



seniors

TODAY

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Life & Times

The Hidden Health Crisis in Ageing India

Urinary Tract Infections among the elderly are
rising quietly, often misdiagnosed and
underestimated

PLUS

Harsh Goenka: Bowled Over at Seventy
Vickram Sethi: The New Language of Grandparenting
Vandana Kanoria: Okinawa Lessons in Longevity

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Why Awareness Is the Best Defence Against UTIs

Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) are not the sort of thing one discusses over polite conversation. Which is perhaps why they remain one of the most underestimated health risks among seniors.

The numbers, as our Cover Story points out, are quietly alarming. What appears to be a minor irritation can escalate with surprising speed into something far more serious, even life-threatening? The body, after 60, does not always send out loud alarms. It whispers. Sometimes, it simply behaves differently. A bit of confusion, a sudden bout of fatigue, a change in behaviour. Easy to dismiss, but risky to ignore. What makes UTIs particularly troublesome in older adults is not just their prevalence, but their subtlety. The infection often masks itself as something else entirely. By the time it is recognised, it has already advanced.

And yet, for all the concern, this is not an unsolvable problem.

Much of it comes down to awareness and small, consistent habits. Hydration. Hygiene. Not delaying a visit to the bathroom. Managing underlying conditions like diabetes. Ensuring mobility where possible. These

are not dramatic interventions, but they are effective ones.

There is also a broader point here. As a society, we tend to accept a certain decline in health as “natural” with age. It is a convenient assumption. It is also, in many cases, incorrect. A sudden change in mental state is not always “just ageing”. It may well be the body asking for attention.

The reassuring part is that UTIs, when identified early, are treatable. The dangerous part is how often they are overlooked.

If there is one takeaway from this issue, it is this: vigilance matters. Not alarmism, but attentiveness. For seniors, and for those who care for them, a little caution can go a long way in avoiding a great deal of distress. Some problems in life are complex. This, fortunately, is not one of them.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vickram Sethi".

Vickram Sethi
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

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Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) among Seniors

The prevalence of Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) among senior citizens in India has emerged as a silent crisis within geriatric care, writes *Dr Soumyan Dey*

The prevalence of Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) among senior citizens in India has emerged as a silent crisis within geriatric care, as recent data from the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI) suggests that approximately 2.5% to 3% of the elderly population experiences symptomatic infections.

However, in acute clinical settings, these figures are often much higher, with some hospital wards reporting prevalence rates reaching 24%. This trend isn't just about hygiene, it's also because our bodies start to wear out after we turn 60. As the body

ages, our bladder muscles become less flexible, which means they don't always empty out completely. So, there's always a little bit residual urine left in the bladder, which is like a still puddle where bacteria can quickly grow.

In India, where the aging population is growing significantly, understanding how our bodies change and react to different conditions is crucial. That's the first step to helping one's own self. It is recommended that one should look at the urinary tract as more than just a waste disposable system. It's actually a delicate part of our body that needs to be regularly flushed out and taken care of to help keep off other severe infections.

As the demographics reveal, it is found that women are more likely to experience such infections. But as people get older, especially in their 70s and 80s, the

difference between men and women doesn't remain as big. So, for the elderly, it is a universal concern.

However, the biological triggers behind these infections often differ significantly between genders as they enter their sunset years. In women, menopause leads to a sharp drop in estrogen, which in turn alters the pH balance and the natural bacterial flora of their vaginal area. Without these protective "good" bacteria, harmful pathogens like *E. coli* (the primary cause of most UTIs) can easily migrate from the digestive tract into the urethra.

For men, the primary risk factor is Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH), or an enlarged prostate. As the prostate grows, it begins to squeeze the urethra, obstructing the free flow of urine and forcing the bladder to work harder to expel waste. When the bladder fails to empty fully, the risk of infection skyrockets.

Furthermore, health problems such as diabetes play a massive role. When blood sugar isn't kept in check, sugar ends up in the urine, making it a perfect feast for bacteria. Diabetic neuropathy can also make it harder for someone to tell when their bladder is full. This means an older person might not realize they need to go to the bathroom until bacteria have already

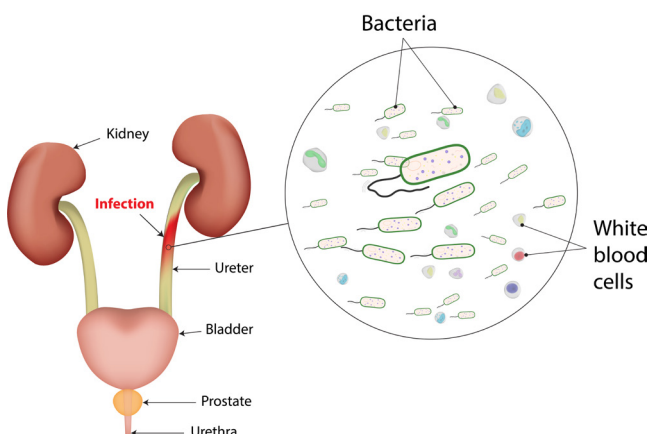
started causing an infection. How a senior lives and moves around also matters. If it's hard for them to get to the bathroom often, they might drink less or hold their pee. Both of those things give bacteria more time to grow in their system.

To fully understand the impact of a urinary tract infection (UTI), it's important to know that the urinary system is divided into two parts: the "lower" and "upper" tracts. The lower urinary tract includes the urethra and bladder, while the upper urinary tract consists of the kidneys and the tubes (called ureters) that connect the kidneys to the bladder. A lower UTI occurs when bacteria enter the urethra and travel up to the bladder. This can lead to inflammation and discomfort, causing symptoms such as a frequent urge to urinate, pain or burning while urinating, and lower abdominal pain. This type of infection is commonly referred to as cystitis.

If a lower UTI is not treated quickly, the bacteria can spread further, traveling up the ureters to the kidneys. When this happens, it results in an upper UTI, which is more serious and is called pyelonephritis. An upper UTI can lead to much more severe symptoms and complications, such as high fever, nausea, vomiting, and pain in the back or side. If left untreated, an upper UTI can cause permanent damage to the kidneys, lead to bloodstream infections (sepsis), or even cause organ failure.

It's really important to know how this all develops. For older people, a simple bladder problem can turn into a dangerous kidney infection surprisingly fast. You know, it's a good idea to think about mobility as more than just being fit. It's actually really important for your urinary

Urinary Tract Infection



health too, because moving around helps your body get rid of waste properly.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of UTIs in the elderly is the “atypical presentation.” Youngsters usually talk about a sharp burning feeling or needing to go to the bathroom a lot, but someone over 60 might not feel any pain at all initially. Instead, the main thing you might notice is delirium, which is a really sudden and noticeable change in someone’s mental state. Someone who was totally clear-headed yesterday might suddenly get confused, upset, or even start seeing things. They might feel really tired, not want to eat much, or start falling down a lot.

As we get older, our body’s ability to fight off infections’ changes. One of the ways our body usually signals that something is wrong is by developing a fever when we have an infection. However, in older adults, this usual response may not happen. Instead, the only signs that something is wrong might show up in the brain, like sudden changes in behaviour or mental abilities. These changes in the brain are often the first signs of an issue, because the immune system in older adults does not always react to infections with a fever. Therefore, if there is a sudden shift in a person’s personality or cognitive abilities, it should never be dismissed as just part of getting older or simply dementia. It’s important to first rule out the possibility of an infection as the cause.

The inflammatory response triggered by a UTI can cross the blood-brain barrier in older adults, disrupting neurotransmitters and causing what many clinicians call “acute brain failure.” Fatigue and behavioural changes should be viewed as primary symptoms rather than secondary effects in this age group.

