

seniors

TODAY

September 15, 2025 | Vol 7, No 3

Life & Times

Royal & Relevant

The Baroda Royals redefine nobility—not by grandeur,
but by grounded brilliance

+

Harsh Goenka: The Tyranny of the Mobile

Vickram Sethi: Of Parks, People & the Stray Dog Dilemma

Deepa Gahlot: Shabana Azmi @ 75

Alimentary | Health | Life Lessons

Don't Wait for an **Emergency** to Know **Your Heart**

Madhavbaug's Arogyam Hriday Sampada campaign brings you a **FREE Computerised Heart Stress Test**

- ✔ Detect problems before they become serious
- ✔ Know your heart's real strength
- ✔ Quick, painless & 100% free

Book Your Free Test Today

Because nothing deserves care more than your heart.

Give a missed call: 020 48 552 566

 Get Your Coupon Instantly On WhatsApp!



The Stray Debate

Walk down almost any street and you will notice them—ears pricked, eyes alert, tails sometimes wagging, sometimes tucked nervously under. Stray dogs are part of the urban landscape, living parallel lives to ours, often in the shadows. They stir up emotions like few other issues do. For some, they are symbols of loyalty and resilience, deserving of protection and compassion. For others, they represent fear, menace, and the neglect of civic order. Why does this subject strike so close to the heart, and why does it so often divide communities?

Many of us recall childhoods where dogs were not just pets but companions, protectors, and sometimes even healers of loneliness. A wagging tail at the end of the lane could brighten an otherwise dull day. On the other hand, some remember the terror of being chased by a snarling pack or the pain of a bite. Those formative experiences shape perceptions for life. Thus, the sight of a stray dog is never neutral—it conjures personal history, and with it, deep emotion.

One reason is that the issue of stray dogs is so emotionally charged that it forces us to confront uncomfortable truths. Stray dogs are not a natural phenomenon, they exist because of human neglect.

Unchecked breeding, poor waste management and inconsistent civic policies that create conditions in which strays multiply. Every barking dog at the street corner is a reminder of the failure of civic authorities. Stray dogs are a threat to young children, they wake you up in the middle of the night, howling away and public safety is a very valid concern. Children and the elderly are especially vulnerable to dog attacks.

The media with its power to amplify emotions often frames the discussion in extremes: either dogs are angels in disguise or lurking threats to human safety. Here we must take an example from the west where in a pet shop window there is a basket of little puppies which are to be given away free for adoption. This is the answer to the stray dog question is – you like the dog, take it home.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Vickram Seth".

Vickram Sethi

Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

Contents

September 15, 2025
Issue #75



Cover Story:
Royal & Relevant - 6

by Malti Gaekwad

Editorial & Business Office:

FGP Centre, Commercial Union House,
3rd floor, 9 Wallace Street, Fort,
Mumbai - 400 001.

Email - editorial: editor@seniorstoday.in

Email - advertising: sales@seniorstoday.in

Other Stories:

Reflections:

**Life Online: The Tyranny of the
Mobile - 14**

by Harsh Goenka

First Person:

**Of Parks, People & the
Stray Dog Dilemma - 17**

by Vickram Sethi

Alimentary:

**Heat of Health,
Beat of Hospital - 22**

by Nagesh Alai

Life Lessons:

**A Gentle Conversation about Life's
Inevitable Companion - 25**

by Udai Mathur

Health:

**The Best Foods for A Woman's
Intimate Well-Being - 28**

by Dr Anupama Santosh

Film:

Shabana Azmi @ 75 - 32

by Deepa Gahlot

Dr Anupama Santosh is a gold medallist Ayurveda consultant, as co-founder of Shreshtha Ayurvedic Center in Bengaluru, with over 24 years of dedicated experience in fertility and women's health



Malti Gaekwad is an artist at heart, graphic designer by profession and a well-known Public Relations practitioner based in Vadodara



Udai Mathur is a writer specialising on health and wellness



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



Harsh Goenka is Chairman of RPG Enterprises. Very active on Twitter, he is known for his inspirational, information and often humorous take on life and events. He tweets at @hvgoenka



Nagesh Alai is a management consultant, an independent director on company boards, and cofounder of a B2B enterprise tech startup. He can be reached at nageshalai@gmail.com





Royal & Relevant

The Baroda Royals are remarkably down to earth, highly social and approachable without any airs, yet outstanding in humility and persona, writes Malti Gaekwad

What do you normally associate with royalty? Sophisticated, aristocratic, elegant, charismatic, revered, educated, patronising... Well, the Baroda Royals are all these and much more. For one, they are remarkably down to earth, highly social and approachable without any airs, yet outstanding in humility and persona... simple yet radiant. Almost all the members are multi-talented, multifaceted and engaged in numerous social and educational activities.

They may be living in a heritage palace said to be the largest residential building, larger even than Buckingham Palace.

The Maharaja may be labelled the richest cricketer, or the Maharani the most cultured, beautiful, fashionable, talented, sensitive, popular and much more. Yet when you meet them, you do not see any of the trappings of royalty. They are celebrities in their own right, but without bodyguards or any pretensions.

To understand what they are today, we need to go a bit into history to see what makes them the way they are.

The Gaekwads of Baroda

The Gaekwads ruled Baroda in Gujarat from 1720 to 1949. The dynasty originally belonged to or rather originated in what is now the neighbouring state of Maharashtra, with Nandajirao Gaekwad. In 1721, the Gaekwads began their rule over Baroda after the brave Maratha warrior conquered the city from the

Mughal emperor. The city was granted as a jagir to the Gaekwad by Chhatrapati Shahu I, the head of the Maratha Confederacy.

Subsequent rulers included Pilajirao, Khanderao and Damaji Rao, who, with the help of the Peshwa, expelled the Mughals from Gujarat. The Gaekwads, along with other Maratha rulers, fought against the British. But in 1802, the British defended Anand Rao Gaekwad under a treaty which gave the Gaekwads autonomy in return for breaking away from the Maratha Confederacy and accepting British suzerainty. Until then, and for some years after, there was instability. The true rise of Baroda began with Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III.

Making of a Visionary – Sir Sayajirao Gaekwad III

Born near Nashik as Gopal Rao Gaekwad, he was not born into the Baroda royal family but was adopted by Maharani Jamanabai, the widowed consort of Maharaja Khanderao Gaekwad, ruler of Baroda, for want of a male heir. It is reported that the Maharani called upon various branches of the dynasty to present themselves and their sons in order to decide upon a successor. When asked the purpose of his visit, the 11-year-old Gopal Rao is believed to have replied, “I have come here to rule.” And rule he did.

Adopted in May 1875 and renamed Sayajirao III, he acceded to the throne as a minor and was extensively tutored in administration by Sir T. Madhav Rao, who guided and groomed the young prince with foresight and integrity.

In December 1881, at the age of 18, he was invested with full ruling powers. He reigned as Maharaja of Baroda between 1875 and 1939. Sayajirao III soon launched

path-breaking reforms: uplifting the weaker sections, educating his subjects, developing agriculture and industry (especially textiles), modernising the judicial system, banning child marriage, removing untouchability, advancing Sanskrit and religious studies, and encouraging fine and performing arts. He was the first Indian ruler to introduce free and compulsory primary education in a state.

