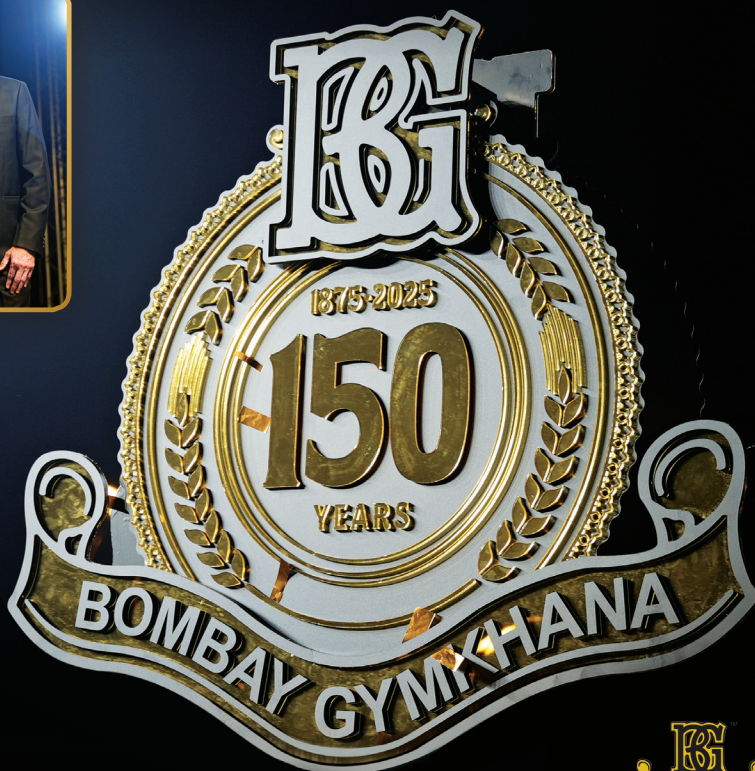


# Black & Gold

The Bombay Gymkhana Magazine

February 2025 Volume 14 Issue 10

## The Sesquicentennial Launch



## Message to our members



Dear Members,

Here's wishing you and your families continued health and happiness in the new year.

### **Bombay Gymkhana's 150th Year Founders' Celebrations Launch**

The year 2025 has begun on a very positive note. The Bombay Gymkhana 150<sup>th</sup> Founders Celebrations Launch event started on a spectacular note with a glittering ceremony of music, dance, and a light show that left members awestruck. The special 150<sup>th</sup> year logo (designed by Manish Sampat) was unveiled by distinguished ex-India cricketer Dilip Vengsarkar and one of our senior-most members Vicaji Jivanji Taraporevala aged 101, who had also witnessed the first-ever Test Match played at Bombay Gymkhana in 1933. The icing on the cake was the launch of a special line of limited edition blazers specially designed by celebrated Indian fashion designer Arjun Khanna. The evening lifted the spirits of the members who turned up in large numbers with their children and actively participated in the festivities, and are looking forward to participating in several events lined up in this momentous 150<sup>th</sup> year. Members would be pleased to note that the expenditure relating to the entire entertainment segment of this very special evening was completely met through sponsorships without spending Gymkhana funds.

### **SPORTING ACHIEVEMENTS**

There were several notable performances in various sports specially by our youngsters.

#### **BADMINTON**

Anay Arlekar reached the semi-finals of the 4<sup>th</sup> Round of the (U-14 Boys Single), MSSA Tournament.

Avni Arlekar: All Maharashtra Anglo Indian Schools tournament in India; (i) U-17 Singles: third place (ii) Team Championship/ Doubles: Second place.

Aashka Patel: Silver Medal (U-10 Girls Singles), MSSA Tournament.

#### **BILLIARDS & SNOOKER**

Digvijay Kadian excelled in snooker with some remarkable performances in championships played across the country – (i) Runner up; All India 15 red Snooker Championship, Goa (ii) Winner in the Bengal Premier League team event, Kolkata (iii) Runner up in North India Open 15 red Snooker Championship, Lucknow (iv) Winner in 10 red RKG Snooker Championship, Pune.

#### **CRICKET**

The Bombay Gymkhana U-12 cricket team won the Silver Cup in the Little Champs U-12 tournament played at the iconic Azad Maidan ground. This was a red ball, 30 over format and was a great way for our young cricketers to get the "maidan experience" of cricket.

#### **RUGBY**

The Bombay Gymkhana Rugby Team won the Pune Cup.

#### **TENNIS**

BG member Kabir Satyani won the ITF Masters Doubles in the 45+ age category partnering Imran Yusuf held at the AITA Trust at University of Mumbai Vidya Nagri, Kalina Campus.

We invite members and their families to turn up in large numbers and participate in various events planned in the area of sports (in-house and external), culture and entertainment as well as CSR related events under BG Cares.

### **A SPECIAL NOTE ON THE 150th YEAR LOGO**

The 150<sup>th</sup> year logo has been designed by Manish Sampat. It celebrates BG's rich legacy since 1875 with a refined and celebratory design. The classic "BG" monogram anchors the identity, while the addition of "150 Years" framed by laurel leaves symbolises excellence and triumph. The use of gold conveys prestige and success, while the circular emblem and ribbon tie the design to its timeless roots. This adaptation honours the institution's history while marking this milestone with elegance and pride. The new logo is fittingly a badge for champions!

Sanjiv Saran Mehra  
President

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All contributions to *Black & Gold* should be original and accompanied by your name, membership number and contact details. Material submitted is liable to be edited as may be determined by the Editorial Board.

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# TRICOLOUR FERVOUR

Republic Day was marked by the unfurling of the national flag in the presence of members, officials and staff who together shared the bonhomie to celebrate this day at the club. **BG**



President Sanjiv Saran Mehra saluting the national flag



BG Staff with the President



Members paying their respects to our national flag



President with the Vice President, CEO & other BG Members



The President with the winner Zuhayr Hirani Merchant



# LITTLE CHAMPS CLINCH SILVER TROPHY

The Bombay Gymkhana U-12 team shone at the Little Champs Tournament, writes BG member **Anandbir Singh**

The Bombay Gymkhana Under-12 cricket team showcased remarkable grit and determination at the prestigious Little

Champs U-12 Tournament, held in December 2024 at Mumbai's iconic Azad Maidan. This red-ball, 30-over format provided an invaluable 'maidan experience' offering young players a taste of competitive cricket at its finest.



