



VITEEE 2021
B.Tech. Admissions
LAST DATE TO APPLY **20th MAY**

**ONLINE REMOTE
PROCTORED EXAM DATES
28th, 29th & 31st MAY**



VIT[®]
Vellore Institute of Technology
(Deemed to be University under section 3 of UGC Act, 1956)

VITALIZING YOUR FUTURE



₹44 lakh

Highest Annual CTC offered in 2021

8840**

Placement offers from 642 companies

5211**

Total number of students places

**For 2021 batch and counting

300+

International Partner Universities
(Europe, America, Asia, Australia etc.)

ITP

INTERNATIONAL TRANSFER PROGRAMME

2 years at VIT

2 years at a Partner University Abroad

SAP

SEMESTER ABROAD PROGRAMME

Final Semester at Partner University



**Vellore and Chennai Campus



*Inclusce of Internship offers

42 Diverse UG Engineering Programmes under the faculty of

- Biotechnology • Chemical Engineering • Civil Engineering • Computer Science and Engineering • Electrical and Electronics Engineering • Electronics and Communication Engineering • Fashion Technology • Mechanical Engineering

Option for minor credentials in emerging areas:

- AI • Machine Learning • Robotics • Data Science • Cyber Security • IoT and more...

www.vit.ac.in ugadmission@vit.ac.in FOR ENQUIRIES +91-416-220-2020 • TOLLFREE No. 1800-891-4220



Reader's Digest

MAY 2021

₹100



**FIND YOUR
HAPPY
PLACE**

**Great Philosophers
Show You How to
Conquer Despair**



BONUS READ
"Let Us
Meet on
the Bridge."

HEALTH

**COVID-19:
What's New
and What's Not**

**Dynamic Duos:
Food Pairings That
Boost Your Health**

RD CLASSIC

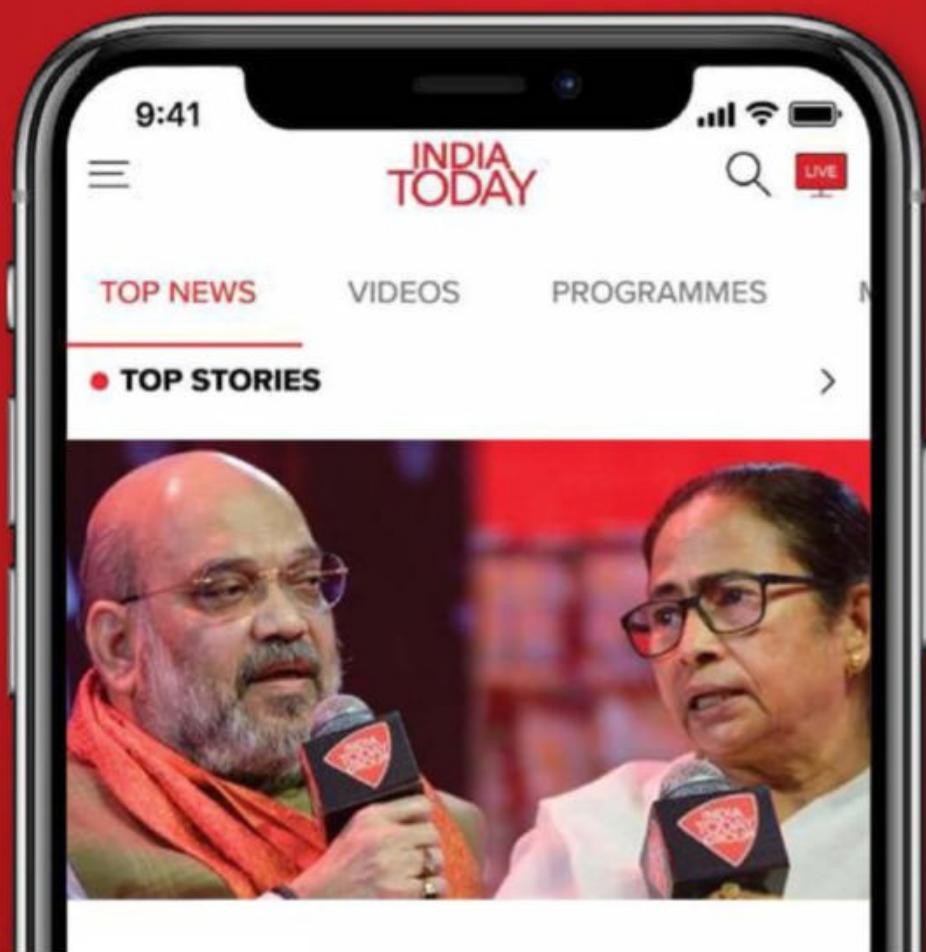
**An Unforgettable
Mother's Day Gift**

DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

**Don't Go
into the
Volcano!**

INDIA
TODAY

We tell the story
Not the moral of the story



DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

AVAILABLE ON



INDIA
TODAY

HIDDEN STORIES SURFACE

ONLY ON GROUND ZERO



Get all sides of the elections

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

AVAILABLE ON



Garmi mein ghol do RoohAfza ka mazaa

Garmi ka mausam saath laya hai
aapki favourite drink, RoohAfza
Toh phir se gholiye apni zindagi
mein RoohAfza ka refreshing
taste, aur iske herbs ki thandak
bhari taazgi jo de aapko ek
anokhaa ehsaas.




ROOH AFZA
Ghulke Jiyo

To know more about us, call on our
toll-free number **1800 1800 600**

[f/hamdardroohafza](#) [t/RoohAfzaIndia](#) [#GhulkeJiyo](#)

www.hamdard.com

Ab RoohAfza sachet mein bhi, sirf ₹10 mein 35ml.

CONTENTS

Features

40

COVER STORY

MAKING ARISTOTLE YOUR LIFE COACH

How the great philosophers can teach you how to live.

BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

52

HEALTH

Dynamic Duos

10 powerful food pairs that team up to deliver a bigger health boost.

BY RD EDITORS

58

DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

Don't Go into the Volcano!

A newlywed couple's honeymoon hike to a jungle crater goes terribly wrong.

BY NICHOLAS HUNE-BROWN

70

HUMOUR

Bring Back the Handkerchief!

A much ridiculed habit finally finds its moment.

BY SCOTT TUROW

74

RD CLASSIC

A Gift for Mama

Cards or flowers can be perfect Mother's Day

presents—except for this unusual Mum.

BY HELENE MELYAN

80

BONUS READ

"Let Us Meet on the Bridge"

Their heart broke when a government mandate forced them to save their infant daughter's life by giving her up. But they never stopped loving her.

BY ROBERT KIENER



ILLUSTRATION BY MARK SMITH



8 **Over to You**

79 **World Wide Weird**
BY SUZANNAH SHOWLER

Conversations

IN MY OPINION

12 **If Not Now, When?**
BY KALPISH RATNA

SMILE

16 **Telepathy With ... My Dog?**
BY PATRICIA PEARSON

GOOD NEWS

20 **A Tool for COVID-Safety and Help for the Stranded**
BY ISHANI NANDI

POINTS TO PONDER

22 **Arundhati Roy, Harsh Mander, Olivia Munn and Rosa Luxemburg**

IT HAPPENS ONLY IN INDIA

24 **The Kindness of Thieves and the Power of Blind Faith**
BY NAOREM ANUJA

Better Living

26 **How to Fine-Tune Your Metabolism**
BY COURTENAY SMITH

HEALTH

32 **Covid 2.0: What You Need to Know**
BY DR CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA

I AM THE FOOD ON YOUR PLATE

36 **Tea: A Symbol of Health and Revolution**
BY KATE LOWENSTEIN AND DANIEL GRITZER

NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF MEDICINE

38 **Stress and Dental Health, Pain After COVID-19 and Stronger Bones for Vegetarians**

(ABOVE) SHUTTERSTOCK; (BELOW) CRAIG CUTLER/TRUNK ARCHIVE

Culturescape

INTERVIEW WITH SHEFALI SHAH

96 **In a League of Her Own**

BY SUHANI SINGH

RD RECOMMENDS

100 **Films, Watchlist, Books and Music**

REVIEW

104 **The Path of the Artist**

BY JAI ARJUN SINGH

STUDIO

105 **Ram Kumar's Untitled**

(**Banaras Ghat**)

BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

ME AND MY SHELF

108 **Taran N. Khan's Favourite Reads**

Brain Games

110 **Brainteasers**

112 **Sudoku**

113 **Word Power**

115 **Quiz**

116 **Quotable Quotes**



Humour

10

Humour in Uniform

31

Laugh Lines

50

All in a Day's Work

66

Laughter, The Best Medicine

94

As Kids See It

106

Life's Like That

96



On the Cover

COVER BY *Nilanjan Das*

Find Your Happy Place: Great Philosophers

Show You How to Conquer Despair 40

Bonus Read: "Let Us Meet on the Bridge." 80

RD Classic: An Unforgettable Mother's Day Gift 74

Drama in Real Life: Don't Go into the Volcano! 58

COVID-19: What's New and What's Not 32

Dynamic Duos: Food Pairings That Boost Your Health 52



PHOTO: (LEFT) NETFLIX; NANTONOV/GETTY IMAGES, ILLUSTRATION BY JENNIFER KLEIN

Reader's Digest



VOL. 62 NO. 5
MAY 2021

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Aron Purie
VICE CHAIRPERSON Kalli Purie
GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Dinesh Bhatia
GROUP EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Raj Chengappa
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Manoj Sharma

EDITOR Kai Jabir Friese
GROUP CREATIVE EDITOR Nilanjan Das
GROUP PHOTO EDITOR Bandeep Singh
SENIOR ASSISTANT EDITOR Ishani Nandi
FEATURES EDITOR Naorem Anuja
CONSULTING EDITOR Shreevatsa Nevatia
EDITORIAL COORDINATOR Jacob K. Eapen

ART DIRECTOR Angshuman De
ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR Vikas Verma
CHIEF OF PRODUCTION Harish Aggarwal
ASSISTANT MANAGER Narendra Singh

SALES AND OPERATIONS

SENIOR GM, NATIONAL SALES Deepak Bhatt
GM, OPERATIONS Vipin Bagga

IMPACT (ADVERTISING)

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER Anil Fernandes
MUMBAI: SENIOR GM (WEST) Jitendra Lad
BENGALURU: GM Upendra Singh
KOLKATA: DEPUTY GM (EAST) Indranil Chatterjee

BUSINESS

GROUP CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER Vivek Malhotra
GM, MARKETING & CIRCULATION Ajay Mishra
DEPUTY GM, OPERATIONS G. L. Ravik Kumar
AGM, MARKETING Kunal Bag
MANAGER, MARKETING Anuj Kumar Jamdegni

Reader's Digest in India is published by: Living Media India Limited (Regd. Office: K9, Connaught Circus, New Delhi) under a licence granted by the TMB Inc. (formerly RDA Inc.), proprietor of the Reader's Digest trademark.

Published in 46 editions and 17 languages,
Reader's Digest is the world's largest-selling magazine.
It is also India's largest-selling magazine in English.

TRUSTED MEDIA BRANDS, INC. (FORMERLY RDA INC.)

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Bonnie Kintzer
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINES Bonnie Munday
FOUNDERS: DeWitt Wallace, 1889–1981; Lila Acheson Wallace, 1889–1984

HOW TO REACH US

MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS/CUSTOMER CARE: Email subscription.rd@intoday.com **Mail Subscriptions** Reader's Digest, C-9, Sector 10, Noida, UP—201301. Tel: 0120-2469900 **Toll-free No** 1800 1800 001 (BSNL customers can call toll free on this number) **For bulk subscriptions** 0120-4807100, Ext. 4361 For change of address, enclose the addressed portion of your magazine wrapper. **ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES: Phones** Mumbai: 022-66063355 Chennai: 044-28478525 Bengaluru: 080-22212448 Delhi: 0120-4807100 Kolkata: 033-22825398 Fax: 022-66063226 **Email** rd4business@intoday.com
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Email editor.india@rd.com **CORPORATE/EDITORIAL: Address** Reader's Digest, India Today Group, 3rd Floor, Film City 8, Sector 16A, Noida, UP—201301; **Phone:** 0120-4807100. We edit and fact-check letters. Please provide your telephone number and postal address in all cases.
Facebook: www.facebook.com/ReadersDigest.co.in **Instagram:** @readersdigestindia **Twitter:** @ReadersDigestIN
Website: <https://www.readersdigest.in/>

© 2016 Trusted Media Brands, Inc. (Reader's Digest editorial material). © 2016 Living Media India Ltd. (Living Media editorial material). All rights reserved throughout the world. Reproduction in any manner, in whole or part, in English or other languages, is prohibited. Printed and published by Manoj Sharma on behalf of Living Media India Limited. Printed at Thomson Press India Limited, 18–35 Milestone, Delhi–Mathura Road, Faridabad–121007, (Haryana). Published at F-26, First Floor, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001. Editor: Kai Friese (responsible for selection of news).



LUPIN LIFE
BE ONE



**BE READY
EVERY DAY**
WITH THE POWER OF
AYURVEDA



BUILDS IMMUNITY
PROVIDES ENERGY



Be One has the power of 8 natural actives with adaptogen formula. In today's hectic lifestyle it provides energy, helps build immunity and enables you to stay active every day. It is a scientifically tested, complete supplement for a healthy mind and body.



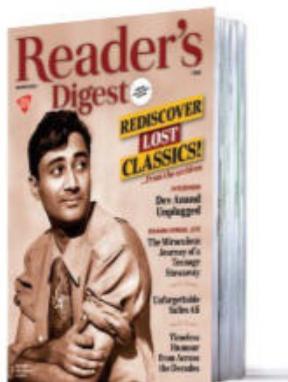
ASHWAGANDHA

SHILAJIT

SHATAVARI

OVER TO YOU

NOTES ON THE
March ISSUE



Rediscover Lost Classics

This issue took me back to 1959, when as a ninth standard boy, I held my first copy of *Reader's Digest*. Our postman had delivered the copy—an American edition—sent by my pen friend Leonard Wilfred from New York, all the way to Manapad, Tamil Nadu. For several years he would mail his copies to me after he was done reading them. Reading the March '21 edition, my heart went out to Leonard who introduced me to this magazine, and to my mother and sister who helped me read and understand the stories since I was not very conversant in English at the time. Each of them transformed my world.

—THARCIUS S. FERNANDO, *Chennai*

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

The Year I Won The War Against Cigarettes

Though written in 1964, this story still makes for an interesting read as little has changed when it comes to nicotine addiction. I was a smoker for 42 years till the present pandemic hit. I have been off cigarettes for more than a year now and agree that the most difficult part is to find enough motivation to kick the habit. The ease of availability of cigarettes certainly doesn't help. The revenue earned by governments at the cost of citizens' health must take a backseat if a healthy nation is to be created. Till this happens we will have to keep devising new ways to kick the butt!

ATUL KUMAR SAXENA, *New Delhi*

This story reminded me of my own struggle to quit smoking. Succumbing to peer pressure, I became hooked to nicotine in medical college. And like most smokers, from one puff I graduated to a pack a day in a few months. The disapproval of my family did little to deter me. One day, almost 25 years later, I experienced a dull ache in my chest during a leisurely morning walk. Following the health scare, I told my doctor I'd do anything to avoid surgery. He yelled, "Quit smoking, then!" I did, then and there. Now at 66 years, I feel happier and healthier than ever before.

DR ASHWANI KUMAR MALHOTRA, *Ludhiana*

The Best Advice I Ever Had

Konrad Adenauer's counsel even though written nearly a decade before my birth still stands as 'the best advice I ever heard'

Life is no doubt strewn with difficulties but quitting a job midway results in frustration. We must persevere till the last mile to fulfill our dreams. Though a good start is a job half-done, it is only by powering through to the end that we reap the rewards.

GOUTAM KUMAR
BHADURI, *Cooch Behar*

Forever Dev

My face lit up with joy upon seeing the March cover. From queuing up to catch Dev Anand's movies in theatres as a child to reading *Guide* cover to cover in college, I have been a die-hard fan of this evergreen star. Like his innumerable fans, I too tried to copy his amazing mannerisms. I even tried to style my hair like he did. The best compliment I have ever received from my wife is when she said, "You look like Dev Anand, but even skinnier".

BHUSHAN CHANDER
JINDAL, *Mumbai*

The Remarkable Life and Work of Salim Ali

Dr Salim Ali was a pioneer in the field of ornithology, who inspired the generations of naturalists. A champion of biodiversity, he believed preserving nature was in the best interests of mankind. He stressed on adopting a multidisciplinary approach, where he blended history, ecology and geography in descriptions of birds and their habitats.

Before his death, he remarked that his work was just the tip of the iceberg and much remains to be done in this field of study.

ASHOK AGGARWAL,
via email

This story reminded me of a chapter on Dr Ali in my class 9 Hindi text-book by Jabir Hussain. Driven by the urgency to decode the complex construction of sentences and to cram the chapter for forthcoming tests, I didn't really pay attention to the

man that chapter was all about. But, after reading this article and revisiting my old text-book, I can say that Salim Ali, the man who spent several decades interacting with nature, has been a precious contributor not only to BNHS, but to zoology as well. Kudos to such lifelong dedication.

DEEPALI JANI, *New Delhi*

Stowaway in the Landing Gear

Mr Socarras's story of a teen's daring escape from Cuba is quite thrilling and inspiring. Everyone should have the right to personal liberty and if these freedoms are denied, they should fight for them in every way possible.

MEET CHANDRANI,
Mumbai

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

HUMOUR *in*
UNIFORM



My brother-in-law Dayton, a Marine Corps captain, was invited to a reception hosted by his commanding officer and his wife. Dayton was new to the base, so the CO's wife took it upon herself to introduce him to other officers. However, she was having trouble remembering his first name.

"It's Dayton," my brother-in-law said. "Just like the city in Ohio."

That helped tremendously, because the next person she introduced him to, she said, "I want you

to meet Akron."
—JAN ALDERMAN

In boot camp, we're trained to respond to a sergeant with such phrases as, "Here, sergeant. Yes, sergeant. No, sergeant." Well, maybe not all of us.

One day in formation, after the sergeant yelled one recruit's name, the recruit

"Well, if your allies said that about you, then they're not your allies."

responded with a simple "Here!"

"Here what, recruit?" the sergeant shouted back.

The recruit answered, "Here I am!"

—RICHARD GURO

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

UNIQUE
AMAZING
APPLIED
PROFOUND
STRATEGIC
LEARNING

Jain (Deemed-to-be University) offers real time, job-ready programs and an academic rigour that places you among the best talents in the country. You can choose from a wide array of over 100 programs in innovative and emerging areas which are peer-assisted, blended and interactive. Whether it is technology, sciences, business, sports or the arts, the faculty and staff are highly experienced and qualified to lead you towards your best. The curriculum and pedagogy are hands-on, distinctive and contemporary. You will be challenged to be enterprising and think independently. Whether it is examining the minute details in forensic sciences or strategizing the future of a multinational business, Jain (Deemed-to-be University)'s inter-disciplinary programs and its extensive industry networks give you an ideal opportunity to excel in your chosen area of academic interest.



Awarded graded autonomy status
by University Grants Commission



Ranked 91 - 95
Among the top Indian Universities
by QS India University Rankings 2019



Awarded Grade A
by the National Assessment
and Accreditation Council



Awarded 5 stars under the Young Universities category
in Karnataka
by KSURF ICARE



Ranked 86 under Management and 115 under Engineering category
by NIRF National Ranking 2019



A global community
15522 Students from
38 Countries



5500+ On-campus placements
in leading MNCs
and blue-chip companies



07 Dedicated research centers



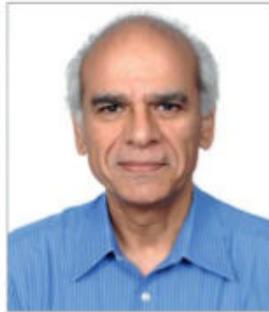
Incubated 40 ventures
and created
100 entrepreneurs

CONVERSATIONS

If Not Now, When?

As the country and its healthcare infrastructure reels from its biggest public-health crisis, what can we do?

BY Kalpish Ratna



Omnishambles. That is the only word for COVID India 2021. There is no point in stating the obvious, so I'll pitch my voice above the panic and chaos to ask: What will we do about it?

A replay of 2020 just won't work. Our strategy last year, like the rest of the world's, was along trusted lines of quarantine and isolation. Trusted, that is, to fail. It could not, would not and did not contain a respiratory virus in 2020—just like it could not, would not and did not contain the Black Death

in 1385, when this hoary strategy was thought up. Yes, travel is faster in the 21st century than it was in the 14th, but there is more than that to account for the rapid spread of SARS-CoV-2. It is worth looking at these hidden factors now, and to find ways to redress them. The past year proved how useless our efforts to contain this disease have been. Isn't it time for ingenious innovation?

The terms 'virus' and 'disease' are not synonyms. But in common parlance, they are confusingly interchangeable. Viruses are ubiquitous, and it is naïve to suppose that you can block them out. It is impossible to contain a virus. It is, however, very possible to contain the disease.

The disease is our response to infection by the virus. Infection can pass unnoticed. COVID jargon has bilked us from understanding its vocabulary.



We declaim in airy terms like ‘waves’ and ‘curves’ but refuse to admit how predictions all through 2020 fell flat. They were based on a presumed knowledge of the dynamics of this disease. A hollow presumption, as we are only now beginning to understand how this disease works.

It is possible to be infected and not experience disease—‘asymptomatic.’ Infection may cause a mild illness, experienced as fever, cough or abdominal discomfort and diarrhoea. It may also cause severe illness that can kill.

How is India doing?

Last year’s case fatality rate was 1.3 per cent in March 2020. This year, it is relatively lower: 0.87 per cent. Daily deaths are more worrying: 3,619 per day across the country as of 5 May—and predicted to rise. The ‘number of cases’ is fallacious. Testing is sporadic, and as it becomes more frequent, more

‘positives’ are recorded. Not all ‘positives’ are sick. What we need is more transparency about the numbers of severe illness. This perilous state is one we have brought upon ourselves by ignoring key factors that spell the difference between life and death. Those key factors are entirely within our control.

I spent 2020 the way most doctors did. I read, questioned and tracked down every bit of research as it emerged. It was evident COVID-19 was more than the devastating epidemic pneumonia that emerged in Wuhan in December 2019. We knew all about the virus, but were learning something new about the disease each day. Although its primary focus was the lungs, every body organ seemed vulnerable. The damage was caused by uncontrolled and uncontrollable inflammation, the result of a disordered immune response to SARS-CoV-2. It was amply evident that

COVID-19 was not just about the virus. It was about the coronavirus and us. People whose health was impaired by conditions with a disordered inflammatory process were most severely affected by COVID-19. So too were the elderly. Partly because older people have a higher proportion of inflammatory diseases and also because ageing itself causes a heightened inflammatory response.

What were these diseases that increased vulnerability to COVID-19? They are so common we call them 'lifestyle' diseases. Heart, liver, kidney disease, diabetes, arthritis—and their common denominator, obesity. Over the past year, we have reduced these to a convenient label: comorbidities. Unfortunately, that's all it is, a label.

Common sense dictated that medical attention for these illnesses must be prioritized. We didn't do that. Instead, policy decisions herded us into a Planet Pajamaville to augment these illnesses from a lack of exercise and unwise food habits. The result? COVID-19 today has many more sitting ducks in its cross hairs than it did last year. Most deaths this year are from this vulnerable group. USA's CDC analysis shows 94 per cent of people who died of COVID-19 had at least one comorbidity. Cohort studies from the UK show a

linear increase in people with a high Body Mass Index, especially among young victims of COVID-19.

In January 2020 we noticed the striking association between air pollution and the outbreak of COVID-19 in Wuhan. The skies cleared and at the same time the epidemic retreated.

COVID-19 is primarily a respiratory disease. The lungs are the killing field. To anybody who studies air pollution, it was evident that serious disease was linked to a poor AQI. It was

**PUBLIC
GATHERINGS
DURING COVID-19
PUT MILLIONS OF
LIVES AT RISK.
THEY ARE CRIMES
AGAINST
HUMANITY.**



an inconvenient truth and was predictably ignored. Only recently have scientific papers explored and validated this observation. India has the world's worst AQI and we have persistently, pathologically, ignored it.

Physical distancing is the only measure that has helped so far, and what have we

done? Yes, we have masks, but what about propinquity? Can you ensure a 6-foot-gap in a panicked crowd at a railway station? At political rallies? At the mêlée during the Kumbh Mela? All these are superspreader events: not only is the virus transmitted madly, it also mutates exuberantly into more infectious avatars. Public gatherings in the time of COVID-19 have put millions of lives at risk. They are crimes against humanity.

There is a lot each of us can do to

reverse this situation into a more manageable one. Start with the understanding that our body is equipped already to fight off COVID-19 if we don't meddle with its strengths. We can do that by cleaning up the air in our immediate vicinity. Stop smoking.

Do not permit bonfires of garbage.

The airway has a wonderful defence system in place. Mucus entraps particles and sweeps them upwards and away from the lung by the ceaseless activity of microscopic brushes called cilia. This partnership must be allowed to function undisturbed. Mucus does not have to be hawked and spat, it has a job to accomplish. It must be kept supple and fluid by good hydration. Cilia are temperamental—they function best at body temperature. Inhaling steam injures them. Yet most people fumigate their airways with hot steam and smoke from various gums rich in irritant terpenes. Agarbatti, camphor, eucalyptus—the list is endless. Steer clear of them all.