During his reign, Baroda saw immense progress: schools, libraries, hospitals, public buildings, parks, gardens, museums, markets, and much more. He established the Bank of Baroda, created the first narrow-gauge railway line in India, and initiated water conservation, sewage and sanitation works.

He travelled the world to study and invited experts to bring the best to Baroda. It was under his patronage that Babasaheb Ambedkar, Dadabhai Naoroji (a Diwan in 1874), painter Raja Ravi Varma, and Sri Aurobindo flourished. In 1895, S B Talpade, with his support, flew an unmanned aircraft, eight years before the Wright brothers.

On his Diamond Jubilee, he set apart a large fund for establishing a university, a task ultimately fulfilled by his grandson, Sir Pratapsinhrao Gaekwad, who founded The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 1949.

When India attained independence in 1947, the last ruling Maharaja, Pratapsinhrao, acceded the Baroda throne to the Indian Union and merged the state with Bombay Province until 1960, when Maharashtra and Gujarat became separate states. Baroda had been one of the largest and wealthiest princely states of British India.

Maharaja Fatehsinhrao Gaekwad



Lt Maharaja Fatehsinh - the wildlife crusader

A staunch conservationist, Fatehsinhrao had a distinguished and multifaceted career. He was Chancellor of the Maharaja Sayajirao University, a respected politician, and Member of Parliament (he contested four Lok Sabha elections and won all of them). He also served as Chairman of the Board of Governors at the National Institute of Sports, was an avid cricketer who played Ranji Trophy, and managed the Indian cricket team's tours of England and Pakistan. He served as President of the BCCI from 1963 to 1966 and was awarded honorary life membership of the MCC.

A devoted animal lover, he promoted wildlife protection, played a key role in Project Tiger, and helped establish the Indian Society of Naturalists, the Wildlife Institute of India and WWF India. He contributed to saving Silent Valley, was involved in establishing Delhi Zoo, chaired the Indian Board of Wildlife Experts Committee on Zoos, and oversaw the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 and the

Forest Conservation Act of 1980.

Passionate about heritage, he authored *The Palaces of India* in 1980. Today, the Palace compound houses the Maharaja Fatehsinh Museum in his honour.

Dr Mrunalini Devi Pawar

She was the Maharani of Dhar, one of Maharaja Fatehsinhrao's five sisters. A renowned educator and nutritionist, with a PhD in food and nutrition, she continued the family's tradition of service through education.

She was a member and head of various committees of the Food and Nutrition Board, including international forums in Switzerland and France. She taught at the university before becoming its Chancellor in 1988, serving until her demise, probably the first Indian woman to be a Chancellor of a large university.

Maharaja Ranjitsinh Gaekwad



Maharaja Ranjitsinhji and Rajmataji

Unlike many royals for whom art was a pastime, Maharaja Ranjitsinh Gaekwad pursued it with academic rigour. He earned a Bachelor's and later a Master's degree from the Maharaja Sayajirao University, and studied at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, on a scholarship, earning a diploma in landscape painting.

He was an excellent portrait artist and vocalist. Though his royal duties and political career (he was MP for 10 years), took him away from art, he returned with renewed passion, holding exhibitions and experimenting with various media: watercolour, oil, ink, pastels, charcoal and printmaking. He was also a self-taught sculptor, commissioned in 2009 to create a metal sculpture titled 'Vessels of Life', during his fellowship at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Durham University.

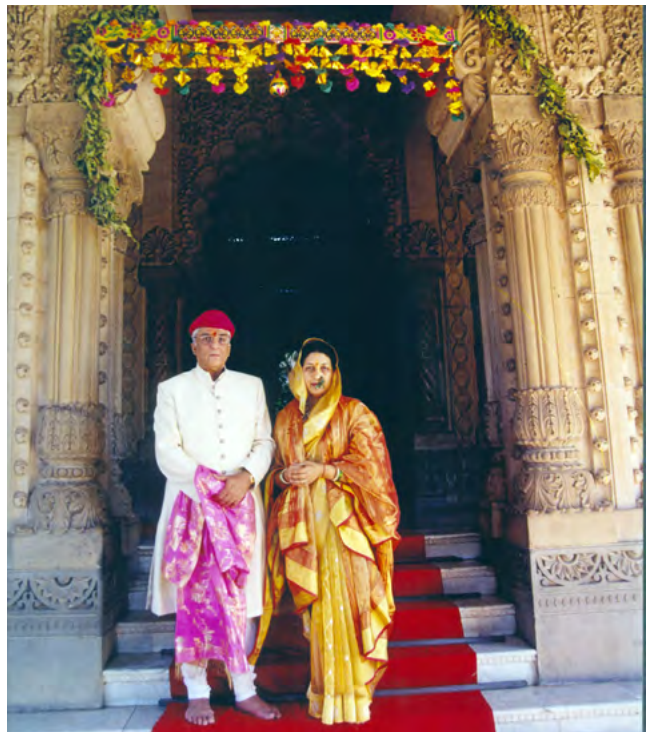


With his sculpture at Durham

His passion for cricket was equally strong; he represented both the Baroda University and Baroda Cricket Association in first-class cricket for many years. For the people of Baroda, it was a delight to see their beloved “Baba” — as he was fondly known, playing cricket, painting or singing. Highly approachable, he was truly a people's Raja. He often engaged with students at the Faculty of Fine Arts, giving lectures and demonstrations. After his passing in 2012, the university established the Maharaja Ranjitsinh Institute of Design (MRID) in his memory.



Painting a large wall mural



Lt Maharaja Ranjitsinhji & Rajmataji

The royal family also hosts an annual festival of music and art in his honour, featuring national and international artists, and recognising outstanding local talent. The festival has grown each year in scale and popularity.

His younger brother, Sangramsinh Gaekwad, lives in Mumbai with his family.

Raajmata Shubhanginiraje



Rajmataji

Graceful and soft-spoken, the Raajmata has a strong presence in Vadodara's public life. She was brought up in a traditional Maratha family in Gwalior with a sound education and training in horse riding and shooting along with her studies. She loved to drive around herself in Delhi and Baroda in her green Fiat, once her husband taught her to drive. The then Maharani of Baroda, despite living in a joint family and looking after her household duties of the elderly in-laws and own three children, enjoyed the freedom to drive to 'work' every day.

She was the Secretary of the Trust that managed the family run 100 bed hospital "The Maharani Shantadevi Hospital" started by her mother-in-law, Maharani Shantadevi Bai Saheb to provide good maternal and child care facilities to people of Baroda. Shubhanginiraje nurtured and looked after the hospital for almost 25 years, working with doctors, staff, counselling patients and their families and ensuring good healthy home like food was provided from the hospital in consultation with nutrition experts. Under her guidance awareness camps were also conducted in nearby villages.

'Maa Saheb' as she is now fondly called, is Chancellor of the Maharaja Sayajirao University and takes a close personal interest in the welfare of students. She also serves as President of the Society for Clean Environment, an NGO working on issues of pollution, clean and green surroundings, water management and public awareness, with a strong focus on engaging school children.