The winners with the Silver Trophy

The tournament began with a steep learning curve for the team. In their opening League match against Cricket Explained, they fought valiantly but fell short by 15 runs in a closely contested encounter. Undeterred, the players hit the practice nets with renewed focus. Their efforts showed in the next game against Yuva Cricket Club, where they again gave their all but narrowly missed out on victory.

With two losses in the League stage, the team's chances of progressing seemed slim. However, the resolve of these young

cricketers, coupled with the tireless efforts of their coach, Rushikesh Mayekar, turned the tide. In their third match against Cricket Mantras, the team delivered a stellar performance, scoring a formidable 182 runs and bowling the opposition out for just 56—a resounding 126-run victory. This impressive win, combined with favourable results in other games, secured their place in the Silver Finals.

Riding high on momentum, the team entered the final against St. Arnold's High School with confidence and determination. From the outset, the boys in blue dominated the game, keeping control at every stage. **With a solid all-round effort, they secured a 39-run victory and proudly lifted the Silver Trophy.**

Coach Mayekar's dedicated training regimen, which emphasises skill development, game strategy, and match exposure, was instrumental in the team's success. His guidance has shaped these young cricketers into not just better players but also true ambassadors of Bombay Gymkhana, wearing the club's badge with pride.

Tournaments like the Little Champs provide invaluable experiences, helping budding athletes grow in confidence and character while honing their skills for the future. Heartfelt congratulations to the coach and the entire team for their exceptional performance. We look forward to celebrating many more of their victories on and off the field. **BG**

## TOP 5 BATSMEN FOR BG

1. Aarav Ghadigavkar - 112 runs;
2. Soham Palai - 59 runs;
3. Arjanbir Singh - 45 runs;
4. Shlok Mulam - 39 runs;
5. Ansh Chavan - 35 runs

## TOP 5 BOWLERS FOR BG

1. Arhaan Ladani - 7 wkts;
2. Samar Varma - 5 wkts;
3. Shlok Mulam - 4 wkts;
4. Soham Palai - 4 wkts;
5. Aarjav Mehta - 3 wkts

If you're a parent looking to give your child a head start in cricket, look no further than the Bombay Gymkhana Cricket Academy. Beyond developing cricketing skills, this academy fosters teamwork, camaraderie, and sportsmanship—building a solid foundation for life both on and off the pitch. Contact the Sports Office to enrol your child today to help them grow into confident cricketers and resilient individuals, ready to take on any challenge with determination and pride.



# THE MARATHON DIARIES

Nimish Shah and Shubhada Dayal, two of the members of Bombay Gymkhana who participated in the TATA Mumbai Marathon (TMM), share their experiences.

## Lacing Up

**Nimish Shah:** I am a practising physician in pulmonary and sleep medicine. I started running as a means to fitness and to improve endurance and this eventually turned into training and running marathons. I have done two half marathons before. This time, I am doing the Dream Run only for the club.

**Shubhada Dayal:** I am an entrepreneur, running my own early-learning publishing firm, Brainologi. I have been running regularly at the TMM for the past five years. I ran the 10k open this year.

## Discovering Running

**Nimish:** I started running during my first year of residency in MBBS, as a means to de-stress and stay fit. Without putting much thought into it, I increased the distance over a period of five years. I continued this during my residency days in England where I ran from the hospital to the train station to save time and beat the traffic! Since returning to Mumbai, a few doctor friends got me running again here. We started with 10k runs, then did the Matheran monsoon marathon (an experience which should not be missed) and



Nimish Shah

eventually started doing the half marathon. The camaraderie is inspiring.

**Shubhada:** I was inspired by my husband who has been running for more than 15 years now. He always spoke about the positive atmosphere, the incredible people that you see at the marathon. Inspired by these stories, I decided to do it once, just to experience it. And then I was hooked!

### Prep Routine

**Nimish:** I have been preparing with regular runs with adequate nutrition and hydration which helps in training. Being part of the boot camp helped me improve my timing immensely. Rest and recovery have been beneficial too.

**Shubhada:** Although I run around the year, I become more disciplined starting October, so that I have a good run on the day of the marathon.

### Before & After

**Nimish:** Before the run, I set my goal of finishing the run keeping a time target in mind. I plan the hydration stops. After the run, it's a nourishing breakfast with friends and adequate rest.

**Shubhada:** Before the marathon, I just focus on being prepared, and keeping my anticipation alive - for the experiences of the music bands and the sunrise over the Arabian Sea, and the cheering crowds. After the run, it is always exhilaration and euphoria.

### FUN SIGHTS

**Shubhada:** I love some of the hilarious placards that the crowd brings. My favourite this year was, 'Why do all the cute ones run away?'. **BG**



Shubhada Dayal

### DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ A World Athletics Gold Label race, the 20<sup>th</sup> TMM saw 59,967 runners on ground and another 5,353 taking part virtually.
- ▶ The categories include Marathon (42.195km), Half Marathon (21,097km), Open 10k, Dream Run (5.9km), Senior Citizens Run (4.2km), Champions With Disability (1.3km), Virtual Run, and Elite Participation.
- ▶ The event's international ambassador is Somali-British former long-distance runner Sir Mohamed Muktar Jama Farah (Mo Farah), the most successful male track-distance runner in the history of the sport.
- ▶ TMM has a robust charity programme through which everyone (be it an individual or corporate) can get involved in supporting a charity/cause of their choice and raise funds for the same.





## BG Celebrates 150

This interview is part of a special series marking the sesquicentennial of Bombay Gymkhana

# JUST GRAND!

Hundred-and-one-year-old BG member **Vicaji Jivanji Taraporevala**, who witnessed the historic first cricket Test in India between India and England in 1933, at Bombay Gymkhana, shares priceless memories with BG member **Malika D’Cunha**



BG President Sanjiv Saran Mehra with Mr Taraporevala

When Bombay Gymkhana President Sanjiv Saran Mehra invited Vicaji Jivanji Taraporevala onstage for the unveiling of the BG logo marking 150 years, it was to a resounding applause from the members. Truly, a moment to cherish.

To have one of our oldest members speak so lucidly and share about his love for BG needed more than a stage to be remembered by. It needed documentation of a treasure for posterity. The *Black&Gold* magazine team immediately scooped up the story and lo and behold, before young Malika D’Cunha took to the skies, she ensured she got an interview with Mr Taraporevala in her pocket for us.

Excerpts from the conversation...

