6th Anniversary

seniors TODAY

Life & Times

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Portrait of Purpose

In a candid conversation, Anu Aga revisits the moments that shaped her life

Specials

Harsh Goenka ✦ Urvi Piramal ✦ Ayaz Memon
Vandana Kanoria ✦ Deepa Gahlot ✦ Gouri Dange
Nagesh Alai ✦ Vickram Sethi

Interview: 'Jumping Jack' Jeetendra

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Celebrating Six Meaningful Years

Dear Readers,

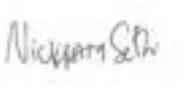
As Seniors Today turns six, I want to take a moment to thank you, our loyal and thoughtful readers, for making this journey so rewarding. When we launched this digital magazine six years ago, our aim was simple yet ambitious: to build a vibrant, respectful and engaging space where seniors could enjoy thoughtful content, share their experiences and feel a sense of belonging. Today, I feel humbled and grateful for the warm community that has grown around it.

Over these six years, Seniors Today has evolved with you. We have brought you stories to inspire, inform and sometimes entertain, covering health and well-being, travel, technology, the arts and the lighter side of life. We have featured stories of resilience, reinvention and quiet triumphs. But most of all, we have learnt from you. Your letters, messages and unwavering encouragement have been the lifeblood of the magazine. You have reminded us that life after 60 does not slow down, it simply finds a new rhythm.

The world around us may often feel rushed and too focused on youth, but here at Seniors Today, we celebrate wisdom, experience and the spirit that defines this stage of life. We firmly believe that ageing is not about stepping back, but about reimagining — exploring new hobbies, friendships, reflections and joys. We are committed to keeping this platform true to those values.

As we look ahead, we pledge to keep publishing stories and insights that matter to you, to encourage conversation and to honour every reader's voice. Thank you for welcoming us into your homes, your daily lives and your reflections. Here is to many more years of growing together, learning together and embracing all that life still has to offer.

I must also express my thanks to our Editor, Pradyuman Maheshwari, and the entire editorial team, who work tirelessly to deliver quality content on time, every time.



Vickram Sethi
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

seniors TODAY
Life & Times

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Learning Life's Lessons

"Today, if I have to answer what is my greatest accomplishment, I'd say it is my ability to overcome my paranoia about death and accepting that death is inevitable and there is nothing we can do about it," says Anu Aga to *Namita Shibad* in a heartfelt interview

Anu Aga is a very meticulous lady. She gives me the time for our meeting. 11.30 am at her office. In the next five minutes her assistant calls and confirms. She even gives me a detailed address. The next day her assistant calls again to let me know that she will meet me at 11.45 instead of 11.30. Wow! I think to myself. No Indian Stretchable Time here.

Her office is on the topmost floor. All neat, spic and span. A cool calm pervades the space, much like the lady. I knock and enter. She gets up to greet me with a hug. Feels good. There is warmth too in the calm. As we settle down, she points out to her feet. "See what I've done." I look down. She's wearing one leather slipper on her left foot and on the right, she has worn the left side of a rubber slipper! I burst out laughing. But before I can realise that it's impolite, she too has a hearty laugh. "I was wondering what's wrong with my feet till

I noticed this." she says, still laughing. But can you walk with the wrong slipper? "Well, I will have to manage till I get home. I have never done something like this, it looks like I'm getting old."



As a child

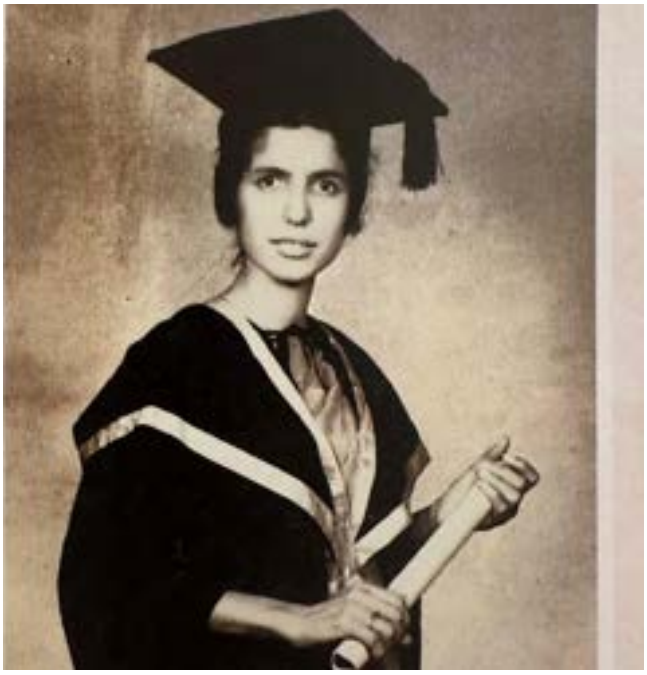
Anu starts her interview by walking down memory lane. "I was the youngest of three siblings, the older two were my brothers. My father would always tell my brothers that they would have to take over the business. Not even once he said that to me. In those days, I had never known a woman heading a company and I assumed it was only men who were heads of corporates!!

My father was not happy with Parsis aping the British by learning English well but not being good at their mother tongue. He was willing to experiment with me and sent me to a bilingual school where Gujarati and English were being taught. I went to Wadia Vachha School at Dadar, with the result that I was not fluent in English nor Gujarati. Since I had good



With her parents and brothers

people skills and was very active in the Social Service League of St Xavier's where I did my B. A. I joined TISS to become a social worker and came first in both the years.



At her graduation from TISS

Anu recalls how when she went to Xavier's College her not being familiar with English idioms at times caused her embarrassment. At a party someone remarked "Farida lost her shirt" and I said "but she wasn't wearing a shirt, how did she lose it? "In those early days I did feel small, but soon came to terms with it. As I grew up, I realised that one should never let language or the colour of your skin define you as a person. But sadly, we were still carrying the British legacy of English and 'fair' being something superior.

When I married my husband Rohinton who was extremely erudite, having studied at Cambridge, never made me feel small or gave importance to knowing English well" Though it has been decades since she lost him, Anu remembers the love and respect the two of them shared. "We met because he was my older brother's best friend. My

brother who wanted to migrate to the US asked my father to interview Rohinton to join the business, since he knew how capable Rohinton was".



At her marriage with Rohinton in Mumbai

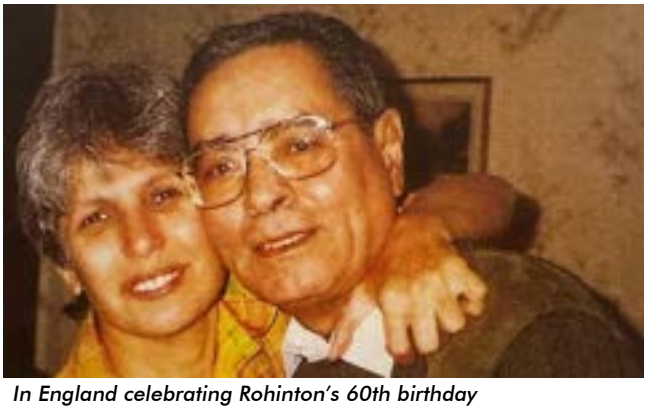
"I was studying at TISS and his house was just behind the college. I'd visit him at times for dinner. His father, who was a wonderful person and was blind had a great sense of humour and would tell me- "she came to have dinner, but ate up my son." Soon Anu and Rohinton were married. Her younger brother took over the business of sterilising medical equipment and her father along with Rohinton set up the business of manufacturing boilers. They started a new life in Pune.



In England for Meher's graduation with the family including her mother

"In those days I was completely petrified of death. If we were driving to Mumbai on the old highway and someone even spoke of death casually, I would make them stop the car near a tree and touch wood. My fear of death was unbelievable. But later I realised that even if I carried a forest with me, I cannot change my destiny."

"At the age of 60, Rohinton died of a massive heart attack. On the third day, the Thermax Board asked me to be the Executive Chairperson. I was not at all ready to assume this responsibility and as I was terrible with things technical and finance and missed my husband terribly. For years I had heard of a Buddhist Meditation Programme called Vipassana. It was residential where for 10 days you were not allowed to talk, read or distract yourself in any way. You had to go within yourself and I discovered that death is inevitable for every human being and hence cannot be called a tragedy. Tragedy is when we do not invest and get along with the living who we care for. I also realised that constantly comparing myself with my late husband and feeling small and inadequate was a meaningless game. I had to give out my best".



In England celebrating Rohinton's 60th birthday

"Today if I have to answer what is my greatest accomplishment, I'd say it is my ability to overcome my paranoia about death and accepting that death is inevitable

and there is nothing we can do about it. This great realisation helped me to cope with the death of my son Kurush in a car accident 14 months after the death of Rohinton. He was 25 years old with his entire life ahead of him... Vipassana has helped me to not only accept death as inevitable but to take life with equanimity. So far I have attended 4 Vipassana programmes and meditate daily for about an hour".

"In 1999-2000 for the first time, Thermax made an operational loss. As the Chairperson it was my responsibility to make it profitable. We engaged a consulting company and with their help took many tough decisions. For example, during my husband's time there was a practise that if a senior executive consistently did well, he was asked to join the board. But when our performance went down it was difficult for the executive who was on the board to objectively evaluate his own performance. The consultant suggested that the Board should have Independent Directors and I I had to ask the 9 executive directors to resign from the board. Be it said to their credit not one of them resigned from the company.e it said to their credit not one of them resigned. My daughter Meher and her husband Pheroz were heads of businesses and were on the board. They were upset with me for asking them to choose. They decided to be on the Board and gave up their executive roles. But today they think it is the best decision for the company and for themselves".

Anu handpicked all the new independent directors. "Since I was active at CII, I knew many people and I on-boarded them as independent directors with one mandate. They should clearly and fearlessly give the family feedback when we are wrong." The lady with the soft heart can use an iron fist when the need arises.

While she was at the helm, Anu put out a 'fatwa'. No corruption will be tolerated. Over time, people understood and now even our customers, vendors tell us that our company is clean".

The other thing Anu was very particular about was safety. "Though people pay a customary nod to issues of safety, not much is really done. I insisted that we have safety measures for not just our own employees, but even the contract workers at site. We employed many safety officers, trained everyone and reviewed our safety record at each board meeting. Our safety record has greatly improved.

Anu decided to retire at 61 and the board selected Meher to take over as the Chairperson. Anu believes that Meher being a Chemical Engineer from Imperial College, and having a very good grasp of finance and having imbibed the family values, is far suited as the Chairperson.

Why did Anu decide to retire at 61, her reply was: "I was a caretaker Chairperson and having accomplished the turnaround of Thermax, I felt like retiring and spending more time with social work. I am very involved with the NGOs Akanksha, Teach For India and more recently, The Circle – all involved in the education sector. My



With Pheroz and Meher

days are full even though I have retired.

Being from the HR background, I wanted to retire because all employees of Thermax retire at 60. I also did not want to disgrace myself by holding on to my position (as I have seen many men staying on beyond their 70s and 80s) while their younger family members are waiting for the "older men to retire".

