

First Anniversary

# seniors

TODAY

*Life & Times*

Issue #13 | July 15, 2020

## *The Age of Happiness*

*With the right mindset,  
we can see the bright, blue  
horizon in the distance,  
writes Harsh Goenka*

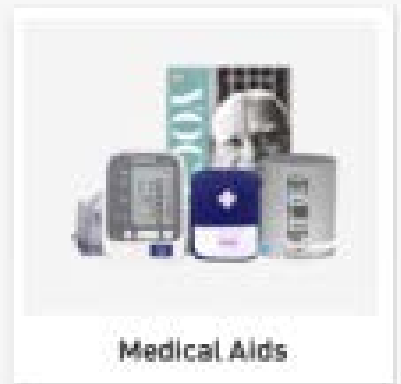
**+His Top 20  
Indian Restaurants**

**Films & Music that will  
make you Happy**

**Urvi Piramal's travelogue  
Ayaz Memon on Cricket  
Bachi Karkaria on Parsis**



## INDIA'S LARGEST SHOPPING DESTINATION FOR SENIORS





## We Are One, and it's an Awesome Feeling

This issue marks a milestone, the first anniversary of Seniors Today. Last July, we unveiled the first issue of our magazine, with an editorial format that conveyed our emphasis on senior life. The issues that surround these years – health, wellness, money, travel, real-life stories and a weekly webinar with a leading doctor who answers all queries regarding health.

We couldn't have got our launch timing worse. The recession fiercely knocking at our door. The pandemic and the economic aftermath of the world's biggest crisis, businesses shutting down even before you can say Covid-19. On the other hand, our tally of readership has gone up steadily, and rapidly. This also proves that seniors are pretty much on the go, tech-savvy and well-informed about their health and lifestyle.

For our first anniversary issue, Harsh Goenka, the self-effacing chairman of RPG Enterprises, writes about the pursuit of happiness, which has become one of the pillars of corporate governance. A progressive business leader who has a quirky sense of humour that is evident from his tweets (he has been voted as the #1 innovative and imaginative tweeter). A patron of the arts, who

has given Mumbai city great contemporary sculptures and sponsored various art shows, ever since he moved to Mumbai from Kolkata. Harsh is a food aficionado, and he has compiled a list of twenty of his favourite restaurants in India. He is equally at home in a Michelin-star as in the likes of Thaker Bhojnalay and Swati Snacks, or eating jhalmuri, bhel and puchka off the street.

We have gone to great lengths to make Seniors Today, the magazine and the website a pleasurable reading experience. As I look back at where we started and how far we have come, it's an awesome feeling – and this is one of the few times the word awesome is appropriate. We couldn't have made it so far without our readers' loyal support. I thank all our contributors, the editorial and business teams and the back-office staff who work silently to make Seniors Today the great magazine that we have become.

We are working constantly to improve our content and become a friend of every senior.

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

**Vickram Sethi**

Publisher and Editor-in-Chief



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Harsh Goenka

Cover Photo : S Kumar

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Col (Retd) **Ranbir Singh**, VrC, who retired in 1990, is a third-generation officer. His father Brig Sukhdev Singh was also awarded the Vir Chakra for the 1947-48 action and Military Cross in World War II. His brothers also joined the army and the son of the eldest brother was killed in action in Sri Lanka.



**Bachi Karkaria** is a veteran journalist and author. She has worked for many years with The Times of India, and a bit with Mid-Day as also with The Statesman. She also curates the Times Litfest, Mumbai.



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**Prabhakar Mundkur** is an advertising veteran, a lateral thinker, storyteller and musician. A coffee aficionado, husband and a father of two, he also describes himself as dogs' best friend.



**Narendra Kusnur** is one of India's best-known music journalists. Born with a musical spoon, so to speak, Naren, who dubs himself Kaansen, is a late bloomer in music criticism.



**Deepa Gahlot** is one of India's seniormost and best-known entertainment journalists. A National Award-winning film critic, she has authored several books on film and theatre, was head of theatre and film at the National Centre for Performing Arts, Mumbai.

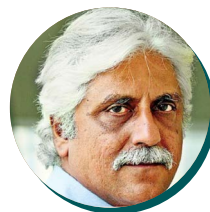


**Sonavi Kher Desai** is a Mumbai-based publisher, writer and editor and is the founder-proprietor of Indus Source Books. She is the author of Spiritual Masters: Sai Baba.

**Urvi Piramal** oversees a professionally managed conglomerate with business interests in real estate, textiles and cutting tools. A wildlife enthusiast, she has authored two books on wildlife: in India and Africa.



**Ayaz Memon** is an author and journalist, and one of the country's best-known writers on cricket – across print, digital, television, podcasts and social media. He also writes on socio-political issues.



# The Age of Happiness

**Harsh Goenka** on how to smile in times of trouble

S Kumar

It was around the 15th day of lockdown, when I re-watched one of my all-time favourite movies, *Life is Beautiful*. Viewing the film after a few years and amidst this lockdown, the story took on a whole new meaning. I was struck by the simplicity and profoundness of the message. Guido, (the Italian shopkeeper who is thrown into a concentration camp along with his little son) had chosen only to see the positive, however minuscule it may have been. And used his imagination and humour, despite the horrific realities of the concentration camp, to shelter his son from the cruelty and

tragedies that surrounded them, braving punishment, disease and death. It showed me how beautiful and indomitable the human spirit is. How little it took for the duo to remain in high spirits. How could they be happy amidst all that hardship?

It got me thinking about what happiness really means. All the sages from time immemorial have advised us to slow down, step off the roller-coaster to understand life and happiness. Well, the coronavirus did just that for us - brought us to a grinding halt. Like all of you, I have spent the past three months within the confines of my

home. Four months ago this would have been utterly inconceivable, and yet here we are. This compulsory pause has opened our eyes and minds to feel and sense a lot of subtle elements of our life that we had lost sight of - things that bring happiness.

As Deepak Chopra had said, focus on the positive whatever the circumstances. Most importantly, we have all been brought to spend more time with our families. Through this forced togetherness, we have rediscovered the warmth and affection of bonding, and the comfort of being with people who are closest to us. We now realise how much we had drifted away even while living together.

As our lives have slowed down, we have suddenly become more aware of the simple pleasures in life and finding joy in them. We notice the clear blue sky a lot more, we hear the birds, the rustling leaves, cherish the sea breeze and even discuss the brightness of the moon. We have begun to look at our days not in terms of dates, appointments and time-slots, but by the differing hues of the sun as it traverses the day.

This may sound odd, but I am sure many will agree with me that with the lockdown and social distancing, our relationships even with those elsewhere have become stronger. We have spoken over the phone to people whom we have not contacted in years, and re-established friendships. Underlying this phenomenon is the fact that we have begun to value people in our lives more.



We spend a lifetime doing the things we do to be truly happy in the future. That future is where you and I are now. Senior citizens. A stage in life when our bodies begin to exhibit the strains and stresses of a life spent building a home, a business, a career and so on. This is a stage in life when we could be facing a completely different set of challenges, mostly centred around health. We could be driven to think of this as a phase of suffering. Like Guido, many before us have risen to that challenge and shown that it is possible to maintain purpose and meaning in life even in the face of significant hardship. Our bodies change as we age, even when we eat healthy, exercise and try to take good care of ourselves. Sight, hearing, bones, joints, balance, mobility, memory, continence, strength and stamina — they will never be what they once were. Like a doctor once told his patient, “All my patients your age who are free of pains, are dead.”

Difficult times teach us some of the most valuable lessons in life. They will come in all shapes, sizes and intensity, but truly the choice to cross over from despair to happiness lies within us. Fifty per cent of being happy comes from how we are wired - our genes. Ten per cent comes from external circumstances. The remaining 40 per cent comes from the choices we make. It is this 40 per cent that we should focus on. If only we can align those choices to what can lead to happiness, we would be on the right track.

Most people would assume that I would be amongst the happiest people, and for the most part I am... after all, I was born into comfortable wealth and have all the advantages of the privileged. Yet on occasion I have observed a feeling of emptiness, even when I have achieved a milestone or accomplished a task well. I remember once after a particularly long and gruelling bout of negotiations which ended favourably, I was rather surprised at my emotions. I was so sure that success would bring me the greatest happiness, instead my jubilation didn't sustain too long. At that time my father gave me some very sage advice, which I follow to this day. This was from the Bhagwad Gita - let your focus be on your actions. Do your best and do not worry about the outcome.

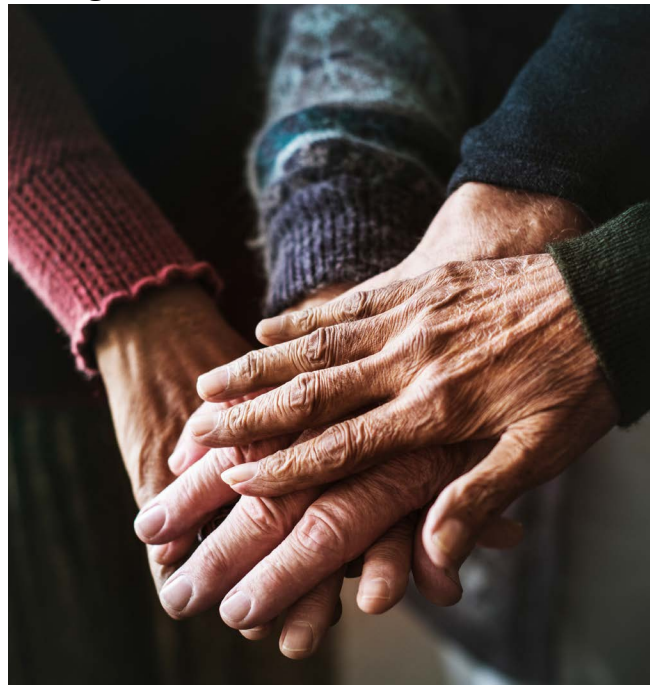
Why is the pursuit so complicated? Indian seers have for millennia described the paths to true happiness through a deeper understanding of concepts such as compassion, doing without expectations, destiny and meditation. The idea of deep breathing originated in India thousands of years ago. Studies show that deep breathing changes brain circuitry if done regularly. It brings concentration and a sense of calm. Yet in India we have abandoned our ethos of meditation and seem to have found more satisfaction in our smartphones. Be it every religion and philosophy, Buddha to Gandhi, Aristotle to the latest self-help guru... all have tried to define happiness and emphasise its importance. We all seem to be searching - yet, time and again our solutions appear to be those that give only short-lived shots of instant gratification. The Covid-19 lockdown has offered us a chance to reclaim those paths.

There are countries where the paths to happiness are more cherished than academic

or financial achievements. These cultures value human relationships, physical well-being and nature more than the modern virtues that define success. In Colombia for example, many roads are closed weekly to promote walking, cycling and skating, and cities are laid out such that people criss-cross and interact. Despite its lack of prosperity, it is high upon the happiness scale. And Bhutan is a shining example where the measurement of Happiness is an integral part of its governance.

In our quest for lasting happiness, there are some low-hanging fruits one could try and work upon.

### **Being human**



The first step is to give ourselves the permission to be human - to acknowledge the fact that we have emotions, positive and negative, and that we must accept emotions as normal and a very human thing to feel. It is equally important to accept that the next person is the same as us, though they may have a different set of emotions. So perhaps the first step is acceptance of ourselves and everyone as human beings with feelings.

## Stop worrying



A big enemy is worry. As we age we tend to worry a lot more than we ever did. From worrying about children to worrying about finances to even the smallest of things like a telephone ring, we become anxious people. It is important to give up on distractions that make us say and do silly things and instead focus on what is important to us. Why should we at all worry about things that might or might not happen?

And by worrying we do not control the outcome – all it does is create unnecessary anxiety.

## A variety of activities



We have to cultivate a variety of activities that can keep us engaged. We need to have a new way of looking at our self - as someone who continues to pursue and enjoy a variety of activities within our limitations. Yes, it is true that many of us cannot climb a ladder or cycle or trek. But we still can go to a museum, click photographs, repair broken stuff or have some fun with our dog. Movies

still enthuse us, as do plays and books and web browsing. Technology is also helping us by bringing in various digital tools at our disposal. Never mind that words or spelling may temporarily escape us. We can always ask Google or Siri to fill in the blanks.

## Dealing with loneliness



Loneliness is perhaps the single biggest problem of old age. We must all cultivate and nurture healthy, intimate relationships. Happiness is very high in countries that focus on genuine relationships, where differences are accepted without acrimony or pressure and there is a great degree of tolerance. Effort has to be made to establish a network of friends and relatives, both old and young alike, with whom one can engage in meaningful conversations. With the young there is always something we can barter. They may know how to reset our cellphones or find channels on our television, and we can help them with our wisdom.

## Being creative



Creativity is not limited to young people. At any age, it can open people up to new possibilities, add richness to life and sharpen the mind. Even when all is lost, our capacity, to appreciate and approach each day with a sense of purpose, is not lost. We should try something new that is either an extension of what we did before or that takes us in a new direction. For example, if you have been a dancer all your life, you could reinvent yourself as a choreographer when you can no longer dance.

### **Healthy lifestyle**



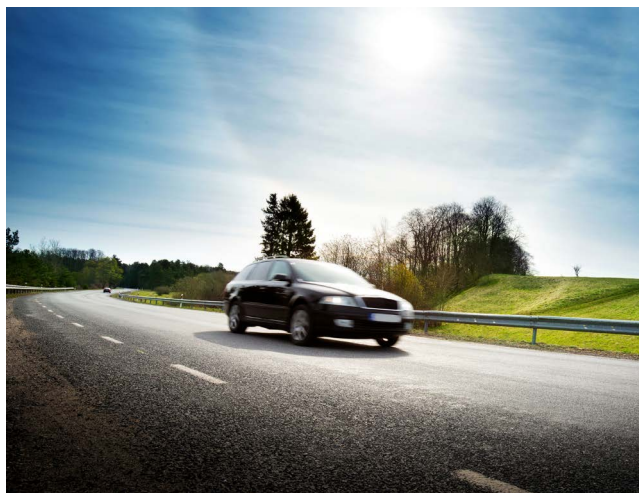
It helps to pursue a healthy lifestyle of wholesome food, daily exercise and supportive social connections. Of course, advancing age has taken — and will continue to take — its incremental toll. Exercise releases endorphins which make us feel good. We may often wake up wobbly and our backs may hurt. We must nevertheless take care of our bodies to the best extent we can. Every simple thing counts, even wearing sensible shoes and gripping the handrail better going up and down stairs.

### **Being grateful**



Gratitude is another vital key to unlocking happiness. Expression of gratitude and appreciation, in whatever form you prefer, promotes positivity. It is known to strengthen the immune system, especially when, as a group or in the family, you make regular efforts to showcase what was enjoyable and what you feel grateful for.

### **Happily Ever After**



All these are but a few of the things we can do to finally achieve that 40% happiness that comes from our actions and our outlook on life. It is still a long drive ahead, we have just left the city and entered the highway. There will be fewer twists and turns, fewer traffic signals, less overtaking and fewer ups and downs. With the right mindset we will be able to see the bright blue horizon up in the distance. So enjoy the rest of the drive. Someone once asked me about retiring and I said, “I have run a tyre company all my life, why should I think of ... re-tiring!”