Immunity is more easily spelt than described. It cannot be 'boosted' by nostrums domestic or international. But commerce is booming—from detergents that promise to wash away the virus to black market drugs to oxygen to ghoulish gouging at crematoria. There is always big money in disaster.

THERE IS NO DRUG WORKS THAT AGAINST COVID-19. LUCKILY, WE HAVE VACCINES WITH A GOOD RECORD OF PREVENTING SERIOUS ILLNESS.

Add to this medical misinformation. There is no drug that works against COVID-19, no anti-viral tablet, no homeopathic or Ayurvedic potion, no amount of tulsi, turmeric or cow's urine.

Luckily, we have vaccines with a good record of preventing serious illness.

Till everyone of us is vaccinated, we must think our way out of this crisis. Governments must enlist the armed forces—not to menace, but to help in humanitarian work. Begin with the dignified disposal of the dead.

Treatment must be decentralized. Unnecessary drugs are life-threatening, and to date, not a single drug has any effect on COVID-19. And certainly asymptomatic 'positives' don't need any medication.

Panic and terror shift the body's response to a stance that lowers immunity, so we must arm ourselves with intelligence instead. We must think ourselves out of this crisis. Infection may be inevitable, but illness is not. Till the vaccine reaches all of us, healthy living is our best defence. If not now—when? 

Surgeons Kalpana Swaminathan and Ishrat Syed write together as Kalpish Ratna. Their book A Crown of Thorns—The Coronavirus & Us was published in August 2020. A Pandemonium in Pakshila is due later this year.

SMILE



Telepathy with ... My Dog?

BY *Patricia Pearson*

I CAN COUNT A dozen friends, all in their 50s, who inexplicably reacted to the global pandemic by adopting a puppy. Actually, I did, too. Last year, paralyzed in the house, afraid to leave without donning a hazmat

suit, I was suddenly consumed by the urgent desire to acquire a seven-week-old Australian shepherd. This craving will no doubt be the subject of a future study on irrational pandemic behaviour. For one thing, this breed

is one of the most energetic on the planet, whereas I am bookish, lazy and middle-aged. And I had taken this route before—with mixed results.

My trouble with dogs is that I never have the remotest clue what they want, and they never seem to have the slightest inkling what I'm saying to them. This domestic impasse became legendary in my family when we had a dog named Kevin. He was a cross between a border collie and a basenji, which means that half of him descended from the smartest breed and the other half from, easily, one of the stupidest. He was highly alert, yet unable to grasp a single thing. Kevin's entire communicative repertoire—whether he wanted food, exercise, permission to jump on the sofa, a toy or, who knows, a conversation about the electric bill—consisted of padding up to me and staring. He did this about 50 times a day, just staring brightly without moving a muscle, and after years of living together I still didn't know what he wanted. We coexisted in a state of profound mutual incomprehension.

"Sometimes I think," I wrote in my journal, "it doesn't matter that I don't know what he wants, because we have nothing in common. Whatever he wants will be something I don't want. He probably wants me to go outside and chase squirrels. I don't want to."

My husband would let Kevin stare

at him until his eyeballs fell out and not worry about it. He took Kevin for walks, fed him and let him sleep on the bed. Done. But as a mother, I was wired to worry about how everyone was feeling.

So, one evening I left Kevin at home and, with about 20 other confused pet owners, attended a workshop led by a pet telepathist whom I hoped would explain the trick to reading Kevin's mind. She was a former bureaucrat who apparently had the revelation that she wasn't meant to file tax reports because *she knew what pets were thinking*. She arrived for the class carrying a slim grey cat, whom she introduced as her assistant. The cat soon shot into a closet, where he remained for the next two hours.

"Moose is going to be invisible for a while, but that will help you get used to communicating with pets at a distance," our instructor assured us, beaming. We nodded, awaiting a message from Moose, such as "Get me the hell out of here." In the meantime, our teacher explained what she knew about animal communication.

"The thing that animals want most in their life is to be heard," she said, sitting on a desk and swinging her legs, "especially the birds. They really have a lot to say because they travel around the world." Um, what? "Don't analyze; don't edit," she warned, about receiving messages. "Just be

willing to say, "That was real."

She had us divide into pairs. The woman beside me was to tune in to Kevin, who was at home sniffing about, and I was to pick up her cat's thoughts. We both looked horrified, which suggested our shared insecurity about this. But we'd paid our money. So I offered that her cat was ... under the bed ... and wanted to go out? She countered that Kevin was ... lying in front of the fireplace ... and also wanted to go out.

We reported our findings to the class, feeling like a pair of Pinocchios.

Back home, my husband suggested

"KEVIN IS HAPPY WITH HIS ROLE IN LIFE," THE PET TELEPATHIST REPORTED.

I contact the instructor for a personal consultation with Kevin. "Let them go mano a mano," Ambrose urged. "Just her and him." I couldn't resist.

When I introduced the telepathist to her subject, he was conked out on our dining room floor making snuffling sounds. I asked her what he was thinking.

"He says that you, as a family, should lighten up," she reported. Otherwise, she said, Kevin is happy with his role in life: to be a teacher to us, to help us connect with our

energies, "and to receive messages from him." *This is just a vicious circle*, I thought. *What messages?*

My husband interrupted: "Ask Kevin who killed our nephew's gerbil—him or Biscuit?" (Biscuit was my sister's psycho-frisky golden retriever, who couldn't be in a room two seconds without knocking something over. She drove my sister bananas.)

Undaunted, the telepathist asked the deeply asleep Kevin if he was responsible for a certain gerbil's corpse appearing beneath my nephew's bed the previous summer. Then she looked at me. "Kevin says it was sad, it happened very fast, but his back was turned at the time." Upon hearing this, Ambrose had to go outside and bray with laughter.

Meanwhile, she offered to tune in to Biscuit, because maybe Kevin was evading responsibility. Moments later, she announced that yes, Biscuit had killed the gerbil, "and she's not sorry."

I thanked the pet telepathist and ran to call my sister at work. "BISCUIT DID IT—AND SHE'S NOT SORRY!" My sister laughed so hard she fell off her chair.

This became a widely shared tale in the family, so everyone is preparing to be amused by how I fare with our new pup. So far, the fact that I've been training Ellie while wearing a mask hardly improves the odds. **R**



AWARDED THE QS RANKING FOR E-LEARNING EXCELLENCE FOR ACADEMIC DIGITISATION

is proud to receive



The Highest Benchmark of **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE, PLACEMENTS & RESEARCH**

for its following programmes

Computer Science Engineering • Mechanical Engineering
Electronics & Communication Engineering



DON'T MAKE YOUR DREAMS SMALLER. MAKE YOUR STRIDES BIGGER.

BE IRREPLACEABLE

ADVANTAGES OF NBA ACCREDITED PROGRAMMES

- Most Organizations/Recruitment Agencies prefer to hire students from NBA Accredited programmes
- Students aspiring for PG courses abroad will be preferred as NBA is recognized under Washington Accord and Degrees are accepted at par with world's reputed Universities
- Students from NBA Accredited programmes are eligible for Scholarships under different schemes of Central/State Government

RANKED AMONGST TOP 200 UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA IN 2020
RANKED AMONGST TOP 100 PHARMACY COLLEGES IN 2020 IN INDIA



RANKED AMONGST TOP 18 PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA BY TIMES ENGINEERING RANKING, 2020

RANKED NO. 3 PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN UP BY INDIA TODAY GROUP SURVEY 2020

RANKS AND SCORES OF GENERAL UNIVERSITIES (PRIVATE)

UNIVERSITY	RESEARCH & INNOVATION	ACADEMIC & FACILITIES	INDO-INTERNATIONAL & LIFELONG LEARNING	PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP	OTHER RESEARCH & PLACEMENTS
BARUCH COLLEGE OF FOOTBALL, New York	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
SHARDA UNIVERSITY, Greater Noida	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
CHITRAMBA UNIVERSITY, Pondicherry	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
ARUNACHAL UNIVERSITY, Imphal	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
GALGOTIA UNIVERSITY, GREATER NOIDA	91.7	91.6	91.6	90.9	91.4
SHRI RAM UNIVERSITY OF BIOTECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, India	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0



Congratulations to our students who have got selected with **amazon** for internship and a package of **₹30.5 lacs** on conversion of full time role

	<p>BWR A* (Star) Grading (Uttar Pradesh) at the State Level in Education</p>	<p>QS GLOBAL RECOGNITION</p>	<p>5 STARS Galgotias University is one of India's few Multi-disciplinary Universities with a 5 Stars QS rating in Teaching & Facilities.</p>	<p>RANKED NO. 3 PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN UP BY INDIA TODAY GROUP SURVEY, 2020</p>	<p>RANKED NO. 6 AMONG PRIVATE LAW SCHOOLS IN UP RANKED NO. 4 IN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES AMONG PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN UP</p>
			<p>TIMES ENGINEERING RANKING 2019 RANKED NO. 1 IN PLACEMENTS AND NO. 1 IN RESEARCH CAPABILITY</p>		<p>RANKED NO. 4 AMONG PRIVATE BBA COLLEGES IN UP BY INDIA TODAY BEST COLLEGES SURVEY, 2020</p>

			<p>400+ COMPANIES</p>	<p>2000+ OFFERS IN 5 MONTHS</p>			

CALL 0120-4370000, +91 9582847072, 9810162221

f /GalgotiasUniversity @/Galgotias_University t /GalgotiasUni ✉ admissions@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in

For the complete list of programmes offered & to apply for fully online admission process visit: www.galgotiasuniversity.edu.in

SCAN HERE TO APPLY





Arpit Kumar (right) and his brother Abhijeet have been granted a patent (image on left) for their Contactless Temperature and Distance Measuring device.

GOOD NEWS FOR A *Better Planet*

A Tool for COVID-safety

INNOVATION With the second wave of COVID-19 spreading across the country, physical distancing has become more important than ever. To help people practice this necessary precaution two high-school students from Patna—Arpit Kumar, and his brother Abhijeet Kumar, from the Bihar Bal Bhawan Kilkari are doing their bit by developing a unique alert device that measures and alerts the bearer if anyone with a higher than normal body temperature is close by. The device, called Contactless Temperature and

Distance Measuring, is as big as a badge and can be pinned on one’s clothes. The brothers developed the innovation, which works on infrared sensitivity, over four months during last year’s lockdown. With the institute’s help, they have registered the device with a government agency and received a patent certification this year.

Meals for Ailing Folk

GIVING When a family member tested positive for COVID-19, sisters Anupama, 32, and Neelima Singh, 26, and their mother Kundan Devi witnessed first hand how difficult it can be for ailing folk to prepare their own meals while isolating at home. The trio began preparing and sending meal packets from their home in Patna’s Rajendranagar for patients who reach out to them through social media. Neelima rides as far as 15

km a day to deliver the food. “We have dedicated all our savings, which were kept for marriage, anniversaries and birthday functions for the next year, to continue serving free food to COVID-19 patients,” Anupama said.

Help for the Stranded

COMMUNITY In December 2020, France abruptly banned all travelers and freight from the UK after the discovery of a new COVID-19 variant. The fallout? Hundreds of Europe-bound transport-truck drivers were stranded on a British motorway en route to cross the English Channel.

Two local Sikh groups—a branch of the NGO Khalsa Aid and the Guru Nanak Darbar temple—quickly leapt into action, and, in the pouring rain, delivered 500 free chickpea curries and 300 mushroom-and-pasta dishes to drivers who, in some cases, ended up being marooned for a week.

“If we see a need,” says Jagdev Singh Virdee, the temple’s general secretary, “we fill the gap, and go beyond.”

“Before I Go ...”

SERVICE Rafique Siddiqui, the principal of Holy Mother School in Malwani, Mumbai, was desperately trying to locate an oxygen cylinder for the COVID-positive husband of one of his teachers who was having trouble breathing. High demand for medical oxygen due to a massive uptick in COVID cases in the country made the

quest an uphill task but he knew one person who could help. His friend, 54-year-old event decorator Pascol Saldhana, would likely have a spare oxygen cylinder since his wife Rozy was diagnosed with kidney failure five years ago and her critical condition required a robust medical setup at home. 51-year-old Rozy immediately agreed to share her spare cylinder with the patient, despite her own health issues, thus saving a life.

Her desire to help did not stop there. As Maharashtra, like many other states, faced diminishing supply



Pascol and Rozy Saldhana

of oxygen cylinders, Rozy sold her jewellery to raise ₹80,000 and purchased more oxygen cylinders to help others who could not afford one for themselves. The family has so far helped six people procure oxygen free of cost and continue to attend to similar requests for help. “I do not know how long I will live. But before I go, I want to help as many people as possible,” Rozy tells *The Better India*.

—COMPILED BY ISHANI NANDI, JASON MCBRIDE

POINTS TO PONDER

Feminism and femininity are not mutually exclusive ... men's grooming is never suspect in the way women's grooming is ... A woman, on the other hand, is always aware of how a bright lipstick or a carefully-put-together outfit might very well make others assume her to be frivolous.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *author*

You wanna talk mental health? Let's talk about how there's a mental-health crisis about living in a country that attacks you just for being you.

Olivia Munn, *actor*

Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution ... only the bureaucracy remains as the active element.

Rosa Luxemburg, *philosopher*

FROM LEFT: ALAMY (3)



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Olivia Munn

Rosa Luxemburg

For millions of people, 'wealth' amounts to little more than a few weeks' wages in a ... low-interest savings account, a car and a few pieces of furniture. The inescapable reality is this: wealth is so concentrated that a large segment of society is virtually unaware of its existence, so that some people imagine that it belongs to surreal or mysterious entities.

Thomas Piketty, *economist*

A dispassionate external observer would be bewildered by middle-class India's capacity to look away when confronted with enormous injustice and suffering; by our society's cultural comfort with inequality. That the accident of where a child is born still determines her chances in life almost irrevocably.

Harsh Mander, *social activist*

What we need today, for the sake of the survival of this planet, is long-term vision. Can governments whose very survival depends on immediate, extractive, short-term gain provide this?

Arundhati Roy, *author*



Thomas Piketty

Harsh Mander

Arundhati Roy

It Happens
ONLY IN INDIA



“Ok. We like her. We accept the match”

For God’s Sake

As if a sea of maskless crowds jostling for divine providence at the Haridwar Kumbh, tempting the fury of both fate and COVID-19 wasn’t triggering enough, our elected representatives continue to spout dubious assertions, tragically illustrative of India’s COVID-19 management

policy. Instead of aiming for damage control or scientific temper, UP BJP leader Sunil Bharala appeared on TV to proudly proclaim that (a) he was COVID-positive; (b) he attended the Kumbh and (c) superspreader events must be held as “faith is above COVID protocols”.

Faith is a powerful

thing, providing both strength and solace to believers but as our young and old gasp for breath, maybe it’s for the best if the honourable MLA saves his.

Source: NDTV

Beat The Retreat

Along with complicity in promoting pseudo-science, lax attitudes displayed by leaders

in charge and no accountability for the deluge of bodies, we found another low to add to this macabre list. As hospitals in Indore were battling oxygen shortage, a tanker filled with 30 tonnes of medical oxygen supplied by Industries to the city's hospitals were held up by PWD Minister Tulsi Silavat, MP Shankar Lalwani, MLA Akash Vijayvargiya and the BJP's city president Gaurab Ranadive for almost two hours for photos. The tanker was stopped at Chandan Nagar Chowk, decorated, a puja duly performed, and then was it sent on its way, only to be stopped again at MR-10 for another photo opportunity. With criticism pouring in, Ranadive has contended that the tanker wasn't stopped "even for five minutes", although there is video evidence circulating on social media.

We just want to know if along with abdication of duty, is dissolution

of empathy the new normal?

Source: timesofindia.com, republic-world.com

COVID Conscience

As our political leadership sits atop a virus apocalypse, and black market profiteering in medical supplies abounds, India's moral bankruptcy is showing. But, looks like all isn't lost on the compassion front. Petty thieves are now setting the moral bar—in Haryana's Jind district, over 1,270 doses of Covishield and 440 doses of Covaxin vaccine were stolen from a government hospital only to be returned within hours with a handwritten note stating, "Sorry, did not know that this is corona medicine". Things are truly dire if those whose job description is to break the law for personal profit feel the need to rally and do the right thing.

Source: *The Hindu*

Religion No Bar

If doomscrolling and daily news updates

about the Indian health-care system atrophying weren't enough to swing you into adopting COVID-19 appropriate behaviour, we might just have the last straw. Self-styled god-man Nithyananda, supreme leader of 'country' Kailasa has issued a 'Presidential mandate' imposing a ban on travellers from India, along with those from Brazil, the European Union and Malaysia from entering the island due to the coronavirus surge. Affairs are indeed bleak on the pandemic-side of things if a largely uninhabited country created by "dispossessed Hindus from around the world who lost the right to practice Hinduism authentically in their own countries" isn't allowing citizens of a Hindu-majority country inside its borders.

Source: indiatoday.in 

—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



BETTER LIVING

How to Fine-Tune Your Metabolism

*Adjusting over time
will help you stay
thinner—and healthier*

BY Courtenay Smith

DANIELLE PAYTON'S METABOLISM was a mystery for most of her adult life. When she was 18, she weighed 75 kilos, which made little sense to the five-foot-four-inch high-school shot-put champ. "I was a very healthy eater—coming from a family of pescatarians and vegetarians—and an athlete, and I couldn't lose a single kilo," says Payton.

Just before college, she was diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), which causes imbalances in the hormones that regulate both the reproductive system and metabolism. That solved part of the mystery—women with PCOS are prone to weight gain. But Payton continued to struggle. By the time she turned 24, she weighed 95 kilos and had developed prediabetes. Her search for a solution became more focussed and urgent. "I had to find food and exercise that worked for my body," says Payton, who lives in Miami and is cofounder of *kuudose.co*, an online fitness and wellness programme. For her, that meant giving up processed and fried foods, eating more animal protein, doing short daily bouts of walking (30 minutes) and strength training (5 to 15 minutes), and taking a probiotic supplement. She also takes doctor-prescribed medication for PCOS (metformin/spironolactone), which seems to help keep her weight in check. It took her four years, but Payton ultimately lost about 40 kilos and now is fairly steady at 55. "Mentally, I

am tougher because of this process of standing up for my body and figuring out what worked for me," she says. "No one knows your body like you do, and listening to your body is crucial."

Most of us have heard that a good metabolism is the golden ticket to weight loss, but that seriously underplays metabolism's role in our bodies and in our health. Simply put, metabolism is the energy used by the physical processes that keep us alive. We burn up to 80 per cent of daily calories while at rest (referred to as basal, or resting,

KEEPING YOUR BODY RUNNING EFFICIENTLY MIGHT BE EASIER THAN YOU THINK.

metabolism) by breathing, digesting, maintaining circulation and more. But while that fact inspires comparisons of your metabolism to a fire-burning furnace, it's really more like a busy city transit system, delivering the right mix of chemicals to the right cells at the right times to extract energy from food and keep the whole machine (i.e., your body) running seamlessly. That's why the first sign of a troubled metabolism may be the faltering of one of these systems manifesting as rising insulin, cholesterol or triglyceride levels or fat deposits around your waist—all markers of metabolic disorder, which

heralds a higher risk of diabetes, heart disease, or stroke.

But your biggest risk—the ‘most universal contributor’ to metabolic decline according to an article co-written by Nir Barzilai, MD, director of the Institute for Aging at the Albert Einstein School of Medicine—is ageing. Ageing naturally causes metabolic decline and also makes us more likely to require medications to address issues such as high blood pressure or depression that could slow metabolism. While there’s obviously no fix for ageing, you can learn to fine-tune your metabolism as your body changes over time, priming it to deliver the right mix of hormones, much as Payton did. “Find what works for you—then do it consistently,” she says. Here are some of the best small changes in habit that can help you make strides in boosting your metabolism.

Watch the Sunrise

“Simply basking in early morning rays can increase your metabolism naturally,” says Ken Ceder, executive director of the non-profit Science of Light. That’s because our circadian rhythms, or master body clocks, regulate the hormones crucial to metabolism and hunger control, including insulin, cortisol and leptin. Our circadian rhythms work best when in sync with the sun, receiving bright light in the morning and diminishing rays toward sundown. To get your daily dose, spend at least 15 minutes every morning outdoors

in sunlight, without sunglasses so the sun reaches your eyes’ photoreceptors. (Don’t stare at the sun; you will get the benefits passively.)

Safeguard Your Sleep

Sleep is the reset button for your metabolism. Prepare your brain for bedtime by dimming the lights a few hours beforehand—turn off bright overheads and turn on bedside lamps equipped with warm or amber-toned bulbs. Also, “if your slumber is constantly interrupted by light snoring, then you are missing out on calorie-burning benefits,” says Bindiya Gandhi, a family medicine doctor in Decatur, Georgia. The fix may be as simple as using a breathing strip on your nose to help open constricted sinuses at night. (Just ask your doctor whether you should be tested for sleep apnoea, since snoring is a common sign of the serious disorder.)

Try Intermittent Fasting

If changing your diet is too overwhelming, try a form of fasting. A 2020 review in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* concluded that intermittent fasting regimens can be a promising way to lose weight and improve metabolic health. There are many approaches, such as overnight fasting (don’t eat between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m.) or the 5:2 method (eat about 25 per cent of usual calories two days a week). Ask your doctor first. Trying it even once or twice may jump-start other healthy habits.

Track Your Water Intake with Rubber Bands

Try this easy system: In the morning, put five rubber bands on your wrist. Every time you drink 16 ounces (two cups) of water, take off a band and put it on the bottle. German researchers found that metabolic rate jumped by 30 per cent for up to 40 minutes in 14 volunteers after they drank 16 ounces of water. The researchers estimated that over a year, increasing your water consumption by two cups a day could burn an extra two kgs or so. Since much of the increase in metabolic rate is due to the body's efforts to heat the liquid, make sure the water you're drinking is icy cold.



JOLEEN ZUBEK, ILLUSTRATION BY MARIA AMADOR

Feed Your Gut

“Healthy gut bacteria optimize your metabolism by helping your body extract nutrients from your diet more effectively,” says Amy Gorin, MS, RDN. A daily serving of probiotic-rich foods such as yoghurt, kefir and unpasteurized sauerkraut might help, though so far studies have been inconclusive on the total benefits. Yoghurt has an added advantage—dairy foods may lower the risk of metabolic disorder, according to an analysis in the British *Journal of Nutrition*. Preliminary studies have found that some probiotic strains help with weight loss (*Lactobacillus rhamnosus*) and body fat reduction (*Lactobacillus amylovorus*). “Ask your health-care provider about a probiotic supplement,” recommends Gorin.

Quash Cravings with Protein

A number of well-documented studies show that high-protein diets may help adults lose weight while maintaining lean muscle mass (one of the main drivers of a naturally high calorie burn), according to a 2020 analysis in *Nutrition*. Protein also unleashes a cascade of metabolic signals from the gastrointestinal tract to tell the brain that it's full. However, long-term high-protein diets can be harmful to the kidneys, so consult your doctor.

Don't Detox

Severe, long-term calorie restriction doesn't work, because your metabolism is mainly determined by your

body composition—the more muscle mass you have, the more calories you burn throughout the day. “When you lose weight quickly, your body is breaking down its muscle mass,” says Susan Berkman, RD, of the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. “When you resume eating normally, your metabolism is slower than when you started the plan because you have less muscle.” Result: You gain fat.

Chill Out—Literally

Cold weather is one of nature’s most powerful metabolic boosters, helping increase your levels of brown fat—the type that burns more calories even when you’re at rest. “Going outdoors in cold weather can increase your non-exercise activity thermogenesis (NEAT) score, helping you torch calories,” says Kristen Koskinen, a registered dietitian nutritionist in Richland, Washington. “The metabolic act of staying warm is an easy way to boost your metabolism without breaking a sweat.” Taking a cold shower (or finishing a steamy one with a cool rinse-off) might also give your metabolism a quick boost by forcing your body to shiver—which

requires energy (and calories)—to warm up. But since the long-term effects on weight loss are unclear, you’ll have to decide whether the torture is worth it.

Curl Up on the Couch with a Book

Wait—being a couch potato can help your metabolism? If you’re totally relaxed, then yes. “Stress increases the level of the hormone cortisol, which can cause metabolic dysfunction if it’s constantly elevated,” says Gandhi. The cure is to do something daily that will help you completely de-stress, whether that’s watching a movie, taking a long bath or reading a book.

Sweeten the Deal with Cinnamon

In test tubes, cinnamaldehyde—the compound that gives cinnamon its flavour and smell—spurred human fat cells to burn extra fat. In animals, a regular dose has been shown to help control blood glucose. Human studies are scant, but it can’t hurt to slay a sweet craving by stirring a dash into coffee, oatmeal, yoghurt or a smoothie. **R**

With additional reporting from *thehealthy.com*



The Feline Mystique

Cats are absolutely obsessed with being just out of reach.

The illusion of access. The original celebrity.

@MUNA_MIRE

LAUGH LINES

I'm afraid of being murdered only because they would record my stomach contents.

—[@elunatyk](#)

Saw some idiot at the gym put a water bottle in the Pringles holder on the treadmill.