It has been more than two decades since Anu retired and handed over the baton to her daughter Meher. She enjoys time with her favourite NGOs, travelling, reading and spending time with family and friends because she likes to nurture relationships that matter to her. She adds "in any case I need more than 3 hours each day to meditate, walk and exercise".



With her grandchildren Zahaan and Lea



With her students of Akanksha

She does not believe in repenting or feeling guilty when someone close to her dies because she did not give them enough time. "My daughter lives close by and we meet very often. My grandson is 30 and my grand-daughter is 26 and I enjoy spending time with them".



With her pet dog

Of course, there are times when she does not have a very busy agenda but Anu likes time for self-reflection and being by herself. "One must learn to be comfortable with oneself". I am often alone but never lonely. I have lost five close friends and my brother and I have accepted their death. I at times wonder what it must be like after death. Is the body discarded and the soul wanders or comes back as rebirth? Do we meet our loved ones? She says that she is not petrified of dying but hopes that she should not suffer and that death should be quick and easy. She does not need to touch wood any more.

Life's lessons have been learnt well.


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The Joys of Retirement

Retirement isn't a full stop. It's a semicolon. It's a shift in rhythm, a chance to downshift from the frenzied sprint of deadlines into the gentle hum of living, writes *Harsh Goenka*

Retirement. The word sounds like a pause, doesn't it? A dignified slowing down, a polite stepping away from the boardroom. But let me share a secret—retirement isn't a full stop. It's a semicolon. It's a shift in rhythm, a chance to downshift from the frenzied sprint of deadlines into the gentle hum of living.

For decades, many of us have lived life dictated by the clock—meetings to attend, emergencies to solve, decisions to make. Your wristwatch has likely been a constant companion, and your mobile phone your clingiest adversary. There may have been success, yes, but the luxury of time was always elusive.

Let's get one thing out of the way first: no one in India truly retires. We simply downshift from "boss" to "senior advisor," from "chief decision maker" to "friendly uncle." Your email signature may shorten, but your WhatsApp messages will likely grow longer. Retirement isn't an exit; it's a gentle reinvention. You may leave the stage, but you'll linger in the wings, whispering unsolicited wisdom from the sidelines.

Coffee Tastes Better at 9 am

The first joy of retirement is deceptively simple: coffee. Not the variety you gulp down between calls, but the kind you sip slowly, while watching the sunlight stretch across the balcony. Imagine waking up at 6 a.m., ready to dive into emails and strategy decks—only to find there are no crises, no red flags. Just silence. The calendar stares

back—blank. Initially terrifying. And then... liberating. Without the tyranny of schedules, you begin to notice things: birds arguing over breadcrumbs, your spouse's smirk at the morning headlines, the neighbour's dog holding a loud press conference with the pigeons. You stop measuring time by deals closed or meetings held, and begin tracking it by the ripeness of mangoes or the length of your morning walk. Your Fitbit no longer serves as an electronic guilt trip—it becomes a friendly co-conspirator on your unhurried adventures. Try identifying cloud shapes one morning. You may even spot one that looks like a boardroom table—and another like your old assistant chasing a deadline. The imagination, long buried under Excel sheets, slowly begins to bloom again.

The Delicious Joy of Being Useless

After a career built on being indispensable, retirement offers an unexpected pleasure: becoming gloriously useless. No one's waiting for your approval on a budget or your signature on a deal. You can offer advice that everyone ignores, and smile serenely as the next generation discovers the same problems you solved decades ago—except now with more apps and far less patience. You're no longer the pillar holding up the roof—you're the porch, where stories are told and laughter lingers. And porches, unlike pillars, are allowed to lean back, crack jokes, and snooze at will. It's also oddly satisfying to decline invitations to long meetings. "Sorry, I'm booked for a siesta." Try saying that with a straight face.





New Jobs, Better Pay (in Joy)

Retirement isn't the end of work—it's the beginning of choice. Consider taking on a portfolio of high-impact, zero-pay roles: unpaid food critic (with strong opinions), reluctant philosopher (with questionable logic), and full-time grandparent (arguably the most rewarding job of all). Why not join a painting class? One might paint what they believe is a serene lake, only to be told by the instructor it resembles a pizza. A promising future in abstract art awaits. Read books not to quote at conferences but to get lost in the story. Listen to music without dissecting the lyrics. Try yoga—though your joints may suggest that 'savasan' is what you should be attempting.

Reconnection—The Lost and Found of Retirement

In the mad dash of corporate life, we often lose people. Not out of neglect, but sheer velocity. Friends become "will call him next week" names on your contact list. Retirement hands you the gift of time—and with it, the ability to reconnect. Write a postcard—yes, a real one—to an old college roommate. Call up a school friend whose laugh you still remember and spend hours talking about nothing and everything. These aren't "strategic connections."

They're people who remember your worst haircut, your college canteen food habits, and your dreams before you learned the term "EBITDA." Reconnecting with them is like finding forgotten treasures in the attic—messy, dusty, but full of gold. And sometimes, you make new friends—at the park, in the lift, or at your grandkid's school play. Friendship, it turns out, doesn't retire.

The Lost Art of Wasting Time

Retirement teaches that "doing nothing" is a very important something. You may discover poetry in staring at stars. You might take slow, scenic drives with no destination. You could nap because the couch looked particularly inviting. You might even forget where you've kept your phone. Your children panic. You smile. They call it absent-mindedness. You call it peace. Watch a line of ants march up a wall for 20 full minutes. In your previous life, you'd have stepped on them. Now, you might admire their discipline. Spend a morning debating the origin of a mysterious birdcall with a neighbour. Conclude, after tea and biscuits, that it was either a koel or a lost ringtone.

From Control to Contribution

For those who've run companies, retirement is often seen as letting go. But it's not about giving up control—it's about shifting focus. Succession isn't a formality—it's a philosophy. The most graceful exits are those where your successor has been nurtured, mentored, and encouraged to walk their own path. You don't step away to disappear—you step back to let others rise. When done with grace, succession becomes a beautiful act of generosity.



Reinvention Is the Real Retirement

Retirement isn't an escape from relevance—it's a redefinition of it. The most fulfilled retirees are those who reinvent themselves, who remain curious, open, and adaptable. Learn something new—be it AI from your grandchildren or the correct usage of Instagram Reels (though beware, you might go viral for the wrong reasons). Curiosity keeps you alive far longer than cholesterol charts. Start a podcast, join a philosophy group, take a cooking class and destroy a few pans. Reinvention isn't about making headlines—it's about discovering new passions without needing a LinkedIn endorsement. Meet a friend who has taken up pottery, another who writes haiku, and a third who swears by bird-watching. None of them were artists or poets or ornithologists in their previous lives—but retirement gave them the license to try.

Becoming Yourself Again

Retirement offers a rare invitation—to meet yourself again. For years, we're shaped by roles—leader, executive, provider, strategist. But who were you before all that? Retirement gives you the space to answer that question. Pull out a dusty journal started in your 20s. You might discover you still haven't written Chapter One of that novel you swore you'd complete. Start now—you finally

have time. Time to write, to travel, to get bored, to be surprised. Time to have a conversation with no objective. Time to play—not for trophies, but for joy. Sometimes, just sit on the swing and let the breeze do the talking. There's something deeply satisfying in listening to silence, a sound we all forgot to appreciate.



A Gentle Turn Inward—The Joy of Faith and Spirituality

In the whirlwind of ambition and achievement, the inner life often takes a backseat. Retirement, however, quietly nudges us toward rediscovery—not just of hobbies, but of the soul. Without the daily clamour of boardrooms and deadlines, many find themselves drawn to stillness. To early morning chants, to temple bells, to the serenity of church prayers or the silence of a meditation session. Faith, once a ritual, becomes a conversation. Spirituality, once scheduled around convenience, becomes a companion. Whether it's reading the Gita with fresh eyes, joining a satsang, or simply watching the sunrise while whispering a silent thank-you—retirement brings a gentle realisation: that peace isn't out there in the world; it has always been waiting quietly within.

And in this stillness, we finally find what decades of noise could not—ourselves.





Sixty, Sparkly & (still) Sexy!

The truth is, we are not past it... we are in it, writes *Vickram Sethi*

Human attraction is a fascinating blend of physical chemistry, emotional resonance and psychological cues. What turns one person on may leave another completely indifferent—or worse, turned off. Whether you're navigating the dating world, building a long-term relationship, or just curious about what makes people tick, understanding the biggest turn-ons and turn-offs can be both enlightening and empowering.

As we grow older, our preferences and sensitivities evolve. What once thrilled us in our 20s may no longer hold the same charm, and what once seemed insignificant might now carry deep meaning. For seniors, the concept of attraction and repulsion extends far beyond the physical—emotional connection, shared values, and simple gestures often take centre stage.

A 'turn-on' is anything—behavioural, physical, emotional, or mental—that creates a sense of attraction or excitement in another person. Turn-ons can be sexual, romantic, or simply a trigger for deep admiration and connection. While turn-ons are subjective, there are certain traits that a wide majority of people consistently find appealing. Right from being physically attractive, subtle aftershave, neat hair, a clean look and fresh breath to having a sense of humour, the ability

to make the other person laugh and hold their attention. Knowing oneself without flaunting it is a turn-on. Furthermore, the ability to express themselves without drama, being excited about what they are doing, being kind in a way that is consistent and genuine—not performative. Being nice isn't boring, it's sexy.



Sex, of course, is a great turn-on. Besides that, being able to hold eye contact, having communication skills, and being able to actively listen is essential for making a connection. A playful attitude can make things fun, adventurous and less predictable, whether in bed or on a picnic. Playfulness and spontaneity are great qualities.

Make no mistake, sex is nature's biggest turn-on. The joy of sex helps us procreate, and every species — whether human or otherwise — has its own methods of attracting a mate. It's interesting to see how a male bird goes through an entire ritual to attract a female. He will dance, whistle, flap his wings, show off his plumage, and even build a nest — and yet the female is not necessarily impressed or willing. Science has still not fully figured out what trigger's attraction between males and females, or between males and males, and similarly between females and females. Whether it's the X and Y chromosomes or a problem in the medulla oblongata remains unclear.



Just because we have turned 60—and maybe forget where we left our glasses—doesn't mean we have lost our sparkle or our standards. Far from it, we are better experienced and have more knowledge about everything worth our while. Once upon a time, we may have been swayed by a handsome face or a cheeky wink, or we could dance all night without putting our back out. But now, attraction is a different kettle of fish. So, what actually floats our boat or makes us want to run a mile? Sit back, get your coffee, and let's explore the delightful world of senior turn-ons and turn-offs with the right dose of chic and charm.

A great laugh, a wicked sense of humour, the ability to talk about the absurdities of life (dirty jokes). Great conversations, someone who listens to you without interruption or checking their mobile phone. Someone who actually listens—and a bit of back and forth—is great fun. What also impresses us is kindness in the form of simple things that never go out of fashion ("please" and "thank you"). Genuine friendship can warm up quicker than a cup of Horlicks when you're feeling cold. Being reliable is a great quality; honesty is deeply attractive when you have lived through a few decades' ups and downs.

