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Being Digital

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The Art of Living Well

As we turn the pages of November, we find ourselves approaching the final stretch of another year. It is a good time to pause, reflect and appreciate the many experiences that have shaped our lives. Some have brought us happiness, some have taught us valuable lessons, and others have reminded us of the importance of patience, resilience and gratitude.

We have always believed that life is not measured by the number of years we have lived, but by the richness of the experiences we gather along the way. The art of living well lies in finding happiness in ordinary moments, nurturing relationships, pursuing interests and remaining curious about the world around us.

We often spend much of our lives chasing milestones, fulfilling responsibilities and worrying about tomorrow. Somewhere along the way, we forget to enjoy the present. Yet, some of life's greatest pleasures are wonderfully simple: a conversation with an old friend, a leisurely morning with a cup of tea, listening to a favourite song, reading a good book or watching the sun set at the end of a beautiful day.

Living well also means knowing when to let go. Let go of unnecessary worries, past disappointments and expectations that no longer serve us. Make room for new friendships, fresh interests and experiences that bring joy. There is always something new to learn, somewhere new to explore and something worthwhile to look forward to.

As we grow older, our perspectives change. We begin to understand that happiness does not necessarily come from having more, but from appreciating what we already have. Time, good health, companionship, independence and peace of mind become some of life's most precious gifts.

Through every edition, our endeavour at Seniors Today is to bring you stories, ideas, information and inspiration that make life more meaningful and enjoyable. Your continued encouragement and affection motivate us to keep doing what we do.

As November unfolds, let us make a conscious effort to live a little more fully, laugh a little more often, forgive a little more readily and appreciate the people who make our lives special.

After all, the best part of life is not necessarily behind us. There is still so much to discover, experience and celebrate.

Vickram Sethi

Vickram Sethi
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

seniors TODAY
It's Our Time

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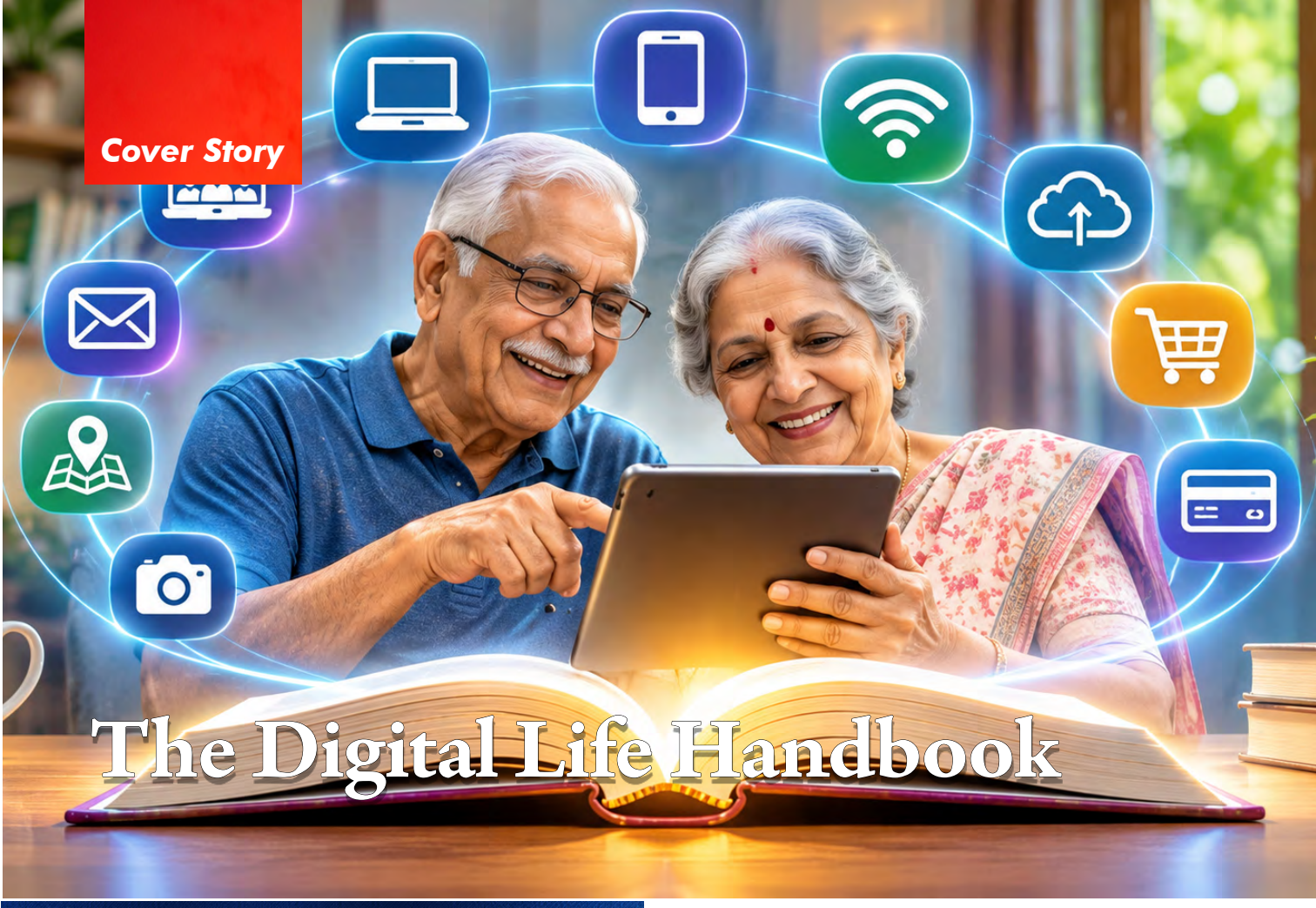




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The Digital Life Handbook

You don't have to be a technology expert to enjoy the benefits of the digital world. But you do need to understand it. Here's a practical guide to the tools, apps and technologies that can make your life easier, safer, healthier and more independent, writes *Anita Narayan*

Remember the days when a telephone was simply a telephone? When you visited the bank to check your balance, a travel agent to book a holiday, bought a newspaper to catch up with the news and consulted an encyclopaedia to find information?

Much of that world has changed. Today, a device that fits into your pocket can perform all these functions and considerably more. Your smartphone can be your bank, library, camera, newspaper, television, travel agent and personal assistant.

And now, there is Artificial Intelligence (AI).

You can ask your phone a question and receive an answer in conversational language. Photograph a complicated document and ask for an explanation in simple English. Dictate a message instead of typing it, translate a conversation or get help planning your next holiday.

For many senior citizens, however, keeping pace with technology can be intimidating. There are unfamiliar terms, countless applications and the occasional fear of pressing the wrong button. Then there are more serious concerns: online fraud, identity theft and misleading information.

The answer is neither to embrace every new gadget nor retreat from the digital world. It is to understand enough to use technology confidently, independently and safely.

You don't need the latest smartphone or

a dozen applications. You simply need to know what is useful and what to watch out for.

Because growing older is inevitable. Being left behind by technology need not be.

1. Understand AI and what it can do



Artificial Intelligence enables computers to perform tasks that would ordinarily require human intelligence, such as understanding language, recognising images, identifying patterns and answering questions.

You probably use AI already. Smartphone word suggestions, Google Maps route recommendations and online shopping suggestions are familiar examples.

Generative AI takes things further. It can create text, images, presentations and summaries based on instructions given by users. You can interact with it in ordinary language, without knowing computer programming.

Some useful AI applications:

•**ChatGPT:** Answers questions, drafts letters, summarises documents, translates messages and helps plan holidays. You can speak to it rather than type.

•**Google Gemini:** Google's AI assistant can work with questions, documents and images.

•**Microsoft Copilot:** Useful for research, writing and summarising information.

•**Google Lens:** Identifies objects, plants and monuments, translates printed text and finds information using your phone camera.

•**Google Translate:** Translates written text, photographs and spoken conversations.

•**Claude:** Another increasingly popular conversational AI assistant.

Most offer free access, with optional paid features. Download applications only from the official Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

Try asking an AI assistant to:

1.Explain a blood test report in simple English.

2.Translate a Marathi message into English.

3.Draft a polite response to a WhatsApp message.

4.Compare two health insurance policies.

5.Plan a holiday keeping mobility limitations in mind.

6.Explain how UPI payments work.

7.Summarise a government notification.

8.Suggest a weekly Indian meal plan.

9.Explain instructions on a household appliance.

10.Teach you how to use a smartphone, one step at a time.

You can also photograph a document and ask questions about its contents.

One important qualification: AI is not a human expert. It can produce convincing but incorrect answers or invent information. Verify anything relating to health, money and legal matters. Never start, stop or alter medication based on an AI response. Avoid uploading confidential medical records, bank statements, Aadhaar details or other sensitive information indiscriminately.

Remember: AI is an assistant, not an authority.

2. Your smartphone: The most important device you own

For most Indians, the smartphone is the primary gateway to the digital world. It is a camera, banking terminal,



entertainment centre, navigation system and communication tool.

It is worth learning more than just WhatsApp and making telephone calls.

Essential skills include:

•**WhatsApp:** Learn to make video calls, share documents and locations, send voice messages, block unwanted callers and adjust privacy settings.

•**SMS and notifications:** Banking alerts and OTPs often arrive through SMS. Keep notifications enabled.

•**Video calls:** WhatsApp, FaceTime, Google Meet and Zoom help you stay connected with family, particularly children and grandchildren overseas.

•Google Maps: Use it for navigation, checking traffic and locating nearby hospitals and pharmacies.

•**Voice typing:** Dictate messages using the microphone symbol on your keyboard.

•**Camera:** Photograph prescriptions, receipts and important documents.

•**QR codes:** Understand the difference between scanning a code to obtain information and scanning one to initiate a payment.

•**Cloud backup:** Google Drive, Google Photos and Apple's iCloud can store photographs, contacts and documents online. Check storage and privacy settings before enabling automatic backup.

Make your smartphone senior-friendly

Increase font size and screen brightness, adjust ringtone volume, enable fingerprint or face recognition where available and set up emergency contacts and SOS features.

Learn to take screenshots, block unwanted calls and locate a misplaced phone. Keep software updated and review which applications have access to your camera, microphone, contacts and location.

Android and Apple phones also offer accessibility features such as text-to-speech, speech-to-text, screen magnification, live captions and voice commands. Some compatible hearing aids connect directly to smartphones.

These features can make everyday technology easier for practically everyone.

3. Digital banking and payments: Handle with care



India has made enormous strides in digital payments. From neighbourhood grocery shops to large retail outlets, UPI has become part of everyday life.

The Unified Payments Interface enables instant transfers between bank accounts using a smartphone. Applications such as BHIM, Google Pay, PhonePe and Paytm offer UPI facilities.

You can pay a shopkeeper by scanning a QR code, transfer money using someone's mobile number or UPI ID, and receive payments directly into your bank account. Mobile banking applications also allow you to check balances, download statements and pay utility bills.

Remember these essential precautions:

•Your UPI PIN authorises a payment. You do not need it to receive money.

•Check the recipient's name and amount before authorising a payment.

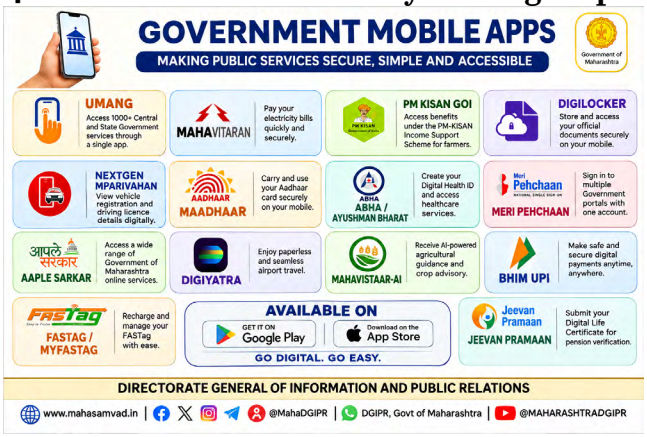
•Never share your OTP, UPI PIN, ATM PIN or banking password.

•Enable transaction alerts and set sensible transaction limits.

