

WOMEN!

NOW!

MAFIA MAMAS



ISSUES

VIOLENCE AT HOME

A 25-year-old woman from India is six months pregnant. She went to the US because the man she married lives here. She has been in Seattle for a year, but her husband does not allow her to leave the house without him. She speaks Punjabi and Hindi but very little English, and has no friends and no community. She is completely dependent on her husband, who beats her and yells at her. He uses the threat of deportation on a regular basis, knowing that to be sent back to India would be shameful, and her family would likely not take her back. He keeps her passport and her documents, so that she cannot leave him even if she chooses to. Even when he beats her into unconsciousness, she does not call the police because she is sure that he will ask the police to deport her.

One day, her husband gets angry when they are downtown and abandons her in the middle of a crowded street. She has never been alone in the city before, and she is terrified. She finally sees someone who is Indian and runs to them asking for help. Luckily, they are sympathetic and speak her language. They take her to a lawyer, who refers her to a shelter. Although the shelter workers are kind, they do not understand her and have no interpreter. The young woman is very hungry, but she cannot eat because she sees that meat is being cooked in the same pots and pans that hold vegetables. For two days in a row, she eats only bread. Finally, she cannot take it any more. She calls her sister-in-law and asks to be taken home to her abusive husband. She stays with him for some more time until he decides to throw her out. After much trying, she finds a job. But without day-care for her newborn, she cannot accept it.

Unless someone prominent abuses his partner, little is said or heard about domestic violence. But every day countless women are physically battered by their partners. These acts account for almost a quarter of all violent crimes against women. One-third of all murders of women are a result of domestic violence.

Even if they are able to leave abusive partners, victims of domestic violence too often enter a spiral that sends them hurtling from emotional and physical violence into the hole of poverty, depression, and social stigma.

The woman above finally got help from Chaya, a grassroots non-profit organization created to meet the needs of South Asian women in crisis. Chaya's volunteer advocates refer them to appropriate legal and immigration services, inform them of their rights, and work to find solutions that protect their safety while respecting their cultural traditions.

In its first 18 months of operation, Chaya served 33 clients, fielded 232 calls requesting telephone counselling from clients, and provided 11 cultural sensitivity trainings to law enforcement officials and mainstream service providers.

No matter where we're from, domestic violence affects us all in countless ways. The State, too needs to step in since domestic violence has direct impact on overall productivity since women, many of whom are professionals, cannot be expected to be very professional with their work while suffering abuse at home. There is also a dire need for professional counselling for abused women to help them get out of the spiral that the otherwise supportive society tends to keep them pinned in.

SYNONYMOUS WITH NEPALI MUSIC, SHANTI THATAL HAS ALSO CONTRIBUTED MUCH TOWARDS SIKKIM'S EFFORTS AT PRESERVING ITS TRADITIONAL PERFORMING ARTS. SHE IS NOW ON THE VERGE OF RETIREMENT, BUT, AS SARIKAH ATREYA FINDS OUT, THERE ARE STILL MANY MORE PLANS THAT CONTINUE TO EXCITE SHANTI DIDI...

MARRIED TO MUSIC

When the Sikkim Government decided to confer the Master Mitra Sen Smriti Award for 2002 for Music on Shanti Thatal, it must have meant different things to different people. For her fans it was an award long over due. For those not familiar with the world of Nepali music, it meant just another award to 'some' musician. For Ms. Thatal herself, it was the culmination of a long career and recognition for her relentless devotion to the promotion and preservation of Nepali music and culture.

She is unfazed by the ongoing debate in the Nepali community that the recognition to her contributions has come a bit late in the day. For someone who has devoted her entire life to music any recognition at any time is worth it. "Awards are recognition of ones efforts and hard work. They are the yardstick for measuring a person's service and devotion towards her chosen field. Awards inspire a person to work even harder. It does not matter whether one receives them early in ones career or later," she says.