What turns us off

Being spoken down to... not understanding technology, and there is an upstart telling

you you're not doing it correctly. They forget that you taught them how to hold a fork and a knife or even taught them to tie their own shoelaces. Now give us our moments. We have earned them. It is irritating when you are rushed while speaking. Even more annoying is when someone is more engaged with their mobile than with you while you are talking. There is no eye contact, and they are staring at their phone as if it holds the meaning of life.

We recognise empty compliments, when the butter is thicker than the slice. Cut out the negative conversations because the negativity just grows. One doesn't want to chat with someone who starts telling you what is wrong with the world today. At this stage of life, we are not impressed by fast cars, gym memberships, or how many steps you walked this morning. We are drawn to people who make us feel seen, heard and respected. We want warmth, not wildness. We want presence, not pretense. Friendship, companionship—and for some of us—even a bit of romance. It's not about fireworks; it's about flickers. The gentle, lasting glow you get from someone who just gets you—that's a turn-on.



The truth is, we are not past it. We are in it. And whether we are looking for friends, partners or a little romp in the hay (even if it comes with a backache), or maybe just pleasant conversation—we know what we want and can recognise a good soul when we meet one. Over the years, we have understood turn-ons and turn-offs. It's not about changing who you are to please someone else, but recognising behaviours and traits that enhance or harm emotional and romantic connections. We have understood that attraction isn't just physical—it's emotional, intellectual, and psychological.



Indian society does not take very kindly to a senior person having any romantic feelings. That is because Hindi movies often portray a senior person as a lecherous villain. Although Hindi movies, have shown romances and attractions between older male and younger females. In the movie Chini Kum an elderly Amitabh Bachhan falls in love with a young Tabu. Similarly, in Jogger's Park, an elderly Victor Banerjee falls in love with a much younger Perizaad Zorabian. In Ek Nayi Paheli, Hema Malini falls in love with a younger Kamal Haasan. Indian society still accepts an older man having a relationship with a younger woman, whereas for an older woman even to desire a younger male is a strict taboo. You have these young upstarts passing comments such as "Buddha abhi bhi tharki hai." They forget that one day they too will become 'buddhas'. So, the next time someone says, "Aren't you a bit old for all that?", feel free to tell them: "No sweetheart, I am finally old enough to know what I actually want."

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SIP the Joy of Life

Image courtesy: iamjayakumars.medium.com

More importantly, investing in systematic inner peace, which I would term as SIP 2.0, day in and day out and not just periodically, is crucial to be able to enjoy the wealth you create, advises *Nagesh Alai*

'SIP kiya kya' could well be a buzz word or a tag line amongst the extant 85 million demat account holders in India who contribute to the kitty that ratchet up our Sensex. They may constitute just about 6.50% of our population, but are the movers and shakers and darlings of our stock markets, keeping our indices on a permanent high like no drug or intoxicant can. At the end of fiscal 1993, a few years after the economic liberation was set in motion in 1990, the AUM (assets under management by mutual funds) was about Rs. 47,000 crores. The SIP (systematic investment plan) AUM as of today stands at about Rs. 15 odd lakh crores and make up for about 21% of the total mutual fund industry AUM. June 2025 alone saw a SIP inflow of Rs. 27,269 crores, the highest thus far. The previous fiscal 24-25 had seen an average monthly SIP inflow of Rs. 25,000 crores. That's indeed an exhilarating ride over 30+ years.

The Indian stock markets are now no longer controlled by the heart attack inducing exuberant inflows or erratic outflows of FIIs and other institutional investors, as was the case in the past. The spade work and ground work of the famed, but now extinct, Unit Trust of India, prior to the 1990s and later snowballed in 1993 by the pioneering Kothari Pioneer has taken deep roots indeed. Today there are about 45 asset management companies (AMC), most belonging to well reputed financial power houses, managing this humungous wealth, under the close scrutiny and oversight of SEBI, the

industry watch dog. Smart and persistent messaging by the industry, harnessing a mindset of insecurity and fear about the future, as also the mission to evangelise financial prudence, has ensured increasing investors participation. The never-ending joy ride may seem surreal, yet is very real, notwithstanding the yawning social and wealth disparities and the concentration of the wealth in the hands of just a few amongst billions.



Image courtesy: static.hdfcsky.com

So, has this wealth creation and elevation of our economic status and higher development levels made our people happier than what they were in the past? In 1990, unlike today, there was no formalised global happiness findings or rankings. Most studies were contoured around metrics like per capita GDP, human development index, level of poverty, etc. At that time, it would be safe to say that our per capita GDP was very low, our human development index lower, more than 50% of our population was below the poverty line and life expectancy would have been around 58 – 60 years. In 2012, when the first world happiness report was published, India ranked 144th amongst 150 countries surveyed; in 2024, it was still low at 126 amongst 143 countries and in 2025, it was placed at 118 out of 147 countries. Improved rankings somewhat, but it hides the continuing plight of the bulk of our population who are still impoverished. Higher per capita GDP or human development index could be beguiling and a convenient hiding of the reality of the stress and distress in life faced by many, impossible to count. The stark behavioural changes in people impact the social fabric and family kinship and manifest in ways that are hard to digest and harder to understand, going by some cruel instances that hit the headlines recently. Not that such heart-rending news have not grabbed the headlines in the past nor are they likely to stop in the future.

An old frail woman, suffering from a skin infection, groaning in pain, was recently found dumped in a huge pile of garbage in a suburb of Mumbai. She was brought to the attention of the police who were kind enough to take her to a nearby charitable hospice to have her cleaned up and sheltered. Apparently, her son did not want the headache of looking after the person who gave him life. Up north, a father, a teacher by profession, in a fit of anger, kills his daughter because she secured poor marks in her exams. A budding life cut short by the burden of unreal expectations. Another father, in Gurugram, who had lost out in his small business, shoots dead his 25 years old daughter, who had made it to the national level in lawn tennis and was running a training academy to create future aces and chart out an independent path of herself. A youngster kills his grandmother because she refused to give him money for a new cell phone. Farmer suicides and student suicides are routine as are killings and murders and molestation by jilted lovers and are too vast in numbers to mention. Property disputes and business fall-outs leading to rancour, hate and snuffing out of lives are no less in numbers. Loneliness, depression, competition and

technology led job derivations, misplaced zeal and a whole galore of other reasons have sieved the social fabric by and large and have led to brutalities at random. Even seasoned counsellors and psychiatrists will find it hard to navigate the mental web and maze of the deviants to fully understand the causative factors.

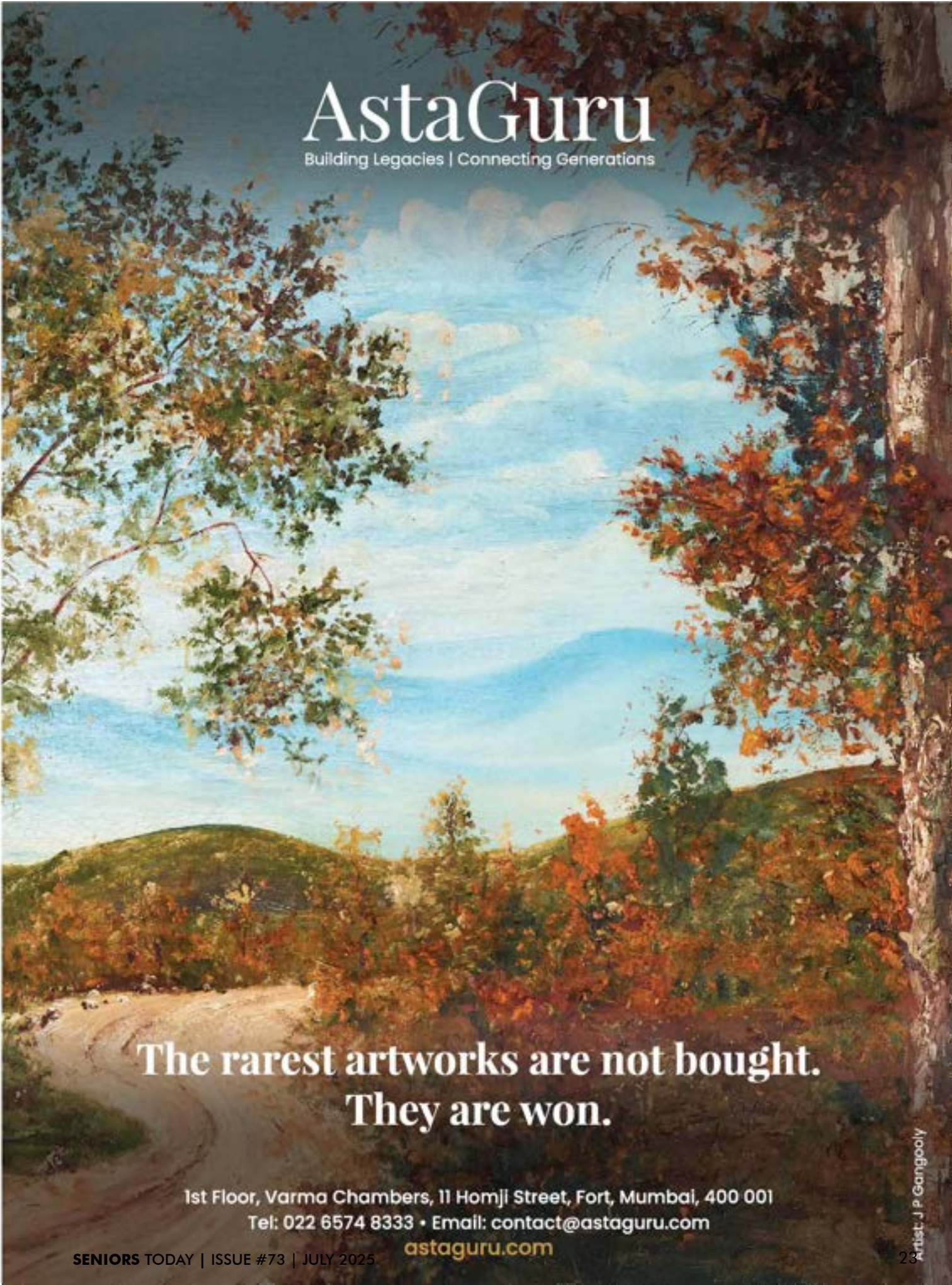


Image courtesy: careme.health

One of the key reasons could be the break down of the family structure itself which made for mutuality of support and security and a cocoon of warmth and interdependency in times of travails, turmoil and torment. The urban push towards nuclear families was just the beginning. The joint family roof was seen as too small a canopy for the multiple leaves and branches of the family leading to separation of kith and kin all left alone to face the vicissitudes and vagaries of life and living. People ignored the reality of the benefits of the family sitting together for a meal. Married children move out on the pretext of privacy and independence, but when a child arrives, they are all at sea and want their parents to support child rearing. Soon, cooking of food at home stopped. It has been outsourced to cloud kitchens and private enterprises. Cooking at home is not merely about food, but about the love that goes into its making. It is about keeping the family connected with affection and is central to our family culture. The aroma and taste of my mother's cooking, till well into my late-twenties living under the same roof, still leaves me pining and wanting, years after her passing to cook for the divine. Importantly, home cooked food ensured our good health and satisfaction with life. A home without a kitchen soon becomes a house of walls no different than a hostel or a hotel. Visitations to family and friends, as and when one felt like, is not possible today; one needs to check on availability and convenience in advance. Over time, separations and single living have become a norm. Live-ins are increasing at the expense of marital commitments. In this ethos, it is hard to find a shoulder to cry on or a heart to unburden. We speak about our ancient civilization and enduring cultures, but the collapse of the family here is as severe as in many parts of the western world. Clearly, the foundation of a family, a home has weakened inexorably leading to reduced well-being, insecurity of mind, inability to face challenges, mental and physical abuse and other abnormalities of behaviours that become headlines in papers, but became taglines in life.