—[@MIKhanX](#)

Fries should be offered more often, like, "Yes, your mortgage was approved. Would you like fries with that?"

—[@SentenceReduced](#)

Doctor's orders say 30 crunches a day... That's an awful lot of chocolate, but I guess I can give it a shot.

—[@wx388](#)

Once heard a guy climbed Everest "because it was there" and just feel like the reason for one of the most strenuous feats in existence should be different than the reason I ate an entire gallon of ice cream.

—[@TheAndrewNadeau](#)

If I eat healthy today, then I can have one piece of candy as a reward. If I eat unhealthy, I can have the whole bag.

—[@gigglegirlNoel](#)



In the Junk Food Folder

NANTONOV/GETTY IMAGES, ILLUSTRATION BY JENNIFER KLEIN



HEALTH

COVID 2.0: What You Need to Know

One year into the pandemic, we've learnt a lot about the coronavirus, but new questions have emerged. Here are answers to some of the more pressing ones

BY Dr Chandrakant Lahariya

SUN TZU, THE MILITARY general from ancient China is credited with the quote “Know thy enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles, you will never be defeated.” By now we have understood a lot about both the virus, SARS-CoV-2, the disease, COVID-19, as well as who is most vulnerable, but in recent months, there have been a few developments. New strains of the virus have been reported and a new route of transmission has been confirmed. Many COVID-19 patients have suffered plummeting oxygen saturation levels. COVID-19 vaccines have been licensed and are being administered.

What do these developments mean for us? What steps should one take to protect oneself? Do we need additional measures? How effective are the vaccines? How long will I be protected once I get my jab? Understanding each of these can help us protect ourselves from the pandemic that has laid the world so low.

Has the virus changed?

Different parts of the world have reported a few new strains of SARS-CoV-2. This is a natural phenomenon among viruses. Every time a virus multiplies, errors—called mutations—creep in during the replication process, which results in changes in its transmissibility (ability to pass to others), infectivity (ability to cause disease) and/or immune escape (ability to avoid detection by the human immune

system). The more a virus circulates, the higher the probability of mutations. Once a virus with mutations begins to circulate and affect a population, it is termed a new strain or variant.

Globally, since the start of pandemic, nearly 200 new strains have been identified but only a select few—the UK (B.1.117), South Africa (B.1.351) and Brazil (P.1) strains—are cause for concern. In India, new strains called double mutant (mutations at two different places; scientifically named B.1.617) and triple mutant (three mutations in same strain; B.1.618) have been identified. Although these have been circulating in several Indian states, scientists and epidemiologists are still determining whether Indian strains lead to increased infectivity, transmissibility or immune escape.

At the individual level, measures to protect oneself from the new or old strain remain unchanged: face masks (consider double masking), physical distancing and regular hand sanitization are still the best ways to shield oneself from contracting this illness.

Does it spread differently?

In early 2020, COVID-19 was believed to spread through droplets from our mouth and nose, but in a few months, scientists discovered early evidence that the virus was airborne. While there was insufficient data at the time, a recent study in medical journal *The Lancet* published new evidence that, whereas droplets are still the main mode of

transmission, COVID-19 does spread through the air as well.

Being airborne does not mean the virus circulates in the air and can enter through the windows of your house and infect a person. This new evidence suggests that breathing in the same air that a COVID-infected individual has exhaled into in the last 30 minutes can result in passing-on of infection.

This has implications on the use of shared spaces—a common bathroom shared with an infected individual, or stairs and elevators in multistorey buildings with limited ventilation may increase the risk of transmission.

This new understanding mandates increased cross-ventilation in shared spaces as well as correct mask use—with both nose and mouth covered—in any place outside your home, every time. Consider anything outside the entrance of your house as a public space. It would be better to double-mask in crowded places or areas with higher risk of transmission such as a COVID testing centre, hospital or marketplace.

Do all COVID-19 patients need supplemental oxygen?

COVID-19 initially attacks the lungs but other organs are also affected. The core function of human lungs is to maintain blood oxygen saturation, which usually remains at 95 per cent or higher. However, as the disease progresses, lung function deteriorates and blood oxygen saturation starts to fall. Every COVID-19 patient is at risk of low oxygen satura-

tion but the most vulnerable are people above 60 years and anyone of any age with comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity or chronic lung, heart and kidney diseases.

Monitoring of one's oxygen saturation with the help of a pulse oximeter is recommended for every person who has tested positive for COVID-19. Oxygen levels at 93 per cent or below, shortness of breath or sudden onset breathlessness should be seen as red flags. If this happens, consult your healthcare provider who will determine and advise hospitalization based on various criteria that categorizes the illness as mild, moderate or severe.

If one faces delays in receiving medical attention, supplemental oxygen can be administered at home, and lying in the 'prone position'—face down with pillows below the neck, chest and legs—can improve oxygen saturation levels in the interim. Those with oxygen levels of 94 per cent or higher receive no added benefit from these methods.

Are COVID-19 vaccines effective?

Two vaccines, Covishield and Covaxin have already been in use in India since January 2021 while a third vaccine—Sputnik V—has become available here this month. The vaccines help to protect one from severe forms of the disease and reduce the risk of death.

Covishield, a viral vector vaccine jointly developed by Oxford University and AstraZenaca is administered in two doses, and currently recommended at



VACCINATIONS WILL BE CRITICAL IN REDUCING MORTALITY AND THE RISK OF CONTRACTING SEVERE FORMS OF COVID-19.

a gap of six to eight weeks. The efficacy of this vaccine—the reduction in risk of severe disease among those who have completed their vaccination compared to those who have not—has been reported to be 53 to 79 per cent, depending on the gap between doses. The longer the gap, the higher its efficacy.

Covaxin, an inactivated or killed viral vaccine, was jointly developed by Bharat Biotech and Indian Council of Medical Research, New Delhi. Its two doses are recommended at the gap of four to six weeks and it has an efficacy of 78 per cent. Both vaccines can cause minor adverse effects such as fever, injection-site pain, muscle pain and restlessness in some recipients.

While there have been some reports (mostly from European countries) of blood clots in people who have taken Covishield, these are being further investigated and evidence indicates that the benefits by far outweigh the risks.

The third, Sputnik V—also a viral vaccine—was developed in Russia. Two shots of this are recommended at a gap of three weeks. This vaccine is reported to have 92 per cent efficacy with side effects similar to the others.

All three vaccines have been given emergency-use license in India after being considered both safe and efficacious by regulatory authorities.

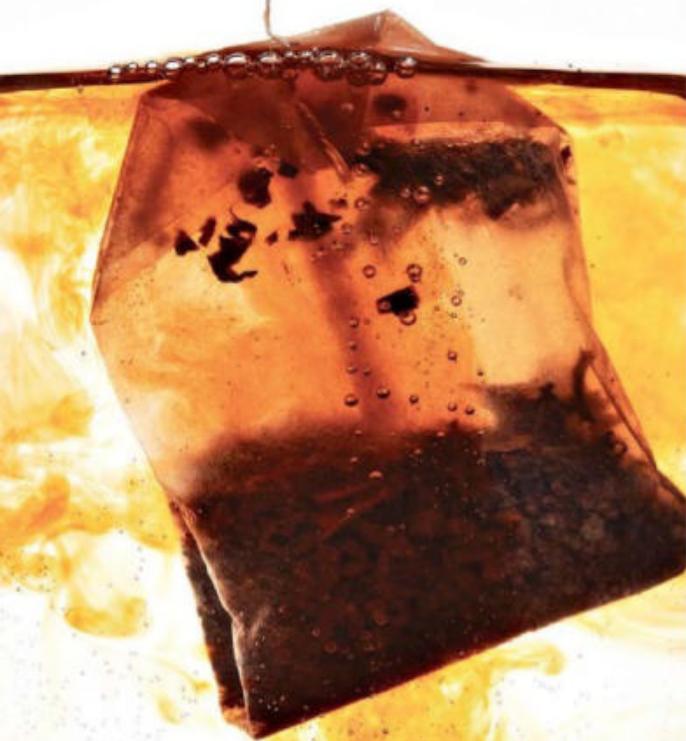
How long will the vaccines protect me?

An individual is considered fully protected two weeks after the second vaccine dose, which prevents severity of the diseases, reduces hospitalization and mortality for at least eight to 12 months. Thereafter, a booster may be needed. However, it is important to remember that a person can still get infected after being fully vaccinated and spread the infection to others. Therefore, even vaccinated individuals must continue to wear a mask and maintain other safety behaviours.

With the second wave of COVID-19 causing untold chaos around the country and the potential for additional waves before the pandemic ends, staying safe and protected through preventive measures, safety protocols and getting vaccinated, are our best hope of beating this pandemic for good. **R**

Lead co-author of Till We Win: India's Fight Against COVID-19 Pandemic, Chandrakant Lahariya is a medical doctor, epidemiologist and vaccines, public policy and health systems expert.

THE
FOOD
ON YOUR
PLATE



I Am Tea ...
**A Symbol
of Health and
Revolution**

BY *Kate Lowenstein*
AND *Daniel Gritzer*

YOU THOUGHT I was just brewed leaves and nothing more, but pinkies out, folks, and prepare to be impressed. I'm the most consumed drink in the world next to water. I have launched ships and started wars, and I helped birth a country. The culture of sipping me is steeped in tradition from Japan to Afghanistan. And each version—whether it's iced black, hot green or a chai latte—starts with the same amazing plant.

That's right: All tea—my main varieties being black, green and oolong—is from the same evergreen shrub, *Camellia sinensis*. (Sorry, but your herbal 'teas'—mint, chamomile, raspberry, etc.—are not tea at all.) As a native of the Himalayan foothills, my leaves were most likely originally chewed for a jolt of caffeine. Eventually, people figured out how to brew me. I'm usually harvested by hand, and only my new shoots are good for brewing. Once picked, I oxidize like a cut apple. Green tea is made by immediately heating fresh-picked leaves to preserve my grassy, vegetal flavor. At my spectrum's other end is black tea, which is left to fully oxidize, making me malty, dark and about twice as caffeinated as when I'm green. In the middle are oolong teas, which have a range of flavours, having been heat-treated between the green stage and the black.

An even richer source of variety? My famous flavoured versions. I am the 1,000-year-old, delightfully

fragrant jasmine tea, a palate cleanser in Chinese restaurants worldwide. I am the black tea blended with the zest of bergamot oranges, which got its name (one theory has it) when a stash of gifts shipped to British earl Charles Grey contained bergamots in close quarters with tea leaves. Yes, that Earl Grey. And I am spiced chai, a black tea brewed with cardamom, ginger, cinnamon and black pepper that is key to the practice of Ayurveda.

After centuries of trade in Asia, I made my European debut early in the 17th century, and it set off a scramble for new trade routes to meet the thirsty demand for me. Cue a burst of colonialism. Cue also the origin story of Yanks. After a century during which the Crown wouldn't allow the East India Company to sell directly to the Americas and the massive trader had to ship me through England first, that profitable supply chain was met with trouble: The colonies started sourcing their tea more cheaply from Dutch smugglers.

The Tea Act of 1773 was the English answer. It let the company cut out the middleman in London on the logic that the colonials would return to getting tea the upstanding way—from them. But, perversely, Britain also kept its tax on tea. Now *that* was upsetting. If the king could tax you on me, he could tax you on anything! A boycott began. Tea drinkers in the colonies were shamed and ridiculed. The Boston Tea Party, a culmination of the resistance, took place on

16 December 1773, when 40,800 kilos of me were tossed into the harbour by outraged colonists. The spectacle was followed by the continental congresses, a war for freedom and the formation of the United States.

Heaps of studies say drinking me straight is great for you. That's largely courtesy of my polyphenols, antioxidants that might lower the risk of some cancers and improve cognition and mood. As with most nutrition research, little is definitive, but we know this: A 'cuppa' (or several) per day will lend you the many upsides of caffeine and not hurt a bit.

Recent controversies over me are of a lighter variety—and still largely driven by those most opinionated tea drinkers, the Brits. Take the kerfuffle singer Adele created when a video for the hit song 'Hello' featured her making tea by putting hot water in the cup first. "What kind of a MONSTER puts the hot water in before the tea bag?" reads an example of the Internet outrage. Last year, an American TikToker brewed me in the microwave and added an unsavoury blend of milk, powdered lemonade, sugar, cloves, cinnamon and Tang. The furor was so great that the British ambassador to the United States called on troops from her country's armed forces to brew tea properly on camera to set the record straight.

Apparently the British still can't take a trolling from Americans on the subject of their favourite drink. **R**



NEWS FROM THE
**WORLD OF
MEDICINE**

DEEP SLEEP MAY DEFEND AGAINST ALZHEIMER'S

Each day, as your brain cells consume energy, they create waste products. These include beta-amyloid, a compound that's found in abnormal levels in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease. Scientists believe that a healthy brain cleans out this unneeded substance during the deep, dreamless part of the sleep cycle known as slow-wave sleep. In a six-year California study, seniors who experienced less slow-wave sleep tended to accumulate more beta-amyloid. This suggests you could reduce your Alzheimer's risk by practising good sleep habits and seeking treatment for sleep disorders such as chronic insomnia and sleep apnoea.

When Pain or Weakness Lingers After COVID-19

After surviving COVID-19, some people are left with pain, numbness or weakness in their hands, feet, arms or legs. While some of the causes of these nerve-damage symptoms are known—including inflammation from the body's immune response and haematomas caused by blood thinners used for COVID-19 treatment—doctors have been at a loss as to what to do about them. A new *Radiology* review proposes a good first step: a high-resolution ultrasound or a magnetic resonance neurography. A damaged nerve in one place can trigger symptoms elsewhere, but these imaging methods can pinpoint the exact location and nature of the injury. Depending on what is revealed, treatment might include pain medication, physical therapy, immunotherapy or surgery.



Stress-Related Dental Problems on the Rise

If you wake up with a headache or sore jaw, you might be grinding your teeth in the night—and you've not been alone. Stress often triggers this problem, and a survey conducted last spring in Israel and Poland found that the COVID-19 pandemic is making the condition more widespread. During Israel's first lockdown, the rate of people who suspected they were grinding jumped from 10 to 36 per cent. To prevent tooth damage, a dentist can make you a mouth guard to wear at night. To reduce the stress at the root of this habit, many activities can help: working out, meditating, deep breathing, watching a funny show or simply indulging in a leisure activity that you enjoy.

DECHA HUAYAI/GETTY IMAGES (TEETH). CREATIV STUDIO HEINEMANN/GETTY IMAGES (CABBAGE)

BETTER MANAGEMENT FOR TYPE 1 DIABETES

Instead of repeatedly pricking their fingers, people with type 1 diabetes can rely on continuous glucose monitors (CGMs). With the help of a tiny sensor inserted under the skin, a CGM measures your blood sugar level continuously and can alert you via a handheld monitor whenever it isn't within the right range. Do they help? Yes. In a Swedish study, switching to a CGM helped patients decrease their average blood sugar level. They also suffered far fewer episodes of too-low blood sugar. Most subjects also found using the device more comfortable than the alternative. The Food and Drug Administration has approved several CGMs, including one that is safe to use in patients as young as two years old.

Keeping Your Bones Strong Without Meat

In theory, you can get the nutrients you need without eating meat or dairy. Yet a British study found a significantly increased risk of hip fractures in vegetarians, pescatarians and especially vegans. Protein and calcium, which are both essential to bone health, are found in certain plant-based foods such as beans, lentils, broccoli and cabbage, so be sure to include them in your meals. **R**



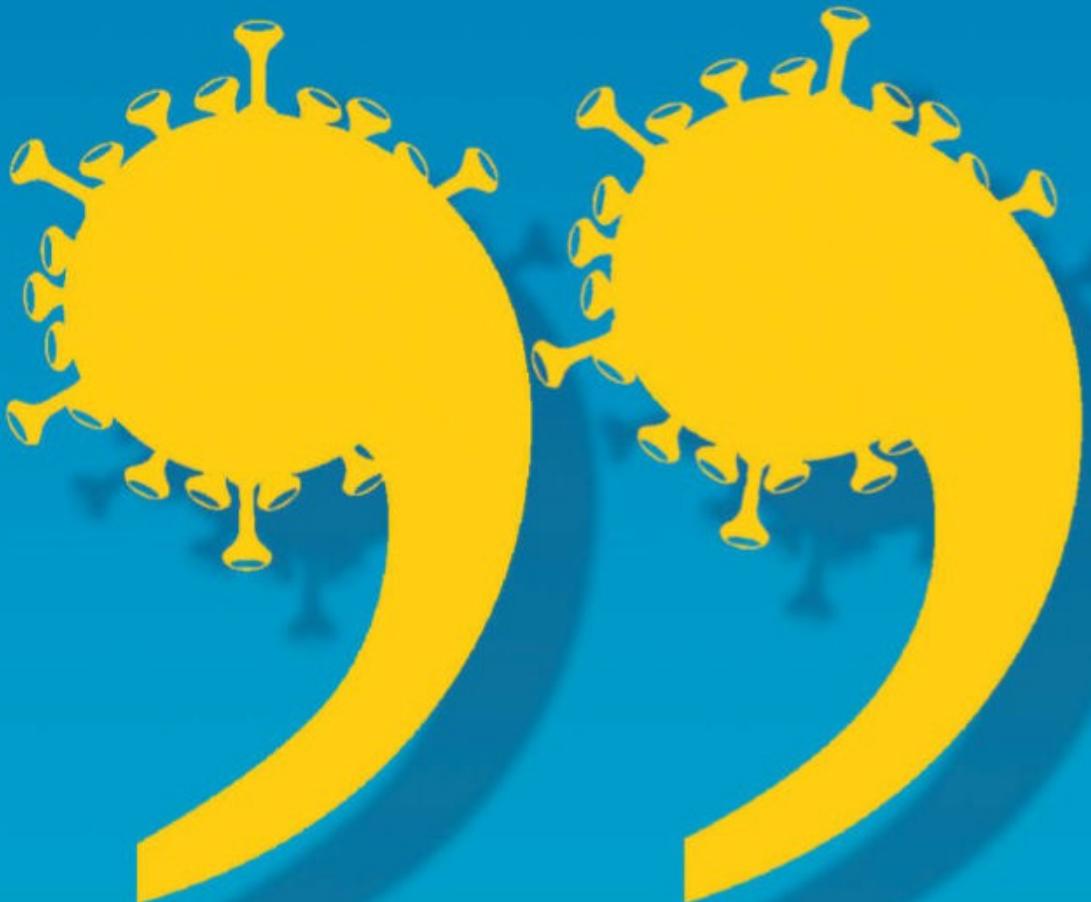
COVER STORY



MAKING ARISTOTLE YOUR LIFE COACH

BY *Shreevatsa Nevatia*
ILLUSTRATION BY *Nilanjan Das*

Happiness is both an aspiration and a commodity. For all the smartphones, cars, clothes and real estate our money can buy, we still yearn for our happy place, that somewhere beyond the rainbow. We all want to be happy, but, happiness, at the best of times, proves to be woefully short-lived, and at the worst of times, wholly elusive. While modern psychiatry sometimes reduces happiness to chemicals—we'd be happy only if we had the right amount of oxytocin and serotonin coursing through our brain—pills, we know, can make us feel good, but they do little to repair heartbreak and hardship.



On the surface, our problems seem specific to the times in which we live, but dig a little deeper and you'll find that human beings have been asking variants of the same questions for centuries, if not millennia. What does it mean to be good? What should be our life's goal—happiness or contentment? Do I need others to feel fulfilled? Can people actually change? How can I be the best version of myself?

Before motivational speakers and self-help gurus, these lines of enquiry were once the mainstay of the world's philosophers. Someone like Aristotle, for instance, believed it was your "responsibility" to flourish, to be "happy". Sadly, however, today we mostly remember only biographical detail about the Greek thinker—he was teacher to Alexander the Great—not so much his interrogation of the good life. For the most part, Aristotle and other Western philosophers such as Marcus Aurelius, Michel De Montaigne, Friedrich Nietzsche and Simone de Beauvoir are dismissed as being highbrow or complex.

The philosophies of such thinkers are, in truth, a defence against everyday and extraordinary adversity. At a time when we're faced with looming questions about mortality and morality, we can find comfort and consolation in stoicism and existentialism, in Montaigne's light-heartedness and Nietzsche's sincerity. Thankfully, for us, we don't need to pore over our dusty editions of Marcus Aurelius'

Meditations or Sartre's *Modern Times* in order to distil their lessons or life advice. Others have done that for us.

Deep thinkers are slowly infiltrating the self-help shelves of our bookstores. Tucked between Robin Sharma and Deepak Chopra, you are likely to find Edith Hall's *Aristotle's Way: Ten Ways Ancient Wisdom Can Change Your Life* (2019). In her book, Hall argues, "Wherever you are in life, Aristotle's ideas can make you happier." Psychotherapist Antonia Macaro's, similarly, soothes our inner turmoil with *More than Happiness: Buddhist and Stoic Wisdom for a Sceptical Age* (2018). Together with philosopher Julian Baggini, she's also written *The Shrink and the Sage: A Guide to Living* (2012) and *Life: A User's Manual* (2020), a book that offers philosophical guidance for (almost) any eventuality.

When put together, books like John Sellars' *Lessons in Stoicism: What Ancient Philosophers Teach Us About How to Live* (2020) and Gordon Marino's *The Existentialist's Survival Guide: How to Live Authentically in an Inauthentic Age* (2018) help tick the usual checkboxes. They help you navigate anxiety, depression and love, but other titles like *What Would Nietzsche do: How the Greatest Philosophers Would Solve Your Everyday Problems* do something more still. They bring philosophy to dilemmas even our therapists belittle as banal. Is it, for instance, "okay to believe in homeopathy?"

One finds in this burgeoning

genre of ‘cerebral self-help’ an array of possible solutions. They tell you what you ought to do when you encounter a bear in the forest, but you will equally find advice on what to do if two of your guests turn out to be vegan. (Turns out Aristotle would opt for dairy-free cake for everyone.) As entertaining as they are wise, these books make accessible great philosophers and their philosophies. Reading them, you’ll learn how to make happiness last, and, also, how to live.



ARISTOTLE AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

If you were to sidle up next to Aristotle and complain you weren’t happy, chances are he would do that annoying

thing college professors sometimes do—he would ask you to define ‘happy’. Even though the philosopher considered happiness life’s ultimate goal, he never equated it with things like riches or even a long life. For Aristotle, happiness had more to do with contentment than gratification. As Edith Hall writes in *Aristotle’s Way*, his was a happiness that “can be described, not measured”.

Aristotle, it must be clarified, had nothing against sex, food and wine. Enjoyed constructively, all these things could make you joyful. The only trouble, he suggests, is that none of these things can *keep* you happy. While Aristotle doesn’t ridicule the pursuit of pleasure, wealth or fame, he does point out that all these goals are governed by chance. If one stroke of ill-luck can make you lose the money you have earned, it is, perhaps, best that you don’t put all your happiness eggs in the basket of your wealth.

“Aristotle believed that if you train yourself to be good, by working on your virtues and controlling your vices, you will discover that a happy state of mind comes from habitually doing the right thing,” writes Hall. In the Aristotelian world-view, happiness cannot come without effort. You will only be happy if you try to be good, and you will only be good if you keep trying to do right by others. Rather than tangle himself in the jargon of authenticity, Aristotle preaches perseverance: “We become builders by building, and lyre-players

by playing the lyre. So too we become just by doing just actions, temperate by temperate actions, and courageous by courageous actions.” Virtues like kindness, he teaches us, can be practiced. You are more likely to be happy, he claims, if others around you are, too.

According to Hall, “Aristotle was convinced that most people get most of their pleasure from learning things and wondering about and at the world.” Though we might now be too engaged with the world in order to step back and understand it, it might help if we pay heed to Aristotle’s prescriptions and take time out for mental pleasures alongside our physical ones. Even if we hit the gym every day, it might help if we visit an art gallery once a month. Forcing ourselves to hold a book might, for once, bring us more enjoyment than holding our phone. Like our bodies, our minds also need nourishment.

In *The Shrink and the Sage*, Atonia Macaro and Julian Baggini remind us that only we can make choices for ourselves: “What we need, and what Aristotle provides, is not a set of prescriptions that diminishes our responsibility to make our own choices, but a philosophy of life that provides a framework for making better ones.” Hearing you moan about unhappiness, Aristotle, it is likely, would go on about how you never did *decide* to be happy. He was born in 384 BC. He is allowed a lecture.



MARCUS AURELIUS AND THE NATURE OF THINGS

Stoics have a problem with emotions. For them, all emotions are judgements, and all judgements are, essentially, deluded because ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are nothing but constructs we invent. The only thing that’s ‘real’, they would argue, is virtue. It is for this reason that stoicism has, over time, developed a reputation of being an unfeeling philosophy. Stoics, however, knew that there was no running away from feelings. The trick was learning how to control them better. In *Mind Over Happiness*, her book on Buddhist and Stoic thought, Macaro writes, “The Stoic reasoning is that since emotions are judgements, we’re capable of controlling and altering them, and are ultimately responsible for them.”