•Download banking applications only from official sources.

There is nothing wrong with continuing to use cash or visiting your bank. Digital payments are an additional convenience, not an obligation.

4. Government services at your fingertips



Several Indian government services can now be accessed through smartphones. Some useful applications include:

•**DigiLocker:** A government-backed digital wallet for eligible documents such as driving licences, vehicle registration certificates and educational certificates.

•**UMANG:** Provides access to various Central and State government services.

•**ABHA:** The Ayushman Bharat Health Account provides a digital health identity to help manage health records through participating healthcare systems, subject to consent.

•**eSanjeevani:** The government's telemedicine service facilitates online medical consultations, although it cannot replace physical examinations when necessary.

•mAadhaar: Provides access to certain Aadhaar-related services.

•IRCTC Rail Connect: Helps book and manage railway journeys.

•DigiYatra: Facilitates paperless airport entry at participating airports through facial recognition, subject to enrolment and consent.

You don't need every government application on your phone. Start with those relevant to you. Download them only from official websites or recognised app stores.

5. Healthcare and personal wellness technology



Technology can be particularly useful in managing health, appointments, prescriptions, investigations and follow-ups.

Wearable devices

Smartwatches and fitness bands can monitor heart rate, physical activity, sleep patterns and, depending on the model, blood oxygen levels and certain heart rhythm irregularities. Some offer ECG features, fall detection and emergency alerts.

A smartwatch can provide useful information but is not a substitute for medical examination or professional diagnosis.

Useful home-monitoring devices

• Digital blood pressure monitors, preferably validated upper-arm models.

•Digital thermometers.

•Pulse oximeters to measure blood oxygen

saturation.

•Blood glucose monitors for those who need to track sugar levels.

•Digital weighing scales.

Learn how to use these devices correctly. Readings, particularly from consumer devices, must be interpreted in the context of symptoms and medical advice.

Your smartphone can also maintain a record of medicines and dosages, allergies, medical appointments, laboratory reports and emergency contacts.

Medication reminder applications, or simply your phone's calendar and alarm functions, can help you remember prescribed medicines.

AI can explain medical terminology and help prepare questions for your doctor. But your doctor remains the final authority on treatment.

6.The dark side: Scams, digital fraud and deepfakes



If one section deserves special attention, it is this one.

Technology has made life easier for millions. Unfortunately, it has also made life easier for criminals. AI has made online fraud considerably more convincing.

Seven scams you must recognise

1. Digital arrest scams

Someone claiming to represent the police, CBI, Enforcement Directorate or another government agency tells you that your Aadhaar, bank account or telephone number is linked to a criminal investigation. They may threaten arrest, insist on a video call or demand money for verification.

Remember: There is no legitimate procedure under which an investigating agency places an ordinary citizen under a so-called digital arrest and demands money to establish innocence. Disconnect and contact the relevant authority independently.

2. AI voice cloning

You receive a call from someone who sounds exactly like your son or daughter, claiming to be in trouble and urgently needing money. AI can imitate voices using recordings available on social media. Disconnect and call the person back on their known number. Families should consider establishing a private verification phrase or code word for emergencies.

3. Deepfake videos

Manipulated photographs and videos can make someone appear to say or do things they never did. A familiar face on a video call is no longer absolute proof of identity. Be cautious if someone requests money or confidential information.

4. Bank KYC fraud

A message claims your bank account or debit card will be blocked unless you immediately update your KYC details. It includes a link to a website resembling your bank's.

Don't click it. Contact your bank through its official application, website or telephone number.

5. Remote-access fraud

A caller posing as a bank employee or customer-care executive asks you to install an application to resolve a problem. It may allow the fraudster to view or control your phone. Never install remote-access or screen-sharing applications at an unknown caller's request.

6. Investment scams

WhatsApp groups promising extraordinary returns from shares, IPOs, cryptocurrency

or stock market tips are common fraud mechanisms. Be suspicious of guaranteed returns, pressure to invest immediately and requests to transfer money to personal accounts.

7. Fake customer-care numbers

Fraudsters create fake telephone numbers and websites resembling those of banks, airlines and service providers. Use contact details published on the organisation's official website or application.

Ten rules for staying safe

1.Never share your OTP, UPI PIN, ATM PIN or banking password.

2.Don't trust an unfamiliar caller merely because the voice sounds familiar.

3.Don't click unexpected links.

4.Never allow strangers to access your phone remotely.

5.Don't transfer money under pressure.

6.Verify requests for money through another communication channel.

7.Avoid sharing personal information on social media.

8.Don't install applications sent through unsolicited WhatsApp messages.

9.Keep your phone and applications updated.

10.If something feels suspicious, stop and check.

What if you have been defrauded?

Act immediately:

•Call India's National Cyber Crime Helpline at 1930 in cases of financial cyber fraud.

•Contact your bank through its official customer-care channel and report the transaction.

•Ask the bank to secure your account and take steps to prevent further movement of funds.

•Preserve transaction IDs, screenshots, telephone numbers and messages.

•Report the incident at cybercrime.gov.in, the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal.

Time is critical. Don't delay reporting an incident because you feel embarrassed or believe the amount is too small. There is no reason to feel ashamed. What matters is acting quickly.

7.Protecting your digital identity and privacy



Every time you use a smartphone or access the internet, you leave behind information about yourself. Your location, photographs, shopping habits and interests can be collected by applications and online services.

A few precautions can make a substantial difference:

•Use strong, unique passwords. Avoid obvious combinations such as your date of birth or telephone number. A reputable password manager can help.

•Enable two-factor authentication or passkeys wherever available.

•Review app permissions. Give applications access to your microphone, camera, contacts and location only when necessary.

•Avoid sensitive banking transactions over unsecured public Wi-Fi.

•Think before posting photographs of your home, travel plans or personal documents.

•Use a screen lock and activate your phone's lost-device service.

India's Digital Personal Data Protection framework establishes obligations relating to the processing of personal digital data

and provides safeguards for individuals. However, no legislation can replace personal vigilance.

One simple rule: Share the minimum information necessary, with the right person, for the right purpose.

8. Technology for independent living



An increasing range of devices can help older people remain independent in their homes.

Smart speakers such as Amazon Echo respond to voice commands to play music, set alarms and provide information. Smart lighting can be controlled remotely or programmed to switch on and off. Video doorbells allow you to see and speak to visitors before opening the door.

Home security cameras can monitor entrances, while certain watches and wearable devices offer fall detection and emergency alerts. Automatic medication dispensers provide reminders, and robotic vacuum cleaners can reduce household chores.

Not every household needs these devices. Buy technology that solves an actual problem, not merely because a gadget is fashionable.

9.The digital companion for travel and mobility

Technology can make travelling considerably easier.



Use Google Maps to check routes, traffic and nearby hospitals or pharmacies. IRCTC Rail Connect helps with railway bookings, while airline applications offer check-in facilities, boarding passes and flight updates. Cab services such as Uber, Ola and Rapido can assist with local transportation.

Google Translate helps with unfamiliar languages. Digital copies of tickets, hotel confirmations, insurance policies and identification documents can be stored securely.

Before travelling, remember to:

•Confirm bookings through official applications or websites.

•Keep printed or offline copies of essential documents.

•Avoid depending entirely on mobile internet connectivity.

•Never share OTPs with someone claiming to represent an airline or hotel.

•Keep emergency contacts accessible.

Technology should make travel more comfortable, not more complicated.

10. Reading, entertainment and lifelong learning



One of the most positive aspects of the digital revolution is the access it offers to knowledge, culture and entertainment.

•**Reading:** Kindle and other e-book applications offer thousands of books, with adjustable fonts and brightness.

•**Audiobooks:** Useful for those with impaired eyesight or who enjoy listening.

•**Newspapers and magazines:** Most major Indian publications offer digital editions.

•**YouTube:** A resource for music, lectures, cooking, exercise, documentaries and educational content. Be discerning about health and financial advice.

•**OTT platforms:** Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and JioHotstar offer films, documentaries and television programmes.

•**Podcasts:** Cover subjects ranging from history and literature to science and travel.

•**Online learning:** Platforms such as SWAYAM offer courses, while online lectures and tutorials provide opportunities to learn new skills.

Retirement need not mean the end of intellectual exploration. Technology makes it easier to pursue interests for which there may not have been sufficient time during one's working years.

11. Choosing the right smartphone and gadgets



You don't need the most expensive smartphone to enjoy technology.

Look for a clear display, adjustable font sizes, good battery life, clear sound, adequate storage, a reasonably good camera and regular security updates. Reliable after-sales service in your city is also important.

Android phones offer considerable choice across price ranges. Apple's iPhones have a consistent interface and a strong ecosystem of connected devices. Both offer accessibility and security features.

The best phone is the one you can use comfortably and confidently.

Other useful purchases could include a tablet for reading and video calls, a smartwatch, wireless earphones, a digital blood pressure monitor, a power bank and a reliable home Wi-Fi router.

Buy from authorised sellers and check how long the device will receive security updates.

12. Learning to use technology: A 30-day challenge



The biggest obstacle for many older people is not technology itself, but the reluctance to experiment. The fear of pressing the wrong button or deleting something important can be overcome through gradual learning.

Set aside 15 to 20 minutes each day and try this four-week programme:

Week 1: Get comfortable with your smartphone

Adjust settings, increase font size, manage contacts, take screenshots, use voice typing, send WhatsApp messages and make video calls.

Week 2: Explore everyday digital services

Learn Google Maps, search for information online, access DigiLocker and explore relevant government services.

Week 3: Discover AI and healthcare technology

Try ChatGPT or Gemini. Ask questions, experiment with voice conversations, translate messages and summarise documents. Explore medication reminders and digital health records.

Week 4: Understand digital payments and safety

Learn UPI, understand mobile banking, review passwords and privacy settings and familiarise yourself with common cyber frauds.

Ask a trusted person to demonstrate a function, but then try it yourself. Don't become permanently dependent on your children or grandchildren to operate your phone.

You can also seek help through digital literacy workshops, senior citizens' associations, libraries, Common Service Centres and banks' customer education programmes. The Data Security Council of India's Meri Digital Suraksha initiative is another resource for digital safety guidance. The objective is independence.

13. What the next five years may bring



AI assistants are expected to become more capable of organising appointments, comparing travel options and managing everyday tasks. Healthcare technology may make remote monitoring and wearable devices more useful to doctors and patients. Smart homes may increasingly manage lighting, security and appliances through voice commands. Robotics could assist with household tasks and certain aspects of daily care. Real-time translation may make communication across India's many languages easier.

Digital companionship may also grow. Conversational AI can offer information, entertainment and interaction. But an AI companion is no substitute for human relationships, family, friendship or professional care.

You don't have to adopt every new technology. Understand what is available and decide what is useful.

The senior citizen's digital survival checklist

Before putting this guide away, make sure you are familiar with these 15 essentials:

1. Know the basic functions of your smartphone.
2. Know how to make a video call.
3. Learn voice typing and voice commands.
4. Know how to use Google Maps.
5. Try at least one AI assistant.
6. Learn to translate messages and documents.
7. Know how to access eligible documents through DigiLocker.
8. Understand UPI and digital payments.
9. Never share an OTP, PIN or password.
10. Recognise digital arrest and AI voice-cloning scams.
11. Know how to block unwanted callers.
12. Enable emergency contacts and SOS features.

13. Keep your phone and applications updated.
14. Know how to report financial cyber fraud through 1930.
15. Keep a trusted family member informed about important digital security arrangements.

Final word: Let technology empower, not intimidate

There is a tendency to regard older people as reluctant participants in the digital revolution. That is an unfair generalisation. Many senior citizens are accomplished professionals, entrepreneurs, academics and active users of technology. Others are only beginning to discover what a smartphone can do. Both groups deserve access to information that is relevant, understandable and practical.

The important thing is to remain curious.

You need not understand how Artificial Intelligence works to benefit from it. Nor do you need to buy every new gadget that appears in the market. But you should know how to use the tools that can make your life easier.

Learn to ask AI a question, make a digital payment safely, identify a fraudulent call, access medical records, book a journey or make a video call to a grandchild thousands of kilometres away.