Ms. Thatal, or Guruma or Shanti Didi, as she is fondly called by those who know her, is retiring as Assistant Director, Song & Drama division, Department of Culture later this month after nearly 22 years in service. But that would certainly not mean that she hanging up her harmonium for a quiet life in retirement. She is now going to devote her time pursuing other interests, related to music obviously, which had taken a back seat due to a hectic schedule while in service. Starting a music school for children is one venture that has caught her fancy of late as has the possibility of launching a magazine on music and culture. Also on the anvil - a compilation album of all her compositions.

Music comes naturally to Shanti Guruma. And she has not known any other interest or hobby. Music is running in her veins, she says, "It is the very air I breathe."

Her love affair with melody started very early in life - while growing up in Darjeeling



in the 40s. She started imitating Lata Mangeshkar when she was still a little girl - her favourite being *Aayega Aanevala* from the film *Mahal*. But it was not easy for her to follow her interests in a household where the only form of music that was allowed were devotional songs. "My father, being a strict Arya Samaji, did not allow us to indulge in such activities, forget about film music," she remembers. However, the little girl and her perfect imitation of Lata's voice began to get noticed and soon she was asked to sing in functions.

It soon became clear to her father that she was not academically inclined at all. "I was not at all interested in studies. I barely managed to pass class VIII. Having given up on me as far as studies were concerned, my father decided to allow me to study music instead." So, in 1957, she took that all-important trip to Calcutta to do a three-year diploma in music.

Once back in Darjeeling, Ms. Thatal decided to back to studies!

"I was not really doing anything after my stint in Calcutta. So, the best option for me was to continue my studies," she explains. She did her matriculation and then joined the Loreto College in Darjeeling to complete her graduation.

In 1977, a job offer as a music teacher at the Kendra Vidyalaya in Gangtok was the beginning of her long association with Sikkim. Within two years, she was appointed as the Assistant Cultural Officer with the Cultural Department.

It would not be wrong to claim here that the Song & Drama unit of the Department is what it is today because of the efforts of Shanti Didi. Over the years, she led cultural troupes to virtually every corner of the country and became synonymous with the unit. No government cultural event is ever complete without the presence of Didi behind the harmonium.

Her music has crossed boundaries. She has the distinction of being the first Nepali woman music director. She rendered music to memorable Nepali films such as *Paral ko Aago* and *Bachna Chahane Haru*. In fact, she is one of the highly respected musicians in Nepal. Shanti Didi has been associated with such legends as Gopal Yonzon, Narayan Gopal, Aruna Lama and artists such as Pema Lama and Ram Krishna Dhakal, and numerous others who have all sung her tunes.

But what about her own singing, one wonders. Anyone who has had the opportunity to hear her sing would definitely vouch that she has a voice that is extremely melodious and soulful. In fact, her fans miss her singing, which Shanti Didi agrees wholeheartedly. "My singing has taken a back seat over the years as I was too involved with creating music for other artists. Maybe now I will get the time to pursue singing," she says in that characteristic singsong voice.



DEAR DEE

Dear Dee,
That was good news indeed. A new man. How nice. There's nothing quite like the early heady days, is there? I'm really happy for you. Describing him as "this bloke who lives down the street" hardly scales the heights of wuthering but is revealing nevertheless!

Women, I'm convinced can change whatever their age but leave men alone for a minute and they set like cement. The other day got mail from generous donor of y-chromosomes to my life. Said he hoped I wasn't turning his son into a mother's boy. I thought that was quite rich considering he's hardly seen him since he was born. If I were to shuffle him around with four other babies I doubt if he could pick his own with any real confidence. Men!! Well, Europe no less! What kind of a job is this?! Mine only takes me to Tadung. I've always fancied myself sitting out at Parisian cafes, being utterly charmed by some Frenchman, telling me in broken English how fascinating I am (will just be back, I can hear the baby crying).