### **What is your earliest memory of Bombay Gymkhana?**

My earliest memory is from when I was 10 years old, and I came to the Bombay Gymkhana grounds to see the first cricket Test match in India between India and England in 1933. However, this was from the general stands erected around the ground as, in those days, Indians were not allowed to be members of the Gymkhana.

A second memory is when I was a young man, perhaps in my early twenties. I was walking across what is now called Azad Maidan and wanted to see the club better. So, I went over the ropes and came towards the Gymkhana Pavilion. A Gurkha with a kukri on his belt came running towards me saying “Chale jao. Ye Angrezi lok ka club hain!”



Mr Taraporevala with his grandchildren

I first actually came into the club much later as a guest of my cousin and in 1966 became a member.

**What was the first Test match like?**

My father, who was a lawyer, had a clerk. The clerk wanted some days off to see the first Test match from the public stands. My father agreed on the condition that he take my elder brother and me to see the match. Two incidents stand out.

The first was when Lala Amarnath made a century in the second innings. C K Naidu, the great India captain, went to congratulate Amarnath but without first going back into his crease. An English fielder was about to run out Naidu. However, Douglas Jardine, the England Captain, shouted and stopped the fielder from throwing the ball--indicating that it was bad sportsmanship. Jardine had great love for Bombay as his father was Advocate General in the Bombay High Court and Jardine had spent many years in the city.

The second incident was when Vijay Merchant got hit on the chin by a fast ball. Much later, I was privileged to know Vijay Merchant and asked him what happened. He told me that when he went injured into

the pavilion, an English Major helped and attended to his wound and then urged him to go back on the field, which Vijay Merchant bravely did.

**Any secret to your longevity?**

No! I believe that going away from this world is not in our hands. Perhaps it is a combination of luck and pluck. One needs to spend one's time on creative intellectual pursuits and physical activities. My wife and I used to swim nearly every day till I was in my mid-eighties. At 101, I spend my time writing and reading and go for my evening walks as briskly as possible!

**Please give us a proverb you strongly abide by.**

I prefer to offer my thoughts--Be calm, caring, gentle, honest, be of good cheer, and with intellectual integrity. Spend your time fruitfully with positive creative projects.

**What is your message to BG members on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary?**

Let the club traditions carry on. Let all sports be played, preserve the library too. Enter the bar after you have worked your heart out on the field - not before! May the community of members harmoniously develop the club together **BG**

# MY BOOK READING AT BOMBAY GYMKHANA

BG member and author of A Kid's Guide to Money - **Shubhada Dayal** introduces her book to children at the Meet The Author event



Children participate in the book reading

Reading my book, A Kid's Guide to Money to children at the club was an eye-opening and enriching experience. It allowed me to witness first-hand how young minds engage with the concepts of money. It was a pleasant surprise to find them aware and quite articulate on the subject. Seeing their reactions, curiosity, and questions gave me valuable insights into which parts of the book resonated most with them.

This book has been one of the most difficult that I have worked on--a tightrope walk between clarity and substance. Some concepts such as power of compounding and risk are so abstract that we had to work hard building stories that will bring these ideas alive. For example, in the book, the idea of risk has been personified in a character named Ria.

I was therefore keen on seeing how children react to these ideas. The children were particularly drawn to the mystery element of the haunted library and the thrill of a chase. It was heart-warming to see their faces light up as they connected these lessons to their own lives, eagerly sharing their own thoughts.

For me, this experience was incredibly fulfilling. Not only did it confirm the relevance of my book, but it also provided me with ideas for the future.

Above all, the enthusiasm of these young readers reaffirmed the importance of financial literacy as a life skill and the value of introducing it early. Their energy and curiosity were contagious, making this experience not just insightful but deeply rewarding. It reinforced my belief in the power of stories to make learning both fun and meaningful. **BG**



Learning as they engage

# ANNIVERSARY TREATS

Anam Bachooali and Shaila Mallik share insights into the heart-warming Book Club sessions

Yet another landmark at The Storyboard which celebrated the first anniversary of Storytime, a monthly storytelling event for our very young 4-8 year-olds which has been a heart-warming treat to many parents, children and storytellers alike. The Book Club for the older children (8-12 years) completed two years in January too. Thanks to our storytellers, Priya Aga, Shaila Mallik, Shreya Mandrekar and Anam Bachooali, our young readers have been initiated and encouraged to read, listen and discuss books through some very creative events.

To mark this anniversary, both the groups met parallelly to talk books on Saturday, 11 January 2025. While one group was parked in the Dining Hall with Anam Bachooali, the other was in the Library itself, a haven for young readers with Shaila Mallik.

Anam is passionate about reading and telling stories. Reading aloud to children creates space for interesting thoughts and conversations amongst children, she says. This was largely in effect at the Storytime session where she shared three fascinating stories--'Barry the Fish with Fingers', 'Fakhruddin's Fridge' and 'The



Shaila Mallik with her young readers

Mighty Splash'—which had them giggling and completely agog!

At the Book Club for older children, an interesting discussion ensued on a dystopian world of the future that failed to look after its planet, led by Shaila Mallik. They read about a brave band of children who bike across the US border into Canada, surreptitiously carrying a lone living bullfrog they have discovered in a world of extinct species. They want to try and find a mate for him in the hope of reviving the species. And in doing so, they hold the belief that slowly they are taking a small step towards reviving the planet. Following the discussion, the children made their own personal pledge to do their bit for Mother Earth.

Come by The Storyboard with your children to see these pledges, borrow some books or browse through magazines, puzzles and children's games. **BG**



Anam Bachooali reads aloud stories

# Showing You the Way to Yourself

Theatre director, screenwriter and documentary filmmaker, **Sunil Shanbag** pens his memories of BG member the late Shyam Benegal, a fine filmmaker and a finer human being

It must have been 1978-79 ... I was in a battered Ambassador car, driven by an elderly driver, on the road from Mumbai's Madh island back to the city, sitting beside Shyam Benegal. When he had asked if I would like to ride with him to the city I had nodded, hiding my nervousness.

Shyam had just finished directing an ad film for the soft drink Limca, and I was one of the young actors in the film. It was a physically demanding day - the hot sun, the innumerable retakes of a bunch of young people playing cricket on the beach, cooling off with the cold drink, and so on. Then it was time for the technical 'pack shots' when the specialised shots of the product were to be taken. Shyam's job as director was done, and the product shots would be taken by the director of photography. As Shyam walked to his car, he smiled and asked if I'd



like to ride back with him, and I nodded, nervously. This was really the first time I would be spending time up close with him.