As President and chief patron of the Maharani Chimnabai Trust, she remains active in planning and executing the skill development certificate courses for women and empowering them with livelihood opportunities in different areas. The beneficiaries even make and sell their products. Events which bring together artisans and craftspeople to showcase their work are organised. Her special interest lies in reviving the Chandari sari weaving tradition and supporting the weavers' welfare. She also oversees the Maharaja Fatehsinh Museum and, with her keen eye for arts and artefacts, contributes greatly to its preservation. An octogenarian, she continues to carry forward the family's legacy enthusiastically.

Maharaja Samarjitsinh Gaekwad



Samarjitsinh Ranjitsinh Gaekwad & wife Radhikaraje

Maharaja Samarjitsinh Gaekwad is a cricket administrator and former cricketer who represented Baroda in the Ranji Trophy. He succeeded his father, Maharaja Ranjitsinh Pratapsinh Gaekwad, and was officially crowned in 2012. In 2013, after settling a long legal battle with his uncle Sangramsinh Gaekwad, he inherited the Lakshmi Vilas Palace, Moti Baug cricket ground, Maharaja Fatehsinh Museum, several real estate assets, and the management of 17 temple trusts in Gujarat and Banaras. He is a passionate sportsman and he has created excellent facilities for several sports in the palace compound, such as a well-planned golf course, good quality tennis courts, covered courts for badminton and nurtured the Motibaug Cricket Club too.

Married to Radhika Raje since 2002, they have two daughters, Padmajaraje and Narayaniraje.

Maharani Radhika Raje Gaekwad



Rajmataji, Maharani Radhikaraje and the two Princesses Narayaniraje & Padmajaraje

One of India's most progressive Maharanis, Radhika Raje was born into the royal family of Wankaner, Gujarat. However she grew up with a deep sense of public duty and service, she developed a passion for conserving heritage, tradition and culture. Currently she is spearheading restoration of their century-old palace. Articulate and compassionate, she has energised the Maharani Chinnabai Stree Udyogalaya, introducing new products and expanding its reach through a signature boutique, Padmanarayani, named after her two daughters. Both young princesses are actively involved in family-led social initiatives.

Significantly, Maharani Radhika Raje has



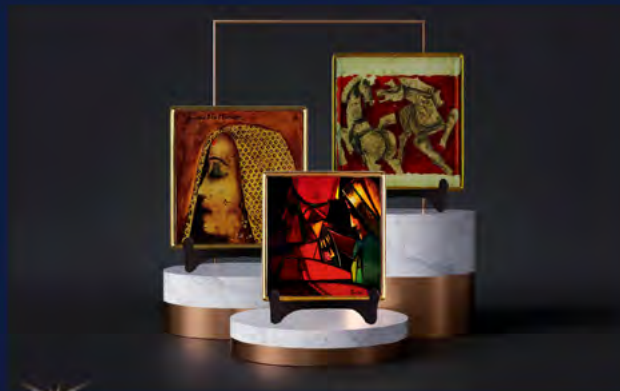
Laxmi Villas Palace

been a strong champion of LGBTQI rights. She has worked tirelessly for their dignity and inclusion. Since 2020, the royal family, with her initiative, organises the Heritage Garba at the palace grounds — one of the largest Navratri festivals in Gujarat. The event also acts as a fundraiser for the Stree Udyogalaya.

Their home, the Lakshmi Vilas Palace, is much larger than Buckingham Palace. The four-storey palace spans 700 acres

with 170 rooms, surrounded by exquisite gardens. Darbar Hall, with Venetian mosaic floors, Belgian stained glass, lacquered ceilings, Islamic domes, temple designs, gilded panels and Indo-Saracenic features, is spectacular. A landmark clock tower signals the Maharaja's presence when the red light is switched on.

“The palace is an enduring symbol of Vadodra as a place open to different cultures and ideas,” says Radhika Raje.



Tyche

Luxury Gifting at its best with a selection of limited edition prints, plates and collectibles.

Trade & Technology Exposition Co. (I) Pvt. Ltd. FGP Centre,
Commercial Union House, 3rd floor, 9 Wallace Street, Fort, Mumbai - 400 001.

79776 14494 info@tychestore.in tychestore.in tychestoreofficial

GIFTEX.IN

World Of Collectibles Auction

Invitation To Consign

Timepieces



CARTIER
ESTIMATE VALUE: ₹ 35,000 - ₹ 65,000
WINNING BID : ₹ 4,31,778

Decorative Arts



AN ART DECO BRONZE LADY FIGURINE
ESTIMATE VALUE: ₹ 90,000 - ₹ 1,00,000
WINNING BID : ₹ 7,58,294

Classic Vintage Furniture



A FOUR DOOR TEAKWOOD CABINET
ESTIMATE VALUE: ₹ 60,000 - ₹ 80,000
WINNING BID : ₹ 2,16,558

Textiles



A MEDALLION DESIGN WOOL ON COTTON CARPET
ESTIMATE VALUE: ₹ 3,75,000 - ₹ 3,95,000
WINNING BID : ₹ 4,26,938

Life Online: The Tyranny of the Mobile

As one grows older, it's not the big achievements or possessions that linger- it's the quiet moments of connection, the gentle gestures of empathy, and the warmth of kindness, writes *Harsh Goenka*

If someone were to ask today, “Who runs your household?” the answer would come without hesitation - the mobile phone. Parents, grandparents, elders, all have their places of respect, but the real boss, the supreme ruler, is that small device sitting in your pocket, buzzing, vibrating, and firing off endless notifications. From the moment we wake up to the time we sleep, every thought, every feeling, every action is dictated by this glowing rectangle. Sometimes it's our alarm clock, sometimes it's a doctor with instant remedies, sometimes it's a

teacher for homework, sometimes it's a boss barking orders, and sometimes even a lover whispering sweet nothings. This tiny gadget has become the very axis of our lives.

Once upon a time, the rooster woke us up. Today, the rooster is unemployed, or perhaps he too should download an app to stay relevant. Now the alarm rings, we press snooze, and our day begins not with brushing teeth but with checking WhatsApp messages. The day's first dose of mood-setting comes from three sources: the older relatives' “Good Morning” picture (sunrise with roses), the school mom's complaints on the parents' group, and an uncle's forwarded lemon-water health tip. Without this morning ritual, even a glass of water feels incomplete.

And these “Good Morning Aunties” are truly remarkable. Rain or shine, before

the sun rises, their pictures of flowers and deities arrive. If one day such a message doesn't arrive, panic sets in: "Is she unwell? Did something tragic happen? Has the world ended?" It has become a digital ritual, without which both their mornings and ours feel empty.



Breakfast tables have changed too. Once families ate together, talking and laughing. Now every head is bowed, not in prayer but over a screen. One person scrolls news, another checks office mail, another swipes through social media. Eating now means spoon in one hand, phone in the other. At weddings, guests first fill their mobiles before their plates. Paneer or chole, whatever you eat doesn't matter, as long as Instagram eats first.

At airports, the scene is even funnier. The crowd at charging stations rivals that which was once seen at ticket counters. People stand like devotees waiting for "prasadam". Someone guards their charging spot as if guarding their life savings, while another pleads, "Bhaiya, two minutes please, I have a flight to catch." This is the new social interaction: begging for a charging point. And because every video call is not on earphones, we all know what's cooking for dinner in ten different homes.