Ya where was I? Never mind.
Is it possible to pick up a book for me. It's a new release called "Life Makeovers", has great tips on how to change your life. A friend read it and says she's not been the same again. Which reminds me, my horoscope for July says, "Mars and Venus join forces just as the sun moves into your sign to make you the sexiest sign of the zodiac. A sexy Scorpio or earthy Virgo could be a potential partner. A new playmate could help you burn off a few calories, but old loves are likely to turn up to complicate things".

I tell you I haven't felt so wanted in a long while!
Love,
Mia

only woman



THE LADY WHO
WOULD BE AN
EMPRESS

beautiful
LOVES
QUEENSORAYA

Two moments were unforgettable in the life of Soraya Esfandiary. One was when she stood by the side of his Imperial Majesty, The Shah of Iran at the age of 18 to become his empress; the other was the day she stood on the steps of the plane taking her to Europe and out of his life forever.

Only seven years stretched between the joy of the first and the anguish of the second. Seven years at the end of which she lost the man she loved, her country and her crown. And all for one reason alone - she could not give the Shah the son and heir he wanted. The story of Queen Soraya and the Shah is one of the most poignant in modern history. Everyone presumed the marriage to be one of convenience. Everything depended on whether she could provide an heir to the Peacock Throne. What no one had taken into account was the fact that they would fall deeply in love.

Soraya, a ravishingly beautiful young woman was the daughter of an Iranian father and a German mother. She had silky raven black hair, high cheekbones, huge dreamy green eyes and full red lips. One day in 1950 the Shah saw rather fuzzy snapshots of her taken in St. Moritz. But they were enough to rouse his interest. Soon Soraya was schooled in the formal protocol and etiquette demanded at court in Teheran. She was taking the first

steps towards ascending the Peacock Throne. On her wedding day, she wore a breathtaking creation of silver brocade, tulle and floating ostrich feathers. The train was 12 yards long and the whole concoction weighed 40 pounds. At the great reception that night Soraya wore some of the Pahlavi Crown jewels for the first time. Diamonds and emeralds in her hair, ears and hands.

Everything seemed so perfect. After a two week honeymoon in a villa on the shores of the Caspian Sea, the couple were forced to return to Teheran where a political crisis threatened. But soon the entire royal family had to flee the country only to return to a jubilant welcome from the Iranian people. Trouble had brought the Shah and Soraya even closer but there could be no official coronation of the princess until a crown prince had been born. After four years of marriage the cradle remained empty. But the Shah, ruling over such a volatile country and with many jealous and ambitious men around him, could not afford to wait. Thus, on February 13, 1958, almost 7 years to the day since their wedding, Queen Soraya kissed her husband goodbye, walked through a guard of honour to the waiting plane and turned for one last look. They were never to



meet again. Soon the Shah announced the divorce "with great sorrow". There was no doubting the Shah's grief. Soraya, inconsolable for a time, threw herself madly into the mainstream of jetset life. She was always on the move and never seemed to smile. She would never speak of the past.

MAFIA MAMAS ARE DOING IT
FOR THEMSELVES

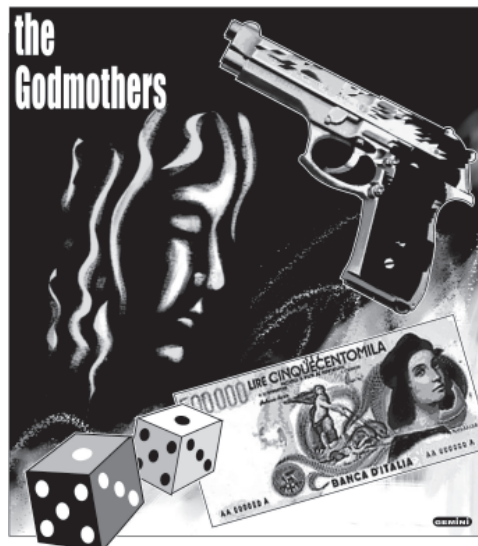
The violence and vendettas once synonymous with the Italian mafia are making a comeback - but this time it's not only by men. Women are embracing new roles in the 'family business' as their gangster men serve time. On the heels of the worst mobster killings in recent Italian history, HILARY CLARKE looks at who's holding the purse-strings in gangland as she reports from Naples, Italy

the same penchant for violence and vendettas as their menfolk in the Italian badlands.