I had met Shyam before, of course. He was already a celebrated film director with films

like *Ankur* (1974), *Nishant* (1975) and *Manthan* (1976) establishing him as one of the most important directors in the new wave cinema of the time. I had begun working with Satyadev Dubey in 1974. Dubey was a leading theatre director in the experimental theatre movement and, with Girish Karnad, a



*Bharat Ek Khoj* (1988)

key part of the famous creative team which worked with Shyam on his films in his early

years. The overlap between cinema and theatre was wide, and like many other new wave filmmakers, Shyam and Nira (his wife) would come and see performances of our plays. That's probably why I was picked to be a part of the ad film shoot. But I knew Shyam only formally, and the thought of a two-hour long car ride in his company, though exciting, also seemed daunting.

As the car moved through the narrow streets of Madh village, I remarked on how quaint and picturesque it was. Shyam smiled and began pointing out crumbling fort walls and old houses, and talking about the history of Madh island. For the next half hour, I was regaled with a fascinating history of the Koli community, the story of the Portuguese taking over Versova and Madh in the 17th century and building the Madh fort, their war with the Marathas who defeated them, the unjust politics of displacement of the indigenous Koli fisherfolk, and how that connects with the failed attempts to build a bridge across the Versova creek to Madh ...

Madh has never been the same for me! To a 22-year-old, who knew Madh merely as a beach where young lovers went, these were fascinating insights.

Through my years with Shyam this was a recurring experience, one which I looked forward to every time we met. He read widely and deeply and had the ability to make connections between seemingly disparate things, thereby imbuing them with a meaning

that was both exhilarating and profound.

Many of the tributes paid to Shyam after his passing refer to him as a “guide,” a “mentor,” or even a “university,” and I believe these are responses to the generosity with which he shared his knowledge in an accessible, graceful, and reassuring manner. The sharing could be over dinner, while prepping an actor for a role, over a cup of tea during a work break, or while driving with a young person who may have seemed to be “interested”.

My education with Shyam continued for the next few years as we worked on challenging projects like *Yatra*, the great Indian



*Bharat Ek Khoj* (1988)



Railways series, and *Bharat Ek Khoj* his mega history of India project based on Jawaharlal Nehru's book *Discovery of India*. On both these projects, Shyam's brilliance was added to by writer Shama Zaidi's equally sharp insights and, as a young writer, I was acutely aware of how this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. To be mentored and guided by such breadth of knowledge and understanding at a critical phase in one's growth was truly a blessing. Inspiring



*Bharat Ek Khoj* (1988)

above all was his commitment to cinema as a means of challenging social norms and perceptions.

Shyam created an atmosphere at work which was non-hierarchical and open, in sharp contrast to the humiliating feudalism within mainstream cinema. He insisted on first names and, when convinced of your seriousness, trusted you completely, and listened to your views with the same attention as he would a more experienced practitioner. This was the finest example of humility, and it brought out the best in us. He drove us all hard on a film shoot, but also created the warmth of kinship and common purpose. Shabana Azmi recently spoke about how Shyam instructed his assistant directors and production managers during

the filming of *Mandi* to be especially mindful of actors who played the numerous small parts in the film.

The development phase of a project engaged him most. He insisted on rigour in ideas and research, and clarity and simplicity in the writing. The special feature of Shyam's films is how accessible and complex they are at the same time. Achieving this was a wonderful challenge for the writers, and Shyam encouraged us to look for creative approaches that were nuanced and often playful. Every project I worked on with him left me with greater understanding of the world we live in.

It is said that a good teacher is one who can show you the way to yourself. I believe Shyam placed his hand on my head—and the heads of many others—and did just that. **BG**

# BREEZING THROUGH THE EVENING

Anaita Vazifdar-Davar writes about an evening with **Mrinalini Harchandrai** and **Jane Borges** at the BG Library's Meet-the-Author event.



Author Mrinalini Harchandrai (centre) with moderator Jane Borges (to her left) and her mother (to her right)

When a poet writes a book, one can't help but expect lyrical verse. In Mrinalini Harchandrai's case, it comes through in its very title – *Rescuing a River Breeze*, her work of historical fiction, that draws one in instantly.

At the Meet-the-Author session on 22nd January, the poet, novelist and Bombay Gymkhana member spoke about the inspiration behind the story (her mother's childhood in Goa), its long journey from idea to physical form and more. In conversation with journalist Jane Borges, Mrinalini brought out the importance of oral history, detailed her meticulous research and left the audience (who had already enjoyed BG's pre-talk sandwiches) with food for thought on the themes of annexation and colonisation, uprising, liberation and freedom, all woven through her book.

The arresting cover takes inspiration

from the Portuguese azulejo (traditionally hand-painted decorative tiles) found in Goa. About the title, Mrinalini says: "Just like a breeze is intangible and impossible to capture, I wanted to convey the evanescence of the individual's aspiration to control the course of fate."

With all these factors, Mrinalini's book promises to be poetry in motion. **BG**



Mrinalini Harchandrai with Jane Borges



Happenings at BG

# 150 YEARS OF BOMBAY GYMKHANA

## THE CELEBRATIONS BEGIN!

BG member **Malika D'Cunha** reports on the Bombay Gymkhana's Sesquicentennial Celebration Launch that packed excitement, pride and joy.

As our beloved Bombay Gymkhana completes a century and a half this year, the Founders Celebration Launch was flagged off with the 150 years' logo reveal, celebrated with great cheer and grandeur, warmth and laughter.

The event was packed with events like the Fire Display, Hula Hoop dance, an aerial dance on ropes and more. Filled with splits, twists and turns, a great level of flexibility was displayed. All so seemingly dangerous yet perfectly executed.





The next event got everyone on the floor with a dance tutorial of the merengue dance form. This was taught by Sandip Soparrkar, who simplified it to make it a mix of marching and twisting. It was wonderful to see the members pick up the dance so fast and perfect the steps so easily.

Young 14-year-old Kiyam Kapoor gave us a brilliant performance on the djembe. You could hear hushed murmurs admiring his talent. One BG member even said that he was a reincarnation of the late maestro Zakir Hussain. When asked why he played the djembe, Kiyam responded saying he just loved its vibes.





The highlight of the event was seeing the 150 years' logo unveiled by the Bombay Gymkhana President, Sanjiv Saran Mehra; the club's oldest member, 101-year-old V Taraporevala; and famous cricketer, Dilip Vengsarkar.