In markets, even the vegetable seller wields mobile power. Selling potatoes worth twenty rupees, he proudly declares "Pay by UPI." Without phone or network, you may return home hungry. At temples, bhakti is incomplete without a mobile "live stream" — "Jai Shri Ram, I'm here at the temple, giving you all darshan." At weddings, while the priest chants mantras and the couple takes vows, guests are busy making Instagram reels. Living the moment has become less important than recording it.

The phone is now also our super-specialist doctor. A small cough? Straight to Google. By the time you finish scrolling WebMD, that cough has transformed into cancer. The fear isn't the illness; it's what Google tells us about it. Even relationships haven't been spared. Husband and wife no longer fight over children or expenses; the new battleground is messaging: "You were online, why didn't you reply?" Screenshots are the new weapons of war, permanent evidence of digital crimes.

Children have also become victims of this revolution. Once children filled the streets playing cricket, football, hide-and-seek. Today, their laughter is replaced with the silence of screens. A child holding a book is suspicious: "Son, are you sick? Do you have fever?". But if he's glued to his phone, parents sigh in relief: "Good, all normal."

Offices too have become prisons of the mobile. Work isn't 10 to 6 anymore – it's 24X7. The boss can ping you at midnight: "Send the report, meeting in the morning." The digital leash remains tied to our necks.

And so, neighborhood streets are empty of games. Even the paanwala has become an influencer – "Paan Singh Blogger" – streaming his thoughts on YouTube.



Lose your phone, and you feel your soul has left your body. At 10% battery, the heart races. When the network drops, sweat breaks out. Even losing your wallet doesn't create such fear because the wallet too now lives inside the phone. People keep their mobile everywhere – under the pillow at night, in the bathroom, in temples, even at funerals. Earlier prayers went, "God, keep my family safe." Now it's, "God, keep my mobile safe, protect my data, and bless my network."

Villages aren't immune either. Earlier, when the power went out, people lit lanterns, shared stories, laughed together. Now, when power fails, the collective cry is: "Arrey yaar, how will I charge my mobile? Battery only 5%!" The village



square is no longer for chess and animated discussions; it's for Facebook scrolling and YouTube shorts.



The truth is simple. Once, we lived life "live." Today, we live it "online." Sightseeing means photographing first, experiencing later. The Taj Mahal is not admired; it is 'selfie'd' from twenty angles. Aunties no longer gossip from balconies; they announce on WhatsApp groups: "Today Sharma ji bought a new red car, number plate...."

Even chaiwallahs now face the universal first question: "Bhaiya, Wi-Fi password?" Weddings once connected families; now they connect phones to networks. Guests at mandap do not look at the couple but at the ceiling, hunting for stronger signal. Sharing Wi-Fi passwords has become the new hospitality.

Let's face it: we don't own mobiles anymore. Mobiles own us. We say, "I carry a phone." Truth is - the phone carries us. We have all become prisoners of a jail without bars, where the shining screen pretends to be freedom.

So next time you pick up your phone, pause and ask yourself: "Am I using my mobile... or is my mobile using me? Is this my tool – or am I its product?"



Of Parks, People & the Stray Dog Dilemma

Why is it the stray dog that provokes such raw emotion, asks Vickram Sethi

The Supreme Court's recent ruling on stray dogs has set the cat amongst the pigeons. WhatsApp groups are in uproar, resident associations stand divided, and petitions are flying about with astonishing speed. And yet, the sheer intensity of it all leaves me somewhat perplexed. In a society that often shrugs its shoulders at the plight of migrant workers trudging barefoot for miles, or the brutality inflicted upon women in broad daylight, why is it the stray dog that provokes such raw emotion?

For many of us, dogs are not merely animals. They are companions, confidants, and often treated as members of the family. We call ourselves “dog parents,” celebrate their birthdays with cakes, and take them for massages at pet spas.

There is something unmatched about the devotion of a dog. Their love is absolute, unconditional and unwavering. It is touching — though also revealing — that we find it easier to invest in the loyalty and innocence of our dogs than in one another. The differences that we are talking of stray dogs and not pets.

It is a simple, familiar pleasure: to step out of one's home, take a short stroll to the nearby park, and sit under a tree listening to the chatter of birds while the world goes by. Parks, in so many ways, are sanctuaries of calm in our increasingly noisy, hurried lives. They are the places where one can walk, stretch, talk to neighbours, or simply watch children play. Yet, recent reports of so-called “killer dog” attacks in suburban parks have sent a ripple of unease through communities. What was once considered a haven is now under a shadow of doubt. The question that arises, particularly for those

of us who depend on parks for exercise, companionship and a sense of routine, is this: are our parks still safe?

It would be unfair to begin any such reflection without acknowledging the deep affection many hold for their dogs. Pets are, for countless families, beloved companions who bring warmth and cheer. Their presence in parks is almost as old as parks themselves, with many treating open green spaces as the ideal environment for their dogs to run, play, and socialise.



For years, parks have been places where two communities — the walkers and the pet owners — co-existed. A friendly nod between an early morning stroller and a dog-walker, perhaps a few words exchanged about the weather or the health of the dog, are small but meaningful social moments.

For those who remember parks as tranquil, welcoming spaces, the sense of menace is more than just physical. It can feel like a betrayal of trust. Parks are not merely recreational grounds — they are emotional anchors. Losing the freedom to walk in them is not unlike losing access to a dear friend.

Research in recent years has repeatedly highlighted the importance of green spaces for mental wellbeing, especially in later life. They provide social interaction, routine, a sense of belonging, and relief from the confinement of indoors. To deprive people of this, even indirectly

through fear, is a quiet but significant harm. (Then again we are talking of stray dogs not pets.)



Yet, as recent incidents show, the balance is fragile. A handful of unfortunate attacks by aggressive dogs have disrupted the sense of security. When the words “killer dog” appear in the headlines, it is not merely an isolated event; it strikes at the heart of our shared confidence in the places we frequent.

Yet, step into a dimly lit street at night, chased by a snarling pack, and the story feels very different. I recall, years ago, trudging through the Delhi winter dawn to catch an early flight, heart pounding as aggressive strays snapped at my heels. Parents send their children off to school with sticks for protection. Delivery riders tell tales of being bitten on staircases, whilst residents upstairs throw down biscuits in kindness. For older folk, the chorus of barking through the night is less of a lullaby and more of a sentence of sleeplessness.

There are the good Samaritans who will collect bones and meat from the butcher cook it and walk the street distributing this largesse to all the strays on the roads. What this wonderful person doesn't realise that these dogs carry diseases, poo and pee on people's door steps, tear their morning papers, even puncture the milk pouches.

To those who endure such encounters, the



passionate defence mounted by dog lovers can feel insensitive. Behind their irritation lies a broader sense of exasperation: stray dogs, for them, are symbolic of a city losing control. We struggle to manage traffic, waste and sewage — and now, not even our streets. Feeding ten strays outside one's gate may feel like an act of compassion to some, but to others it is little more than disorder disguised as virtue.

For those in their later years, this issue is not abstract policy—it is lived reality. It touches the quiet morning walk, the safety of grandchildren, the serenity of one's own doorstep. And yet, it also touches the heart, for few can ignore the sight of a hungry, shivering creature at the corner of the lane.