***Harsh Goenka is Chairman of RPG Enterprises. Recently he topped a list of India Inc captains, ranked on the basis of their social authority. He is very active on Twitter, and is known for his inspirational, information and often humorous take on life and events. He tweets at @hvgoenka***

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# The Joy of Winning

Screengrab: Esports video on YouTube

The World Cup 1992 encounter between India and Pakistan always brings back happy memories, writes *Ayaz Memon*

One of my most joyous memories is of India beating Pakistan in the 1992 World Cup at Sydney. Purely from a cricketing point of view, the match was unremarkable: a low-scoring affair with hardly a noteworthy performance. Yet, its impact was to be enormous. Let me set up this game here for readers to understand why.

This was the first time India and Pakistan were meeting each other in the World Cup. In the previous four editions (1975, 1979, 1983, and 1987), the two countries featured in different groups. The only possibility of them playing each other was either in the semis or final.

India's record till the 1983 tournament had been dismal. Pakistan were much the better team in limited overs cricket till Kapil Dev and Co turned the world upside down. In 1987, the World Cup shifted to the sub-continent. India and Pakistan were joint favourites and expected to meet in the final, but both lost in the semis.

Based purely on this track record, it should have been even steeper when the two countries met in Sydney in mid-March 1992. However, from 1986 the equation between the two sides had tilted so heavily in favour of Pakistan that it seemed almost an impossibility India could win, whatever the conditions or situation.

To explain this conundrum, I must rewind to the final of the Australasia Cup between the two countries in Sharjah on April 18, 1986. Cricket had taken firm root in the UAE, thanks largely because of the appeal of Indian and Pakistani players for the expat population living in the emirates. A final between the two teams was a bonanza.

The match was a humdinger. India looked to be certain winners when Pakistan were reduced to 209 for 6 chasing 246 to win. This might seem like a very modest target today, but in the 1980s, around 250 was always a challenging score.

Moreover, the pitch was sluggish, making

stroke-play difficult. This in turn meant that required run rate had kept mounting even as wickets kept falling, and by the time Pakistan captain Imran Khan was dismissed (6th wicket), India's total looked insurmountable.

One man, however, hadn't given up. Javed Miandad, who had come in at number 4, had taken firm root, keeping the innings going with resolve and stealth even as batsmen at the other end fell. Now he took complete charge, farming the strike, steadily picking up boundaries, to keep the target within reach.

The match reached an incredibly tense climax. At the end of the 49th over, Pakistan were 235 for 7, needing 11 runs to win. Difficult, but not impossible. Miandad, who had gone past his century, hit Chetan Sharma's first delivery towards the boundary. Kapil Dev's brilliant throw had Wasim Akram run out, trying to give Miandad the strike.

Miandad narrowed the margin with a boundary off the next delivery, but failed to get two and keep strike off the next, exposing Zulqarnain, who was clean bowled by Sharma. Five runs were now needed off two deliveries, but last man Tauseef, not Miandad was on strike. Advantage India.

Somehow, Tauseef and Miandad scrambled through for a single off the fifth delivery, leaving Pakistan four runs to win off the last delivery. The entire stadium was on its feet for this rousing climax. As Sharma ran in to bowl, there was pin drop silence.

It was a low full toss. Miandad got under it with quicksilver reflexes, and tonked it over mid-wicket for a 6. He had pulled off an incredible victory for his team. What followed was bedlam among Pakistan supporters, but Indian fans and players were enveloped in funereal silence, disbelieving of what had transpired.

Such was the psychological trauma

caused by Miandad's last-ball six that India inevitably stumbled against Pakistan thereafter, even from eminently winnable situations. And not just in Sharjah, but even in their own country, as seen in 1987.

It is in this context, that the 1992 World Cup match between the two assumes significance. When the itinerary was released months before the tournament, this match was ticked off as a sure win for Pakistan. On the eve of the match, the buzz was not so much about which team would win, but by what margin would Pakistan triumph.

When India made a very modest 216 – thanks largely to youngsters Sachin Tendulkar and Ajay Jadeja, the result looked foregone. India looked to have been undone by the 'Miandad Effect' once again. But the second half of the match had a surprise in store.

Pakistan stumbled in what had seemed an easy run chase. Two wickets fell early, which brought in India's nemesis Miandad into the middle. But this time he looked completely out of rhythm, spending 110 balls to score 40, which was in complete contrast to how he had plotted and destroyed India in Sharjah in 1986.

The only memorable part of Miandad's innings was his altercation with wicket-keeper Kiran More. A frustrated Miandad responded to More's jibes at his poor batting with a jack-in-the-box act that to this day remains the strongest highlight of that match.

India went on to win by 43 runs. Pakistan were to recover from this setback and go on to win the tournament. India were eliminated early, yet had gained massively for the future. The spell cast by Miandad's last-ball six at Sharjah which had lasted six years was finally broken.

Since 1992, India have never lost to Pakistan in the World Cup.

# Fun on Film

From romcoms to satire, comedy films have made us laugh down the ages. *Deepa Gablot* lists 20 of the best

If smiles and laughter can be used to measure happiness, then comedy films can definitely be counted as the top catalysts. Which kind of bad mood cannot be lifted by a funny film?

Here's a list of 20 old favourites... none of the newer ones are counted because Rohit Shetty may be successful, but is not yet in the league of Hrishikesh Mukherjee when it comes to wholesome comedy. Also, there's just one film per director otherwise Mukherjee, Basu Chatterjee and the forgotten Roop K Shorey would have dominated the list. They are all clean, can-be-watched-with-family kind of films, an aspect that seems to be ignored by so many comedy writers and directors. This is a random personal selection, readers could make their own grey-day watch list.

### **Ek Thi Larki (1949):**

In Roop K Shorey's exuberant romcom (made before term was even coined), Meena Shorey is on the run from two blackmailers (IS Johar-Majnu) and joins the company of Ranjeet (Motilal) as a secretary, when she does not know the first thing about typing or



shorthand. On a business trip, due to a fib by Meena, she and Ranjeet end up as domestic helps in the home of a rich couple. In the process of dodging the crooks, Meena makes up incredible stories to avoid being caught, but the boss falls in love with her anyway. IS Johar went on to write, direct and act in several movies and his sense of humour remained as sharp as ever.

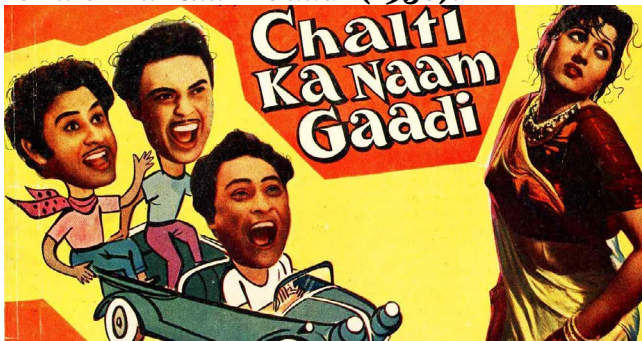
### **Gateway Of India (1957):**

This film was a crime thriller cum comedy, directed by Om Prakash, set over one night; Madhubala played the part of Anju with such infectious energy, she made every scene sparkle. Anju escapes from the clutches of killers after her fortune, and over the course of the night, meets many men (cameos by



stars), hoodwinks the bad guys and calls all of them to the Gateway of India on some pretext. She gets the villains arrested and finds true love with a poet (Bharat Bhushan).

**Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi (1958):**



The Ganguly brothers Ashok, Anoop, Kishore, play Sharma brothers in Satyen Bose’s delightful musical comedy. The eldest Brijmohan hates women and forbids the younger two from getting involved with any female. But Manhohan falls for Renu (Madhubala) and Jagmohan with her friend Sheela (Sahira). Then they discover a secret from Brijmohan’s past and have to take on the evil due of KN Singh and Sajjan. With SD Burman’s magical score, the movie is worth multiple viewings.

**Half Ticket (1962):**



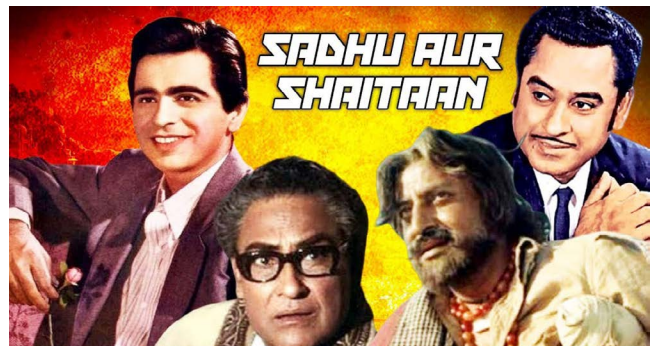
Only Kishore Kumar could have pulled off this zany comic caper directed by Kalidas, in which he, Vijay, dresses as a kid so that he can buy a half ticket on the train. On the journey he meets a pretty woman (Madhubala), whom he falls in love with, but she thinks he is a child. Further complications arise when a villain (Pran) hides a diamond in the ‘half-pant’ of the kid to hoodwink cops, and then pursues Vijay trying to retrieve it.

**Padosan (1968):**



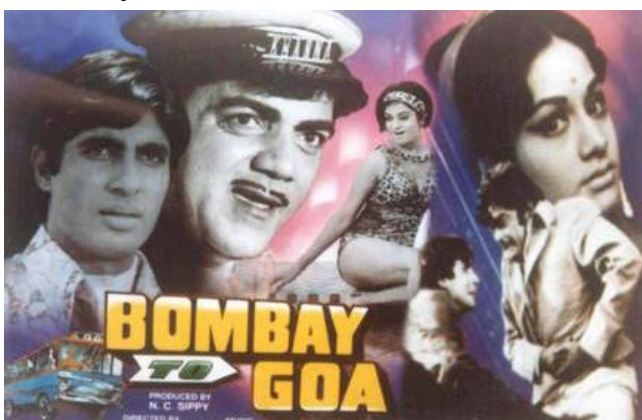
Today this Jyoti Swaroop film would have been whipped for racism, but back then nobody minded Mehmood playing a caricatured bald, lungi-wearing “Madrasi” music teacher, who is in love with his student, the lovely Bindu (Saira Banu). Her neighbour Bhola (Sunil Dutt) falls for her too, but he can’t sing. To woo her, he enlists the help of his musician buddy Vidyapati (Kishore Kumar), who sings while Bhola lip synchs. The romantic rivalry was side-splitting, quite rightly putting this film in the list of top-ten Bollywood comedies.

**Sadhu Aur Shaitaan (1968):**



Mehmood plays a good-natured taxi-driver, Bajrangi, in the crime-comedy directed by A. Bhimsingh; he does not realise there is a corpse (Pran) in the back of his cab, and wonders why a succession of passengers (cameos by stars) are so spooked. The dead man is the 'shaitaan' who tries to cheat an honest back employee Sadhurat (Om Prakash), and ends up dead by accident, while a terrified Sadhurat goes on the run. It sounds ghoulish, but the film was a laugh riot.

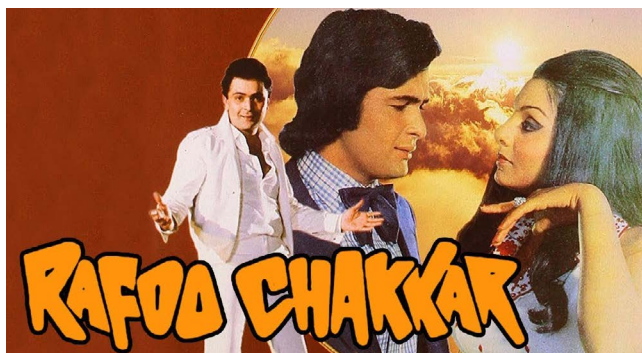
### **Bombay To Goa (1972):**



S Ramanathan gave Amitabh Bachchan one of his early hits, in this road movie in which Mala (Aruna Irani) is conned into escaping an arranged marriage and running off with a lot of money to become an actress; she witnesses a murder, and gets on a Goa-bound bus to escape her pursuer (Shatrughan Sinha). Amidst a bunch of cartoonish co-passengers, including a fat boy who keeps demanding 'pakoras', there is the dashing Ravi, who, unknown to her, is her unseen fiancé, out to protect her. The humour is generated by the nutty passengers, the wisecracking conductor, played by Mehmood and the driver played by his brother Anwar Ali.

### **Rafoo Chakkar (1975):**

Most actors getting into drag tend to overdo



it and make the scenes distasteful, but Rishi Kapoor and Paintal were careful not to go over the top most of the time, in this Narinder Bedi film, a remake of Hollywood movie Some Like It Hot. Dev and Salim witness a murder and to give the killers the slip, disguise themselves as women and join an all-girl band going to Srinagar. Dev falls in love with Ritu (Neetu Singh), but cannot reveal who he is without putting himself in danger. An entertaining mix of comedy, drama and pleasing music.

### **Khatta Meetha (1978):**



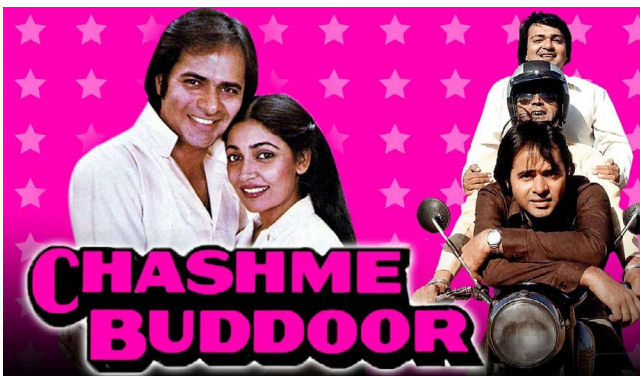
One of Basu Chatterjee's little gems, in which a Parsi widow (Pearl Padamsee) with two grown-up kids is cajoled by her friends to marry a widower (Ashok Kumar) with three sons. Both of them can't manage their families on their own, and hope the yours-mine-our situation will help. But the children on both sides bug one another, till a common enemy unites them. It was a sweet, gentle comedy, which was the director's forte.

### **Golmaal (1979):**



In Hrishikesh Mukherjee's evergreen comedy a man (Amol Palekar) invents a fictitious twin to save his job when playing truant from work, and then has to convince his boss (Utpal Dutt) that he exists, by skipping between the two characters and creating comic chaos. What complicates his life further, is falling in love with the boss's daughter (Bindiya Goswami).

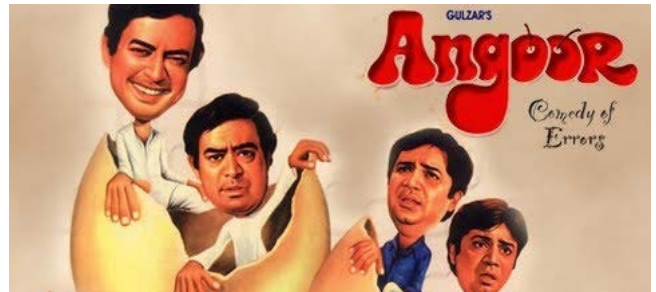
### **Chashme Buddoor (1981):**



Sai Paranjpye directed this wonderful comedy about three roommates all falling for Neha, the girl-next-door (Deepti Naval), who sells Chamko washing power in the neighbourhood. When she chooses the gauche (Farooque Shaikh), the other two (Rakesh Bedi, Ravi Baswani) try all kinds of mean tricks to break them up. Saeed Jaffrey played one of the best roles of his career as the paanwala-cum-confidant. Paranjpye's scenes of the romance were frothy and chuckleworthy, without resorting to slapstick, which is why the David Dhawan

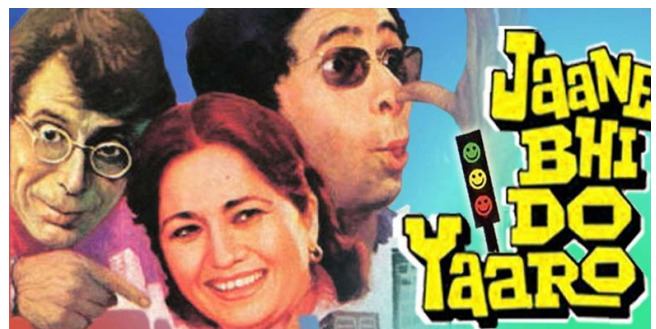
remake of this film simply did not have the same magic.