The music and fireworks filled the air as every member beamed with pride and joy. Mr Mehra shared a brief concept note regarding the logo, explaining that the colour gold symbolises prestige and success while black embodies the roots. The logo, designed by Manish Sampath, exuded elegance, like a badge for champions.





The 3-D mapping on our beloved building reminded us of the history of our cherished club and its evolution. Watching this narrative left us amazed and thankful for being part of this institution.

This was followed by a ramp walk by the Managing Committee sporting the new blazers designed by well-known designer Arjun Khanna for the 150 years' celebration.

The event was filled with music, dance and entertainment. The band, Bombay Coalition, got everyone on the dance floor with some classics by Whitney Houston, ABBA and The Beatles, with the young ones especially on the dance floor from the start till the end.



## Happenings at BG

Whether it was munching on our usual favourites like Cheese Toast and Chaat or trying the Nepali Thukpa, the food was yum, with both children and adults also savouring the popcorn and candyfloss, which you are never too young to enjoy!

The event catered to all, right from the young adults and elderly members to the children. Whether it was jiving to the music, or catching up on old times with a glass of wine, Bombay Gymkhana, as usual, fosters a wonderful feeling of unity, love and brotherhood.





### **'In one word – it was amazing!'**

BG member Prem Kamath shares his experience at the event

“ I completed 50 years as a permanent member of the Bombay Gymkhana in December 2024 and so have witnessed many an event at the Gymkhana; however, nothing can beat the 'kickoff' function of our 150 years' celebrations...in one word it was AMAZING! ”



## Happenings at BG

Every aspect of the programme was executed with finesse while the layout of tables, decorated tastefully in our Black & Gold colours and the catering arrangements were excellent. The menu had variety, and the counters were well positioned with plenty of food. The waiters, from our permanent staff as well as those hired on a temporary basis, were attentive and provided excellent service by asking attendees about their requirements at the tables itself.





The shows that were put up were of a high quality and there were no long speeches. The high point of the event was the launch of the specially designed BG logo, and it was a great idea to have it unveiled by the 101-year-old venerable gentleman V Taraporevala, who made a short memorable speech on his long association with the Bombay Gymkhana.

As the evening advanced, on one could see that the children too were having a ball on the dance floor even as members joined them in great numbers to shake a leg! The surprise item was the video projected on the facade of the building showcasing Bombay Gym's history and the more recent events and other important achievements.

All in all, it was a truly enjoyable and memorable evening and a fitting start to our 150<sup>th</sup> year celebrations. **BG**



Scan the QR code to  
watch the event!



# For the Love of S.T.E.M.

On the occasion of International Day of Women and Girls in Science (1<sup>st</sup> February), BG spotlights three of its members—**Shaista Desai, Avantika Mehra and Zahra Assur Sanghai**, showcasing their inspiring achievements

The mood is upbeat. Shaista Desai believes, “It’s the best time for women in STEM.” Zahra Assur Sanghai is fascinated with how STEM “explains the way the world works,” while Avantika Mehra advises young women in science to “Align yourself with strong role-models.”

Here’s tracing their journeys...

## AREA OF SPECIALISATION

**Shaista Desai:** I worked for 16 years for GlaxoSmithKline pharmaceuticals (GSK), starting out at and ultimately leading the marketing function for the vaccines business at GSK. During my tenure, my team and I worked on and launched more than 12 innovative vaccines in the Indian market that protected infants, adolescents and adults against vaccine preventable diseases.

**Avantika Mehra:** I’ve spent the last few years in management consulting working in venture capital/ growth equity, consumer products, and healthcare, and at an AI startup building immersive digital storytelling for brands. In my free time, I write about emerging technology at [subliminal.substack.com](http://subliminal.substack.com).

**Zahra Assur Sanghai:** I have just finished a research project at the Rockefeller University, studying how the ribosome, which is the machinery in the cell that is responsible for all protein production, is assembled and how it functions. I am now looking to make a transition into the biotechnology start-up world.



Shaista Desai

## FORMATION

**Shaista:** An alumna of Cathedral and John Connon School, Mumbai, I completed my HSc at Jai Hind College, Mumbai, followed by my BSc in Life Sciences and Biochemistry at St Xavier’s College, Mumbai. I earned my MSc in Integrated Immunology from Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom, in 2005-2006.

**Avantika:** I studied Cognitive Science at the University of Virginia (a combination of Computer Science, Psychology, Philosophy, Linguistics, and Neuroscience) while working at UVA’s Computational Memory Lab.



Zahra Assur Sanghai

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**Zahra:** I was drawn to the STEM subjects at a young age, took the science track in the 11<sup>th</sup> standard at the Cathedral and John Connon School, then continued my studies as a Biochemistry Major at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia for my undergraduate degree. I enjoyed doing lab research so much that I went on to do my PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics at Columbia University in New York, and continued to do research as a post-doctoral fellow at the Rockefeller University in New York thereafter.

### FASCINATION WITH STEM

**Shaista:** The one thing that has always fascinated me about STEM subjects is that while so much has been discovered, so much more still remains to be uncovered! Whether it's the universe, our planet (with all its plants and animals) or even our own bodies, there's so much that we still don't know. It's this element of mystery that fascinates me.

**Avantika:** A couple of things drew me towards studying and thinking about emerging technology. When I was younger, my dad, a VC investor, patiently engaged

me in conversations about the internet economy, which was core to developing commercial acumen and an interest in tech.

I read books that taught me how to think, and motivated me to think: Steve Jobs' biography, stories about how Silicon Valley founders operated; even plugging into 'hacker' communities online.

I had a great psychology teacher, who sparked my interest in cognition - which eventually led me to study synthetic and human minds at university.

I also proactively built on my interests. I used Coursera and textbooks available online to self-learn programming and basic app development, until my mom found and set me up with a local certification program. A friend and I cofounded a program to teach students from humble backgrounds how to code - I got a lot of energy from combining my academic interest in technology with my passion for social impact and education.

**Zahra:** What I love about STEM is that it is all based on facts and fundamental principles, not opinions - it explains the way the world works! Once you learn more of the field, you can truly understand and appreciate the beauty of nature.



Avantika Mehra

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## Feature

### INTEREST SPARKED

**Shaista:** My interest in Biology (in particular) began with one fantastic biology teacher, Ms Nikita Mann, I was lucky to have been taught by her at the Cathedral & John Connon School. She brought the subject to life and for me there was no looking back from there. After that, a wonderful professor at St Xavier's College, Dr Radiya Gupta opened up the world of immunology to me. My mentors at Oxford University, Prof Jon Austyn and Dr Helen Chapel, played a pivotal role in further honing my knowledge and skills in Immunology.

