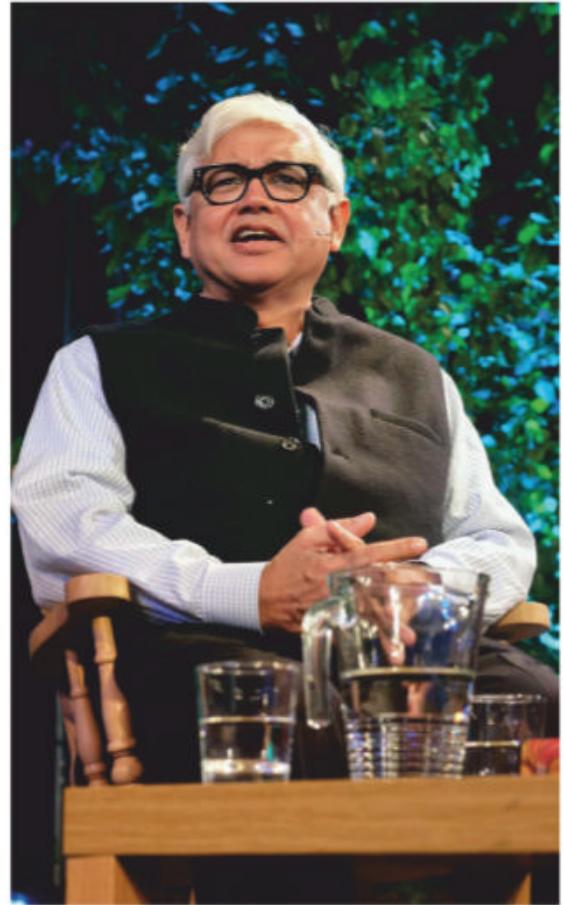
Geography is at least a study of space.

It gets us to relate to the land. It's really shocking how modern, urban, educated people are completely ignorant about the lay of the land around them. This is most visible, I think, in a place like Mumbai. This is an entirely geo-engineered landscape. There were once six islands there, which came to be replaced by what is called a land reclamation project. So, it's now this huge peninsula which stretches into the sea. It's an extremely precarious environment and people in Mumbai seem to be completely oblivious to it.

Similarly, people in Delhi might know a lot about the history of the region, but they are completely unaware of the geography. They pump up groundwater at such an astonishing level that they're going to run out of it in a year or two. This has even been said by the Niti Ayog. You see this phenomenon of obliviousness about the land in many parts of the world.

**The Biden administration, for instance, often stresses on the word 'science' when they talk about climate change. After reading *Nutmeg's*, one starts to feel that may be part of the problem. Much like imperialism, science, too, has reduced both human and non-human life to inert resources, right?**

Yes, absolutely. But again, I think we have to be very careful in thinking through these things. It's absolutely the case that historically, science and colonialism are two aspects of the same



Ghosh, at the 2015 Hay Festival in Wales discussing the third volume of his Ibis Trilogy, *Flood of Fire*.

thing. The implementation of engineering projects, for instance, has almost always favoured the elites, and it has almost always strengthened the colonial grip on colonized countries. That was certainly the case with India's massive geo-engineering projects, and only now do we see how catastrophic those projects have been. We see it very vividly right now in Punjab where the land which was made fertile by overground irrigation is now actually degrading. This is why farmers can't even make a

**“THE WHOLE IDEA OF ‘HUMAN’ COMES TO CENTRE, REALLY, ON WHITE MEN ... FROM THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ONWARDS, THE REST OF HUMANITY IS REGARDED AS ESSENTIALLY BRUTISH ... YOU WOULD BE FOOLISH TO IMAGINE THAT THE LEGACY OF THAT DOESN’T REMAIN.”**

living anymore. Their protest is a form of environmental protest. Again, it’s the earth hitting back at us. So yes, the history of science and engineering is a history of unintended consequences. I think we have to rationally criticize certain kinds of scientific projects, especially in relation to geo-engineering.

At the same time, however, we also have to accept that science itself has changed. And today, there are many, many scientists, especially climate scientists, who are very aware of these issues. So, I think it’s a very nuanced picture. In any situation, you have to pick the right people, the right allies, so to speak. And that’s absolutely true in relation to science, too.

**You write about how the etymologies of words such as ‘brute’ and ‘massacre’ can help tell stories of subjugation. This made me wonder about the relationship between violence and language. Would there be harm if we didn’t have the words to justify the inflicting of it?**

Yes, of course. Violence between humans has always existed. But I feel a word like ‘brute’ or ‘extermination’ does a lot of profoundly damaging and

destructive work. So, the whole division between, say, humans and brute nature is actually also a division between certain kinds of humans on the one hand and certain others who were regarded as brutes. The vast majority of those other humans are actually either black or brown or of other races.

What’s in fact so striking is that the whole idea of the human comes to centre, really, on white men. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the rest of humanity is regarded as essentially brutish. You can’t also forget that these ideas were prevalent well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Just look at Winston Churchill—someone held up as this great moral figure. He was constantly referring to Indians as brutes, as animals. He’d say things like, ‘Look at them [Indians] reproducing like rabbits.’ That entire language was completely absorbed, and you would be foolish to imagine that the legacy of that doesn’t remain. These are very deeply rooted ideas, especially within the Anglosphere. I think it’s almost impossible to get these ideas out of various kinds of cultural and academic imaginaries. So much of development economics, etc., is still informed by these prejudices.

**As more and more people start migrating as a result of climate change-related suffering, how best do you think can we avoid a narrative of victimhood?**

I don't know how we'll do it, especially because, within the frameworks of the liberal state, justice and victimhood are almost completely identified with each other. Compassion is extended only on the grounds that people are victims. And it's a very strange thing because many of these migrants who are moving today are not necessarily victims. Though they do, of course, go through terrible suffering, and many of them are displaced by climate events, it's not a very simple picture. Fortunately, I'm not someone who is involved in the making of policy, but I can certainly see that this problem can't be dealt within the normal frameworks of liberal governance. We need some different kind of framework.

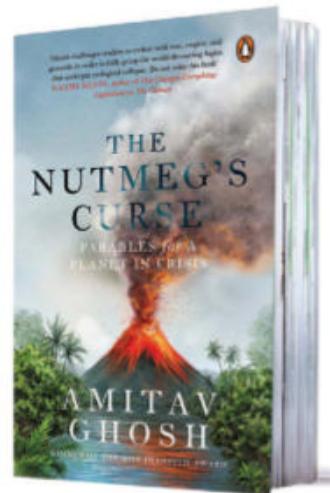
**Have you ever considered involving yourself in the making of policy? Also, wouldn't it help if policymakers read your books?**

I wish I could agree with that. Every time I've been in a room with policymakers and technocrats, I can tell you that they don't allow anyone to speak. They are not in the least bit interested in any input from anyone else. Their arrogance is absolutely staggering. Even if they read a book like mine, it will never penetrate

anywhere in their heads, so it's a complete waste of time to even talk to those people.

***The Nutmeg's Curse* is, of course, an urgent book, but were you also consciously writing quickly?**

I've never written a book at this speed. The pandemic created a situation where this long focus was possible, but even then, I must say the concentration that I was able to achieve in that time is something completely foreign to my experience. Usually, books take me years, but this time, there was an urgency. Also, it was uncanny that I was there writing about colonialism



**“USUALLY, BOOKS TAKE ME YEARS, BUT THIS TIME, WITH *THE NUTMEG'S CURSE*, THERE WAS AN URGENCY.”**

PHOTO: CLIVE GEE/PA IMAGES/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



(Left to Right) Aravind Adiga, Sebastian Barry, Amitav Ghosh, Linda Grant, Philip Henshaw and Steve Toltz—the six shortlisted authors for the 2008 Man Booker Prize for Fiction in Piccadilly, central London.

and its environmental impacts, and, suddenly, I see this Black Lives Matter march go by where they're saying the same thing.

**Do you think that forest fires, the sudden flooding of New York or even cyclone Amphan will be enough to shake institutional apathy?**

Let me tell you a story. Some years ago, the Godrej group asked me to speak at their annual meeting. Since they had many speakers, I was given some 20 minutes. I thought anything I say would sound didactic. So, I wrote a story about a young, successful executive and his family who live on the

Worli sea-face in a very spectacular building. Then suddenly, one day, there's this cyclone coming at them, and, slowly, all their lives are completely destroyed. I also made a video to go along with my story—something I clipped together from various kinds of found footage. They were just completely riveted. Just showing it to them in that format really made a huge difference, I think. Afterwards, Pheroza Godrej came to me and said, "I'll immediately try and create a disaster management scenario for Mumbai". I think that actually happened. Concrete things can, at times, come out of speculations, too. **R**

## AS KIDS SEE IT



“I can still see you sticking your tongue out at me.”

**Our nine-year-old** conducted an experiment to prove the tooth fairy isn't real. When he lost a tooth, he kept it under his pillow and told no one for three days. No money. Then, when he told us he lost his tooth, there was money under

his pillow the following day. Eventually, he confronted us with his scientific evidence.

—[@ROGUEDADMD](#)

**My daughter wanted** to show her grandparents how much she loved them, so she decided to

carve 'I love you' on the side of their car.

—[REDDIT.COM](#)

**My five-year-old** daughter is convinced she has a superpower.

The superpower is that she can smell ants.

—[@PRO\\_WORRIER\\_](#)

**The family dog**, Dooley, was about to celebrate his 11<sup>th</sup> birthday. Our five-year-old grandson suggested that a frisbee might be a good gift, but we pointed out that Dooley was now a senior citizen and too old for one.

“Don’t worry,” our grandson said. “It says, ‘ages five to 12’ right on the box.”

— SALLY ROPER

**I smoked an** eight-pound pork shoulder for nine hours because my kids said they’d eat it. Five minutes before it was done, they said they wanted hot dogs instead.

— TOM VANHAAREN, *reporter*

**My five-year-old** didn’t want to take a bath last night, so I told her the bathtub was filled with ‘special birthday water’ and this was her only chance to experience it until her next birthday. I’ve never seen her get in the bathtub faster.

—  @SNARKYMOMMY78

**My six-year-old, when I told him to go play: “I don’t want to play. I don’t have imagination. Imagination is boring!”**

— ARIANNA BRADFORD, *writer*

**A few weeks ago**, I tried to bore my three-year-old to sleep by telling him everything I knew about nuclear and particle physics.

Every night since then, however, as he’s falling asleep, his little voice pipes up: “Tell me about atoms again.”

—  @DETLY

**One evening**, my nine-year-old daughter was watching a hockey game with my husband. Half-way through the game, she turned to me excitedly and said, “Mommy, can we adopt a goalie? That one only costs \$31.” She was referring to his jersey number.

— SARAH TIESSEN,

**My little brother** invited his entire class to his birthday party, except his ex-girlfriend and her new boyfriend. “She can’t come,” he

told our mom. “I want security at the door.” He’s in kindergarten.

—  @AVENEET\_G

**I have curly hair**. One day, while on a video call with my daughter, her three-year-old son appeared behind her. Looking at me, he thrust both his hands into his mom’s hair and made a mess of it. Then he said, “Mom! Now you look just like grandma!”