To humanise the challenge is to admit that both compassion and caution are essential. A city without kindness is a harsh place indeed; a city without order is an unsafe one. If we can weave the two together, we may yet find mornings where the milk pouches remain unpunctured, the newspapers unshredded, and the strays

cared for in ways that do not threaten but enrich our common life.

In the end, a park is not about dogs or people alone — it is about harmony. It is about being able to hear the laughter of children, the rustle of leaves, the friendly bark of a dog, all woven together without threat or fear.

For those of us who walk slowly now, perhaps leaning on a stick, or pausing more often to catch our breath, the park is more than an open field. It is freedom. It is continuity. It is the assurance that life, though changing, still has simple joys to offer.

Let us not allow fear to rob us of this gift. Let us, instead, work together — walkers, dog owners, neighbours, and friends — to restore safety, courtesy, and warmth to the places that sustain us.

Because when a park ceases to feel safe, it is not only about dogs; it is about the erosion of one of life's most accessible and universal comforts.

And that is a cost too high to bear.



Evergreen Club Events Through The Week

seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

AAO KHELEN

(Host) Maninder Aneja

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp

seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

ANTAKSHARI

(Host) Archhanaa Athawale

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp

seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

ARTS & CRAFTS

(Host) Sunita Verma

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp

seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

SUNHERA SAFAR

WITH DEAL DHAMAKA

(Host) Firoz Shaikh

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp

seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

DECODING THE MYSTERIES OF ANCIENT WORLD

(Host) Archhanaa Athawale

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp

seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

FINE TUNE YOUR SINGING SKILLS

(Host) Mohan krishnan

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp



seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

FUN TAKSHARI

(Host) Ravi Bala

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp



seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

MEHFIL - E - GHAZAL

(Host) Archhanaa Athawale

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp



seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

POETRY & PROSE

(Host) Dr. Sajni Vaidya

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp



seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

READ & REVEAL

(Host) Archhanaa Athawale

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp



seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

SPIN THE WHEEL

(Host) Firoz Shaikh

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp




seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

TAMBOLA

(Host) Firoz Shaikh

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp



seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

THE VOCAL CRAFT

(Host) Firoz Shaikh

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp



seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

WHAT'S COOKING

(Host) Archhanaa Athawale

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp



seniors EVERGREEN CLUB

YOGA & MEDITATION

(Host) Poonam Arora

@seniorstoday.in/@evergreenclubapp



Heat of Health, Beat of Hospital

*Be wise if you wish to be healthy,
advises Nagesh Alai*

We all have grown up hearing the simple homily of early to bed and early to rise making us healthy, wealthy and wise, clearly a common sensical experiential learning handed down the generations by word of mouth. All it requires is a daily discipline of sound sleep and physical activity, efficient time management and harnessing of resources and opportunities to attain one's goal in life, develop good consistent habits and sharp focus to enable discerning decisions and judgment. When followed in letter and spirit, these bring about a mindful living leading to satisfying outcomes and tranquillity of body, mind and intellect. When the body, mind and intellect are in a state of unison, it leads to an appreciation of the self in the context of the universe and a better understanding of the indescribable cosmic forces that hold us and the world together in all its glory.

Humans that we are, we come with our own foibles and weaknesses which work

against the above principles resulting in a sub optimal realisation of our intrinsic potential and a yawning distance away from being fully healthy, wealthy and wise. Quite clearly, many of us, if not most of us, do not or perhaps cannot live up to our full potential, conveniently attributing it to causes beyond our control and in the bargain losing out on effects that were meant to be beneficial to us.

Each of the three elements of health, wealth and wisdom, all of which are equally important for a meaningful life, have a role to play in our ability or inability to face the moments of truths and realities of situations as we traverse life.

A family member had to be rushed to an ICU in a nearby hospital recently owing to behavioural incoherence and pathological imbalances. What was meant to be a one-day precautionary medical observation and early discharge, turned out to be somewhat extended due to multiple blood tests, MRI, DSA and a whole lot of other expensive tests and medications, revealing an aneurysm in the blood vessels to the brain.

Now, that was a fright for sure, given that the person leads a successful professional life with all its daily challenges and pressures, while ignoring the discipline of daily exercises and compromising on health. Nature has its way of sending signals to every person and this could well be its calling card to force some tempered living. The trauma of rustling up advance deposits and paying bloated bills is another story altogether. I have always believed that we can expect no quarters in life, least of all hospitals who, while claiming to be charitable or reasonable, are actually extremely commercial and cut-throat. They would not be bothered about your patient or treatment unless you cough up monies in advance.

The experience of a visit to hospital and admission of a patient could be overwhelming and traumatic to the most seasoned, as it was to me and a few others as we handled our family member's health downturn. While every person will have his or her own experiences to recount, it will be worthwhile to look at the following watchlist which could come in handy when faced with similar situations.



1) A dependable set of people, family or friends, around you are a sine-qua-non. You can do very little without their active help and care. Establish a system of keeping your contact list updated and shared with people close to you. This is crucial in the case of emergencies. At a

practical and real level, no hospital will undertake any tests or embark on any medical intervention unless someone signs off and gives consent on your behalf in advance.

2) Keep your health records updated and accessible. This will help determine an appropriate course of medical action.

3) In times of emergencies, your finances should be known and accessible to a trusted few to fund admission and treatment.

4) The only back-up for this could be a willing family or friend to pay the hospital at the moment of admission. In the case of the family members that I alluded to, two family members willingly volunteered to pay the advance deposits to the hospital.

5) Having a medical insurance is recommended and could come in handy at such times. However, a practical hurdle here is getting a quick cash-less admission into the hospital, especially important during emergencies. It could turn out to be a procedural nightmare with most hospitals putting you through bureaucratic red-tape causing loss of valuable time. You may be left with no option but to pay up in advance and claim health insurance later.

6) TPA (Third Party Associates), who are supposed to be enablers and partners of health insurance companies and work in tandem with the hospitals to ensure immediate monetary support to the insured in moments of stress, more often than not do exactly the opposite. One needs to read the fine print in the health insurance policy, especially exclusion and dos and don'ts, to fully understand it and what could be potential bottle necks. Cases of health insurance companies turning down insurance claims and putting them into years of loops are legendary. All

insurance companies are culpable in this. The government and the courts are slowly waking up to this cruelty and trying to mend the situation to enable seamless financial support for the insured.



7) At the least, three to four people will be needed to take turns to be with the patient at the hospital. This is indispensable. It will help in lessening the tensions of a hospital stay and will also be a huge moral support. The care givers, as much as the patient, need a respite.

8) Let one person be the central point of contact for information and updates transmission to family and friends. This will help avoid wastage of valuable time in multiple responses to multiple enquiries from well-meaning well-wishers.

9) While being empathetic, crowding of family and friends and multiple visits should be a no-no. The patient will get stressed and recovery will slow down.

10) When in doubt about any medical procedures, take a second opinion. It's a must to have some certitude about the

outcomes of the treatment.