Above all, don't let the fear of making a mistake prevent you from learning something new.

Technology can help us remain independent, informed, connected and engaged. Of course, we must stay alert to fraud, misinformation and the erosion of privacy. Not everything on a screen is true.

But the benefits far outweigh the reasons to stay away.

The digital world does not have an age limit. Neither should curiosity.

You may have retired from work. There is no reason to retire from learning.





The Machine in the Morning Room

Artificial Intelligence as servant, not master. A comic conversation on speed, ageing and the things a machine must never be allowed to manage for us, written by *Manoj Maheshwari*

It was at precisely ten-fifteen on a Wednesday morning that I, Bertram Phipps, came to suspect civilisation had taken a wrong turning at the roundabout.

I had settled into the armchair with a cup of Darjeeling, the newspaper, and a general intention of doing nothing whatsoever until luncheon. Outside, a gardener was clipping a hedge with the measured serenity of a man who had never been asked to update an operating system. Somewhere a koel made a leisurely remark about spring. On the gramophone, an agreeable gentleman was playing something by Duke Ellington.

Then the telephone began.

First it chirruped. Then it trilled. Then it emitted a sound like a small but determined tropical bird trapped in a biscuit tin. It informed me that I had received seventeen messages, three reminders, a "breaking alert," two invitations to join things I had no intention of joining, and an urgent communiqué from a person called Artificial Intelligence, who appeared to believe that I should immediately improve my productivity.

"D'Costa," I said, with the calm of one standing knee-deep in a swamp, "I fear the machine has developed ambitions."

My valet, Mr D'Costa, whose composure had survived my aunt's bridge parties, my cousin Cecil's attempt to become a jazz drummer, and the invention of the group chat, regarded the instrument with the mild interest of a man inspecting a caterpillar.

"Indeed, sir?"

"It wishes me to rise earlier, answer messages faster, manage my health, revise

my travel plans, monitor my sleep, invest more cleverly, drink more water and possibly become a better person before eleven o'clock."

"An exacting programme, sir."

"Also," I added darkly, "it says I have only twelve per cent battery remaining."

"Perhaps, sir, the device is attempting to make itself indispensable."

That, I felt, was precisely the attitude which had led to revolutions.

The tyranny of the jiffy

The trouble with our new age is not merely that it moves quickly. It has come to regard a considered pause as a character defect. A message arrives and, before one has had time to form a properly civilised reply, a second message arrives asking whether one has seen the first. A conversation which once allowed a letter to mature for three days now proceeds at the speed of an anxious woodpecker.

Language, too, races past. Someone announces that a photograph is "dropped," a plan is "locked," a person is "ghosted," and an aunt is "muted." We nod with what we hope is an expression of worldly grasp, while inwardly seeking the nearest dictionary and a restorative beverage.

Even the peaceful cup of tea is under siege. The room has scarcely begun to settle into its proper silence when the phone warbles, flashes and vibrates. We worry about Wi-Fi, battery life, passwords, storage and computing power. There was a time when one's chief technological anxiety was whether the gramophone needle had behaved honourably. It had many virtues: it did not send reminders, it did not judge one's sleep, and it never suggested mindfulness in a proprietary tone.

"Would you advise rejecting the modern age altogether, D'Costa?" I asked, after a particularly aggressive chirp had interrupted a saxophone solo.

"I would not, sir. One does not reject a useful tool merely because it has the unfortunate habit of ringing during tea."

And there, as usual, D'Costa had put his finger on it. The question is not whether artificial intelligence is a tool or a boon. It can be both. The more useful question is: whose hand holds the tool?



A remarkably able under butler

Used properly, AI is rather like an exceptionally able under-butler. It can find the timetable, explain the obscure medical expression, compare the three insurance policies, translate the baffling menu, turn a tangle of notes into a clear list, or help one formulate sensible questions before meeting a doctor, lawyer or financial adviser.

For those of us in later life, this can be genuinely liberating. A good conversational assistant can explain a test result in plain language, suggest what to ask at the next appointment, help organise a health record, make a walking plan more intelligible, or find reliable material on a new interest. It can make travel research less laborious, help unravel tax or legal terminology, and give a beginner a patient introduction to anything from a new language to the history

of the Deccan.

It does not grow impatient if we ask the same question twice. It does not rush us. It can speak or listen, simplify or go deep, and be available at the hour when the rest of the household has long since retired. In a world where professional advice is often hurried and wrapped in jargon, that is no small service.

"It is a sort of universal secretary, then?" I said.

"A preliminary assistant, sir," said D'Costa. "One would not, I think, entrust it with the family silver."

Quite. We should use it to understand, prepare, compare and imagine. We should not allow it to decide our treatment, execute a substantial investment, sign a document, or tell us that an elderly relative is safe when our own eyes and affections say we should visit.

The machine is a magnificent first reader, researcher and organiser. It is a poor substitute for wisdom, accountability, experience or love.



The case for an unplanned afternoon

AI is especially seductive in the matter of travel. Ask it for a holiday and it will produce, before the toast has cooled, an itinerary with the correct hotel, the correct suite, the correct breakfast, the correct museum, the correct guide, and perhaps an algorithmically appropriate sunset at 6.42 p.m.

The result is impeccable. It is also, in a curious way, faintly exhausting.

For what is travel without the wrong turning, the unexpectedly closed museum, the sudden rainstorm, the ridiculous café, the charming stranger who recommends a restaurant which has no menu but serves the best meal of the trip? A journey that has been perfectly curated may contain no disasters at all. But it may contain rather fewer stories.

The same is true of music, writing and art. A machine can assemble an agreeable imitation from an astonishing amount of existing material. It can make something smooth. But smoothness is not always soul. The wobble in a singer's voice, the ungainly first draft, the painter's uncertain line, the child's wildly improbable invention: these are not errors to be corrected out of existence. They are the evidence that someone is alive and attempting something.

There is also privacy. Every helpful system wants to know more: where we are, what we buy, whom we speak to, how we sleep and, one fears, whether we favour the bathroom at a particular temperature. It is entirely possible that the water closet of the future will recognise the bum upon which it is called to perform, adjust the flow, warm the seat, select an ambience and issue a report on the morning's achievements.

"A terrible thought, sir," said D'Costa. "Though it may reduce disputes regarding the thermostat."

The joke contains a warning. Convenience can quietly become surveillance. We must be sparing with deeply personal information and alert to the difference between a service that helps us and a system that harvests us.

The D'Costa rules for civilised intelligence

At this point my friend Augustus Gomes, who had been silent only because the phone had temporarily exhausted itself, said that the whole affair required rules. This was bold from Augustus, who once tried to regulate his finances with coloured envelopes and lost the red one.

D'Costa, however, appeared to approve. After a pause of the sort that usually preceded the saving of a household from ruin, he offered five principles.

Rule	What it means
Ask	Use AI to help you frame the question. A good question remains a human achievement.
Verify	For health, money, law, news and anything consequential, check important claims against a qualified person or reliable source.
Pause	Turn off needless alerts. A reply that arrives after tea is still a reply.
Decide	Let the machine present choices; keep judgment, values and final responsibility with yourself.
Leave room	Protect walks, music, conversation, solitude and the unplanned afternoon from relentless optimisation.

"In short," I said, "we must use the beast without allowing the beast to use us."

"An admirably compact formulation, sir," said D'Costa.

There is courage in becoming a beginner again. We did it when we first learned to drive, use an ATM, send an email or board a flight with an electronic ticket. We can do it with AI too, provided we retain the right to say: explain that slowly; show me your sources; I shall think about it; and no, you may not interrupt my tea.



More life in the life

The promise of AI should not be that we can complete an ever greater number of tasks in a jiffy. That is merely an efficient route to becoming busy in more interesting ways. Its promise is that it can take some of the drudgery off our hands and leave more room for life.

More time to understand our health and care for it wisely. More confidence to learn. More help in planning a long-postponed journey or finishing a bucket list. More clarity about financial and legal questions. More opportunity to write, paint, garden, listen to music, laugh with friends, pay attention to a grandchild, notice the trees and have a proper conversation without one eye searching for a charging cable.

Artificial intelligence can be an excellent servant. It can never be the master of a good life, because it does not know what a good life feels like. It cannot experience the relief after a difficult diagnosis is explained kindly, the thrill of an unexpected view, the ache of missing someone, the absurd pleasure of a friend's bad joke, or the way a remembered song can bring an entire lost summer back into the room.

The phone, at that moment, gave a small and expectant chirp.

I looked at it. D'Costa looked at me. Duke Ellington, remarkably, carried on.

"Shall I answer it, sir?"

"Not yet, D'Costa," I said, reaching for the teapot. "Let it learn patience."



Help Us Grow

seniors TODAY
Life & Times

Seniors Today was born a little over 7 years back, and has grown to be India's #1 Destination for Seniors Today. We started with a monthly e-magazine and later a daily newsletter, both of which are available for everyone to read without any payment.
Our content is now available in English and Hindi.

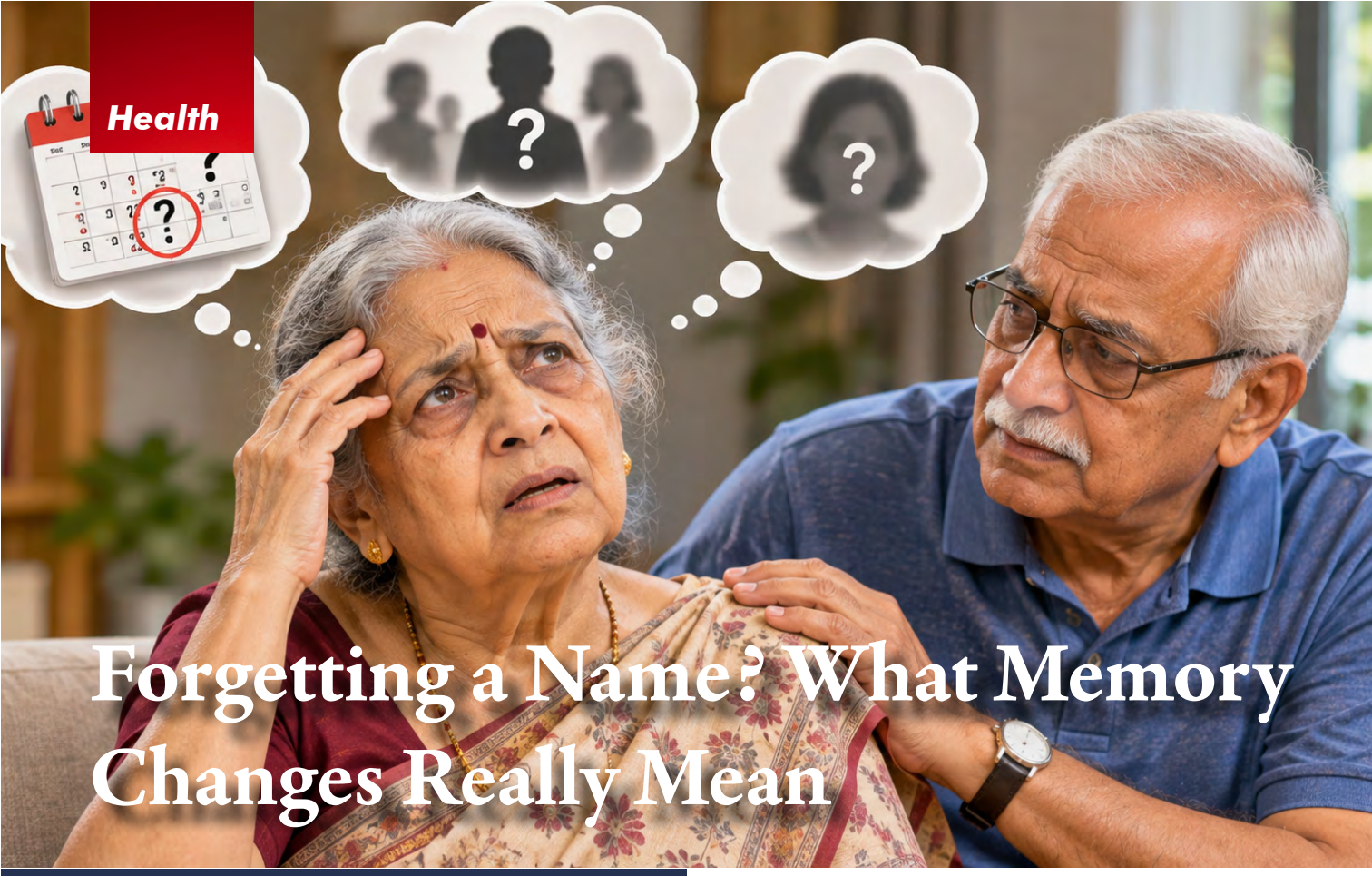
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Forgetting a Name? What Memory Changes Really Mean

A borderline result on a blood test can make an ordinary lapse feel alarming: Does this mean I have Alzheimer's? Forgetting a name now and then is common, and no test or scan can answer that question alone. What matters is whether the change becomes persistent or starts to affect daily life, writes *Dr Rajiva Gupta*

Someone comes to the clinic with health check-up results. Besides an Alzheimer-related blood test, the report says "borderline." "Does this mean I have Alzheimer's?" they ask.