Those gunned down were: Michelina Cava, 51, sister of Biagio Cava, head of the Cava clan of the Camorra, the feared Neapolitan mafia; Michelina's 53-year-old sister-in-law Maria Schibelli; and Clarissa Cava, just 16, the boss's daughter. The killers were members of the arch-rival Graziano clan.

The gunbattle erupted a day after a fight had broken out in a local beauty parlour.

"The code of honour of the mafia as a male, protective thing has



always been a bit of a myth," says Umberto Santino, president of the Palermo-based Giuseppe Impastato

mafia research centre. "Women and children have always been victims of their violence. These are criminal organisations and they don't discriminate."

The Graziano and Cava families have been at war for 50 years and this was the latest in a series of vendettas that have spawned dozens of killings. The dead Cava women were themselves armed with knives and scissors and the young Clarissa was said by police to have been carrying an acid phial.

Those wounded include the Graziano clan's 67-year-old leader

Luigi Graziano, who was travelling in a car with the Graziano women. Nine members of the Graziano clan have been arrested for the murders, including Antonio Mazzochi, a policeman married to a clan member, and four women - among them a 62-year-old grandmother.

What has been dubbed the Lauro massacre has caused tremors in Italy. It is seen as heralding the return of the bloody vendettas between rival gangsters, once commonplace in the south.

More worryingly, it has also placed women firmly on the map of mafia killings - both as instigators of the violence and as targets of vendettas.

When it comes to breaking the glass ceiling in organised crime syndicates, the Camorra of Naples - whose roots go back 200 years, making it older than the Sicilian Cosa Nostra - are well ahead of their southern cousins.

According to the Camorra Observatory, a Naples-based wing of the local state security services, 59 per cent of women affiliated with the Camorra clans are directly involved in their activities.

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MAFIA MAMAS

"Investigators have always underestimated the role of women in the Camorra," said Observatory president, sociologist Amato Lamberti. "We shouldn't wonder at the sight of women holding the shot gun and firing. For at least 30 years women have been taking power inside these criminal organisations."

Indeed, the Camorra spawned one of Italy's most notorious female criminals, Pupetta Moresca, who became famous in 1955 after she personally avenged the murder of her husband. Her life was turned into a film in 1988 with the starring role played by Alessandra Mussolini, the daughter of the wartime Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, who himself was an arch foe of the mafia.

There were other isolated cases of famous female Camorra such as Celeste Giuliano, better known as Celeste di Forcella, after the district in Naples where she controlled the heroin trade and other gangster activities following the death of her brothers. After her arrest in 2000 at the age of 45, the bottle-bleached Celeste made a notorious last request to police - she wanted to go to the hairdressers and be allowed to put on a leopard skin outfit.

Women have been able to move up the ranks in the Camorra faster than the Sicilian Cosa Nostra because it is more of an urban organisation, which started life in gambling and gaming before moving into the world of drugs and public building contracts.

In rural Sicily, where Catholic traditions are stronger, women are more hidebound by traditional mores regarding the sexes.

According to the Camorra Observatory the role played by 75 per cent of the women in Sicilian mafia families is passive, supporting their sons, brothers and husbands rather than actively participating in the crimes.

But even in Sicily, women have always been more than the glamorous wives, moralistic mothers or amorous mistresses of mafia bosses as portrayed in Hollywood films like *The Godfather*.

And as such, they have also been vulnerable to vendetta violence.

With the growing number of spectacular mafia arrests and maxi-trials, including the 1993 trial of the boss of all bosses - Sicilian Salvatore Riina, who was responsible for turning the Cosa Nostra into a sophisticated multinational corporation - trusted women have been increasingly taking control of their imprisoned husband's businesses.

Riina's wife Ninetta Bagarella is generally seen as the brain behind her husband's organisation.