### **Angoor (1982):**



This Comedy of Errors version had been made before by Debu Sen as Do Dooni Char (1968), but Gulzar's Angoor, starring Sanjeev Kumar and Deven Varma as two sets of identical twins, with Moushumi Chatterjee and Deepti Naval as their love interests remains a feat of witty writing and comic timing. One pair of twins let loose in a town could cause enough mistaken-identity confusion, two kick up a storm.

### **Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro (1983):**



Kundan Shah's black comedy is one of the finest satires made in India; it is laugh-out-loud funny, but also bitterly critical of greed and corruption in high places. Many newbie actors and directors, who went on to become stars in their own right, appeared in the film or were part of the crew in the story of two photographers (Naseeruddin Shah-Ravi Baswani) who stumble on a murder. Satish Shah plays the corpse in the funniest cat-and-mouse chases involving the two bumbling photographers and rival builders

(Om Puri-Pankaj Kapur). The Mahabharat sequence on stage is movie gold.

### **Hum Hai Raahi Pyar Ke (1993):**



Mahesh Bhatt directed this madcap comedy (plot from a Hollywood film, *Houseboat*), in which an uptight Aamir Khan suddenly gets custody of his sister's children—three uncontrollable brats. Juhi Chawla played a runaway heiress, who hides out in their house and after some crazy hijinks gets hired as the governess. The kids (including a young Kunal Khemmu) drive their uncle nuts, but also end up softening him up and sorting out his love life by getting rid of the vampy Maya (Navneet Nishan). Juhi Chawla shone in it—she always had terrific Lucille Ball-like comic timing.

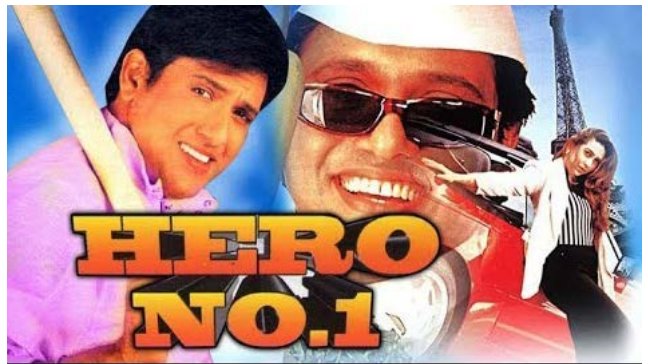
### **Andaz Apna Apna (1994):**



This film directed by Rajkumar Santoshi has turned out to be cult comedy, with its dialogue (the best lines sound improvised on set) and characters like Crime Master Go Go (Shakti Kapoor) growing in popularity

years after the film came out. There is the added attraction of seeing Aamir Khan and Salman Khan on screen for the first and probably only time. They play two good-for-nothings Amar and Prem, who dream of getting rich by marrying heiress Raveena (Tandon), who has travelled to Ooty with her secretary Karisma (Kapoor). Both insinuate themselves into her home and fight to attract her attention, unaware that the two have swapped identities, because Raveena wants to find true love. There are kidnappings and mix-ups galore before the guys are finally paired with the girls they love.

### **Hero No 1 (1997):**



If one David Dhawan-Govinda film is to be picked—and they had a successful partnership-- it would probably be *Hero No 1*, a blend of *Bawarchi* and *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, in which Govinda has to soften Karisma Kapoor's stern grandfather (Paresh Rawal), by working as a cook in their household. He wins over the whole family and the hand of the girl he loves. The star is so good at comedy because he has absolutely no inhibitions and no fear of looking silly.

### **Hera Pheri (2000):**

Priyadarshan's film is about two unemployed men (Akshay Kumar-Sunil Shetty) and their alcoholic and near-sighted landlord (Paresh Rawal) who try to solve their financial woes by crashing into a



gangster's kidnap-for-ransom plot and get into all kinds of hilarious situations. It all begins with a wrong number due to a misprint in the phone directory, and gets crazier by the minute. Tabu plays an earnest bank employee, the only sane one in the cast. The director has made a spate of comedies, but this one remains at the top of the heap.

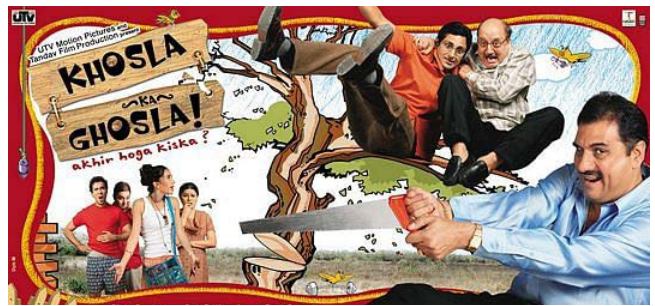
**Lage Raho Munna Bhai (2006):**



A sequel to Munna Bhai MBBS, also by Rajkumar Hirani, the comic team of Munna the gangster and his sidekick Circuit (Sanjay Dutt-Arshad Warsi) return and use the term Gandhigiri as they go about fighting a evil realtor and doing good, without missing out on the laughs of the first film. Munna romances an RJ (Vidya Balan) pretending to be an expert on Gandhi, and ends up having heart-to-heart chats with the spirit of the Mahatma, that only he can see.

**Khosla Ka Ghosla (2006):**

A dark comedy for the times, frighteningly true because such scams are known to have



happened. In Dibakar Bannerji's film, KK Khosla (Anupam Kher), a middle class man, discovers that a plot he had purchased to build a house has been usurped by a real estate nexus headed Khurana by (Boman Irani). Lawful methods do not work with a man like Khurana, so with the help of a former accomplice (Vinay Pathak), the Khosla family turns the tables on their foe. Justice never looked so satisfying!

**Bheja Fry (2007):**



Sagar Ballary's sleeper hit was inspired by a wicked French comedy Le Dinner Des Cons. Rajat Kapoor plays a rich snob, Ranjeet, who throws a dinner party for his friends every week, where they invite one "idiot" whom they can ridicule. Ranjeet decides to get Bharat Bhushan (Vinay Pathak), an income tax inspector and passionate hobby singer for this dinner. He cannot imagine that his evening's entertainment will turn out to be more than he can handle. Bharat's well-meaning attempts to help Ranjeet, who has hurt his back, end in a massive and very funny mess.

# Hitting the Happy Notes

Music is at the top of the list when it comes to lifting the spirits. *Narendra Kusnur* lists 10 top cheerful film numbers

Everybody loves a happy song, and it provides the best means to unwind. As the group Osibisa sang, “Dance the body music, music makes you happy.”

There’s no formula for what makes for a happy song. It could be a romantic number, or a song sung to celebrate an occasion. Sometimes, it may make you happy because of its words, when its tune may be ordinary. At other times, it may not even mean anything, but its rhythm keeps your feet tapping.

Thus, our choice of 10 happy Hindi film songs isn’t bound by any rules. We like them because they keep us happy. So shake your head, or get into a dance act. Enjoy.

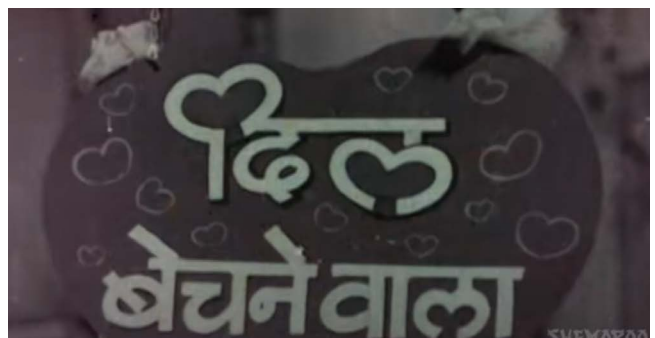
## **Ichak Dana - Shree 420 (1955)**

The song lingers as an earworm primarily because of its peppiness. Music directors Shankar-Jaikishen maintained a vibrant rhythm and Lata Mangeshkar and Mukesh sang Hasrat Jaipuri’s words. The song was



filmed on Nargis, Raj Kapoor and a group of school children.

## **Eena Meena Deeka - Aasha (1957)**



One of India’s first rock n’ roll numbers, it was composed by C Ramchandra who was inspired by kids playing ‘Eenie Meenie

Miny'. Though the Kishore Kumar version became more popular, there was a separate rendition by Asha Bhosle. In the mukhda, lyricist Rajendra Krishan chose to use words that didn't have meaning. It worked.

### **Akhiyan Bhoor Gayee Hai Sona - Goonj Uthi Shehnai (1959)**



Geeta Dutt was truly a versatile singer, and was joined by Lata Mangeshkar on this sprightly duet. Composed by the brilliant Vasant Desai and written by Bharat Vyas, it had the lines "Akhiyan bhoor gayee hai sona, dil pe hua hai jadoo toona". A nostalgic number.

### **Kisiki muskurahato pe/ Anadi (1959)**



The combination of Raj Kapoor and Mukesh works wonders again, with Shankar-Jaikishen providing the music. Kapoor prances down the road in a feel-good manner, and Shailendra's lines "Maana apni jeb se fakir hain, phir bhi yaaron dil ke hum amir hain" create an impact.

### **Main Hoon Jhoom Jhoom Jhumroo - Jhumroo (1961)**



Kishore Kumar did a few fantastic stretches of yodelling in this fun song, which formed part of the opening credits. He composed and sang the song himself, with Majrooh Sultanpuri writing the lyrics. A tough song to sing, but many have attempted it at parties and antakshri competitions.

### **Yahoo - Junglee (1961)**



The very way Mohammed Rafi began the song singing 'Yahoo', we knew we were in for a happy number. Shammi Kapoor's dancing, Saira Banu's presence and the snowcapped locales added to the mood of the song, composed by Shankar-Jaikishen and written by Shailendra.

### **Yeh Dil Na Hota Bechara - Jewel Thief (1967)**

When it came to exuberant songs, Dev Anand had his quota too. His typical gait



added to the charm, as proved on 'Yeh Dil Na Hota Bechara'. Kishore yodelled again in this S.D. Burman tune penned by Majrooh Sultanpuri. Tanuja provided the acting support.

### **Utthey Sab Ke Kadam - Baaton Baaton Mein (1979)**



A fun song composed by Rajesh Roshan and written by Amit Khanna. It was picturised on a group that included Amol Palekar, Tina Munim, Ranjit Choudhary and Pearl Padamsee, who also joined Lata Mangeshkar and Amit Kumar on vocals.

### **Dukki Pe Dukki Ho - Satte Pe Satte (1982)**

A large cast led by Amitabh Bachchan and Hema Malini appeared in this frothy number



sung by Kishore, Asha Bhosle and others. R.D. Burman's set the tune to Gulshan Bawra's words. The film had another happy group song 'Mausam Mastana'.

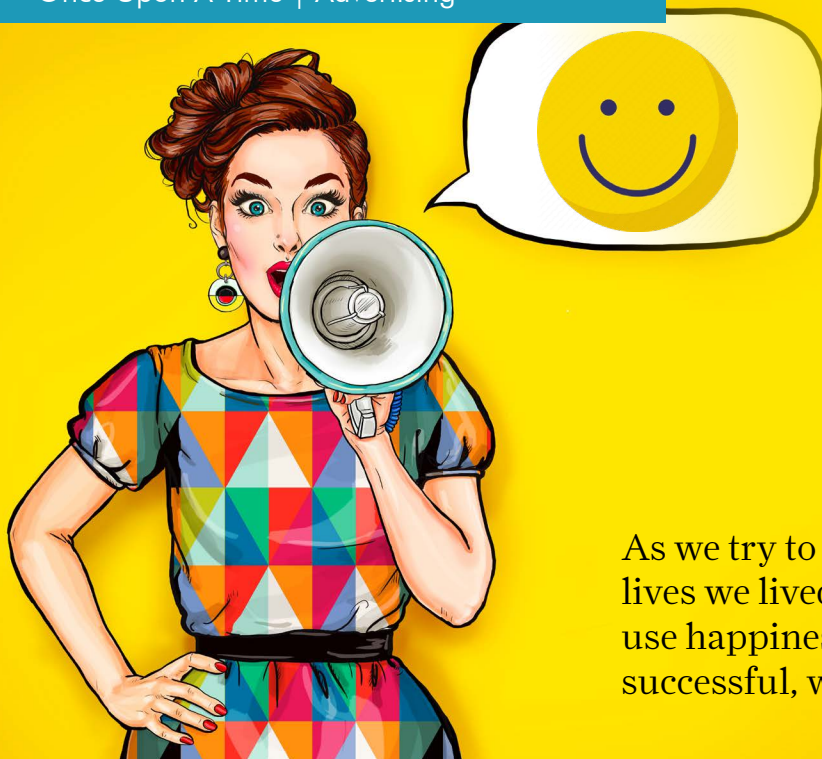
### **Ala Barfi - Barfi (2012)**



Ranbir Kapoor did a wonderful enactment in this peppy tune sung by Mohit Chauhan, composed by Pritam and written by Swanand Kirkire. The song had an effervescence that made it endearing.

That was our list of 10 happy Hindi film songs. A few others came to mind while shortlisting these numbers. Besides some picturised on Shammi Kapoor and Dev Anand, we thought of 'Ek Chatur Naar' (Padosan), 'Gunguna Rahe Hain Bhanware' (Aradhana), 'Chhoti Si Asha' (Roja) and 'Lakdi Ki Kathi' from Masoom, which is of course more apt for a list of children's songs. Or there were a few like 'Meri Pyaari Beheniya' (Sachcha Jhoota) and 'Mehndi Lagake Rakhna' (Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge), which would come under wedding songs.

There was an interesting thing we noticed – for some strange reason, it's so much easier to think of sad songs than happy ones. Maybe it's because most popular songs have a serious emotion involved. Or maybe our minds have been conditioned to remember lyrics with depth more easily. Whatever the reason, both types of songs – happy or sad – become memorable if they have that basic factor called melody.



## Does Advertising make you Happy?

As we try to lumber back to the normal lives we lived in 2019, the brands that use happiness as a cue might be the most successful, writes **Prabhakar Mundkur**

Can advertising make you happy? Of course, it can. It can also make you sad, pensive, frightened and apprehensive. But most often, when advertising makes you happy, it works for the brand or product being advertised. In the HBO show *MadMen*, set during the boom of the ad industry in the 1960s, Don Draper famously said: “Advertising is based on one thing – happiness”. He wasn’t wrong. He was only advocating something the advertising world has always known.

A long time ago, research seemed to show that advertising that was entertaining seemed to be more effective than advertising that was not. Take this ad for the launch of Honda in the United States. It said: ‘You meet the nicest people on a Honda’. There is something so sweet and innocent about the ad. And, after all, meeting nice people is a happy feeling, isn’t it?