11) Don't feel shy asking the hospital about the break-up of costs and rationale of the charge. Get a sense of the estimated treatment costs in advance. Do not assume that hospitals will not make mistakes or not charge you more. A patient is merely a revenue unit for them. Heard of ARPUs in mobile companies? It is the same with hospitals. They are budget and revenue driven. Keeping a close watch on the billing is a must. After all, we are paying for it.

12) While no one will admit it openly, when the hospitals ask if you have health insurance, it could be a ruse to charge you more and run up bills. This will eventually lead to being out-of-pocket beyond the health insurance policy pay-outs. Be circumspect.

13) Ensure proper record keeping to ensure claims – doctors' opinions, causative factors, test reports, medicines, treatment details etc. These are necessary to claim the money from the health insurance companies and go legal, if need be.

14) Follow the recommended post-operative post-discharge care and caution. It is in the patient's interest.

15) Finally, keep the faith in yourself and the cosmos to heal.

Be wise if you wish to be healthy; wealth of well-wishers, more than money, will be your ultimate support in life. Stay healthy, wealthy and wise!





A Gentle Conversation about Life's Inevitable Companion

There comes a time in life when speaking openly about what we usually avoid can bring not sorrow, but a quiet sense of peace, writes *Udai Mathur*

There is a subject many of us prefer not to mention, as though giving it a name might make it arrive sooner. That subject is death. For generations in India, it has been spoken of in whispers, softened by euphemisms, or not spoken of at all. Yet, in recent years, across the world and now here too, a quiet but thoughtful movement has emerged: the idea of death positivity.

At its heart lies a simple truth. Death is not a defeat, nor a shame, nor something to hide from. It is an inevitable stage of the journey, as natural as birth, growth, and ageing. To acknowledge it is not to welcome it before its time, but to approach it with openness, dignity, and calm.

What it means

Death positivity does not glorify death, nor does it suggest rushing towards it. Instead,

it invites us to accept it as part of the great cycle of existence. Just as we celebrate new life and cherish our youth and maturity, so too can we prepare ourselves gently for life's closing chapter.

It encourages us to speak with our loved ones about matters we often avoid: our wishes for medical care, the kind of farewell we would like, or how we would like our belongings and memories to be passed on. These conversations, though delicate, are acts of love. They spare our families uncertainty in difficult moments and ensure that our own choices are respected. Death positivity also transforms how we think of grief. Rather than treating mourning as something to be hurried through, it honours it as a personal and lasting journey. By speaking about it, we allow ourselves and others the chance to heal more fully.

In truth, this movement is less about death than it is about life. By acknowledging our mortality, we remind ourselves to live more deeply and with greater gratitude.

The benefits of acceptance

For many, bringing this subject into the open feels like lifting a burden. Fear thrives in silence, but fades when spoken of kindly and clearly. Some of the gifts of acceptance include:

- **Clarity:** When our wishes are known, families are not left anxious or divided when decisions must be made.
- **A richer appreciation of life:** Recognising life's fragility makes everyday moments sweeter—a walk under the trees, laughter with grandchildren, or a quiet cup of tea at dawn.
- **Closer bonds:** Families who speak of such matters often grow more united. These conversations become gifts of clarity, rooted in love.
- **Gentler grieving:** When loved ones know they honoured our wishes, they find comfort in their loss.
- **Dignity and control:** Awareness of our choices in end-of-life care allows us to leave with peace and self-respect.

Far from being gloomy, this way of thinking frees us from needless fear. It opens the door to a more intentional, joyful life.

What it looks like in practice

Death positivity is not a doctrine but a perspective, lived differently by each person. For some, it means writing a simple will. For others, it may be keeping important documents in one place for children to find, or speaking openly during a Sunday meal about what sort of farewell they would prefer.

Some choose to write letters for their families, to be read later. Others plant trees or prepare memory boxes as legacies of love. In cities, one can even find death cafés—informal gatherings over tea and snacks, where people share thoughts about life and its inevitable close.

Even our rituals, whether rooted in faith, philosophy, or personal choice, take on deeper meaning when we embrace them with understanding. A prayer, a hymn, or a mantra can be more consoling when chosen consciously.

Above all, the essence of this movement lies in openness: a willingness to speak, to plan, and to reflect.

A cultural shift

Many of us grew up in households where death was spoken of in hushed tones. Words like “gone” or “passed away” softened its edge, but the silence often left families unprepared. Moving towards a more open view does not mean turning away from our traditions. On the contrary, it often enriches them. Rituals become more personal, grief less isolating, and remembrance more meaningful.

To ask, “What would I want at the end?” is not morbid. It is compassionate—to oneself and to one's family. It is a question rooted in courage and love.

A final reflection

At first, the very idea of being “positive” about death may seem unsettling. But to acknowledge its certainty is not to give in to it, nor to lose hope. It is to recognise that life is precious precisely because it is finite.

When we accept death as part of the natural order, we are free to live with less fear and more tenderness. We can focus on what truly matters: the laughter of our grandchildren, the friendships that sustain us, the rituals and prayers that give us strength, and the small daily joys that weave the fabric of our days.

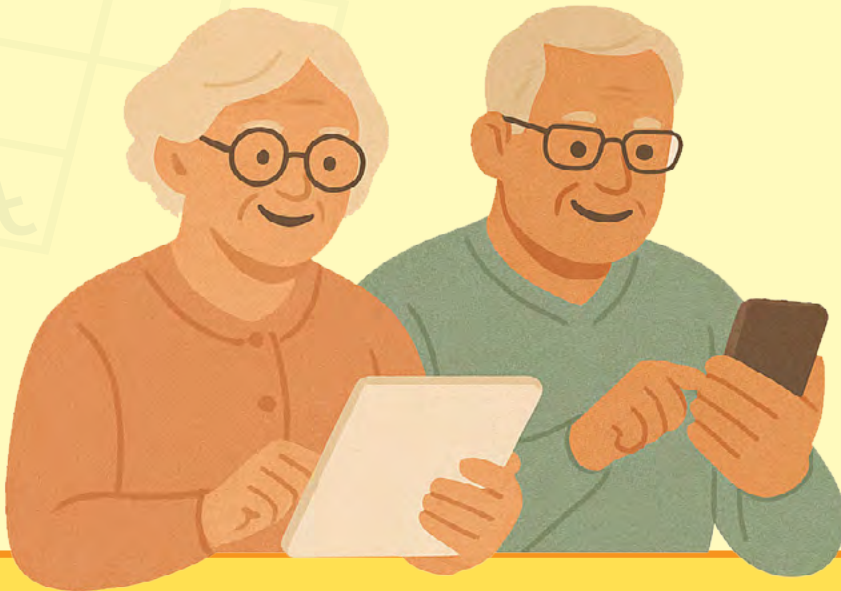
As the old saying reminds us: death is not the opposite of life, but a part of it. When we embrace that truth, we discover that death positivity is, in its deepest sense, life positivity.

seniors
10000
10000



We are Happy to Announce the Launch of

G U E S S T H E W O R D



A fun and engaging game crafted specially for seniors!