Women's 'clean' names are also used to open bank accounts for money laundering and other white-collar crimes. But as the position of women improves in society, so will their careers within the family's criminal network.

Clarissa Clava, the 16-year-old killed in Naples last month, was studying to be a lawyer. The police have no doubt that she would later have been able to provide legal services for family members.

"Hate and greed don't discriminate," one local taxi driver said. "And that is what the mafia is all about."

- GEMINI NEWS

BETTER GROOMING



Susong SAYS

FOR THAT SPECIAL EVENING

For that special evening out, to bring that glow back to your skin, here are two face

tighteners to brighten your face before going to a party. Beat one egg white and apply on your face with a brush. After it dries up (15 - 20 min), wash off with warm water. Splash cold water on the face. Pat dry. Make a paste of 1tsp cornflour, 1 tsp wheat husk (obtained after sifting ordinary quality wheat flour) and enough malai to form a thick paste. Rub on your face and neck. Rinse after it dries. The corn starch tightens the skin, the husk removes the dead cells and the malai provides the nourishment.

for the fashionable family

the NEXT best THING

Planning to go for a complete family shopping but hate going from shop to shop with your brats nagging you all the time and your couch potato of a just recovering from the World Cup virus husband grudgingly accompanying you, then the best place to shop would definitely be **Strawberry** at Nam Nang. This tastefully done up shop offers you items that practically cover all the aspects of your home - from beautiful window curtains to the cushion covers, bed covers, teddy, puppy and floral printed undergarments for your sweetie pies, and skirts, shoes, printed socks etc.



For your teenage daughter you can pick up hipsters, skirts, minis, tank-tops embroidered with multi coloured beads for their socials. For the husband, the shop offers classy sweaters, trousers, t-shirts, jackets.

Also in the new arrivals section are rain coats and umbrellas in

varied colours to defend yourself and your family members against any sudden downpours.

If you are more in the mood to indulge yourself, there is an array of sensual lingerie among the regular boutique stuff that could do your closet proud.

MUMBAI STYLE PAO-BHAJI

Yours in taste

Taking the whole family out for a good meal is a rarity in Gangtok. But snacks, well, that is a different scene altogether. The aloo-chewra people capitalised on this fad. Quick Bite has added some gloss to the whole enterprise. This weekend, dish out this recipe shared by Basant (Chamling) Rai, an expert in Indian, Chinese, and continental cuisines presently serving varied snacks at Quick Bite located at MG Marg. Here's some Mumbai-style **Pao Bhaji**.

INGREDIENTS: Cabbage-20 grams; carrot- 15 grams; beans- 15 grams; 4 tomato-20 grams; salt to taste; chilli powder, ginger and



onions- 3 grams pao-bhaji masala- 2t-spoons; tumeric- 1pinch Cabbage, tomato, beans, carrots... chopped and boil (15 mins). Put butter or oil in a pan add ginger and onions paste and fry for 10 mins. Soak bread and mash it or in its place boiled and mashed aaloo can be used. Cook for 5 mins and add cabbage tomato, beans, and carrot,

over which is sprinkled turmeric, chilli powder, salt and pao-bhaji masala. Take a double roti and heat it till brown. The famous Mumbai pao- bhaji now actually served at your home. Basant (Chamling) Rai hailing from Sagarmatha Anchal, has been in this line for the past six years.

WOMEN NOW
03-09 July, 2002

HIS TONGUE HAS SOME CHEEK



Men will be men whether they are from Mars or Majitar. Here are their six favourite lines.

What's to eat?
Flung at you first thing as he comes in when you're lying in bed with cerebral malaria. Say fried cholesterol and he'll say "oh"

You're just like your mother
Is this the same man who once likened you to Madonna? Well, he stands corrected now. Suddenly you've morphed into an overweight nag, a slob and a god-awful bore, the picture he has of the woman he openly disliked from day one.

You're hurting my mother's feelings
His mother is the adored one, his goddess and all time oracle. She's never wrong and you're never right. Never say never, never ask why. You'll hurt his mother's feelings.