One doesn’t want to meet mean people or unhappy people or rude people. In fact, the first Honda ad had a nun in it. And one expects nuns to be very nice! Honda went off



You meet the nicest people on a Honda. And the remarkable thing is the low cost of it all. Prices start about \$215\* Insurance is painless. Upkeep negligible. Honda’s four-stroke engine demands 200 miles from a gallon of gas. And gets it. Plenty of drive. That’s how you stay at the top of the class. World’s biggest seller. **HONDA**

to a flying start as a brand in the US.

As a brand, Coca-Cola has been pursuing happiness for the longest time. Coke is a happy brand. And it wants to make people drink it happy. Which is why there is always

fun and laughter in a Coke ad. And the happiness starts right from the time you are unhappy or in other words thirsty. The pop of opening a Coke bottle or the crack of opening a Coke can and the fizz are the first emotional triggers to happiness.

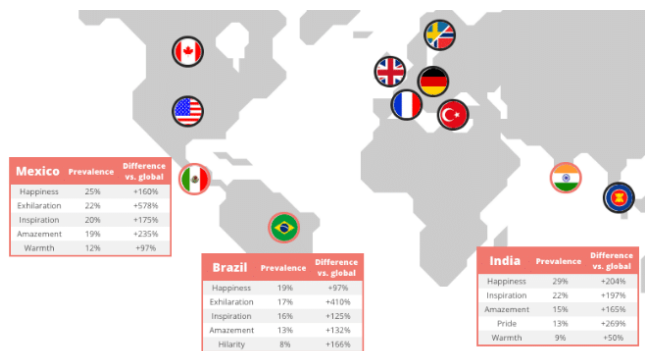


Just two years ago, Max Roser at the University of Oxford said: “The world has more reasons to be happier than ever before. In almost every way: poverty, literacy, health, freedom, and education are improving”.

In the West, Christmas is one of the happiest occasions and one would say that from John Lewis to every other brand advertising during the festive period celebrates happiness and warmth. The trend is even more pronounced in India, which gives itself much more reason to celebrate given the number of festivals that are celebrated here.

“After surveying almost half a million respondents in 2018, the prevalence of positives across the ads we’ve tested has grown too. Happiness is up from 7% to 12%; Amazement 4 to 7% and Warmth from 5 to 6%. There’s a huge opportunity for brands to give people what they want and lift the mood of the world as we continue into 2019.”  
 – Rebecca Waring, VP, Insight & Solutions, UnrulyEQ.

Happiness is typically clubbed together with other emotions like exhilaration, inspiration, amazement and warmth.



Source : Unruly

In 2018, Samsung’s “Be together” commercial was about happiness. About families celebrating together even if they were geographically apart. Many brands are constantly celebrating happiness. Tanishq, Cadbury’s and a whole range of Indian brands are about happiness. The ads always have smiling faces and happiness writ all over them.



With the Covid-19 pandemic having created so much sorrow in the world, one can’t help feeling that as we all try to lumber back to the normal lives we lived in 2019, the brands that use happiness as a cue might be the most successful.

The world is more in need of happiness than ever before.



## Be Happy, Stay Healthy

**Studies show that happiness might protect you from gastrointestinal distress, writes *Dr Jayant Shetye***

Serotonin, a hormone found in our body has normally been associated with a feeling of well-being. However, recently an additional function has been attributed to it by a group of scientists led by Vanessa Sperandio, Ph.D., a professor of microbiology and biochemistry at the University of Texas' Southwestern Medical Center. The research is presented in the journal *Cell Host & Microbe*.

Serotonin is a neurotransmitter - a chemical that nerve cells use to communicate with each other - is mainly produced in the gut but has its main effect on the brain.

The human gut is a host to millions of bacteria, called the normal flora, which help in digestion of the food. However, some of these bacteria undergo mutation and then become pathogenic, ie, start attacking the

host causing serious and potentially fatal infections.

When these pathogenic bacteria are exposed to serotonin it results in reduction of expression of group of genes that these pathogenic bacteria use to cause deadly infections. Additional experiments using human cells showed that these pathogenic bacteria could no longer cause infection-associated lesions on the cells if these bacteria were exposed to serotonin. Thus, exposure to serotonin resulted in reducing the virulence of these pathogenic bacteria. This study forms the basis of a doctoral thesis presented by Aman Kumar, at the UTSW.

Next, the researchers examined how serotonin affected virulence in living hosts. Using mice, which were genetically modified to either over- or underproduce serotonin in

their gastrointestinal tracts, the researchers studied how serotonin might change the ability of a bacterium to infect and sicken their hosts. Those mice that overproduced this neurotransmitter were less likely to become colonised by pathogenic bacteria. However, the mice that underproduced serotonin became much sicker after bacterial exposure, often dying from their illness. Treating mice that underproduced serotonin with fluoxetine (sold under the brand name Prozac) to increase serotonin levels prevented them from getting sick from the pathogenic bacterium.

Further experiments identified the protein CpxA on the surface of the pathogenic bacteria that serotonin attaches to. Because many species of gut bacteria also have CpxA, it's postulated that serotonin could have wide-ranging effects on gut bacterial health.

In the future, Sperandio and her colleagues plan to study the feasibility of manipulating serotonin levels as a way of fighting bacterial infections in the gastrointestinal tract. Antibiotics are invaluable weapons to fight infectious diseases. Currently, few available antibiotics can effectively fight pathogenic gut bacteria. However, by altering the composition and functions of the gut microbiota, the antibiotics can also produce long-lasting deleterious effects on the host. The emergence of multidrug-resistant pathogens raises concerns about the common, and at times inappropriate, use of antimicrobial agents.

Thus, it is postulated that if we could supplement antibiotics with Prozac or other drugs in the same class, it could give us a new weapon to fight these challenging infections.



*Manipulating serotonin levels could even help fight bacterial infections in the gut, in future*

# Is Telemedicine the Future of Healthcare?

With rapid advancement of technology, it is likely that telemedicine will become convenient and widely accepted in the coming years, writes *Vickram Sethi*



Sixty years ago, telemedicine grew as a concept branched out of telecommunications technology. It began with a few hospitals experimenting with telemedicine to reach patients in remote locations. Since then it has rapidly transformed, with integrated services hand in hand with technology.

We are living in the era of technology where our phones have become our extended arm. Our life revolves around computers, laptops, iPads... so much so that since the pandemic, we have acquired the new way of socialising digitally. The digital way of keeping in touch has been there for years and today it has become a way of living. We are evolving creatures, hence we need to ensure that we sail with the wind and not against it. Since the outbreak, medical healthcare has been stretched to the brink. The fear of the coronavirus has locked us in our homes, jeopardising normalcy. Visiting a doctor's clinic is feared – and thus comes telemedicine to the rescue. While teleconsultation is on the rise, many of us are yet to be convinced

about the idea of a doctor's visit over a screen. Telehealth, telemedicine, virtual care – it has many names and it existed decades before the pandemic took over the world.

Telemedicine is for us and it is a tool that keeps us connected to our healthcare providers to minimise contact. It is new for all of us and like we have begun socialising digitally, healthcare is evolving too. There is teleconsultation happening all around us, but does that mean this could be the future of medicine? How comfortable are we to visit a doctor on the screen of our phones, laptops or iPads? How will the doctor do a diagnosis just by looking at us over the screens? There are so many questions that make us feel sceptical about stepping into the “new normal” of healthcare. But the fact remains that it is happening right now, people are turning to telehealth and there is a good explanation as to why telehealth is here to stay.

## **Why opt for virtual care?**

Virtual care was originally created as a way

to reach out people in remote areas. It was the way to treat patients in areas with shortage of medical professionals. Today telemedicine is increasingly becoming a convenient tool for medical care.

While the idea of telehealth/virtual care seems intimidating after a lifetime of in-office visits, let's look at telemedicine as an additional tool to get the best care possible. We also need to understand that virtual care is not meant to replace face-to-face care, but to enhance and make healthcare accessible from wherever you are.

It provides us the convenience of a routine check-up through digital means at home. We waste so much time on routine in-office visits, whether it's sitting in stop-and-go traffic or in a waiting room. Telehealth reduces travel time and all the effort made for the visit.

There are virtual-care technologies that can monitor diabetes and high blood pressure, and manage chronic conditions. Several hospital systems are being upgraded with virtual-care technologies to monitor chronic health conditions as frequently as daily, so that they can act immediately if anything goes awry. This means having a doctor monitor your health right from your bed.

Nobody likes to drag themselves out of their home to a waiting room filled with other patients who have various illnesses. For situations like these, virtual care is a breeze, it lets you have an initial appointment right



*Technology is going to keep on upgrading and improving our way of healthcare*

from your bed.

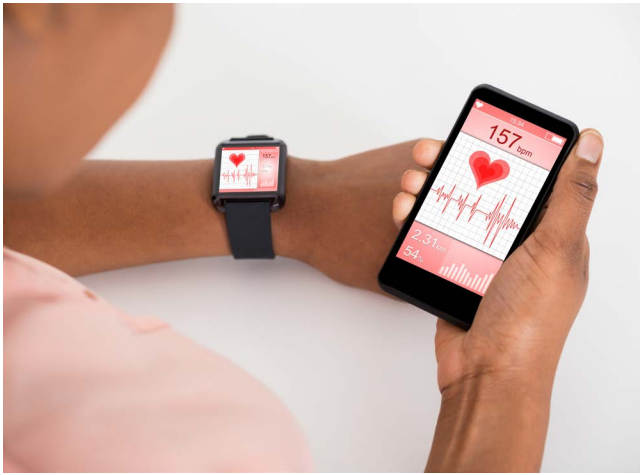
Telehealth reduces the number of appointments you make with doctors and specialists. This is the efficiency right from your bed; primary doctors and specialists can participate together in a virtual visit to perform a thorough examination, everything done without you stepping out of the house.

Care from anywhere is especially convenient for those who live far away or in a different city. With the help of telehealth, you do not have to travel all the way to consult with a specialist, especially if you are traveling from another city or country. Virtual visits can be accessible from wherever you are to coordinate care.

### **Cons of telemedicine**

While telemedicine is a net benefit that has the potential to change healthcare delivery for the better, it does have a few downsides. However, with the growing popularity and acceptance of telemedicine these cons are likely to resolve themselves as the technology progresses.

- Telemedicine requires additional technical training and equipment.
- While it is convenient to use telemedicine, there is a high possibility of breakdown in care continuity – a new doctor for every telehealth session could appear, and this could lead to fear and anxiety. This would happen if there is huge demand for care from patients.
- Some critics of telemedicine argue that interactions over technology are impersonal and that physical examination is often necessary for a proper diagnosis. They believe that telemedicine is best used to supplement routine visits to make sure everything is going well.
- While telemedicine is convenient and saves time, there are chances that many doctors



*People have already begun to use smart technology to monitor and track their health*

using telemedicine will add a convenience fee to their bill. Some people may be happy to pay the additional fee for the convenience but it might not be the same for everybody.

### **Gadgets that make you self-sufficient**

With a variety of consumer-friendly mobile health applications, people have already begun to use smart technology to monitor and track their health. Remote patient monitoring and wearable technologies have the potential to improve the patient's condition by monitoring physical health digitally. Wearable devices can capture measures of physical activity, promoting continuous monitoring of heart rate, blood pressure, glucose, and ECG. Many devices on the market also support fall detection, a functionality which has proven vital for seniors.

Over the last few years, major tech companies like Google, Apple and Samsung have developed wearable devices that provide with the facilities to monitor personal health. There are plenty of mobile applications that are designed to be smart enough to detect health conditions accurately, providing the physician with all the data required to do a thorough health check-up.

Wearables such as the smart watch, smart

jewellery, fitness tracker and even smart clothing are familiar. There is also an implantable sensor containing pills that can monitor blood pressure and other health metrics; the patient swallows the pill and they can wear an external device to easily monitor the data generated from within the body. Technology is going to keep on upgrading and improving our way of healthcare with new gadgets and mobile applications. And as more people get proactive about using smart wearable technology to manage health, soon telehealth will become a way of healthcare.

### **Telehealth around the world**

The United States continues to be the leading market for telehealth services, but several other countries and continents are making room for this technology.

Europe is on track to become the second-largest market for telehealth, while the Asia-Pacific region is the fastest-growing region in the global market due to the rise in the geriatric population.

The situation in Australia is that there are many hundreds of pilot tests and demonstration telehealth services scattered across the country in both acute and primary care. Some combine voice, data and video while others concentrate on monitoring data capture and transmission.

Japan's slow embrace contrasts with a rapid expansion of telemedicine across the globe. The Japan Medical Association argues that it will be difficult for doctors to provide an accurate assessment of a patient's conditions without listening to the heart and the lungs and examining the neck and the throat for swollen lymph nodes. Telemedicine has been available in the country since 2018, but only patients of chronic disease and those receiving prescriptions for existing illnesses have subscribed to telehealth. Older

practitioners tend to be resistant to digital technology.

The Russian telemedicine market can be expected to at least double by the end of this year. Russia's government authorities and medical institutions have plenty of work to do to develop the telemedicine industry. In addition, Russia's healthcare sector has enough resources to remotely monitor patients with the use of self-diagnostic medical devices.

### **Telehealth in India**

Telemedicine in India is one field which is successfully evoking keen interest from the private sector and making it take an active part in public health management.

Telemedicine practices in India are also extended to the fields of traditional medicine. The National Rural Ayush Telemedicine Network aims to promote the benefit of traditional methods of healing to a larger population through telemedicine.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) made a modest beginning in telemedicine in India with a Telemedicine Pilot Project in 2001.

In 2005, the Department of Information Technology in the Government of India standardised telemedicine practice guidelines to set up a National Telemedicine Task Force under the Health Ministry.

The WHO recommends a doctor-population ratio of 1:1000 while the current doctor-population ratio in India is only 0.62:1000. Training of new physicians is time-consuming and expensive, hence the doctor-to-patient ratio can be expected to remain low for a long time to come.

### **The future**

With rapid advancement of technology, it is likely that telemedicine will only become



*The United States is the biggest user of telehealth, but it is catching on in other countries too*

convenient and widely accepted in the coming years. Already with smart wearables we have stepped into the new era of smart healthcare. People have begun to monitor their health, giving a boost to longevity. With the help of these wearables, health data can be shared with health professionals in real time from wherever you are. There are also programmes designed to keep a check on a person's emotional state of mind based on his/her facial expressions, and all this data will be used in the future to monitor wellness. Digital healthcare startups have already begun experimenting with automatic documentation during office visits so that every detail is stored digitally and can be accessed by any doctor anywhere. Advanced artificial intelligence – robots – will be performing surgeries remotely on patients.

To keep up with this rate of progress we will need to overcome other administrative barriers. With telemedicine, the future looks bright and hopefully with the increase in demand we are likely to overcome these barriers as well.

As we move on and into the new healthcare approach, we must embrace this change and face our fears. We usually find that wonderful new experiences open up when we take a step forward into transformation. This is how we grow. This is how we learn. This is why we are here.