Emperors, one would think, are too busy with their banquets and bayonets in order to make time for philosophy. The Roman emperor (from 161 to 180 AD) Marcus Aurelius, though, made time for his people and for some pondering. His *Meditations*, a set of notes he wrote to cope with the everyday, is today a bedrock of Stoic philosophy. As Eric Weiner writes in *The Socrates Express: In Search of Life Lessons from Dead Philosophers* (2020), “To read *Meditations* is to witness an act of philosophy in real time.” Marcus, says Weiner, is “live-streaming his thoughts, uncensored.” He is not exaggerating.

Marcus once wrote, “When you wake up in the morning, tell yourself: the people you deal with today will be meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, jealous and surly.” A thought this grim might keep us in bed until after noon, but in *Life: A User’s Manual*, Macaro and Baggini posit a cheerier interpretation: “Taking a dim view of others can be the road not to misanthropy but to sympathy and fellow feeling.” We’re all flawed. We are all in this together. As Marcus says, “I have to go to work—as a human being!”

For Marcus, everything was always in flux. “You too,” he said, “will alter in the whirl and perish, and the world as well.” Looking at it from the outside, one can dismiss Marcus’ prescriptions as being too pessimistic or melancholic, but as Macaro tells us, “In fact his notes to himself were simply reminders to face the inevitable facts of life in the

right spirit.” Marcus wanted us to see the transience of things, he wanted us to know the “noble vintage” we drink is just “grape juice”, the meat we savour is dead animals and that human lives are “yesterday, a blob of semen” and “tomorrow embalming fluid, ash.”

In *Lessons in Stoicism*, John Sellars says that Marcus did something extraordinary—he “looked outwards to contemplate the vastness of what we cannot”. To look at ourselves as tiny specks in the universe, as subjects of nature, suggested Marcus, had several advantages. For one, it made us look at our worldly concerns in perspective: “Is it your reputation that is bothering you? But look at how soon we’re all forgotten.” Two, it also makes us humble: “Nature gives all and takes all back. To her the man educated into humility says: ‘Give what you will; take back what you will.’ And he says this in no spirit of defiance, but simply as her loyal subject.” Wonder, says Marcus, is a step towards wisdom.

MONTAIGNE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BFFs

Michel de Montaigne, it is said, had great love for the Stoics, but for Cicero, the 2nd-century philosopher and Skeptic, he held a special kind of scorn. “There is no occupation so sweet as scholarship,” said Cicero, for whom reason was a divine tool that afforded



mastery over all things, Enraged by this pedantry, Montaigne had written, “In practice, thousands of little women in their villages have lived more gentle, more equable and more constant lives than [Cicero].”

Nothing upset Montaigne more than pompous and conceited thinkers. Even though he spent much time writing his *Essays* on the top-floor of a secluded red-roofed tower, he was irked by those who philosophized from the top-down vantage point of ivory towers. Montaigne wrote for everyone, and he wrote about everything—clothes, cruelty, coaches and cats. One of the more memorable questions he posed still needs a satisfactorily answer: Do you play with your cat or does your cat play with you?

Alain de Botton, in his book *The Consolations of Philosophy* (2000), best sums up Montaigne’s philosophy of the

ordinary: “Montaigne had outlined a new kind of philosophy, one which acknowledged how far we were from the rational, serene creatures whom most of the ancient thinkers had taken us to be. We were for most part hysterical and demented, gross and agitated souls beside whom animals were in many respects paragons of health and virtue.” Rather than bemoan our imperfections, however, Montaigne celebrated them. Though life was messy, it deserved to be loved.

Rather than write long prescriptions for happiness, Montaigne asks us to value the joys that simple friendship and camaraderie can offer. He writes, “In my judgment the sweetness of well-matched and compatible fellowship can never cost too dear. O! a friend!” In his friendship with Étienne de La Boétie, for instance, Montaigne invests himself fully. Friends, he argues, should be more than acquaintances. Friendship ought to exceed familiarity. The “souls” of friends must “mingle” and “support each other.”

Boétie was only 32 when, in August 1563, he died after suffering severe stomach cramps. Even though Montaigne was devastated (“Since that day when I lost him, I merely drag wearily on ...”) he grew accustomed to death. Only one of his six children, for instance, survived infancy. Montaigne himself had a near-death experience in 1569 when he was thrown off his horse. Strangely, these experiences did not defeat Montaigne. He didn’t go

into a funk when he thought of mortality, he advocated facing death head-on. “Let us rid it of its strangeness, come to know of it, get used to it.” Rather than keep death at arm’s length, avoiding its morbidity, Montaigne says we must defang it by first befriending it.

Montaigne was of the belief that death should not be looked at as a “catastrophe”, but should rather be viewed as something “inevitable” instead. And for those of us who fuss about “dying” more than “death”, Montaigne had some words of comfort: “If you do not know how to die, don’t worry; Nature will tell you what to do on the spot, fully and adequately.” Given his gentle optimism and large-heartedness, Weiner says with good reason, “[He] is the philosopher I most want to have a beer with.”

NIETZSCHE AND THE ART OF COOL

Something about Eric Weiner’s casualness makes his *Socrates Express* a joy to read. Calling Friedrich Nietzsche “the bad boy of Western philosophy,” he then adds, “He was, and is, the most seductive, the most inevitable, of philosophers.” Weiner reminds us that Nietzsche believed philosophy should be fun: “Some philosophers shock. Many argue. A few inspire. Only Nietzsche danced.” There is nothing he wants to *prove*. Nietzsche “simply wants you to see the world, and yourself, differently”.

If you ever spend time asking questions like ‘But who am I?’, you can bet your last dollar that Nietzsche would not dismiss your worries as idle or indulgent. He would, instead, be emphatic, euphoric even: “The man who does not want to remain in the general mass, has only to stop ‘taking things easy’. He needs to follow his conscience, which cries out: ‘Be yourself! The way you behave and think and desire at the moment—this is not you!’ Existence, Nietzsche firmly held, could never be random or pointless.

In *Life Lessons from Nietzsche* (2013), John Armstrong makes the case that in Nietzschean philosophy, our desire to “be cooler” is, essentially, a good thing. “Because what it does is bring us closer to the sense that we too have it in our power to reach after great things.” What Nietzsche would have us



do is concentrate our efforts, gradually accumulate relevant insights and then painstakingly sort out of “what is crucial from what is misleading, by practice and repetition”. This sounds like too much work, yes, but Nietzsche is quick to remind us that the paths to success are paved with suffering.

Nietzsche knew a thing or two about suffering. His father died horribly early. At 20, he had a crisis of faith. He was rejected by his lover. He lost much of his eyesight with age. Marcus Weeks, in *What Would Nietzsche Do?*, points out that “despite these tragedies, he found a way to turn them into a positive philosophy”. According to Nietzsche, we will all have to endure some misery in our lives, but he sees in this opportunity, not a setback. As Weeks writes, “The things we strive to do, if they are worth doing, involve the risk of failure, and the suffering that they bring helps us to appreciate our achievements all the more.” Nietzsche himself said, “What does not destroy me, makes me stronger.”

Happiness never ranked high on Nietzsche’s list of priorities. He had famously declared, “Mankind does not strive for happiness; only the Englishman does.” Nietzsche never did look at happiness as life’s goal. He thought it was a consequence of our actions. His disdain for the English, of course, had much to do with his rejection of capitalism. The German Nietzsche was not a man for industry. He preferred rest: “Even now one is ashamed of resting,

and prolonged reflection almost gives one a bad conscience. One thinks with a watch in one’s hand, even as one eats one’s midday meal while reading the latest news on the stock market; one lives as if one always ‘might miss out on something.’” As Patrick West says in *Get Over Yourself: Nietzsche For Our Times* (2017), it’s like he was writing today.



BEAUVOIR AND THE IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

Though we drop often the words ‘existential crisis,’ not many of us know what ‘existentialism’ really means. Simone de Beauvoir, perhaps the most accessible existentialist philosopher, had once offered up an explanation,

albeit inadvertently. “My life would be a beautiful story come true,” she said as a young woman, “a story I would make up as I went along.” In his *Socrates Express*, Eric Weiner points out, “This is existentialism. There is no script to follow, no stage directions. We are author, director, and actor of our own life story.” You’ll always have a choice—that is existentialism in a pithy nutshell.

The existentialism that gets taught in today’s philosophy courses was, in large part, thought up by Beauvoir and her lifelong partner and accomplice, Jean-Paul Sartre. As they spent their time drinking coffee and cocktails in Parisian cafes, they discussed human responsibility and authenticity. Beauvoir, however, suffered bouts of ‘impostor syndrome’: “Day after day, and all day long I set myself up against Sartre, and in our discussions, I was simply not in his class.” Not one to be intimidated, Beauvoir persevered. “My curiosity was greater than my pride,” she said. “I preferred learning to showing off.”

Years after Beauvoir’s death in 1986, scholars have begun to argue that Beauvoir was more than Sartre’s disciple; she was his superior. As Antonia Macaro and Julian Baggini write in *Life: A User’s Manual*, “Sartre never managed to articulate an ethics based on his existentialist philosophy. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir does a better job of articulating the ethical dimension of the existentialist philosophy of freedom.” Beauvoir, at all

times, seemed to know how to do the right thing.

In *The Second Sex* (1949), her seminal feminist work, Beauvoir argues that the pressure a woman feels to look a certain way, can, in effect, lead her to treat herself as an object that was designed to please men. “Fashion does not serve to fulfil her projects but on the contrary to thwart them,” she writes. Having laid bare oppressive social structures, Beauvoir did not give in to either outrage or despair. As Sarah Bakewell tells us in *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being and Apricot Cocktails* (2016), she instead “encouraged women to raise their consciousness, question received ideas and routines, and seize control of their existence.”

For Beauvoir, change was always yours to make and it was important that we constantly strive to enrich our lives. She insisted that our past should be marked by abundance: “If the world behind us were bare we would hardly be able to see anything but a gloomy desert.” Strangely, however, Beauvoir was a creature of habit. She spent her days doing much the same things: having tea, writing, reading, listening to music and lunching with friends. She once wrote, “In their rhythm, in the way I fill them, and in the people I see, my days resemble one another. Yet my life does not seem at all stagnant to me.” What is true for Beauvoir is perhaps true for all philosophers: Their observations travel time while they, ostensibly, sit in one place. **R**



ALL
in a Day's
WORK

Male teachers at my old school had to wear suits. But one colleague always managed to subvert the dress code by wearing the ugliest ties. Every day, staff and students alike

couldn't wait to see what hideous accessory he had on.

When he retired, I finally asked him, "Why the ugly ties?"

He responded, "Because that way, no one would ever know I only owned one suit."

—ROD HANSON

I gave a presentation to a small town as part of my role with North Carolina's department of transportation. At the

end, I asked whether there were any questions. There was.

"Can we move the deer-crossing sign on the state-owned road?" asked a councilperson.

"Why?" I asked.

"That location isn't a safe place for the deer to cross."

—SUZANN RHODES

When I worked at an employment agency, I was interviewing a

**The science test question asked:
What is hard water?
The student's answer: Ice.**

—WEARETEACHERS.COM

candidate for an entry-level job. I read his application as we talked: name, address, year of graduation and so on.

Then I looked at what he had written next to the box that read "Position desired."

"Near a window," it said.

—SONA DORAN
IN THE *NEW YORK TIMES*

My kindergarten student needed a glue stick, so I opened my supply cabinet to see what I had. "Wow! You have a lot of stuff!" he said. "You must make a lot of money. Where do you work, anyway?"

—CONNIE GAHM

I just spent 15 minutes liking photos of dogs on Instagram. Time well spent.

—[@JEREMYADAMROSS](#)

There are 68,000 medical billing codes doctors use to denote injuries and maladies for insurance purposes. These actual codes are among the more specific ones:

- ◆ W59.22XA: Struck by turtle
- ◆ Y93.D1: Stabbed while crocheting
- ◆ Z63.1: Problems in relationship with in-laws
- ◆ V91.07XD: Burn due to water skis on fire
- ◆ V97.33XD: Sucked into jet engine

—HEALTHCARE.DIVE.COM
AND ADVANCED DATA SYSTEMS CORPORATION

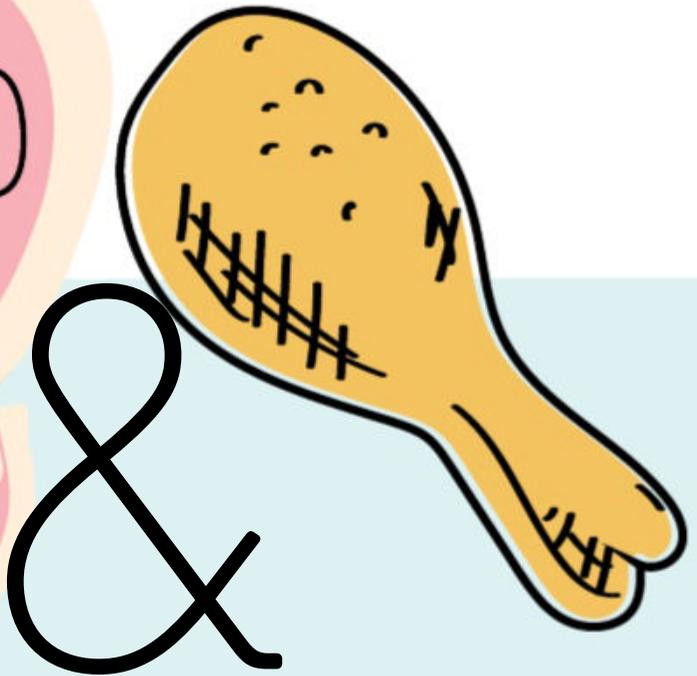
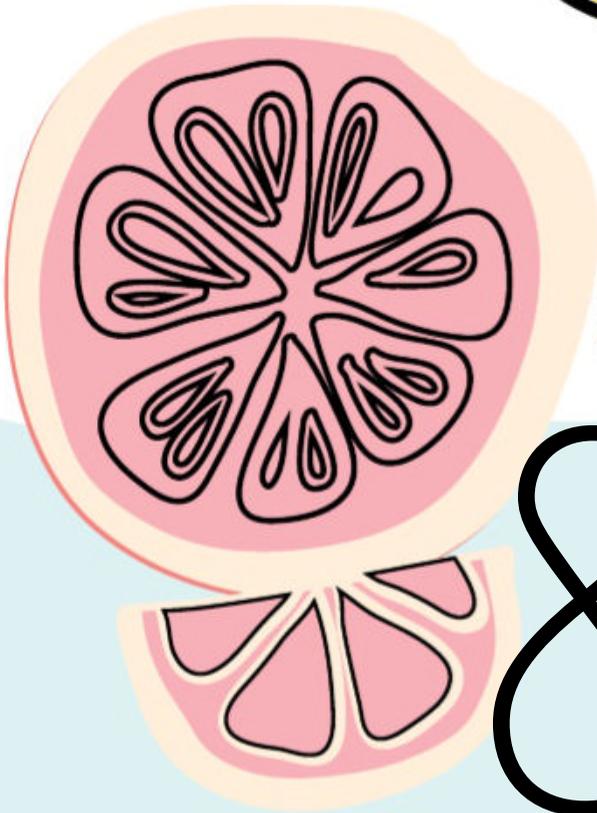
Reader's Digest will pay for your funny anecdote or photo in any of our humour sections. Post it to the editorial address, or email: editor.india@rd.com

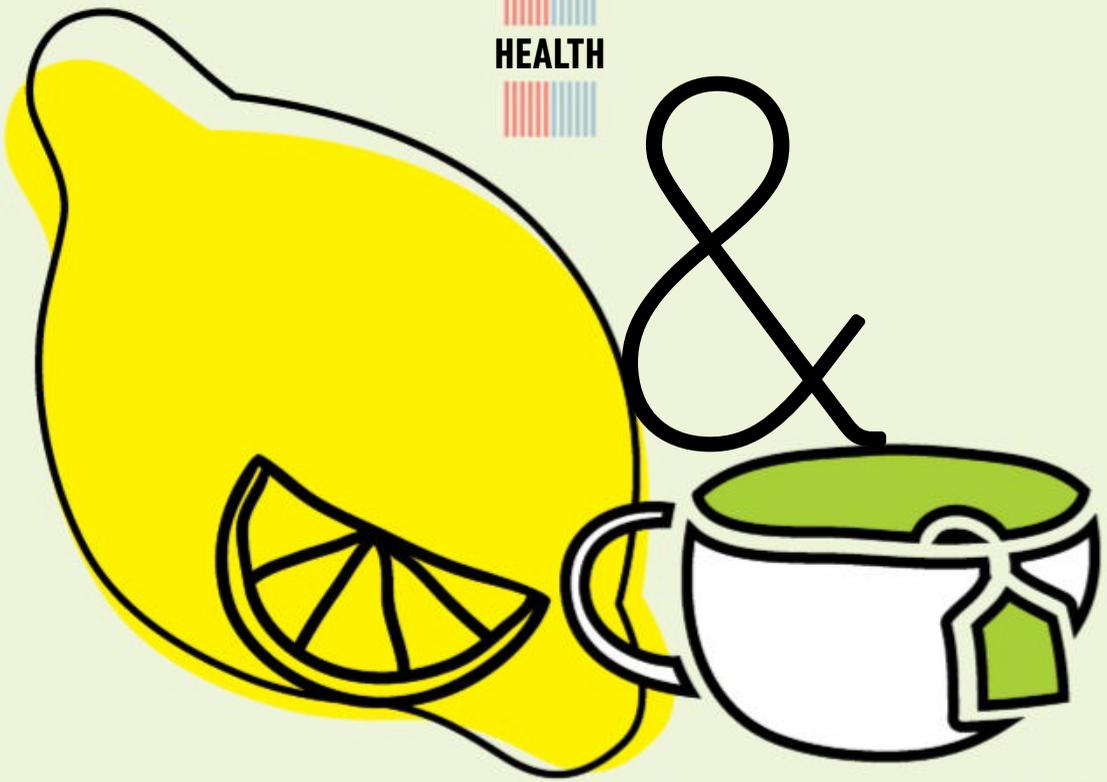
I HATE OFFICE LINGO—AN ODE

When you say ping me I want to punch you. It's true. Bio break too. It makes me cringe. And if I'm being honest I don't care about your ducks or the row they're in. I don't know what net-net means unless it's being said by an excited tennis announcer. Come to think of it let's not circle back or drill down or take a deep dive or take it off-line or level the playing field or create action items and honestly I don't care if this won't scale and may I add that going forward I would like to park this project. And this job. I quit. Now. Sorry. I have a hard stop.

—JOHN KENNEY IN
LOVE POEMS FOR WORK (PUTNAM)







DYNAMIC DUOS

BY *the Editors*

Researchers are continually finding that certain foods deliver an even bigger health boost when consumed together. Make the most of these nutritious foods by teaming them up

PASTA & VINEGAR

Help prevent type 2 diabetes

MAKE YOUR PASTA salad with a vinaigrette dressing. Vinegar contains acetic acid, which reduces the spike in blood sugar that occurs after consuming starchy foods high in carbohydrates such as pasta, rice and bread. A steadier rise in blood sugar reduces hunger by keeping you feeling satiated, as well as helping to minimize the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Blood-sugar spikes are best avoided, so that your body isn't secreting too much insulin in an attempt to manage them. Research in 2015 by the Max Planck Institute for Heart and Lung Research in Germany discovered that acetic acid activates the receptors that inhibit insulin secretion.

FISH & WINE

Absorb more omega-3s

ITALIAN RESEARCHERS FOUND that adults who consumed a glass of wine a day had higher blood levels of omega-3 fatty acids, which are found in fish such as trout, salmon, herring and sardines. (The same results were not found for beer or spirits.) The finding is from a 2008 study of 1,604 subjects from Belgium, Italy and England between ages 25 and 65. Scientists believe that heart-healthy polyphenol antioxidants in wine might be responsible for improved omega-3 absorption. Omega-3 fatty

acids are proven to reduce your risk of experiencing a major cardiac event.

GREEN BEANS & TOMATOES

Boost iron intake

IRON IS NECESSARY for producing haemoglobin, which transports oxygen to muscles and the brain. Low levels of iron can lead to fatigue, fast heartbeat, headache and more. Iron from food comes in two forms: haeme (found in animal-based foods) and non-haeme (found in plant foods such as green beans, edamame, leafy greens and



many others). But our bodies absorb far less non-haeme iron than haeme iron. Consume those non-haeme iron foods along with vitamin C, which is found in tomatoes, citrus fruit, sweet peppers, berries, etc. A Swiss study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Medicine* reported that adding vitamin C to a meal rich in non-haeme iron yielded an almost three-fold increase in our body's ability to absorb the iron.

GREEN TEA & LEMON JUICE

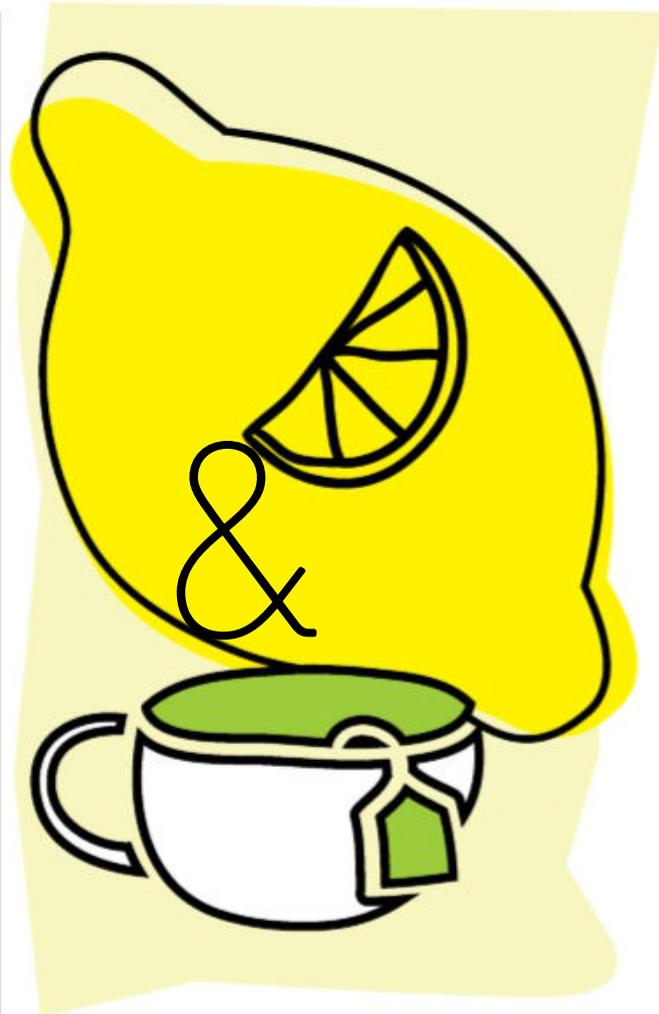
Boost immunity and heart health

GREEN TEA HAS been shown to strengthen the immune system and, in animal studies, to reduce the growth rate of tumours. And the catechins found in green tea are powerful antioxidants that have a positive effect on cardiovascular health. There's a way to further boost the power of those catechins, which are a type of antioxidant: add some citrus juice. According to a Purdue University report, adding a splash of juice from a lemon, lime, or grapefruit to green tea reduces the breakdown of its catechins in our digestive system, making them more readily absorbed by the body.

BEETS & EGGS

Maintain brain power

HOW ABOUT A lunch plate that includes pickled beets and sliced hard-boiled eggs? Choline is abundant



in egg yolks (as well as in chicken liver); betaine is found in beets, spinach and some grain products. A 2010 *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* study found pairing these two nutrients was associated with lower blood levels of homocysteine, an amino acid produced in the body. Elevated levels of homocysteine has been linked with declining cognitive function. The power combination may also protect against cancer, according to a review study by Nanjing Medical

University in China in 2016, published in *Scientific Reports*.

BROCCOLI & RADISH

May help prevent cancer

ADDING A LITTLE peppery kick to your broccoli with some sliced radishes can maximize its antioxidant firepower. A 2018 Chinese study published in *Food Science and Biotechnology* stated that the addition of radish, arugula and rapeseed sprouts to broccoli sprouts could promote the formation of sulforaphane, broccoli's signature antioxidant. Foods including radishes possess the enzyme myrosinase, which works to improve the formation of sulforaphane and its absorption rate into the blood. Research suggests that sulforaphane has strong anti-cancer power, particularly by preventing the expansion of cancer cells in the body.

ONIONS & CHICKPEAS

Give you more energy

ANY DISH MADE with chickpeas is tastier with onions, but the combination is also good for you. According to a 2010 study in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, sulfur compounds in onions, garlic and leeks can help you absorb more iron and zinc from grains and legumes, including chickpeas. Iron is involved in the transport of oxygen in the body, so an iron deficiency can cause fatigue



and 'brain fog'. And as for zinc, a large body of research shows it's effective in fighting the common cold. For example, a 2017 review study by the University of Helsinki in Finland found that the duration of cold symptoms were reduced by one-third for those who took zinc.

VEGETABLES & OLIVE OIL

Increase antioxidants

IF YOU NORMALLY sauté vegetables in butter, consider switching to olive oil. Research from the University of

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,
providing you various content:
brand new books, trending movies,
fresh magazines, hot games,
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site



We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>

Barcelona, published in *Molecules* in 2019, showed that when cooking onions, garlic and tomatoes in olive oil, the oil acts as a vehicle that boosts the bioavailability of the vegetables' components. In other words, heating this combination of ingredients, known as sofrito in some Mediterranean cooking, was shown to allow more of the vegetables' polyphenols (which are antioxidants) into circulation in our body.