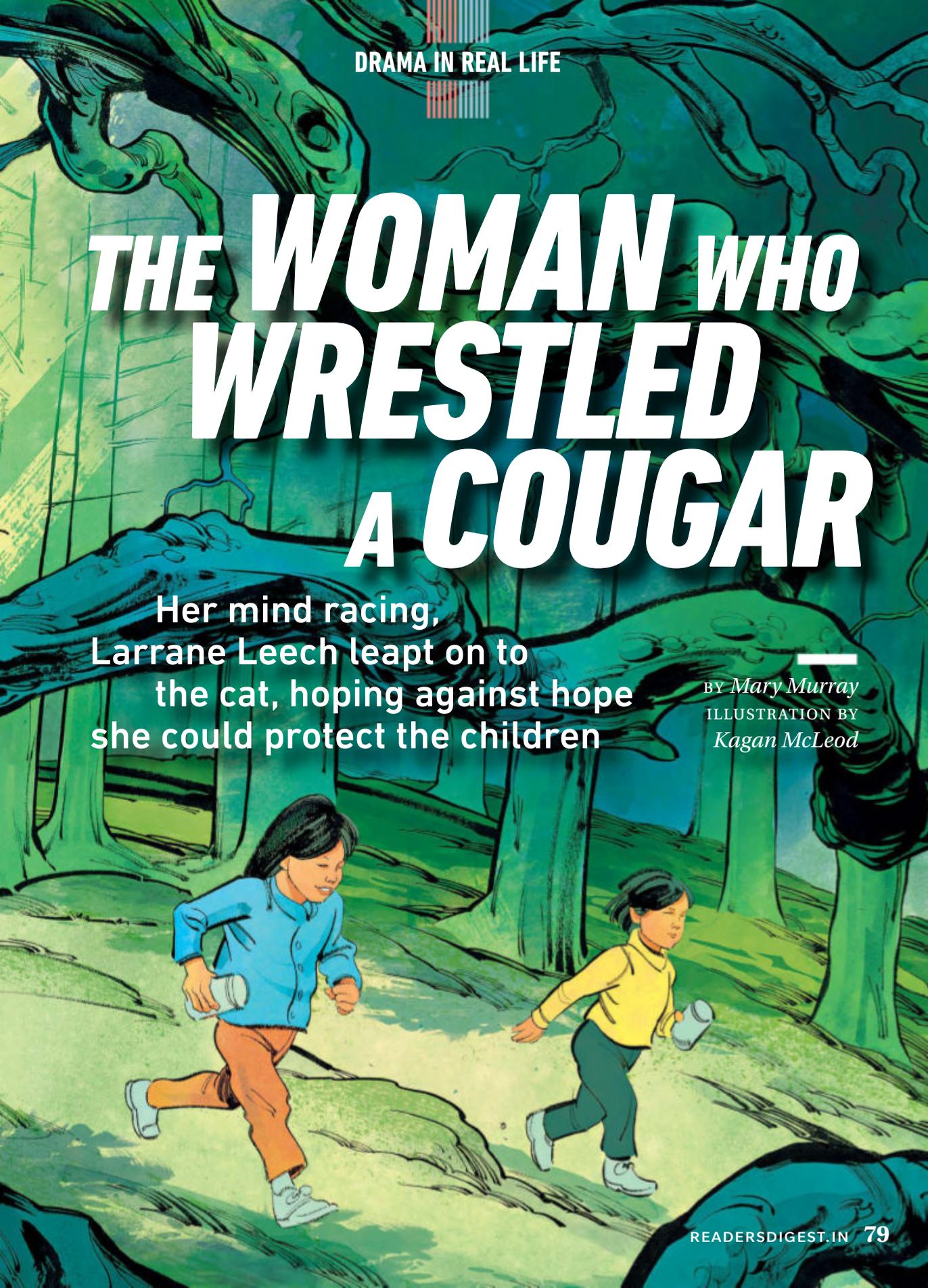
— PAULA GOODMAN

**My toddler is** having a tantrum because, apparently, “the bath is too wet.”

—  @LOTTIE\_POPPIE

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





DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

# THE WOMAN WHO WRESTLED A COUGAR

Her mind racing,  
Larrane Leech leapt on to  
the cat, hoping against hope  
she could protect the children

BY *Mary Murray*  
ILLUSTRATION BY  
*Kagan McLeod*

**N**udged awake by the morning sun, the young cougar opened its jaws in a teeth-baring yawn and stretched its muscular forelegs. Then it started down the mountainside, crossed a narrow highway and loped towards the wide, rushing river. For days, the cougar had been edging closer to the small lumber village of Lillooet on the Fraser River, at the edge of the mountains of southern British Columbia. Now, after drinking the river's cold water, the cougar bedded down again in the nest of tall grass.

On 3 July 1991, the five children in Larrane Leech's daycare group were outdoors early, painting bright tempera landscapes under the penetrating sun. By 10 a.m., it was time to find shade, so Larrane decided they would walk down to the river. "We're going to pick berries now," she announced.

At 44 years old, she had made one of her dreams come true when she turned her home into a daycare centre. It had taken hard work and determination to get her certification. After completing her coursework in early-childhood education, she had worked as a volunteer in a daycare centre while holding down a job at the local lumber mill and raising three teen sons alone.

So far, the centre was operating smoothly. But it was too soon to tell whether the families she worked for would be happy with it. And she worried about being able to care for enough children to make the business pay off.

Larrane had known all five children in her care since they were infants. Three were siblings: playful Mikey, age two; Jessica, five, the exuberant leader; and three-and-a-half-year-old Allesha Allen, the tough little athlete. Four-year-old Natani Leech, who had long hair, was actually their aunt, and Larrane in turn was her aunt. Only the bubbly toddler Lisa O'Laney, a few months shy of two, was unrelated to them. All were members of Indigen-

ous tribes clustered around Lillooet, more than 160 kilometres northeast of Vancouver.

The children had fallen easily into Larrane's daily routine. A nature lover, she insisted they spend as much time as possible outdoors. Everyone loved circle time, when they passed around a black-and-white eagle feather; the child who held it could then talk about whatever they wanted.

After clearing away the painting supplies and handing each child an empty jar, Larrane called for Pal, her one-year-old part-German shepherd. Giggling with anticipation, Jessica and Natani paired off in front. Larrane linked Mikey's hand with Alleshia's, took little Lisa's in her own and said, "Let's go."

Larrane's house stood on a wooded slope not far up from the mighty Fraser River. The group made its way over the dusty gravel road and then on to a dirt trail through the trees. The two oldest girls broke into a run through the tall brown grass at the trail's edge, Natani's waist-length hair swaying back and forth. Larrane and the little ones hurried to keep up.

Stopping the children at the first berry bush, Larrane pointed to the long, thin branches bearing clusters of plump, sweet navy-blue fruit. "Look, the berries are all over," she said. She helped Lisa find some clusters on the lowest branches. Mikey watched, then tentatively bit into one of the berries.

"Mmmmmm, good," he said, and got busy plucking more.

*The cougar cocked an ear towards the birdlike chatter and reflexively sniffed the air. Cougars rarely attack people or show themselves, but as towns expanded into mountainous countryside, there had been more and more sightings, especially in southern British Columbia. At the time, the province was home to some 3,000 of them.*

*The young cougar was instinctively versed in hunting strategies: step silently and downwind through the brush to avoid being heard, scented or seen; choose the weakest prey and attack from behind, clamping powerful jaws on the vital nerves and blood vessels of the prey's neck.*

LARRANE AND THE children moved slowly from bush to bush. Pal stopped frequently in the shade, panting. In 20 minutes, the children filled their jars and were almost to the river. Here, the ground fell steeply to a cool, shady strip of sand about four metres wide.

"Okay," Larrane commanded after the group clambered down to the sandbank, "let's get in our circle." She could not risk letting a child wander off. Suddenly Alleshia jumped up and scooted towards the trees. "Come back, Alleshia," Larrane called. Running after her, she caught up with the child and leant over to help her back to the sandbank.

*Now the cougar could see the funny little creatures that had been making all the noise. Automatically, its predatory machinery kicked in. These were perfect prey: small, wiggly and oblivious to any possible attack.*

*Stepping over the thick carpet of pine needles, the cat slunk toward the children, never so much as rustling a leaf or snapping a twig. Then it did something remarkable, something only a young, inexperienced cat would do. It walked on to the bank and merely nudged one of the children, the young boy, Mikey, backwards on to the sand. The rules of hunting required that the cougar grab the boy's head in its mouth and carry him away. But the young cat paused, and to remove any hair before attacking and feeding, it began to lick the boy's smooth skin with its rough tongue.*

**LARRANE SENSED THE** children suddenly go quiet. She looked up to see the back end of a cat the size of Pal standing over Mikey. The cat's head was down, out of sight behind its peaked shoulder blades, and its plumped, black-tipped tail swiped back and forth like a whip.

Larrane was momentarily frozen by the sight. Now Natani was giggling nervously. "Stop licking Mikey's face," she said playfully, as though talking to a house cat.

Larrane couldn't tell whether Mikey had been bitten; he was silent and hidden beneath the beast. Her mind racing wildly, she sprang impulsively

towards the cougar. Blindly intending to grab its tail, she shifted aim at the last minute and seized the cat by the scruff of the neck. Tugging once, she shook it from side to side.

Instantly, the cougar unsheathed its claws and wheeled toward Larrane, swiping Mikey's face and Lisa's, too. Growling and hissing, it stretched up high and brought its paws down upon the head of the five-foot-one-inch woman. As she stumbled backwards, one paw slipped on to her right shoulder, the claws grazing her ear.

## **LARRANE GRABBED THE BIG CAT BY THE SCRUFF OF ITS NECK AND SHOOK IT FROM SIDE TO SIDE.**

This animal was capable of killing her. Although still in its youth, it had all the teeth and muscle a cougar needs to pull down a victim three times its size.

Aware now of the danger, four of the children shrieked and ran behind Larrane. Mikey lay still on the ground.

"Stay behind me," Larrane screamed as she faced the cougar. Acting before she could think, she grabbed the animal's forelegs and pulled them off her. The cougar's thrashing forced her back into a crouch. Her soft sandals shifted and slipped in the sand, making it difficult to keep a secure

stance. Summoning all her strength, Larrane forced herself back upright, still grasping the cat's thick legs. Then she thrust her arms forwards and locked them straight out in front of her. At the same time, she used her thumbs to push the animal's paws inward to protect herself from being cut.

Locked in a deadly dance with the cougar, Larrane felt as though she were watching herself in slow motion. She stared at the animal's pink tongue and long ivory fangs. Stepping back and forth on its hind legs, the cat let out a menacing growl as it tried to tug its paws with their sharp claws away from her.

"Pal, do something!" Larrane yelled at the dog cowering on the sand not three metres away. She felt the muscles in her arms, legs and back weakening. *What in the world am I going to do?* she thought. *No one will ever find us here, and if the cat gets away from me, he'll surely kill the children.* "Just go away and leave us alone," she yelled into the animal's face. "Leave us alone, and we'll leave you alone."

The cougar was now trying a new tactic to break Larrane's grip. It began thrashing its upper body from side to side, and Larrane could sense its imminent escape. Again acting without any conscious plan, she arched her back to gather momentum, then shoved forward with all her might, thrusting the cat directly at the dog and shouting, "Pal, do something!"

The cougar fell backwards but rolled

instantly on to its feet and darted past Pal through the brush farther along the sandbank.

Without knowing it, Larrane had responded perfectly. She had distracted the cougar from Mikey only a fraction of a second before it had a chance to crush the boy's skull in its mighty jaws. Then her aggressive movements and loud shouting probably scared the animal. Cougar experts say the cats often lose their appetite for killing when angrily confronted.

## **THE COUGAR HAD ALL THE TEETH AND MUSCLE TO PULL DOWN A VICTIM THREE TIMES ITS SIZE.**

Watching the cat retreat, Pal gave chase, barking madly. In one bound, the cougar leapt halfway up a pine, then climbed to the top, wrapped its paws around a branch and hung there, looking down at the dog.

Larrane rushed to Mikey, who lay quietly on the sand. The left side of his face and neck was bathed in blood. But he was breathing, and his eyes were open so wide they seemed to bulge from his face.

*He's alive,* Larrane thought, gasping in relief. But he was eerily still. *He must be in shock,* she decided as she pulled him into her arms.



Larrane Leech on the day she received the Star of Courage.

Then her eyes fell on Lisa, wailing at her side. The girl's face was also covered with blood.

Shifting Mikey to her right side and scooping Lisa up in her left arm, Larrane called to the other children. "We have to run home now." She saw their terror as they looked at her. She touched her face and felt blood dripping. *It's scaring them just to look at me*, she realized. "Let's go," she ordered, "as fast as we can!"

They scrambled up the hill, Lisa still crying, Mikey remaining silent. Larrane soon found the two children too heavy to carry and eased Mikey down. He suddenly jolted from his stupor. "Owie, owie, owie!" he screamed, tears coursing down his face.