**Zahra:** My father is a chemical engineer by training, and I get my love for the sciences from him. I enjoyed the science subjects from a young age - Chemistry was always my favourite! He would help me with my studies and explain things in a very clear and logical way, and it all just clicked for me. I do also credit many of my teachers, both at Cathedral and in college, and my mentors during my PhD that continued to hone those skills and interests, as there were many discouraging moments along the way, that they helped me get through.

### POPULARISING STEM

**Shaista:** I strongly believe that having great mentors and role models goes a long way in building interest and confidence in any field, including STEM. It's important to also raise awareness about the possibilities that STEM learning opens up. Many people believe that STEM subjects are too tough, or too boring, or too theoretical or don't have exciting career opportunities. But that's entirely untrue. The world today is changing rapidly and science and technology really are at the forefront of innovation. Combine that with the huge focus now being placed on the diversity dividend and the role of women in the workforce. When you put the two together, there could be no better time than now for women in STEM.

**Avantika:** Some advice I might share to young women interested in emerging technology:

Read: Reading builds mental stamina, allows

for deep engagement with ideas, provides perspectives, and can help cultivate intellectual autonomy - if you have a developing pre-frontal cortex (i.e., are below 25-years-old), reading is probably the highest-leverage thing you can do to differentiate yourself.

**Build side-projects:** If you're interested specifically in technology, create a portfolio of fun side-projects before AI agents get here (they don't have to be monetisable, or even useful - just interesting).

**Manage impostor syndrome:** Even if you don't feel the most confident or competent at a STEM-ish subject, if you're passionate about it, keep learning as long as it gives you energy and is sustainable.

**Align yourself with strong role-models:** In my own journey, I found inspiration in remarkable women like Reshma Saujani, founder of Girls Who Code, and Shubha Tole, a pioneering neuroscientist at TIFR. Their academic and professional legacies, and attitudes towards approaching career decisions encouraged me to increase the upper-boundary of what I thought could be possible.

**Zahra:** I believe that good mentors and teachers can make a huge difference in young girls' interest in STEM. Also giving examples of other women in STEM who have had successful, fulfilling careers would be great encouragement for young budding scientists. School alumni that have had STEM careers could also come back and speak to current students and provide guidance and confidence by example, showing them that this is a great life-choice and career path to take. **BG**

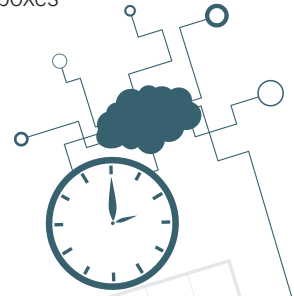


**SUDOKU**

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit must appear once in:

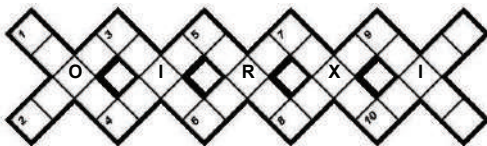
8			4			3	
	5		6		1		
		7	2	5			
	5				7		
2	3	9			5	6	1
		4			8		
		6	5	2			
	1		8			2	
9			3				5

- each of the vertical columns
- each of the horizontal rows
- each of the boxes



**CRISS WORD**

Ten five-letter words cross and interlock to complete these criss words. Some of the letters have already been filled in. Can you fill in the rest? Clues are given.



1. Long-legged bird
2. Impassive
3. Move higher
4. Weaves wool
5. Small tree
6. Explode
7. Poisonous
8. Pugilist
9. Regretting
10. Main or principal

**SCRAMBLE**

Solve the four anagrams and move one letter to each square to form four ordinary words

Now arrange the letters marked with an asterisk (\*) to form the answer to the riddle or to fill in the missing words as indicated:

- OTORR
- HRINO
- MANUAL
- DIINGH

*	*			*
		*	*	*
		*	*	*
*				*

Lose an \_\_ in the \_\_\_\_, and you will spend all day looking for it.

- Richard Whately (4,.,7) **BG**

(all solutions on page 35)

BG Book Club members name their recent reading shelf selections that had them...

# Hooked!

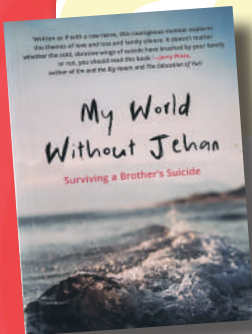


I read the semi-autobiographical *What Does It Feel Like?* by Sophie Kinsella. Though heart-wrenching, the narrative is infused with warmth, humour, optimism, raw honesty and courage. The psychological insights the author presents and reflects on as she matures affected me deeply, and I read with eagerness and interest to the end. Her wry wit and strong grit in the face of the guilt she felt came across in her writing. There was no single dull moment in the novel. An uplifting read.

- Perveez

*The Devotion of Suspect X* by Keigo Higashino is among my favourite books.

- Kanika Kapur



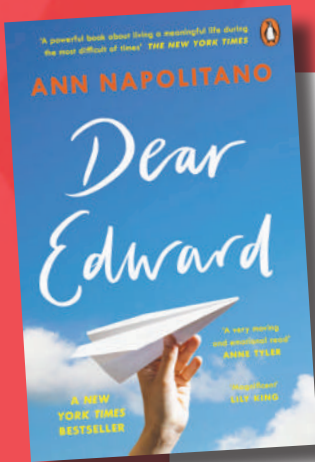
Ever since I had attended author Liana Mistry's reading at the Bombay Gym, I had resolved to read her book *My World Without Jehan: Surviving a Brother's Suicide*.

- Radhika



The one book/author I loved reading in 2024 was undoubtedly my all-time favourite --Agatha Christie, who I can read repeatedly with the same fervour as my first time.

- Gauri Sinh



My two absolute favourites have been *Dear Edward* by Ann Napolitano and *The Djinn Waits a Hundred Years* by Shubnum Khan. Two very different stories. *Dear Edward* tugged at my heartstrings. It was the tender way in which the author dealt with bereavement - a coming-of-age story with a difference, if you will. Edward became special because he'd survived, but he was just an ordinary boy. A lucky but a regular chap.