BANANAS & WATER

Faster post-workout recovery

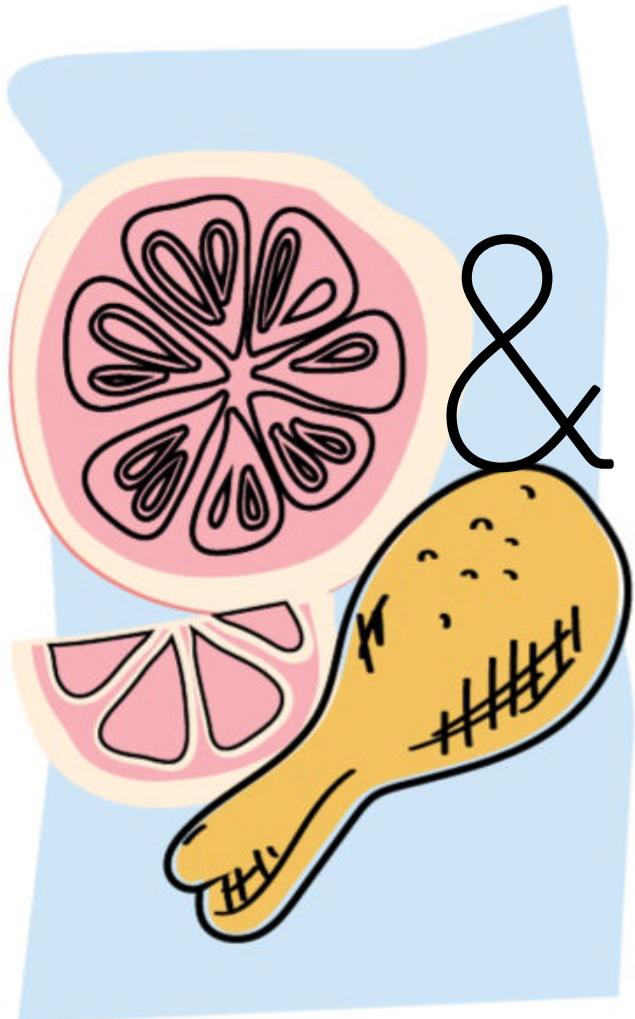
A 2018 study by Appalachian State University in North Carolina, published in the journal *PLOS ONE*, shows that consuming both water and bananas is just as, or more, effective than a sports drink for exercise recovery. Bananas mimic ibuprofen in reducing pain and inflammation—thanks to boosting serotonin and dopamine levels—while the water rehydrates the body.

CHICKEN & GRAPEFRUIT

Boost energy

POULTRY, BEEF, PORK and fish are all top dietary sources of coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10). This power source for our body's cells plays a vital role in the production of the energy we use for everything from digesting food to running on a treadmill. CoQ10 may also help control blood pressure in

those with hypertension. A 2010 Japanese study discovered that eating grapefruit allows up to 50 per cent higher cellular absorption of CoQ10. Chicken roasted with sliced grapefruit, onions and other vegetables makes for a delicious family meal. But beware of eating grapefruit if you are taking certain medications—statins is one example, but talk to your doctor—as it can cause some medications to pass into your bloodstream too quickly, which could be dangerous. **R**







DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

DON'T GO INTO THE VOLCANO

A dream honeymoon hike to the rim of a jungle crater ends with a terrible fall. Now a young bride must get her severely injured husband medical care—by herself

BY *Nicholas Hune-Brown*



O

IN A STEAMY morning in July last year, Clay and Acaimie (pronounced 'Ah-CAY-mee') Chastain arrived at the base of Mount Liamuiga on the Caribbean island of St Kitts, ready for their first climb as husband and wife. They had married just five days earlier back home in Crawfordsville, Indiana—the culmination of a story-book romance. Clay, 23, and Acaimie, 25, had met at Purdue University, at a square dance held for Clay's Christian fraternity and Acaimie's Christian sorority. Clay—a handsome farmer's son with a charming, puppy-dog energy—was immediately smitten by Acaimie's beguiling smile. They'd lasted through college and the tough years after, when Acaimie moved to Illinois for work as a store manager and Clay finished his master's degree in swine nutrition back at Purdue. They took turns enduring the weekly five-hour drives to see each other, but they were devoted and slightly old-fashioned—they refused to live together in the house they'd bought together in Indianapolis until after their wedding.

Like any good couple, they had their



complementary differences. Acaimie had always been the worrier. "A realist," she says. "A pessimist," Clay replies. She liked order and structure. She wasn't just fastidious about washing her sheets once a week; she did it at the same time every Saturday. Clay, on the other hand, was a perpetual optimist—maddeningly carefree and easy-going, always certain that things would turn out just fine.

So it was Clay who wanted to take a day of their Caribbean honeymoon and spend it scaling Mount Liamuiga.



Acaimie, with Clay on their wedding day—a preview of her strength

The highest point on St Kitts, Liamuiga is also a dormant volcano that starts in the clouds and plunges down to meet the sea. Called Mount Misery by the British who colonized the island, it is a popular day hike for vacationers looking for adventure.

The couple, dressed in T-shirts and sneakers, arrived for their journey in a rental car expecting to find more information on-site. Instead, they found an empty dirt parking lot with just a small plaque marking the trailhead. They made their way up anyway, the narrow

path taking them through tropical growth so lush you couldn't see the sky. Vervet monkeys chattered in the trees; the air was thick and humid.

It took them nearly three hours to reach the peak, but the view—*the view!*—made it all worthwhile. The island of St Kitts stretched before them, the green rain forest carpet cascading down toward the sapphire Caribbean water. They may have been tired and sweaty—Clay's red bandanna was soaked—but they couldn't have been happier as they ate their sandwiches, took a few selfies and walked around the rim of the volcano completely alone.

That's when Clay saw it: a small trail, semi-hidden beneath plant life, that led into the volcano's crater, a bowl of green with cloud forest giving way to a grassy meadow. A series of screw eyes had been drilled into the rocks, with ropes that led down. For Clay, the sight was unbearably inviting. It felt like a secret entrance to a primeval paradise. Acaimie was less enthusiastic. The trail was steep, and she was afraid of heights, but she gamely followed Clay's lead. After just a few minutes of descent, though, she'd had enough. She told her husband she'd wait on the rocks just off the trail while he went exploring. "Just be quick," she said as she watched him set off on the precipitous path, zigzagging while clutching the rope.

A few minutes later, she heard a crash—a noise that sounded like a large branch snapping, followed by the

sound of something big rolling downhill. "Clay?" she called. Silence.

Acaimie fought back a flutter of panic. She hadn't heard anyone call out, after all. The sound might have been anything. A few minutes later, she heard something faint that could have been a human voice. She leaned forward, craning her neck. Then she heard it again, and this time she was certain: It was Clay, speaking in an eerily childish tone she hardly recognized, calling for help from deep within the crater.

SHE HEARD A CRASH, THEN THE SOUND OF SOMETHING BIG ROLLING DOWNHILL.

As she looked over the lip of the volcano, she tried to suppress some of her worst worries. Her phone wasn't getting a signal, and her cries for help were met with only silence. "Clay!" she shouted as loud as she could. "Clay, are you OK?"

Acaimie gripped the rope and began scrambling down the trail. When the path became too steep, she slid on her butt, her legs and arms getting bruised and scraped in the process. Then, just off the trail, she saw a flash of red. It was Clay's bandanna. And next to it was his cell phone.

She grabbed both and continued down, screaming for Clay all the way.

"Help," he said in that strange voice.

"I'm coming! Stay where you are," she said. Finally she spotted his white shirt through the trees. She wanted to prepare for what she was going to see, worried that if he were badly injured the sight of him would put her into a state of shock. "Tell me what's wrong," she said as she approached.

"I don't know," he said weakly.

Clay was sitting hunched over with his head in his hands, his back to Acaimie. When she got closer, she could see that he was bleeding from the back of his head, and his neck and shoulders were scraped. Walking around him, she saw that he'd been vomiting. Blood ran down his face.

Perhaps the rope he'd been holding had snapped, or maybe he'd just missed a step, but it was clear he'd fallen a long way. He was badly concussed. "Where are we?" he asked. She explained they were on a hike on St Kitts. "Why aren't you calling for help?" he asked. Their phones weren't getting cell service, she told him. He seemed to take that in. Then, 30 seconds later: "Where are we?"

Acaimie tried to clear her mind. They were alone in the volcano without cell service. There was only one thing to do: She needed to drag him out somehow.

"Look at me, Clay," she said. He looked through her, his eyes swimming. "We're going to have to climb out of here, and you're going to have to listen to me."

Acaimie hoisted Clay shakily to his feet. He had no balance and couldn't



A medevac plane transported Clay from St. Kitts back to the United States.

support himself. The two of them stumbled forwards, and Acaimie put his hands on the rope. She told him to hold tight as she placed Clay in front of her and pushed him from behind. He lurched forwards, flailing like a drunk, but he seemed able to control his limbs just well enough to follow Acaimie's directions. When they reached a particularly steep section, she bent down, picked up his feet, put them in good footholds so he wouldn't slip and pushed again.

Inch by inch, step by step, they climbed. After what couldn't have been more than half an hour but felt like forever, they reached the top. "Help!" Acaimie yelled. She'd hoped that once they reached the top they'd find a group of hikers, but the trail

was empty. There was no choice but to try to make it back to the trailhead alone. It was about 12:30. It had taken them three hours to reach the summit. *How long, she wondered, would it take them to reach their car?*

PUTTING HER HUSBAND'S arm over her shoulder, Acaimie led him back down the trail. It was almost like a black-diamond ski run—sheer and winding as it cut back and forth through rain-forest so thick she could never see more than a few yards ahead. Clay's legs flopped beneath him; at times he almost began running down the hill because of this lack of control and Acaimie had to struggle to make sure he didn't send them crashing into the trees. In particularly steep sections, she



Clay, here in a St. Kitts hospital, has recovered from most of his injuries.

sat Clay down, shuffled ahead of him, and had him slide into her arms.

As they made their way, the sun was sinking lower in the sky and Acaimie's mind raced. The path was confusing and indistinct in places, with smaller trails branching off into the wilderness. *What if they got lost, she wondered. Would Clay survive the night?*

She checked her phone again. Still no signal.

After more than two hours, Clay seemed to be getting worse. He was losing what little control he'd had over his body. Every 10 minutes or so he'd stop, collapse on the trail and begin vomiting blood. "I want to sleep," he mumbled now, shutting his eyes. Acaimie urged him to keep moving.

"You're doing such a good job. I'm so proud of you," she kept repeating, unsure if any of it was getting through to her husband. Once again she checked her phone. No signal.

It dawned on her that maybe she should leave Clay there and run ahead and get help. But one look at him and she nixed that idea. She worried that in his state, he might wander off into the wilderness or stumble down the trail and injure himself. She needed him to keep going.

They continued on—Acaimie guiding Clay, Clay barely able to move forwards. After hours of painful but exhausting progress, they took a break. She instinctively pulled out her phone to check for a signal. Yes! It was faint, but it might work. She dialed 911 and heard the welcome sound of another person's voice. She described what had happened—the fall, the vomiting, the blood, the disorientation. The dispatcher, barely audible, asked whether they were able to make it to the trailhead, or did they need a helicopter? Acaimie looked around. With the thick covering, there was no way a helicopter could land anywhere near them. She told him they'd keep trying to make their way down.

But as they moved forwards, she became more scared. Clay's condition was continuing to deteriorate. He could hardly use his arms and legs. At one point, Acaimie couldn't support him and gravity took over, sending him flying out of her arms and rolling

down the hill, smashing into a tree. He lay there in a heap. Then he started vomiting blood again.

She dialed 911 once more. “If the paramedics are anywhere near the trail, they need to start heading up now!” she told the dispatcher. When she hung up, she looked down the trail, calling out for help as loudly as she could until her voice grew raspy. Clay was getting cold and clammy. She didn’t know whether they could go any farther.

Then she heard something. It was faint and could have been almost anything. She didn’t move a muscle, afraid she might miss it if it came again.

“Hello!” someone called out.

Acaimie leaped up. “We’re here!” she yelled as two paramedics came into view. “We’re here!”

The paramedics wrapped Clay’s arms around their shoulders, and then each took a leg. In this cumbersome manner, they carefully carried Clay down the mountain to the ambulance waiting at the trailhead. Acaimie sat in the front of the ambulance—she was hyperventilating, and her hands eventually became numb from lack of oxygen. She listened in horror as the paramedic in the back yelled to the driver, “He’s still vomiting blood; we need to get to the hospital!”

AT THE EMERGENCY ROOM, doctors discovered just how vast Clay’s injuries were. They included a bad concussion, a fractured vertebra, a fractured skull and a spinal fluid leak. Clay spent a painful week recuperating

in a St Kitts hospital before being medevacked to a hospital in Florida, where doctors placed a shunt in his spinal cord to drain excess fluid. After nine days, he flew home to Indiana for several months of physical rehab and visits with specialists, including a neurosurgeon and an audiologist. But he was alive. And as his mind slowly cleared and the enormity of what he had endured became apparent, Clay was amazed at what his wife had done for him.

Today, the couple are in their new home in Indianapolis. Nearly a year later, Clay has regained the balance he lost, but he’s now deaf in one ear. “It’s really not that bad, a minor inconvenience at worst,” he says, ever positive.

When Clay and Acaimie think about what happened in St Kitts, it’s with a strange mix of emotions. A honeymoon is supposed to be a chance for connection—an island of time in the midst of a busy life for people to truly get to know each other. But even though their honeymoon had turned into a nightmare, it cemented their relationship. The words ‘in sickness and in health’ were no longer just a quaint refrain said in front of friends. To see one’s partner under the most awful conditions imaginable had created a kind of intimacy that was different from what they’d had before.

“We got shell-shocked, but in a good way,” says Clay today. “You realize what you have. And you become so thankful.” **R**

LAUGHTER

THE BEST *Medicine*

God is speaking

to Moses.

God: I've got good news and bad news.

Moses: Give me the good news first.

God: The good news is that you have been chosen to deliver my people from bondage. I will force the

pharaoh to free the people by sending plagues of locusts, frogs, darkness, devastation and more. The pharaoh's armies will chase you all the way to the Red Sea, but don't worry.

I will help you part the waters to aid your escape.

Moses: So, what's the bad news?

God: You have to prepare the environmental impact statement.

—Submitted by

ROBERT STRAND



"I like a man with a good firm elbow bump."

The opposite of ...

◆ ... mermaid is landlady.

—[@CALBO](#)

◆ ... formaldehyde is casualdejekyll.

—[@BROWTWEATEN](#)

◆ ... Iceland is water water.

—[@HOTBITHORAN](#)

A husband and wife

go to see a marriage counselor. At the start of their session, the

counselor asks them what the problem is.

The wife starts listing every issue the couple had ever had in the 15 years they've been married. She goes on and on.

When she's finally done, the counselor gets up, embraces the woman, and kisses her passionately. The woman is stunned.

The counselor then



AN INSPIRATIONAL
TITLE FOR INSTANT
SUCCESS

TOP
VISIONARIES
WHO CHANGED
THE WORLD



—REVISED EDITION—
GEORGE LILIAN

What if you could sit down to dine with some of the world's most successful entrepreneurs and have a conversation with them? What would you ask them? What insights would they have to offer? Find inspiring life and business lessons from visionaries such as **Steve Jobs**, **Mark Zuckerberg** and **Elon Musk** in this book.

**RETURN
THIS CARD
TODAY!**

JUST FILL IN YOUR NAME, ADDRESS
AND SIGNATURE. DETACH AND
POST THIS CARD TODAY

(PLEASE WRITE IN CAPITALS)

▼ Detach this card and send to Reader's Digest ▼

GET THIS
BOOK
WORTH ₹399
FREE!

SUBSCRIPTION DATA CARD

Claim a gift worth ₹399 and enjoy the next 12 issues of Reader's Digest for just ₹83 a copy.

SEND NO MONEY NOW...

though, if you prefer, you may mail your cheque payment in favour of 'Reader's Digest' with this card in a stamped envelope.

To Reader's Digest Yes, please start my 12-month subscription to Reader's Digest at a saving of ₹261 and send my gift. I will accept your VPP for ₹999.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE
12 MONTHS — ₹1,260
(INCLUDING POSTAGE & HANDLING)

YOUR DISCOUNTED PRICE
12 MONTHS — ₹999
(INCLUDING POSTAGE & HANDLING)

YOUR SUBSCRIPTION SAVING: ₹261 DISCOUNT ON THE FULL PRICE



NAME

ADDRESS

City Pin

*Email Tel./Mob SIGN

*This authorizes RD/LMIL to communicate about its products and promotions through mail, phone, printed material, email, etc.

*This authorization is irrespective of my instruction elsewhere to not be contacted or informed over mail, phone, printed material, etc.

RDE20054/3

OFFER VALID IN
INDIA ONLY.

PREFERENTIAL SUBSCRIBER AGREEMENT— OUR WRITTEN COMMITMENT TO YOU

- You will be entitled to a gift subscription at the Preferential Subscriber's rate.
- You will enjoy the assurance that, unless you notify us to the contrary (which you may do at any time), this written agreement confirms your gift subscription will continue without interruption—and, of course, at a Preferential Subscriber's discount.

▼ Detach this card and send to Reader's Digest ▼

Postage
will be
paid by
addressee

BUSINESS REPLY CARD

Permit No.: BR.D (C)-276
ND G.P.O., New Delhi-110 001.

No postage
stamp
necessary
if posted
in India

▼ Detach this card and send to Reader's Digest ▼

ONLINE PAYMENT



Scan me

Scan this QR code
with your smartphone
and simply pay for your
subscription online.
We will dispatch your
gifts immediately.

To:

Reader's Digest

F 26, First Floor,
Connaught Place,
New Delhi - 110 001.

Did you hear about the Energizer Bunny? He got arrested for battery.

—*Wideopenpets.com*

turns to the husband and says, "That is what your wife needs at least three times a week. Can you do that?"

The husband thinks for a moment before he replies. "Well," he says,

"I can bring her here on Mondays and Wednesdays, but on Fridays, I golf."

—*Bouldertherapist.com*

I finally make enough money to be able to

put a television in each room of my home. I live in a studio apartment.

—*Submitted by*

LOUIS SAPIA

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

NATURE'S BLOOPERS

The Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards recognize nature's silliest moments, captured for posterity. We wrote equally silly captions for these recent finalists.



"Talk to the hand, sweetheart."



"Can you believe what he's wearing?"



"Mom, this is so embarrassing!"



"I've got to be me!"

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PETR SOCHMAN/COMEDY WILDLIFE PHOTO AWARDS 2020. BERNHARD ESTERER/COMEDY WILDLIFE PHOTO AWARDS 2020. KRANITZ ROLAND/COMEDY WILDLIFE PHOTO AWARDS 2020. MAX TEO/COMEDY WILDLIFE PHOTO AWARDS 2020.



Bring Back the Handkerchief!

I have used a pocket handkerchief all my life—and was ridiculed for it. Now, my habit has found its moment

BY *Scott Turow*

FROM *THE WASHINGTON POST*

THE TEXT FROM my son said it all: “Dad, there’s an article you were born to write that the world is finally ready for: Bring Back the Handkerchief!”

As my son knows, there’s no “bring back” for me. For me, the handkerchief never left.

My mother raised me with several fixed rules. One was that a gentleman always has a clean handkerchief in his right rear pocket, a piece of simple

cotton, roughly 15 inches square and less than four inches when folded. I was a dutiful son, but I can recall being a ten-year-old on the school playground, feeling the padding directly over my butt and wondering what it was there for. Time would tell.

Every night for most of my life, I have removed from my trousers the items I’m going to need the next day—keys, wallet and hankie, if it’s still unused. After 60 years, I am like

the princess in 'The Princess and the Pea'. My body weight feels wrong if I'm heading out of the house with an empty back pocket.

I am sure this habit has sometimes struck friends and colleagues who've noticed it as a little quaint, but in polite company nobody comments on somebody else's trivial eccentricities. That rule of behaviour, of course, did not apply to one's children in the late 20th century. When my three kids were growing up, they all let me know whenever they could that my hankie was as ridiculously old-fashioned as a top hat and a walking stick. They had their arguments. If you have to be

A HANKIE CREATES NO WASTE AND HAS A FAR WIDER VARIETY OF USES.



prepared every day for allergies or a cold, why not tote a little packet of tissues, which saves you from that disgusting business of blowing your nose in the thing and then stuffing it back in your pants?

Point taken—especially in the time of COVID-19. But a cotton handkerchief is a lot more durable than tissue, creates no waste, and has a far wider variety of uses. One reason my kids saw that handkerchief so often is because of the epic number of chocolate mouths, skinned knees and drippy

noses that hankie wiped. Can you grab the handle of a pot that's boiling over with a Kleenex? Now that I am a grandfather of five, my hankie again has been getting a workout. When friends become grandfathers for the first time, I often send them a dozen handkerchiefs as a small gift. "Hold on to these," I say, "you're going to need them." In fact, for Father's Day last year my wife gave me several new handkerchiefs, embroidered with my grandpa name, 'Pops'.

Her gift was a tacit admission. From her subsequent comments, I take it that the first time that handkerchief came out, right after we started dating, she thought to herself something like, "Holy smokes, what an old-timer!" But by now, neither of us can count the number of times her eyes have welled up at a movie, a tickle won't leave her throat in the theatre, or, as happens, she's needed to blow her nose and timidly whispered, "Can I borrow your handkerchief?"

Yet not even my mother could have anticipated the hankie's new role as an Essential Public Health Appliance. All of us have learnt how hard it is to follow advice from medical experts in this coronavirus-plagued era about not touching your face. Here is an answer. Got an itch in your eye or your nose that you just have to scratch? Facing those frequently touched places such as elevator buttons and door handles that seem full of peril? Use your hankie!



Here let me add a sober note on best practices: Touching your face with a coronavirus-infested hankie is not much better than doing so with a dirty hand. The solution is to carry multiple hankies in different pockets. And of course, if you used a handkerchief for virus protection, wash it thoroughly with soap and hot water as soon as you can.

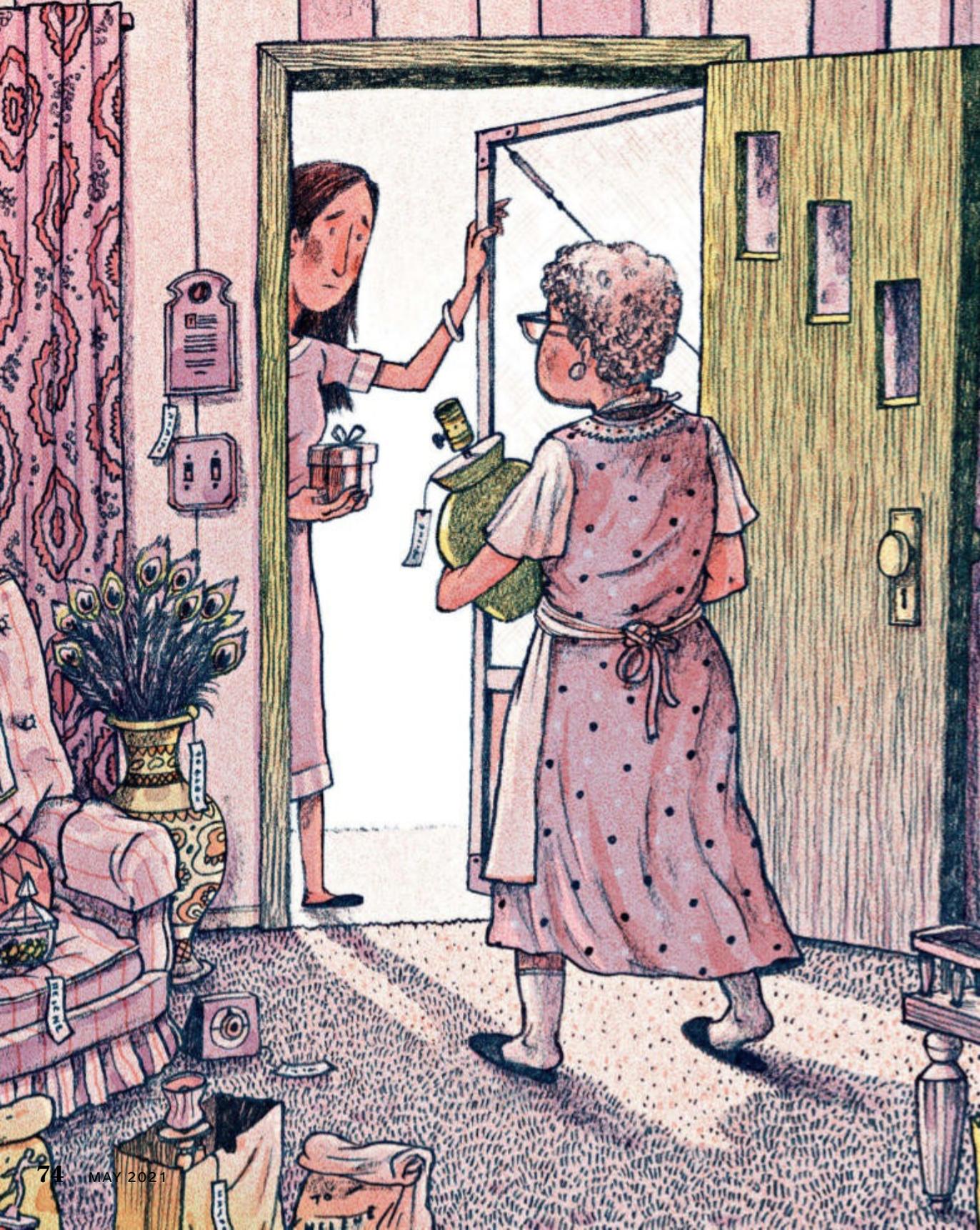
That said, your handkerchief can be even more useful in protecting others from you, especially if you are one of those asymptomatic coronavirus carriers. It is widely recommended that

**BRING BACK THE
HANDKERCHIEF. IT
MAY ACTUALLY SAVE
A FEW LIVES.**

we wear masks when we're out of the house. Guess what can be turned into a DIY mask by folding several times and applying two rubber bands six inches apart? In a pinch, and if you have no rubber bands, your handkerchief can become a makeshift bandanna that can be pulled over your lower face like a robber entering a bank.