In these situations, diagnosis calls for a meticulous and nuanced approach. Asymptomatic Bacteriuria (ASB) is a common trap, but the usual methods include a urine culture to identify the exact bacteria and a urinalysis to check for white blood cells and nitrites. This is the term used to describe the presence of bacteria in the urine that do not genuinely cause symptoms or an infection. ASB is rather prevalent in the elderly, and it is advised not to overtreat these instances with antibiotics.

Inappropriate use of antibiotics for “quiet” bacteria does not help the patient and actively adds to the worldwide antibiotic resistance epidemic, making it more difficult to treat potentially fatal illnesses in the future. Only individuals exhibiting symptoms, whether cognitive or physical, are eligible for true treatment, which usually entails a focused course of antibiotics. Since the “guesswork” approach frequently fails with the more complex bacterial strains present in elderly people, identifying the exact strain through culture is crucial to ensuring the drug is effective.

Two key components in treating and managing health conditions are quick action and supportive care. Quick action means starting treatment as soon as possible, while supportive care involves helping the body in ways other than medication. One important recommendation is to complete the full course of antibiotics prescribed, even if the patient feels much better after just a few days. Stopping the medication early, when the patient feels fine, can lead to the infection returning or becoming resistant to the antibiotics. In addition to medication, maintaining good hygiene is crucial. This

includes washing hands and keeping the body clean, as it helps prevent the spread of harmful bacteria. Staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water is also essential. Water helps flush out toxins and bacteria from the urinary system, acting like a natural cleanser that physically removes harmful invaders from the body. It's also vital to provide the patient with proper support in terms of nutrition and rest. A well-balanced diet and enough sleep are necessary for the body to recover and for the immune system, especially in older individuals, to function effectively in fighting off infections.

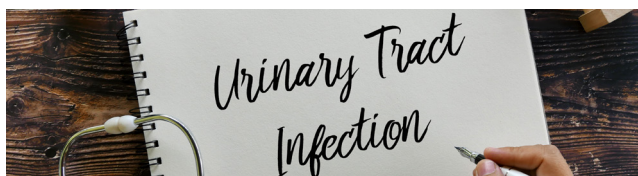
Neglecting a urinary tract infection (UTI) in older adults can lead to severe, even life-threatening consequences. If the bacteria from a UTI enter the bloodstream, it can cause urosepsis, a serious form of sepsis that is one of the leading causes of death among the elderly. Sepsis occurs when the body's immune system reacts excessively to the infection, attacking its own organs and causing a dangerous drop in blood pressure. This overwhelming immune response can harm vital organs, making the situation even more critical.

Even if the infection is detected early, recurrent UTIs can still lead to long-term damage, such as chronic kidney disease, which significantly reduces the quality of life. In addition, major infections like UTIs can cause physical weakness in the body. Older adults may also experience delirium, a state of confusion or disorientation, which can further impact their ability to function independently. To prevent such outcomes, it is essential for older individuals and their caregivers to focus on prevention. A strict cleaning routine is crucial, including the "front-to-back" wiping technique. This helps prevent harmful bacteria from

the intestines from reaching the urethra and causing infection. It is also important to change adult briefs and incontinence pads promptly after they become wet, as moisture can promote the growth of bacteria, increasing the risk of infection.

For individuals with limited mobility, it is advised to follow a "timed voiding" routine. This involves going to the bathroom at regular intervals, typically every two to three hours, even if they don't feel the urge to urinate. This practice helps ensure that the bladder is emptied regularly, reducing the risk of infections or complications. Additionally, managing any underlying health conditions, such as diabetes, plays a crucial role in preventing urinary issues. By maintaining a healthy diet and taking prescribed medications, individuals can control their blood sugar levels. This is important because high blood sugar (glucose) provides an environment where bacteria can thrive, increasing the risk of infections. There are also preventive steps that can further support urinary health. Wearing cotton underwear, for example, allows the skin to breathe and helps maintain proper hygiene. Drinking enough water is equally important, as it helps flush out toxins from the body, keeping the urinary system functioning properly and reducing the likelihood of infections. By combining these habits, individuals can better maintain their urinary health and reduce the risk of complications.

Through these habits our elders can surely stay well and free from the unseen threat of illness by cultivating a culture of alertness and proactive care.





Bowled Over at Seventy

For a generation raised on restraint, technique and white flannels, it's astonishing how completely the IPL has swept us off our dignified feet, writes Harsh Goenka

The Indian Premier League (IPL) was not designed for us. The music is too loud, the jerseys are too gaudy and a match ends at midnight. And yet, here we are, absolutely hooked. Let me confess something. Last Tuesday at 11:47 PM, I was standing in my living room in my pyjamas, pumping my fist in the air like a twenty-two-year old watching the batsman hit a six off the last ball to win a match. My wife looked at me from the doorway with the expression she usually reserves for when she is about to say 'we need to talk'.

IPL is our generation's guilty pleasure. We came of age watching five-day Tests where a draw was celebrated like a victory,

where the phrase "building an innings" was a moral philosophy. We were raised on the gospel of Gavaskar which is patience, technique, respect for the crease. And now we sit watching a man reverse-scoop a ball over his own head for six and our first instinct, after the initial cardiac episode, is: "My God, that was beautiful."

We grew up with cricket as a religion. IPL turned it into a nightclub. And somehow, against all odds, we still showed up.



Then and Now: A Study in Contrasts

Consider the great Sunil Gavaskar. The man scored 10,122 Test runs with the calm, unhurried authority of a retired judge writing his memoirs. He wore white. He appealed rarely. He once batted through an entire day without once appearing to perspire. Now consider your average IPL opener: tattoos, blue streak of hair under a fluorescent helmet, a walk-in song that could wake the dead, and a brief that says 'score 50 in five overs or we'll find someone who will.' Same sport. Different civilisation entirely.

We seniors are the original purists. We remember when a dot ball was not a failure but a declaration of command. Today, dot balls are treated with the alarm usually reserved for medical emergencies. Commentators gasp. Twitter erupts. The batsman looks apologetically at the dugout as if he's knocked over a priceless Ming vase.

Cricket as we knew it: five days, possibly a draw, no refunds; white flannels, the colour of dignity; playing for the crease, the country, posterity; a fast bowler who ran in 40 overs a day; a crowd that applauded a fine cover drive; captains who thought in sessions, sometimes in days; commentary that said 'and he's played that with great restraint'; retirement at 35 considered premature.

IPL as it is now: three hours, result guaranteed, cheerleaders included; neon jerseys, the colour of a Holi party; playing for the franchise, the auction, the brand deal; a fast bowler who bowls four overs, earns ₹12 crore, and does a protein shake ad; a crowd that does a Mexican wave during the bowler's run-up; captains who think in deliveries, sometimes in DRS reviews; commentary that

screams "WHAT A SHOT! ABSOLUTE CARNAGE! SENSATIONAL!"

How We Watch It: The Senior's Survival Guide

Here is the truth about how seniors actually watch IPL, and it is gloriously different from the marketing fantasy of young fans in their team jerseys. We watch it in armchairs, often with the volume at 40% because someone in the house is asleep. We watch with a glass of warm milk or, for the braver among us, a single malt nursed across two overs. We pause it to use the bathroom and feel no guilt whatsoever.

We fall asleep in the 17th over and wake up in the 19th and, here's the beauty of T20, we have missed absolutely nothing that can't be understood from the scoreboard. Nobody needs to know. We recalibrate in seconds, assess the situation with the practiced calm of a man who has survived many corporate crises, and immediately have a strong opinion about the field placement.