It is an understandable worry. A parent had the disease, and lately a few names have been harder to recall. The word "borderline" can sound like a warning.

But a borderline result is not a diagnosis. Nor is forgetting a name or misplacing your glasses, by itself, proof of Alzheimer's disease. What matters is the pattern: what has changed, how often it happens and whether it is getting in the way of daily life.

Memory changes are not all the same.

You meet someone at a gathering and later cannot recall their name. You look for your glasses and find them beside the telephone. Perhaps it takes longer than it used to retrieve a word or remember why you entered a room. Occasional lapses like these can happen as we get older. Stress, poor sleep, low mood, illness, hearing problems and some medicines can also affect attention and recall.

Mild cognitive impairment, or MCI, is a more noticeable change in memory or thinking, while the person remains largely independent. MCI is not dementia, and it does not always progress. Some people remain stable, some improve, and some have greater difficulties over time.

Dementia affects a person's ability to

manage everyday life independently. They may repeatedly struggle with familiar tasks, medicines, finances or finding their way around a place they know well. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia, but it is not the only one.

A doctor looks at the whole pattern: what has changed, whether it is getting worse and how it affects daily life. A family member or friend who knows the person well may help describe the changes, if the person is comfortable with that.

Start with the person, not the test.

If memory concerns persist or begin to affect everyday activities, talk with a doctor. They will ask when the changes began, whether they are progressing and which tasks have become difficult. A brief check of memory and thinking may help. They may also review medicines and ask about sleep, mood, hearing, vision and general health.

This kind of conversation can be reassuring and useful. Poor sleep, depression, anxiety, medication effects, hearing loss and some medical conditions can affect concentration or recall. Some causes can be treated or managed. The aim is to work out what might be happening and what could help, rather than rush to a label.

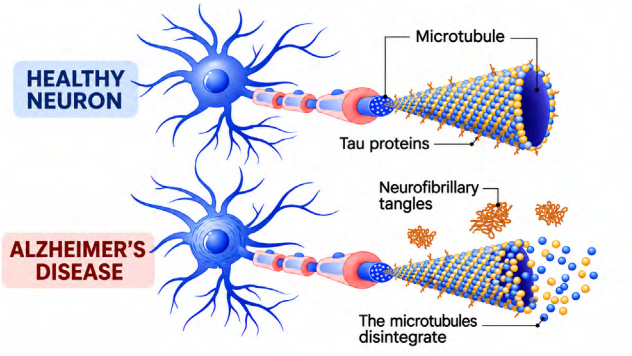
A brain scan may be useful if the history and examination suggest it. MRI or CT can identify a stroke, bleeding or another structural problem and add information to the assessment. But a scan is only one part of the picture. A report may show mild brain-volume loss or small-vessel changes; what they mean depends on the person's age, symptoms, and the pattern seen. A scan finding alone does not establish dementia.

What can a blood test tell us?

One blood marker getting attention is phosphorylated tau 217, or p-tau217. It can point to biological changes linked to Alzheimer's disease. Blood tests for these markers may help specialists assess people who already have clear memory or thinking problems. Current guidance addresses their use in that diagnostic setting; it does not recommend them as routine screening for people without cognitive concerns.

Yet these tests are appearing in preventive health packages and are being promoted more widely. People who feel well—or have only occasional lapses—may wonder whether they should be tested. Before agreeing, ask: What will the result tell me? What won't it tell me? If it is borderline or positive, what happens next?

A positive result may point to Alzheimer-related changes in the body. By itself, it does not diagnose dementia or tell you whether, or when, you will develop it. Consider the result alongside symptoms, medical history, and a clinical assessment.



A 2026 JAMA study followed 2,684 older adults with no cognitive impairment at the start. Higher p-tau217 levels were linked to a greater chance of later cognitive impairment. Among those with very high levels, the estimated risk was 38**%** over five years. The participants came from selected research cohorts, so that figure cannot tell an individual reader what will happen to them. The outcome was cognitive impairment, not necessarily dementia.

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HEALTH Connect

A wellness guide for Healthier , Happier Living



The New Face of Healthcare

The New Face of Healthcare: Better Technology, Better Possibilities



What once seemed extraordinary is becoming increasingly accessible, and what once required a journey across the world may now be available much closer to home, writes Ravi Swaminathan

Not very long ago, the words "advanced medical treatment" often created the image of a hospital in London, Singapore, New York or some other distant city. Families facing a complicated illness would consider travelling abroad, sometimes because they believed that the treatment they needed was simply not available closer to home.

The situation today is very different. Healthcare has undergone a remarkable transformation, and several hospitals across the country now offer sophisticated treatment, advanced equipment and highly specialised medical expertise. What is changing is not merely the appearance of hospitals, but the entire experience of diagnosis and treatment. A patient can walk into a modern medical centre with a complicated problem and find cardiologists, neurologists, oncologists, surgeons, radiologists, intensivists and other specialists working together. Detailed imaging and laboratory investigations can support a diagnosis, while advanced technology allows doctors to plan and deliver treatment with extraordinary precision.

Complex surgeries, organ transplantation, advanced cancer care, stroke treatment and sophisticated heart procedures are now within the capabilities of leading institutions. For families, this development offers something enormously valuable: choice. The need to travel long distances for every complicated treatment is gradually reducing. Of course, the quality and expertise of hospitals can vary, and no treatment comes with guarantees. But the progress is real. Healthcare has moved beyond simply treating illness to detecting disease earlier, understanding it more accurately and tailoring treatment more carefully to the individual.

Perhaps the greatest change can be seen in diagnosis. Modern medicine increasingly depends on identifying a problem early and understanding precisely what is happening before deciding how to treat it. Sophisticated scanners, digital imaging, advanced pathology and laboratory tests can provide doctors with an extraordinary amount of information. In certain cancers, for instance, doctors can examine the molecular characteristics of a tumour to establish which therapies may be appropriate. In heart disease, advanced imaging helps specialists understand the structure and functioning of the heart before recommending an intervention. Neurologists can use specialised scans to assess strokes and other disorders of the brain with increasing precision.

This ability to look deeper has changed the conversation between doctor and patient. Instead of simply saying that something is wrong, doctors can often explain where the problem lies, how extensive it may be and what treatment options are available. Artificial intelligence is also beginning to support certain diagnostic processes, helping doctors analyse images and large volumes of medical information. It is important, however, not to confuse assistance with replacement. A computer may identify a pattern, but a doctor must interpret it in context. Medical history, symptoms, medications, age, lifestyle and other health conditions all matter. The future of diagnosis is therefore unlikely to be humans versus machines. It will be humans using increasingly intelligent tools to make better decisions.

Surgery has experienced its own quiet revolution. The image of a major operation involving a large incision and a long recovery is no longer the only possibility. Minimally invasive techniques have transformed many procedures, allowing doctors to reach parts of the body through very small openings or blood vessels. Robotic systems have taken this a step further in selected specialties. They give surgeons enhanced visualisation and extremely precise control, particularly during delicate procedures. For the right patient, this can mean less tissue damage, reduced blood loss and potentially quicker recovery.

In orthopaedics, computer-assisted planning helps surgeons prepare for joint replacements with greater precision. In cardiac care, catheter-based procedures allow selected patients to receive treatment without conventional open surgery. These developments are particularly meaningful because recovery is not simply about leaving the operating theatre successfully. It is about returning to everyday life. Being able to walk sooner, eat normally, sleep comfortably, manage pain better or return home earlier can have a profound effect on a person's confidence and independence.

Yet, families should remember one important point: the most advanced procedure is not automatically the best procedure. A good surgeon will recommend technology because it is appropriate for the patient, not because it happens to be fashionable or available. Sometimes a traditional approach remains the safest choice. Good medicine is not about using the newest tool at every opportunity. It is about knowing when to use it.

Heart and cancer care demonstrate another important change: the growth of highly specialised centres. Medicine has become too complex for one doctor to know everything, and leading hospitals increasingly rely on teams of specialists. Consider someone diagnosed with a serious heart condition. Their care may involve a cardiologist, an interventional specialist, a cardiac surgeon, an imaging expert, an anaesthetist, a physiotherapist and a rehabilitation team. Similar-

ly, someone undergoing cancer treatment may need the combined expertise of surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation specialists, pathologists, nutrition experts and palliative care professionals. This multidisciplinary approach can make treatment more coordinated and reduce the risk of important details being overlooked.

Intensive care has also become more sophisticated. Modern monitoring systems can track vital functions continuously, allowing teams to respond quickly when a patient's condition changes. Stroke care has improved through faster imaging and treatments that can restore blood flow in selected patients, provided they are administered within the appropriate time window. Organ transplantation has developed into a highly specialised field involving careful matching, surgery, intensive care and long-term follow-up.

These advances remind us that modern healthcare is not about one dramatic breakthrough. It is the result of thousands of improvements in diagnosis, surgery, medication, nursing, rehabilitation and patient monitoring. Together, these can make a significant difference when someone is seriously ill.

There is also a more human side to this progress that deserves attention. The best hospitals are beginning to understand that excellent treatment is not enough if patients feel lost in the process. People want to know what is happening to them. They want doctors to explain complicated medical terms in language they can understand and answer their questions without making them feel rushed. Families want timely information, particularly when a loved one is in intensive care or undergoing a major procedure.

Technology can help here too. Digital records, online consultations, remote follow-ups and electronic access to reports can make healthcare more convenient. A second opinion can sometimes be obtained without travelling to another city. At the same time, there is a danger in becoming too dependent on technology. Healthcare should never become an impersonal exchange between a patient and a computer screen. A reassuring conversation with a doctor can sometimes be as important as a sophisticated scan. A nurse noticing that a patient is frightened may provide comfort that no machine can offer. A physiotherapist encouraging someone to take those first few steps after surgery may contribute as much to recovery as the operation itself.

World-class healthcare therefore has two essential ingredients. One is scientific excellence. The other is humanity. Remove either one and the experience becomes incomplete.

Perhaps the most encouraging aspect of modern healthcare is that the future is no longer something we simply have to wait for. It is already arriving in hospitals around us. Robotic systems are becoming more capable, personalised medicine is expanding, artificial intelligence is finding new applications and minimally invasive procedures are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Research into regenerative medicine, genetics and new forms of treatment could eventually change the way many diseases are managed.

But progress should always be measured by what it means for the person sitting in the hospital room. Does the treatment improve the chances of recovery? Does it reduce unnecessary suffering? Does it help someone remain independent? Does it allow a person to return to family, work, travel, hobbies and ordinary pleasures sooner? These are the questions that truly matter.

The modern hospital should not be judged simply by how impressive it looks or how expensive its machines are. Its real worth lies in the quality of its doctors, nurses and support teams, the safety of its treatment, its ability to handle complex cases and the care it shows towards every individual. The good news is that medical care is moving steadily in this direction. What once seemed extraordinary is becoming increasingly accessible, and what once required a journey across the world may now be available much closer to home. The future of healthcare is therefore not merely about longer lives. It is about giving people a better chance to live those years with health, dignity, independence and hope.