So my son has it right: Bring back the pocket handkerchief. It may actually save a few lives. And it will certainly give me the chance to channel my mother, to lift my chin and look at my adult children through one eye, asking in her good-hearted way, "What do you have to say now, smarty-pants?" **R**

Washington Post (15 April 2020), Copyright © 2020 by Scott Turow, washingtonpost.com. Used by permission of Brandt & Hochman literary agents, inc.



MOTHER'S DAY SPECIAL

A GIFT FOR MAMA



*For many moms, a card
or some flowers are perfect.
This unusual woman deserves
something, um, special*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY *John Hendrix*



Mama, This Story Is for You

BY *Helene Melyan*

FROM THE OREGONIAN

THERE IS A country—I read about it once—where the local custom is that if you go to a house and praise some small possession, the owners feel obliged to offer it to you as a gift. I don't remember the name of the country; the only other place I know of with such a custom is my mother's apartment.

Knowing Mama, I have always been careful with my compliments, but that doesn't stop her. Mama senses admiration far more subtle than what's spoken. If she catches me staring at anything small enough to put in a grocery sack, she hands it to me as I leave. It would do no good to protest.

"I was merely staring at that photograph of Mount Hood because I have one exactly like it in my living room." Mama would only nod and say, "Of course. You were thinking how nice it would be to have a set. If a mother doesn't understand, who does?"

Sometimes, while visiting Mama and trying not to say anything complimentary, I reflect on what might have been had she ended up in, say, the White House. "Here you are, Mr Prime Minister, that nice picture of George Washington you were admiring so

much, from the Blue Room. No, take it. You like it. What do I need it for?"

Being with Mama is like watching an Alfred Hitchcock movie: I never know what's going to happen next. For instance, I have lasting memories of childhood walks with her. Mama noticed everything. We had to stop to admire a nice house, a nice tree, a nice flower. Mama regarded the people we saw (those who didn't look like her relatives) as portraits in a museum—no matter if people stared back. "She was pretty once, but has seen tragedy," Mama would whisper, or, "Such a handsome man, but conceited to the core." Her sharpest epithet was 'Minky', reserved for the type of woman Mama thought would wear a mink to the supermarket.

As far back as I can remember, Mama was telling people they were in the wrong line of work and suggesting alternative careers. If the landlord fixed the sink, she told him he should have been a plumber. If he couldn't fix it, Mama would wait until the plumber came and then tell him he should have been a landlord. And if either one of them told her a joke, Mama would have to know why



he hadn't gone into show business.

My turn came when I grew up and became a housewife. "You missed your calling," Mama sighs, examining the doodles on my phone book. "You should have been an artist." Later, I tell her how I returned rancid fish to the supermarket and demanded a refund, and she amends this to lawyer. I know it's horsefeathers, but I like it.

"You missed *your* calling," I tell Mama. "You should have been a vocational counselor."

"I know," she sighs. "But that's life. Maybe now that it's spring ..."

According to Mama, there is no problem that will not be a little bit solved by the coming of spring. I grew up believing that there was only one

correct way to end a discussion of things unpleasant or troublesome: nod at the calendar, pat somebody on the back if possible and sigh, "Maybe in the spring ..."

I could understand how certain problems—sinus conditions, chapped lips, sticking windows—would respond to the change of seasons. But I never tried to unravel the spring magic that Mama vowed would help me understand fractions or long division.

I was not the only target of Mama's philosophy. At one time or another, Mama had several dozen people in the neighbourhood waiting for spring to relieve them of indigestion, mice, domestic difficulties and trouble with the horizontal hold on their television sets.

Sometimes, sitting in school during history (which Mama promised me I'd find less boring in the spring), I would daydream my mother into other places and other times. Once I saw her patting Napoleon on the back, after he got the news from the Russian front. ("Maybe in spring ...") She was beside George Washington at Valley Forge, brushing snow off his epaulets. ("In spring, maybe, you'll win the revolution.") She was looking over Thomas Edison's shoulder, comforting him in his early failures. ("Don't worry; maybe in the spring you'll try something new.")

"IT DOESN'T HAVE TO RHYME AS LONG AS IT'S FROM THE HEART," MAMA SAYS.

I have been worrying for weeks now about what to give my mother for Mother's Day. For most people, this is a modest problem, solved by the purchase of a bathrobe or a box of candy. For me, however, Mother's Day represents an annual challenge to do the impossible—find a gift that will make neither Mama nor me feel terrible.

Expensive gifts—which Mama defines as costing over \$1.98—are out, because they make Mama feel terrible. ("This is awful," she says, examining an apron. "I feel just terrible. You shouldn't have spent the money on me.") Inexpensive presents—under

\$1.98—please Mama, but they make *me* feel terrible.

There is always the danger that a gift given to Mama will bounce swiftly back to the giver. If I buy her something wearable, she perceives in an instant that it could be let in here, let out there and it would fit me perfectly. If I give her a plant, she cuts off the top for me to take home and root in a glass of water. If I give her something edible, she wants me to stay for lunch and eat it.

Papa, a sensible man, long ago stopped trying to shop for Mama. Instead, on Mother's Day, her birthday and other appropriate occasions, he composes a short epic poem in which he tells of their meeting, courtship and subsequent marriage. After nearly 30 years of poems, Papa sometimes worries that the edge of his poetic inspiration has dulled, but Mama doesn't complain. She comes into the room while he is struggling over a gift poem and says, "It doesn't have to rhyme as long as it's from the heart."

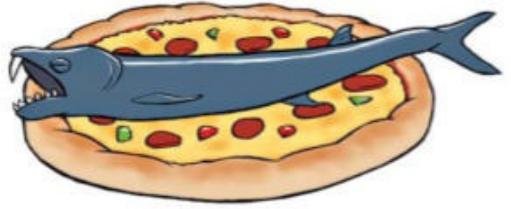
This year, finally, I think I, too, have found a painless gift for Mama. I am going to give her a magazine article, unrhymed but from the heart, in which I wish her 'Happy Mother's Day' and tell her there's nothing Papa or I could ever buy, find or make her that would be half good enough anyway. **R**

This story originally appeared in the May 1977 issue of Reader's Digest.

THE OREGONIAN (2 OCTOBER 1975), COPYRIGHT © 1975 BY OREGONIAN PUB.CO., OREGONLIVE.COM.

WORLD WIDE WEIRD

BY *Suzannah Showler*



Olfactory Factory

At the Institute for Digital Archaeology in Oxford, UK, scientists are conjuring ways for visitors to catch a whiff of the past. In a forthcoming exhibit at Oxford's Bodleian Library, visitors will experience odours captured from rare books and manuscripts using sealed chambers and high-tech filtration systems. These essences are disseminated with nebulizers that create scent clouds of superfine mists. Included in the collection is a 1217 copy of the Magna Carta with a slightly swampy odour. The quantity of scent essence possible to extract from a single book is limited, however, and only the exhibit's first visitors will get to huff the literal molecules of the archive up their nostrils. Future visitors will

get a spray of the institute's synthetic reproduction of 'eau de Magna Carta' instead.

Not Your Average Fish

New revelations from the fossil record show that, sometime between 40 and 55 million years ago, sabre-toothed anchovies measuring up to a metre long once swam the ocean. In findings published in *The Royal Society* in May, scientists used CT scanners to examine fossil samples collected in Belgium and Pakistan in the last century.

Though the sabre-toothed anchovy went extinct, the newly identified species shares a number of features with the fish we know today. The scientific literature doesn't determine whether it would be as polarizing an ingredient

on a pizza, however.

Sorry, Gotta Jet

In March 2019, a 64-year-old executive at a defence company in France accidentally ejected himself from a fighter jet. His co-workers sent him on the ride as a gift, and while he wasn't wild about the idea, he accepted out of politeness. But when the jet took off, a combination of the 3.7 G-force and loose safety straps caused him to float up out of his seat. What he grabbed to steady himself turned out to be the ejection handle. He was launched from the aircraft, which was going over 500 kilometres an hour. Fortunately, his parachute opened, and he landed in a field with only minimal injuries. **R**

“LET US MEET ON THE BRIDGE”

It broke the young couple’s heart that they had to give up their infant daughter to save her life. They never stopped loving her

BY Robert Kiener



“**B**E STRONG,” Xu Lida whispers to himself as he walks along Sanxiang Road in Suzhou, China, a picturesque city some 96 kilometres west of Shanghai. It is early morning on 24 August 1995, and the slight 23-year-old shopkeeper is fighting back tears as he dodges pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles on his way to an outdoor market.

In his right arm he is carrying a basket that holds his tiny, three-day-old daughter Jingzhi. After crossing a busy street he peels back her blanket and checks that she is still asleep. His heart pounding, he reminds himself what he and his wife have decided: We have no choice. He blinks back tears and wraps her up again. *Perhaps, one day, she will understand and forgive us.*

He reaches the popular market just before 5 a.m. and is relieved to see that it is nearly empty. He can leave his daughter here without being seen. He spots a small tent outside a bicycle maintenance shop. *She will stay warm there and someone will surely find her.*

He hasn't slept in more than 24 hours, and as he carries Jingzhi to the tent he begins crying again. He kisses her gently and tucks her basket into the tent, knowing that this is his final farewell. He walks away but doesn't get far before he stops, compelled to go back. But as he nears the tent, he notices people gathered around it and realizes she has already been discovered.

He hears her cry and knows she will be rescued. But he feels horribly guilty, saddened, devastated. *What have I done?* Reluctantly he walks

away, knowing he will never forget the sound of her crying.

IN 1995, CHINA'S strict one-child policy, which sought to control the nation's soaring population growth by compelling Chinese couples to have only one child, was in full effect. Couples who disobeyed were harshly punished with government-forced abortion, sterilization, steep fines and destruction of their homes.*

Because Xu and his wife Qian Fenxiang already had a daughter, one-year-old Xiaochen, they were forbidden to have another child.

Xu and Qian met in 1990 when

* More than 336 million abortions, many of them forced, were carried out between 1971 and 2015, when China's national birth planning programme ended.

they were both 20. They fell in love and married, and Qian gave birth to Xiaochen a couple of years later. Although Xu had little education beyond middle school, he was a hard worker and ambitious.

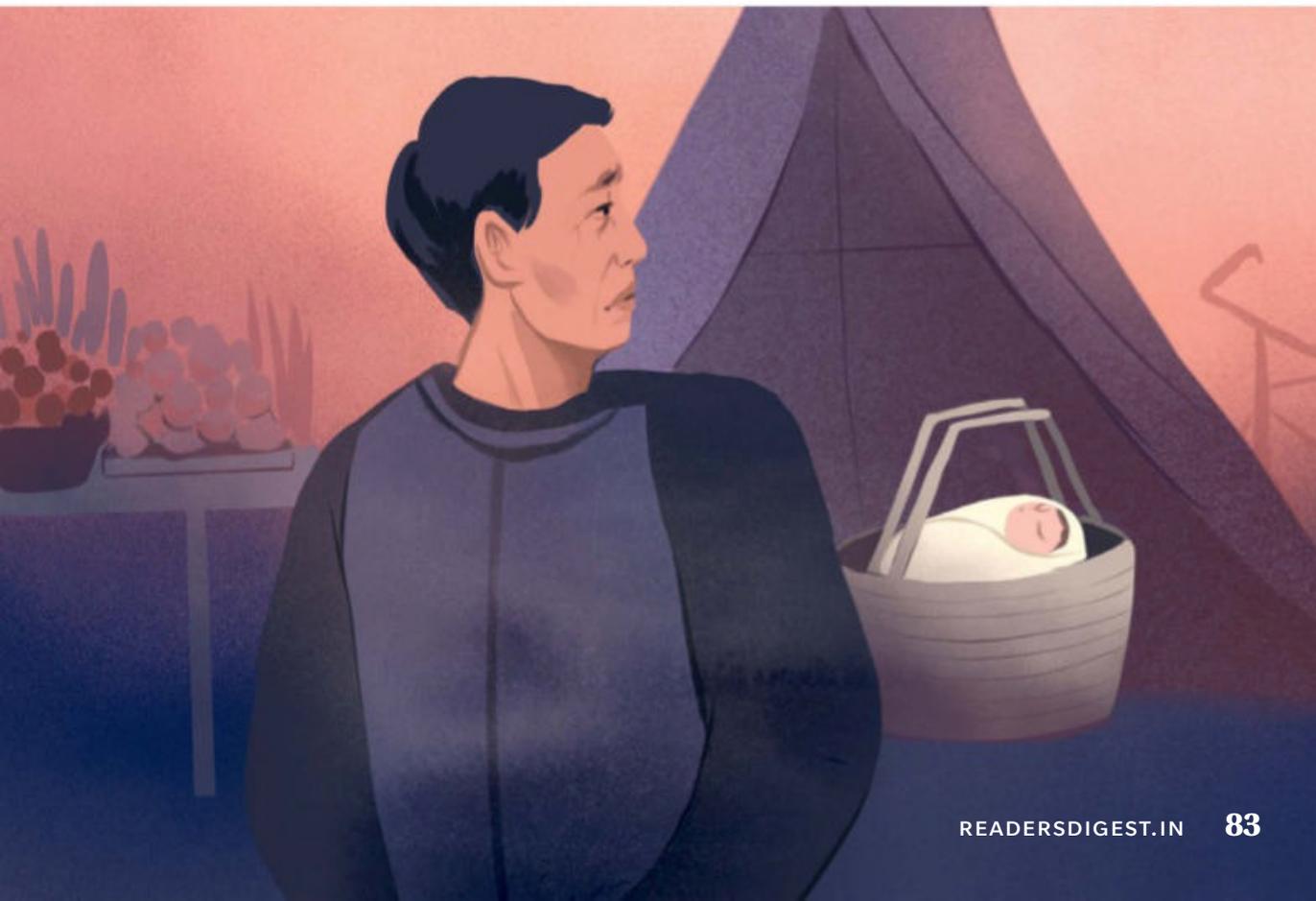
He soon left his job as a trash picker and opened a shop in nearby Hangzhou, where he refurbished and sold refrigerators, washing machines and other appliances. Despite working seven days a week, they struggled to make ends meet.

One day Xu said to his wife, “Our daughter is so lonely. She needs a brother or a sister to keep her company.” They often discussed having another child but knew the government forbade it.

Still, the couple couldn’t get the idea of having a second child out of their mind. Then, in late 1994, Qian fell pregnant.

She hid her pregnancy but family planning officials learned of it when she was seven months along and demanded she undergo an abortion. One late spring evening, as Xu held his wife, he felt their baby moving within her. “It’s like our child is already alive,” he told her. “We cannot kill her.”

The couple decided to offer the baby for adoption to a couple who could not conceive. Qian tried to reason with the local family planning officials, telling them, “I want to save a life.” But they were adamant; she must abort her child.



When Qian and Xu refused, village leaders tore down the couple's house. Terrified, they escaped 160 kilometres north to Suzhou, where they hid on Qian's sister's small boat. They planned to deliver the baby on their own because going to a hospital without a government-issued birth permit would result in a forced abortion.

When Jingzhi was born, Xu cut the baby's umbilical cord with scissors he had sterilized while aboard the small boat. They had hoped friends would



The couple agreed to leave Jingzhi in the market, where she could be found and adopted.

adopt their newborn daughter, but no one could.

Village leaders were still pursuing the couple, threatening to tear down Qian's mother's house as well as her brother's. She confessed to her sister, "We have no hope." In desperation, the couple agreed: They would leave Jingzhi in the nearby market, where she could be found and adopted.

Before Xu set out for the market with Jingzhi, he placed a small bag of powdered milk, a bottle of milk and six (a lucky number) yuan in her basket to wish her good luck on her

journey to find a good family.

He also included a letter he had penned with brush and ink. It read: "Our daughter, Jingzhi, was born at 10 a.m. on the 24th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, 1995. We have been forced by poverty and affairs of the world to abandon her. Oh, pity the hearts of fathers and mothers far and near! Thank you for saving our little daughter and taking her into your care. If the heavens have feelings, if we are brought together by fate, then let us meet again on the Broken Bridge in Hangzhou on the morning of the Qixi Festival in 10 or 20 years from now."

A New Home in America

IT IS 17 August 1996, almost a year to the day after Jingzhi had been abandoned in the market, and she's the centre of attention in the Suzhou Social Welfare Home, an orphanage that has been her home since she was discovered. The little girl with the big eyes is in the arms of her new adoptive parents Ruth and Ken Pohler, an American couple from Michigan who have flown to China to adopt.

"Say 'Mummy.' Say 'Mummy,'" says Ruth as she holds Jingzhi, or Kati, as she has been renamed by the Pohlers, and beams into her smiling face. "She's so beautiful. So sweet," says Ruth as Ken smiles broadly and looks on. The Pohlers, who have two sons of their own, were anxious to add a girl to their family. They were aided by Bethany Christian Services, a child

and family support group that helps arrange international adoptions.

Along with Kati's official papers, the Suzhou orphanage officials give the Pohlers the letter that Xu had tucked into the baby's basket. After boarding the bus to their hotel, Ken hands it to his Bethany translator Xian. He watches her reading it and is amazed when he sees tears rolling down her cheeks. She comes over to Ken and Ruth and explains what the note said.

"What anguish these parents must have been feeling when they were forced to abandon their baby daughter," Ken says to Ruth.

Later, they confess to one another that they are puzzled: How could they ever meet these birth parents, 10 years down the road, on some bridge on the other side of the world? It seemed impossible.

GROWING UP IN the midwestern town of Hudsonville, Michigan (population 7,000), Kati is flourishing. She fits in with the Pohlers and her older brothers Jeff and Steve. She has a natural talent for music and sports and, with her parents' urging, she learns to play the viola, the violin and the piano.

Kati is readily accepted by the close-knit community and has lots of friends. However, by age five she is aware that she is different from them. One day, she asks Ruth, "Whose tummy did I come from? Did I

come from your tummy?"

Ruth pauses, takes a deep breath and tells her, "No honey. You didn't come from my tummy. You came from a lady's tummy in China." Holding back her tears, she adds, "But you came from my heart." That is enough for Kati. The answer seems to satisfy her. She runs off to play with friends.

Occasionally, Kati wonders about her mother in China. Ken and Ruth had placed her passport, orphanage records and other files from her past

"You came from a lady's tummy in China," Ruth tells Kati. "But you came from my heart."

on a high shelf in her closet. Sometimes, thinking about "that woman's tummy," Kati stacks two chairs atop one another and clammers up them to look at the Chinese-language documents and pictures. Among them is the poignant note from Xu.

But Kati does not ask again about her birth parents. From time to time, Ken and Ruth talk about when to tell Kati about her parents and the letter. Ken proposes, "Let's wait until she's older and better able to handle the news or begins asking us more questions." Ruth agrees.



AS KATI'S 10TH birthday nears, Ken and Ruth begin formulating a plan. They put themselves in the shoes of Kati's birth parents and imagine what they would be thinking: *Where does our daughter live? Is she being cared for well? Is she happy and healthy?*" They agree that they would be heartbroken if they had been forced to abandon their child.

They want to reassure Kati's birth parents. But Ruth is concerned about somehow losing Kati. "She's our daughter," she tells Ken. "I don't want to think anyone could take her away."

One evening, they explain their feelings to a friend, Kirk Northouse, who does business in China. They

tell him about the birth father's letter and his hope to meet his daughter or her adoptive parents on the Hangzhou bridge.

The couple tell Northouse that they wish there was a way to reassure Kati's birth parents that she is happy and healthy without exposing Kati or themselves. "She's far too young to handle all this, much less go to China to meet them," they say.

"I have good friends who live near the Broken Bridge," Northouse replies. "They may be able to help."

Over the next few weeks the Pohlers put together a package for the birth parents. They include pictures of Kati growing up and explain that she is a

healthy, happy, accomplished, well-adjusted American girl. They do not include their names or other details.

A China-based friend of Northouse, Anne Wu, agrees to visit the Broken Bridge in Hangzhou on August 11, the date of the Qixi Festival—often described as the Chinese Valentine’s Day—just as Xu had requested ten years earlier, and deliver the package to Kati’s birth parents.

If only it could be that simple.

“If Is a Very Big Word”

XU AND QIAN had returned to Hangzhou a few days after leaving their daughter in the market in Suzhou, but they never stopped thinking about her. The questions nagged at them: *Has she been adopted? Did we do the right thing?*

They reached out to friends in Suzhou to ask their help in locating Jingzhi, but no one could find any trace of her. Frustrated, Xu drew up a list of orphanages in Suzhou. The couple considered going back to inquire about their daughter but knew they would be risking prosecution.

It broke Xu’s heart to watch his wife cry whenever they spoke about Jingzhi. He often reminded her about the letter he’d written, saying, “Let’s hope we will meet her and see how she is doing when she is 10 ... if her new parents bring her to the Broken Bridge.” Every time Xu said it, he thought to himself, *‘If’ ... ‘If’ is a very big word.*

Finally, the 10th-year anniversary

arrived. “Even if our child doesn’t come, surely her new parents will,” Xu told Qian. “Our letter will have touched them. Have faith.”

IT IS JUST past three o’clock on 11 August 2005, and the Broken Bridge, famed in Chinese legend as the place where lovers reunite, is packed with visitors. Holidaymakers on the bridge jostle one another as they search for a better view of the picturesque West Lake for a photo. The

“Even if our child doesn’t come, surely her new parents will,” Xu tells Qian.

sun is beating down; the lake is still.

The three members of the Xu family, including 11-year-old Xiaochen, have been on the bridge since 8 a.m. and are now exhausted. And disappointed. For eight hours Xu has been holding a fan with Jingzhi’s name on it and a copy of the letter he’d left in her basket 10 years ago. But no one among the tens of thousands of people who walked by them has come forward.

The wait today has been especially hard on Qian. For the first time in a decade she thinks there is a good chance her daughter, or her



daughter's adoptive parents, might appear. She has long hoped to hold Jingzhi in her arms, hug and kiss her and tell her how sorry she is about having to leave her in the market.

Will she, or her adoptive parents, understand that she and Xu had no choice? Turning to her husband, who looks so tired under the hot sun, she asks, "Will they ever forgive us?"

Each time she sees a family with a little girl she is overcome with emotion; from initial bursts of joy to searing, painful sadness. She and Xu watch anxiously as taxis dispatch their passengers at the bridge, hoping one might bring them closer to their daughter.

Dejected, depressed and exhausted, Xu turns to his wife just before four o'clock and admits, "No one is coming. Let's go." In tears, Qian nods, holds Xiaochen tightly by the hand, and the three of them leave.

REMARKABLY, SHORTLY AFTER the family leave the bridge, Anne Wu appears. She missed the train from her home in Suzhou and arrived late, carrying pictures of Kati, a long letter from the Pohlers to her birth parents, and a photocopy of Xu's 10-year-old letter.

She looks all over the bridge for Kati's parents, but they are nowhere

to be found. She has missed them by minutes.

Wu is devastated and blames herself. She approaches a television crew on the bridge working a news feature on the Qixi Festival. Did they notice anyone waiting for someone?

“No,” says one of the crew who is intrigued by Wu’s story. “But come to our studio and we can look over the film we shot today.” At the nearby television studio, Wu and the crew scan the footage of visitors to the bridge that day. They see no one who might be Kati’s parents.

“Wait,” says one of the crew. “Let’s slow down the film and look again.” Sure enough, in a single 1/25th-of-a-second frame, they spot a slight, tired-looking man holding a sign and a copy of the letter. The station soon reports the story, asking viewers to help locate the as-yet-unnamed ‘man on the Broken Bridge.’

Other television stations and major newspapers across the nation pick up the powerful human-interest story. The Xu family has no idea that their search for their daughter has become national news.

The Story Creates a Stir

“IT CAN’T BE!” exclaims Lao Guo, a shopkeeper in Hangzhou. As he opens his take-out breakfast of sweet cakes, he notices a grainy photograph in the newspaper that has been used to wrap his meal. “It’s my friend Xu Lida!”

When Lao Guo brings them the

battered newspaper, the couple is speechless. Xu reads the article and begins shaking. “They say someone came to the bridge the day we were there,” he tells Qian. “And she was bringing us news about Jingzhi!” Qian breaks down crying. The miracle they had hoped for is happening.

