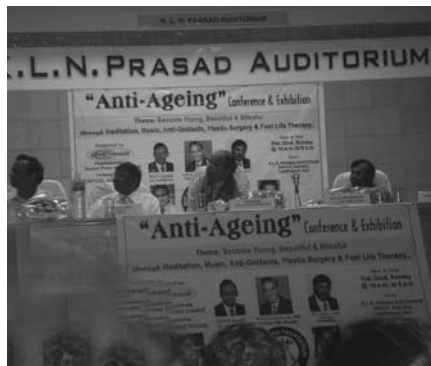


Older the fiddler, sweeter the tune!



The art of aging gracefully

support the elderly. Lalitha Garapati, a meditation guru who was felicitated on the occasion, said, "A two-year-old boy wants to wear his father's shoes, a five-year-old girl wants to wear a saree like her mother, but at some point of time growing up is no longer glamorous." Swaamy Maithreya, master of meditation, asked, "Every child, even the worst of us, looks beautiful; whereas every old person looks ugly, why?" He said that the missing link was 'connectedness'.

The conference venue also featured a small exhibition and sale of anti-ageing products and dietary supplements by Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council (PHARMEXCIL).

Now that the old are increasingly being edged out of the place of honour and respect traditionally reserved for them in this country, and we are getting more youth-centric, it becomes necessary to hold conferences on the need to age gracefully. One such was recently held in Hyderabad. The Anti-Ageing Conference and Exhibition was organised by Dr V Hari Kumar, who runs the Blissful Academy and heads the Bharatiya Vaidhya Vidhan Ltd.

D R Karthikeyan, former CBI director and president of *Life Positive* in his talk titled, "Age gracefully, live purposefully", emphasised the need for a socio-economic approach to sup-

Conscious birthing



Kasia: birthing without trauma

In the race towards progress, humanity has left behind much of what was good and beneficial. We are now retrieving all that and returning to nature with a vengeance. This return is most apt in the area of childbirth, as nature has designed an impeccable process, which too much medical intervention can impede. Kasia Wierzbicka, a Polish hypnobirthing practitioner operating out of Mumbai, loves to quote Dr Michel Odent, author of *Birth Reborn*, and an innovative obstetrician with fresh new perspectives on the birthing process, who said, "To change humankind, it's necessary to change the way we are born."

Hypnobirthing is a technique for achieving a relaxed and stress-free childbirth. The programme developed around this technique is designed to make the parent-couple focus on experiencing the joy of childbirth. When a woman is consciously prepared and joyously looks forward to childbirth, her mind and body are in harmony. She is then in harmony with nature which functions in a well-designed manner.

Hypnobirthing is based on the philosophy that nature has designed the process of birthing meticulously, taking care of every aspect as one sees in the case of animal mothers. The body secretes different fluids in appropriate measure at the appropriate time to aid the process smoothly. The woman is taught to call upon the body's natural relaxant, lessening or even eliminating the discomfort and the consequent need for medication.

Women who opt for hypnobirthing are amazingly alert, and in good humour during labour. They experience freedom from fear that helps them to relax the unyielding muscles to facilitate the process. The technique consists

of self-hypnosis, special breathing and visualisation, which helps them replace their learnt fear of childbirth, with trust in their body. The mind and body then work in tandem making the whole experience natural and relaxed.

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Retail therapy



Spirituality on sale

One is never quite the same after a brush with spirituality. Samira Amin's domain changed after reading *The Celestine Prophecy* a few years ago, and so did her business. She gave up her successful career as a designer and converted her boutique into a charming outlet for healing devices as well as for conducting therapy sessions. The Ostara Shop, at Gowalia Tank in Mumbai, is a treasure trove of healing devices ranging from aromatherapy to crystals and everything in between. Aromatherapy diffusers and essences, acupressure slippers and massagers, a whole range of crystal rocks and jewellery, tarot and angel decks, books on various modalities,

and numerous knick knacks like stained-glass charms, metal and crystal pendulums, dream-catchers, and charms to ward off the evil eye and even Tibetan bowls. Her crystal collection from around the world consists of rocks, jewellery, pyramids, towers and wands. It is said about crystals that you do not pick them – they pick you. Crystals are known to 'call you' so the piece that you just 'happen to' pick up or ask the price of, is the piece for you.