Larrane pulled him along towards the house. Pal lingered behind, watching the cougar, before finally following the others. "Everything will be all right," Larrane called out to the kids. But deep down, she was not so certain. The cougar could be anywhere. She considered what it had already done—to Lisa, to Mikey and to the dream she had worked so long to realize. *Would any parents trust her with their children after this?*

In five minutes, they were all inside the front door. Suddenly Larrane was aware of her own pain. Her thighs

were bruised, and the scratches on her arm, forehead and ear burned. Her hands shook as she telephoned the hospital and the parents of Lisa and Mikey.

At the Lillooet Hospital, Mikey needed 40 stitches to close the lacerations on his chin and neck, but all his wounds were shallow. Lisa had been lucky, too. The cat had clawed within an inch of her right eye. The doctors used 20 stitches to repair the cuts on her face and gave both children tetanus shots.

Larrane's scratch needed only to be cleaned and left to heal. But the muscles in her arms, back and legs were so sore that she had difficulty walking.

The next morning she felt profound relief when she opened the front door to four of her daycare children—including Mikey. Only Lisa did not return.

For several days, as they sat in a circle passing the eagle feather, the children remained quiet. The pictures they painted at art time were showered with splatters of red.

Finally, a week later, Mikey took the eagle feather in his hand and said, “I had a dream last night.”

“And what did you see in your dream?” Larrane asked gently.

“I saw an eagle. And he was sitting on my bed. Then he flew over me.”

Larrane smiled. In Lillooet folklore, the eagle is a sign of strength, sent by ancestors as an assurance that the person who sees it will be kept safe. She knew the child was beginning to feel secure again.

Larrane felt secure, too. She had met the greatest challenge of her life head

on. Her friends and neighbours applauded her strength. And now, she felt, she could accomplish anything.

*Police and a local conservation officer set out in search of the cat immediately after the attack was reported. Nine days later, the cougar wandered into Doug Johnston’s yard, one and a half kilometres north of Larrane Leech’s house. Johnston called his neighbour Dayle Turley, who came over with a shotgun and killed the cat.*

*In December 1992, Governor General Ramon John Hnatyshyn, awarded Leech the Star of Courage. And the village of Lillooet gave her a commendation for “outstanding bravery.”*

*Leech continued running a daycare out of her home for several more years. She passed away on 14 September 2020, at age 73.* 

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## Fair Weather Friend

One night when American weather forecaster and journalist Al Roker was still a young meteorologist in Cleveland, the evening news anchor, Doug Adair, was swatted on the head by a homeless African American man outside the studio. During the broadcast the next day, Adair turned to Roker and said, “Al, I don’t know if you heard, but last night after the 11 o’clock news one of your people attacked me.”

Before anyone could draw a shocked breath, Roker calmly turned to him and asked, “Doug, why would a weatherman attack you?” And that, my friends, is how you become one of the most beloved fixtures on network news.

JUDITH NEWMAN IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

# BORN THIS WAY

*A glimpse into a transwoman's resilient life, both synchronously coveted and singled out*

---

BY *Dhananjay Chauhan.*

AS TOLD TO *Naorem Anuja*

I often think about the way plants grow. Not all stretch upwards, tall and straight. Some instead curve, diverge, turn as necessary, reaching out for the space and light it needs to survive and bloom. As a child, I knew I was different from others, but had little inkling about how that difference would mark me out.

I was born in Uttarakhand in July 1971. Soon after, my father got a job in Punjab University, and we moved

to Chandigarh. My parents named me Dhananjay. I was three when I first told my mum that I wanted to join in on a kitchen chore. I would watch fascinated as she kneaded dough to make rotis for our daily meals. My request however met with a dismissive wave and resistance—perhaps because I was a little child and would hassle more than help; partly because in my home, like in most Indian homes, a boy has no place in the kitchen.



PHOTO COURTESY: SARADA MENON



PHOTO COURTESY: SHUTTERSTOCK

That night, once everyone fell asleep, I tip-toed into the kitchen. The light was out of my reach, but, scrambling in the dark, reached into the large, heavy container where flour was stored, put some into a vessel, poured in water and stuck my fingers into the soupy mess. I had no idea what I was doing, but mimicked what I saw my mother do every day. It was thrilling. The sound of my tiny hands, slapping against the wet, unset dough woke her up. Worried that a cat had strayed in, she looked in to check, and found her eldest boy flour-soaked, playing house.

**Kids learn boys are this way, and girls cannot do that, and that is all there ever was, is or even should be.**

When I turned five, it was time for my *mundan* ceremony—a Hindu coming-of-age ritual where they shave a child's head. This purification ritual is supposed to rid a child of negativity from his past life, and put him on the right path to development in this life. Girls in my family were excused this ritual baldness. I was inconsolable and kept screaming that I was a girl and should be spared. I lost that fight but won a different battle—they let me wear a frock at the ceremony. My childhood was full of such subtle

negotiations with adults in my world, a constant back and forth between what I desired and what I was allowed.

It is hard to articulate the dissonance between my assigned sex at birth and how I felt as a person. I couldn't explain it and even if I tried, I am not certain you would completely understand. If you were asked exactly how long it took you to grow your hair out, you wouldn't be able to point to a precise timeline. Gender is somewhat similar—rarely a cataclysmic event that can serve as identifier of when you started to express who you are.

Gender is socially constructed. Children are taught what it means to be male or female and which pronoun goes with what body—constructed and ordered in binaries. They learn that a boy is this way, and girls cannot do that, and that is all there ever was, is or even should be.

I was seven, when I told my mother I was a woman. I was quickly carted off to a pandit, who assured my parents that a witch had possessed me; nothing a quick exorcism couldn't fix. Hot tongs were taken to my body, lashes repeatedly inflicted to beat the spirit away, until finally, cowering in pain, I spoke the words that made them feel better—I'm a boy. I understood that it wasn't okay, or safe for me to tell others that I, a boy felt like a woman. I began to try and present more masculine but I was deeply unhappy.

Soon, puberty struck and my body started to betray me. The tufts of hair on my face, made no sense. How could this be happening? I'm female. But women's bodies looked different from mine. The memory of the hot tongs, the beatings and the fear joined forces and developed a voice. It told me that what I was knew and felt deep down—I am woman—was a lie, a betrayal.

But truth, I found, is stronger than doubt. No argument or force can withstand its power. Every nerve in my body wanted to be female. The 'real' world demanded that I look and act like a man, but my reality was that of a woman. School became harder: isolation, bullying, homophobic abuse and eventually sexual assault—first by a schoolmate and afterwards a middle-aged neighbour—marked my academic years. By the time I turned 12, it became clear that I had to hide who I was from the world, and often those who saw my truth were not my friends.

Small pockets of joy carried me through the miasma. Performing as female characters in neighbourhood skits during Ramlila celebrations, made my heart sing. For once, I could dress-up and put on make-up without censure, without being singled out. But even these spaces weren't safe.

Predators, armed with the ability to sniff out weakness, picked up on my vulnerability, my fear of discovery, knowing full well that the way I carried myself—'like a girl'—meant I was



**Dhananjay, now a trans-rights activist**

fair game and without help or support. Whenever I gathered the courage to fight back, they would threaten me with violence and blackmail. My family didn't understand what it meant for me to be living in a body that was not my own or the traumas I had to undergo because of it. I wanted to escape. A few years later, I did. I cycled all the way to Kurukshetra, only to realize I had nowhere to go.

**E**ducation, I decided, would be my ticket out. In 1993, I topped Panjab University in my course. I started pursuing multiple diplomas, learning different languages—Russian, French, computer science courses. Keeping myself gainfully occupied helped me with my mental health. Learning kept me from completely sinking into an abyss. I had found a few

friends from the LGBTQI community, and their company saw me through those days. With them I didn't have to control and police how I spoke or how my body moved. I could drop my guard and just be me.

Now an adult, I enjoyed safety among friends, but danger was never far away. One day my group and I attended a carnival, the sort that shopping malls often organize. There was music and dancing and we joined in the revelry. A little after 9 p.m., I was headed home when a man walked up to me and struck up a conversation. He had a kind manner and we chatted for a while. It was late, so he offered to give me a ride, maybe drive around the city a bit before taking me home. His friend would bring the car around. I turned him down several times but he insisted.

Once his friend arrived, he held my hand and shoved me into the car, pulled out a gun and threatened to pull the trigger if I made noise. They drove me to a hostel in Ambala, where 20 men took turns violating me through the night. Trembling, bleeding, devastated, I was driven to the bus station and left there at three or four a.m.

After what felt like ages, a half-empty and dimly lit bus stopped and I clambered on to a seat in the back. The conductor appeared after a while and sat next to me, asking for my ticket. I told him I had no money. I don't know what it was exactly, but he knew it too—I wasn't a straight man. He grabbed my hand and placed it on his privates—the

price I would have to pay to get home.

When the bus reached Chandigarh, I dragged myself to the police station to file a report. Skeptical, the cops took me to a room and began questioning me. They asked me to remove my clothes to show them where I had been touched. Feeling helpless and terrified of further assault, I decided I didn't want to register a report and walked out.

**N**o one wanted to acknowledge my trans-femininity, unless it was to punish both the man I looked like on the outside and the woman I was on the inside. I felt destroyed, attacked at every level. It felt like people forgot their humanity as soon as they encountered me. No one ever listened to people like us; we had no protection. A lifetime of trauma and pain came simultaneously hurtling to the fore. This was no way to live—like a gaping wound. Thoughts of ending it all swirled in my head.

But as I turned that thought over and over in my head, I felt a surge of anger: *Why should I destroy myself? Why did I have to hide who I was? What was my crime? Being stuck inside a body I was born with, that was never my own?* For once I would let 'her' live instead of hiding her away. No one would be allowed to hold my true identity over my head like a weapon, using it to abuse me, hurt me or diminish me again.

I poured myself into activism and reached out to people in the LGBTQI

community. Initially it was hard: a lot of trans-people are disillusioned, paralysed by the overwhelming barriers and hatred we've faced, but cowering away was no longer an option. I started building networks in the community. In 2009 I started an NGO called Saksham Trust. We started collaborating and learning from our work with other LGBTQI organizations.

In 2012, I joined a national level consultancy where transgender activists across India got together to file a public interest litigation together with the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA). After the 2014 NALSA judgement recognized the transgender com-

**I felt a surge of anger:  
Why should I destroy  
myself? Why did I  
have to hide who I was?  
What was my crime?**

munity as the third gender, I became the first transgender person to join Panjab University in 2015. I went to the university admissions dressed in women's jeans and a kurta. It was the first time that I looked into the mirror before I stepped out of my home, and I wasn't scared of what reflected back at me. At the age of 44, I had finally allowed the woman in me to live, I was going to see what she was capable of.

I have been fortunate to be able to

be part of various progressive steps and victories for the transgender community. I was at the forefront of organizing the first Chandigarh Pride parade, campaigned to get the state government to institute a transgender welfare board, and now serve as one of two transgender members of the 14-member panel.

After I joined Panjab University, I campaigned for separate transgender bathrooms, for instituting an anti-discrimination cell on campus and providing transgenders with free tuition. From being oppressed and stuck in a cycle of violence, waiting for hours outside institutions to hear me out, I now get invited to conferences, schools and colleges and even police academies across the country to speak and deliver sensitization programmes.

To those struggling with their gender identity, I want to say: Own your story, embrace your identity, educate yourself and engage. Choose life as an act of resistance. It took time, but I have learnt to accept myself. It is my body, and only I am allowed to make rules for it, choose what makes me comfortable in my skin and happy in my being.

After years of seeking ways to disguise my true self, I have made the decision to medically transition. In a few months, I will present as unambiguously female and bring my body finally in sync with my mind. Soon, I will be able to live as a resilient 50-year-old woman, who was born a male. **R**

# LAUGHTER

THE BEST *Medicine*

**A man** had too much to drink and needed a ride home. So he called his wife to come pick him up.

“Where are you?” she asked.

“Let’s see,” he said, looking around. “I’m at the corner of Walk and Don’t Walk.”

—Submitted by

MELANIE L. JUNGLES

**Upon entering** a store, a man noticed a big ‘BEWARE OF DOG’ sign posted on the door. He continued cautiously until he noticed an old hound asleep on the floor near the cash register.

“Is that the dog we’re supposed to beware of?” he asked a worker behind the counter.

“Yep, that’s him,”



the man replied.