From a newspaper reporter they learn that Kati has been adopted by an American couple. Through Anne



Qian strokes a picture of Kati as if she were stroking her long-lost daughter’s hair.

Wu they soon receive the pictures and news about Kati that the Pohlers have supplied anonymously.

As Qian stares lovingly at one recent picture of Kati, she strokes it as if she were stroking her long-lost daughter’s hair. She tells Xu, “There’s no doubt that is our Jingzhi. She has my eyes. But she is in America, so far away!”

Xu replies, “She is safe. I just pray that she is not bitter towards us.”

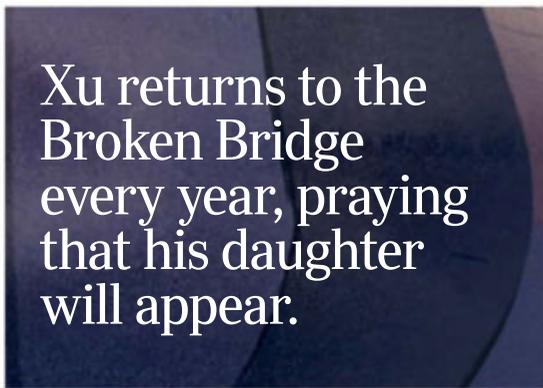
The couple’s story shows no signs of dying down and is picked up by the powerful Chinese Central Television Station (CCTV).

When the Pohlers hear of the stir this story is causing in China, Ken is stunned.

“How did this become such a massive story?” Ruth worries that the Chinese might try to take her daughter back.

Ken tells Ruth, “It’s best we back off. Kati is still so young.”

Kati knows nothing of how famous she has become on the other side of the world. The happy, piano-playing fifth-grader living in a tidy ranch home in rural Michigan is safe in the embrace of her adoptive parents.



WITHOUT ANY INPUT from Ken and Ruth, the story begins to fade in China. But it soon takes a twist when an enterprising US-based documentarian and academic, Changfu Chang, hears of it from a friend in China. Chang has produced several stories on adoption and is intrigued by the Xu family. “It has all the elements of a great story,” he tells a friend and travels to China to research it.

He meets Xu and Qian and films them, along with several other Chinese couples, for his documentary, *Long Wait for Home*, about

international adoption. In it, the couple offer a moving confession to the daughter they abandoned. Looking straight into the camera Xu says, “We think of you every day.”

However, as Chang admits after finishing his documentary, “There’s a major piece of the puzzle still missing. Who adopted Jingzhi? Will Jingzhi ever meet her birth parents?”

Back in the US, Chang searches for clues about the identity of Jingzhi’s adoptive parents. Drawing on details from Ken’s letter—that Jingzhi had a knee problem and that the family enjoyed spending time at the beach—he starts combing through message boards and adoption-related sites. Eventually he identifies a Michigan family who mention that their adoptive daughter once had knee problems. They also live near Lake Michigan, which has numerous beaches.

Chang finds a picture of Ken Pohler online—he looks like the father in the photograph given by Anne Wu. He locates the Pohlers and reaches out to them.

Neither Ken nor Ruth, remembering the ‘media circus’ in China, have any interest in talking with Chang. But he convinces them that he can act as an intermediary between them and the Xu family, passing along news and pictures of Kati without revealing the Pohlers’ identity. They agree and he does not betray their trust. He hopes that someday, *if* everyone agrees, he can do another documentary that

includes Kati and the Pohlers.

As the years go by, Xu and Qian cherish the bits of information about Kati they glean from Changfu Chang. They learn she is doing well in high school, playing in the orchestra and, later, starting college. Occasionally they receive a new picture of Kati and add it to the others they have framed and hung on their walls.

Hoping against hope, Xu returns to the Broken Bridge every year on the day of the Qixi Festival, praying that his long-lost daughter or her adoptive parents will appear. But they never do. As Xu tells a friend, “My hopes have been dashed time and time again. But I won’t give up.”

Reunion on the Broken Bridge

IN 2016, KATI, soon to turn 21, is about to start a college semester in Spain and feels her new classmates may have questions about her background. So she asks Ken and Ruth if they know anything about her birth parents. She is startled when they tell her about the Xu family, give her Xu’s letter, and explain how the birth parents’ story spread through China.

Kati is overwhelmed, then angered. “You knew this all this time and didn’t tell me?” she asks her mother. Ruth and Ken apologize, explaining that they were trying to protect her.

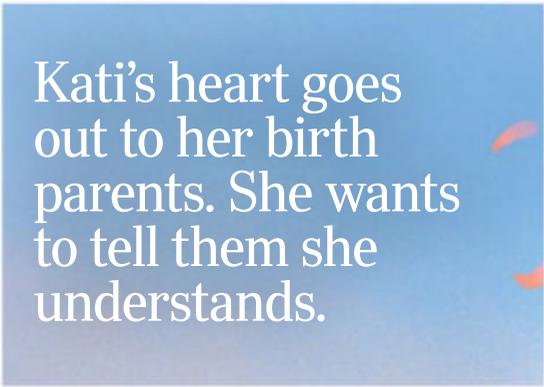
“Time,” Ruth tells Kati, “just slipped by. We are sorry.”

Says Ken, “Honey, we should

have told you earlier. But there’s no book about handling these things. We weren’t trying to hide anything from you.”

Ken and Ruth explain how Changfu Chang has acted as an intermediary for them with Kati’s birth parents. “And he has met your birth parents,” says Ken. “He has also done a documentary about adoption that included interviews with them.”

A few days later Kati is sitting alone



Kati’s heart goes out to her birth parents. She wants to tell them she understands.

in her college audio-visual studio watching *Long Wait for Home*. In raw, heartfelt interviews filmed nearly a decade earlier, her birth parents spill out their hearts, speaking directly to the precious daughter they were forced to give up.

When Qian speaks to her in the video, Kati cannot stop crying. “I love and miss you every day ... I hope you live a happy life. I thank your adoptive parents for giving you a new life and taking care of you ...”

The camera turns to Xu. He wipes tears from his eyes and says, “Every night your mom and I have been

talking about you, thinking of what you look like, where you are living and whether you are struggling or suffering. We thought that our wrong decision might have given you a troubled life ... Every day we love you dearly.”

Kati's heart goes out to her birth parents. She wants to tell them she understands. She wants to tell them that she has no bitterness toward them. They need not feel guilty. After watching the video, she now knows what she has to do.

Kati and Chang keep in touch as she completes her semester in Spain and returns to the US to finish college. She accepts his invitation to fly to China and help him make a documentary about her story. He suggests Kati meet Xu and Qian on the Broken Bridge during the 2017 Qixi Festival.

Ken and Ruth are apprehensive and offer to go with her, but Kati, who has forgiven her parents, explains that “I want to go on my own.” Ruth knows it is Kati's decision.

“I don't want to lose you,” she tells Kati.

Kati holds Ruth's hand and tells her softly, “You are my family. I love you.



Above: the Pohler family (left to right): Ruth, Jeff, Steve, Kati and Ken. Below: Kati's birth family (left to right): Qian, Kati, Xu and Xiaochen.

You raised me. Yes, I have another set of parents but you're my family.”

IT IS THE eve of the seventh day of the seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar. The Qixi Festival starts the next day, 26 August. Kati has flown to Hangzhou to meet—for the first time—her birth parents, Xu and Qian, and her older sister, Xiaochen, on the Broken Bridge.

Xu and Qian have been up all night, unable to sleep because they are so

excited about meeting their daughter after 22 years. As he sits close to his wife, Xu asks, “What can I say to her? Would it help to say I am sorry?” He pauses, takes a breath and adds, “No. 10,000 sorries wouldn’t be enough.”

Hardly able to control her emotions, Qian says, “I will throw myself at her and beg her for forgiveness.”

Kati, approaching the Broken Bridge on foot with Chang, keeps wondering what she will say, how she will feel. It’s time. In minutes her life will change.

The late-afternoon sun bathes the stone-arched bridge and West Lake in a warm glow. Although the Qixi Festival won’t start until the next day, scores of holidaymakers already line the bridge.

Kati, her heart beating fast, scans ahead for the birth parents she has seen only on film. Suddenly she spots a teary-eyed Qian, trailed by Xu and Xiaochen, and a wave of emotion sweeps over her. *Finally! Is this really happening?*

Xu and Qian spot their daughter.

Qian runs free, weeping uncontrollably as she pulls Kati into her arms. Xu, his eyes wide, steadies his wife as she cries, “My daughter! Mum is so sorry! For all these years Mum couldn’t find you. I couldn’t take care of you.” Qian, Xu and Xiaochen all hug Kati tightly.

Kati, back in the country where she was born and reunited with her birth parents, holds Qian tightly. Although she cannot understand what she is saying, she feels her mother’s love.

After years of hoping and years of disappointments, Xu and Qian get the wish Xu expressed so eloquently in the letter he wrote more than two decades earlier: “If the heavens have feelings, if we are brought together by fate, then let us meet again on the Broken Bridge.”

Kati, now 25 and teaching English in Prague, has returned to China several times, most recently for her sister’s wedding. Ruth and Ken Pohler have also visited the Xu family in China. Xu texts Kati frequently, reminding her how much he and Qian love and miss her. 



Words That Are Their Own Opposites

A contronym is a word that is its own antonym. Sound unusual?

You probably use contronyms every day .

Oversight can mean both ‘watchful supervision’ and ‘an inadvertent omission’

Cleave means either ‘to cling/adhere’ or ‘to split/sever’.

AS KIDS SEE IT



“Daddy, it’s time for you to face your fears and stop avoiding my math lesson.”

My son was just two when my daughter was born. For the first six months of her life, we were constantly greeting her with “Hi, sweet girl” or “Hi, my precious baby.”

My daughter is now 18 months old and no matter how much we correct him, my son is

convinced her name is Hi. He’ll say, “Mom, Hi is awake. Hi is hungry.” Or my absolute favourite, “Hello, Hi.”

—REDDIT.COM

While I was lying next to my four-year-old, he looked into my eyes, parted my hair to the side and said, “Mommy,

I can’t rub the lines out of your face.”

—[@MUMINBITS](#)

After my five-year-old got a new haircut, he told his classmate:

“A robber came in the middle of the night, took my hair and made it into a wig!”

—RIVKA JAKUBOVIC

I remember talking to my eight-year-old son about growing up. He said, "Dad, I want to be just like you." Before I could complete my huge grin, he added, "But richer."

—MOHAMMED QUADRI

Dubious claims my toddler made this week:

- ◆ He invented the 'thumbs up'.
- ◆ Only 'some' lizards can read.
- ◆ He forgot how to eat carrots.
- ◆ His daycare allows swords.

—@HENPECKEDHAL

My seven-year-old drew a self-portrait, gifted it to herself and hung it up on her wall. From now on, I'm making her my life coach.

—@GFISHHANDNUGGETS

I told my six-year-old that I'm 38 and she started crying. When I asked why, she said, "I'm just sad because old people die." I'm both touched that she loves me so much and

When asked by a friend at daycare why she has two moms, my four-year-old answered that her dad was eaten by a shark.

—@BAKEKATER

depressed that she thinks my life expectancy is that of a farmer in the 17th century.

—CLINT EDWARDS, *writer*

My six-year-old:

I figured out the password to the tablet and bypassed the parental controls to download all my shows.

Also my six-year-old:

Help! I put both my legs in the same pant hole and now I'm stuck!

—@NOT_THENANNY

A brief history of my 11-year-old's attitude toward wearing shorts:

School in winter: Shorts

Bedtime: Shorts

Camping: Shorts

Walking the dog on a wet and windy day:

Shorts

Expedition to the

North Pole: Shorts

Voyage to the moon:

Shorts

—@THREETIMEDADDY

While I was repairing my six-year-old granddaughter's dresser, I heard the following exchange between her and her friend:

My granddaughter:

That's my grandma. She's our fix-it-up person. Do you have a grandma?

Her friend: No, I have a nanna.

My granddaughter:

Well, you should really get a grandma.

—PATRICIA POWER

Kindergarten teacher on Zoom: What's your favourite pie?

My kid, panicking:

I don't know, I haven't had a chance to try them all yet!

—BETH REVIS, *writer*

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

IN A LEAGUE OF HER OWN

Actor Shefali Shah on her passion for filmmaking, show-don't-tell performances and journey towards greater creative control

BY *Suhani Singh*

When many actresses struggle to find meaty roles in their 40s, you are thriving professionally at 48. It must be fulfilling to finally get your due.

It feels amazing to finally do the work that I have always desired. Now roles are written for me. My work was always appreciated earlier as well, but it didn't translate into strong roles. There were offers that came my way but I chose to say no. I don't regret those decisions. I came to the understanding that the kind of work I like doing doesn't

come along every day. If it's something that feels right in my gut, then I will do it. I don't have a very long resume, but a strong one.

You have dabbled in TV, film, short films and web series. How much has the latter empowered you as an artist?

It has, a lot. *Delhi Crime* [on Netflix] actually changed things professionally for me. Finally, people are writing scripts for me. Filmmakers believe I have the capacity to carry a show or film on my shoulders. I am



PHOTO: NETFLIX

getting the roles of central characters and ones befitting my age. *Delhi Crime* was my learning curve. It changed the way I worked.

How so?

It was an eight-hour-long film about a five-day story. Every small thing mattered and it was all connected. While I had a role model in front of me [IPS officer Chhaya Sharma], Vartika had to be her own person. When they talk about international actors rereading a script over 100 times and more, I understand that now. I had never worked so hard—the show really pushed me. Earlier I used to feel that this is a scene and now I have to work on it, but now I realize that the scene comes right at the end. First is my character as a person—who she is, has been and her attitude.

Delhi Crime became the first Indian streaming show to win an International Emmy Award. Season two is slated to release this year. Do you feel the burden of expectations?

The Nirbhaya rape and murder case tackled in season one affected everyone deeply, so it is difficult to match up to that in some ways. The first season was magic, and magic cannot happen every time. Having said that *Delhi Crime 2* has to be treated as an individual show and not seen in comparison to the previous one. We have a different creative team which is bringing their best to the table.

You have been typecast as a mother many times, yet your portrayal never feels repetitive because one ends up seeing different shades of women.

As a mother to two sons, I have to say that no moment is the same as the last one. There is no rule book for being a mom and you have to keep evolving with them. Children are going to rebel, be needy, disapprove and be embarrassed of what you do or say. It is all part and parcel of being a mom. I chose roles because they were part of very good scripts and not because the part was that of a mother. *Once Again* was about a woman who finds love in her 40s and in *Dil Dhadakne Do* she is someone trying to find agency.

Actors depend on powerful prose to express themselves. In *Ajeeb Daastaans* you had minimal lines and had to learn sign language to emote. Did you relish the challenge?

It's not just with *Ankahi* [one of the four stories in *Ajeeb Daastaans*]. I strongly believe that if you can say something with two words then don't use four. In fact, I am terrified of monologues! Actors have this innate need to show how good they are in every scene. I feel like '*Mat dikhaao, kya zaroorat hai?*' [What's the need to show off?] If you are true to your character, everything will fall in place. All the directors I have worked with will tell you that the first thing I do is start shredding my lines. It probably shows in my work.

“ONLY NOW HAVE I REALIZED THAT A SCENE COMES RIGHT AT THE END. FIRST COMES MY CHARACTER AS A PERSON—WHO SHE IS, HAS BEEN AND HER ATTITUDE.”

Writer-directors can be a little possessive about scripts. Do they approve?

Until now, most directors have been receptive. I read the script, make notes, ask questions and find solutions. It is not an approach I started with, but I have gradually grown into a space where I don't need to say much—when I can just show it, especially when the camera can catch the smallest nuance.

Was your husband, filmmaker Vipul Shah, familiar with this method of yours when he directed you in the upcoming web series, *Human*?

I entered with my script and my diary and Vipul and Mozez [Singh, co-director] looked at me and said “We will have to delay the shoot because this will never get over”. By the time our script sittings were done, Vipul pulled my leg and said, ‘10 *episodes ka show tha, ab bas paach bache hai* [This show was supposed to have 10 episodes; now only five remain].

You have been acting for 25 years. How do you look back on your creative journey so far?

Initially it was slow, disappointing,

and it had nothing to do with anyone else. There were choices I made and I don't regret any of them. Everything that's come my way has been worth the wait. Finally I am where I wanted to be. It is interesting that it didn't happen when I was younger.

You have also forayed into writing and directing.

I have been wanting to direct for a very long time, but it is a big responsibility so I wasn't sure I could take it. The stories emerged from the things I was feeling during the lockdown. One of the two shorts I have made centres on the idea ‘If disease doesn't kill you, distance will’. It really stayed with me.

Tell us about your upcoming projects.

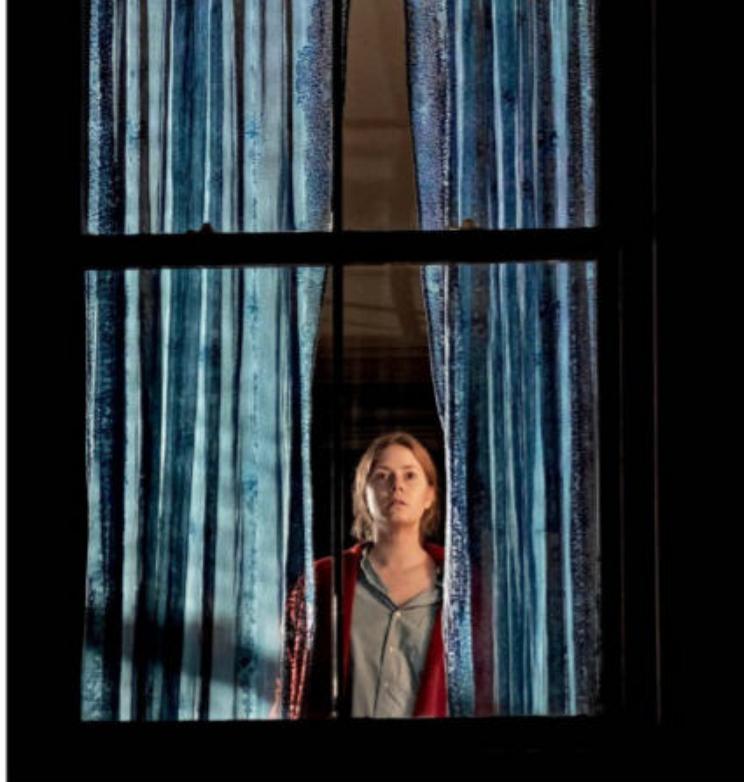
Human is about the underbelly of the medical world: the human drug trial. It is gritty, raw and real, and deals with caste and class differences. In the dark comedy *Darlings* [Alia Bhatt's maiden production] I play a wicked character. I play a doctor [with Ayushmann Khurrana] in *Dr G*, which is a sensitive yet funny film. *Delhi Crime* season two is shot but we need to some post production and patchwork. 

RD RECOMMENDS

Films

ENGLISH: Agoraphobic child psychologist Anna Fox (Amy Adams) barely leaves her room. When a seemingly perfect family moves across the street, she is intrigued and starts spending more time at her window. Then, suddenly, she witnesses a brutal crime. Adapted from A. J. Finn's best-selling thriller, **THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW** also stars Gary Oldman and premieres on Netflix on 14 May.

HINDI: After having travelled to the Venice Film Festival last year, **MILESTONE** will stream on Netflix from 7 May. Directed by Ivan Ayr, who had earlier directed the path-breaking *Soni*, the film tells the story of



Actor Amy Adams in a still from *The Woman In The Window*.

Ghalib, a truck driver, who while trying to come to terms with a personal tragedy, touches a professional milestone—his truck clocks 5,00,000 km. Sadly, he risks losing his job to a younger recruit.



Suvinder Vicky as Ghalib in *Milestone*

Omprakash Mehra last collaborated with actor Farhan Akhtar in 2013 for *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*. There was one thing this biopic of runner Milkha Singh proved—the pair understands the beat of a sports film. Releasing on Amazon Prime Video on 21 May, **TOOFAN** has all the hallmarks of a classic boxing film—a ruffian from Dongri takes up the sport, tastes success, stumbles and then rises again.

TELGU: When an autorickshaw driver finds a camera in the

backseat of his three-wheeler, his friend tells him it's the same kind of gadget that's used to make movies that star the likes of Mahesh Babu and Prabhas. Together, they, too, resolve to make a hit movie for one important reason—to bring electricity and water to their village. **CINEMA BANDI**, a heart-warming comedy, streams on on Netflix from 14 May.



Film poster for *Cinema Bandi*

#WATCHLIST: ON OUR RADAR

The Underground Railroad

An adaptation of Colson Whitehead's 2017 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of the same name, this limited



Thuso Mbedunin in *The Underground Railroad*

series tells the story of young Cora (Thuso Mbedu). Having escaped the Georgia plantation, Cora discovers that rumours of the Underground Railroad—a secret network of tracks and tunnels that help runaway slaves—are true. Premiering on Amazon Prime Video on 14 May.

***Master of None Season 3*:** The show's first two side-splittingly funny seasons saw its protagonist Dev (Aziz Ansari)



A still from *Master of None*

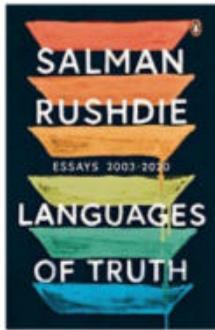
make sense of the immigrant experience. Streaming on Netflix from May 23, the third season will shift its focus to Denise (Lena Waithe) and her partner Alicia (Naomi Ackie). Expect jokes, yes, but also a whole host of existential questions.

Books

Languages of Truth: Essays 2003-2020 by Salman Rushdie, Penguin Hamish Hamilton

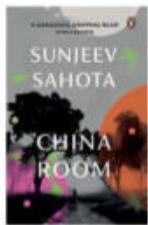
When thinking of Salman Rushdie's oeuvre, we usually think of novels like *Midnight's Children* and the *Satanic Verses*.

What gets discounted are books like *Imaginary Homelands* and *Step Across This Line*, collections of non-fiction that illuminate and entertain in equal measure. Thankfully, for us, the author is releasing a new collection of essays, criticism



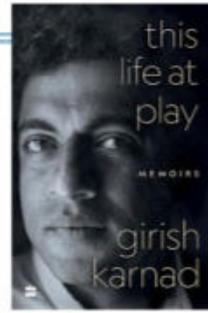
and speeches this month. Always incisive and at times inspiring, together the pieces will track the evolution of culture and language.

Written between 2003 and 2020, this volume tells the story of the early 21st Century, its landmarks and failures. There are also pieces on migration and multiculturalism here that make *Languages of Truth* unputdownable.



YOU MAY ALSO LIKE ... China Room by Sunjeev Sahota (Penguin Hamish Hamilton):

Ever since Sunjeev Sahota's *The Year of the Runaways* was shortlisted for the 2015 Booker Prize, his readers have been eagerly anticipating his next book. Releasing this month, *China Room* is a multigenerational novel that speaks of love, oppression and freedom. As a woman tries to discover the true identity of her husband, her 1929 narrative intersects with a man's who struggles with addiction in the present day.



Scope Out This Life at Play: Memoirs (Fourth Estate):

Girish Karnad wore many hats—playwright, actor, director and administrator. In this memoir of his youth, he offers wit and candour.

Are You Enjoying? (Bloomsbury): Both funny and devastating, this short story collection marks the debut of Mira Sethi, one of the most exciting literary voices to recently emerge in Pakistan.

The Book of Indian Ghosts (Aleph): Riskundar Banerjee, an authority on all things paranormal, tracks the advent of India's spirits, from *chudails* in North India to *mechho bhoots* in West Bengal.

Music

TUNE IN

Song: 'Lady L' (Live at Berklee)
Artists: Berklee Indian Ensemble
 ft. Ustad Zakir Hussain

Ustad Zakir Hussain was presented an Honorary Doctorate by the Berklee College of Music in 2019. To celebrate the tabla maestro's life and work, the Berklee Indian Ensemble took the stage with him, performing 'Lady L', an iconic track that appears on Shakti's second album, *A Handful of Beauty* (1976).

Composed by violinist L. Shankar, one remembers 'Lady L' as a light and lyrical tune, but seeing Hussain perform it all these years later, we are reminded of how complex the percussion always was.

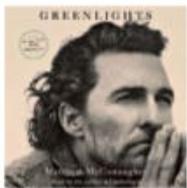
The Berklee Indian Ensemble, a collective of highly talented students, are not over-enthusiastic while per-



Tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain (left)

forming with Hussain. They ensure their instrumentation never eclipses Hussain's mastery. 'Lady L', with its constant ebbs and flows, is also the perfect song for them to perform. As the song rises and falls from its several crescendos, Hussain consistently wows us with the dexterity of both his fingers and his music. Uploaded on YouTube in November last year, 'Lady L' is a treat for nostalgists and fans.

LISTEN



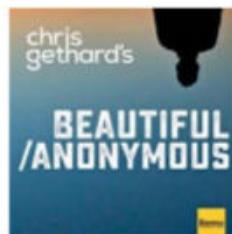
AUDIO-BOOK:
 Narrated by actor Matthew

McConaughey in his trademark Texan drawl, **GREENLIGHTS** invites us to grapple

with life's problems the way the actor once did. There's catharsis and understanding here.