Solve A New Game at 6am, Monday through Saturday

- **Keeps your mind sharp**
- **Easy to play**
- **No downloads needed**
- **Fun, rewarding & made for YOU**

Play Online Now At:
<https://seniorstoday.in/gtw>

Scan to Play



The Best Foods for A Woman's Intimate Well-Being

Dr Anupama Santosh advises women on how to nurture vitality and confidence naturally

As the years go by, women often notice subtle changes in their bodies, such as a little less stamina, joints that ache more than they once did, and perhaps some changes to digestion and sleep. Yet one area often left out of conversation is women's sexual health and intimate vitality. For many women in their sixties and beyond, it is not about turning back the clock but about sustaining comfort, intimacy and self-confidence. The reassuring truth is that what you eat can make a meaningful difference. A balanced diet can support circulation, hormone balance, lubrication and mood, all of which help make intimacy more comfortable and enjoyable. No miracle fixes, no risky shortcuts, simply wholesome nutrition designed with senior women in mind.

Why food matters for women's sexual health

Unlike men, women's sexual health after midlife is shaped heavily by hormonal changes, especially after menopause. Falling oestrogen levels can lead to vaginal dryness, reduced blood flow to genital tissues, and changes in mood, sleep and energy. Diet plays a central role in easing these effects. Foods rich in phytoestrogens, antioxidants and healthy fats can help improve circulation, ease dryness and support hormone balance. If your heart, hormones and mind are healthy, intimacy is likely to be more comfortable and fulfilling too.

The Star Foods For Women's Intimate Vitality

Soy and other phytoestrogen-rich foods such as soybeans, tofu, flaxseeds, sesame seeds and chickpeas contain compounds that gently mimic oestrogen in the body

and may ease menopausal symptoms. A simple way to include them is to add roasted soy nuts or a spoonful of flaxseed powder to your morning porridge or curd.

Avocado is packed with healthy monounsaturated fats and vitamin E that help maintain tissue elasticity and natural lubrication. It also supports cardiovascular health, which underpins sexual vitality. You might spread avocado on whole-grain toast or add cubes to salads.

Leafy greens such as spinach, methi and drumstick leaves provide folate, magnesium and nitrates that support blood flow and reduce fatigue. Folate also helps regulate mood. Lightly cooked greens in dal or curry are a gentle way to include them.

Pomegranates are high in antioxidants that boost circulation and reduce inflammation. Some studies suggest pomegranate juice can improve mood and desire in postmenopausal women. Fresh seeds are better than packaged juice, which is often high in sugar.



Nuts and seeds, including almonds, walnuts, sunflower and sesame seeds, are rich in zinc, vitamin E and omega-3s. These support hormone health and tissue repair. A small handful as an evening snack or sprinkled over salad is a good way to take them in.

Oily fish such as salmon, mackerel and

sardines are excellent sources of omega-3 fatty acids. These support cardiovascular health, reduce inflammation and may help with vaginal dryness. Vegetarians can use flaxseeds, chia seeds and walnuts as alternatives.

Dark chocolate with at least 70 per cent cocoa contains flavonoids that improve circulation and serotonin, lifting mood and enhancing intimacy. A small square after dinner is sufficient. Milk chocolate should be avoided as it is high in sugar and low in cocoa.

Berries such as blueberries, strawberries and jamun are rich in antioxidants that fight oxidative stress and improve blood vessel health. They also provide vitamin C, which supports collagen production in tissues. Adding fresh berries to yoghurt is an easy option.

Dates and figs are traditional foods associated with vitality. They contain iron, potassium and natural sugars for quick energy. Two or three dates with soaked almonds make a light yet nourishing snack.

Foods To Limit For Women's Well-Being

Too much sugar can worsen vaginal infections and affect energy. Excess salt raises blood pressure and restricts circulation. Refined carbohydrates and trans fats encourage weight gain and inflammation. Excess caffeine or alcohol can aggravate hot flushes, night sweats and sleep disruption.

Lifestyle Partners To Good Food

Regular activity such as walking, yoga or light strength training improves circulation and hormone balance. Pelvic floor exercises strengthen vaginal muscles and support comfort during intimacy.



Hydration reduces dryness and urinary discomfort. Adequate sleep allows the body to repair hormonally. Managing stress is equally important, as high cortisol levels can suppress desire. Gentle Pranayama or breathing techniques like Anuloma-viloma and Bhramari are highly beneficial for stress management. If needed, senior women can approach qualified Ayurvedic doctors to support them with herbs like Shatavari, Aswagandha, Yastimadhu and others.

When To Seek Medical Advice

If discomfort, dryness or loss of libido persists despite healthy food and lifestyle adjustments, it is important to see a gynaecologist. Vaginal dryness can often be managed with topical oestrogen creams or lubricants. Persistent problems may indicate underlying hormonal or metabolic issues. There is no shame in seeking professional help, and timely advice can greatly improve quality of life.

A Gentle Word on Expectations

Ageing changes sexual function in natural ways. Desire may ebb and flow, and comfort may require more attention. Yet intimacy at this stage can be deeply fulfilling, focusing less on performance and more on connection, affection and companionship.

Good food nourishes the body, but kindness, self-acceptance and open conversation with a partner nourishes the spirit. That is what makes intimacy meaningful at every age.





Help Us Grow

seniors^{TODAY}
Life & Times

Seniors Today was born a little over 6 years back, and has grown to be India's #1 Destination for Seniors Today. We started with a monthly e-magazine and later a daily newsletter, both of which are available for everyone to read without any payment.

Our content is now available in English and Hindi.

We offer a comprehensive understanding of issues pertaining to seniors— health, wellness, happiness, travel and even talent. With Health Live @ Seniors Today, we have a weekly consultation with a top-notch doctor. Then there's Seniors Have Talent, a singing competition for seniors, and The Seniors Kitchen, where you could share your popular recipes with the rest of the world.

With no shareholders or billionaire owners, we set our own agenda and provide trustworthy journalism that is free from commercial and political influence.

**We are now in our seventh year and our reach grows daily.
If there was ever a time to join us, it is now.**

**Make a contribution to Seniors Today of any amount that you think fit.
It would help us to reach out to more and more senior citizens.**

www.seniorstoday.in/contribute

Shabana Azmi

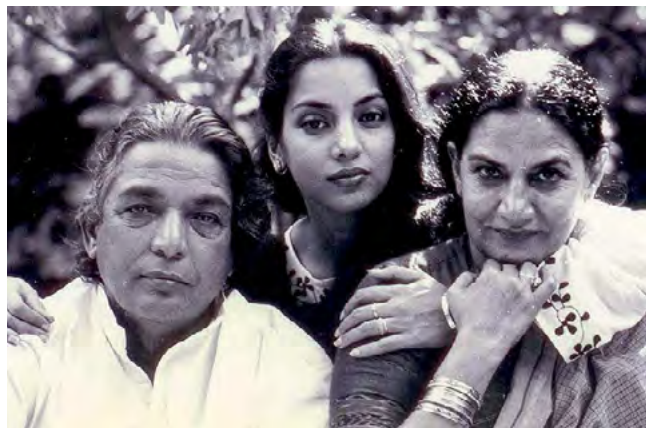
@ 75

Shabana is set apart by her subtlety, emotional depth, and incredible range as an actor, writes *Deepa Gahlot*

It's gone down in movie lore. On hearing that ad filmmaker Shyam Benegal was casting for his feature film, Shabana Azmi, glammed up and went to meet him. She was unaware that the role was for a poor village woman in *Ankur* (1974). The cinematographer Govind Nihalani was unimpressed, but Benegal cast her, and turned her into Laxmi of his film. Thence began the saga of a long and illustrious career, with Shabana, turning 75 on September 18, 2025, becoming a respected star in India and abroad, with too many awards and accolades to count.