Choosing the Right Care for our Parents/ Seniors

A friend once called me seeking guidance about his mother, who had recently been diagnosed with dementia. He and his brother were struggling to manage her care at home. Her condition was deteriorating, caregivers were becoming frustrated, and their families were finding it increasingly difficult to balance professional responsibilities with caregiving.

I suggested considering an assisted living centre with specialised dementia care and cognitive stimulation programmes.

His immediate response was, "What will our relatives and society think if we move our mother to an assisted living centre?"

After several discussions, the brothers decided to proceed. Fifteen days later, their mother moved into our centre. Today, they describe it as one of their best decisions. Their mother receives professional care, family relationships have improved, and the anxiety, frustration and guilt they once experienced have reduced considerably.

Over the years, my team and I have encountered numerous families facing similar dilemmas.

When Should You Consider Assisted Living?

1. Safety Concerns: Frequent falls, wandering, aggression or confusion associated with dementia can make home care increasingly challenging.
2. Declining Physical or Cognitive Health: Conditions such as Parkinson's disease, dementia, arthritis or frailty may require continuous supervision, medication management and assistance with daily activities.
3. Social Isolation: Loneliness, withdrawal and limited social interaction can affect an elder's emotional and cognitive wellbeing.
4. Caregiver Stress: Balancing careers, children and caregiving responsibilities can lead to exhaustion, anxiety and strained family relationships.

What Does Assisted Living Offer?

A professionally managed assisted living centre provides a supportive residential environment that combines independence with personalised care.

Depending on individual needs, services may include 24-hour nursing support, trained caregivers, doctor visits, medication management, physiotherapy, nutritious meals, psychological counselling, cognitive stimulation and meaningful social activities.

How Do You Choose the Right Centre?

Visit multiple centres and evaluate staff competence, medical support, safety arrangements, hygiene, resident engagement and specialised dementia care.

Understand the costs, available accommodation and the centre's approach to emergencies. Wherever possible, involve your parent in the decision.

Most importantly, remember that moving into assisted living is an emotional transition. Regular family visits, communication and involvement remain essential.

Choosing assisted living does not mean abandoning our parents. It means recognising when their needs require professional support beyond what families can consistently provide at home.

The goal is not simply to add years to life, but to add dignity, companionship and happiness to those years.

Because ageing gracefully is not about where our parents live, but how well they live.

Assisted Living: A Choice of Care, Dignity and Peace of Mind

Prasad Bhide
Founder & CEO, Aaji Care



“Providing Advanced Healthcare at affordable costs”

This vision has guided us to build a 264 bedded hospital with modern infrastructure and a team of around highly qualified doctors on our panel. Our Doctors share amongst themselves decades of experience and enjoy the trust of the patients and their families.

Whether it is a routine health checkup for individuals or family, diagnostics, non invasive care or welcoming your baby in the world, our staff keeps delivering services with love and care to our patients.

Saifee Hospital has been continuously acquiring new ways and means and concepts to deliver better healthcare for its patients which is driven by patient safety as its backbone. We have State of the art, cutting edge technology to support patient care.

We conduct some of the very advanced surgical programs HIPEC, PIPEC, renal transplant programs and Cochlear implants and robotic surgeries in varied fields.

Enriching the quality of life is our passion and to provide world class preventive and holistic care to every strata of society in a safe, ethical and affordable manner is our vision.

SAIFEE HOSPITAL

under the auspices of Saifee Hospital Trust Reg. No. E-5448 (Bom)

SERVICES AVAILABLE AT SAIFEE HOSPITAL

MEDICAL

Cardiology	Hepatology	Oncology
Dermatology	Internal Medicine	Paediatrics
Diabetology	Intensive Care Medicine	Psychiatry
Endocrinology	Neonatal ICU	Respiratory / Chest Medicine
Gastroenterology	Neurology	Rheumatology
Haematology	Nephrology	

SURGICAL

Bariatric Surgery	Gastro Intestinal Surgery	Onco Surgery
Cardiac Surgery	General Surgery	Ophthalmology
Colo-Rectal Surgery	Gynaecology & Obstetrics	Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
Cosmetic & Plastic Surgery	Head & Neck Surgery	Orthopaedic Surgery
Dentistry	Liver and HPB Surgery	Paediatric Surgery
Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT)	Laparoscopic Surgery	Renal Transplant Surgery
Excimer Laser	Minimal Invasive Surgery	Robotic Surgery
HIPEC Surgery	Neurosurgery	Urology Vascular Surgery

DIAGNOSTIC & THERAPEUTIC

Endoscopy	Liver Clinic	Sleep Study
Lab Medicine / Blood Bank	Nuclear Medicine	Physiotherapy & Rehabilitation
Cardiac Rehabilitation	Sports Injury clinic	Speech Therapy & Audiometry
Cathlab	Health Checkup	Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation
Dermato Cosmetic Clinic	Urodynamic Studies	Neurophysiology (EEG,EMG)
Imaging (CT/MRI/USG/DEXA/Mammo/XRay)	Non Invasive Cardiology (TMT,ECHO)	Ayurveda

15/17, Maharshi Karve Marg, Mumbai - 400 004. Tel.: (022) 6951 5253, 6757 0111, 2383 0111, 75065 11101.
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When World Class Healthcare Comes Closer to Home



For an important diagnosis or major procedure, families should look at the hospital's experience in treating that particular condition, writes *Poonam Chopra*

There was a time when a complicated medical diagnosis brought with it another worry: where can we find the best treatment? For many families, the answer meant looking beyond India, travelling overseas and dealing with the expense, uncertainty and emotional strain of being treated far from home.

That picture is changing. Walk into leading hospitals in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Pune and other major cities, and you will find medical expertise, technology and facilities that compare with some of the best institutions worldwide. Robotic surgery, advanced cancer treatment, sophisticated cardiac procedures, organ transplantation, precision diagnostics and specialised critical care are no longer futuristic concepts. They are part of modern medical practice.

Importantly, this progress is not just about acquiring expensive machines. Hospitals are investing in specialist doctors, trained nurses, advanced laboratories, research, infection control and multidisciplinary

teams. Patients with complicated conditions can increasingly access several specialists working together, rather than having to visit different hospitals for different aspects of treatment.

Of course, no hospital can guarantee a cure, and the latest technology is not necessarily appropriate for every patient. But the question is increasingly less about whether advanced medical care is available in India and more about finding the right hospital, specialist and treatment.

Technology has transformed the way medicine is practised. Modern diagnostic equipment provides doctors with remarkably detailed information about what is happening inside the body. Advanced imaging can identify tumours, blockages and other problems with greater accuracy, often allowing treatment to begin earlier.

Robotic surgery has brought greater precision to selected procedures. Despite the rather intimidating name, the robot does not operate independently. The surgeon remains in control, using the system to make precise movements with enhanced visualisation. In suitable cases, this can mean smaller incisions, less blood loss, reduced pain and quicker recovery.

Minimally invasive procedures have similarly changed the experience of treatment. Some operations that once required major surgery can now be performed through small openings or blood vessels. In cardiac care, for instance, selected patients with serious heart valve problems can undergo procedures without traditional open-heart surgery. Orthopaedic surgery has also benefited from computer-assisted planning, helping surgeons prepare more accurately for joint replacements.

However, technology must never replace medical judgement. The newest machine is not automatically the best answer. It is the doctor's experience and understanding of the patient's condition that determine whether a particular technology will genuinely help. In good healthcare, technology is the servant, not the master.

Cancer treatment offers another striking example of medical progress. Modern cancer centres bring together surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation specialists, pathologists, radiologists and other professionals to develop coordinated treatment plans.

Doctors now recognise that cancer is not one single disease. Even patients with apparently similar cancers may respond differently to the same treatment. Detailed pathology and molecular testing can help identify the biological characteristics of a tumour and guide treatment choices. Targeted therapies and immunotherapy have opened new possibilities for selected patients, although they are not suitable for every cancer and should never be mistaken for miracle cures.

Cardiac medicine has made equally impressive advances. Specialist centres can now undertake complex angioplasty, advanced valve procedures, bypass surgery, treatment for heart rhythm disorders and even transplantation. Emergency care has improved too. When someone suffers a heart attack or stroke, rapid diagnosis and immediate treatment can make a crucial difference. Better imaging, monitoring and intensive care facilities allow medical teams to respond faster and more effectively.

Yet behind every advanced machine is a human team. A scanner cannot comfort a frightened patient, a monitor cannot explain a diagnosis to the family and a surgical system cannot make a difficult ethical decision. These responsibilities remain with doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals. Their knowledge, experience and compassion are as important as the technology surrounding them.

Medical knowledge is also becoming increasingly global. Indian doctors participate in international conferences, research, specialist training and collaborations with colleagues overseas. New discoveries can reach practising doctors much faster, while difficult cases can sometimes be discussed with experts elsewhere.

Telemedicine has made specialist advice more accessible. Families dealing with a complicated diagnosis can seek a second opinion without necessarily travelling to another city. Digital medical records and the secure sharing of scans and reports can further

support this process.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is beginning to assist doctors, particularly in analysing medical images and large volumes of information. But it is important to keep expectations realistic. AI is not a doctor, and technology cannot replace human understanding. Medicine is not simply about identifying a disease; it is about understanding the person who has it.

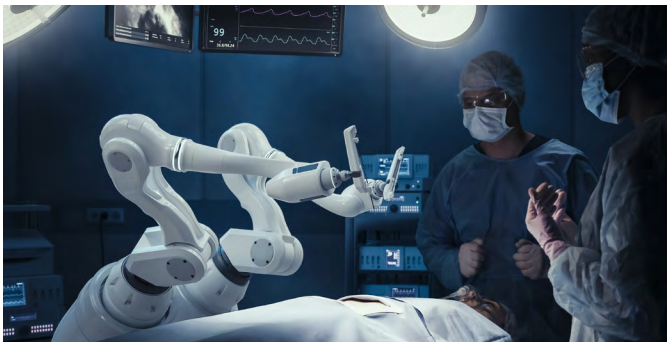
This is particularly important for senior citizens, who may be managing several health conditions simultaneously. A doctor needs to understand a patient's medical history, existing medication, lifestyle and concerns before recommending treatment. The best hospitals are those where advanced technology and experienced professionals work together, with human judgement guiding every important decision.

Choosing the right hospital requires more than looking at its facilities or reputation. An impressive building, website or advertisement featuring the latest equipment should not be the deciding factor. For a major diagnosis or procedure, families should examine the hospital's experience in treating that particular condition.

Who will actually perform the procedure? How frequently does the specialist undertake it? Does the hospital have adequate intensive care and emergency facilities? Are all the relevant specialists available when required? What are the treatment options and their possible risks?

A second opinion can be particularly valuable before major surgery or expensive treatment. It may confirm the original recommendation or offer another perspective. Patients and their families should never hesitate to ask questions: What exactly is wrong? Why is this treatment recommended? Are there alternatives? What happens if we wait? What should we expect during recovery?

Equally important is the way a hospital treats its patients. Illness can make people feel frightened, dependent and vulnerable. A doctor who listens, a nurse who patiently explains a procedure and a hospital team that keeps the family informed can make an enormous difference.



World-class healthcare is therefore not simply about expensive equipment or impressive buildings. It is about clinical expertise, patient safety, communication, compassion and outcomes. Every patient is an individual with a family, memories, worries and hopes.

The future promises even greater possibilities. AI may help detect diseases earlier, robotic systems may become more precise and personalised medicine may allow treatments to be tailored to an individual's biological characteristics. Remote monitoring could also help doctors keep track of patients without requiring frequent hospital visits. Advances in transplantation, regenerative medicine and genetic research may eventually change the treatment of several serious conditions.

But amid all this progress, one simple truth must remain central: technology is valuable only when it improves a person's life. Its real worth lies in helping patients recover, live longer, experience less pain or retain their independence.