When did we get married?
While he can never forget your school boyfriend's name, his memory gives him a slip when it comes to the most important day in your life. Before amnesia does you apart, anniversary and birthday dates (especially yours) need to be circled in red on the calendar and served a week before.

Where is my socks/mobile/ remote control?
Its your fault if you don't keep a map to each item in the house. How can you be a good wife if you can't locate all his things when he needs them. Deep breathe, until he shrieks, "Where is my mother!"

Come on, you only have to lie down!
The honeymoon is over. Your headaches have begun. He wants sex; you want a saridon. But he is compassionate, he even lets you lie down.

NOW!
can be reached at 70949
(http://www.epicurious_home/a01index.html)
or emailed at sikkimnow@rediffmail.com

WHATS COOKING ON THE NET

You no longer need to sing for your supper - netsurf correctly and you'll unearth great gourmet specialities. Your first few breathless expeditions into cyberworld may be far from fruitful but with a little patience and experience in handling the search engines you can bake your cake and eat it too.

There are literally millions of sites on the internet, each different and varied. You can visit a limited number by just typing in the hyperlink. But if you want to find a specific site on the internet or

want information on a specific engine jere are some great foodie sites:

The Gourmet connection
<http://www.norvich.net/~gourmet/ezone fdglory2htm>)

This site has an extensive collection of links (close to 90 of them) to food sites of interest. These include sites like "The diabetic gourmet", which details recipes for diabetics, to huge catalogues on the net - full of info on chocolates and other goodies. *A culinary world tour*

(<http://www.webcom.com/~gumbo/worldfood.html>)

This site is for those who are really adventurous. It is linked to sites with African, Jewish, Hungarian, Russian and Caribbean recipes. Definitely worth a visit if you like authentic ethnic recipes.

Indian recipe exchange
(<http://www.helloindia.com/India/resoi>)

This site is devoted to recipes contributed by the virtual Indian community. The contributions are from housewives and not from

professional cooks. The page also lets you search for recipes depending on your preferences.

Epicurious food
(http://www.epicurious_home/a01index.html)

The absolute "must visit" site, it is characterized with links upon links. There are literally hundreds of them. Additional features include regular competitions, attractive prizes and the latest news about food. There are links to pages about table manners, weight loss and herb spotting.

HEALTH FLASH

THE PILL AND BREAST CANCER

Birth control and breast cancer have caused a lot of confusion for women over the years. Is there a link between the two?

Women who take the pill can once again be reassured that they are not increasing their chance of getting breast cancer. A new study looked at more than 9,000 women and found no link between the use of oral contraceptives and a higher risk of breast cancer. This was true even among women who had taken pills containing high doses of estrogen, women with a family history of breast cancer, and women who were on the pill for a long time or started at a young age.

NIGHT-LIGHT MAY PREVENT DIABETIC EYE DAMAGE

New research supports the theory that hours of complete darkness increases retinal damage from diabetes—and that sleeping with some lights on could help counter the effect. However, it's too soon to recommend diabetics to keep the bedroom lights on every night to cut their risk of the eye damage—known as diabetic retinopathy. For one, chronic exposure to light during sleep could have "some unforeseen effects." Diabetic retinopathy is a common complication of diabetes that can lead to blindness. It is caused by changes in retinal blood vessels. Some researchers believe that oxygen deprivation in the retina during dark hours promotes diabetic retinopathy. A study looked at seven adults with type 2 diabetes but no apparent retinopathy, and compared them with eight non-diabetics. They found that activity in tissue near the surface of the retina was reduced after being in the dark, but was pumped up with exposure to oxygen. Healthy individuals showed no such changes. All of this, researchers believe suggests that "night-time illumination" during sleep could benefit diabetics. However, they add, more research is needed before diabetics start taking on a permanent, "full night-time illumination" regimen. It is unclear, according to researchers, whether sleeping with the light on regularly might have negative effects such as sleep pattern disruptions. The researchers also noted that sticking with a diabetes management plan aimed at controlling blood sugar levels can help ward off diabetic retinopathy.