She jocularly narrates her mother,

Shaukat Kaifi's comment, that a director who cast her in that role must be a fraud. (Later, when she saw the film, she also applauded the loudest.) But *Ankur* was also the beginning of a significant collaboration between director and performer, and she went on to star in many of Benegal's films, like *Nishant* (1975), *Junoon* (1978), *Susman* (1978), *Mandi* (1983), *Antarnaad* (1992).



For an actress, who, as a daughter of intellectual and left leaning parents, Kaifi Azmi and Shaukat Kaifi, with training at the Film and Television Institute, one fallout of working with the stalwarts of the parallel cinema movement was that she also became a vocal activist for social change. Her hunger strike, in 1985, for the rights of slum dwellers is still remembered with awe—actors might sometimes speak up or march for a cause, but hardly anyone has had the courage to challenge the political establishment like this. She actively participated in protests against slum demolitions in Mumbai. She joined the Nivara Hakk (Right to Shelter) movement, living among slum dwellers to understand their daily struggles. It was a bold move that brought her face-to-face with the harsh realities of poverty and urban displacement. She recounts an instance when a minister asked her why she, a famous actress, was meddling in politics. Her response was, “I am an Indian citizen first, and an actress second. My work as an actress gives me a platform, and it is my duty to use it for those who do not have a voice.”

Her early years were spent in one room in a Mumbai commune, Red Flag Hall, where her parents lived alongside other one leftist and progressive writers, poets and artistes, so her understanding of life is not superficial, and that shows in her work—both as an actress and activist. She often recounts how their home was a hub for literary and political discussions, with luminaries like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ali Sardar Jafri, Josh Malihabadi attending these gatherings. Her father instilled in her the belief that art must be rooted in reality, and this laid the groundwork for her future as an actor-activist. Her husband

Javed Akhtar shares her beliefs and they are both vociferous in their views on social justice.

She has acted in commercial films like Amar Akbar Anthony (1977), but she has mentioned in interviews that after doing a film like Gautam Ghose’s Paar, in which she was exposed to extreme poverty, she automatically chose meaningful films down the years. Her career, spanning over five decades, has been a masterclass in the art of authentic storytelling, where each role is not just a performance but a conversation starter on the human condition.



She has mentioned in interviews that when she was reluctant to accept Amar Akbar Anthony, her father advised her, “Why don’t you do a film that the common people will watch? Then when they come to see you in a commercial film, they might also be inspired to see one of your parallel films.” That pragmatic view has stood her in good stead over the years, as is seen in the recent Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani, in which she was paired with Dharmendra and even shared a kiss with him.

Her transformation for Ankur perfectly captures her commitment to her craft. The film was shot in a real village, and to prepare for her role, Shabana insisted on living there to understand the daily lives of the villagers. She would spend

her days talking to the women, observing their mannerisms, and internalizing their struggles. This immersion was a fundamental part of her process, a practice she would continue throughout her career.



From Mandi to Khandhar, Shabana's preparation for her roles, sets her apart

In *Mandi*, she played the overweight madame of a brothel and put on weight to play the character with an authenticity that challenged stereotypes. The film, a satire on politics and morality, was another testament to her willingness to tackle complex, socially relevant subjects. Immediately after, for *Khandhar*, she slimmed down drastically to get the haunted look of the lonely woman she played in the film. For every role, her preparation and understanding of the character is what makes her performances stand out.



Ankur won her the first of her five National Awards. In a record that's impossible to match, she won National Awards for *Arth*, *Khandhar* and *Paar*;

three years in a row, and the last for *Godmother*.

Her roles in these award-winning and memorable films demonstrated early on in her career, her subtlety, emotional depth, and incredible range.



In *Arth*, the semi-autobiographical film by Mahesh Bhatt, she played Pooja, who discovers her husband's infidelity and decides to walk out of the marriage and forge her own path. Her performance resonated with millions, as she navigated the emotional turmoil of betrayal and the quiet strength of self-reliance. She often recalls how her own upbringing, where her mother's financial independence was a given, helped her understand Pooja's journey. She has said in interviews that while most men are defined by their careers, a woman's worth is often tied to her roles as a wife or mother. Playing Pooja, who breaks this mould, was a deeply personal and liberating experience. She also mentions the drunken scene in which she confronts her husband's girlfriend, as one that was emotionally draining, for a woman to ignore shame and fear of society to lash out with pain in full view.

In *Khandhar* directed by Mrinal Sen, she played a woman trapped in a decaying mansion, waiting for her fiancé who has long abandoned her. Her performance was a study in stillness, repressed desire and silent despair.



Swimming with pigs in Paar: one of the most iconic scenes in Indian cinema

In Paar by Gautam Ghose, she and Naseeruddin Shah played a poor couple fleeing their village after a violent confrontation. The climax, where they must swim across a river with a herd of pigs, is one of the most iconic scenes in Indian cinema. Shabana, despite her initial apprehension about the pigs, committed fully to the scene, her visceral performance capturing the raw desperation of their situation.



Her willingness to experiment led to international projects as well. Her role as a middle class housewife entering into a lesbian relationship with her younger sister-in-law (played by Nandita Das) in Deepa Mehta's controversial film Fire (1996) was a courageous move that challenged social norms and brought her a new wave of admiration. The film, which

was met with protests and censorship, solidified her reputation as an artiste who would not shy away from confronting uncomfortable truths. She often speaks of the vitriol she faced but also the support she received from those who believed in her message of inclusivity.



Inspired by her father's involvement at the grassroots level in his native village, she carries on the work with the Mijwan Welfare Society, an NGO founded by her father. The organization works for the empowerment of the girl child in rural India. She is deeply passionate about this cause, ensuring that the legacy of her father's vision lives on. She often speaks of how the delicate art of "chikankari" embroidery practiced by the village women, brought to the forefront by designers like Manish Malhotra, has not only provided them with a livelihood but also with a sense of dignity and self-worth.

Shabana Azmi has also been a vocal advocate for communal harmony, HIV/AIDS awareness, and gender equality. In a recent interview, she reflected on her life and career, stating, "I grew up in a household where the lines between art and life were blurred. My father used to say that if you want to be a good artiste, you have to be a good human being first. I have tried to live by that principle."



BRINGS YOU A SINGING PLATFORM



WEEKLY ONLINE SINGING
COMPETITION FOR 60+

SEASON

19

STARTING ON
17 SEPT 2025

REGISTER NOW

Contact: 8928149469 | 9082256039
events@seniorstoday.in

seniorstoday.in/seniors-have-talent



**THE
SENIORS
KITCHEN**



WWW.THESENIORSKITCHEN.COM

<https://bit.ly/theseeniorkitchen>

GIFTEX.IN

MODERN & CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ART

Paperworks & Sculptures

SEPTEMBER 16-17, 2025



POWERED BY

AstaGuru

Building Legacies | Connecting Generations