Samira's acupressure slippers are meant to be worn for 15 minutes every day. These have markings to show you how to interpret the meaning of pain in different parts of the foot. A detailed chart explains how every organ is represented on the soles of our feet. This can be a very useful way of detecting health problems even before their onset.

A quiet area of the store has been set aside for one-on-one therapy sessions with clients – be it for tarot or angel card reading or counselling. Angels are nothing but energy aspects of our self, explains Samira. She does not like to measure out her counselling sessions by the hour because she feels that you cannot impose stringent time limits on an intuitive process.

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A candle in the wind



Vimla Thakar

The Mount Abu-based reclusive spiritual thinker and activist, Vimla Thakar, highly regarded the world over for her profound insight into life, passed away on March 11, 2009.

Dedicated to balancing 'inner' spiritual development with 'outer' social development, Vimla Thakar was interested in spiritual matters from an early age. She pursued this interest with meditation and spiritual practices through her youth.

"The essence of religion is the personal discovery of the meaning of life, the meaning of truth. Religion is related to the unconditional, total freedom that truth confers on us. It is a revolution of the whole way of living. Religion moves us from the superficial layers of existence

and encourages us to go deeper to the roots of life. It is an inward journey to the depths of our being.”

Later, she became active in the bhoodan movement of Shri Vinoba Bhave and also attended talks given by, and met with, the philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurthy. This meeting was to change her life. She dedicated herself to teaching meditation and philosophy. For the next two decades, she travelled between India, the US and Europe, teaching and giving talks on spirituality. After 1979, she curtailed her travel outside India. She passed away on the day of Holi, the festival of colour in India.

“Nothing in life is trivial. Life is whole wherever and whenever we touch it, and one moment or event is not less sacred than another,” she had said. Let us, in this moment of grief, remember her message of equanimity and peace.

Letting go of plastic

To think that about a quarter of a century back, India simply didn't have plastic bags! And now the menace is everywhere, clogging drains and rivers, filling landfills, and washing up on sea shores.

Recently, though, many states have taken the initiative to ban plastic or polybags. This long overdue legislation is welcomed by most, though it will take time for it to seep into the lifestyles of all those accustomed to the convenience of the ubiquitous plastic.

Kavita Menon, a housewife, says, “I am extremely happy that a ban has finally been imposed on the use of polybags.”

Polybags pose a major threat to the environment because they cannot be recycled. Hence, there is always a need to produce more and more. Since polybags are lightweight, they often choke the drainage. When an animal feeds on polybags lying in the dustbin, toxins are released into its body, harming the intestine, finally leading to death. Because plastic is non-biodegradable, it breaks down into tiny toxic particles when dumped, leaching into the soil and ultimately polluting it.

With plastics out, here are some alternatives:

- **Jute:** Unlike plastic, jute is durable, renewable, and biodegradable, i.e. it does not deprive soil of its nutrients when discarded. Besides, climate- neutral jute bags are gaining popularity.
- **Cloth:** Cloth bags are certainly the best. Shares Ranjana Chitkara, Deputy Manager, Delhi Tourism, “I carry a cloth bag every time I go shopping. It is reusable, washable and easy to store.”
- **Canvas:** Canvas bags are strong, reliable and environment friendly.
- **Paper bags:** Kshitij Jain, Company Director, Suyash Papers Pvt Ltd says, “Eco-friendly paper is biodegradable as well as recyclable.”

Contact : Khadi Bhavan, Delhi: 011-23360902

Suyash Papers Pvt Ltd: 09811159211

Himanshu Jute Bag Dealers, 09810044078, 27495825

Web site: www.squidoo.com/plasticbags