We also watch it with superior knowledge. While the twenty-five-year-old in the next room is impressed by a bouncer, we are comparing it to Marshall's action, Lillee's intent, and Kapil's wrist position from the 1983 World Cup. Our commentary, delivered to nobody in particular, is richer, deeper, and significantly more accurate than anything on Star Sports. Our spouses disagree. We are right anyway.

The young fan sees a six and claps. The senior sees a six, and talks about its entire genealogy going back to CK Nayudu.

What We Can Still Teach Them

For all its carnival energy, IPL desperately

needs what our generation carries in its bones: context. When a young commentator calls a 160-run chase 'impossible,' we smile. We were there when Kapil Dev hit four sixes in a row at Tunbridge Wells with India at 17 for 5. We know what impossible looks like. This isn't it.

When a batter gets out attempting a ramp shot and the studio panel dissolves into analysis, we shrug. Recklessness dressed as innovation is still recklessness. Some things don't change. And when a young fast bowler sprays three wides in the death overs, we don't need Hawk-Eye to tell us what went wrong. We have watched enough cricket to diagnose a problem with our feet up.

The greatest gift our generation brings to IPL is perspective. We have watched enough cricket to know that talent is common and character is rare. We can spot which of these young men will still be playing at thirty-five and which will be forgotten by the next auction. The ones who run hard between the wickets, who set their own fields quietly, who walk back to the pavilion without theatrics- we know all about them.

The Joy of Being Here For It

Somewhere along the way, we stopped being resistant. We learned to enjoy the sixes even if we mourned the dot balls. We learned to appreciate the athleticism even while we missed the artistry. We downloaded the Hotstar app with some help from our grandchildren, who found our confusion hilarious and our eventual mastery of the pause button genuinely moving.

And here is the thing about being a senior watching IPL in 2025- we have earned this.

We paid our dues across rain-interrupted Tests, scratchy transistor radios, and black-and-white television sets with antenna adjustments between every over. We are the ones who kept cricket alive in the lean years, before glamour and sponsorship money arrived to make it fashionable. Cricket owes us a good time. IPL, with all its noise and neon and spectacular excess, is delivering on that debt.

So this season, settle into that armchair. Pour whatever suits your doctor's advice. Let the cheerful chaos wash over you. Argue with the television. Compare every young spinner to Bishan Bedi and Lance Gibbs and every young batter to Vishwanath and Viv Richards and refuse to be told you're being unreasonable. Cheer loudly for the older players still in the mix- the men who, like us, refuse to acknowledge that their time is past.

And if you fall asleep in the 18th over and wake up to find your team won, do celebrate. You were there for the whole thing. Just not necessarily awake.





Tribute to Miniben Shah

Miniben Shah is an Advocate at the Bombay High Court, holding qualifications of B.Com. LL.B.

She inherited her passion for law and social service from her mother, Mrs. Kapilaben Shah, and her maternal grandfather, K. K. Shah, who began his career as a brilliant criminal lawyer before entering public life. During the tenure of Indira Gandhi, he served in the Union Cabinet as Minister of Information & Broadcasting, Health, and Urban Development, and later became the Governor of Tamil Nadu.

Miniben proudly says that she has inherited the spirit of social service from both her mother and grandfather.

According to her philosophy, just as we save from our earnings for a better future, we should also donate selflessly to earn blessings and create a better life for others. She remains deeply grateful to God for making her an instrument for many noble causes.

She is actively associated with several respected organizations dedicated to social welfare and women empowerment, including:

**Vice President Giants Group of Chowpatty
Lohana Mahila Mandal
Antarrashtriya Vaishnav Parishad
Bharatiya Stree Seva Sangh**

**Khadayata Stree Mandal Mumbai
Giants Saheli Group of Chowpatty
Nana Nani Khusiyaan**

She is also associated with many other institutions working tirelessly towards empowering women in society.

Miniben believes that women are the backbone of every family and the guiding force behind the future generation of India. By helping women become self-reliant and financially independent, society can create a stronger and more prosperous nation.

She feels honored to be present at events where organizations unite selflessly to serve needy women and uplift their lives with dignity and opportunity. According to her, these children and families are the future of our great country, and empowering women means empowering India itself.

Inspired by the vision of Narendra Modi, she believes that every individual and organization should work in their own way towards nation building and social upliftment.

Miniben Shah's Philosophy

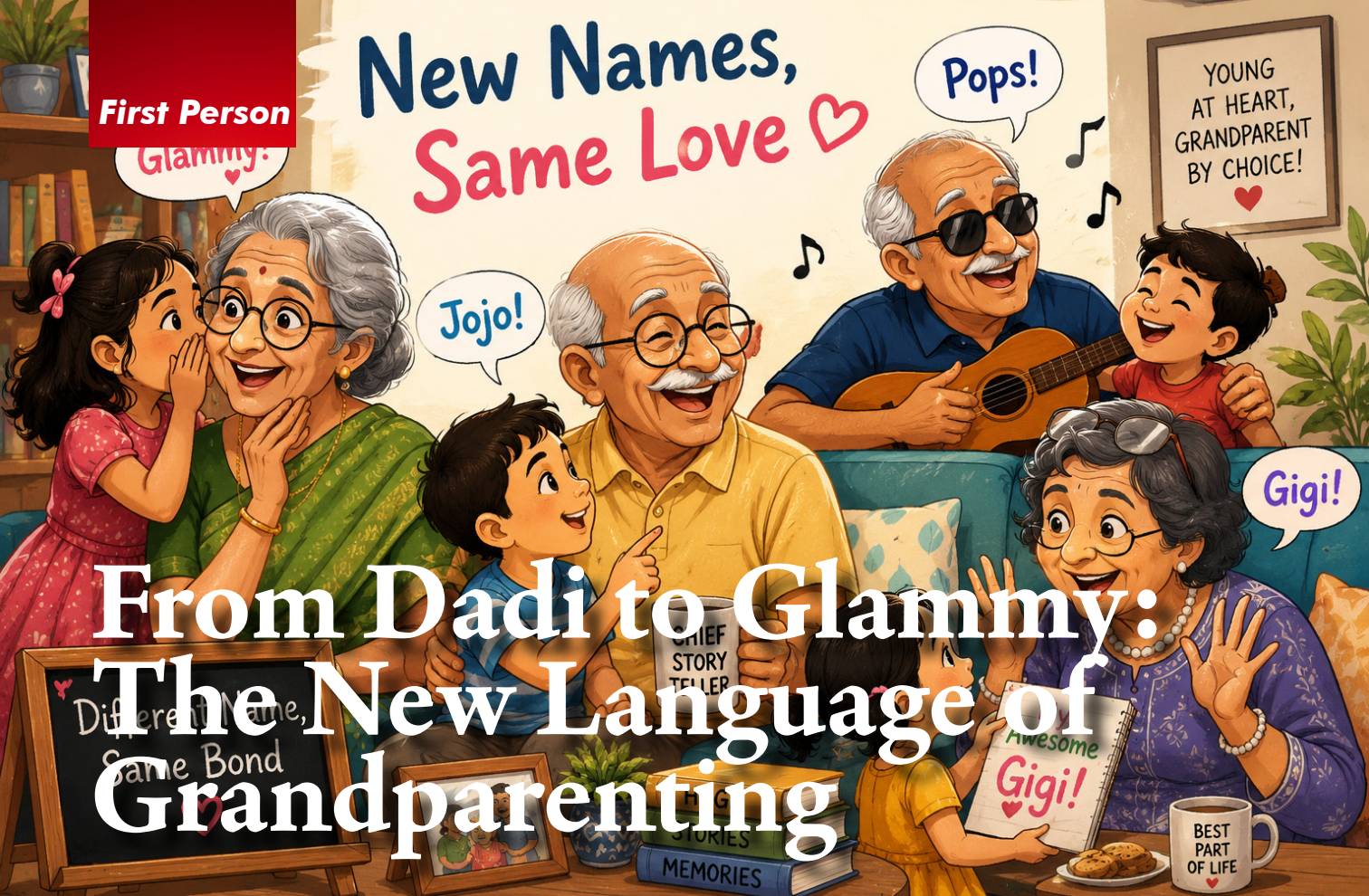
"Give more to society than you take from it."