Wealth creation is good for everyone, undoubtedly. SIP is a conduit for that. But more importantly investing in systematic inner peace, which I would term as SIP 2.0, day in and day out and not just periodically, is crucial to be able to enjoy the wealth you create. If you wish to SIP the joy of life, you need to bask in the family. The return of happiness will be multi fold.




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In Every Home, a Story Waiting to be Told

We are all storytellers living in a network of stories, writes *Vandana Kanoria*

Every family has a story to tell.
Stories lie nestled within the taste of our mothers' cooking.
They turn up unexpectedly in old sepia toned photographs.
Sometimes they whisper, sometimes they shout,
They bind us together in shared experiences and memories.

In every culture, storytelling has been an intrinsic part of human communication. From ancient myths etched on cave walls, to modern-day novels and podcasts, movies, television shows and commercials that grab us with product stories, all are but different ways of storytelling. Most great songs are stories.

Our memories overflow with tales of first loves, second chances, lessons learned, we chuckle about funny moments. We shake our heads at the things we can't believe we did or said.

We tell stories for countless reasons: to delight and disarm, to comfort and teach, to keep our pasts and those who lived in them, alive. In the enchanting world of childhood, storytelling for kids holds a special place, despite intrusions of the internet and social media. Family narratives serve as a bridge between generations. They preserve and celebrate a family's unique story. Grandparents, more than anyone else, are the keepers of family stories - their magic and mystery are all about hearing the voice of loved ones.

Every event in the lives of our grandparents is a story - they never simply got up and went to school, the journey was an epic adventure; the pranks they played on strict ogre like teachers and assorted relatives, how they skipped school and how they had the most imaginative reasons for doing so! And most importantly, how did they live with no Instagram and email, only one TV channel and a rotary phone?

One can see, through their eyes major historical events unfold. The freedom movement, partition, the patriotic fervour – these are all stories we grew up with - they inspire and transform. They give young people a sense of who they are in profound ways.



"If you want your children to be intelligent," Albert Einstein once remarked, "read them fairytales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairytales."

The love of all things magical is often sparked by fairy tales, legends from Epics and Puranas. I think every child is enthralled by tales of Krishna and Hanuman, as they are by Pariyon ki Kahania and Akbar Birbal stories. The elders are repositories of myths, folk tales and fairytales, which, Pullman says, "loosen the chains of the imagination. They give you things to think with – images to think with – and the sense that all kinds of things are possible." These stories transport children to distant lands, with fascinating characters. We all loved Rapunzel's golden hair coming down from the tower, the little girl in a red cape chased by the wolf, giants who live on beanstalks, dwarves, monsters, wishing trees, princes on flying horses and princesses asleep for a hundred years... ...

These words of magic and enchantment, help keep alive our sense of wonder. We learn to accept and respect the 'other' - the world of our elders that shaped them - so different from our own; the strange worlds that exist in myths and fairytales, develop a more compassionate attitude to those who are so different from us. With each word spoken and every tale woven, storytelling weaves a magical tapestry that captivates, turning young people into future storytellers. Stories have shapes, as Vonnegut believed, and they in turn give shape to our lives.



When you open an old a leather-bound family album, memories slip softly from the pages – and that is all it takes to begin telling a story. Pictures save little pieces of life, and "are powerful storytellers, silent yet eloquent. They are time capsules, holding within them the essence of moments that once were, and in some ways, will always be." How a beloved grandfather looked on his wedding day, the naughty smile of your mother as a seven-year-old, family groups wearing strange clothes and posing stiffly in front of the camera. Sepia toned, and yellowing, black and white photos add a layer of immediacy and intensity to stories. They evoke emotions – sometimes tenderness and sometimes much laughter, and are visual aids, propelling the story forward and burnishing faded memories.



Sensory experience of food serves as a link to the past, weaving together narratives of our families, cultures, and traditions. It has the power to connect us to our roots, to our loved ones. A powerful vehicle for familial bonding, nothing makes enchanting stories quite like food. The kitchen becomes a place where stories are born, nurtured and sent forth in the world. It might be a tale of how the dish was created, a funny anecdote about a cooking mishap that passes, much embroidered, into the vast family storehouse of tales, and evokes much mirth upon retelling. The grease-stained, handwritten recipes in a beloved grandmother's frayed notebook, conjures up tales of eccentric great aunts with peculiar preferences; of uncles who presided over large cauldrons of aromatic sizzling dal during family picnics.

Each recipe handed down through the generations carries with it a piece of our family's history. Sharing these stories at the table enriches - turning meals into exciting tales of journeys through time and memory.



"Stories are threads that weave us together. They turn moments into meaning and give our lives colour, depth and connection."

We are all storytellers living in a network of stories.

Stories grow, sometimes they shrink and sometimes inspire other stories. With each retelling they mutate and morph. Some parts are sharpened and elaborately embroidered, others dropped and erased, and there is often a debate about what really happened leading to more stories...

They are like nuggets of gold in family's treasure chest, eternally filled with precious tales by successive generations. The richest families are those in which the stories have been remembered, preserved, told and retold.

When my kids are grandparents, I want them to have rich stories of happy childhoods. I want them to not only talk about the Lego cities they built, the books they loved, the endless moments of mischief and fun, but also all about their struggles and tears because there is a world of stories in each of us and they beg to be told.



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Dressing up, Dressing down



Gouri Dange grades a distinction between seniors' wardrobe styles. Are you Group S or G?

Dressing up, Dressing down

"I grow old ... I grow old ... I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled," said T S Eliot in The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock. The significance of this declaration or lamentation was completely lost on us BA/MA English students circa 1982, some of us trying sincerely to walk in these long-ago poets' shoes, and some of us just waiting to exit the lecture hall for our daily wada-pav at the tree canteen.

Now, firmly in our sixties, this rolled-bottom reference to what you wear as you age sounds more relatable. One can see that Seniors are clearly divided, visually, into two different categories: those who dress well even for the early morning yoga class, or breakfast at home, or a visit to the bank, or out for a meal. And those who simply will not bother.

The seniors who believe in dressing well at all times are easily identifiable. They can be seen in ironed clothes, matching and well-selected upper and lower garments, a touch of make up perhaps, good footwear, a bit of jewellery with the women, a small bag with their essentials. The men of this group are bathed and clean-shaven, or have trimmed face hair in whatever configuration they choose to wear it – mousch, or mousch + beard, or goatee, eyebrows not allowed to turn into millipedes. They have clean lenses in their glasses, with frames that are not from baba-aadam-ka-zamaana; their toenails are trimmed and their footwear is in some unobtrusive but neat stage of its life. Let's call these people Group S (S for Spiffy).

At the other end of the spectrum are one

bunch of seniors who, after having dressed formally and appropriately and correctly and obediently for decades, to suit their jobs, to suit their social status, to suit their family commitments, have now decided to dress just simply as they wish. Which may not be unkempt and unhygienic at all, but certainly does not involve spending more than five minutes in thinking of what to wear.

The hand opens the cupboard, pulls out something from a pile that has slightly toppled and thereby lost some of its ironed look. Or they select from a pile that has come out of the washing machine and been, at the most, smoothed down and folded. Their yoga and walking clothes are completely unmatched – not shabby maybe, but definitely not the stuff worn by elegant elderly in the advertisements for various Senior activities and facilities. The down-dressers, both men and women, can be loyal and ardent members of the Grunge Club. Let's call them Group G.

For those of Group G who take their retirement really seriously, this dressing down has become such a comfort zone, that invitations to weddings and other occasions are met with an inward groan and an outward clever excuse to not go. After all, who amongst them wants to dress up, and that too in some colour dictated by an event planner who wants you to be part of the larger artistic vision of the occasion? "I refuse to be an overpainted Extra in anyone's kid's shaadi videos, please," is the thought that drives them. Perversely, at times, they may possess many silks and suits and ties from their enforced dressing-well days. But those are either being given away systematically, or are entombed and moth-balled in a less-used cupboard or in trunks.

Luckily, for a sense of balance in the universe, there are Group S Seniors who provide the cut-colour-clarity-carat that brings sparkle and elegance to the vision of growing old gracefully. And Group G is left alone, to lounge about in baggy clothes, and proudly compare with their fellow-slouchers, how many years they have owned and worn their happily unremarkable wardrobe.

Yin and Yang, both shall prevail.

As for myself, I am usually firmly in Group G, but make occasional stabs at clambering into Group S.





91 Not Out! Celebrating Chandu Borde's Lifelong Innings

Photo credit: Anand Chaini

Chandrakant 'Chandu' Borde is the youngest among India's living nonagenarian Test cricketers. *Ayaz Memon* writes on the journey from a gritty middle-order hero to a wise cricketing statesman

Chandrakant Gulabrao 'Chandu' Borde, who turns 91 on July 21, is the fourth and second-youngest living nonagenarian Indian Test cricketer. Others in this unique quintet are Chingleput Doraikannu Gopinath (95), Chandrakant Trimbak Patankar (94) and the redoubtable Nariman Jamshedji 'Nari' Contractor, who turned 91 on March 7 this year. Leg-spinner Vaman Viswanath Kumar turned 90 on June 22.

The list of oldest living Test cricketers is currently headed by 96-year-old Neil Harvey, the stylish top-order left-hand batsman who was part of Don Bradman's team that played against Lala Amarnath's side that toured Australia in 1947-48. This was independent India's first cricket assignment. Harvey also toured India in 1956 and 1959-60.

Gopinath, the oldest Indian nonagenarian cricketer, was a stylish middle-order batsman from Chennai, making an impressive unbeaten 50 on Test debut against England at the Brabourne Stadium in 1951-52. He never quite lived up to the early promise and faded away after playing eight Tests.

Patankar, a wicketkeeper-batsman born in Pen, represented Maharashtra and Mumbai in domestic cricket and made a solitary Test appearance for India, against New Zealand at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata in 1955.