“He doesn’t look dangerous. Why do you need that sign?”

“Because,” the man explained, “before I put it up, people kept tripping over him.”

—Startsat60.com

**A mother** returned from the supermarket and handed her young son the box of animal

crackers he had begged her for. As she unpacked the rest of the groceries, the boy spread the crackers all over the kitchen table.

“What are you doing?” the mom asked.

“I’m looking for the seal,” said the boy. “It says you can’t eat these if it’s broken.”

—Scoutlife.org

I think that being an astronaut on the way to the moon would be the worst time to find out you're a werewolf.

—LEONARD CHAN, *comedian*

I used to be addicted to the hokey pokey. But I turned myself around.

—Fatherly.com

### What's Up, Doc?

◆ The doctor gave me some cream for my skin rash. He said I was a sight for psoriasis.

—Bestlifeonline.net

◆ I went to see the doctor about my short-term memory problems. The first thing he did was make me pay in advance.

—Memesbams.com

**Tonight's forecast:** dark; continued dark tonight, turning to partly light in the morning.

—GEORGE CARLIN, *comedian*

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

A priest was looking for something when his friend walked in. "I'm meeting some

members of the laity," the priest said, "and I can't find my collar."

"My, my," his friend replied. "A lay date and a collar short."

—Submitted by  
WENDELL POWERS

## A REAL PLOT TWIST

The author of *The Prince* thought it better to be feared than loved and instructed youngsters to be cunning and cutthroat. Here's how Mr Machiavelli would review these more recent children's titles:

◆ *Where the Wild Things Are*: Max could have been a great and terrible ruler. But he allowed loneliness to creep into his heart and gave up his position of power. I give this opus 3 out of 5 stars.

◆ *Guess How Much I Love You?*: Love should be used only for deceitful means, and Little Nutbrown Hare understands that his father's love can be used to manipulate his actions. 4 stars.

◆ *Charlotte's Web*: Charlotte should have drained that pig for all he was worth. Instead, she made the mistake of choosing to have empathy for the weak hog. Pathetic. I award this book 1 weak dying star.

◆ *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*: The ambitious young caterpillar eats his way through bigger and more difficult obstacles and emerges more powerful than ever. 5 glorious stars.

◆ *The Giving Tree*: The boy uses fraud to deceive the tree into giving him more and more of itself. The ends always justify the means. 5 stars.

—Pointsincase.com



# FIND

# GO



**BONUS READ**

# ING BIG

*How two outsiders found their way into each other's hearts*

BY *Dion Leonard*  
WITH *Craig Borlase*

FROM THE BOOK  
*FINDING GOBI*



# JUST

like the start line of any race, everyone was doing their own thing to cope with the nerves. I tried to distract myself by looking at the other 100 or so competitors. It was June 2016 and I was in northwestern China to run a race: 250 kms over the course of a week across freezing peaks and then the scorching Gobi Desert. I'd be attempting about one marathon a day for four days, and *two* on day five.

Only three days earlier I'd kissed my wife, Lucja, goodbye in Edinburgh—she was an ultramarathoner too but couldn't get the time off for this race—and after the long trip, I was exhausted, which isn't how I wanted to feel this close to my biggest race. It's hard to think of a more brutal test of mental and physical toughness; ultramarathon runners go through agony, shedding sometimes even 10 per cent of our body weight during these races. But finishing is one of life's most rewarding experiences.

I was 41, and had started doing ultramarathons only three years ago. I'd run the fabled Marathon des Sables in Morocco twice, running with 1,300 others; the route is through the Sahara in 51-degree Celsius temperatures. The first time, I placed 108<sup>th</sup>; the next, I was 32<sup>nd</sup>. But at my most recent race, in Cambodia, I'd finished

with my hamstrings in agony. I felt I may never compete again. But I'd recovered enough for the Gobi race.

The thought of never competing again made me feel queasy—and this time, I wanted to reach the podium. Because I didn't like being an outsider. Not since I was a kid in Australia and life changed forever.

IT WAS A sunny day in 1984 in my rural hometown in Queensland, just one day after my ninth birthday. That morning, I'd finally perfected my somersault on our outdoor trampoline, and after lunch Dad and I went out with our cricket bats. He taught me how to hold the bat and hit a ball so hard it sailed beyond our property's boundary. That evening, Mom left for aerobics class, Dad watched cricket on TV, and I went to bed. Some time later, I awoke to, "Dion!"

I got up to see what Dad wanted. His breathing sounded wrong. “Go get your grandmother, Dion.”

Nan lived in an apartment attached to the house. As soon as she saw Dad, she called an ambulance. “Garry, you’re having an asthma attack,” she told him in a voice I’d never heard. “Keep calm, Garry. Stay with me.” When the paramedics wheeled Dad out, he was still struggling to breathe, his head shaking.

I’d never see him again.

At the funeral, I broke from Mom’s hand and draped myself around Dad’s coffin, sobbing, until someone peeled me away.

It was as if Mom became a child again after Dad died, crying

different, so I started attending church alone on Sundays. Sometimes the sermons made me feel better about myself. But the way people looked at me, whispering, as I hovered near the cakes table afterwards made it clear that I didn’t belong.

One Saturday when I went to a friend’s house, his mom told me he couldn’t come out. “You’re a bad influence, Dion,” she told me from behind the door. “We don’t want you coming around.” I walked away devastated. I didn’t swear or act out at school; I was polite, kind. But I was becoming aware of my place in life: on the outside.

As the years passed, my mother spent days in her bedroom, leaving

## STILL ONLY A BOY, I WAS AWARE OF MY PLACE IN LIFE: ON THE OUTSIDE.

constantly while Nan took care of me and my little sister, Christie. Then one evening, when Mom and I were in the kitchen, she said out of the blue, “Garry wasn’t your dad.”

I have no memory of what I replied, maybe because of the shock. What I know is that while everything had changed in one ambulance ride, it took only four words to rip my heart apart.

I was ashamed of the truth about myself. My hometown was a small place with traditional values, and it seemed all my friends came from perfect families. I didn’t want to be

me to make the meals. Christie and I couldn’t do anything right. If we left crumbs around or I didn’t do my gardening chores right, my mother nagged and screamed.

“You’re useless!” she’d say. I’d yell back, and soon we’d be swearing at each other. Mom never apologized. Nor did I.

By the time I was 15, I’d had enough. I said I was moving out, but Mom didn’t seem to care. A friend and I rented a room in a hostel filled with drifters and drunks. I was still at school and pumped gas to pay rent; I

managed to keep up with my schoolwork, but my teachers showed no sign of caring about how I was coping.

I became a pain-in-the-ass loudmouth, riling the teachers and getting thrown out of class. At the final assembly, when the headmaster greeted each of us with a friendly word about our futures, he could only say to me, "I'll be seeing you in prison."

But when I hit my 20s, life got a lot better, and I met Lucja. I first tried running when I was 26 and we were living in New Zealand. At the time, Lucja was managing an eco-hotel and I was working for a wine exporter. Both jobs came with perks such as crates of wine and great meals out. People told me I was a big lad, and

they were right. At more than six feet tall, I weighed 108 kilos, heavier than I'd ever been. I didn't exercise, occasionally smoked, and had created a dent in the sofa where I watched sports on TV.

Then Lucja made some new friends who loved running and fitness, and she got onto a health kick. When I realized it wasn't just a phase, I panicked: the fitter she became, the greater my risk of losing her. Why would she stay with a fat bloke like me?

So I started running, too, and got a lot healthier. For the first couple of years I ran three or four kms at a time, but then I impulsively bet a runner friend that I could beat him in a half marathon. He was so confident he'd win that the familiar fear from my youth—of not belonging—returned. I trained hard, won the bet and haven't looked back. In fact, my need to prove myself only became stronger.

**A**T THE START line of the Gobi Desert race, I did a final check that my backpack's straps were snug across my chest. We carry everything we need for the entire week: I bring only a sleeping bag, the clothes I'm wearing, and the minimum food I need, 2,000 calories a day. I'd be eating rehydrated meals, jerky, nuts and energy gels, and I wouldn't be changing or showering.



Dion and Lucja on their wedding day.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DION LEONARD

I should have been feeling confident; my training had prepared me well. But as always happens at the start line, I began thinking the other runners were fitter, stronger. I struggled to ignore that familiar voice: *Who am I to think I can do this?*

The horn sounded, and a crush of people surged down the middle, wanting to take the lead. I'd put myself wide. I didn't want to trip, and I could maybe get ahead before the course narrowed and dropped into a canyon. My plan worked and soon I was behind a favourite to win, Tommy Chen of Taiwan.

by side for a while until a Romanian runner, Julian, caught up. The three of us traded the lead from time to time, and we ran across muddy fields, over bridges, and past villages that belonged in another century, I became hopeful that this race might not be my last after all. I was flying.

Back in my yurt that afternoon, I laid down and thought about my performance. I was happy with third place, and there was only a minute or two between me, Tommy and Julian. I ate some jerky and dozed in my sleeping bag, waking an hour later when my

## THEN I SAW A DOG WITH BIG DARK EYES, BEGGING. I THOUGHT, NO WAY I'D FEED IT.

The rocks were slippery from the dew, and I struggled to keep my footing. A twisted ankle would mean a whole lot of pain or, worse yet, a 'Did Not Finish'.

Halfway through the day, I saw a dune towering ahead. It was steep, and easily 300 feet high. The sand gave way with the slightest pressure, falling like weak clay, and I had to use my hands on it for extra grip. Tommy and I weren't running up it; we were scrambling.

Up top, we ran along its narrow peak stretching almost a kilometre. "Look at this view!" Tommy shouted. "Isn't it magnificent?" I said nothing. I'm scared of heights and had to move cautiously.

Tommy was surprised when I overtook him on the descent. We ran side

tentmates returned from their runs.

"Whoa! Dion's back already!" said an American named Richard Henson. I smiled, and congratulated them on the first stage.

"Are you here to win?" asked another.

"Well, I'm not here for fun," I replied.

Richard laughed. "We got that impression. You're not exactly sociable, are you?"

I laughed too. I liked this guy. "Yeah, it's just how I get through these races."

At 6:30 I wandered outside carrying my bag of dehydrated chili. At the fire where water was boiling, I made up the meal. Everyone was sitting around chatting, but all the seats were taken, so I crouched on a rock and ate. After scooping the last traces from the

bag, I got up to head back to the yurt and turn in.

That's when I saw a dog. Sandy coloured with big dark eyes and a funny-looking moustache and beard, it was walking among the chairs, getting up on its hind legs and charming runners into parting with their precious food.

*Clever dog, I thought. There's no way I'd feed it.*

**J**UST BEFORE 8 the next morning, I shivered in the cold as I took my place on the starting line. The ground was wet, and the Tian Shan

"You're cute," I said softly, "but you'd better be fast if you're not planning to get trodden."

I looked about; someone had to get it out of our way. "Does anyone know whose dog this is?" I asked as the countdown began. None of the locals or staff noticed. *Nine, eight, seven...*

I looked down. The dog was still sniffing my gaiters. "You'd better get away, little doggie." *Five, four...*

"Go on," I said, nudging it. But it only took a playful bite of the gaiter, jumped back, then dove in for another sniff.

The race began, and as I set off, the

## THE DOG COULDN'T CROSS THE CULVERT. BUT I DIDN'T LOOK BACK. I NEVER DO.

mountains ahead were covered in dark clouds. We were already at an altitude of 7,000 feet, and today would take us up to more than 9,000. I focused only on the challenge ahead; I couldn't afford not to. Then my concentration was broken by laughter and a little cheering behind me.

"It's the dog! How cute!"

I looked down and saw the dog from last night. It was standing by my feet, its tail wagging, staring at my bright yellow gaiters I wore to keep sand out.

Then it did the strangest thing. It slowly looked up, its dark eyes taking in my legs, then my yellow-shirted torso, and finally my face. It looked right into my eyes, and I couldn't look away.

little dog came with me. The gaiters game was even more fun now that they moved, and the dog danced around my feet as if it were the best fun ever. But the last thing I wanted was to trip over the pooch and cause injury to it or myself. I had to stay focused on keeping pace, so I was thankful when, next time I glanced down, the dog wasn't there.