Community Support & Sponsorship Highlights

- ✦ Peak Education for Children Welfare – A generous contribution of ₹25,000/-
- ✦ Bharatiya Stree Seva Sangh – Women Empowerment sponsored a special women empowerment program with a contribution of ₹1,00,000/-
- ✦ Laughter Day – Khadkhadahat Show for Seniors organized a grand laughter show with sponsorship support of ₹1,00,000/-.
- ✦ Antarashtriya Vaishnav Parishad generously donated ₹3,00,000 for the Grand Mahaprasad & Dinner.
- ✦ Santoshi Mataji – Served as the Mukhya Yajman and generously donated ₹5,00,000/- to Prempuri Ashram in support of spiritual and charitable activities.

First Person
Glammmy!

New Names, Same Love



From Dadi to Glammmy: The New Language of Grandparenting

Across Indian families, grandparents are quietly reinventing themselves, beginning with what their grandchildren call them, writes *Vickram Sethi*

Baby news has a way of sending even the calmest of expectant parents into a flurry as they search for the perfect name for their soon-to-arrive child. But increasingly, another equally spirited search is unfolding quietly in many Indian families. This time, it is the grandparents doing the searching — not for the baby's name, but for their own.

There was a time when becoming a grandparent came with a ready-made title. You stepped into the role and, almost by default, became Nanna, Dada, Nana, Granny, Aajoba or Paati. The names were comforting, familiar, and handed down like heirlooms. They carried warmth,

respect, and a quiet dignity.

But something interesting is happening today. Grandparents are gently setting aside some of these traditional labels and choosing names that feel more personal, more playful, and sometimes more reflective of who they are.

At first glance, it may seem like a small shift. After all, what is in a name? Yet, if one listens closely, these choices reveal something deeper about how people now see ageing, identity, and their place within the family.

The grandparent of today is not quite the same as the grandparent of a generation ago.

Many people are becoming grandparents while still deeply immersed in active lives. They travel independently, discover new hobbies, attend yoga classes, experiment with cuisines they had never heard of thirty years ago, and occasionally

understand technology better than their own children. Retirement no longer signals a slowing down in the way it once did. For many, it marks the beginning of an entirely new chapter.

In such a context, the traditional image of a grandparent sitting quietly in a corner, wrapped in routine, no longer resonates with everyone. And so, the names evolve. Some choose variations of their own names. A Meena may become Minima, a Rajesh could turn into Raju Papa, while a Sunita might delight in being called Sunny Ma. Others borrow from global influences — Grandma, Pops, Mimi, Gigi. Some names are carefully chosen. Others emerge accidentally from the delightful linguistic inventions of toddlers and stay forever. There is also gentle humour in this shift. Many grandparents admit, with a smile, that they simply do not feel old enough for certain titles.

A South Delhi grandmother recently confessed that she could not quite imagine herself responding to “Dadima”. “It sounds like someone who wears only white saris and complains about blood pressure,” she laughed. She preferred Glammy. Not because she rejected tradition, but because she still saw herself as energetic, social, and fully alive to the world around her. And perhaps that is the heart of this quiet cultural change. These new names are not acts of rebellion. They are acts of self-definition.

Previous generations often accepted ageing as a gradual shrinking of identity. Society assigned you a role, and you stepped into it quietly. Today’s seniors are less willing to disappear behind stereotypes. They wish to remain visible as individuals while embracing new family roles.

Interestingly, this change is not only driven by grandparents. Children, with their delightful spontaneity, often play a role too. What begins as a toddler stumbling over syllables can quickly become a permanent family title. An Aajoba may become Jojo. An Aajji may become Jiji. Before long, it feels as though the name had always existed.



Yet, despite all the changing terminology, the essence of grandparenting remains beautifully untouched.

A grandmother holding her grandson for the first time described it simply: “I felt such deep love, my heart melted. I love my grandchild like my own child, but I know I cannot have him with me all the time.” That perhaps explains grandparenthood better than any sociological theory ever could.

There is a tenderness to this phase of life that feels different from parenting. Parents carry the burden of responsibility. Grandparents often carry the luxury of affection. They become custodians of stories, secret chocolates, indulgence,

family history, and emotional safety. When a grandchild insists on sleeping beside a grandparent, it is rarely because of what they are called. It is because of the sense of comfort and security they feel in that presence.

And that is why, ultimately, the bond between grandparent and grandchild is not defined by a title. It is defined by the time, attention, patience, and love invested in the relationship.

Of course, not everyone feels the need to move away from tradition. For many, the classic names still hold a special place. They carry memories of childhood, echoes of their own grandparents, and a comforting sense of continuity. And that is the beauty of modern Indian families today. The old and the new coexist quite happily.

In one home, a child may call out “Nanu!” from the kitchen. In another, “Gigi!” over a