- Nive

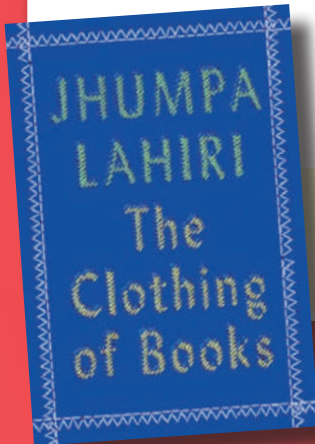
A compulsive reader, I'm distraught if I don't have a book to read! I selected two books - *Blue Sisters* by Coco Mellors, a heart-wrenching saga of sibling misfortunes leaving the reader with a sense of hope among sister dynamics, and *The Women* by Kristin Hannah, a powerful story of courage in harm's way, of nurses who have been dismissed by history.

- Siddika



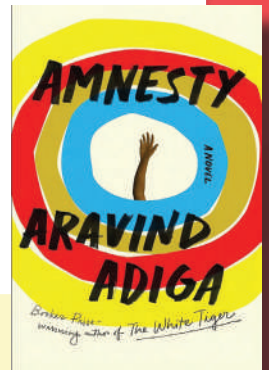
Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Clothing of Books* is a small 'naked book' as the author deconstructs and classifies book covers/ jackets into interesting chapters. Not heard about by many, this book is a must-read for all those who have a fetish for book covers.

- Reena



I read *Amnesty* by Aravind Adiga and what appealed to me was the relentless search of the protagonist for a better future yet powerless in the face of harsh reality and the superior attitude of the rich West.

- Vispi



# WHAT'S IN AN indian name?

BG member **Suneel Talwar**, domiciled in the USA, takes a lighthearted look at the perception of Indian names

Some of the top Indian-American CEOs in corporate America with traditional Indian names (according to *The American Bazaar*) include Google and parent company Alphabet's Sunder Pichai; Twitter's Parag Agrawal; Microsoft's Satya Nadella; IBM's Arvind Krishna and Adobe's Shantanu Narayan.

However, most companies with Indian CEOs started being appointed as such in the mid-1990s, such as Rohm & Haas: Rajiv Gupta; Hartford Financial Services Group: Ramani Ayer; US Airways Group: Rakesh Gangwal; PepsiCo: Indra Nooyi; and Chanel: Leena Nair, to name a few.

Some more notable Indian-Americans who gained much success in their field include classical music conductor, Zubin Mehta; Federal Judge, Amit Mehta; Mayor of Hoboken, NJ, Ravinder Bhalla; Governor, South Carolina, Niki Haley; and Vice President, USA, Kamala Harris. These are just a few in an impressive and large list, to which almost a million small and large successful businessmen and women could be added – hotel owners, gas station owners, Subway and Dunkin Donut shop owners, professors, and other professionals in every business. And yet, Indian-Americans make up only 1.2% of the US population or just a tad less than 4 million people. Many different Indian names are easily accepted now, even pronounced correctly, especially in San Francisco





and Silicon Valley.

This brings me to the main topic of my writing, "What's in a Name?" Suneel Talwar, yours truly, arrived in the US in March 1970. For Americans, it was not easy to pronounce many Indian names. Nonetheless, Indian names have deep meanings in all their many languages and are highly respected by their own people.

My given first name Sunil is an Indian, Punjabi, Hindu name and, in Sanskrit, means blue, sapphire, and dark blue. It is also an epithet of Krishna ("All attractive"). Great start but hard to live up to!

Why did I change the English spelling of my name from Sunil to Suneel? I made it phonetically correct and wrote it as such. A loving uncle and cousin would, on occasion, tease me and mispronounce my name as Soo-nil on purpose. So, I took care of that in my teen years. Nobody, including my parents, said a thing about it.

My family name should also be phonetically spelled. It should be Talvar ('Tauhl-varr') instead of what it is in English--'Tall-wahr'.

Boy, the English language is also a crazy language.

When I moved to the US, my indirect boss at the advertising agency I worked at in NYC, Norman Vale (who became a friend and mentor), carefully and kindly suggested that I change my name to either Sunny or Neil to Americanise it. His reasoning for suggesting this change was that, in America, last names are very different and diverse. First names mattered more as they are generally how most people know you and address you. An American name would not make people look or think of you as being different. Sunny was totally unacceptable to me, so Neil it became—after much thought and trepidation—for business and with most non-Indian Americans. For the rest, I was Suneel as also for all my legal papers. And I continue to be very comfortable with it both ways.



By the way, years later, I learnt that Norman had changed his family name from Feldman to Vale, to make it non-Jewish to be able to work in the advertising business. When I asked him why he never told me this piece of history, he just smiled and gave me a hug. Norman became Director General of the International Advertising Association before starting his own consulting company, Vale International.

Today, most people with Indian names in the US are considered 'smart' and 'successful' because of their names, whether they are or not!

So, what's in a name? You decide, with a smile! **BG**



# MUSIC FOR YOUR MOOD

BG member Mallika Sagar describes the experience of vocalist **Nyah Gauri Bhat**'s classical music-meets-tech platform Sangeet & I

I had the pleasure of spending an extremely informative hour at BG Conversations on 8 January 2025, learning about how the wonders of technology, specifically Convolutional Neural Networks, an architecture of Deep Learning (a subset of Artificial Intelligence) is now a necessary term to familiarise ourselves with. It has the power to combine with the age-old tradition of classical Indian music to create a sensory experience that is unique, engaging, interactive and educational.

Nyah Gauri Bhat, the young creator of this wonderful platform, Sangeet & I, is an 18-year-old classical Indian vocalist, who appears to be gifted with both left and right brain cells as she has spent the last seven months creating and writing the code needed for her idea to come to life.

Essentially, an individual's facial expression is read in real-time when placed in front of a camera, accessed through a QR code. Sangeet & I analyses the person's current emotional state by classifying it into one of five moods: happy, sad, angry, surprised, and neutral.



Nyah Gauri Bhat explains the app

Upon identifying the current mood based on the Convolutional Neural Network model trained on a database of over 37,000 images, a corresponding classical raga plays, selected to uplift, and enhance the user's mood. Each raga has been sung by Nyah, whose extensive vocal range and melodious notes bring each of these compositions to life, complemented by a series of explanatory points explaining the genesis of the raga, and what it hopes to communicate through the music.