The forest fell away as the path climbed into the mountains. I kept up a six-minute-mile pace, concentrating on a short stride and quick feet.

Then I saw something move out of the corner of my eye. I forced myself to look down for a fraction of a second. It was the dog again. It wasn't

interested in my gaiters now; it seemed happy just trotting beside me. *Weird*, I thought. *What's it doing here?* I liked dogs. Lucja and I had had a Saint Bernard named Curtly, but after he'd died, we didn't get another; neither of us wanted to go through that kind of pain again. But my only concern with this one was that it would trip me or make me lose focus.

I pressed on and attacked the incline. Zeng, the Chinese runner in the lead, had pulled away from me a little, but I couldn't hear anyone behind me. It was just me and the dog, side by side, tearing into the switchbacks.

When the path was interrupted by a three-foot culvert, I leapt over the fast-flowing water without breaking stride. The dog stayed behind, barking and whimpering. But I didn't look back. I never do. The dog probably belonged to someone back near the camp. It had had a good workout, conned some runners out of food, and now it was time to head home. I kept my head in the race and pushed on.

Suddenly there was a flash of brown, and the dog was back. *Determined little thing*, I thought.

Soon the track became even steeper and the temperature dropped. The air numbed my face and fingers, and the altitude made my breathing tight



**Dion feels that, in many ways, by finding Gobi he has found more of himself.**

and my head a little dizzy. Every step became a battle.

When a checkpoint finally came into view, volunteers and organizers called out the usual encouragement. But this time, they shouted a little louder. "There's that dog again!" I'd almost forgotten the little dog at my side. While I'd been struggling uphill, it had kept pace, skipping along as if running 2,500 feet into the sky was the most natural thing in the world.

At checkpoints, runners refill their bottles and medics ensure we're okay. But this time the dog got far more attention, and volunteers took photos. When I headed out, I expected the dog would stay here in favour of a better

meal ticket. But it joined me again.

If the run up the mountain had been tough, the eight-km descent on a path of rocks and loose stones was its own unique sort of pain. It was brutal on the joints, and I struggled to hit anything close to my maximum pace. Tommy glided past me, followed by Julian. I was annoyed with myself for giving too much on the ascent, but finally the path flattened and I picked up my pace. I wouldn't catch Tommy, Zeng, or Julian that day, but felt good to still be on pace for third overall.

People were cheering for the brown mutt and I as we crossed the finish line side by side. I could swear it was playing to the crowd by wagging its tail faster. "That dog, man!" said Tommy. "It's been following you all day!"

Someone found a small bucket and gave it some water, but I stepped back, wanting to get away from the crowds. When the dog finished drinking, it looked up, locked eyes on my yellow gaiters, and trotted over. It seemed determined to follow me.

As soon as I sat down in the tent, the dog curled up beside me—and I started thinking about germs and diseases. It's crucial during these races to keep as clean as possible because without any access to showers or sinks, it's easy to get sick from anything you touch.

I had a few hours before my 6:30 meal, so I pulled out some nuts and jerky. The dog's stare into my eyes was unbreakable. With a piece of meat

midway to my mouth, it struck me that I hadn't seen it eat all day. "Here you go," I said, tossing it half the jerky. I didn't want its mouth on my fingers. The dog chewed, swallowed, spun around a few times and lay down. Within seconds it was snoring, deeply asleep. Then I was, too.

I woke later to my tentmates cooing like kids. "Ah, how cute is that?" "Isn't that the dog from last night? Did you hear she followed him all day?"

*She.* I hadn't even considered if the dog was male or female. I opened my eyes, and she was staring deeper into my eyes than I would have thought possible. "Yeah," I said to the guys. "She stuck with me all day. She's got a good little motor."

Some of them fed her, and she gently accepted, as if on her best behaviour. I told them I'd guessed she belonged to someone at the last camp.

"I don't think so," said Richard. "Some of the others said she joined them on the dune yesterday."

I was staggered. She'd run almost 80 kms in two days on those little legs.

"You know what you've got to do now, don't you?" said Richard.

"What?" I asked.

"You've got to give her a name."

**T**HE NEXT MORNING, I stopped running just 1.5 kms in, cursing my stupidity. I'd put on a jacket as it had been cold, but suddenly the sun came out. As I stood packing the jacket, Tommy, Julian, and two

others passed. Then one more runner approached, and I smiled.

“Hey Gobi,” I said, using the name I’d given her the night before. “You’ve changed your mind?”

She had spent the night curled up at my side, but once I got to the start line, she’d disappeared among the crowd. I’d been too focused on the weather to worry about her. But there was Gobi, looking up at me as I fastened my bag. She was ready to go. So was I.

Some time later we reached a fast-moving river at least 150 feet wide.

I imagined. Using only my right arm for balance, I edged forward. I slipped more than once, one time going down hard on my left side, getting Gobi wet. But she didn’t wriggle. She stayed calm, letting me do my job and keep her safe. There was a moment when her face was level with mine that I swore she gave me a look of genuine love and gratitude.

I put her down on the other bank and she scrambled up it, shook herself off and stared at me. “You’re ready, aren’t you, girl?” I said, unable to stop smiling.

## JUST BY BEING THERE, DETERMINED, GOBI MADE ME WANT TO KEEP GOING.

Julian had already traversed it, and I waded right in. The water reached my knees, and there were slippery rocks underfoot. One misstep and my race could be over.

I was so focused I didn’t consider Gobi. I guess I assumed she’d find her way across, like yesterday. But with every step I took, her barking and whining became more desperate. I was a quarter of the way across when I did what I had never done before in a race. I turned around.

Gobi was running up and down the bank, looking at me as I made my way back. *Would this lose me a place on the podium?* I tucked her under my left arm and waded back into the cold water. She was much lighter than

“Let’s go, then.”

That’s when I looked up and saw an old guy on a donkey. He was watching us, expressionless. What must this look like? I wondered.

I was behind the leaders but pushed to catch up. Whenever I started to tire, I only needed to glance at Gobi. Just by being there, and being determined, Gobi made me want to keep going.

Later, a couple of kilometres from the finish, I made a series of sprints to catch up to Tommy and Julian. My lungs burnt, but Gobi thought it was great fun, pushed me hard—and we passed the leaders. I crossed the line first, Gobi on my heels. The sound of the finishing drum couldn’t drown out the cheers from organizers and volunteers.

**D**AYS FOUR AND five were going to be gruelling sessions on the black, hard-packed Gobi Desert under a cruel sun. I decided this would be too much for Gobi, so she'd travel to the next camp in a volunteer's car. I made sure that person was going to keep her cool and hydrated, but I felt a shiver of worry. Gobi had attached herself so clearly to me; would she be okay with strangers? Or would she set off on another adventure?

line, scanning the horizon. For a moment she stayed motionless, and I wondered whether she'd recognize me. Suddenly she leapt from the rock, a blur of brown fur tearing toward me, little tongue flapping.

For the first time that day, I smiled.

In the tent, with Gobi curled up at my side, I drifted in and out of sleep. I was missing Lucja. I relied on her in so many ways at races. Whenever I became frustrated, she'd take the sting

## GOBI HAD TRUSTED ME TO HELP HER. HOW COULD I LEAVE HER BEHIND?

Day four was brutally hot, with temperatures in the 37-degree range. I stayed in front for a long time, but that meant I had to navigate the route and suck up the vicious headwind. I missed Gobi biting at my gaiters to speed me up. My legs felt like concrete and my head drifted into familiar thoughts. *Maybe I'm all washed up. Maybe coming here has been one big mistake.* By the time Tommy, Julian, Zeng, and another runner overtook me, I was past caring. In the final kilometre, all I wanted was for this whole thing to be over. I could imagine Lucja telling me to sleep on it, that I'd feel better after some rest and food, but another voice was telling me to give up running completely.

Then I turned the final bend and saw Gobi sitting on a rock at the finish

out. One of my favourite memories of running with her is our first Marathon des Sables. On day one, I'd almost quit. But I improved, and as I neared the end of the final day, I was happy I'd place near the top 100. Then, a few hundred feet before the finish, I spotted Lucja, shielding her eyes from the sun as she looked in my direction.

"What are you doing here?" I asked when I reached her. She should have reached this point an hour ago.

"I wanted to finish with you," she replied. We crossed the finish line hand in hand. She could have placed much higher, but she chose to wait for me.

I needed Lucja. But today had taught me something else. I'd missed Gobi, and would miss her again the next day. She was a great distraction during hours of running,

and she inspired me. She didn't know anything about running technique or race strategy; she was a fighter who refused to give up. After only two days of running with Gobi at my side, I realized I enjoyed watching her little legs power through.

So while day five, almost two marathons long, was even hotter—we'd moved on to the Gobi's black sand, and temperatures soared to 52 degrees—I kept the lead. And when I really started to struggle, I pulled my secret weapon from my bag: an iPod. I'd saved it for a moment when I needed a boost, and my rocket fuel was Johnny Cash. When that baritone filled my ears with lyrics about outsiders and the kind of men everyone writes off, my spirits lifted. He was singing just to me, calling me to push harder, to prove the doubters wrong.

I was utterly depleted as I neared the finish, and there was Gobi, just like the day before. She dashed out to run the last 200 feet with me and we crossed the finish line together.

I was on a high. My overall second-place podium position was all but secure; the final day would be a symbolic 10 kms, followed by a celebration feast. I had proved to myself that my running career had some life.

"What are you going to do about that little one?" one of the runners asked later, pointing at Gobi.

It was a good question, one I'd been asking myself. Did Gobi have an owner on the edge of the desert?

Everyone I asked thought it was more likely she was one of China's countless strays. I didn't want to leave her to fend for herself, but there was more: Gobi had picked me, out of so many others. From the time she started nibbling at my gaiters, she had hardly ever chosen to leave my side. She had trusted me to help her, and given everything she had to keep up. How could I leave her behind?

"You know what?" I replied. "I'm going to find a way to bring her home."

I hadn't spoken to Lucja for a week, and when I finally got to call her I was a little nervous. How would I tell her I wanted to bring home a stray dog from China?

But before I could say much more than hello, Lucja asked, "How's Gobi?"

I was stunned. "You know about Gobi?"

"Yeah! Some of the runners mentioned her in their blogs. Pretty little thing, isn't she?"

"She is. I wanted to talk to you—"

"You're bringing her home? As soon as I heard about her, I knew you'd want to."

It wasn't quite as easy as we'd hoped.

I LEFT GOBI AT the home of a trusted volunteer in the regional capital, Ürümqi. Back home, I returned to work, and Lucja and I researched the steps for bringing a dog to the UK. Gobi would have to be quarantined four months at Heathrow Airport. But first, as we learnt from a helpful

woman named Kiki from WorldCare Pet Transport, a Beijing pet-moving service, Gobi would need a rabies test in Ürümqi followed by a 30-day wait in that city. Then she could fly to the UK for her quarantine—but only from Shanghai or Beijing. To fly to either of those cities, she must be accompanied by the person who would be taking her out of China.

Could we really bring Gobi home? The total cost could be several

I felt desperate, but my desire to find Gobi was as strong as any I'd ever had.

When I landed in Ürümqi, I met the search committee that Kiki had organized, led by a dog-loving woman named Lu Xin. They'd been putting up posters and knocking on doors. I was blown away by the kindness of strangers who had jumped in to help. But I couldn't see how we'd ever find Gobi in this city of more than four million. We'd have to knock on

## IN THIS CITY OF FOUR MILLION, I DIDN'T SEE HOW WE'D EVER FIND GOBI.

thousand dollars. So we decided to create a crowd-funding page, setting the limit at \$6,500 [₹4,85,000]. Two days later, the *Daily Mirror* got in touch, and 24 hours after they published, "Heartwarming bond between ultra-marathon man and the stray dog he refuses to leave behind," we'd surpassed our target. Worldwide media coverage followed, and we had enough funds to bring Gobi home.

There was only one problem: She had gone missing.

**G** OBI HAD SOMEHOW gotten out of the volunteer's home days earlier. Lucja and I agreed: if Gobi had a chance of being found, I'd have to return to Ürümqi. My employers at the whisky distiller where I'm a business manager were very supportive.

thousands of doors at countless apartment blocks. And she'd been gone several days; if Gobi had decided to head for the mountains in the distance—if she made it through the dangerous traffic first—she could be long gone. It seemed impossible.