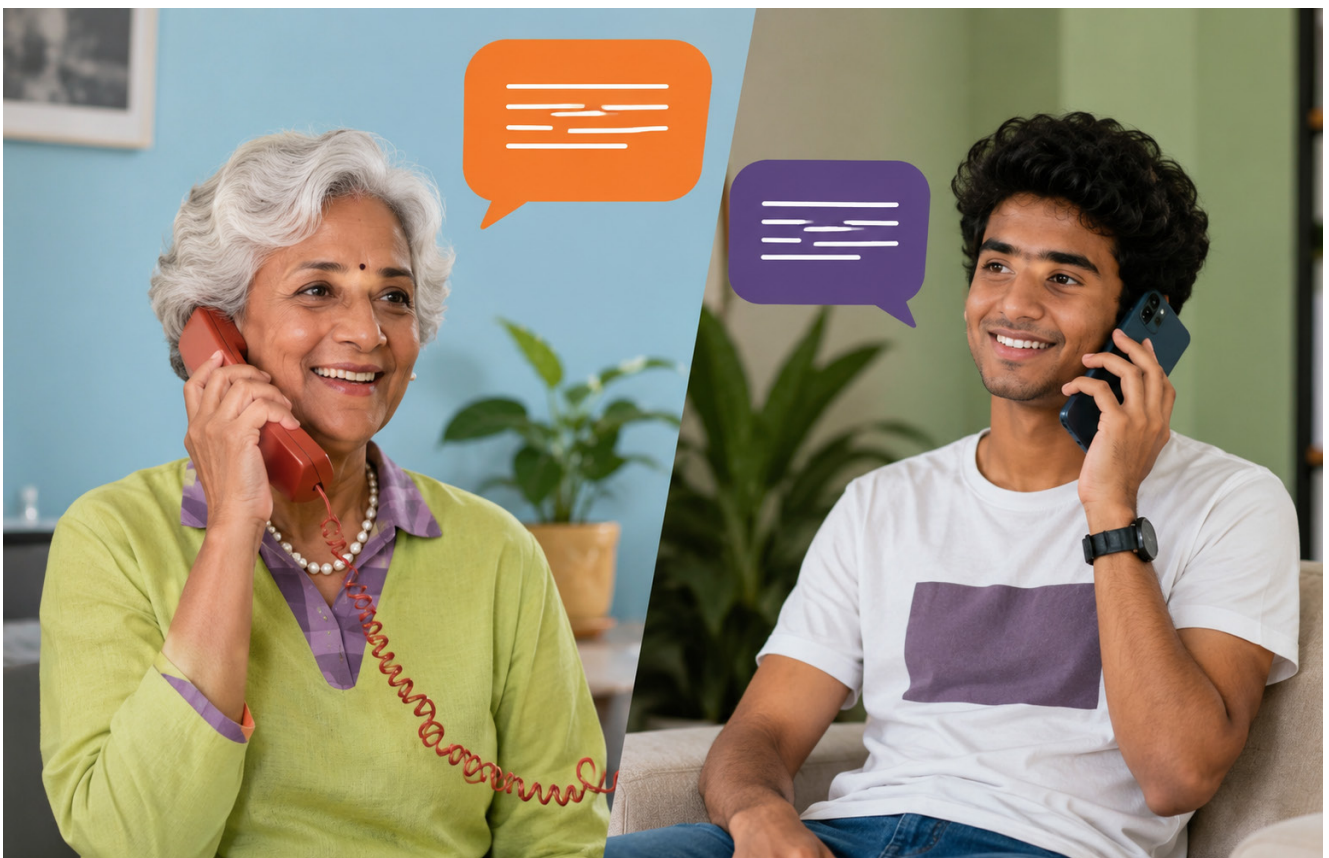


video call. Both carry the same instinctive affection.

What matters most is the relationship behind the name. Whether one is called Nanu, Dadu, Dadi, Glammy, or something entirely invented by a toothless toddler, the privilege remains the same.

To be loved by a child who sees you not as old, but as home.

In the end, it is not really about tradition or modernity. It is about love, memory, and the many ways in which we choose to live — and be remembered.





Bow and Take a Bow

Let our humility come to the fore and respect for others manifest in our behaviour, writes *Nagesh Alai*

Over the past few days I have been in the process of shifting homes necessarily involving decluttering, discarding and donating of house hold and kitchen items. A sizeable chunk of utensils, crockery, pulses, grains and sundry other food items were handed over to the cook who has been with us during our stay in a temporary rented accommodation. Since there were several items and packages, the cook had to call her teenage daughter, who had just passed her 12th standard exams, to help her take the stuff away. I had never met the daughter before. The moment she entered the apartment and saw me, she put her palms together in salutation and touched my feet. I was taken aback by her

prostration, but instinctively responded with a namaskar and blessed her by placing my right hand over her head. The age-old Indian cultural custom of revering and regarding elders and seeking their blessings has seen a gradual erosion over the years amongst the independent minded youth driven as much by their questioning everything status quo as by intellectualising everything. The teenager's action was heart-warming and touching more so because it requires courage to be humble and confidence to bow to someone unknown.

I have been practising that well-instilled custom till date well into my late sixties, as do many of my contemporaries. In one of my usual debates with my own two sons over the years, I have heard their resistance to conformation while being agreeable to doing it for anyone who they see as worthy and have made a difference to them. Their contention was that age does not

necessarily mean wisdom and they would be hence averse to practice it universally, but most certainly selectively. They were but representative and reflective of their generation and I was understanding of their views. But the point remains that the expression of humility and acceptance of the eternity of knowledge gaps and seeking the elder's blessings to fulfil these gaps that bowing or prostration implies is somewhere lost or just being dismissed as avoidable in the face of extreme individualism. I wonder if my bowing and prostrating to a much younger priest who has more knowledge of our scriptures and texts than me would be derided, though I am convinced of my action and the philosophy behind it.

There is a growing adverse behavioural manifestations in public that is evident in the dilution of our well tested philosophy behind life and living.

The other day I was driving at moderate speed on a busy thoroughfare. One of the young delivery riders, who are perpetually in a tearing hurry, overtook me from the left side, while making it a point to slow down a bit and hurl unprintable cuss words at me. It did not matter to him that I was an elder and I did no wrong.

Some months ago, an Uber driver cut me sharply from left and overtook me at a traffic choked signal. In the bargain his car touched me. He stopped his car in the busy road and started a heated argument and demanded money from me. I politely told him he cannot hold me responsible and that my car too has been scratched. Beside, we have our respective insurance to claim the costs of repairs. He would have none of it, but I insisted that we go to a police station and lodge a complaint. So we drove together with me following him to the police station.

After a short fifteen minutes' drive through the chock-a-block traffic, he stopped his car at Sion Hospital and aggressively asked for money. I refused saying that we are going to the police station precisely to lodge the complaint and get our respective insurance claims. But he would not have any of it and threatened that he would smash my windshield if I don't pay. I stood my ground and dared him to do so and that I will be filming him doing it. Maybe he saw my composure, maybe he saw I was a senior citizen; he got frustrated and cursed me no end and went off since he had a passenger waiting in his car. Perhaps I got lucky. We all know about road-rage driven scuffles, violence and death. But that incidence did leave me rattled. Mortified enough to use app rides 95% of the times rather than driving my car.



The lack of civility, aggressiveness and misbehaviours reflect multitudinously in our daily lives. You cannot assume safety whilst crossing on zebra stripes as signals are not followed by zipping two wheelers and impatient four wheelers. On the other side pedestrians cross indiscriminately even at reds, leading to several accidents, some fatal. Indiscriminate speeding and overtaking from the wrong sides leading to major accidents and loss of lives are daily news headliners. Two wheelers driving on pedestrian footpaths in choking traffics are de rigueur. Trying accosting any of these

people and expect any repentance! It will be instead a self-entitling “my way, not yours” response in most cases. Rules be damned.

Try taking an escalator in a mall. You will hardly find anyone standing to the left and keeping the right side free for others to pass. Queue jumpers in any line are endemic and only a few will take them on. No washroom in any public places including glitzy malls will be kept dry and neat by most users for the next person. Finding food wrappers and packs tossed by people instead of taking the trouble to locate dust bins, should not come as a surprise. But the same people will hold forth on faulting the staff or the municipality. Double parking, blocking other parked cars, honking incessantly and myriad other similar instances are routine.

Shrill mobile rings, loud talking and

playing noisy videos are common place in restaurants and auditoriums with no concern or sensitivity towards other patrons. Rude behaviour rules where manners should be the mores.

Technology and opportunities have opened up pathways to become lettered and rich, but sadly has left many poor of behaviour and civility. The individual has become more important than her/his role in a collective society. It is little wonder that public mores and morals have taken a beating.

Perhaps the solution to lack of civility and mal behaviour lies in bowing to everyone with a namaskar. After all, there is the Supreme in everyone. Let our humility come to the fore and respect for others manifest in our behaviour. That is the true path to realizing the Self.





Reflective and Meditative Practices for Senior Citizens

Reflective and meditative practices for senior citizens can significantly improve mental clarity, emotional resilience, and physical well-being, writes *Dr Monika Dass*

Reflective and meditative practices for senior citizens can significantly improve mental clarity, emotional resilience, and physical well-being. These practices help manage age-related stressors, such as anxiety, chronic pain, or isolation, by promoting a sense of calm and present-moment awareness.

A few tailored reflective and meditative practices suitable for you:

Core Meditative Practices

Guided Meditation: Using audio recordings or apps to follow a soothing voice that leads you through relaxation techniques, focusing on soothing sounds

and positive imagery.

Mindful Breathing (e.g., 4-7-8 method):

Inhaling slowly through the nose for 4 seconds, holding for 7, and exhaling through the mouth for 8. This helps slow the heart rate and reduce anxiety.

Body Scan Meditation (Yog Nidra in India):

Sitting or lying down comfortably, you gently guide your attention from your feet up to your head, focusing on releasing tension in different parts of the body.