# *The Face of Battle*

**July 4, 1999 was when Tiger Hill was captured from the Pakistani forces. Looking back to the earlier Kargil conflict, Col (Retd) Ranbir Singh, VrC, tells us first-hand how another key Pakistan point was captured in 1965**

*The Kargil Battle - 17 May 1965 Kargil Sector and around.*

Kargil is at 8000 feet altitude and located on National Highway 1-A between Srinagar and Leh in J&K. It is 64 km further up from Dras where 4 Rajput had won the 'Battle Honour Zojila' on 15 Nov 1948. Col Girdhari Singh, MC (Military Cross) and Bar, the then CO was awarded VrC (Vir Chakra). My father Brig Sukhdev Singh, MC, CO 1 Patiala was also awarded VrC in Zojila Operations and they too won the 'Zojila Battle Honour'. Coming under the Snow Belt area, it is a high-altitude field area. The surrounding mountain ranges vary from 9,000 to 20,000 feet in height. Being part of a desert area, these features are bare and devoid of any flora. The terrain is most inhospitable with the high altitude reducing physical efficiency. The mountain spurs are narrow and steep. The ground configuration

favours the defender, whereas a rugged and sharp climb is extremely cumbersome for the attacker. River Indus flowing from North downwards meanders through Kargil separating Headquarters 121 Independent Infantry Brigade Group and 4 Rajput. In the May of 1965 Brig VK Ghai was the Brigade commander, which was directly under HQ 15 Corps. Rajputs was the only infantry battalion under this Brigade. Lt Col Sudarshan Singh, all of 6'2" smart Sardar, had taken over the command of Fourth from spirited Col KPP Nair around 10 May 1965. Lt Col (Maj Gen Retd) KS Bajwa matching in stature was commanding 85 Light Regiment located there. There was only one battery of 6 x 4.2 inch mortars having limited range of 4100 yards. The second battery arrived from Pathankot on 16 May and it was deployed at Harkabahadur Bridge, adjacent to River Shingo flowing from Pakistan side and

merging into River Indus. This Artillery Regiment was only one year old and itching to draw first blood. In early May, the Sector was dormant, with normal and routine activity.

### **The bugging factor**

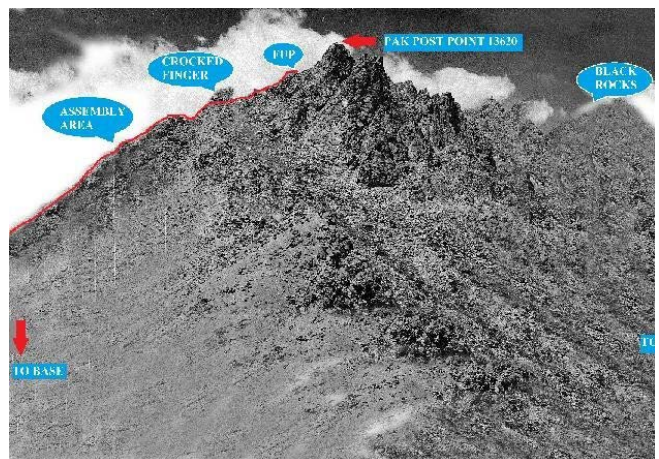
China attacked and humiliated India in 1962. As if this was not enough, Pakistan inflicted insult by capturing portion of Indian Territory in Kutch Sector of Gujarat in a surprise initiative in April of 1965. The Indian Government may have decided to tackle this diplomatically, but the army was decidedly unhappy. Such situations demoralise the army. There were undercurrents and hushed rumours doing the rounds to avenge the Kutch slur. Where and what should be the target, the capture of which will give the Indian army a tactical advantage?

### **Possible motivating factor**

Destiny cannot be predicted, at best, it can only be conjectured. Delay is a known cause of bitterness leading to reservations at lower levels. The million dollar question was; will the Govt do the honours or will it be the army to steal the thunder by taking the all important command decision to even the score with Pakistan who was basking in the recent Kutch glory. Lo and behold, such an opportunity presented itself out of the blues to Brigade commander Brig Ghai. There were umpteen surmises as to what triggered this peaceful Sector into a volatile and happening place. Many juniors professed to have inside information on the subject. It is purported that a Demi Official letter from a senior commander did the trick. Mind you, as the hearsay goes, even the letter at best suggested the possibility of capturing the highest and most formidable PAK Post Pt

13620.

There is also another understanding that the then army commander Gen Harbaksh Singh verbally spoke to Brig VK Ghai who had served under him, suggesting the possibility of capturing Pt 13620. This massive feature not only looked down upon the Brigade Sector, but also dominated the entire Kargil valley and highway NH1-A. This dominance was both irksome and unpalatable. Brig Ghai deserves abundance of praise for his grit, determination and boldness of a true commander. By taking the all-important command decision of capturing Pt 13620, he became an elite and instant hero in the making. It is also true that, should your decision boomerang, there will be none to stand by you. Vagaries and spoils of war are a natural phenomenon in war.



*The route taken from Kargil Base by Bravo and Charlie Coys', 4 Rajput for Attack and Capture of Pak Post Pt 13620*

### **The orders**

Brig VK Ghai commander 121 Independent Infantry Brigade Group called Col Sudarshan Singh, CO 4 Rajput, Col KS Bajwa, CO 85 Light Regiment, Maj DP Nayar and Maj Baljit Singh Randhawa to his Headquarters on the morning of 13 May 1965. Brig Ghai ordered 4 Rajput to capture Pakistan Post Pt 13620 and Black Rocks by 0500 hours on 17 May 1965.

Since it was to be a silent attack, he ordered 85 Light Regiment, the artillery Unit to provide support on call. The enemy strength was a Regular coy minus at Pt 13620 with sections each of 3-inch mortars and MMGs besides their authorised weapons. A platoon minus defended Black Rocks supported by authorised weapons.

### **COs discuss initial plan**

Both COs returned to Rajput office to work out further modalities for the attack. No one knew exactly what had transpired at the Brigade Headquarters and what the artillery CO was doing in Col Sudarshan's office. Being of same seniority, they knew each other. After in-depth discussion, they coordinated artillery fire and formulated the attack plan. Col Sudarshan had just taken over the Unit and did not know the officers. He was to decide on companies and company commanders and on readjustment of defences. Reconnaissance (rece) was carried out for selection of a secure and viable attack route. When Col Sudarshan's mind was clear and made up, he called in Major DP Nayar, Alfa Coy commander and Major Baljit Singh Randhawa of Bravo Coy (company). CO ordered Maj Randhawa's company to attack and capture Pt 13620 by 0500 hours on 17 May 1965. Charlie Company commanded by Major Bikram Singh Chattri was to be his reserve. He was told to rece South West approach from Harkabahadur flank. Detailed orders would be given after rece reports. However, Col Sudarshan was already clear as to the approach and direction of attack as he had known this area previously. There is always some surprise element despite requisite planning. From Kargil, the snow on the massive Pak feature was not visible, as it was in reverse depression. However, actually

there was plenty of snow in the selected FUP (forming up place) area and around. It was to be a silent attack on almost 14,000-foot-high mountain, despite there being snow and it being a full moonlit night. As, it was a silent attack meant to surprise the enemy, the artillery support was on call. Silent registration of targets was done off the map.

### **Special request**

Major Randhawa came out of the COs office and reminded me of old resolve of fighting alongside in case of war. Both knew each other well and enjoyed mutual trust. What are you waiting for I asked him; go tell the CO. Therefore, Baljit asked the CO to allow Ranbir to go with his Company for the attack. The CO refused. Then I went to the CO and asked him to allow me to be the leading Platoon Commander for the attack. The CO again refused saying that I do not belong to Bravo Company. Luckily, CO 85 Light Regiment who was present in 4 Rajput CO's office intervened asking Surdarshan to permit me as I was a volunteer. My CO then gave permission. Major General KS Bajwa, Retd has written many articles on the Kargil battle and mentioned about this incident. At the time, 4 Rajput defences in Kargil Sector were spread over about 13 km frontage.

### **Rece and preparation**

The next two days were utilised on reconnaissance and preparations. Everyone got busy cleaning weapons and ammunition. Rehashing for occupation of defences and relieving of attack companies was carried out on war footing by night. All this happened on the night of 13-14 May. The CO gave out his orders to his Operation Group on 15 May morning. Same night the companies moved along left flank from Kargil Base for own picket No 8 of Alfa coy

under the cover of darkness. The climb was arduous negotiating narrow slopes in small groups in echelons. They rested in the reverse slopes and no movement during day was allowed.



*Lt Col Sudarshan Singh, CO giving orders to 'O' group*

### **Operation Group shown Enemy Defences**

On 16 May morning, Major Randhawa along with essential officers and JCOs went up to the Crooked Finger area in twos and threes to show the enemy defences from behind big boulders. We all saw the PAK soldiers relaxing in the sun and smoke coming out from their langar (Kitchen). The CO also had a look at the layout. There was plenty of snow in the selected FUP (forming up place) where attacking companies were to deploy before the attack. From the FUP the climb up to the highest point was almost vertical, with huge boulders and a linear frontage. It meant that, even a platoon with two sections up could not move in the restricted area. Congestion of troops at any point would mean easy target for the enemy and more casualties for the attacker. The perimeter wall of stones around his defences was five feet high. Lieutenant Chattopadhaya with platoon minus was left behind while others

returned to 8 Picket. Chattopadhaya was to keep the enemy post under surveillance and later mark the FUP by 0200 hours. This was about 300 meters from the enemy perimeter wall. The brave and spirited Lieutenant Chattopadhaya died in an encounter at Pattan near Srinagar in August 1965.

### **Move to Forming Up Place**

The attacking troops started from 8 Picket at 2000 hours. The climb was extremely rigorous especially carrying company weapons. Picket pet dog Kalu walked alongside. He kept moving with us despite being told to go back. The companies were moving through the re-entrant to avoid detection. There were plenty of loose stones, which made the move even more difficult. At places men had to move on their fours. As planned, Chattopadhaya and his team had marked the FUP and assisted the troops to deploy there. Time was now 0200 hours 17 May 1965. It was biting cold on the snow. My platoon was ready to mount the attack. In other platoons, Lieutenants Vijay Aggarwal and Bhagrawat were also in position behind my leading platoon. Charlie Company with Major Bikram Singh Chettri sat poised behind us as reserves. The enemy post and the perimeter wall were visible in the moonlight. It was impossible to believe that the enemy had not heard the noise or seen the green uniform contrast on the snow. Moonlight shining on metal parts of the weapons could easily give away Rajput's presence. At 14,000 feet with snow everywhere, it was freezing cold and holding weapons was painful with skin freezing on the metal parts. It was then that I suggested to Major Randhawa who was there, not to wait for 'H' hour of 0230 hours and immediately attack the enemy. Being from an army family, I had told the men to put two

Patiala pegs of rum in their water bottles. They took a few swigs to warm-up and were ready to mount the attack.

### **Test of nerves and leadership**

At 0200 hours, the leading troops crossed the (SL) Start Line. There was no fire from the enemy and men laboriously ploughed through snow and rocky area for 150 metres. Then all hell broke loose on the attacking men. The volume of fire was so heavy and intense that the troops took to the ground. The sudden and effective enemy fire suggested that they had come to know of Rajput's presence and were ready waiting in stand to. It also showed good training for not opening fire from far. They patiently waited for us to get near and then fire for effect. It is here that leadership counts. Commanders at all levels pushed forward encouraging the men. Movement uphill through huge rocks was a challenge by itself. Momentum of attack is singular factor for success. Men were becoming casualties. The enemy had opened up with Light and Medium Machine Guns. They also used 2 inch and 3 inch Mortars. The troops at the Kargil Base watched the splash of mortars and flash of weapons fire. It resembled a huge Diwali firecracker show for them. There was firing on both sides. The Rajputs were closing in on the enemy perimeter wall despite multitude weapons fire and resultant casualties.

### **Perforating perimeter wall and the dogfight**

Time was now 0315 hours. Rajputs had crossed the perimeter wall and hand-to-hand fight ensued. There was deafening noise of fire from both sides. The brave men forged ahead undaunted. The officers, JCOs and NCOs transcended their heroic leadership and led the men from the front.

It was indeed a tango of life and death. It is only in battlefield that one can witness the real, life and death dance orchestrated. I moved towards a bunker with two men to silence an LMG, which was hindering the momentum. It was imperative to blunt this fire. While successfully assaulting the LMG position, Havaladar Om Parkash was killed inside the enemy bunker and I was wounded. With blood oozing out from the side of my head, I lay unconscious for some time. Major Randhawa had moved up to encourage the men to advance with speed. He told me to move back, but I refused and kept on moving with my Platoon.

The scene of the battle is difficult to describe. Had the dogfight been filmed by camera for viewing, people would have been reminded of movies like, 'To hell and back' and Haqeeqat. There was urgency and a frenzy-like do or die situation for both sides. The enemy was not comfortable with the progress the Rajputs had made. The entire area reverberated with war cries of "Bol Bajrang Bali Ki Jai" and "Allah Hu Akbar". The surcharged atmosphere heightened dogmatism to succeed at all cost. The sound of firing was deafening. The dogfight was fierce and bloody. The valiant Rajputs were killing enemy soldiers and destroying weapons firing from the bunkers. There were so many Rajput soldiers lying dead or wounded. Attacks are best resorted to when the moon phase is dark, to avoid emotional and demoralising factor on seeing colleagues and buddies become casualties. Charlie Company was marking time to be unleashed. In the mêlée, some Charlie Company men became over-exuberant with josh and joined the battle royale. Sepoy Budh Singh of Charlie Company saw N/Subedar Girdhari Lal of Bravo Company moving toward an LMG, which was causing havoc. Budh Singh

could not restrain himself and rushed to join Girdhari Lal. Both charged the LMG killing the enemy and destroying the gun position. While brave Girdhari Lal fell dead, Sepoy Budh Singh miraculously survived. Their bravery was rewarded with gallantry awards of Vir Chakra.

### **Death of a heroic leader**

Time was now 0350 hours. Sensing that the daylight was not far, Major Baljit Randhawa took upon himself to accelerate the attack. He was displaying leadership and bravery of a rare order. He moved with the men firing inside the bunkers. When he entered a bunker, he was face to face with an enemy JCO. Both fired instinctively at each other. The enemy JCO fell dead and a Sten gun burst hit Major Randhawa in the chest, which proved fatal. I was at his side at the time. Major Randhawa was a diehard soldier and a leader. Though critically wounded, he kept encouraging the men to forge ahead with speed. Being next senior, I took upon myself to capture the highest point. The company senior JCO Subedar Bahadur Singh was doing a commendable job throughout the night to enthuse the men.

### **The final phase**

Lieutenants Aggarwal and Bhagrawat moved up with speed and they were embroiled in hand-to-hand scuffles with the enemy. Lieutenant Aggarwal kept charging at the enemy. An enemy bullet wounded him in the thigh. Unmindful, he kept forging ahead with his platoon. Having survived Kargil, the valiant Lieutenant Bhagrawat died fighting in Uri Sector in September 1965. The time was now 0415 hours and day light at 14000 feet height was fast approaching. The CO, Col Sudarshan Singh moved right up. He had picked up a dead

soldiers LMG and came forward firing from it. I told him about Major Randhawa. The CO said casualties would take place in battle. He told me to take over and complete the last phase of attack with aggressive speed. So encouraged, the Spartan Rajputs rushed forward towards the highest Point. The enemy was by now very jittery, unnerved and submissively demoralised. They had already lost 10 men and scores wounded. Fearing certain death of all remaining men, the enemy panicked and rolled down the steep reverse slopes to safety. The wounded enemy too did likewise. Seeing the complete enemy exodus, the brave Rajputs rushed through the last phase while firing at the running enemy. Time was now 0450 hours on 17 May 1965. Daylight had emerged and the Rajputs had completed the capture of Pt 13620 with missionary zeal.