It was late when I got back to the hotel after my first full day searching with the team. I was jet-lagged and had not eaten since breakfast so I ordered room service, took a drink from the minibar, and tried calling Lucja. No reply. I waited, and took another drink. Then another.

When Lucja called back, a surge of sadness flowed out of me, like water down a drain. All I could do was cry.

When at last I caught my breath, Lucja told me she'd talked with Kiki, and they'd agreed we needed local

media coverage. She had arranged a TV interview for the next day.

“Maybe it’ll kick things off, like the *Daily Mirror* did,” she said.

“I hope so,” I said quietly. “But Lucja, she could be a hundred kilometres away.”

“You know what I’m going to say, don’t you?” Lucja replied.

I did. But I wanted to hear it anyway. “Sleep on it. It’ll all look different in the morning.”

THE TV REPORTER wanted to know why a guy living in Scotland would come all the way here to search for a dog, and he knew the search was being led by locals. The coverage worked; the next day we had more volunteers, and interview requests from across China. One sent a crew to follow me for a live broadcast of the search.

We needed the coverage to help convince locals to care about a little dog, and we did get more tips, though so far all were dead ends. But I’d have to be careful with media, especially international outlets; we were advised to never be critical of the state. If authorities felt China was painted in a bad light—say, as dog-eating barbarians—we could lose their cooperation. One article had speculated Gobi was snatched for the dog-meat trade. (I dismissed this; locals told me the practice wasn’t common in this region.)

On the fourth day, I was excited when Richard, my tentmate from

the race, arrived. His work took him around China, so he offered to help search. I didn’t know it at the time, but Lucja had asked Richard to look after me. She knew I was stressed and not eating properly. We went for a much-needed run; I’d had my eye on the mountains and Richard helped me hand out posters in villages there.

Still, I despaired as we searched Ürümqi’s streets daily. I couldn’t stop doubting our chances, and feeling the pain of knowing I was losing Gobi. We’d followed up on some 30 tips, going to see dogs that were nothing like her, dashing my hopes each time.

On day 14 of Gobi being missing we got yet another tip. Someone who had seen our poster spotted a stray they thought was Gobi and had taken it home. They texted a photo, but it was blurry, and the dog had a deep scar on its head. I was doubtful, but we went to check it out.

We drove to a gated community and parked. I stepped into the house, and suddenly a streak of sandy brown shot across the room and jumped up at my knees. “It’s her!” I shouted, picking the dog up and thinking that I’d slipped into a dream. She was making the excited, whimpering, yapping sound she’d made when we were reunited at the finish line. “This is Gobi!” She burrowed into my lap like a puppy.

I rang Lucja. “We bloody well found her!” I said the moment she picked up. Both of us didn’t say much for a while. We were too busy crying.

**Gobi's first run  
on the beach  
in her new home,  
Edinburgh,  
Scotland.**



I COULDN'T RISK LEAVING Gobi alone in China again. Also, she must have been hit by a car: in addition to the gash on her head, she had a painful dislocated hip and needed an operation. So Lucja and I decided I'd stay. I'd be with Gobi during the 30 days following the rabies shot, and then my little dog and I could do a three-month quarantine together in China and avoid her going through four months of that alone in the UK. I feared my employers would think I'd lost the plot, but they were again fully

supportive, refusing my offer to resign.

"I guess this is where we start our new life together," I told Gobi when it was decided. She stared back at me, big eyes locked on mine, just like during the race. I was convinced she was telling me that whatever the next adventure was, she was all in.

We relocated to Beijing, where I rented a small apartment. The rabies test came back negative, and then Gobi had her hip operation. She was up and about just days later. We spent lots of time outside, walking along

the canal on nice days. Gobi and I soon learnt that the best street-food stalls served *jianbing*, a crepe with egg inside. We couldn't get enough of those. We even found a cafe where the staff didn't mind us sitting at an outdoor table; for a city that generally doesn't allow dogs in taxis or buses, and has only since 2015 allowed guide dogs on subways, this was a major score.

Gobi seemed happier than ever, holding her head high, eyes bright. It was impossible to tell she'd recently been a stray. Sometimes I'd slip out to the gym or grocery store, but Gobi didn't like being left alone. Whenever I returned, she'd spin and sprint and yelp with pure excitement. I'd pick her up, and a deep calm would fall over her, just like at the river crossing.

Life in Beijing got tougher in November: that's when the government turned on the heat nationwide and pollution worsened. The apartment was a furnace, but I dared not open the windows and let dirty air in. We couldn't go for walks. The end of December couldn't come soon enough.

Finally, though, after four months of waiting in China, we could go home.

“**W**OW!” SAYS LUCJA as the three of us charge up Arthur's Seat, the steep grassy mountain dominating Edinburgh's skyline. “Look at her energy!”

It's my 42nd birthday—the day after Gobi and I arrived home—and the three of us are on our first run together. Gobi turns around, tongue out, eyes bright, chest puffed. She and Lucja had bonded the moment they met, and it's as if she understands exactly what Lucja had just said.

“You haven't seen anything yet,” I say, pushing the pace to loosen the strain on Gobi's leash. “She was like this in the Tian Shan mountains.”

Gobi is a true climber, and with every step we take, she's more alive. Soon her tail is wagging so fast it blurs, her body bouncing with joy.

This little dog has changed me in ways I think I'm only just beginning to understand. To be trusted so much by a living creature, and to be on the receiving end of that kind of love and devotion is a powerful thing.

Love. Devotion. Attention. Affection. Those all disappeared from my life for a whole decade when I was growing up. Now I was getting the chance to treat someone vulnerable in the way I wanted to be treated back then. In many ways, by finding Gobi, I've found more of myself.

Gobi turns again, pulling on the leash, and I swear she's grinning. *Come on! Let's go!*

Lucja and I look at each other and laugh as we run, enjoying the moment we've longed for: To be together. **R**

From the book *FINDING GOBI* by Dion Leonard with Craig Borlase. Copyright © 2017 by Dion Leonard. Reprinted with permission of Thomas Nelson.



PHOTO: NETFLIX

# THE WAY OF THE WORLD

BY *Sukhada Tatke*

**T**he latest novel by author **Anuradha Roy**, *The Earthspinner*, is a marriage of her two loves: writing and pottery. Set in a past that is relatively removed from now, it deals with themes of sectarian violence and religious intolerance, rendering it deeply resonant with the world of today. The novel is a haunting investigation into grief and loss and the need for creative impulse to rise above it all. Finally, *The Earthspinner* is about the fragility of the freedoms to live and love the way we want.

**This is your second novel with 'Earth' in the title. What is your relationship with Earth—the planet, and earth—the ground beneath our feet?**

That's such an unusual question. In this book, earth can be the small ball of clay in the potter's hand that turns into a bowl, or it can be the planet itself,

and its meaning expands and contracts infinitely within this span. The potter sees earth in one way, and the father, who is a geologist, thinks of it as something created over millennia. The title in *Folded Earth* refers explicitly to this aspect of the planet—that the Himalaya is quite literally created by the collision of one continent against another. I like this sense, in books I read or write, of a dimension beyond the human one, more mysterious, unknowable, transcending all that happens to the characters, connecting a gigantic planet with a little bit of soil from its surface.

**What was the seed for this novel? An idea? A character? A theme?**

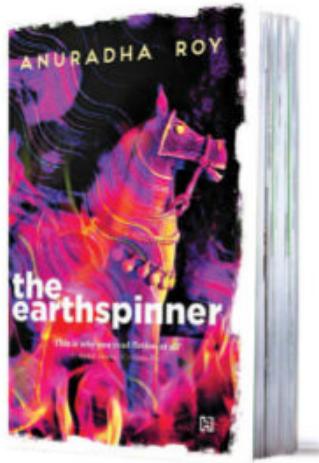
The book began with the horse. I had come across clay horses in my childhood—they are made in Bankura in Bengal. Later I discovered clay horses were also made in parts of south India

and when I read about the horse in Hindu mythology, I encountered a rich set of myths about a 'submarine horse' that roams the ocean floor. This horse and the clay ones felt connected.

**The Earthspinner is, among other things, a novel about creativity and the battle to keep it alive despite all odds. Is your creative process like that of Elango, the protagonist, where you give yourself fully and madly to what you're creating?**

Without the energy of obsession there would be no audacious artistic projects and if you don't feel obsessed, you might as well not do it at all—because then the odds will certainly defeat you. When creating his horse, Elango is up against all kinds of constraints—both quotidian, such as the availability of clay or the weather—as well as the more indefinable: Is his imagination up to the task? Does he have the strength and persistence for it? Is it worth doing at all? Will he lose heart or faith in his own idea? These are questions everyone making things—books or sculpture or pots—have to confront.

**Grief and loss are at the heart of this novel—a woman grieving the loss of**



**EVERYONE IS ALTERED BY LOSS, BUT YOU ARE NOT A PRISONER TO IT.**

**her husband or a potter grieving the loss of his dream. Are we, as humans, condemned to forever remain stuck in our silos of grief and losses?**

I don't think that humans are condemned in that way, and that is not what the novel is about either. As you say, many of the characters experience grief and loss. Loss is the other side of having anything, isn't it? I think loss, in the book, is like the water that one of the characters says forms limestone—"unnoticed in warm and calm seawater from sediments of shells and algae that remain in it as fossils". What I mean is that everyone is altered by loss, it changes your substance, it becomes a part of you, but you are not a prisoner to it.

**Dog, horse, owl, butterfly—fauna are central in the book. What is your relationship with them?**

I am fortunate enough to live on a hillside by a forest, so birds and animals are a part of my daily life. Woodpeckers, babblers, warblers, magpies, all visit to eat from the feeders I fill for them daily. They have vigorous baths in a shallow bowl of water kept for them. We use no pesticides, so it has a great deal of insect life—butterflies, hoverflies, bees and less

pleasant things such as scorpions, wasps and snakes. We are slaves to four dogs who rule our home. *Earthspinner* is partly about the hierarchies humans establish, in which they are at the top and animals are immaterial. This is imbecilic, and responsible for many of our current problems.

**Nature plays a very important role in your novels, including this one. Surely the climate crisis is weighing on you?**

It makes me feel as if I am watching the last act of a tragedy written by self-obsessed and greedy humankind decades ago. I would like to think there is still something we can do about the climate crisis, but honestly, I don't think capitalist and crony interests will ever allow the kind of action that is needed. Here in the mountains, you experience the crisis every day, in the incessant rain, sudden droughts, catastrophic landslides, falling trees. There is nowhere to run or hide. We are in a car with failed brakes, hurtling down a hillside.

**History and politics always play out in some way or another in your novels.**

**How do you approach your research?**

Too much song and dance is made of research when the real energy and force of fiction comes from its language, coherence, immersiveness, ideas. It's a bore to read books that wear their research too obviously, unless it is deployed with flamboyance and imagination, as in *Moby Dick*, for example. In my research, I try to absorb information

(from books, travel, interviews) and then write as if it is lived experience. I don't want any undigested information floating around or too much knowledge tacked on just because I discovered it.

**There are chilling similarities in the book with what's going on in India today—sectarianism, lynchings, religious animosity. Is there a difference between the segregated India of today and the one you came of age in?**

None of us can delude ourselves that things were peaceful, harmonious and joyful among communities and castes some decades ago—there has always been caste and religion-based violence. But the difference is that secularism and equality were something to be aspired to then. Now this dream has died.

**Like Elango, you are into pottery yourself. Do your two arts—writing and pottery—inform each other?**

There are any number of metaphoric parallels that can be drawn between writing and pottery. The way sludge and slop is transformed over many stages into a thing with shape, form, beauty, utility. Pottery has taught me about patience, persistence and handling failure stoically. Writing is a condition for me of being alive, and the way I decode the world for myself, but the process can be painful and complex. Making pots gives me much more immediate, sensory satisfaction. They are two completely different things and I couldn't do without either of them. 