Kumar, who played for Madras/Tamil

Nadu, was a leg-spinner and took five wickets in his debut Test against Pakistan in 1961. While he played in the first class format from 1955 to 1977, he wore the India cap in just two Tests.



Image courtesy of madrasmusings.com

CD Gopinath – Our oldest cricketer



Image courtesy of static.toiimg.com

Patankar – Our second oldest cricketer

Nari Contractor, born in Godhra, has lived almost his entire life in Mumbai – at Rustom Baug in Colaba – but represented Gujarat and Railways in domestic cricket, primarily as an opening batsman.

More significantly, he played for India in 31 Tests, captaining in 12 of these – five v England, five v Pakistan, two v West Indies. Under his captaincy, India beat



Image courtesy of s-i.ihgim.com

VV Kumar turned 90 this year

Ted Dexter's England team 2-0 at home and drew all five Tests in a tense series against Pakistan in 1961-62.

Contractor batted left-handed and possessed sound technique and temperament. He led a fairly strong Indian team to the Caribbean in 1962 but could play in only two Tests before being felled by a vicious Charlie Griffith bouncer at Barbados.

This brought his flowering career to a sudden end in 1962. India were forced to find a new captain, and the mantle fell on 21-year-old Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, heralding the start of a new era in Indian cricket.

The impact of the season ball on his temple had brought Contractor to the brink of death. Timely medical aid, including receiving a blood transfusion from rival captain Sir Frank Worrell, prayers of fans and divine benediction saw Contractor not only survive, but be an active participant in India's cricket affairs in ensuing decades.

Contractor's grievous injury and subsequent recovery make for one of the most poignant and remarkable stories, not

just in Indian cricket, but the history of the sport.

He could never make it back into the Indian Test team, but after retiring, dedicated himself to administration, as national selector for a spell, and as conscience-keeper.



Image courtesy of cricktracker.com

Contractor turned 91 this year



Image courtesy of espncricinfo.com

Borde, 91, is the most accomplished of the nonagenarian quintet

Of the Indian nonagenarian quintet, Borde is the most accomplished in terms of achievements. He played 55 Tests over a decade after his debut in 1958-59, scoring 3,061 runs with five centuries and bagging 52 wickets bowling leg-spin. He was also a brilliant fielder.

A Roman Catholic like his venerated predecessor Vijay Samuel Hazare, Borde showed fantastic all-round skills from a very young age to catch the attention of selectors.

Hazare was a top-order batsman with impeccable technique and a penchant for high scores, who also bowled smart medium-pace swing and seam. He is best remembered for making centuries in both innings of the Adelaide Test in 1947-48, a feat that was emulated by Virat Kohli in 2014-15.

Hazare was born in Sangli, played for Maharashtra, Baroda and Central India in domestic cricket.

Borde, born in Pune, played most of his cricket for Maharashtra and briefly for Baroda. He gave up bowling after back problems dogged him, concentrating on batting, and after Polly Umrigar's retirement in 1962, was India's mainstay in the top order. Sound in defence, and with a vast repertoire of attacking strokes, he was particularly good against fast bowling, one area in which Indian cricket had traditionally been found wanting.

Borde captained India in only one Test, at Melbourne against Australia in the first match of the 1967-68 series when Pataudi was injured. Many believed he should have been given the captaincy after Umrigar had shown reluctance to accept the post after Contractor was bounced out of the sport by Griffith in the West Indies.

But the selectors preferred Pataudi, and Borde spent the rest of his playing career as the Nawab's deputy. In 1969, after India lost to Bill Lawry's Australian team in the first Test at Bombay, Borde called time on his international career.

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Borde holds a special place in my association with cricket. My journey with the sport starts in the 1964-65 season when Australia were touring India under Bob

Simpson. India had lost the first Test at Madras. The second was at the Brabourne Stadium. I was lucky to get a ticket to the Islam Gymkhana stand courtesy of a relative.

I was 9, initiated into cricket in the past couple of years. My first heroes, Pataudi and M L Jaisimha, and Graham McKenzie and Norman O'Neill were to feature in the match. It was a dream come true.

I remember the match vividly. It was a taut match which swung one way, then the other, leading to a pulsating climax on the last day. When India, chasing 255 to win, lost their eighth wicket (Pataudi) at 224, it seemed all over bar the shouting. With only the tail remaining, Australia looked likely winners.

The one specialist batsman still in the middle was Borde. He had batted steadily, showing no nerves or panic, picking up runs without undue risk. Borde was now the focus of attention of all spectators, egging him on to do the unexpected. In Inderjit Singh, Borde found a plucky ally. Between them, the pair eked out the runs in a nail-biting finish. India won with two wickets to spare. The crowd went berserk. I had found a new hero.

Borde was to be India's batting hero again in the second match that I saw. The mighty West Indies led by Sir Gary Sobers were touring. The first Test was at Brabourne Stadium. Against the formidable attack featuring the dreaded pace duo Hall and Griffith, with Sobers, Gibbs and Holford in support, India's batting was under immense pressure very early, losing three wickets for a mere 14. In that situation, Borde came out to play one of the finest counter-attacking knocks seen, smacking 121 with 15 fours.

By this time, Borde had climbed many more notches in my estimation. By the end of the series, after notching up another century (125) at Madras, he had become my favourite Indian batsman.



Indian Cricket's Greats

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I got to know Borde personally, a year or two into my career writing on cricket. Sharad Kotnis, my first editor at Sportsweek magazine where I cut my teeth, once sent me on assignment to Pune to interview Professor D.B. Deodhar, popular then as the Grand Old Man of Indian cricket, and celebrated coach Kamal Bhandarkar, who had at one stage assisted Sunil Gavaskar with his game. "And while you are in Pune, also meet Chandu Borde," said Kotnis. "He will make you see cricket in a new light."

I was somewhat sceptical, but after meeting Borde, I realised that Kotnis was not being extravagant in his praise. The couple of hours I spent with Borde opened up new dimensions about playing cricket, both in the technical sense and the mental aptitude needed.

Over the next few decades, Borde was somehow at several significant inflection points in Indian cricket, and much sought out by the media.

For instance, he chaired the selection committee which picked the 1983 World Cup winning squad under Kapil Dev. It was largely on his insistence, as Kapil affirmed, that the Indian squad was packed with fast-bowling all-rounders like Mohinder Amarnath, Madan Lal and Roger Binny, apart from the captain himself. "His knowledge of English conditions helped make this decision," Kapil acknowledges.

Things didn't quite go in Kapil's favour a year-and-a-half later when the selection committee, which included Borde, dropped the star all-rounder for playing a rash stroke in the Delhi Test. The third Test at Kolkata is the only one which Kapil missed in a stellar career. Borde says he was one of five selectors that took the decision which still invites criticism and controversy.

In 1989, Borde was manager of the Indian team which toured Pakistan under Krishnamachari Srikkanth. The youngest member of the team was 16-year-old prodigy Sachin Tendulkar. He took the task of mentoring and nurturing Tendulkar to heart. When the youngster was found sleepwalking, Borde, afraid that he might hurt himself more than anything, gave up his single room to sleep with Tendulkar and keep him under close watch, so to speak.

In 2007, when Greg Chappell gave up his post as chief coach of India, the BCCI leaned on Borde to take his place and assist skipper Rahul Dravid. India won the Test series after 21 barren years. Pertinently, India haven't won a series in England since.

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Ever since I got to know Borde personally, I've kept the association intact and often leaned on him to understand issues and affairs pertaining to the sport. Over the



Photo credit: Anand Chaini

A decorated career

40-45 years I have known him first hand, what's impressed me most about Borde is how he's kept in tune with changes in cricket's ethos, technique, trends. While he's aged in years, he retains an inquiring mind, curious about new developments and new players.

I've moderated a few sessions involving him over the years and have admired his clarity of thought, his candour, and utter absence of bitterness. He is not one of those who says or thinks that the past was splendid and the present is unfulfilling.

"This attitude, taking each day as it comes, wanting to learn new things, is what keeps me going," says Borde.

Of modest habits – he eats frugally, has the occasional glass of wine – what he enjoys most is his physical regimen. Till a decade back I remember he would be at the Poona Club, perambulating the cricket oval for a couple of hours. With advancing years, he's cut down on the distance, but not on the frequency: he's on his walk diligently, every morning.

"Every step is a challenge, in exercise, advanced sport or life. It gives me lofty thoughts," he says. "Walking clears up my mind of any negativity, fills it with lofty thoughts."

What better state of mind to be in?



Morocco's Potent Beauty Stokes Your Senses

All photos by Urvi Piramal

"Some journeys begin long before the plane lands—stitched together by the places you imagine, the silence between cities, and the feeling that something unknown is waiting to unfold." *Urvi Piramal* weaves us along on her ethereal Morrocan sojourn

Our journey to Morocco began with a long flight from Mumbai to Casablanca via Istanbul—a crossing of continents that mirrored the cultural intersections we were about to witness.

After landing in Casablanca, we drove to Rabat for a restful overnight stay-waking up to a city that felt elegant and understated, with wide boulevards and whispers of French influence.

During our time in Rabat, we explored a fascinating mix of history and modernity. We began at the iconic Hassan Tower, the unfinished minaret of a grand mosque built in the 12th century and which still commands attention.



Hassan Tower - the minaret of the unfinished mosque in Rabat

Across from Hassan Tower, the Mausoleum of Mohammed V impressed us with its intricate white marble structure and green tiled roof. This is also a revered place as it is the resting place of the king and his two sons.



Mausoleum of Mohammed V – Rabat

From there, we wandered into the Kasbah of the Udayas, a peaceful blue-and-white quarter perched above the Bou Regreg river, offering stunning views and a sense of timeless charm.

Glimpses of the Kasbah Udayas



Kasbah of the Udayas



Door of a building in Kasbah of the Udayas



Kasbah of the Udayas



Kasbah of the Udayas

Tucked inside the historic Kasbah of the Udayas, the Andalusian Gardens in Rabat are a peaceful, beautifully laid-out space inspired by Moorish design. Created during the French Protectorate, the gardens are filled with orange and pomegranate trees, palms, fragrant herbs, and glimpses of the Bou Regreg river beyond, it's a quiet escape that feels both intimate and timeless – a lovely contrast to the energy of the city just outside.



Andalusian Gardens inside the Kasbah Udayas



Gate Almohad Palace



Andalusian Garden inside the Kasbah Udayas



Andalusian Garden inside the Kasbah Udayas

A striking contrast awaited us at the Grand Theatre of Rabat, a gleaming architectural marvel shaped like the head of a serpent. Sleek, bold, and futuristic, it felt like a symbol of Morocco's forward-looking spirit – an elegant fusion of culture, creativity, and cutting-edge design.



Grand Theatre at Rabat

After exploring Rabat, under a soft spring sky, we started our journey north.

By late afternoon, we were heading toward Tangier, where the Mediterranean breeze and the rhythm of the sea marked our Moroccan adventure.

Tangier: At the Edge of Two Worlds

In Tangier, Morocco reveals one of its most striking landscapes—where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Strait of Gibraltar in a dramatic clash of waters. At Cape Spartel, the northernmost point of mainland Africa, we stood by the historic lighthouse atop Jebel Quebir, watching the coastline fade into mist and myth.