### **Reorganisation**

Immediately after success of the battle reorganisation is a must to be ready for any enemy counter-attack. I got on with this job. Procedures and battle drills are necessary to comply with to negate any enemy attempt to regain lost ground.

The Signal Platoon of the Unit had done a remarkable job of continuously laying telephone line with speed of the attack. Moment Pt 13620 was captured; the telephone line was through to the Brigade Headquarters via 4 Rajput base exchange. Immediately, the Tricolour, the Indian National Flag, was hoisted at the highest point, which was seen fluttering in glory by everyone at the Kargil Base, through binoculars. The CO informed the Commander of the success on telephone. As per procedure, vary light pistol was fired in agreed to colour sequence to announce and signal the success to all concerned.

## Destiny, fate and aftermath

The enemy left behind 10 dead. They were able to roll down their wounded on the sharp reverse slopes.

The Rajputs lost their brave and dynamic coy commander Major Baljit Singh Randhawa. They also lost 1 JCO and 13 Other Ranks. Besides me, lieutenant VK Aggarwal and 50 Other Ranks were wounded.

## The spoils of war

**Captured Trophies:** The Unit captured 2 x Medium Machine Guns, 2 x 3 inch Mortars and many small arms with plenty of ammunition. MMG's and Mortars were given to 4 Rajput as War Trophies and these are kept and displayed in the Unit Quarter Guard. These battle souvenirs remain emotional link with the past, and act as morale and esprit de corps multipliers for the new generation.



Weapons captured from PAK Post Pt 13620, in picture CO, Maj DP Nayar, Maj SN Bhatnagar and Capt Ranbir

**Honours and Awards:** Theatre Honour was awarded to the Unit. 4 Rajput received four immediate awards, Maj Randhawa MVC (posthumous) Capt Ranbir Singh, Naib Sub Girdhari Lal and Sepoy Budh Singh Vir Chakra. Major DP Nayar and Captain SN Bhatnagar were awarded Mention in

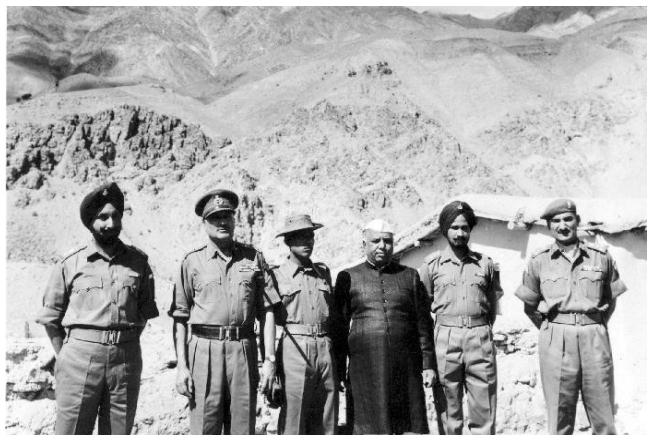
Dispatches. The Commander Brig VK Ghai of Kargil was awarded VSM Class-1.



Immediate awards announced - The Tribune Cutting dated 1 July 1965

## Heroism and sacrifice immortalised

There is a War Memorial at Kargil in memory of those who sacrificed their lives for capture of Pt 13620. This feature has been named as Baljit Post in memory of Major Baljit Singh Randhawa, MVC. I (Ranbir) went to deliver Major Randhawa's Ashes to his Family at his Village Isapur near Amritsar.

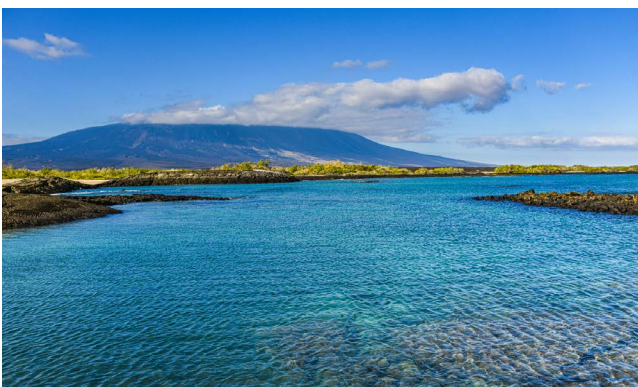


Defence Minister YB Chavan at Kargil Jun 1965 with Brig VK Ghai, Col Sudarshan Singh, Capt Ranbir Singh and Lt Nk Budh Singh

# The Centre of the World

The Galapagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean are a utopia of crystal blue waves, dotted with sandy beaches and tropical plants. Text and Pictures by *Urvi Piramal*

By all accounts, the Galapagos Islands are one of the natural wonders of the world: straddling the Equator in the Pacific Ocean, the archipelago consists some 150 island clusters created by the cooled ash of the region's many volcanoes, and of which only a handful are habitable by man.



It is here, towards the centre of the earth, where I journeyed in October 2018 with a group of friends. After the day-long flight to Ecuador, via Amsterdam, we alighted at Quito, the capital. From here we took a 1.5-hour flight to Guayaquil and further half an hour flight to San Cristobal Island. Here we were greeted by a guide who took us on a zodiac boat to our home on the yacht – 'Majestic'. This utopia of crystal blue waves, dotted with sandy beaches and tropical plants was to be our home for the next eight days. I was reminded of the poem by William Cowper: "I am monarch of all I survey, My right there is none to dispute, From the centre all round to the sea, I am



Some views of the islands of Galapagos

lord of the fowl and the brute ...”

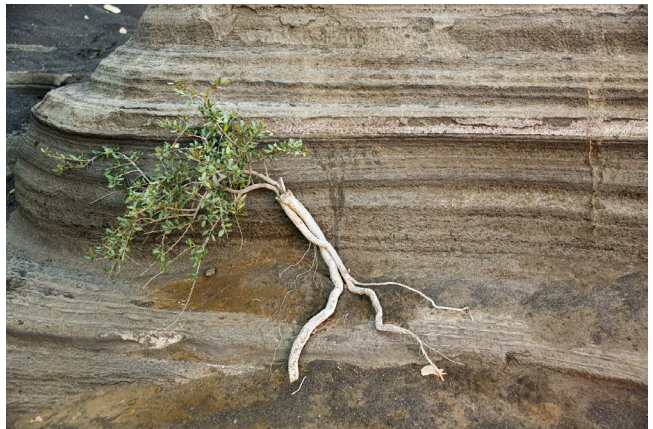
The topology and geology of the islands varies based on when last a volcano erupted in the area. Eruptions range over two centuries, with the last recorded volcano in 2009. The older islands are noticeably darker, denser and full of rich foliage; while the newer islands are as yet without flora and still have layers of basaltic and porous lava and ash. Towering over us are remnants of fast-cooled lava, black and beautiful against a purple and gold sky.



*Young island which is still covered with lava with no vegetation*



*Tall lava body against the purple and gold sky*



*Flora just starting to grow on a little older island*

Roughly two centuries ago, English biologist Charles Darwin visited the archipelago and his collections and observations from this period contributed to his theory of evolution and adaptation. There is a lake named after him which we were lucky to visit.



*Darwin's lake – at Isabela Island.*

### **From Dawn Till Dusk**

On board our 10-person luxury yacht, we had a top-deck terrace and pool; a mid-deck lounge and living space; while the bottom layer also had bedrooms. An army comprising two captains, two officers, one

chef, one barman, one steward served us for the next eight days. While we roamed the area, jumping dolphin would swim alongside the boat, whistling and calling to each other.



*Majestic*



*View of the lounge in our yacht*



*Dolphins playing around our boat*

Our days were such – we would roam the Pacific by night and dock early mornings near one of the neighbouring islands. Mornings started in time for the 6am gorgeous sunrise. We would leave the yacht by a zodiac boat and board the island. While some of the islands had a rough docking area, some required a “wet landing” – where we would have to alight the dingy in ankle-

deep water, walk in the cool water to the shore, and then slip back into our footwear. To conserve the environment, the Galapagos tourism board has deemed that visitors to the island must follow a schedule; not be above a certain number; and not be allowed to visit for more than two hours. I was amazed by the pristine islands: they were untouched by man, not a single bench, not a single piece of litter refuted the fact that only wildlife roamed there.

Our paths up the virgin beaches were dotted by marine iguanas that looked up lazily as we made our way carefully across their paths.



*Marine iguanas and sealions dotting our path*

### **The Indigenous Animals**

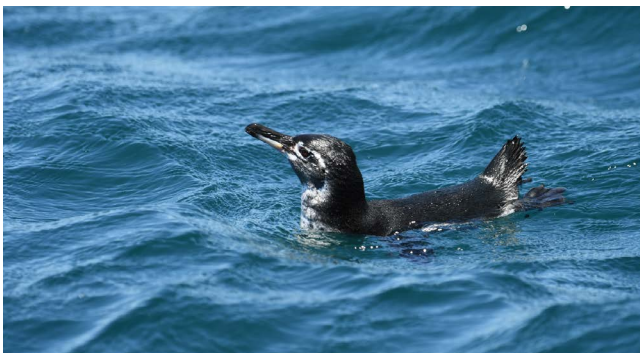
The animals and birds here can best be described through pictures. All the fauna are indigenous to the area and can only be found here. As the Galapagos islands were being formed, animals from the mainland –

South America – migrated to the islands and finding everything they ever needed, they never left.

The animals on the islands span several centuries: the tortoises are more than 100 years old and the frigate bird babies were just being born. Cormorants, initially flying birds, discovered that all their food was available in plenty and that there was no need to fly: in time, the birds' wings grew stubbier and less feathery – they became flightless to adapt to their new reality.



*Close-up of the giant tortoise which has been around for more than 100 years*



*Smaller than their cousins down South, these are the only penguins that live above the Equator*



*Galapagos Penguins*



*Marine Iguana: The only species of marine lizards on the planet – the theory being that iguanas were the only ones who had to foray into the water in search for food. These iguanas would lie basking in the sun, perfectly camouflaged among the rocks.*



*Sally light foot crab: These brilliant red crabs made playful neighbours to the marine iguanas and many birds – possible because all these animals eat different things.*



*Sea lions: The sea lions would luxuriate in the sun – barely aware of our presence*



A playful moment as a baby sealion gently nibbles the tail of a marine iguana



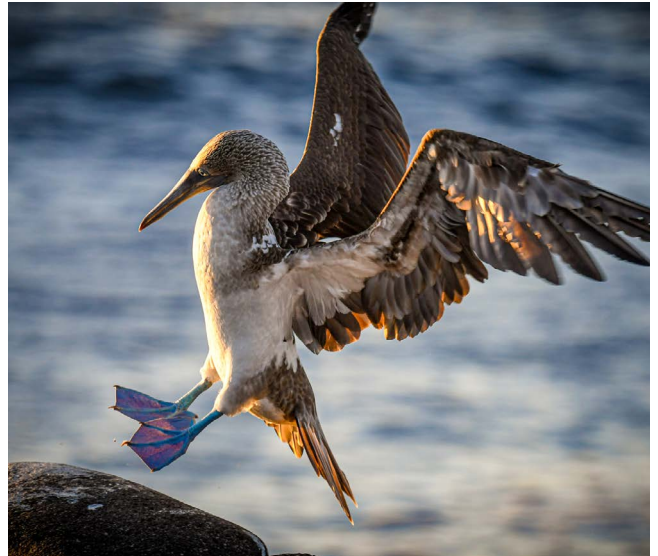
Blue Footed Booby



Land Iguana: Is endemic to the Galapagos Islands and are vegetarian and feed on cacti and their flowers



Pacific Sea Turtle – Is an endangered species found around the Galapagos Islands

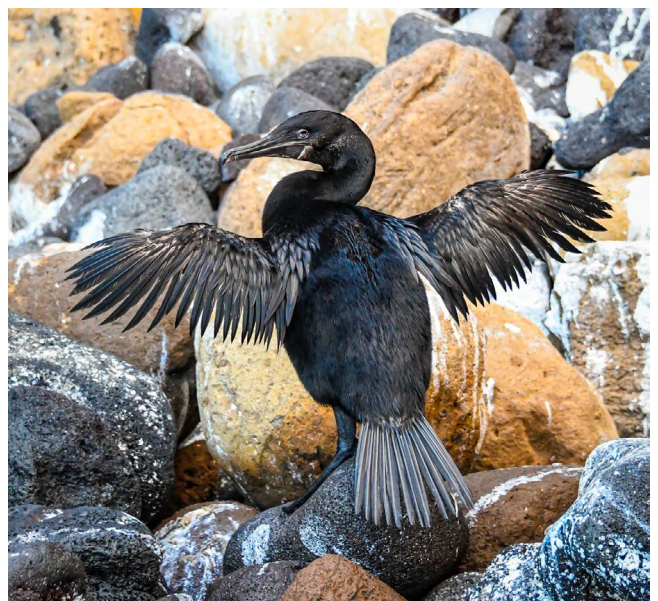


They live on the ground unlike their cousins the red-footed boobies who live on neighbouring islands

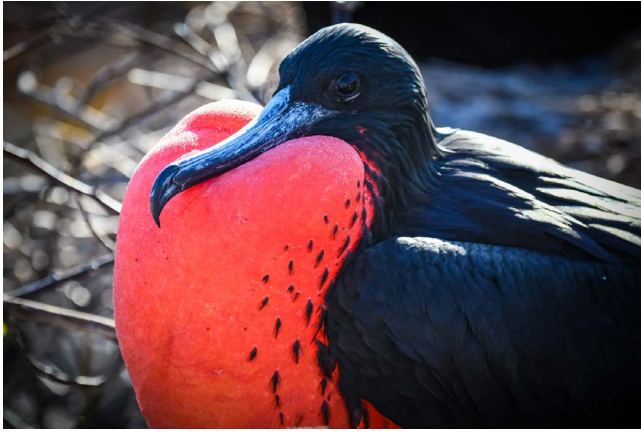
## Birds



Darwin's Finches: They have specialised beaks suited to eating seeds and insects



Flightless cormorants in the world belong only to the Galapagos Islands. Tiny wings and large feet help the birds in water and land



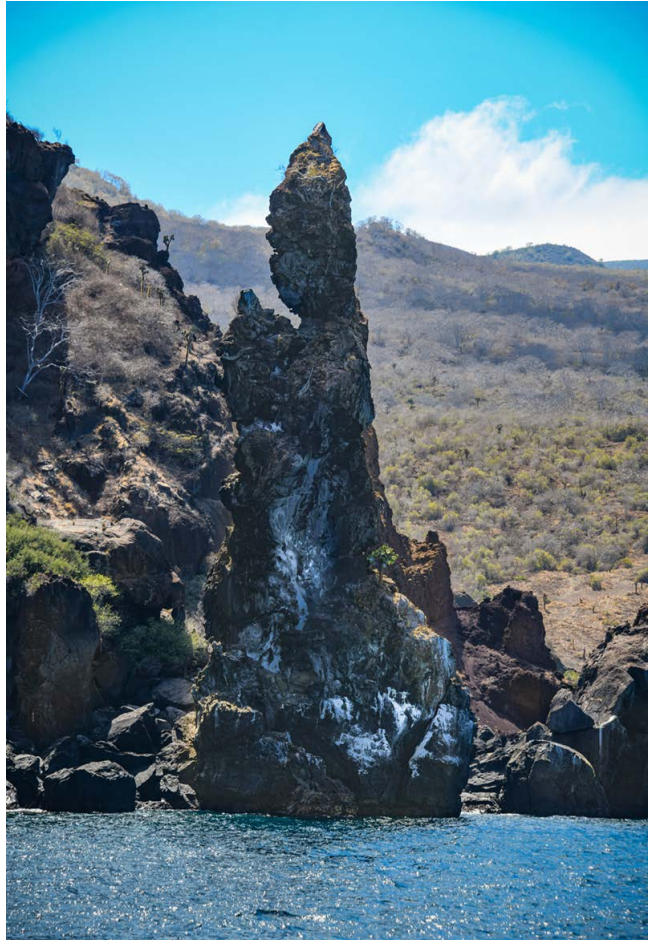
The male frigate bird puffs up the skin under his beak in order to attract a mate