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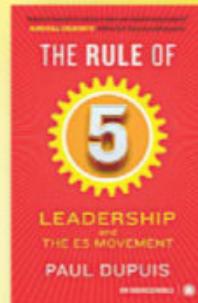
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## RD RECOMMENDS

# Films

**ENGLISH:** *Home Alone* films, especially those starring Macaulay Culkin, are things that make both Christmases and childhoods special. Streaming on Disney+ Hotstar from 12 November, **HOME SWEET HOME ALONE** takes the familiar trope of a boy protecting his home from dastardly intruders and casts it in a British setting. Archie Yates, who had announced his adorability in *Jojo Rabbit*, plays the lead.

**HINDI:** Films like *Let's Talk* and *Neerja* are proof that few filmmakers can build the kind of toe-curling suspense that Ram Madhvani does. Premiering on 19 November, **DHAMAKA** sees the director adapt



Archie Yates of *Jojo Rabbit* fame in *Home Sweet Home Alone*

the Korean thriller *The Terror Live* for Netflix. In it, we see news anchor Arjun Pathak (Kartik Aaryan) receive a call from a terrorist who says he'll strike at Mumbai's very heart. All hell breaks loose.

**TAMIL:** Based on real events that occurred in 1993, **JAI BHIM** tells the story of Chandru (Suriya), a lawyer who comes to champion

Dalit rights. Seeing that a young tribal man has simply disappeared after being arrested, Chandru tries hard to find him and bring his wife justice. Also starring Prakash Raj and Lijomol Jose, this gritty and urgent film will stream on Amazon Prime Video from 2 November.

**MALAYALAM:** Hill Top used to once be a grand



A still from the film *Jai Bhim* set to stream on Amazon Prime

hotel, and the pride of Ernakulam. The rundown property suddenly starts to feel less drab when a married couple—Pavithran (Nivin Pauly) and Haripriya (Grace Antony)—liven it up with their vigorous bickering. **KANAKAM KAAMINI KALAHAM** (releasing on Disney+ Hotstar on 12 November) is a quirky riot of a comedy that is being promoted as “a crazy, fun joyride”



The cast of the comedy flick *Kanakam Kaamini Kalaham*

## #WATCHLIST: ON OUR RADAR

**Special Ops: The Himmat Story Season 1.5:** The first season of *Season Ops* left us wanting to know what will happen next, but creator Neeraj Pandey has



Poster for *Special Ops 1.5*

decided to now tell us what happened before. Coming to Disney+ Hotstar on 12 November, this high-adrenaline prequel shows us how Himmat Singh (Kay Kay Menon) rose through the R&AW ranks. Aftab Shivdasani and Vinay Pathak will both play key roles.

**Tiger King Season 2:** Released last year, *Tiger King* made us want to cringe and binge. There was something both crude and compelling about American big cat owners like the



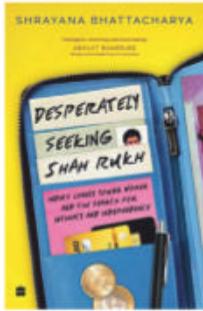
Joe Exotic from *Tiger King* season two

flamboyant Joe Exotic and his rival Carole Baskin. Season one showed us how Joe was jailed on charges of animal abuse and attempted murder. Out on Netflix on 17 November, season two of this docu-series continues his saga.

# Books

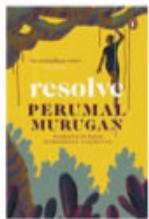
## ***Desperately Seeking Shah Rukh: India's Lonely Young Women and the Search for Intimacy and Independence* by Shrayana Bhattacharya, HarperCollins India**

If recent headlines are anything to go by, it seems clear that Shah Rukh Khan's stardom is predicated more on love than adulation. Not even the worst of scandals can shake it. Shrayana Bhattacharya can, perhaps, vouch for this. For 15 years, she travelled across India, speaking to women who turn to SRK in their times of turbulence and heartache. In Jor Bagh



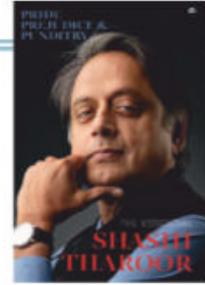
and Jharkhand, Khan offered both recourse and escape.

*Desperately Seeking Shah Rukh* tells the story of how generations of Indian women have seen in the actor the possibility of a friendlier masculinity. While, on one hand, it celebrates the actor's extraordinary 30-year career in Bollywood, it first documents the struggles of those who love him.



### YOU MAY ALSO LIKE ...

***Resolve* by Perumal Murugan (Penguin Hamish Hamilton):** Though in possession of good fortune (a piece of land), Marimuthu is still not able to find himself a wife. He is awkward, inward-looking and desperately lonely. Others might have used this premise to write a comedy of manners, but Perumal Murugan, expectedly, uses it to ask larger questions about agriculture, caste and gender. Translated from the Tamil by Aniruddhan Vasudevan, this novel is comic on the surface, but savage at heart.



### Scope Out

***Pride, Prejudice and Punditry: The Essential Shashi Tharoor* (Aleph):** This book collects the best of the five million-odd words that Tharoor has published in books, newspapers, magazines and online.

***You Can't Be Serious* (Simon & Schuster):** In this candid memoir, Kal Penn writes about his remarkable journey, one that has included acting, writing, working as a farmhand and teaching Ivy League courses.

***The Horizon* (HarperCollins India):** Gautam Bhatia further explores the themes of freedom, violence and fear in this sequel to his fast-paced, stylish and confident science-fiction debut novel *The Wall*.

# Music

## TUNE IN

**Song:** 'Kudi Nu Nachne De'

**Artists:** Shilpa Rao ft. Anurag Naidu

Covers can sometimes be hard to get right. While they, of course, feel familiar—the songs they render are usually popular already—it is a challenge for them to hit a note that the original hasn't. Composed by Sachin-Jigar and sung by Vishal Dadlani, 'Kudi Nu Nachne De' was an apt anthem for the 2020 film *Angrezi Medium*. The tune instantly made you want to groove; the lyrics made you think.

In her version, Shilpa Rao strips away the song's elaborate production, using Anurag Naidu's piano as her only instrument. The clicking of fingers sometimes gives her performance an a cappella touch.

Surprisingly, even this pared down



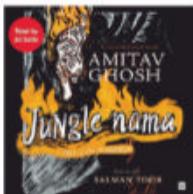
**Jamshedpur-born singer Shilpa Rao**

rendition retains the pep we have always identified with the track. When heard without much accompaniment, Rao's raspy and rounded voice forces you to listen to the words of the song, realizing fully its feminist potential. This cover is rousing, yes, but also reformative.

## LISTEN

### AUDIOBOOK:

Amitav Ghosh's **JUNGLE NAMA**, a book written in verse, rightly deserved an in-



ventive audio-book. Rather

than a straight-up narration, Ali Sethi has, thankfully, also given the book a wonderful score.

**PODCAST:** On **THE MICHELLE OBAMA PODCAST**, we hear the former First Lady



engage her family, friends and colleagues

in conversations about life, love and other emotions that make us who we are.

—COMPILED BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

## REVIEW

# Decoding the Burari Mystery

A new documentary shows some secrets are always taken to the grave

BY *Jai Arjun Singh*

Of the many talking points around the 2018 Burari case—the one where a family of 11 committed mass suicide in their Delhi home—what true-crime aficionados should find fascinating is how efficiently the whole thing was done. Especially given that the proximate cause seemed to be the mental illness of a family member who convinced the others he was getting instructions from a deceased patriarch.

Where the actions of so many people are coordinated, missteps usually follow: someone has a last-minute change of

heart, another makes too much noise, a mother's resolve weakens—things get messy. Yet here the entire family, including two teenage boys and a young woman soon to be married, ended up dead in a crowded neighbourhood, after performing a late-night ritual on the terrace.

This is one of the mysteries that the Netflix docu-series *House of Secrets*, created by Leena Yadav and Anubhav Chopra, can't address beyond a point, though it does a scrupulous job of providing all the pertinent information. The facts are laid out non-gratuitously—interviews with police,

shell-shocked neighbours and distant family; video footage from a party two weeks earlier; and diaries revealing a history of spiritualism.

Such a case sparks a discussion on many important things: mental health crises, the nature and myriad pressures of the joint family structure. At the same time, as psychologist Rachana Johri (one of the show's more poised talking heads) points out, straightforward answers may not exist at all. Ultimately this could be one of those rare, outlying cases that can teach us very little—and that might be Burari's biggest horror. **R**

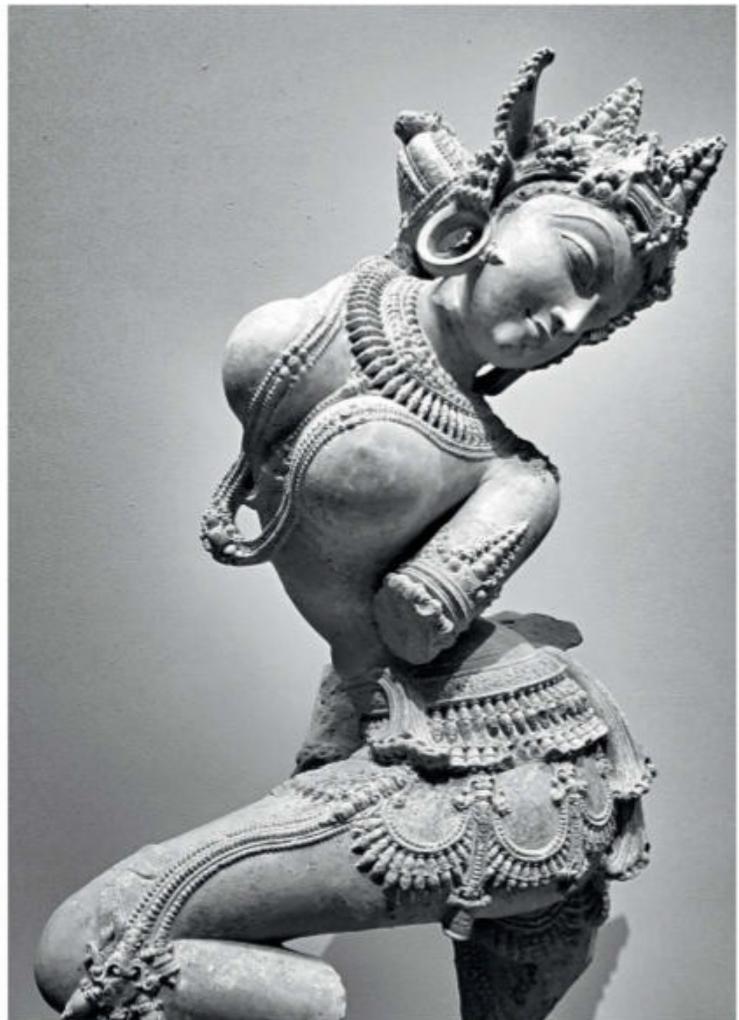



**STUDIO**
***Celestial Dancer***

By William  
Dalrymple

Digital print on  
Photograph, 2021  
24 X 17 inches

HAVING authored books such as *The White Mughal* and *The Anarchy*, William Dalrymple, one would assume, must have first come to India to follow a late Mughal or British colonial trail. Strangely, though, it was ancient India—the Ajanta caves, Buddhist sites like Sanchi and temples in the south—that became his starting point. *The Golden Road*, Dalrymple’s next book, has taken him back to the start of his India obsession—artistic and cultural leaps the country took between



200 BC and 1200 AD.

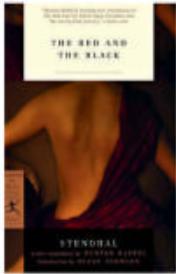
A proficient photographer, Dalrymple took along his camera when he travelled to research for *The Golden Road*. Showcased as an exhibition in Delhi’s Vadehra Art Gallery last month, his photographs of Chalukya temples and Pallava sculptures are all striking, but

there is one picture that stands out in particular. On display at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is an 11<sup>th</sup> Chandela sculpture of a celestial dancer. Much like her improbable pose, Dalrymple helps exaggerate her impossible beauty. **R**

— BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

## ME & MY SHELF

Rahul Raina is the author of *How to Kidnap The Rich*. He divides his time between Oxford, England, where he runs his own consultancy, and Delhi, where in the down season, he teaches English and works for charities for disadvantaged children..