Aside from giving us a detailed explanation of how she had written the code and chosen the algorithms, what was remarkable to see was Nyah's ability to communicate this to us, an audience of mixed ages! She used simple analogies to explain how the corresponding raga was selected once the emotion had been detected. For example, she compared the predicted emotion to a key, and the raga to a lock, where each key could open just one lock, making it all appear seamless and as harmonious as the ragas she sings. **BG**



Members listen at the session

# SOLUTIONS

## SUDOKU

8	6	7	1	4	9	2	5	3
4	5	2	3	6	8	9	1	7
3	9	1	7	2	5	4	8	6
6	8	5	2	1	3	7	4	9
2	3	9	8	7	4	5	6	1
1	7	4	5	9	6	8	3	2
7	4	3	6	5	2	1	9	8
5	1	6	9	8	7	3	2	4
9	2	8	4	3	1	6	7	5

## CRISS WORD



### Words:

rotor, rhino,  
alumna, hiding

**Answer:** Lose an  
**hour** in the **morning**,  
and you will spend all  
day looking for it.

-- Richard Whately

(puzzles on page 29)

### ADD SOME BG COLOUR TO YOUR INBOX!

*Black & Gold* is available via email.  
To receive the electronic version  
of Bombay Gymkhana's monthly  
magazine, simply send an email to  
[relations@bombaygymkhana.com](mailto:relations@bombaygymkhana.com).  
You can also download it from the  
BG App. So, check out the latest  
BG happenings on the 'go'.

**BOOK CLUB**

**BUTTER**  
by  
ASAKO YUZUKI

The cult Japanese bestseller about a female gourmet cook and serial killer and the journalist intent on cracking her case, inspired by a true story.

Monday, 10th February 2025, 5.30 pm - 6.30 pm, Library

**THE STORYBOARD**  
presents

**BOOK CLUB**  
(AGE 8 YEARS AND ABOVE)  
HARRY POTTER AND THE  
PHILOSOPHER'S STONE  
BY J.K. ROWLING  
A DISCUSSION LED BY  
PRIYA AGA

SATURDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY 2025  
11:30AM - 12:30PM  
THE STORYBOARD  
(LOWER VERANDAH)

**STORYTIME**  
(4 to 7 years)

Read aloud session by  
Shailee Malik

Saturday, 15th February 2025  
11:30 am - 12:15 pm  
The Storyboard  
(Lower Verandah)

Register at Tel: 4323420  
Email: [library@bombaygymkhana.com](mailto:library@bombaygymkhana.com)

**FILM**

**3 STOREYS**

Directed by Arjun Mukerjee

The film explores the director's fascination for what really lies beneath all the different masks we so effortlessly wear during the course of our lives. Set in a middle class chawl in Bombay, three love stories weave in and out of each other, as do the inter-connected lives of the various families residing in a voyeuristic environment where the lack of space and privacy cook up an explosive melting pot of passions and intrigue, and twists in the tale.

3 Storeys (produced by Excel Entertainment and Open Air Films) released in theatres worldwide in 2018.

The film was also invited to the Shanghai International Film Festival, The River to River Festival in Florence, and the Indo-German Film Festival in Berlin.

Join BG member and Director Arjun Mukerjee for the screening and a short interaction thereafter.

Friday, 28th February 2025, 5.30 pm to 7.00 pm  
followed by Q&A  
VENUE: 1875

Register at  
Email: [library@bombaygymkhana.com](mailto:library@bombaygymkhana.com)  
Telephone no: 4323420

Bombay Gymkhana Library  
Presents

**BG CONVERSATIONS**

A monthly event wherein members share their professional expertise on a wide range of interests through interactive & enriching discussions.

**CYBER CRIME AND CYBER SECURITY**  
with  
YASHASVI YADAV

Burgoning cyber crime and the blitzkrieg with which they are transforming into newer forms of attacks has necessitated an intensive need to create an awareness towards this form of crime impacting us all across the globe.

Listen to Yashasvi Yadav as he speaks passionately about pre-empting and detecting cyber crimes.

Yashasvi Yadav is an IIT officer presently posted as Special ICP Maharashtra Cyber Department, the nodal agency for cybercrime and related matters for the State of Maharashtra. He has trained several IAS and IIT officers in cyber crime, has several patents in his name in the field of IT and is a recipient of prestigious International awards including Walter Henry award instituted by International Association of Chiefs of Police and from Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Wednesday, 19th February 2025, 5.30pm to 6.30pm, Dining Hall

Register at  
[library@bombaygymkhana.com](mailto:library@bombaygymkhana.com)  
Telephone no- 4323420

## In Memoriam

The Bombay Gymkhana deeply  
regrets the sad demise of:

Azarmie Fali Poncha  
(24 December 2024)

Rhodabe Maneckjij  
(27 October 2024)

Shyam Benegal  
(23 December 2024)

Ramniwas A Goel  
(20 January 2023)

Om Prakash Degan  
(16 December 2024)

Pheroze A Jamsedji  
(6 March 2020)

# Thank God, FEBRUARY IS HERE

BG member **Sunita Rajwade** points towards the perks of patience

The excessive partying in December and the hectic activities in January: The TATA Mumbai Marathon, the Coldplay concert, the Parade of the Planets and even our Bombay Gymkhana's rip-roaring entertainment programme for the BG 150-year logo reveal have frankly left me quite exhausted.

Hopefully, February with its fewer days will be a calmer month. A month to take life easy and enjoy the cool sea breezes while indulging in a relaxing cruise in the harbour or a brisk walk on the newly restored Marine Drive promenade.

But can the people of Mumbai relax? Most Mumbaikars are conditioned to do the most they can in this Maximum City. They always seem to be rushing off someplace and have no patience or desire to go at a slower pace. I blame this lack of patience on instant coffee or rather the phenomenon of getting quick results. Instant coffee has ruined the pleasure of waiting for the coffee to drip drop by drop in the percolator. Similarly, 2-minute noodles, overnight miracle cures, instant profits, and quick-fix solutions to every problem are equally to blame.

Our brains are bombarded by experts—both genuine and self-declared—with immediate remedies. Just scroll through the social media platforms, flip television channels or glance through the papers and you will see what I mean. Your dream house is just around the corner, your money will multiply exponentially by just investing in a few



schemes, and your health will improve with just a teaspoon of elixir downed for a week.

Thanks to the ease of technological access, instant gratification is possible with the click of a button. You no longer have to spend hours at the bank, travel agency, or government office. Press 'Search' and you shall find. And press 'Submit' and you will get.

But in the long run, we should remember that the person with the longer breath wins the prize. We should learn to be patient. Allow things to happen in their time. If the planets have waited 144 years to line up for their celestial parade, surely we can wait a few minutes for the coffee to perk?

The next time you are at BG, do ask for their South Indian Filter coffee or their famed pot of Tea No. 1. **BG**