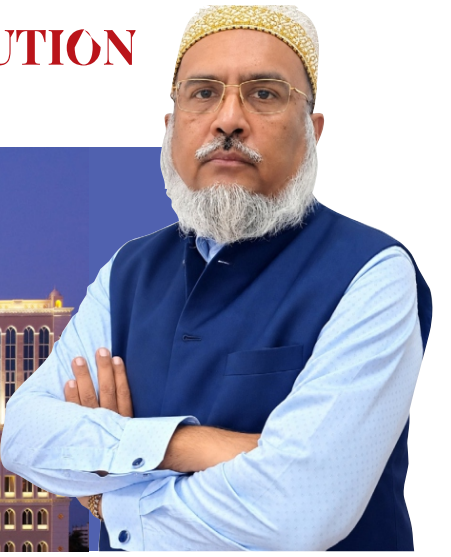
For families who once believed that the finest medical treatment could only be found abroad, this is a reassuring change. Increasingly, world-class facilities, highly trained specialists and advanced treatments are available closer to home.

There will always be differences between hospitals, and medical treatment will never be without uncertainty. But the direction is encouraging. Medicine is becoming more precise, specialised and capable.

Ultimately, behind every technological breakthrough, every skilled surgeon and every advanced treatment lies the same timeless purpose: to protect life, restore health and give people something no machine can manufacture on its own – the confidence to hope for a better tomorrow.

SAIFEE HOSPITAL: LEADING THE EVOLUTION OF ADVANCED MULTI-SPECIALTY CARE





A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN ADVANCED MEDICAL CARE

Saifee Hospital is a 250-plus-bed multispecialty tertiary-care hospital in Mumbai, equipped with state-of-the-art technology and supported by a team of highly experienced clinicians. The hospital offers comprehensive medical and surgical care across a wide range of specialties, with expertise in advanced and complex procedures, including HIPEC and PIPAC, robotic surgery, cochlear implantation, kidney and liver transplantation, advanced reconstructive surgery, complex retinal and corneal procedures, and paediatric robotic surgery.

At the heart of Saifee Hospital's philosophy is a deeply patient-centric approach built on empathy, compassion and respect.

MISSION AND VISION: HEALTHCARE WITH A HUMAN TOUCH

Saifee Hospital's mission is to achieve excellence in healthcare by delivering world-class preventive, curative and holistic care to individuals across all sections of society in a safe, ethical and affordable manner.

The hospital believes that every patient deserves personalised attention, access to advanced medical technology and treatment from highly skilled medical professionals. Its approach combines clinical excellence with a commitment to making quality healthcare accessible, efficient and compassionate.

A defining principle of Saifee Hospital is to ensure ease of treatment for doctors and ease of access to treatment for patients. This philosophy is reflected in its belief that rules are meant to serve people, not enslave them—an approach that places patient welfare, clinical effectiveness and operational flexibility at the forefront of healthcare delivery.

A TRUSTED DESTINATION FOR INTERNATIONAL PATIENTS

Saifee Hospital has established itself as a prominent healthcare destination in India, attracting patients seeking high-quality medical treatment at affordable costs. Its comprehensive multispecialty services cater to patients requiring both routine and highly specialised medical interventions.

Key strengths include:

- A team of highly experienced doctors and specialists.
- Access to advanced medical technology and modern equipment.
- Expertise in complex procedures and specialised treatments.
- Continued engagement with patients after they return home.
- Video consultations with Saifee Hospital doctors.
- Support for international insurance coverage, subject to applicable terms and eligibility.

Through these services, Saifee Hospital aims to provide patients and their families with confidence, continuity of care and a reassuring healthcare experience, irrespective of where they come from.

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY TO TRANSFORM HEALTHCARE

Saifee Hospital continues to explore and adopt emerging technologies that can enhance clinical precision, improve operational efficiency and strengthen patient outcomes.

Robotics-Assisted Surgery: The hospital has incorporated robotic-assisted surgical systems for selected complex procedures. These platforms support enhanced precision, dexterity and visualisation, enabling surgeons to perform minimally invasive procedures where clinically appropriate.

Artificial Intelligence in Diagnostics: AI-powered tools are being utilised to support medical imaging and diagnostic processes. By assisting clinicians in analysing imaging studies, including X-rays, CT scans and MRIs, these technologies can help identify potential abnormalities, improve workflow efficiency and support timely clinical decision-making.

Electronic Health Records: The implementation of electronic health record systems supports secure management of patient information, improved documentation and better coordination among healthcare professionals. Saifee Hospital seeks to strengthen diagnostic capabilities, support personalised treatment planning and improve the overall patient experience.

RECOGNITION AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the years, the hospital has received multiple awards and accolades, including recognition for Best Infection Prevention and Control Practice, Iconic Hospital of the Year for Quality and Patient Safety, and Best Healthcare Delivery, among others.

These achievements reflect the hospital's continued emphasis on maintaining high standards of clinical care, strengthening patient safety practices and delivering healthcare services with professionalism and compassion.

As healthcare continues to evolve, Saifee Hospital remains focused on combining advanced medical capabilities, experienced clinical teams and a patient-first philosophy to deliver accessible, ethical and quality healthcare to people from India and around the world.

arohi
eye hospital
Redefining Eye Care

A Legacy of Trust and Excellence



Founded in 2010 by Dr. Shradha Goel, Arohi Eye Hospital has grown from a modest eye hospital in Andheri West into a trusted destination for advanced eye care in Mumbai.

BUILT ON STRONG VALUES

Built on a foundation of clinical excellence, innovation and compassionate care, Arohi has continuously evolved, bringing modern technology and specialised treatments under one roof.

EXPERT LEADERSHIP

Under the leadership of Dr. Shradha Goel, the hospital offers comprehensive services, including cataract surgery, LASIK, retina, glaucoma, pediatric and corneal care.

OUR IMPACT

With over 1.5 lakh patients served, NABH accreditation and years of dedicated service, Arohi has established itself as a patient-focused institution.

Our services

- Lasik
- Cataract
- Retina
- Glaucoma
- Pediatrics
- Cornea



More than just better vision... Arohi's journey is not just about restoring vision, but about building trust, transforming lives and creating a brighter future through quality eye care.

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For someone already worried about memory, an unexplained result can add uncertainty rather than answer a question. A test is most useful when it addresses a clear question and includes a plan for what to do with the result. Knowing that a biological change may be present is not the same as knowing what will happen to one person.

Positive steps for brain and general health

People can take useful steps without first knowing a biomarker result. The 2024 Lancet Commission estimated that addressing 14 modifiable risk factors could prevent or delay up to 45**%** of dementia cases worldwide. These include physical inactivity, high blood pressure, hearing and vision loss, depression and social isolation.

Regular physical activity, good control of blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes, adequate sleep, attention to hearing and vision, and staying socially connected all support health as we age. A balanced, nutritious diet and avoiding smoking help too. None of these steps can guarantee dementia prevention, but they support brain health, heart health, and quality of life.

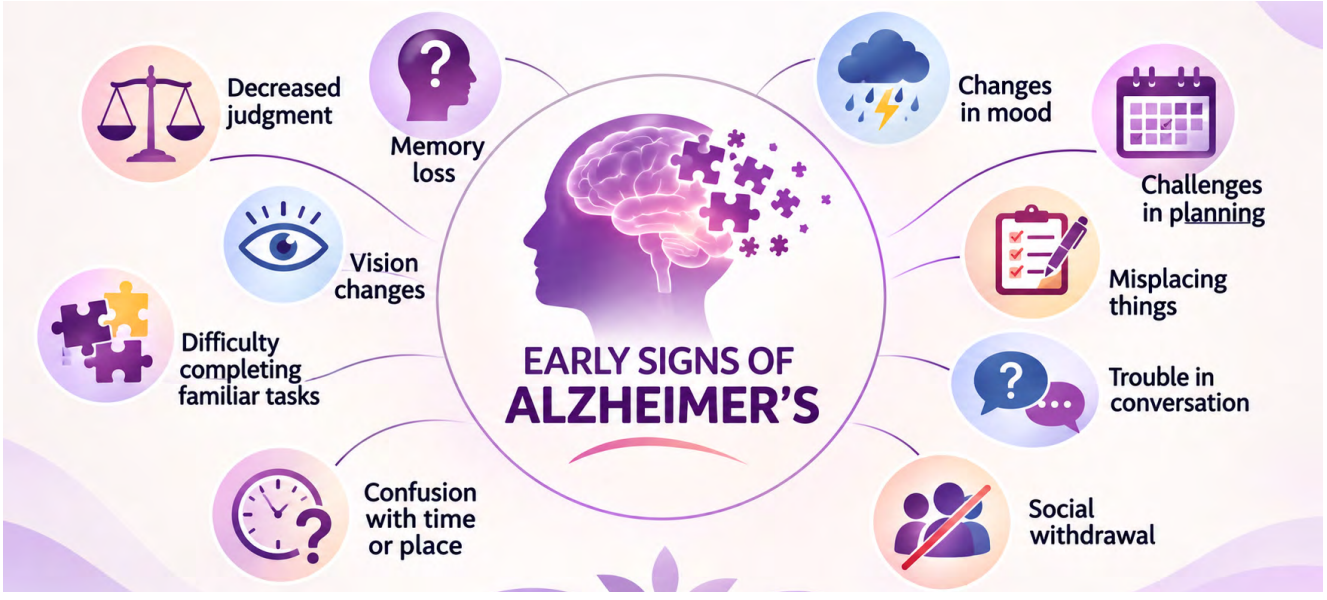
Some medicines can help manage symptoms. Newer treatments that target amyloid may be considered for selected people with early Alzheimer's, but they are not suitable for everyone and need careful assessment and monitoring. A blood-test result alone is not a reason to start a dementia medicine.

A reason to ask, not a reason to panic

Forgetting a name now and then usually isn't a reason to panic. Notice whether it is an occasional lapse or part of a persistent change that is getting worse. If memory problems trouble you or affect daily life, bring them up with your doctor. Writing down a few examples beforehand—and bringing someone who knows you well, if you wish—can make the conversation more useful.

A sudden change in confusion or alertness is different and needs prompt medical attention.

A careful assessment can help explain what may be happening, whether further tests would answer a useful question and what could be improved. The aim is to understand your concern and decide together what to do next.





Tu Tu Main Main and Beyond

What distinguishes relationships that crumble under pressure from those that survive life's ups and downs, asks *Vickram Sethi*

Conflict in a relationship isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it's pretty inevitable. Differences in personalities, needs and expectations can cause friction. Stressors such as financial difficulties, illness, work responsibilities, parenting and major life changes can also test even the most compatible couples.

So, what distinguishes relationships that crumble under pressure from those that survive life's ups and downs? It's how couples fight that matters most. Often a couple has been married for a long time and live in a very small space; that's the time when they get into each other's hair. Every action, every movement gets questioned and little arguments can blow up the fuse. People also get stubborn as they age and you have retired, the children have left home and there is nothing else to do. Many couples take to other things that is religion, spirituality, grand children just to avoid conflicts.

Arguments are bound to happen in any relationship, but there are strategies to help keep them productive. There are many signs of healthy conflict, from compassionate communication and validating each other's feelings to the ability to recover and reconnect after things go wrong. But one mindset underpins many of these practices: seeing each other as teammates, not opponents.

An analysis found that using language that frames partners as a unit, such as referring to themselves as "we", was associated with better relationship functioning, partly because it encouraged more positive conflict.

To have a resilient relationship, couples need a shared commitment to overcoming

challenges together. That means remembering they are on the same side, even when they disagree.



This sense of togetherness, along with the skills and behaviours that support it, can develop when couples invest in their relationship.

Taking time to nurture your bond and build a strong foundation makes it easier to feel like a unified team. This, in turn, influences how you approach disagreements and your ability to overcome difficulties together.

How conflict can build resilience

People often use resilience to describe the ability to bounce back from adversity, whether it is an ongoing disagreement with your partner or a major upset in your household.

But resilience does not necessarily mean returning to the way things were before. As human beings, we are changed by our experiences. Ideally, we learn from them and grow, becoming better equipped to handle future challenges.

In relationships, resilience is not simply about restoring harmony and moving forward after difficult times. Healthy conflict can provide an opportunity to discuss differences, understand your partner's perspective, exchange feedback and identify underlying issues you may not have addressed together.