Cape Spartel



Cape Spartel – Timeless view



Cape Spartel



Where Atlantic kisses the Mediterranean - Cape Spartel

A short drive took us to the mysterious Caves of Hercules, a natural grotto steeped in myth and mystery. Legend has it that Hercules rested here after separating Africa from Europe. The cave's silhouette, which resembles the shape of the African continent when viewed from the sea, adds a mystical element to this natural marvel. The wind was so strong, that the spray of the water flew against the waves.



The Caves of Hercules is an archaeological cave complex located in Cape Spartel, Morocco



The Caves of Hercules

Lunch was a luxurious pause before we wandered through the Kasbah district, browsing traditional handicrafts in the old medina's quiet alleys. Our final stop offered a view of a majestic minaret rising above the sea, a poetic farewell from a city that stands between continents and centuries.

Wandering the winding soul of the city – the Medina



Kasbah district - Medina



Shops at Old Medina



Kasbah district - Medina



Decorative work at Merdina



Kasbah district - Medina

A Tapestry in Stone and Tile

Moroccan architecture is a feast for the eyes—ornate, geometric, and deeply symbolic. Influenced by Berber, Arab, Moorish, and Andalusian styles, it balances grandeur with intimacy. You'll find sweeping horseshoe arches, intricately carved cedarwood ceilings, keyhole doorways, and tranquil inner courtyards called riads, often built around a central fountain or orange tree.

Perhaps most captivating of all is the traditional mosaic art known as Zellige - a painstaking process, handed down through generations. Each piece is chipped and shaped by hand and then assembled like a puzzle. This art adorns fountains, mosque courtyards and palace walls. The patterns are never figurative, in keeping with Islamic traditions, but they feel alive: kaleidoscopic, rhythmic, and mesmerizing.



Restoring beauty of Zellige -one tile at a time



Zellige

The next day we headed to Marrakesh, stopping on our way to see the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca.

Hassan II Mosque: Faith Etched in Stone and Sea



Hassan II Mosque



Hassan II Mosque



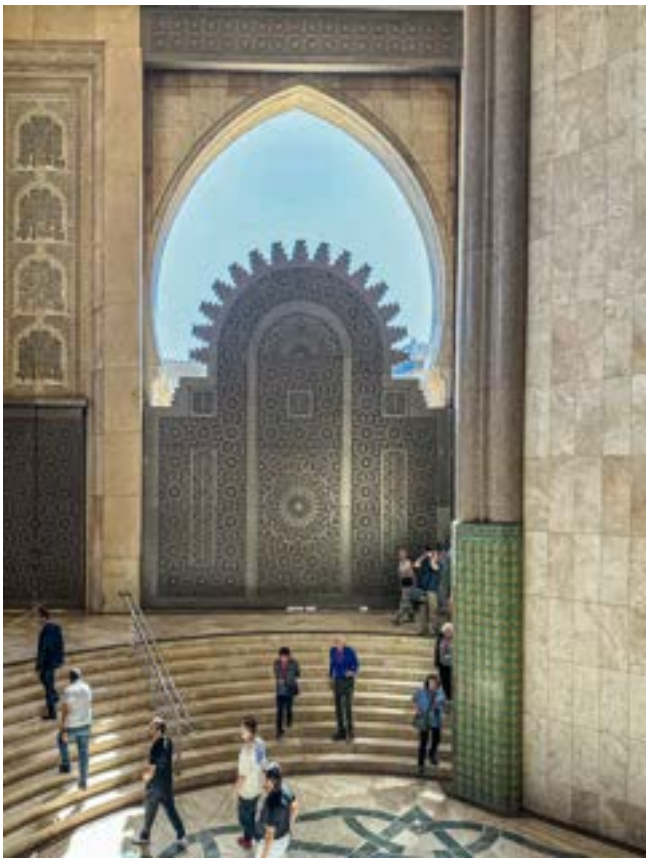
Hassan II Mosque



Hassan II Mosque



Hassan II Mosque



Hassan II Mosque



Hassan II Mosque



Hassan II Mosque

Standing on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean in Casablanca, the Hassan II Mosque is more than just a religious site—it is a triumph of vision, craftsmanship, and spiritual grace. With the tallest minaret in Africa, rising 210 meters into the sky, and its prayer hall partially built over the sea, the mosque feels as if it's suspended between earth, water, and the heavens.

Commissioned by King Hassan II and inaugurated in 1993, it brings together Morocco's most skilled artisans—woodworkers, plaster carvers, zellige masters—to create a structure that is both monumental and meticulous. The interiors are a symphony of marble, hand-carved cedar from the Middle Atlas, and stunning mosaic tile work that captures light and shadow in intricate patterns.

As a visitor, I felt a deep sense of calm the moment I stepped inside. The scale is humbling—the vast prayer hall can hold up to 25,000 worshippers and the courtyard another 80,000 —but it never feels overwhelming. Instead, it invites stillness. The ocean breeze drifts in gently through arched windows, and the grandeur, while awe-inspiring, carries a softness that allows for quiet reflection.

For me, the Hassan II Mosque wasn't just an architectural marvel—it was a moment of pause. Of being reminded that beauty, faith, and human endeavor can come together in perfect harmony.

Marrakesh: The Pearl of the South

A city of color, rhythm, and history, Marrakesh—often called the Pearl of the South—offered a day steeped in imperial grandeur and vibrant street life. Founded in the 11th century by the Almoravids, it still pulses with the energy of centuries past. We began at the Koutoubia Mosque where its 12th-century minaret rose 77 meters into the sky, a timeless symbol of Almohad architecture.



Koutoubia Mosque

At the Bahia Palace, intricate ceilings and peaceful courtyards revealed the elegance of 19th-century Islamic design. The day unfolded in the souk's bustling alleys, alive with colors, spices, and craftsmanship, before spilling into the heart of the city—Jemaa el-Fnaa, where snake charmers, storytellers, and street performers turned the square into a living theatre. Marrakesh is not just seen—it's felt.



Elegance etched in every arch - the grace of Bahia Palace



Bahia Palace



Bahia Palace



Bahia Palace



Bahia Palace



A burst of colour and aroma - heaps of spices that capture the soul of Morocoo in every shade



Colour, scent and stories behind every spice, a woman's touch

Into the Atlas: A Day Among Valleys and Villages



A Poetry of God's creation

Our 4x4 journey into the Atlas Mountains unfolded through the peaceful valleys of Asni and Ouirgane, where terraced fields, olive groves, and Berber villages seemed to blend seamlessly into the hills. Known as the "happy valley," Ouirgane lived up to its name with its quiet beauty and striking greenery.



Berber Village - Atlas



Down the Atlas, the old way still lives

Feeling the crisp mountain air in the gardens of Domaine de la Roseraie we enjoyed a well-deserved tea break.

We then arrived at the stunning Kasbah Tamadot, a retreat owned by Richard Branson, where Moroccan elegance meets global charm. To our surprise we found the interiors decorated with Indian artifacts, giving the place a warm, familiar energy.



Where the mountains meet magic - Kasbah Tamadot



Laxmiji adorning the gate at Kamadot



Laxmiji adorning the gate at Kamadot



Indian Dwarpal Statues placed at the entrance

As we sat down to lunch on the terrace, we looked out at villages dotted along the slopes, their whitewashed walls gleaming in the sun. To our delight, Richard Branson himself walked around greeting each table—a gracious host in a setting that felt both luxurious and intimate.



Overlooking a Berber village at lunch

Heritage in Marrakesh

Our final day in Marrakesh unfolded like a love letter to Moroccan culture, creativity, and elegance.



Where cobalt dreams bloom

We began at the iconic Jardin Majorelle, where cobalt blue walls, exotic plants, and still pools created a peaceful escape from the city's rhythm. Tucked within the garden is the intimate Berber Museum, which offered a fascinating glimpse into the artistry and traditions of Morocco's oldest indigenous people. Carefully curated by Pierre Bergé and Yves Saint Laurent, its 600 artifacts—from jewelry and textiles to ceremonial objects—celebrated the spirit and diversity of Berber (Amazigh) life, from the Rif Mountains to the Sahara.



Jardin Majorelle

We continued to the Yves Saint Laurent Museum, a sleek tribute to the designer who found deep inspiration in Morocco. His sketches, couture pieces, and personal memorabilia brought his story to life, and reminded us of how deeply Marrakesh had shaped his creative world.

Rhythms of Spirit and Celebration

Throughout our journey, Morocco revealed not just its landscapes and architecture, but its living, breathing traditions. One evening, we were treated to a captivating performance of belly dancing, where music, movement, and expression came together in a celebration of femininity and storytelling. The dancer's graceful rhythms echoed the sensual energy of the land—fluid, powerful, and alive.



Rhythm

In contrast, we also witnessed the serene, hypnotic motions of the whirling dervishes—a spiritual practice rooted in Sufi tradition. As they spun in long, flowing robes, their movements seemed to transcend time, drawing the viewer into a space between prayer and poetry. Together, these two performances—one grounded in earthly joy, the other in spiritual ascent—offered a moving glimpse into the depth and duality of Moroccan culture.



Folk dance – Morocco

Across mountains, medina and souks – the human tapestry of Morocco











Final Reflections

Morocco isn't a place you simply visit. It's a place that invites you in—through scent and song, silence and spice, pattern and prayer. It's in the call of the muezzin at dusk, the chatter in the souks, the warmth of strangers, and the lingering taste of mint tea. From the windswept cliffs of Tangier to the serene snow-capped Atlas Mountains, from ancient ruins to rose-scented palaces, the country leaves you fuller than when you arrived.

What remains long after the journey ends is a sense of wonder—a feeling that Morocco is still unfolding, quietly, somewhere in your memory.



Lights, Camera, Introspection

Known to fans as 'Jumping Jack' or 'Mr White Shoes', veteran actor Jeetendra opens up to *S Ramachandran* about a lifetime of fame, sacrifice and finding peace with his family today.

At 83, Jeetendra reflects on his extraordinary path from a Mumbai chawl to iconic stardom, sharing candid memories of triumphs, regrets and the everyday joys that sustain him now.

A prominent figure in Indian cinema, Jeetendra's journey in acting commenced with the 1964 film Geet Gaya Patharon Ne. His breakthrough arrived in 1967 with Farz, catapulting him to widespread recognition. His dynamic on-screen presence in numerous Hindi films earned him the moniker "Jumping Jack." Throughout the late 1960s and extending into the 1980s, he consistently featured in highly successful Indian movies, including Jeene Ki Raah, Khilona, Caravan, Bidaai, Udhar Ka Sindur, Dharam Veer, Swarg Narak, Jaani Dushman, Aasha, Meri Aawaz Suno, Farz Aur Kanoon, Himmatwala, Tohfa, Maqsad, Swarag Se Sunder, Khudgarz, and Thanedaar. Beyond commercial hits, he also delivered critically praised performances in films like Boond Jo Ban Gayee Moti, Mere Huzoor, Dharti Kahe Pukar Ke, Humjoli, Parichay, Khushboo, Kinara, Priyatama, Lok Parlok, Takkar, Jyoti, Pyaasa Sawan, and Sanjog. In the early 2000s, he ventured into production, establishing Balaji Motion Pictures with his daughter Ekta Kapoor at the helm,

which grew to become a leading production house in Hindi cinema.