Visualisation: Mentally imagining a tranquil setting - like a calm beach or a quiet garden - to evoke feelings of peace and reduce stress.

Reflective & Gentle Practices

Gratitude Journaling: Writing down three things you are grateful for each day to help shift focus from challenges toward positivity.

Guided Autobiography / Reminiscences:

Reflecting on life stories, significant events, and milestones. This can be done alone or through structured groups to provide a sense of purpose.

Mindful Walking / Nature Walks:

Walking slowly, focusing on the feeling of your feet touching the ground, and noticing the sights, sounds, and smells of nature.

Art Therapy or Crafting: Engaging in painting, drawing, or crafting to encourage a flow state of mind and emotional expression.

Gentle Movement and Somatic Awareness



Chair Yoga: Combining gentle stretching, breathwork, and meditation, ensuring safety for those with limited mobility.

Tai Chi: Often called “meditation in motion,” this involves slow, focused movements that enhance balance and mental concentration.

Mindful Eating: Savouring food by eating slowly, paying attention to flavours, textures, and aromas to foster appreciation and presence.

Tips for Starting a Practice

Start Small: Begin with just 5 to 10 minutes a day to build a habit without pressure.

Create a Comfortable Space: Designate a quiet corner with a comfortable chair or cushion, perhaps adding a calming item

like a blanket or plant.

Be Consistent: Regularity matters more than duration; daily practice brings the best results.

Be Gentle with the Mind: It is normal for the mind to wander. When it does, gently guide your focus back to the breath or the present moment without self-judgment.

A Few Things to Remember:

- Reflective practice is the continuous process of analysing actions, decisions, and experiences to foster professional growth, learning, and self-awareness. Key components include self-evaluation, writing reflections, and seeking feedback, often applied in education, healthcare.... and will certainly help in daily life!
- 20 minutes of meditation is equivalent to 4 to 5 hours of deep sleep.
- Meditation has been shown to reduce stress levels, which can also help alleviate symptoms of autoimmune diseases.
- Several studies show that meditation can help relieve tinnitus symptoms.
- For good sleep: eliminate caffeine 10 hours before sleep; cut alcohol 3 hours before bed; stop working 2 hours before bed and stop screen time 1 hour before bed.
- Meditation does not feel like it changes your brain. It literally does. Neuroimaging studies show measurable structural and functional changes as little as 8 weeks of regular practice.
- Thinking, speaking or acting in ways that harm can negatively impact our meditation practice. It may even prevent us from returning to meditation at all.
- You start responding rather than reacting. Your relationships feel safer, and boundaries become easier to set. You find joy in small things again, and moments of peace last a little longer.

seniors TODAY

Life & Times

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Wise with Water: A Gentle Guide to Staying Hydrated

Drinking plain water all day can feel tedious, especially when thirst itself is not a pull.

***Tina Vora* offers a simple, thoughtful guide to make hydration more enjoyable and varied.**

As we advance in years, the body begins to communicate its needs more quietly. One such change is a diminished sense of thirst. Many older adults may not feel thirsty even when their bodies require fluids, which makes dehydration an often overlooked concern. In a country like India, where the climate can be warm for much of the year, maintaining adequate hydration becomes especially important. Water is fundamental to nearly every function in the body. It supports

digestion, keeps joints supple, regulates body temperature, and helps in flushing out waste. Even mild dehydration can lead to fatigue, headaches, dizziness, or confusion—symptoms that are sometimes mistaken for other age-related concerns. Over time, insufficient fluid intake may also contribute to constipation, urinary infections, and reduced energy levels. Yet, drinking plain water throughout the day may feel monotonous, particularly when one does not feel naturally inclined to drink. The good news is that hydration need not be dull or forced. With a few simple additions—many of which are rooted in Indian kitchens—water can be transformed into something flavourful, comforting, and even therapeutic. These variations not only make drinking water more enjoyable but can also gently support digestion, immunity, and overall vitality.

Below are 10 thoughtful water variants

that can bring both taste and wellness into daily hydration.

1. Nimbu Pani (Lemon Water)



A classic across Indian households, nimbu pani is refreshing and uplifting. A squeeze of fresh lemon in water, whether warm or cool, offers a pleasant tang along with a dose of vitamin C. A pinch of rock salt or a hint of honey can make it even more appealing, particularly during warmer days.

2. Tulsi Infused Water



Tulsi leaves, often found growing in household courtyards, are known for their calming and immune-supporting qualities. Simply adding a few washed leaves to a glass or jug of water allows their subtle flavour to infuse gently, creating a soothing drink suitable for any time of day.

3. Jeera Water (Cumin Infusion)

Jeera water is a time-tested remedy for digestive comfort. Soaking cumin seeds overnight and consuming the strained



water in the morning can help ease bloating and support metabolism. Its earthy flavour is mild and familiar, making it easy to incorporate into daily routine.

4. Mint and Cucumber Water



Few combinations feel as cooling as mint and cucumber. Thin slices of cucumber paired with fresh mint leaves lend a refreshing taste to water, making it particularly enjoyable during hot afternoons. It also helps in keeping the body cool and hydrated.

5. Saunf Water (Fennel Infusion)



Fennel seeds bring a gentle sweetness and aroma to water. Lightly crushed and soaked, they release their essence gradually. This infusion is often appreciated after meals, as it may help in digestion and leave a pleasant aftertaste.

6. Amla Water



Amla, or Indian gooseberry, is valued for its rich antioxidant content. A small amount of fresh amla juice diluted in water creates a tangy, invigorating drink. It can be especially beneficial for supporting immunity and maintaining general vitality.

7. Cinnamon Water



A cinnamon stick left to steep in water overnight imparts a delicate warmth and fragrance. This infusion is subtle yet comforting, and is often considered helpful in supporting balanced blood sugar levels and circulation.

8. Ginger Water

Fresh ginger slices in warm water create a soothing and slightly spicy drink. It is

particularly comforting in cooler weather or after meals, as it may aid digestion and help ease mild nausea or discomfort.

9. Fruit-Infused Water (Seasonal Blends)



Seasonal fruits can add both colour and gentle sweetness to water. Slices of orange, apple, pomegranate kernels, or even a few crushed berries can transform a simple glass into something inviting. These infusions encourage more frequent sipping and bring variety to daily hydration.

10. Ajwain Water (Carom Seed Infusion)



Ajwain seeds, commonly used in Indian cooking, are known for their digestive properties. Boiling a small quantity in water and allowing it to cool creates a slightly strong but beneficial drink. Taken in moderation, it may help relieve indigestion and support gut health.

Incorporating these variations into daily life need not feel like a structured routine. A glass of infused water in the morning, another between meals, and a warm preparation in the evening can naturally

space out fluid intake. Keeping a filled bottle or a jug within easy reach—perhaps on a bedside table or near a favourite chair—can serve as a gentle reminder to sip through the day.

It is also worth noting that hydration does not need to happen in large quantities at once. Small, regular sips are often more comfortable and effective than trying to drink large amounts infrequently. Listening to one’s body, while also building a quiet discipline around drinking fluids, can create a healthy balance.

For those managing specific health conditions such as heart or kidney concerns, it is always wise to follow personalised medical advice regarding fluid intake. Family members and caregivers can play a valuable role here—by offering a variety of these preparations, checking in periodically, and making

hydration a shared, pleasant activity rather than a task.

There is also something deeply comforting about these traditional infusions. Many of them carry familiar aromas and tastes that connect one to home, routine, and memory. A glass of jeera or saunf water may remind one of long-held household practices, while a jug of cool fruit-infused water can feel like a small indulgence on a warm afternoon.