### **The Red and the Black** BY STENDHAL,

*Modern Library, ₹504*

The original social satire, con-artistry *bildungsroman*, this novel—set in a country in psychological

and social crisis—has thrilled, moved and appalled readers from its very first publication to this day. Julien Sorel is a hero who has been copied, mimicked, stolen—but never bettered—by a hundred authors, since Stendhal.

### **The Count of Monte Cristo**

BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS, *Om Books, ₹395*

Slow-burn revenge, meticulously described. Brigands, treasures, bankers, villains, money beyond measure, kindly priests, and that most beautiful of plots—the innocent turned cold-hearted avenger. Is this the most pleasurable novel of all time? It's certainly the most copied, adapted, stolen-from. And the original self-help book too.

### **If Tomorrow Comes**

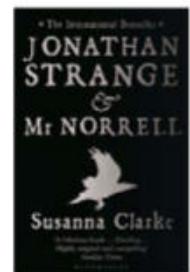
BY SIDNEY SHELDON, *HarperCollins, ₹399*

I think all Indian middle-class families have a copy of this or another Sheldon somewhere on their shelves. Who can argue with a hundred million books sold? Tracy Whitney is framed by the mafia for a crime she didn't commit and sentenced to 20 years in jail. It only gets more compelling from there.

### **Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell**

BY SUSANNA CLARKE, *Bloomsbury Press, ₹699*

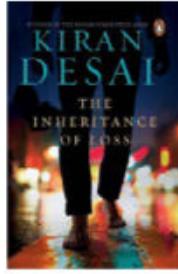
Magicians, aristocrats, Austenian chicanery, tart archness, love, loss, friendship and genuinely terrifying nightmarish elfin creations. It has everything you want in a book—especially footnotes. All books should have footnotes. All books should be about competing magicians. Actually, all books should be this.



## The Inheritance of Loss

BY KIRAN DESAI,  
*Penguin, ₹399*

Indian literary fiction can sometimes pale with age. What seemed fresh, artful and exciting a decade ago can seem tame pabulum today. International audiences can sometimes champion work that annoys us as Indians. Desai's work will never suffer this way. Her third novel may never come out, but no matter. She has given us the world already.



## Fingersmith

BY SARAH WATERS, *Virago, ₹800*

Show me one person who read this book and doesn't love it, and I'll show you a heartless, tasteless, gutless human being. The plot is a chocolate box of twisty, mazy, sweet delights, the villains are shocking and brilliant. And the descriptions! Bollywood must adapt this for film. We shall all benefit.

## The Quincunx

BY CHARLES PALLISER,  
*Ballantine Books, ₹2,006*

This is a 1,200 page book you can read in two days. I certainly read it in two days, one frosty British Christmas. Utterly mesmerizing with a gorgeously nested, labyrinthine, puzzle-box of a plot. 19<sup>th</sup>-century inheritance law has absolutely no reason to be this interesting. This is the (faux-) Victorian book every Indian shelf should have contained when I was growing up.

## Tales from the Kathasarit-sagara

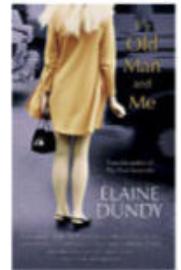
BY SOMADEVA, *Penguin, ₹350*

Indians have been telling stories for centuries. They bind us together and drive us apart; they show us the world has changed, and that the world has never changed. Somadeva was a Kashmiri who lived a thousand years ago. The importance of his stories is utterly timeless and will continue to shape and inform every Indian writer, even if they do not know it.

## The Old Man and Me

BY ELAINE DUNDY,  
*Virago, ₹399*

Unfairly ignored but now thankfully back in print and loved by generations anew, Dundy's wonderfully cynical, beautifully amoral book about revenge, social-climbing and post-war hijinks still shocks, amuses and enraptures. It's extremely funny and scabrously witty—the sort of book I wish I could write about India today.



## A Murder is Announced

BY AGATHA CHRISTIE,  
*HarperCollins, ₹299*

Short, sharp and brilliant from beginning to end. It shows that Christie was the foremost humorist, social novelist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as its best crime writer. The freshness of her sardonic savagery and skewering of social types is something no half-baked all-star adaptation can dull. Are we sure that Agatha wasn't secretly Indian? **R**



# SIXY SUDOKU

**1**

**How to play:**  
 Insert the numbers 1 to 6 just once in each a) row, b) column, c) bold outlined area and d) white or grey rectangle.

**2**

**3**

Example

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

**4**

**5**

**Beware!**  
 The bold outlined areas are no longer 2x3!

**6**

For answers, turn to page 128.

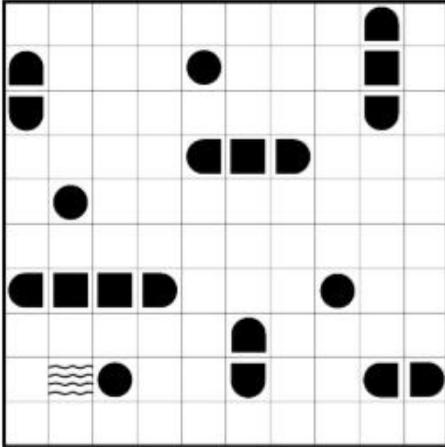
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# BRAIN TEASERS SOLUTIONS

FROM PAGES 126 & 127

## Ships



## Star Search

2	★	1			
★		3	2		1
3	★	2	★	★	
★		2		4	★
2				2	★
1	★	1			

# SIXY SUDOKU SOLUTIONS

**1**

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

**2**

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

**3**

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

**4**

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

**5**

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

**6**

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


**WORD POWER**

**Grab your safety goggles** and fire up your Bunsen burner—we're heading to science class with terms related to chemistry, biology and physics. If you feel out of your element, don't worry; the words are also used outside the lab. After your pop quiz, take a quantum leap to the next page for answers.

BY Sarah Chassé

**1. hypothesis** *n.*

(hi-'pah-thuh-sis)

- A published study
- B unproven theory
- C law of motion

**2. combust** *v.*

(kum-'bust)

- A burn
- B fuse
- C shatter

**3. vacuum** *n.*

('vak-yoom)

- A air pump
- B unit of measure
- C empty space

**4. dilute** *v.* (di'-loot)

- A split in half
- B water down
- C apply force

**5. crucible** *n.*

('kroo-sih-bull)

- A pot for heating
- B simple machine
- C volcanic rock

**6. evolve** *v.* (ih-'volv)

- A die out
- B change gradually
- C pass down

**7. nucleus** *n.*

('noo-klee-iss)

- A bodily fluid
- B observation
- C cell part

**8. hybrid** *n.*

('hi-brid)

- A clone
- B hatchling
- C crossbreed

**9. inert** *adj.* (ih-'nert)

- A explosive
- B inactive
- C poisonous

**10. velocity** *n.*

(vuh-'lah-sih-tee)

- A speed
- B friction
- C pressure

**11. vertebra** *n.*

('ver-tuh-bruh)

- A green metal
- B back bone
- C reptile family

**12. pathogen** *n.*

('path-uh-jen)

- A invasive species
- B disease's cause
- C plant spore

**13. inquiry** *n.* (in-'kwy-ree)

- A reaction
- B thesis
- C investigation

**14. symbiotic** *adj.*

(sim-bee-'ah-tik)

- A oxygen-rich
- B interdependent
- C evidence-based

**15. variable** *n.*

('vair-ee-uh-bull)

- A math equation
- B colourless gas
- C changeable factor



## Weird Science

Science has countless branches, many with names ending in *-logy* or *-ology*, meaning 'study', from the Greek *logos* (word). Among the lesser-known specialties: oology (the study of birds' eggs), koniology (dust), dendrochronology (tree rings) and ichnology (fossil footprints). And for those who really want to get down and dirty, there's scatology, the study of ... well, excrement.

### Word Power ANSWERS

#### 1. hypothesis

(B) *unproven theory*

The professor designed an experiment to test her hypothesis.

#### 2. combust (A) *burn*

"Oh no," Ben cried on Christmas. "Our turkey combusted in the oven!"

#### 3. vacuum

(C) *empty space*

Adopting a rescue dog has filled the vacuum in Geena's life.

#### 4. dilute (B) *water down*

You should dilute bleach before using it to disinfect surfaces.

#### 5. crucible

(A) *pot for heating*

"For this experiment, we'll melt aluminum in a crucible," Ms Saikia told her students.

#### 6. evolve

(B) *change gradually*

Experts believe that some dinosaur species evolved into birds.

#### 7. nucleus (C) *cell part*

A cell's nucleus contains its genetic information, or DNA.

#### 8. hybrid (C) *crossbreed*

The clementine is a hybrid between the mandarin and the sweet orange.

#### 9. inert (B) *inactive*

Medications often include inert ingredients, such as dyes.

#### 10. velocity (A) *speed*

As the league's top wide receiver, Chetan is known for his velocity and ball handling.

#### 11. vertebra

(B) *back bone*

I will never go ice skating again—the last time I went, I fell and cracked a vertebra!

#### 12. pathogen

(B) *disease's cause*

Bacteria, fungi and viruses are all types of pathogens.

#### 13. inquiry

(C) *investigation*

"My conclusions are based on scientific inquiry, not on personal opinion," said Dr. Lee.

#### 14. symbiotic

(B) *interdependent*

Today's teenagers have a symbiotic relationship with social media.

#### 15. variable

(C) *changeable factor*

Meteorologists consider a lot of variables when predicting the weather.

### Vocabulary Ratings

**9 & BELOW:** pat on the back

**10–12:** above the norm

**13–15:** high mark



## QUIZ

BY *Samantha Rideout*

- 1.** Even during a power outage, food-crop seeds would remain safely frozen in the Global Seed Vault, located where?
- 2.** What is generally considered to be the first science-fiction film?
- 3.** What major sports tournament requires players to dress in white, to minimize the visibility of sweat marks?
- 4.** What collectible plastic-brick toy sets can sell for thousands of dollars and have even become targets for thieves?
- 5.** On average, how much time passes between two high tides?
- 6.** Anne Bonny and Mary Read were notable 18<sup>th</sup>-century women because of their occupations as what?
- 7.** Residents of Chumbivilcas, Peru, celebrate Christmas by challenging each other to what?
- 8.** Every human has wisdom teeth. True or false?
- 9.** What's the biggest wild cat native to the Americas?
- 10.** For what movie did Jordan Peele receive the Oscar for best original screenplay, becoming the first Black screenwriter to win that category?
- 11.** Which of the following countries does not recognize dual citizenship: China, Turkey or Denmark?
- 12.** What kind of wine is often sold to support breast-cancer awareness?
- 13.** He inspired the idea of 'short man syndrome', but roughly how tall was Napoleon in reality?
- 14.** Until 2018, what popular and spicy German street food had a museum dedicated to it in Berlin?
- 15.** In 2000, Canadian psychologists published a tongue-in-cheek paper diagnosing Winnie the Pooh and his friends with disorders. According to the paper, Piglet clearly suffers from what?



**Answers:** 1. Svalbard, Norway. 2. Georges Méliès' 'A Trip to the Moon' (1902). 3. Wimbledon. 4. Lego. 5. Roughly 12 hours and 25 minutes. 6. Pirates. 7. Fist fights. 8. False. Increasingly, people are born with no wisdom teeth under the gums at all. 9. The jaguar. 10. Get Out. 11. China. 12. Rosé. 13. 168 to 170 centimetres, which was average in France at the time. 14. Currywurst (curry sausage). 15. Generalized anxiety disorder.

# QUOTABLE QUOTES

If you're lonely when you're alone, you're in bad company.

Jean-Paul Sartre, *philosopher*

**As much as I live I shall not imitate them or hate myself for being different to them.**

Orhan Pamuk, *author*

It takes courage to say yes to rest and play in a culture where exhaustion is seen as a status symbol.

Brene Brown, *academic*

**Is the country free? If daughters are disappointed in the country, they are unhappy, Put your hand on your heart and say is the country free?**

Kamla Bhasin, *activist and author*

ALAMY (3), RAMESH SHARMA



Jean-Paul Sartre

Brene Brown

Orhan Pamuk

Kamla Bhasin



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PAR AAPKE LIVER  
KO NAHI!**



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