In Parichay

"Time has just flown by, I don't know how," Jeetendra begins the conversation, a sense of contentment in his voice stemming from the huge body of work and the fact that his kids are settled at work and grandchildren too are in place. He savours the newfound freedom that comes with age. "Now I am no longer a slave to the clock. I wake up when I like. I go to sleep when I want, not having to worry about shooting schedules the next day." For the veteran actor, this autonomy is "very liberating." His days are now filled with precious moments, primarily spent with his grandchildren. Yet, the spark for acting remains: "As far as work is concerned I am still open to good offers."

But then a poignant note enters the conversation as Jeetendra touches upon the sacrifices made during his career's peak. His prolific work in Southern films meant immense time away from his children, Ekta and Tusshar. With a visible sigh, he admits, "It is true. I don't remember anything about Ekta and Tusshar's growing years. I don't remember playing with them, being with them, attending their school functions."

He recounts a common scenario: "Whenever my two children had a holiday, I'd make them fly down to my shooting to be with me. But that's no way to bring up children." This deep-seated regret remains "the one missing link in my life." However, his grandchildren now offer a chance for solace and a sense of "reliving Ekta and Tusshar's childhood."



With daughter Ekta Kapoor

Despite the missed years, Jeetendra beams with pride when discussing his children's accomplishments. "Both Tusshar and Ekta have done well for themselves," he states. He particularly marvels at Ekta's drive. "Ekta works so hard. She reminds me of what I used to be. She produces TV serials and films; she has also stepped into the digital space. I sometimes wonder how she manages all these things."

Yet, there's one force potent enough to bring all their professional endeavors to a halt. "Only my grandchildren can do



In Farz

that," Jeetendra says with a happy smile, underscoring the central role family now plays in his life and has become a farz of sorts for him.

Farz also is the pivotal moment in his career. "It changed the course of my career," he declares. Before its release, he felt he was "just thrashing around, trying to find a place for myself."

He shares an intriguing anecdote: "Do you know every major star of the 1960s said no to Farz? I am thankful to each one of them. I was probably the last choice." The film was shot on a tight budget, with a memorable schedule in Ooty where four songs were filmed, including the iconic "Mast Baharon Ka Main Aashiq" and "Happy Birthday To Sunita."

While acknowledging the "fantastic" original Telugu version starring Krishna and Jayalalitha, Jeetendra humbly adds, "But Babita and I were not bad either." He takes particular satisfaction in the enduring popularity of one song: "The song Happy Birthday to Sunita is played at every birthday party to this day." With a happy chuckle, he asserts, "The credit for bringing the Indian James Bond to Hindi cinema goes to me." That perhaps is the rare off moment when he indulges in self praise.

But then, the actor's roots are what keeps him even grounded today. Jeetendra fondly recalls his formative years, the first two decades of his life spent in a Girgaon chawl, which profoundly shaped him. "Mujhe aisa lagta hai ki jo meri parvarish, jo sanskaar... Maa-baap ne toh diye hi, par aapke mahaul se bhi aapko bahut sanskaar milte hai," he explains, emphasising the significant role surroundings play in upbringing and values. "I am a typical Maharashtrian in habits, language and everything. I became a hero because I could speak Marathi very well."

He describes those days as the "best" of his life, remembering a close-knit community of "80 families" in the four-story chawl, bound by "a lot of love." Neighbors could always rely on one another, even for simple things like "tea leaves or other supplies." He vividly recalls, "Jab mere ghar mein pankha laga, sab building ke log dekhne ko aaye," adding that his house was also the first to get tubelights – simple luxuries that brought the entire community together.

Jeetendra spent 18 years in that chawl. "While I lived in this small chawl, there was always sufficient amount of love," he shares, reflecting that those "was the greatest time in my life." He also shares a fascinating detail about his first break: "I was an extra actor, junior artist, I got my first break because V Shantaram found it so hilarious that me being a Punjabi guy spoke such clear Marathi." Having moved to Bombay from Amritsar at just 15 days old, he proudly declares, "I am more Maharashtrian than anything else."

The Heroine's Body Double and Early Struggles

An amusing, yet telling, anecdote emerges when asked about a period where he reportedly played a heroine's body double. "Yes... now you think, I am a junior artist in the picture 'Sehra' and have to do Chamchagiri of Shantaram ji, I am ready to do anything," he laughs.

He elaborates on the situation: "So duplicate was not found in Bikaner. You will not believe that I played a duplicate of Sandhya ji. In those days, clothes were also like that and Shantaram ji was an authentic filmmaker and neither made me an authentic girl." Despite his disappointment,

Jeetendra was determined to remain in Shantaram's film.

He recounts a moment of sternness from the legendary filmmaker: "We were shooting in Bikaner. Shantaram did not like delay. When I reached late for dinner, he got angry and asked me to go back. He told my make-up man not to dress me up the next day."

Determined, Jeetendra recalls, "I woke up at five in the morning and asked the makeup man to prepare me. When I went to V Shantaram's room crying, he was surprised to see my preparation, and then I made him happy with my work." This dedication earned him the role of Sandhya's body double. While the film was a hit, it didn't immediately benefit him. He appeared in the less successful 1964 film Geet Gaya Patharon, before Farz in 1967 finally propelled him to superstardom.



In Dharam Kanta

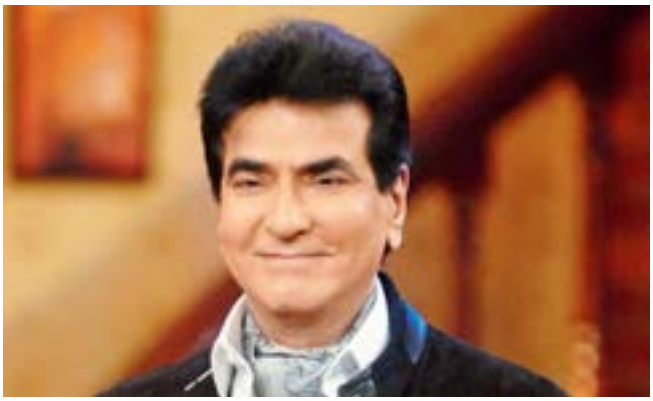


Image courtesy: abplive.com

On the sets of Indian Idol

Gudi Padwa Memories and Chawl Celebrations

With Gudi Padwa around the corner, Jeetendra's thoughts drift to childhood festivities. "Though it starts getting really hot after Holi, I'd wait for Gudi Padwa since early childhood," he reminisces, citing the "festivities and the food," including the season's first mangoes. He describes the elaborate, yet simple, meals as "heavenly compared to the lavish food these days."

A slight problem, however, always accompanied these delicious feasts. "There was a neem chutney served and none of us kids liked it," he chuckles. But the elders would insist it was necessary to truly enjoy the other delicacies like "the tasty yellow potato bhaji with puris, the varan bhaat with toop, the koshimbir and aamras/ mango shrikhand." Given the choice, the children would "just agree and gulp the chutney." He notes the working-class simplicity of those times: "No taam-jhaam like now. Even radios were rare and people went to small chai kiosks to hear them. It was a different time..."

Despite the camaraderie, conflicts were not uncommon. "Plenty! Mostly over water," he reveals about the chawl. "But these escalated as quickly as they dissipated." He explains that underlying the squabbles was a deep sense of mutual

dependence: “You knew, if you ran out of sugar/jeera the next day you’d still go to each other.” He fondly recalls the “drunken brawls at Holi” as particularly “entertaining for us kids,” often imitated by them in the absence of television.

A Punjabi in a Maharashtrian Milieu

Jeetendra explains his family’s journey from Amritsar to Mumbai. “I was born in Amritsar where the extended family were merchants but there was some fall out and my father Amarnathji brought us all to Bombay to start afresh.” His father’s imitation jewelry business “boomed.”

His life, he says, truly began to change then. He attended “Girgaum’s St. Sebastian’s School” and helped his father by “supplying imitation jewellery to the film industry.” Filmmaking legend V Shantaram was a client. “I’d courier the goods. The glitz and glamour of films was very attractive for a young boy my age.” He confesses to purposefully “hung around willing to do bit tasks or run errands so that I could avoid being home and studying which I hated...”

Interestingly, he shares a connection with another Bollywood icon: “Rajesh Khanna used to live in Thakurdawar and I stayed at Girgaum. We went to the same St. Sebastian high school.” While Khanna was “very fond of acting” and participated in dramas, Jeetendra’s path was less clear. “My father’s financial position was not that great. I was bad at studies. I didn’t know what to do in life. I could neither be a businessman as we had not enough money and I was bad so I didn’t know what job I could get.”

The Allure of Cinema: Beyond Money

When asked if he was paid for his early roles, Jeetendra’s response reveals his passion. “It never struck me. When asked to be a junior artiste in a crowd scene too, it felt so heady that money was the last thing on my mind.” For him, the basic necessity was a luxury: “The fact that there would be food was itself great!” Later, he earned “a princely Rs 5 a day.”



A star who still honours his roots

Festivals on Set and Enduring Influences

Even on film sets, festivals like Gudi Padwa were acknowledged through food. “The food would be in keeping with the festival,” he notes, often with “a distinct Kolhapur flavour since so many people in the company were from that region.” He credits this experience for his love of Maharashtrian delicacies: “My taste for modak, puran poli, shrikhand, basundi and narali bhaat have all come from there.”

He continues to visit his roots, returning to “Girgaum’s Shyam Sadan Chawl.” “For 22 years I went from adolescence to being an adult there,” he shares. “Every year, I unfailingly visit our chawl’s Ganpati pandal on the first day. It is a great reminder of my roots.”

The impact of Maharashtrians on his character is profound. “Maharashtrians are mostly tenacious, hardworking, fearless and so humble despite coming from a land of rich music, cinema, literature and culture,” he observes. “I imbibed those values which have stood me in good stead.”



With Rekha in Mother



With Randhir Kapoor, Rekha and Rakesh Roshan

Of Rekha and Sridevi

Jeetendra speaks with immense warmth about his long-time co-star, Rekha, who affectionately calls him "Ravya," his real name. "Rekha and I have done about 30 films together, some hits and some super hits," he notes, praising her "terrific acting skills and utmost professionalism."

He reiterates a past anecdote that exemplifies her generosity: "I remember once I had to solve some income tax problems. My chartered accountant told me that the officer in charge was a huge Rekha fan and would be only too happy to meet her."

Without hesitation, Rekha responded, "'No problem Ravya, I'll be there.'" He recalls her going "out of her way to be cordial with the officer" and even "served him snacks with her own hands." The result? "The fan boy was floored and my tax problems were all sorted." He poses a rhetorical question, "Now you tell me, who does that? Unless it's a true friend. There have been so many instances where she's just been there rock solid."