In the end, staying hydrated is not about strict rules or elaborate effort. It is about care—quiet, consistent care for the body that has carried one through many seasons of life. By making water more enjoyable and approachable, it becomes easier to honour that care each day.

A simple glass of water, thoughtfully prepared and regularly enjoyed, can go a long way in supporting comfort, clarity, and well-being in the golden years.

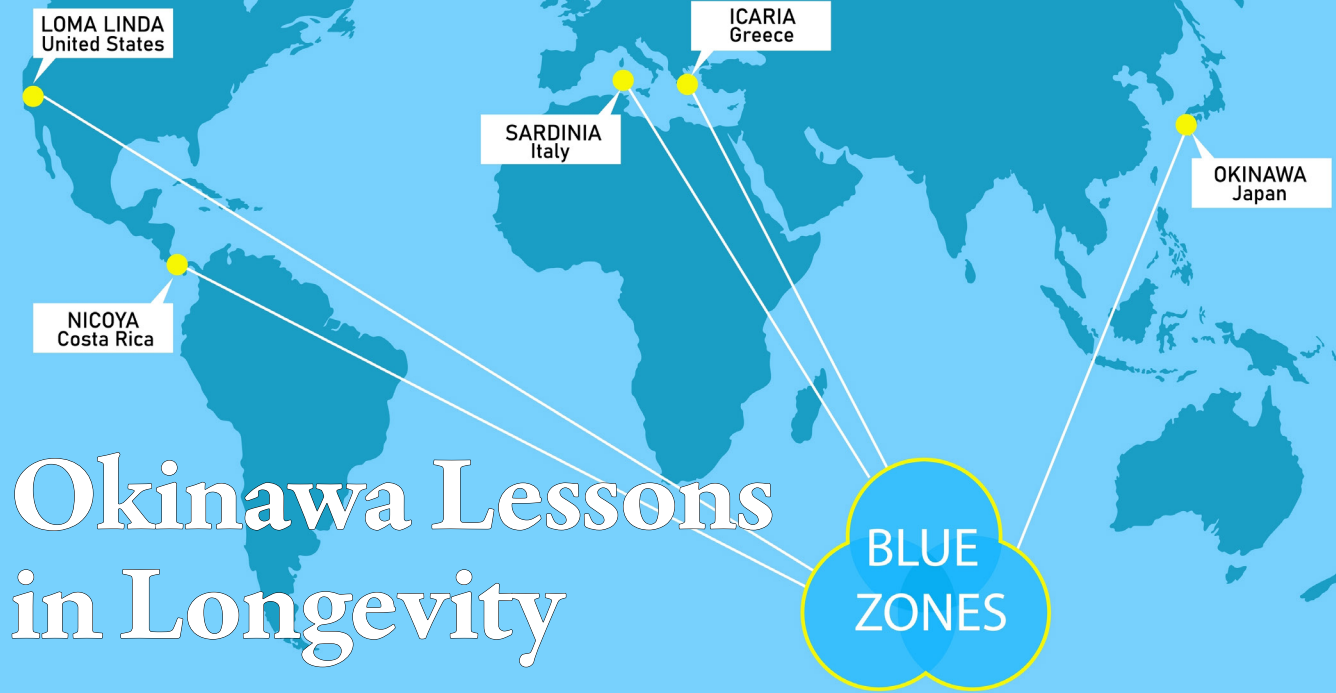


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Okinawa Lessons in Longevity

Travel is said to broaden the mind - but could it also lengthen a life? In certain corners of the world, it feels almost possible, writes Vandana Kanoria

Travel is said to broaden the mind - but could it also lengthen a life? It is a seductive thought, and in certain corners of the world, it feels almost possible. The idea of Blue Zones, a term popularised by Dan Buettner, points to a handful of regions where people live not just longer, but better. These are places where centenarians are not anomalies, where ageing feels less like decline and more like a quiet continuation. The name itself is incidental: Buettner and his team circled these areas in blue ink on a map. But what they found within those circles seems to be the stuff of myths. Yet, these places though seemingly utopias, are ordinary landscapes—villages, coastlines, small towns, where life

unfolds slowly without spectacle. What distinguishes them is not wealth or medical advancement, but a pattern of living that accumulates, day after day, into something extraordinary. Buettner described five known Blue Zones:

Icaria (Greece): Icaria is an island in Greece where people eat a Mediterranean diet rich in olive oil, red wine, and homegrown vegetables.

Ogliastra, Sardinia (Italy): The Ogliastra region of Sardinia is home to some of the oldest men in the world. They live in mountainous regions where they typically work on farms and drink lots of red wine.

Okinawa (Japan): Okinawa is home to the world’s oldest women, who eat a lot of soy based foods, where exercise is not a strict regimen but a part of everyday movement.

Nicoya Peninsula (Costa Rica): the Nicoyan diet is based around beans and corn tortillas. The people of this area regularly perform physical jobs into old

age and have a sense of life purpose known as “plan de vida.”

The Seventh-day Adventists in Loma Linda, California: The Seventh-day Adventists are a very religious group of people. They’re strict vegetarians and live in tight-knit communities.

Interestingly, genetics probably only account for 20% to 30% of longevity. Environmental influences, including diet and lifestyle, play a huge role in determining the life span. In Japan, a country where many people live well into their and nineties, it is no surprise that Okinawa has the highest concentration of centenarians on Earth. Roughly 1 in every 2,000 people lives past 100. They have 80% less heart disease and significantly lower dementia than the West. Findings echo what Okinawa embodies: predominantly plant-based diets, moderate caloric intake, daily low-intensity movement, strong social ties, and rhythms that diffuse stress. Together, these reduce the burden of chronic disease—heart ailments, dementia, metabolic disorders.

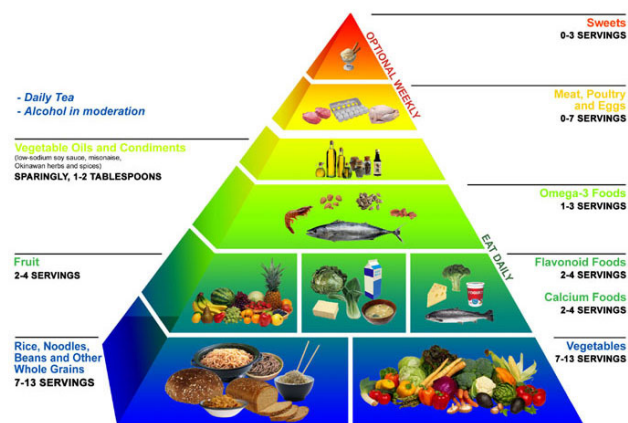


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In Okinawa, time seems to stretch. Mornings begin gently: the soft clink of teacups, the warmth of miso soup, the quiet rhythm of sweeping just outside the home. People pause easily—for conversation, for acknowledgement—as if the day is something to be inhabited, not managed. Longevity here is not pursued. It happens quietly, as a consequence of how life is lived.

It begins with food—simple, seasonal, deeply rooted in the land. Meals are composed of vegetables, legumes, tofu, seaweed, and grains, their colours muted and natural, pulled from earth. Bitter melon, sharp and medicinal. Purple sweet potato, dense and faintly sweet. Turmeric and ginger woven into everyday cooking. Meat is rare, used sparingly, almost ceremonially.

Equally important is how one eats. The principle of *hara hachi bu*—stopping at eighty percent fullness—creates a subtle discipline, a lightness that lingers long after the meal. There is no urgency at the table, no excess. Hunger and satisfaction meet without conflict.



okinawahai.com

Movement, too, is constant but unremarkable. There are no designated hours for exercise, no separation between activity and rest. People walk, tend to gardens, cycle through narrow roads, sit

and rise from the floor. Homes are designed for this rhythm—low, grounded, requiring the body to engage in small, repeated efforts that build strength over time. The body is not trained; it is simply used.