He finds a mate, builds a nest, and the female lays a single egg



The baby is born, and papa's red balloon shrivels up



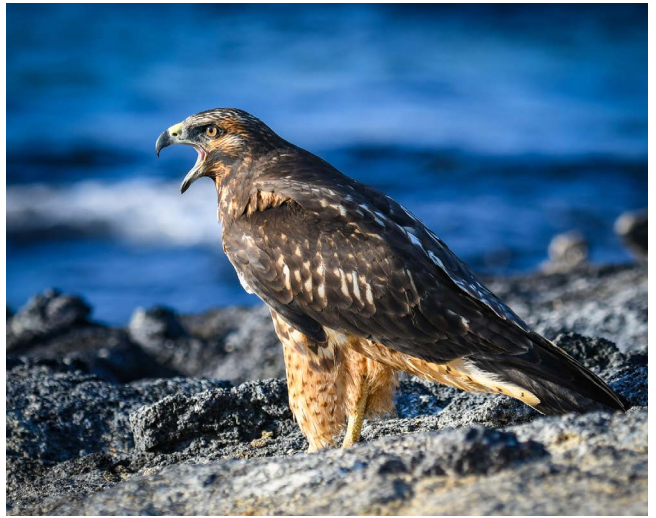
Praying Monk: The pirates and buccaneers used to arrive at these islands as well. They use these landmarks to navigate themselves



Pelican ready to take off from the beach



American Oystercatcher -They feed almost exclusively on Shellfish and other marine invertebrates



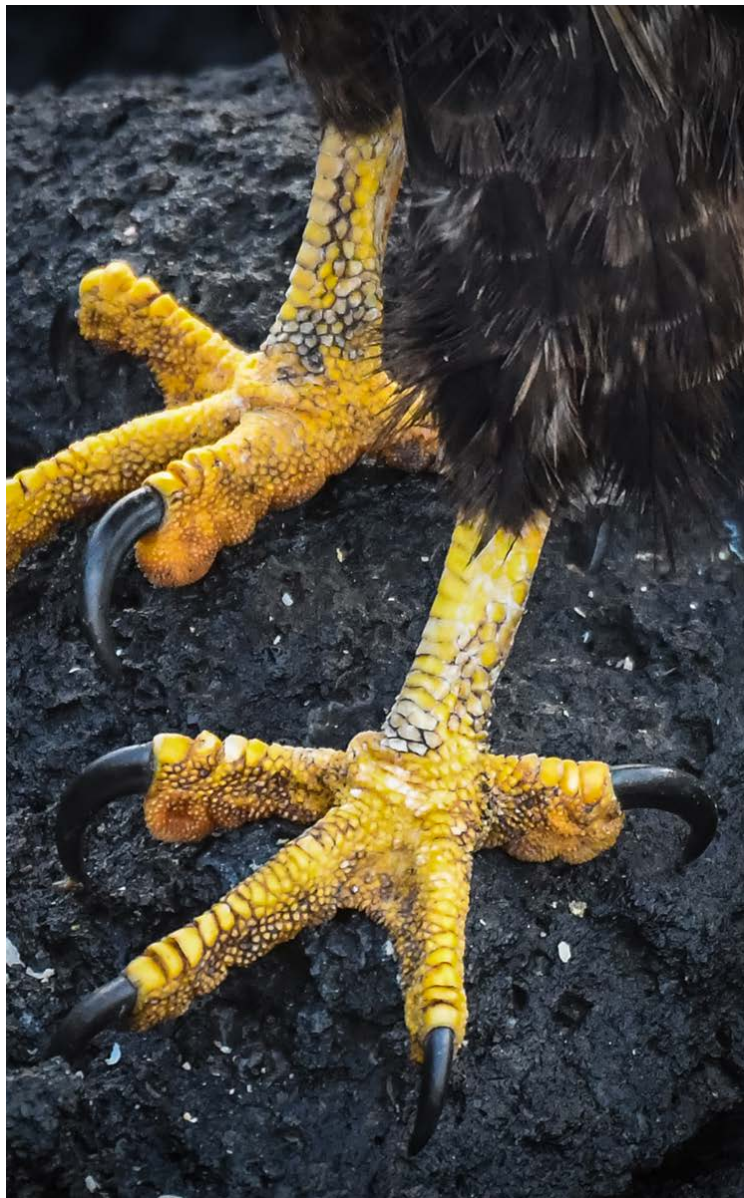
Galapagos Hawk is endemic to most of the Galapagos islands



Nazca booby is the largest booby in the Galapagos island



Galapagos Great Blue heron



Strong talons of the Galapagos Hawk

## End of the Day

Every morning, after visiting the islands, we would come back by breakfast. The rest of the day would be spent lounging on the yacht, snorkelling if the weather permitted, relaxing and watching the sunset from the jacuzzi. Snorkelling was an exciting experience because a whole new world opens up to you when you snorkel. You see different types of fish, swim with iguanas and sea lions. Every evening, the sun would

set around 7pm, and as is common on the Equator, it would set quite quickly, covering the waves and landscapes in a dusky purple and pink twilight. Looking at the sky, the air, the water, I would feel strongly an inner energy resonating with the very pulse of life and I would feel peace and wonder of God and his creations.

I would like to end with the words of William Shakespeare – “The earth has music for those who listen.”



## Share Your Grief

***“Grief, I’ve learned, is really just love. It’s all the love you want to give, but cannot. All the unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in the hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go.” – Jamie Anderson***

Psychologists believe writing about grief can reduce pain. Research has found that putting down one’s thoughts about worries and concerns can help those looking for ways to cope with their grief.

While writing requires motivation, energy and dedication, it’s easy, less stressful and all one needs is a pen, paper, computer or your device keypad. You don’t have to talk to anyone about it.

At Seniors Today, we are happy to provide you a forum to publish your personal accounts. Simply mail them to us at [editor@seniorstoday.in](mailto:editor@seniorstoday.in) with Share Your Grief in the subject. Please also include your name and contact number so that we may contact you in case we wish to make any clarification. While we would like you to write the first person account with your name, we will – needless to say – not disclose your information if you wouldn’t like us to.

# Lawfully Happy

**Under the Indian Constitution, every citizen is guaranteed certain rights, which are thought to be the foundation for a happy life, writes *Sonavi Kher Desai***

Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States of America, and a lawyer, said: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Young or old, we all seek happiness. How easy is it for a senior citizen in India to enforce his or her unalienable right to the pursuit of happiness? And how successful would the pursuit be? Under the Constitution of India, every citizen is guaranteed certain rights, which are thought to be the foundation for a happy life. These rights include Justice, Liberty, and Equality for all.

Through the Directive Principles of State Policy, the Constitution aims to provide the right to education and to work in cases

of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement. It also seeks to ensure the protection of educational and economic rights of weaker sections of society, which includes senior citizens. These rights underpin senior citizens’ ability to pursue happiness in the autumn of their lives. But



*Legislation is there to help, but the secret to happiness is in our attitude to life*



*Take expert advice and have a savings plan with inflation in mind*

eventually, achieving that happiness is largely up to the individuals themselves.

It is said that life can only be understood backwards although we have to live it going forward. In other words, one has to make a concerted effort to create a happy senior life for oneself, so that one can look back with satisfaction as one enjoys the fruits of that effort. It is therefore important to plan for later years when one is younger.

The concerns a person faces on becoming a senior citizen are mainly related to finance and health. The right to education and work ensures that we have the opportunity to get qualified and find employment. Life is made up of time, which ticks away faster than we think. If we understand that our time is actually limited, we will begin to plan our finances and healthcare when we are younger and in a better position to do so. And we will comfortably reap the benefits of that in later years. As we get older, money is also needed for medical treatments. It is therefore important to take expert advice and have a savings plan with inflation in mind. Having enough resources will help in being secure in later years.

The government implements pension and benefits schemes and programs for seniors under several ministries viz. Rural Development, Health & Family Welfare, Finance, Home Affairs, Railways, and Civil Aviation. The Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY) is a recent pension scheme launched in 2017 and operated by LIC. Senior citizens have a right to avail of these schemes and benefits for a richer life experience.

The Directive Principles also seek to provide employment in old age to enable senior citizens to earn a living. Being independent and living a life of dignity are essential elements of a happy life. The National Policy, formulated by the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry in 1999, also aims to help seniors live with security and dignity.

Another issue of concern to senior citizens is abandonment by family members and maintenance. The government has enacted the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, to safeguard the rights of the elderly with penal provisions for abandonment. This gives senior citizens the ability to enforce their rights through special Tribunals set up under the Act.

However, the Constitution and legislation are only tools that senior citizens can rely on to ensure that their right to lead a happy life is protected. As we get older, the secret to happiness is to retain the enthusiasm of youth, to keep learning, and to engage in different areas of life to maintain social contact and keep loneliness at bay. The role of legislation is to provide support when our right to pursue happiness is being obstructed. Our happiness is determined by our attitude to life, and our attitude is made up of our thoughts. A positive mindset, the ability to laugh, and living in the present moment lead to a happy frame of mind.

# Best of the Feasts

*Harsh Goenka* lists his top 20 restaurants in India

I consider myself a food adventurer. I am always on a quest looking out for fresh culinary experiences and new flavours to savour wherever I go. Having spent the better part of my adult life honing my epicurean curiosity, I thought it would be relatively easy to list what I consider to be the top 20 restaurants in India! But instead it has proved to be a difficult exercise.

As with art, the experience is highly subjective. My selection is naturally restricted to those I have visited and also by my being a vegetarian. This automatically excludes some amazing non-vegetarian contenders and newer ones like Kappa Chakka Kandhari and Kimono Club that I have heard good things about, but unfortunately haven't been to.

But what is it that makes a restaurant not merely good, but great? The flavour of the food? The service? The ambience? There are two more criteria that heighten the overall dining experience for me - inventiveness and presentation of the

cuisine. It has to be a feast for the eyes and the taste buds. Fortunately of late we also have several top-class international chefs frequenting our country and this exposure has certainly added to our expectations. Tragically some of my fondest food experiences can never make it to this list ...mouthwatering fare from hole-in-the-wall eateries or on the streets. Paanipuri, Jhalmuri or Rasta Sandwich represent the ultimate comfort food for me. Some of the small South Indian cafes in Chennai and Kolkata offer the softest and fluffiest of idlis and crisp tasty dosas but lack the ambience. I still enjoy old-fashioned Indian continental food, a phrase you rarely hear nowadays except in a few restaurants or clubs in Kolkata where time has stood still. How can I leave out Bar-B-Que where I so enjoy eating Punjabi-Chinese food? Or St Jude's kitchen in Bandra run by Gresham Fernandes, which cannot qualify as a restaurant because of its pop-up format?

So here's my list of top 20 restaurants in India:

**1. Indian Accent, The Lodhi, New Delhi –**



Indian Accent is without question the best Indian restaurant in the country and Chef Manish Mehrotra is clearly the pioneer of contemporary Indian food. Successfully retaining authentic flavours, while using global trends in enhanced presentation, he introduced the concept of plated Indian food and made each dish a visual delight. His Moradabadi Dal and Daulat ki Chaat (something that I had prompted him to bring on the menu) are personal favourites.

**2. Avartana, ITC Chennai**



Avartana meaning turning around, they have deconstructed Southern cuisine and “turned” it into a brilliant multi-course meal. The herb infused Rasam in a French press, and served in martini glasses as an aperitif got me hooked, and it was a win-win

experience all the way through. The menus, painstakingly perfected over two years, have some delightful food pairings and are so good that I often think of travelling to Chennai just for this.

**3. Masque, Mumbai**



Chef Prateek Sandhu has been the trendsetter in Mumbai for reimagined traditional cuisine. The Kashmiri-influenced food is ingredient driven and he is constantly innovating the offerings depending on season and availability. Exotic berries, morels and vegetables foraged from the Himalayas find their way into the dishes in inventive ways. Mid-course the flaky Katlam roti served with walnut chutney and other relishes is a favourite of mine. The small tasting room, a new concept, is a great dining out experience with friends. Several international chefs collaborate with Masque and the result is a refined, organic blend of delightful food.

**4. The Table, Mumbai**



When Table opened in Mumbai in 2011, it was the first restaurant to launch the concept of small plates with a very varied international menu. Ever since, their quality has been consistently excellent. I can never have enough of their truffle pasta, zucchini spaghetti – a healthy version of the noodles – and caramel ice cream with popcorn. There is a nice warm vibe to the restaurant with a lovely balance of elegance and casualness.

### **5. Wasabi, Taj Mahal, Mumbai**



Saturday nights the red and wood-panelled fine dine is filled with Mumbai's jet set, and it is impossible to get a seat without prior reservation. The secret of their success is their authentic ingredients, freshly flown in every day from Japan.

The Tofu Carpaccio and Avocado Tacos are absolute must-haves for a vegetarian. Having eaten at their partner restaurant Morimoto in Philadelphia, I would dare to say that Wasabi is far better, or perhaps the offerings have been fine-tuned to suit the Indian palate better.

### **6. Izumi, Mumbai**

It has a charming café atmosphere and is always buzzing with young energy. Serving truly mouthwatering Japanese cuisine, this tiny restaurant is always a delight to visit. The dishes are delicately flavoured with great emphasis on fresh ingredients, many of which are flown in from Japan. Despite that



the food is very well priced. I particularly enjoy their ramen noodles and sushis. Though their menu is limited, there are enough vegetarian options to have a gourmet experience.

### **7. Bombay Canteen, Mumbai**



As busy and buzzy as a college canteen, there is a wonderful playfulness about the regional fare on offer. It is an excellent place to savour diverse regional and local favourites tweaked with a creative flourish. So don't go there expecting a fine dine experience with cutting edge techniques. Instead, the homestyle sweet-spicy-tangy flavours and the friendly smiling service will get you to return! Try their barley jowar salad, dabeli and round it off with coffee rasgulla. I have really enjoyed their food festivals where they have invited Bengali, Oriya and South Indian exponents of regional cooking. Tom Zacharias is young and dynamic, and I am sure he will go places.

## 8. Bukhara, ITC Maurya, New Delhi



Bukhara has been an all-time favourite for North West Frontier food in Delhi and became iconic after Bill Clinton's visit. Their open kitchen was a trendsetter when they began. It has remained consistent in taste and quality and though the menu is limited it has some very special dishes. Their Dal Bukhara is legendary and ITC actually exports cans of it worldwide. They are masters of tandoori cooking and their tandoori gobi and paneer is simply divine. In true Indian style, their food is best eaten with the hand.