In a healthy relationship, conflict becomes a chance to work through a challenge and emerge stronger.

So, what does productive conflict look like? There is no single definition, but a team mentality is essential. Think of conflict not as a fight but as a joint discussion. It is about working and growing together.

Keeping your shared goal in mind can help you avoid common mistakes, such as becoming preoccupied with who is right or resorting to harsh language and personal attacks.

Even when arguments go off track, resilient couples find ways to reconnect. They might revisit the conversation after cooling down, offer affection, take responsibility for their actions or apologise when they have hurt each other.

These small choices can strengthen the foundation of a relationship over time.

How to fight on the same team

When disagreements arise, it can help to think of the conversation as a game of catch rather than a tennis match.

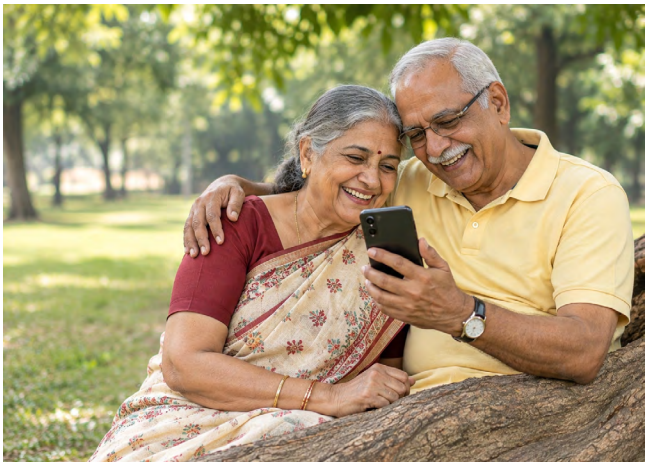
When you play catch, you throw the ball gently back and forth. You take your time, pay attention and respond to each other. The game depends on both people sending and receiving.

Tennis, on the other hand, can become fast and adversarial, with each player trying to score the next point and emerge as the winner.

The same distinction applies to arguments. When you treat your partner as an opponent, you concentrate on defending your position and proving yourself right. When you approach the discussion as a teammate, you listen, respond thoughtfully and work towards a shared solution.

These communication skills take practice,

and even people who communicate well can benefit from returning to the basics. The important thing is to recognise when you are treating each other as opponents rather than working together.



Here are some practical ways to put this approach into action.

Set some ground rules

Being on the same team means trusting that you will be treated with care and respect, even during disagreements.

It helps to agree on what fighting fairly means and which behaviours are unacceptable. Decide which lines you will never cross, such as name-calling, attacking each other's character, shouting or deliberately giving each other the silent treatment.

Ground rules can also cover what to do when a conversation becomes heated. You might agree to take a 15-minute break to calm down or promise to apologise when you have hurt each other's feelings.

The purpose is not to prevent disagreements but to ensure that both partners feel respected and safe enough to express themselves honestly.

Know when to pause

Even with ground rules in place, there comes a point when continuing a conversation does more harm than good. You might become too emotional to listen compassionately, or find yourselves going around in circles because neither of you is willing to reconsider your position.

Sometimes, we say things that are inappropriate, inaccurate, unhelpful or simply things we do not mean.

When a disagreement becomes unproductive, it is better to pause than to keep pushing for an immediate resolution. Use the break to settle yourself rather than rehearse your argument or dwell on everything your partner has done wrong.

Remind yourself that you are talking to your teammate, not your opponent. Deep breathing or taking a short walk can help you calm down.

The important part is returning to the conversation once you are in the right frame of mind to discuss the issue rather than fight about it. It is better to return sooner rather than later, so that taking a break does not become a way of avoiding the problem.

In the meantime, try to maintain a positive connection. Apologising, showing affection and spending quality time together after an argument can help both partners recover emotionally and restore closeness.



Talk before resentment builds

Many couples avoid conflict and allow small grievances to grow into major resentments.

Eventually, these feelings erupt, often at a time when neither partner is in the right frame of mind to communicate effectively.

Instead, set aside time once a week, or as often as suits you both, to talk about your relationship.

How are you both feeling? Have you been giving each other enough attention? Is anything troubling either of you?

Make room for these conversations before frustrations build up and become overwhelming.

Regular check-ins provide a relaxed setting in which to practice healthy communication. They also give you an opportunity to return to disagreements that you may have paused earlier.

Often, the best time to discuss conflict is when you are not actually in the middle of one.

These conversations are not something couples need only during difficult periods. They remain important throughout a relationship because differences are inevitable.

You will never find yourself with someone who thinks exactly as you do. The goal, therefore, is not to eliminate conflict but to manage differences in a way that strengthens the partnership between two individuals who have chosen to be a team.

A lasting relationship is not one in which disagreements never happen. It is one in which both people feel heard, mistakes can be acknowledged and problems can be addressed with care and respect.

When you remember that you and your partner are on the same side, disagreements become less about winning and more about understanding each other. And that is what helps a relationship grow stronger over time.





To be or Not To Be

None of us need to face the dilemma of 'to be or not to be' at the sunset stage of our life, for there is no other way, advises *Nagesh Alai*

Fantasy is a pleasurable indulgence for many of us and serves the purpose of a joyful escapism from the drudgery of daily life or an impetus for some exciting times ahead or to simply enable facing the current situation. I, for one, unabashedly get into that mode more often than not, as I live through the sunset phase of life soaking in all the rainbow colours and hues that the setting fireball of a planet spectacularly displays for us. In the ancient spiritual ages, the Hindu philosophy of living glorified the third stage of life (or ashrama) called vanaprastha (referring to exit from daily life in a city or a village and entering the vana or forest to live as a hermit), post fulfilling the responsibilities of 'grihasta' or a householder and in preparation to 'sannyasa' or complete renunciation. Staying in a forest amid the lush nature and green and air and rain and streams would be something to pine and die for and would have been possible in the distant past, but something unthinkable in the modern times when humans have depleted and depraved the environment and ecology much to their own peril.

Regardless of the destruction of the green cover, live we all must amid the concrete jungle of the cities and the milieu of independent living or forced co-living or migration and job led family separations. Crossing the seven seas is no longer a taboo, but something which the generations of various times over the past 5 decades have been actively doing , many times at the expense of their progenitors who are left

behind. The hoary system of a joint family has fallen by the way side for a range of reasons and pressures of the times and the added primacy of self over others has all but diluted the deep sense of responsibility towards elders, which was well entrenched in the societal culture. The philosophy of detachment is the only thing that can help the silver generation cope with the situation that they are in voluntarily or involuntarily.

Some practical dos and don'ts that are worth looking at for leading an equanimous existence in the midst of the changing societal equations are :

1) In keeping with the core philosophy of vanaprastha and sannyasa stages of withdrawal and detachment from family life, just be and let go.

2)Let go of command and control over your family or children. Have the confidence in their ability to chart a path of their own. Your responsibility ended with giving them a good foundation and education. It is for them to face the world with all its challenges and opportunities. Let them decide.

3)Keep your opinions to yourself, unless asked.

4)Don't expect your opinions to be considered or followed by your children. Don't feel offended either if your opinions are ignored.

5)If the children are staying with you, let them run the house. Don't interfere unless something is being seriously mishandled and compromising the household.

6)If they are staying with you, have upfront discussions and agreement on contributions to the household expense kitty.

7)If the children are staying on their own, let them lead their lives and avoid unsolicited advice. Don't judge them simply because they chose to live separately.

8)Respect their space and ensure that your space is respected too.

9)If your children are living in a different city or abroad, it may be worthwhile setting up a periodic routine of family video calls for conversations and bonding. If the routine is missed for any reason, don't fret.

10)The visits to your children, in India or abroad, may be once or twice a year, but not for extended periods unless the children want it. The difference in the time frames or number of visits will be the difference between feeling welcomed and feeling imposed upon.

11) Be detached, but never be indifferent. Parents may find the former difficult and the latter will never be. But the children's responses could be different depending on the circumstances and distances. Don't have any reciprocal expectations.

12) Be prudent with your expenditure and if you can help it do not depend on your children, whether they live with your or away from you, for any financial support.

13)Children will have their own priorities and these may not align with yours and may be completely at variance. Accept that reality.

14) Never take your children for granted, they will not appreciate it.

15)Your financial situation and that of



your children/their family may not be the same, it may be vastly different, leading to divergence of views on financial matters and spending patterns. Needs will be different, wants will be varied. Best to have a balanced and prudent approach and avoid any drag on each other's resources. Not everyone will be or can be equally giving or generous. If help is offered, accept it with grace; if not accept it as a reality of circumstances. Don't impute motives.

16)Your children may go off on travels by themselves without checking with you or taking you along. So be it. They may need their 'me' time and may need their private breaks. Respect it.

17)Conversely, don't hesitate to take off on a travel when you feel like it. There is nothing wrong in it nor should you feel guilty taking that break. You are as entitled to it as your children are.

18)Should the children need any financial help, be prudently supportive, but not at the cost of depleting your resources to such an extent that you will become dependent.

19) Indulge in your favourite pass times – be it reading books, visiting libraries or museums or theatres or restaurants or whatever. These are pleasurable divergences and will lift your sense of wellbeing.

20) If you are lucky enough to have a grandchild, when marriages are being put off or pets take precedence over having a progeny, make the most of it. Stay completely involved with the grandchild, as much as you can, and watch her/him grow. Visit them periodically, as your finances my permit, and bond with them. There can be no greater joy. More importantly, it will rekindle and add depth to your relationship with your own child and his/her spouse. Everyone sub consciously knows that there is no warmer nest than a family.

21)Have periodic tete-a-tete with your children and have meaningful conversations touching upon the family, profession/jobs, concerns and insecurities and everything else. Your experiences may be of great use to them and they may welcome it.

22)Mentor or help them with their investments, should you have a knowledge in that front. A helping hand or guidance will be of great help, given the complexities of investments and decision metrics.

23)Periodic visits or travel to each other's places will add to a sense of belonging and bonding. Set up a calendar, if need be, for these occasions will be much awaited and a source of joy.

24)If there is any ailment in the family, proactively step in to offer help and succour – physical, mental and financial – to the best extent that you can. Mutual dependency, regardless of living distances, is inevitable and a much-needed support system.

25)Be generous in giving. The universe will give you manifold in return. Ultimately, your children are your universe, not withstanding the fact that you may be in different orbits.

The above may seem obvious, but most fail the test and take a fall. At the end of the day, it is all about gradual withdrawal from life, transitioning or passing the baton to the next generation while confining oneself to counselling or mentorship roles, detaching oneself from worldly affairs, focussing on introspection, reconnecting with the spiritual roots, meditating and preparing for the eventual sannyasa and exit phase.

None of us need to face the dilemma of 'to be or not to be' at the sunset stage of our life, for there is no other way. If only Hamlet had realised it in time, these famous words would probably not have found their way into Shakespeare's drama of life.

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Festival Fever

We Indians love to indulge with great fervour during all our festivals, writes *Malti Gaekwad*

India is known the world over for its unity in diversity and that is something we can really be proud of. Our colourful and beautiful traditional dresses of different regions, our food – full of various flavours and tastes, our languages, our landscapes, even our festivals are diverse or at least they are celebrated in different ways across the country like cherished heritage. Some festivals are seasonal and are significant in celebrating the harvest. In some states the sowing/ plantation time is also sacred and starts with prayers for a rich harvest. Some festival dates depend on the movement of the sun and some on the appearance of the first moon or the full moon. Not all are religious in nature but almost all have some ritualistic and customary significance.

Some festivals are celebrated with joyous activities like music and dance followed by lavish feasts and some are sober in nature, where there is more of religious activities and fasting before offering special things to the Gods and finally feasting of course! Whatever the case maybe we Indians love to indulge with great fervour during all our festivals.