With Hema Malini in Kinara

Jeetendra also shares a fascinating detail about Sridevi's casting in Himmatwala. "One time me and Rekha were watching a Telugu film (which starred Sridevi). Rekha was supposed to play the female lead in Himmatwala at the time." He recalls Rekha repeatedly telling him, "'You should work with her.'" He assured her he would. "I think Rekha couldn't give her dates for Himmatwala and then the film's director K Raghavendra Rao said let's take Sridevi."

The Power of Healthy Choices

Now in his eighties, a "totally fit" Jeetendra offers valuable advice on well-being. He reveals that his health took a turn for the worse in his mid-fifties. "That was the time I stopped drinking, smoking and having tobacco. My life changed after that."

This personal transformation informs his message to others: "If others can stop their bad habits they will be fitter. Even youngsters will be fit if they give all this up early."



Sixty & The Senior Star

Image courtesy: thelookindia.com

***Deepa Gahlot* takes a look at a pick of stars, at the point when they crossed into senior status**

This year, three current superstars – Shahrukh Khan, Salman Khan and Aamir Khan—turn 60. Officially, they are now senior citizens. However, they are as spry as ever, doing tough action films, romancing younger leading ladies and dancing energetically on screen and on stage at various shows. The actresses they starred with in the past, like Madhuri Dixit, Juhi Chawla, Aishwarya Rai, Sushmita Sen, Preity Zinta, who are not yet 60, have to hunt for roles that suit their current ages, and star opposite older leading men. That has always been the case in the film industry; male stars have longer shelf lives. Dev Anand, for instance, was playing romantic leads well beyond the age of 60.

There are several stars who have crossed the age 60 barrier and are still active. But what were their careers looking like when they turned 60?

A look at a pick of stars, at the point when they crossed into senior status.

Dharmendra (Born 1935):



Image courtesy: bollywoodhungama.com

Not one to slow down, handsome as ever, and in keeping with his He Man image he did an astonishing number of films in the year he turned 60 – Policewala Gunda, Maidan-e-Jung, Aazmayish, Taaqat, Hum Sab Chor Hain, Fauji and Veer. As the titles indicate they are all action films. He didn't always have a romantic track though, and

the actresses he starred with in this era—like Reena Roy and Jaya Pradha—have long since retired.

Amitabh Bachchan (Born 1942):



Image courtesy: bollyy.com

The fittest and most active veteran star in India right now, in 2002, he did Vipul Shah's Aankhen, in which he played the mastermind of a bank heist, using blind men for the job, and was nominated for a Filmfare award for best supporting actor; in David Dhawan's Hum Kisise Kum Nahin, he played a psychiatrist to a goon and in Sanjay Gupta's Kaante, for which he was nominated for the best actor award, he played an Indian in the US, who plans a bank heist.

Jeetendra (Born 1942):



Image courtesy: english.punjabkesari.com

Never known to be a great actor, Jeetendra chugged along, however, doing action films and family dramas, with varying degrees of success. At one time he dominated the films that came out of Hyderabad's studios remaking their Telugu hits. What he brought to the screen that others of his time did not, was his dancing skills. The tight white trousers and white shoes became the style associated with him. When he turned 60, the roles were few and far between, and in 2002, he did not have a single release.

Sharmila Tagore (Born 1944):



Image courtesy: bollywoodhungama.com

She started her acting career with Satyajit Ray films, yet fitted right into the glamorous mould required of the Bollywood leading lady of the 1960s. She has just wowed audiences with her performances in films like Gulmohar and Purawtan, having aged gracefully like a true diva, 2004 was a blank in her filmography, though she never really gave up acting.

Hema Malini (Born 1948):



Image courtesy: news18.com

Many actresses before and after her, faded away or retired, the film industry's norm being to ignore women over 40. But Hema bucked the trend and continued to find age-appropriate roles, but much fewer in number than the leading men she starred with. In 2008, she did not have a single release, though before and after she did have films coming out.

Shabana Azmi (Born 1950):



Image courtesy: amarujala.com

With her formidable talent, retirement was just not on her agenda. She still continues to act in Indian and international films, with an occasional foray to the stage. In 2010, she did a British comedy, It's A Wonderful Afterlife, directed by Gurinder Chadha, in which she plays a mother keen on getting her daughter married and kills off the suitors who reject her. Then the spirits of her victims haunt her, and the plot gets crazier. Not one of the best in her filmography, but who'd imagine her as a serial killer.

Mithun Chakraborty (Born 1950):



Image courtesy: theindianeye.com

Once the most prolific action and dancing star, his entry into politics may have mellowed him. He acts in quite a few Bengali films now, and age has not dimmed his Disco Dancer charisma. When he turned 60, he did Bengali films Shukno Lanka (for which he won a Star Jalsa Award for best actor), Target: The Final Mission, and the Rohit Shetty comedy, Golmaal 3.

Naseeruddin Shah (Born 1950):

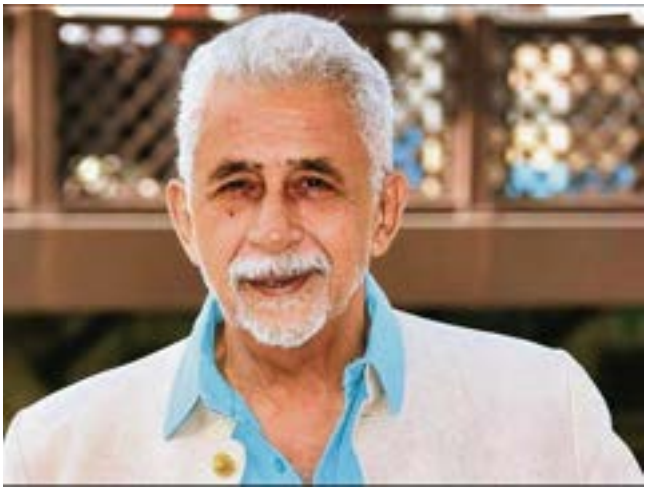


Image courtesy: thetribuneindia.co

Never in the rat race for typical Bollywood stardom, age never affected his career or his fan following among the discerning. His 60th year had an interesting mix of films from the offbeat to the potboiler—Peepli Live. Ishqiya. Raajneeti and Allah Ke Bandey—at least three of them memorable.

Rajinikanth (1950):



Image courtesy: telegu360.com

His superstardom is unprecedented. He continues to act in mostly successful films, and opposite increasingly young leading ladies. Age has never mattered to him, but after a point, he started doing fewer films, going for quality over quantity. At age 60, he acted in Enthiran, in the dual role of a scientist and a robot in S.Shankar's film, one of the most expensive made till then. Dubbed into several languages—including Hindi as Robot—the film was a blockbuster.

Rekha (Born 1954):
The eternally enigmatic star makes public appearances in full regalia, but she gradually faded out of acting, even though



Image courtesy: vogueindia.com

a film pops up now and then—nothing like the roles in her heyday though. At the age of 60, she did a sadly forgettable film, Super Nani, directed by Indra Kumar, in which she played Sharman Joshi's grandmother.



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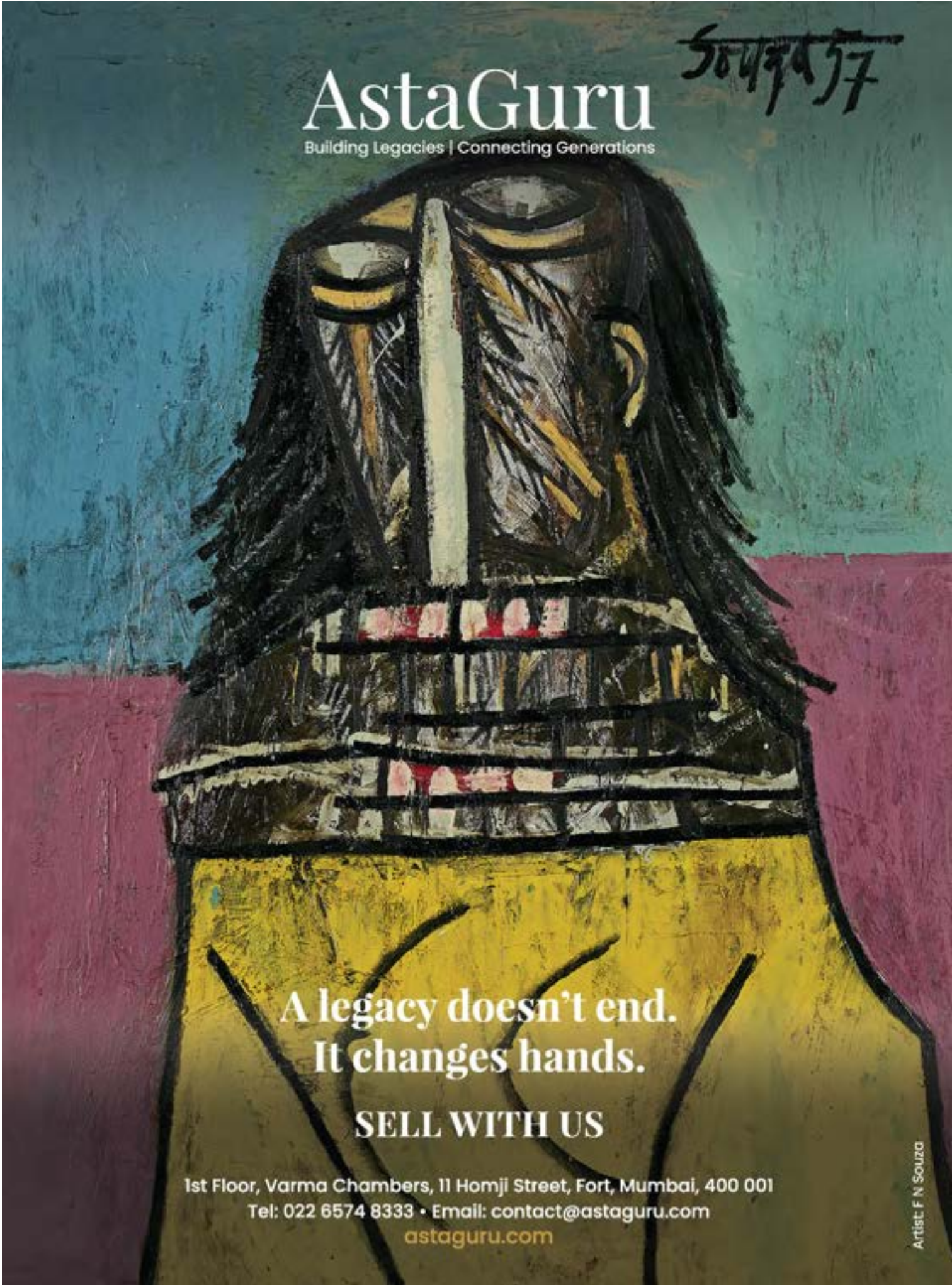
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