## 9. Chinoiserie, Taj Bengal, Kolkata



The best Chinese restaurant in India which was inspired by the iconic Golden Dragon in Taj Mumbai. What makes it special are the different flavours they offer based on various provinces of China. Their crackling spinach and corn kernels are a perennial hit. It is a very hospitable place where the people go out of their way to cater to the customer's wishes, and they have adapted the taste very well to Indian preferences.

## 10. Thaker Bhojnalay, Mumbai



I remember having gone there as a child and have fond memories of the place when the cost of a meal was only Rs 10. Now the meal costs as much as Rs 500, and the eatery is now airconditioned but continues to be very humble and basic, with Formica-topped tables and standard foam-covered chairs. What it lacks in ambience, it makes up for with its warm and hospitable service. They serve freshly cooked, sumptuous Gujarati food with some Rajasthani influences. You get unlimited servings and the food is served piping hot. The first floor diner is so popular that you have to be prepared to wait for a table. Interestingly, it is so famous on the international culinary circuit that every well-known chef visiting India comes here as a pilgrimage.

### 11. Tresind, Mumbai



It is a sophisticated dining place, very competitively priced, and its set meals are charmingly presented and equally delicious. A delightfully enjoyable experience is their Dal served with subtly different masalas and varied ingredients representing the different regions of our country and as a motif of national integration. What makes it special is that the Dal is table-cooked in front of you. I also enjoyed their interpretation of some local dishes like Khandvi and Gajar ka Halwa.

### 12. O Pedro, Mumbai

Goan food was never high on my list of preferences till I visited O Pedro. Chef Hussain Shahzad has modernized traditional Goan fare and made it more sophisticated, while reflecting the region's culinary diversity. His novel interpretations, while often retaining the typical coconut-kokum base, are definitely praiseworthy. The place is very well designed and reflects the charming casual vibe that Goa stands for.



### 13. Artusi Ristorante, New Delhi



What makes Artusi special is that it is a fine dining restaurant, yet it doesn't have a typical formal ambience. It serves authentic Italian food in a warm, cosy environment. Sticklers for attention to detail, they handmake their pasta daily and also the breads and sauces are made in-house. Their soups and pastas are delectable while their tiramisu is highly recommended.

### 14. La Plage, Goa

The best part of this French restaurant is sitting on the sandy beachfront. And the hammocks and casual sitting add to the chilled-out holiday vibe. It's run by a French



a couple who refresh their menu every year, while keeping some perennial favourites. It is rare to find delicate French food in India and their beetroot and mango carpaccio is a winner. If in Goa this charming seaside eatery is worth a visit.

### 15. A Reverie, Goa



It is situated just a bit away from the beach and the settings are charming with ample space around. The menu is diverse and changes frequently with lot of seasonal ingredients dominating the selection. Excellent Western cuisine presented elegantly.

### 16. Bomra's, Goa



As someone said, this was Goa's best kept secret. Created by Bawmra Jap, known for his inventive cooking, Bomra is an excellent restaurant for Burmese food, which I thoroughly relish. Burmese food goes very well with the Indian taste and is rich in flavours and very fresh. The tomato salad and the Khow Suey are my favourites.

### 17. Diva, Delhi



Run by the diva of restaurateurs, Ritu Dalmia, Diva is amongst the best Italian restaurants in India. You will find one of the best thin and crisp pizzas in the country at Diva, and it is the go-to place if you are looking for fresh truffles in the right season.

### 18. Gunpowder, Goa



Set in a charming Portuguese villa, Gunpowder serves good Southern Indian food with a lot of Malabari favourites to savour. Particularly finger licking are the appams and ishtew.

### 19. Comorin, Gurgaon



It is Manish Mehrotra's new community dining place. Comfort food of every region and street favourites are delectably presented. It is innovative and the atmosphere is excellent. Simple food, freshly made and amazingly flavourful.


### 20. Qualia, Mumbai



Rahul Akerkar, who pioneered the fine dine scene in India with his Indigo, makes a comeback with his latest offering. With a menu and interesting food pairings honed over months, it shows the passion Rahul has put into its dishes. The pizzas and pastas are mouthwateringly tasty. What they serve is good looking soul food with an interesting balance of sweet and sour flavours.

That brings me to mention a few of my favourites, which I regret could not find a mention in the list. Yauatcha, Americano and Swati Snacks all in Mumbai and Tres in Delhi, all of which serve outstanding, consistently good quality, great-tasting food.

All the restaurants in this listing have fascinated me with their creativity and their genius of combining disparate, often unlikely elements and making them work in unique flavour-filled ways. With each passing day, I am learning ever more to appreciate simplicity and inventiveness in food and these artisans of food never cease to amaze me.



# Salli, Soli and the Shifty Sadra

In the second of our series on Communities, the inimitable *Bachi Karkaria* holds forth on probably the quirkiest of them all – the Parsis

How dare you ask me to write on this topic, Editorji? It's a contradiction in terms, and only an oxy-moron would think that such a species with common traits exists. Our most common feature is that each of us is so uncommon. Shylock may have said 'Sufferance is the badge of all our tribe', but we have as little use for it as a meal without eggs. Instead, 'Individuality is the badge of all our tribe', as much as the sadra we wear. Naturally, the 'I' factor kicks into even this sacred garment. Hilloo, Pilloo and Viloo put their own stamp of necessity or style on it, wearing it panty-long or bra-short, Magyar-sleeved or strappy, everyday muslin or elaborately bordered net for special occasions. Or the entire garment dispensed with by ivory-skinned Ava and other members of our Only Backless Classes. Poor Nasloo can't take so many liberties with his sadra. And even less with the Nagging Najoo in his life.

A direct ancillary of our individuality is our readiness to jump into disagreement, with our own unmusical scale of disagreeability.

Amartya Sen wrote 'The Argumentative Indian'. But, if he'd been foolhardy enough to narrow it to The Argumentative Parsi, he'd never have completed the manuscript. And no publisher would have dared touch it for fear of a cornucopia of correspondence -- clarifying, correcting, complaining or just plain cantankerous. Among the many sayings that hold a mirror to our community is the one that if he can't find an opponent, the Parsi will argue with the reflection in his 'arsi'.

## **Bomi vs Bejoy**

Long ago, a Manjula Padmanabhan cartoon in Parsiana depicted two gentlemen in traditional topi and beaked noses, with one of them asking in genuine bewilderment: 'Best community? Which others are there?' I'd come to Bombay just a few years earlier from Calcutta, home to the Bengalis who also inhabit a lofty ivory tower, not deigning to recognise any other lesser human breed. I realised soon enough that it was a neck-and-neck race between my former and present

fellowmen, and we Parsis won only by a nose-length.

The sense of superiority is not without reason. The Bombay Bawa (and more so bawi) is as much the custodian of culture as the self-anointed Bong (who else in all India knows not to clap between the movements of a Western symphony?). We better the Banerjees in baritone though they could match us barrister for barrister. And doctor for doctor. But, aha, would anyone pay a premium for a Bengali-owned car? Nah! Bejoy babu would never sully his hands by driving it himself (at 20 kmph), forget about lovingly wiping off engine grease and polishing it to a shine every Sunday.

### **Bombay meri jaanu**

I must confess that I didn't fully know what it was to be Parsi till I moved to Bombay. Oh yes, we were a well-knit community in Calcutta with our sports and amateur dramatic clubs, Youth League, Scouts and Guides troops. We earnestly listened to spiritual lectures amidst the body-building apparatus of the Saklat Physical Culture Institute since this was the only dedicated space till Seth Eduljee Olpadwala, owner of Byron's Soft Drinks, donated his palatial mansion to the community. But we were still only a tiny outpost, with a tinier population. In Cal, my chances of casually encountering a kaumrade were as slim as the thighs of Freny Fatakia aka Fatakdi, but my eyes goggled as I passed scores of Parsis at bus queues, bazars and bowing to the gates of fire temples as I made my way from VT station to my aunt's flat. There I got torpedoed by the depth charge. It was my first encounter of the Baug kind. It was a rite of passage more fundamental than my navjote, the ceremony which inducts every Parsi-born child into Zoroastrianism.

Pitching camp at Homai Masi's house, I learnt what it meant to be a dyed-in-the-dhansak Parsi, not the shorshey-bata-compromised saas ni machhi Bachi I'd been for the past 21 years of blissful ignorance. This was my initiation into the true faith. Here's a list of its Tata Steel-clad principles which I discovered as I was sucked into Bombay Bawadom.



*The Atash Behram in Udvada*

**The fourfold path.** Zoroastrianism's threefold tenet of good thoughts, good deeds, good words have acquired a fourth, secular add-on, the good life. This is manifested in the Parsi peg, the staggering lagan nu bhonu, the everyday willingness to 'Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die out'. And the fact that after the obligatory obeisance to our oldest, most sacred fire 'enthroned' in the Atash Behram at Udvada, every true believer must genuflect to toddy and tareli-boi spiked gargantuan meals at the nearby, Sidhwa family-run Globe Hotel ( Estbld 1924). Church and state satiated-ly un-separated.

**A distinctive multilingual fluency.** In my first weeks I was bemused by my cousins' awed admiration of some neighbour's 'second language'. Was that loutish Langrana boy, who couldn't string together a coherent sentence in English or Parsi-Gujarati, a secret linguist? Ask and ye shall

receive a revelation. 'Second language' was shorthand for the felicity with which Parsi men pepper their speech with the common 'BC-MC' gaali.

### **Zain and the Art of Motorcycle**

**Maintenance.** No Kawas can be a red-blooded bawa stud unless he spends all Sunday morning lavishing near-erotic attention on his Kawasaki, and then varrooming up to Lonavala, the sparks flying at every hairpin bend as his beauty grazed the ghats.

**The 'Apro' Appropriation.** 'Apro' means 'our', and is a familiar, almost familial way of making a storied personage your own; 'Apro George' was the original, referring to the British monarch who visited Bombay in 19, and whose photograph along with that of Jamshedjee Tata hung on either side of the portrait of the Prophet Zarathushtra in most homes till they were recently dethroned by newfangled notions of interior décor. The pronoun-ed possessiveness extended to 'Apro JRD' and passed on to 'Apro Ratan'. There was 'Apro Adu' referring to the late and much-missed Adi Marzban, theatre genius and owner-editor of Jam-e-Jamshed, which every Parsi had to read for its vital hatches, matches and despatches columns. And of course there's 'Apro Zubin', twice-born because he's not only a cultural icon,



*Salli per eedu is one of the several typical egg dishes in Parsi cuisine*



*You couldn't possibly have a Parsi meal without raspberry soda*

**The Ovoid Alter Ego.** You cannot think of a Parsi without eggs any more than you can make a kanda-kothmir no poro without them. Forget cholesterol, cardiac arrest and maybe Covid-19 too, eeda is to us what Edam is to the Dutch, more so because we have more ways to deploy them than any Hollandaiser. We can steam an egg atop everything bar a dal, turning any other wallflower veggie into the darling of the dining table. Why, we even welcome a bride with the circling of an egg around her head (not that this has helped up our precipitous decline in fertility). We even extend this to the new car in our life. Maybe we should call that ritual 'BMW par eedu'.

**Mamma Knows Best.** The Indian mother's son fixation is a national affliction but, again barring the Bengalis, in no other community is vice versa equally true. There are so many single Parsi men not because they are gay (though many are that too) but because their mothers won't give them a divorce. And wives must learn to live with a disadvantaged threesome in the marriage, there's no way they can compete with the Other Woman, 'my Mamma'.

### **The Ganga Network.**

Very early in my Bombay foray, I learnt that



*Cusrow Baug is a landmark in South Bombay*

she was the third woman most critical to Baug dynamics. The nav-vari -sari-sporting, sharp-tongued, no-nonsense part-time bai was essential not only for the sweeping, swabbing, and scrubbing of ‘vaasan’ to mirror finish, but equally for her role as grape-vine. It was she who kept A Block Alamai fully apprised of the bickering in B Block Batliwala flat, why the matrimonial negotiations for D Block Dinbai’s ‘maari doll-jevi dikri, Daulat’ came to naught, and the salacious details of Philandering Philly’s latest transgression. Upward mobility on both sides of the social divide have made her a dying breed, with her educated daughters and nieces no longer needing menial jobs, and younger wives no longer staying home and needing neighbour gossip to ‘mitho-marchu’ up their lives. All power to both progressions, but a regretful goodbye to the joys of making mincemeat of Colourful

Coomi together with the ‘kheema na kawab’. Or generally making a random kachumber of reputations.

Yes, we Parsis are dying out, but you can be sure we won’t go glumly into the night. We’ll go out dancing with our retrofitted knees, drinking till Sala Soli’s last bottle is downed, dining like there’s no diabetes or arteriosclerosis. And, oh yes, arguing interminably with the Almighty, using all the ‘second language’ unfailingly at our command.



*If it's Britannia it must be Berry Pulao*

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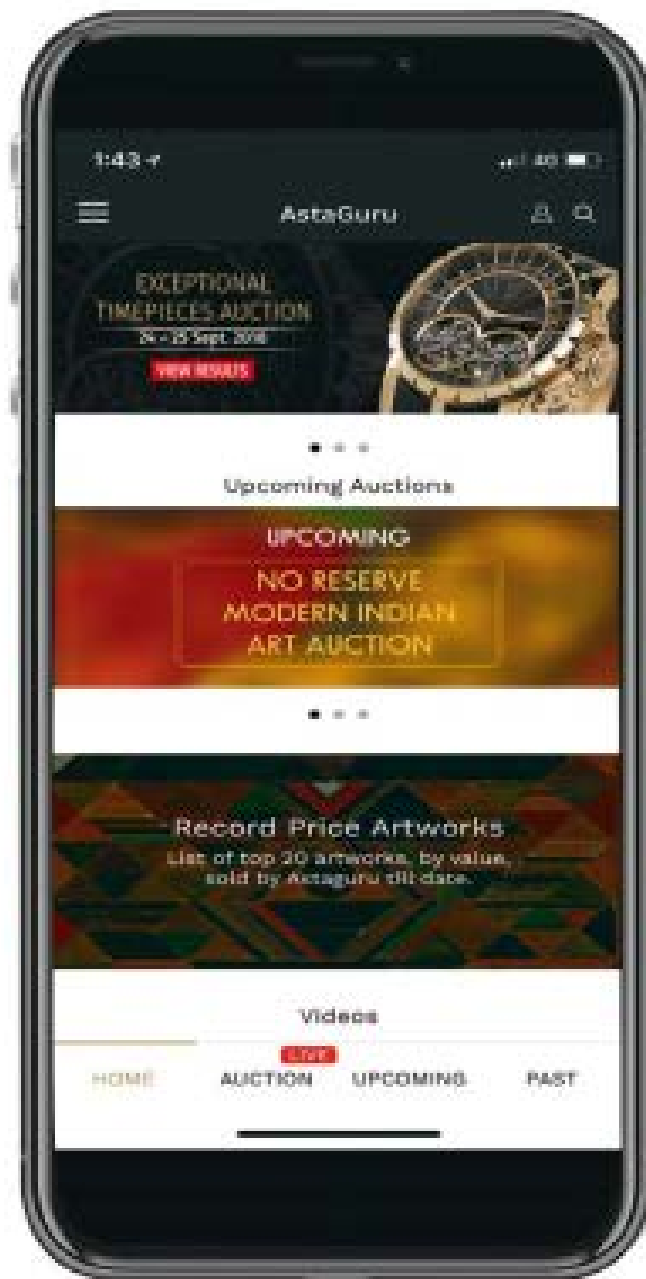
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