Most of our festivals spread across the year almost in a chain like manner. Giving importance to different seasons, various kinds of foods along with seasonal crops, seasonal fruits, flowers and plants which are offered to the Gods and then partaken as Prasaad. Foods like til gul, revadi and gajjak made with, peanuts, sesame seeds

and jaggary during Sankranti (winter), Modaks and coconut sweets during Ganapati festival, Undhiyu in Gujarat during early winter with a host of seasonal vegetables. Every state has its own special foods.This practice ensures that the variety of dishes and sweetmeats and seasonal fruits are consumed by everyone at the right time. Affordable or not, every family tries to follow the tradition and do their best during festivals.



If we were to list the festivals which take place in India during one year we should start from the beginning of the calendar Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Bihu, Pongal, Maha Shivratri, Holi, Gudi Padwa, Chaitra Navratri, Cheti Chand, Ramzan, Eid, Good Friday, Easter, Akshay Tithi, Raksha Bandhan, Janmashtami, Ganpati, Navratri, Durga Puja, Dashera, (during Dashera, the Kshatriya community will clean and service their weapons, before other celebrations)

Karva Chauth, Diwali, Bhai Beej, Gurpurab and Christmas.



Added to these are our national holidays like Republic Day, Independence Day, Teachers Day, Gandhi Jayanti, Sardar Jayanti and 14th November – Children's Day. Then they are Army Day, Navy Day and Air Force Day and more such days. As if these were not enough, we Indians have whole heartedly started observing and celebrating Valentine's Day, Friendship Day, Rose Day, Chocolate Day, Halloween, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Doctors Day, Senior Citizens Day and what not! More than anything else, all these immensely contribute to the specialised merchandising of popular products.

Then there is Ram Navmi, Hanuman Jayanti, Vishwakarma Jayanti, Sharad Purnima, in fact almost every Purnima (full moon) is celebrated. Also some of the third, fourth and sixth day of a New Moon like Akshay Tithi, Teej, Ganpati Chaturthi, Karva Chauth, Chhath Puja and so many others. The list is endless.

No doubt all these festivals and celebrations keep our calendars packed. But there is more. Engagements, weddings,

birthdays, baby showers, Navjot, mundan and thread ceremonies, house warming etc. keep adding to the list of celebratory events. Birthdays and other parties have also acquired a new dimension now. The earliest influence was - cake cutting, instead of a homemade feast with halwa, puri and kheer. Now it's a different level altogether, with fancy decorations, exclusive variety of food items, music, games and customized return gifts. Every family and community celebrate in a way their tradition has laid down and whatever their pocket allows. Actually people save and make provisions to spend at such events.



One thing is sure that this festival season is like an infectious fever leading to a boom in market activity. People of all strata go on a buying spree which is a big boost to the local economy. Every festival brings with it its own specific merchandise. Balloons and buntings are an old story. The variety of festoons and decorative products available from time to time are mind boggling. One actually needs to go out on the streets to see and get into the festive feel.

Kites during kite flying season, Pichkaris and colours during Holi, Ganpati, Dasamata, Durga's Idols in big and small sizes are sold during the different seasons, kinds of lighting, earthen lamps, fire crackers and rangoli colours during Diwali and even other festivals. Our national flag in different sizes in January and August, tri-colour lapel pins, broaches, stickers, Santa Claus masks, X-mas trees, red and white caps for Christmas and many kinds of masks and caps/ hats for New Year's Eve, are but a few obvious items on sale but there are countless accessories besides these too. Navratri and Garba time there are roadside stalls laden with glittering dresses and matching jewellery not only for girls but boys too and not to miss the special ones catering to children of all ages.





Raksha Bandhan, Janmashtami, Ganpati, Durga Puja, Karva Chauth and other festivals all come with their own fanfare - mostly just for a day but the shopping season just rolls out from one to another.

During February, the cost and sale of roses goes up and then you can see little teddy bears with red hearts for Valentines', these are just a few examples.

The cricketing season is another crazy time..... caps and sun glasses were common, but now, stadiums are filled with people wearing India jerseys and carrying banners, posters and the Indian flag.

To top it all is the wedding season. It's another crazy time and getting bigger each passing year with more and more functions getting added to the accepted ones. That's why it's now known as the Big Fat Indian Wedding! Many foreigners come to India just to take part in an Indian wedding. They indulge in buying traditional clothes for various functions and attend classes to learn and enjoy the dance steps for the sangeet function. They want to take part in



every ceremony like mehndi, haldi, wear safaas, achkans, dhotis and lehenga cholis with maang tikkas and go all the way. Good for the Indian economy I would say.

All of this is really good as long as we buy indigenous products and not 'Made in China' items and don't let the fever get to our head!





The Zeenat Effect: 75 Years of Glamour, Guts & Grace

It was Zeenat Aman who defined the spirit of the age by challenging the status quo, writes *Deepa Gahlot*

Even though she has gone grey and posts regularly in social media unfiltered photos of herself, it is difficult to imagine Zeenat Aman as 75! Think of her and the image of the svelte model-turned-actress comes to mind, the one who overturned the image of the traditional Hindi film heroine.

There were other glamorous actresses of course, but the Seventies can more or less be carved between Zeenat Aman and Hema Malini. The former was called Glam Doll, Bindaas Babe, Sex Bomb, and other such politically incorrect names, and flaunted her figure in bikinis, low-cut dresses and slinky gowns; the latter was called Dream Girl and was so demure, her midriff was covered by a flesh-coloured layer if and when it was visible.

Hema Malini may have had a better success rate at the box-office, but it was Zeenat Aman who defined the spirit of the age by challenging the status quo.

Born on November 19, 1951, in Bombay (now Mumbai), Zeenat Khan grew up in a progressive environment shaped by the artistic legacy of her father, Amanullah Khan, a screenwriter who wrote under the pen name "Aman" and contributed to classics like Mughal-e-Azam and Pakeezah. After her parents divorced, her father passed away when she was thirteen—she adopted his pen name, "Aman," as her surname.

Her mother, Vardhini Scharwachter (née Scinda), remarried a German national. After her schooling at a boarding school in Panchgani, she won a scholarship to study at the University of Southern California

in Los Angeles. Although she returned to India before completing her degree, her time abroad and her unconventional, cosmopolitan upbringing broadened her worldview, and gave her a sense of fearlessness. While other actresses of the time were always chaperoned by their mothers, Zeenat never needed that crutch. She also had a string of relationships, well-documented in the fanzines, when most other industry women were hypocritical about their personal lives.

Upon returning to Mumbai, Zeenat worked briefly as a journalist for a women's magazine, before becoming a model—she had the looks, height, grace and attitude for it. In 1970, she entered a beauty pageant, was second runner-up in Miss India and went on to win Miss Asia Pacific International—becoming the first Indian woman to claim the title.



Back then models and beauty contest winners were not considered actress material. But OP Ralhan offered her Hulchul (1971) -- not a great launch for her. In the same year she appeared in the film Hungama, which was also a flop. Her major breakthrough arrived when Dev Anand cast her in Hare Rama Hare Krishna (1971). She played the sister of his character--Janice (Jasbir), a flower child caught in the hippie movement of Kathmandu, and brought a contemporary energy to the screen, as well as the vulnerability of a young woman neglected by her family. Accompanied by R.D. Burman's soundtrack and Asha Bhosle's vocals on Dum Maro Dum, her performance resonated with audiences, earning her the Filmfare Award for Best Supporting Actress.

There were industry naysayers who believed that once an actress has played the hero's sister, it is practically the end of her career as a leading lady. Zeenat defied that perception too – the audiences and filmmakers were enamoured of her beauty and smouldering screen presence—it did not matter that she could not really act and spoke with a breathless slightly anglicized accent.



And because she was seen as a care-a-damn person, the roles she picked were not

of demure women. In Dev Anand's Heera Panna (1973), she cavorted in a bikini, which gave her the sex symbol tag. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, she played quite unconventional roles.

In Roti Kapda Aur Makaan (1974), opposite Manoj Kumar, she played a woman who chooses financial security over love, giving her a realistic complexity that in an earlier time would have branded her a vamp.

In Ajnabee (1974), opposite Rajesh Khanna, her character picked career over motherhood, when such a choice would have been sacrilegious in a film, as in society.

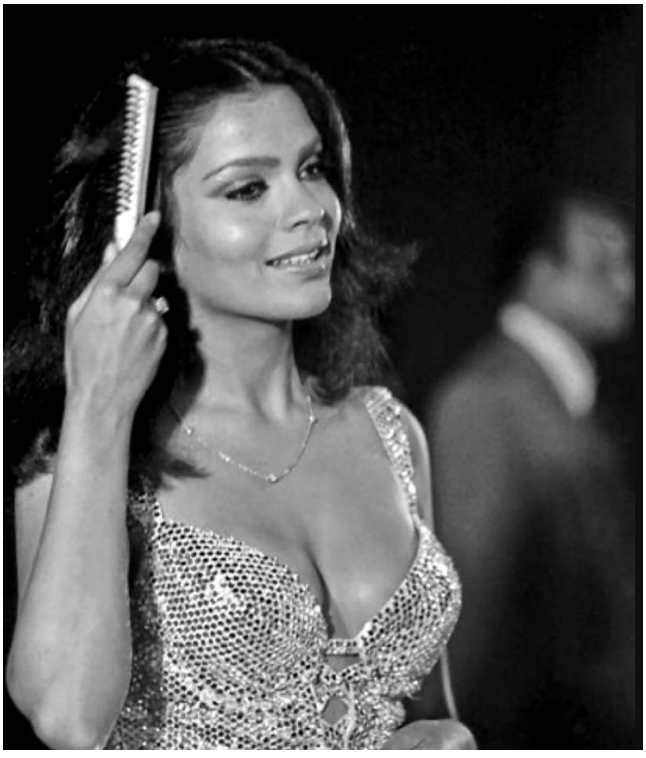
In Don (1978), opposite Amitabh Bachchan, she broke the damsel-in-distress mould and performed her own stunts in the revenge plot.

When Raj Kapoor was looking for an actress, who would not be coy about wearing a no-blouse tribal costume for his Satyam Shivam Sundaram (1978), she would never have made it to his list; she impressed him by turning up in the costume and bagged the film. She earned a Filmfare Best Actress nomination for her performance as a woman with a scarred face and divine singing voice.



She had played a scared wife in a vicious man in BR Chopra's Dhund (1973); he cast her again in Insaf Ka Tarazu (1980), in which she played a sexual assault survivor seeking justice in a legal system that was, back then, unsympathetic towards women. Her work as a model leaves her vulnerable to questions about her lifestyle and character in court. She worked really hard on this role, and was nominated for a Filmfare Award. (Interestingly, in Dhund one of her co-stars was Sanjay Khan, who was to play a negative role in her life later.)

The Seventies and Eighties was the era of Amitabh Bachchan, and the kind of male-centric films in which the actress in mainstream cinema was just a decorative prop. Many of her films have her in generic 'heroine' roles—films like Warrant (1975), Chori Mera Kaam (1975), Shalimar (1977), Heeralal Pannalal (1978), The Great Gambler (1979). Still, her glamour was a powerful factor in films like Qurbani (1980), Ram Balram (1980), Laawaris (1981), Professor Pyarelal (1981). At a party for Shalimar, the gossip mags went gaga over her low-cut gown and declared her the winner in the cleavage competition with Italian star Gina Lollobrigida.



It was OP Ralhan who threw her a rope, casting her against type in Pyaas (1981), in which she played a sweeper. The film



flopped and her efforts went unnoticed.

What Zeenat accomplished, however, was to open doors for other glamorous actresses like Parveen Babi, Tina Munim and Kimi Katkar. It was said at the time that the willingness of heroines to look and act 'bold' meant the end of the vamp in Hindi films, whose role in mainstream movies was to wear skimpy outfits and be seductive.

Zeenat Aman was frequently featured in the gossip magazines of the time, and her alleged affair with Sanjay Khan resulted in an incident of violence in public that left one of her eyes damaged. Eventually, she married Mazhar Khan, had two sons and eased out of films by 1989, making just sporadic comebacks in films like Bhopal Express (1999), Boom (2003) and some cameos.

Zeenat Aman's career may not be studded with memorable roles, but she was a Bollywood icon in her time, and remains one of the unforgettables.





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- Experienced Care Team
- Comfortable Living Spaces
- Engaging Daily Activities
- A Caring Community

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