PODCAST:
 As comedian Chris Gethard speaks on the phone with an

anonymous caller for an hour in each episode, he ensures that the podcast



BEAUTIFUL/ANONYMOUS becomes a lesson in empathy.

—COMPILED BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

REVIEW

The Path of the Artist

The Disciple is a poignant tribute to the world of Indian classical music and its forgotten practitioners

BY *Jai Arjun Singh*

CHAITANYA Tamhane's *The Disciple* (Netflix) could just as well have been titled 'discipline.' This is the quality that Sharad (Aditya Modak) has to organize his life around, and we witness both his patience and frustrations as he comes to terms with the possibility that he might never find a proper foothold in the world he loves. Is he good enough, as a singer or as a student?

Slow-paced as this Marathi film may seem, it becomes a hypnotic



A still from the Marathi film, *The Disciple*

experience as you become invested in the central character and his journey. The narrative moves around in time, giving us glimpses of Sharad's childhood and the present day, where he tries to draw succour from audio recordings of talks by a long-deceased teacher named Maai (voiced by Sumitra Bhave).

Tamhane's long takes and almost-static shots—characteristic of his earlier feature *Court*—work wonderfully for this subject matter. In the musical performances, the camera sometimes moves only very slightly forward, as if mindful of

intruding on the performers' space.

The Disciple is driven by its attention to detail and its many little vignettes—the mildly chastened look on Sharad's face when his guru tells him, mid-performance and in front of a seated audience, "No, you aren't listening", or the slow escalation to hostility when the mother of one of his students asks that her boy be allowed to take time off to perform with a 'fusion' band. It is a story about the relationship between art and artists, as well as a lament for things that have come to be seen as elitist, outdated or both. **R**



STUDIO

Untitled *(Banaras Ghat)* by Ram Kumar

Oil on canvas,
76 x 81 cm

IN 1960, artists M. F. Husain and Ram Kumar arrived on the ghats of Banaras. Husain was garrulous while Kumar was reserved. They reached the city in the middle of a winter night. An otherwise bustling

Banaras resembled a ghost town. Kumar would later say, “I thought the city was inhabited only by the dead and their dead souls. Every sight was like a new composition, a still life artistically organized to be interpreted in colours.” Deeply impacted by the space, suffering what he called “metaphysical anguish”, Kumar stayed on in Banaras even after Husain left. His art, as a result, transformed forever. As Kumar began

painting Banaras in 1966, he moved from a figurative style to an abstract one. In this painting, for instance, the artist concentrates only on Banaras’ architecture, giving it a Cubist expression. Though Kumar was fascinated by the buildings themselves, he felt they had “an inner life of their own, deep and profound”. This, perhaps, is something Kashi’s new architects must remember. **R**

— BY SHREEVATSA NEVATIA

LIFE'S

Like That



"I don't want to add to your humiliation, but you have some kibble stuck in your teeth."

It was my wedding day, and no one was happier than my 78-year-old mother. But as she approached the church doors, an usher asked, "Which side are you on?" "Oh, no," she said. "Are they fighting already?"

—JOSEPH HUBISZ

Aguy joined our Zoom class shirtless, so the

tutor told him to turn his video off. He did as told, and up popped his profile photo: a picture of him shirtless at the beach.

—[@AUDROCUR](#)

I had to rethink where I ranked in my

family's hierarchy when my sister and I found our dad holding court amid friends at a party.

"Oh, gentlemen," he said, pointing to my sister. "Let me introduce you to my daughter Terri. And this," he said, motioning to me,

I don't get it when I see skinny people running ... aren't you done???

—[@JACKIES_BACKIE](#)

“is my daughter Terri’s sister, Gayle.”

—GAYLE SALTER

Looking for the perfect Wi-Fi network name? Borrow one of these tried-and-true ones:

- ◆ I Pronounce You Man and Wi-Fi
- ◆ Wi-Fi Fo Fum
- ◆ Mom, Click Here for Internet
- ◆ Lord Voldemort
- ◆ Vladimir Computin
- ◆ Click Here for Viruses

—Rd.com

Recipes used to be terse instructions handwritten on an index card. Now you scroll through a Paris engagement story before you get to how to make the soup.

—[@LIZHACKETT](#)

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

My sister came across a movie poster online that showed a man passionately kissing a woman in the pouring rain. “How come you’ve never kissed me

like that?” she demanded of her husband.

He shrugged, saying, “We never get that much rain.”

—YEFIM M. BRODD

SCENTS AND ODD SENSIBILITIES

If you’re a fan of Chanel No. 5, these five perfumes may or may not pass the smell test. But they are real. So ask for them by name, hopefully without gagging.

Funeral Home: Its manufacturer, Demeter, calls it a blend of “lilies, carnations, gladiolus, and chrysanthemums, with a hint of mahogany and oriental carpet.”

Garage Eau de Toilette: Take a whiff of Garage, says luckyscent.com, and you’ll recognize traces of kerosene and leather with plastic floral notes.

Powell’s by Powell’s: Named after a famous bookstore in Portland, Oregon, it boasts hints of violet, wood, and “biblichor”—the musty smell of old books. This perfume re-creates “a labyrinth of books; secret libraries; ancient scrolls; and cognac swilled by philosopher-kings,” according to Powell’s.

Eau de Stilton: This perfume “re-creates the earthy and fruity aroma of Blue Stilton cheese,” insists the website [Now Smell This \(nstoperfume.com\)](http://NowSmellThis.com).

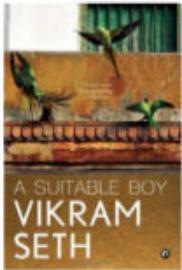
Horse: From the perfumery For Strange Women, this aroma recalls a well-stocked stable with notes of “hay, dry musk, leather and oats,” says basenotes.com.



PHOTOLOGY1971/GETTY IMAGES (PERFUME BOTTLE), SUBJUG/GETTY IMAGES (CHEESE)

ME & MY SHELF

Mumbai-based journalist and author **Taran N. Khan** has written for *Guernica*, *Al Jazeera*, *The Caravan* and *Himal Southasian*. Her debut book *Shadow City: A Woman Walks Kabul* won the 2021 Stanford Dolman Travel Book of the Year prize.



A Suitable Boy

BY VIKRAM SETH,

Aleph Books, ₹1,499

Reading Vikram Seth's opus as a student, I experienced the unfamiliar frisson of finding people

I could recognize in a book. Revisiting it recently, I was taken by Seth's grip on emotion and ear for dialogue. Cracking and wise, melancholic yet hopeful, this is a rare book that has aged well.

Tales of the Amber Sea: Fairy Tales of the Peoples of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

TRANSLATED BY IRINA ZHELEZNOVA, *Raduga Publishers, Currently unavailable*

This pick is a stand in for all the beautifully illustrated, cheaply priced books from the former Soviet Union that were available when I was growing up in the 1990s. Reading about Vasilisa the Beautiful, wicked Baba Yagas and the adventures of Dennis was an essential

part of childhood, and widened the horizons of my world.

Invisible Cities BY ITALO CALVINO, *RHUK, ₹399*

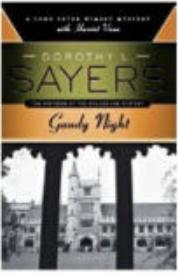
Is there a better book about cities, about the very idea of exploration, about journeys and memory? I return to this slim volume often, as a reminder of the capaciousness of language, and how vistas shift depending on how we approach them.

Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War

BY SVETLANA ALEXIEVICH,

W. W. Norton & Company, ₹1,247

A work of reportage that changed how I saw Kabul, and how I see journalism. Alexievich arranges the voices of her protagonists into a symphony of loss, betrayal and vulnerability. "I strive desperately (from book to book) to do one and the same thing—reduce history to the human being", she writes.



Gaudy Night

BY DOROTHY L. SAYERS,
Harper Paperbacks,
₹1,308

Starring the stellar Harriet Vane—feisty author and detective, who solves a poison pen crime while being wooed by the brainy Lord Peter Wimsey—and set in a fictional all-women's college in Oxford in the 1930s, (Sayers was one of the first women to receive a degree there), this sparkling work is as much about the inner lives of women as it is a thriller.

Letters to a Young Poet

BY RAINER MARIA RILKE, *Penguin Classics*, ₹450

German poet Rilke responded to a teen-aged military student and aspiring poet's request for advice by refusing to offer any. "No one can advise or help you—no one. There is only one thing you should do. Go into yourself." The 10 letters in this slim book are inspiring meditations: on the writing life, the quest for authenticity and the need to embrace doubt. "This most of all: ask yourself in the most silent hour of your night: must I write?"

Meatless Days BY SARA SULERI,
Penguin, ₹499

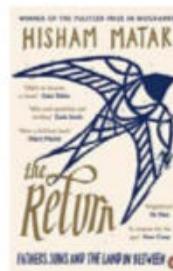
Suleri breaks the mould of South Asian women's memoirs with this book. Original and dazzlingly innovative in her language, she describes life in Lahore with her siblings, formidable grandmother, Welsh mother and journalist father, each essay zigzagging across time

and space, often leaving much unsaid. A weird and wonderful jewel.

Raga'n Josh: Stories from a Musical Life

BY SHEILA DHAR,
Orient Blackswan, ₹595

This is a love letter to Indian music and to the eccentric, consummate performers of the form. Sheila Dhar would have been the ideal lockdown buddy, with her hilarious flow of anecdotes, eye for detail and wicked sense of humour, leavened by her passion for ragas.



The Return: Fathers, Sons and the Land in Between BY HISHAM MATAR,
Penguin, ₹499

The Libyan writer's memoir about his father, who was imprisoned during Gadaffi's era, both breaks your heart and fills you with hope. Matar writes about his country, and his father's long absence, with moving simplicity and courage. This is a book about tyranny and resistance, families torn by violence, and the abiding love between father and son.

Hoshruba: The Land and the Tilism, BY MUHAMMAD HUSAIN JAH,
Urdu Project, ₹2,670

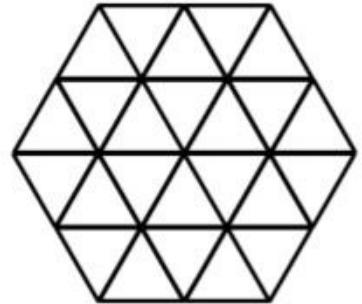
The translation of these *dastans* from Urdu by Musharraf Farooqi is an immersive introduction to the fabulous *tilism*, or magical realm, populated by fairies, sorcerers and shape-shifters of all kinds. Hard to stop reading once you start. **R**

BRAIN GAMES

7 Pages TO SHARPEN Your Mind

Shape Up

Difficult This hexagon is made of identical equilateral triangles (triangles with three equal sides). If you don't count rotations or reflections, then there are three different shapes you can make by joining four such triangles fully edge to edge. First, determine what these three shapes are. Next, figure out how to use two copies of each of them to make the hexagon. There's only one solution (not counting rotations and reflections).



Rectangles

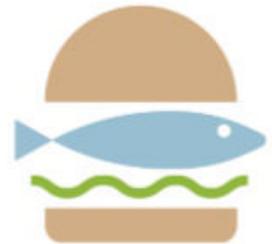
Easy Subdivide this region along the grid lines into non-overlapping squares and rectangles. Each of these rectangles or squares must contain exactly one number that matches the number of small cells that make up its area. Can you draw the correct boundaries?

9							12
			6	6			
			3				
					2		
			12				
	6			6			
10							8

Fishy Business

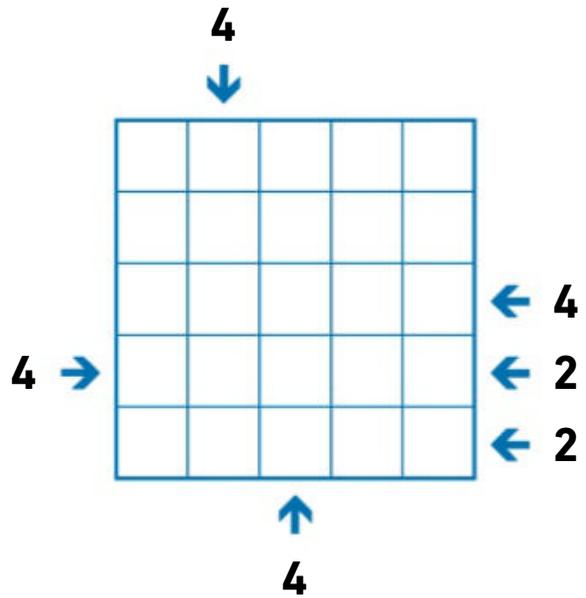
Easy

Thoibi is volunteering for a programme delivering meals to people with limited mobility, and she has a budget of ₹100 to shop for fish-burger ingredients. It costs ₹4 for a package of 10 fish patties and ₹3 for a package of eight buns. How many packages of each should she buy to maximize the number of fish burgers she can assemble? She can have extra ingredients left over, but she won't serve a patty without a bun or vice versa.



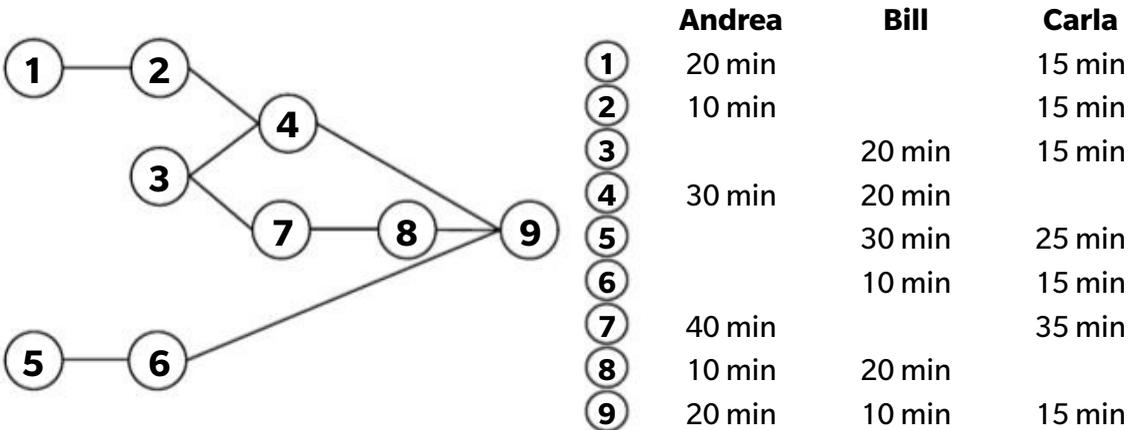
Skyscrapers

Moderately difficult This grid represents a bird's-eye view of a city's downtown core. Place a number from 1 to 5—representing a building's height in storeys—in each square so that no two buildings in any row or column have the same height. The numbers outside the grid tell you how many buildings are visible in the corresponding row or column to an observer looking in from that direction. Higher buildings block the view of lower ones behind them. Can you determine the heights of all 25 buildings?



It's a Process

Difficult There are nine steps to building a widget, but certain steps can only be started once other ones are finished. This process is diagrammed in the flow chart: if a line joins two circles, the circle on the left marks a step that must finish before the one on the right can begin. You have three workers, though not every worker is trained to perform every step. You've noted the length of time it takes each worker to complete each step they can do. If they started now, how soon could you have a brand new widget in your hands?



For answers, turn to PAGE 112.

(SKYSCRAPERS) FRASER SIMPSON; (IT'S A PROCESS) DARREN RIGBY

BRAINTEASERS ANSWERS

FROM PAGES 110 & 111

Shape Up



(or a reflection or rotation of the same solution).

Rectangles

9									12
				6	6				
				3					
								2	
					12				
		6				6			
10									8

Fishy Business

Thoibi should buy 13 packages of patties and 16 packages of buns. She'll spend exactly ₹100 and assemble 128 fish burgers.

Skyscrapers

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

It's a Process

In as little as 70 minutes.



BY *Jeff Widderich*

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

To Solve This Puzzle

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

♦ every horizontal row and vertical column contains all nine numbers (1-9) without repeating any of them;

♦ each of the outlined 3 x 3 boxes has all nine numbers, none repeated.

SOLUTION

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


WORD POWER

What do fettuccine, football, grasshoppers and a carryall have in common? If you think you're seeing double, you're right—each of those words contains two sets of repeated letters, as do all the words this month. Will your answers be errorless? Don't be embarrassed to turn the page for the answers.

BY Sarah Chassé

1. buccaneer *n.*

(buh-kuh-'neer)

- A early settler.
- B pirate.
- C bullfighter.

2. terrazzo *n.*

(tuh-'raz-oh)

- A mosaic flooring.
- B seasoned pork.
- C public square.

3. heedless *adj.*

('heed-less)

- A outgoing.
- B inconsiderate.
- C unselfish.

4. muumuu *n.*

('moo-moo)

- A sweetheart.
- B wild ox.
- C loose dress.

5. settee *n.*

(seh-'tee)

- A place mat.
- B sofa.
- C tennis match.

6. hippogriff *n.*

('hih-puh-grif)

- A mythical animal.
- B early automobile.
- C complainer.

7. bassoon *n.*

(buh-'soon)

- A court jester.
- B woodwind instrument.
- C hunting dog.

8. skiddoo *v.*

(skih-'doo)

- A joke around.
- B tap-dance.
- C depart.

9. guerrilla *n.*

(guh-'rih-luh)

- A large monkey.
- B outlaw soldier.
- C grilled pita.

10. milliwatt *n.*

('mih-luh-waht)

- A tooth whitener.
- B unit of power.
- C earthworm.

11. abbess *n.*

('ab-ess)

- A deep wound.
- B convent leader.
- C grand estate.

12. fuddy-duddy *n.*

('fuh-dee-duh-dee)

- A old-fashioned person.
- B sticky candy.
- C mock turtleneck.

13. lessee *n.*

(leh-'see)

- A free trial
- B rope trick.
- C renter.

14. kookaburra *n.*

('kuh-kuh-burr-uh)

- A vegetable stew.
- B giant oak tree.
- C Australian bird.

15. riffraff *n.*

('rif-raf)

- A questionable character.
- B expert surfer.
- C fishing fanatic.

Home of the Triple Double

Even more rare than words with double double letters are those with three pairs of doubles. You'll find a few of them on the map of the United States, many with an indigenous origin. There's Tallahassee and Kissimmee in Florida, the Chattahoochee River, Mississippi and the grand champion: Goodlettsville, Tennessee.



Word Power ANSWERS

1. buccaneer (B) *pirate.* After the raid, the band of buccaneers divvied up their loot.

2. terrazzo (A) *mosaic flooring.* Tamanna installed cheery green-and-white terrazzo in her guest bathroom.

3. heedless (B) *inconsiderate.* "How can you be so heedless of my feelings?" Dipak asked, looking heartbroken.

4. muumuu (C) *loose dress.* While visiting Goa, I bought two flower-patterned muumuus.

5. settee (B) *sofa.* Our dog Harpo likes to nap on our vintage settee despite having a bed of his own.

6. hippogriff (A) *mythical animal.* According to legend, a hippogriff has the front half of an eagle and the hind half of a horse.

7. bassoon (B) *woodwind instrument.* Erica is the only bassoon player in her high school's orchestra.

8. skiddoo (C) *depart.* "I'd love to stay and chat, but I have to skiddoo!" Amit said as he left.

9. guerrilla (B) *outlaw soldier.* The guerrilla leader hatched a plot to overthrow the government.

10. milliwatt (B) *unit of power.* A milliwatt is equal to one thousandth of a watt—not enough to give off much light!

11. abbess (B) *convent leader.* The younger nuns looked to their abbess for guidance.

12. fuddy-duddy (A) *old-fashioned person.* Call me a fuddy-duddy all you like, but I'm still not getting a smartphone.

13. lessee (C) *renter.* Per the contract, the apartment's lessee pays the cable bill.

14. kookaburra (C) *Australian bird.* The kookaburra's call sounds like fiendish laughter.

15. riffraff (A) *questionable character.* Mom says that in her day, people who got tattoos were considered to be total riffraff.

Vocabulary Ratings

9 & BELOW: good

10–12: gold

13–15: god



QUIZ

BY *Samantha Rideout*

1. Which common cloud type most resembles a fluffy white cotton ball?
2. What Canadian-born media personality is a household name in China but is virtually unknown in his homeland?
3. The leopard seal is an apex predator on which continent?
4. What was the first human-made object to orbit the earth?
5. With a 74-game winning streak, who is the most decorated Jeopardy champion?
6. Heart attacks are more common during spring, compared to other seasons. True or false?
7. In Western art, what is a memento mori?
8. In which country were robotic wolves with flashing red eyes recently deployed to scare off bears?
9. What Spanish building did Frank Gehry design using software first made for the aerospace industry?
10. A factory in the US sells around 80,000 washboards each year to customers who use them for decorating, washing clothes or what other purpose?
11. Which form of arthritis most commonly affects the large joint of the big toe?

12. Which one of these technologies is the newest: the compass, irrigation or gunpowder?

13. What beloved children's book characters were created by Finland's Tove Jansson?

14. Initially, many European scientists didn't believe this animal was real because it seemed to be part mammal, part reptile. What is it?



15. Rhubarb's stems are delicious and nutritious, but which part of this plant is toxic for humans?

Answers: 1. Cumulus. 2. Mark Rowswell, known in China as Dashan. 3. Antarctica. 4. The Soviet satellite Sputnik 1. 5. Ken Jennings. 6. False: they're more common during winter and summer. 7. A symbol or artwork intended to remind the viewer of their mortality. 8. Japan. 9. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. 10. Making music. 11. Gout. 12. The compass, which dates as early as the 11th century. 13. The Moomins. 14. The platypus. 15. The leaves.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

When your mother asks, “Do you want a piece of advice?” it’s a mere formality. It doesn’t matter if you answer yes or no. You’re going to get it anyway.

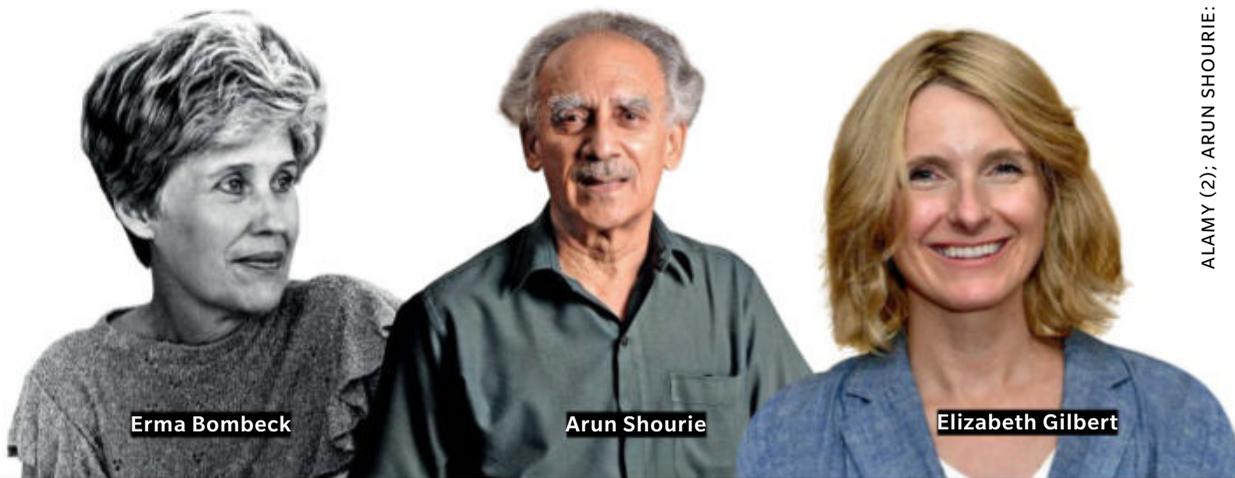
Erma Bombeck, *writer*

One thing in the universe surely flies faster than light—and that is time.

Arun Shourie, *journalist and politician*

You can measure the happiness of a marriage by the number of scars that each partner carries on their tongues, earned from years of biting back angry words.

Elizabeth Gilbert, *author*



ALAMY (2); ARUN SHOURIE: SHEKHAR GHOSH (INDIA TODAY)



Relation banaya ki customer gavaya? Have sambandh, nahin toh sab Bandh. JAGDEEP KAPOOR, brand guru



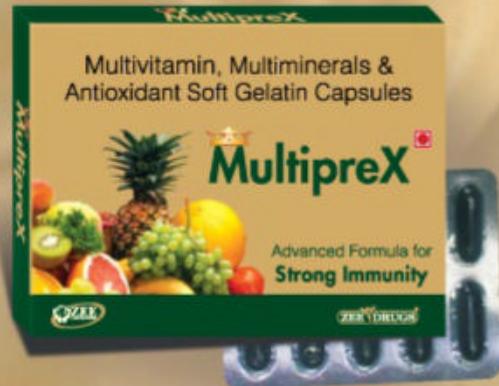
Call or WhatsApp on 8291100591 • enquiry@samsika.com • www.samsika.com
Copyright © 1995. Jagdeep Kapoor



MultipreX™

Advanced Formula For Strong Immunity

Capsules • Syrup • Oral Drops • Powder
Multivitamin, Multiminerals & Antioxidants



**Boost's Immunity, Fullfill's Vitamins & Mineral
Deficiency & Protects from Diseases**



ZEE LABORATORIES LTD.

A Complete Cosmetic Range

9896134500

Available at all leading chemist stores