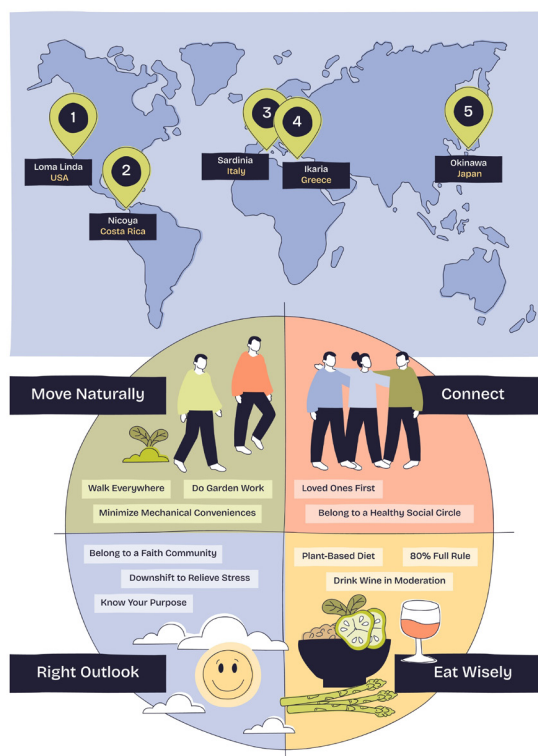
And then there is community—the quiet architecture holding everything together. In Okinawa, people belong to moai—small, enduring circles formed early in life, sustained across decades. These are not casual friendships but systems of mutual care. They meet over tea, share conversation, offer support without ceremony. If one stumbles, the others lend a helping hand. Loneliness, so pervasive elsewhere, finds no room to settle here.

Threaded through daily life is a sense of purpose—ikigai. It need not be grand. It may be tending a garden, caring for a neighbour, continuing a craft. There is no abrupt idea of retirement, no sudden withdrawal from usefulness. Life continues, gently, full of meaning. In contrast, modern life often moves against this grain. It accelerates, isolates, fragments. We eat quickly, move sporadically, connect superficially. Solutions are sought in latest influencer posts, in chat GPT in strict regimens, fleeting trends, technological fixes.



In an era of rising chronic diseases, obesity, and mental health challenges, the blue zones offer a different narrative to modern lifestyles dominated by processed foods, sedentary behaviour, and social disconnection. Okinawa offers something quieter, almost radical in its simplicity. It reminds us that longevity is not about expensive medical interventions - “none of them are tracking their steps, or taking superfoods, or running down to Costa Rica for stem cells” - but about simple, sustainable habits. Community and connection are as vital to health as diet and exercise. A sense of purpose can profoundly influence well-being and resilience.

Blue Zones Lifestyle



People in the blue zones don’t consciously decide to walk more, garden regularly, eat predominantly plants, or participate in faith-based activities. These aren’t deliberate “habits” they adopt in pursuit of health and longevity. Instead, their

environment naturally encourages these behaviours, seamlessly weaving them into daily life. The enduring appeal of the blue zones lies in the ease of adopting their ways of living. They remind us that the key to a long, healthy life is not found in fad diets, supplements, or biohacking, but in the timeless wisdom of living simply, eating mindfully, connecting deeply, and moving naturally. While headlines elsewhere promise miracle cures or anti-ageing hacks, life here tells a subtler story. There is no fountain of youth, promising a single, transformative cure. Only a way of living, repeated gently over time.

But what is most striking is how little of

this feels intentional. The environment itself nudges towards the principle that longevity is not built through dramatic change, but through small, consistent acts: in stopping just before fullness, in moving without thinking of it as exercise, in being expected somewhere, by someone, in waking each day with a reason, however modest.

And perhaps that is what travel reveals at its most meaningful—not just new geographies, but new rhythms of being. A reminder that a long life is not engineered at the end, but shaped quietly, almost imperceptibly, in the choices we make each day.

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Film

When Bollywood First Tackled A Growing Menace

from the original soundtrack

Ramanand Sagar's

CHARAS

MUSIC LAXMIKANT PYARELAI

Charas sounded an alarm about what could happen to a society if people were allowed easy access to narcotics, writes *Deepa Gahlot*

Today the drugs business has taken on deadly proportions, but back in the 1970s, the world was just waking up to the perils of narcotics. Now marijuana is considered relatively harmless, when mind-altering, life-endangering drugs have flooded the market.

In 1971, Dev Anand made *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* about a group of weed-smoking, acid-dropping drifters called Hippies. Two years later, Ramanand Sagar made *Jalte Badan*, about the downfall of a young man due to drug addiction.

In 1976, he made a major hit, *Charas*, the

first that took a look at the international trade in opium or charas, the raw material for more addictive drugs.

It was an ambitious thriller that followed the trail of drugs from Mumbai to Malta and Rome

By today's standards, it is technically primitive, but then it was daring-- it had Bond level gizmos, like transmitters hidden in shoes, bras and even a watermelon.

Before the cell phone age, the characters found ways of communicating quickly, via consoles with blinking lights.

The prosperous life of Suraj (Dharmendra), in Uganda is ripped apart when his father and sister are killed in a fire set by the villainous Robert (played by a post-Sholay Amjad Khan). He is the 'suited-booted' and scarred (looked like scrambled eggs on his cheek) henchman of

the drug kingpin, Kalicharan (Ajit).

Suraj arrives in Mumbai to find that Kalicharan has embezzled his family's business and home.

Driven by a personal vendetta and national duty, Suraj joins forces with the Indian police to destroy Kalicharan's network.

Always a step ahead of Mumbai cops and even Interpol-- represented by Tom Alter making a Bollywood debut-- Kalicharan blackmails and threatens a dancer, Sudha (Hema Malini) into smuggling a large consignment of opium in the sets of her stage show.

Sudha has already encountered Suraj when he was escaping Kalicharan's goons, and unlike the usual coy leading ladies, quite openly flirts with Suraj, just stopping short of actual intimacy, because Indian girls wait till they are married.

What Suraj does not know is that his sister, Munni (Aruna Irani) had not perished in the fire, but taken by Robert to Malta, where he drugs her and forces her to dance in Kalicharan's nightclub, which is a hangout of white junkies.



As Rani and Keshto Mukherjee played clowning, but surprisingly intrepid cops, who intel-gathering helps the case.

Kalicharan has more men, better equipment and more planning proficiency-- at one point, he organises a helicopter to lift his car, leaving the pursuing cops behind, looking frustrated.

Without the aid of modern VFX, the film had terrific action sequences and car chases across lovely European locations, at a time when very few films ventured abroad.

Charas was not their first film together, but the magical chemistry between Dharmendra and Hema Malini was undoubtedly a factor in the film's success. By 1976, they were the "Golden Couple" of Indian cinema, and their romance was scorching the screen as well as gossip magazines of the time. The picturisation of the song Kal ki haseen mulaqat ke liye was almost risqué, to the extent censors would allow.

For its time, Charas was a clutter-breaker. Ramanand Sagar, who would later achieve legendary status with the television epic Ramayan, displayed a keen eye for grand scale here. The action sequences, involving helicopters, speedboats, and classic 70s car chases, are choreographed with a sense of frantic urgency that keeps the three-hour runtime moving at a brisk pace.

While Charas was primarily an action entertainer, it also served as a reflection of the hippie era. The mid-70s saw a rise in Western tourists traveling through India and Nepal in search of spiritual enlightenment and easy access to drugs. The film sounded an alarm about what could happen to a society if people were allowed easy access to narcotics. The result is evident now.



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