AN ESTIMATED 150 MILLION people worldwide suffer from diabetes. It is a condition where the body is unable to produce or use the hormone insulin leading to elevated blood sugar levels and potentially serious complications. In India, there are nearly 35 million people who are diabetic and the figure is expected to double in the next few years. In Sikkim, although no statistics are available, doctors say that they are witnessing a great rise in the number of diabetic patients.

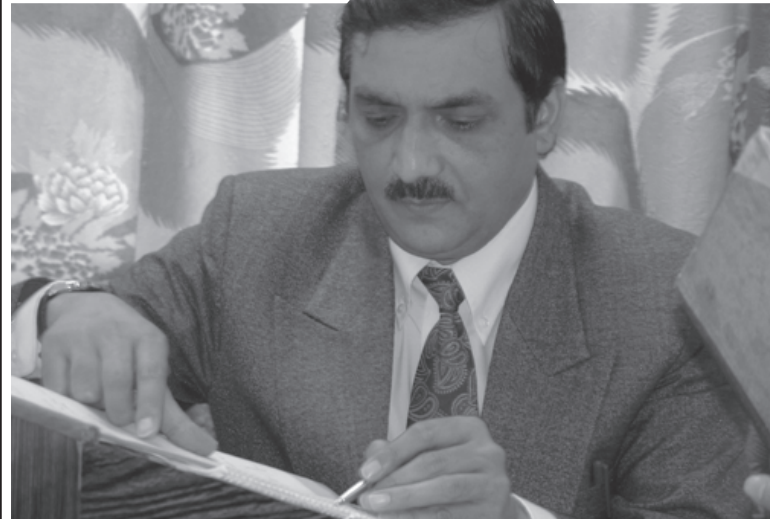
Contrary to popular belief, diabetes is not a mild disease. It is more than just high blood sugar. Diabetes affects other vital organs of the body and if not well controlled can lead to serious, acute, as well as long term complication. Nearly 80 per cent of diabetics will suffer from eye problems and 30 per cent from kidney failure. Diabetes is

also the biggest risk factor for developing cardiovascular complications with diabetics up to four times more likely than others to develop heart disease or suffer a stroke. In a recent survey, doctors felt that their diabetic patients were not adequately aware of their increased heart disease risk, when in fact, 65 per cent will die of a heart attack or stroke.

On June 22, the first patient education programme was organised in Gangtok by the Cardiology Department of STNM Hospital in collaboration with Nova Nordisk, a drug company. This three-hour programme focused on spreading awareness and educating people on diabetes management.

MITA ZULCA speaks to Dr. K. Bhandari, Senior Cardiologist, to find out more about the disease.

WHEN SUGAR IS NOT SO SWEET



to learn to live with it. Once you have it, its going to be there, but the disease can be kept under control. In fact, it is very necessary to control diabetes. It is possible to delay or prevent some of these complications if diabetes is controlled properly.

How does a person know if he has diabetes?

If you have the symptoms of frequent urination, excessive thirst, excessive hunger and weight loss, with a random blood sugar of more than 200 mg/dl you are likely to be diabetic. Other symptoms are tiredness, irritability, weakening eyesight, numbness in the legs or burning sensation in the feet and dry and itching skin.

In the context of Sikkim, how much of a problem is it?

Over the last 15 years, my diabetic patients are increasing in numbers. One of the reasons could be that obesity is growing quite abnormally here. We have small frames meant for the mountains, but all the junk food and other lifestyle factors are making people obese. This is a major contributing factor for diabetics.

What is your message then?

My message will be to live a life of moderation. Eat healthy, exercise regularly, avoid smoking and if you must drink, do it in moderation. And for those above 40, it is wise to have regular check ups done.

What exactly is diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition in which there is too much sugar (glucose) in the blood. Although sugar is needed to provide energy for the body, when in excess, it causes problems. Persons with diabetes have excess sugar in blood because they lack or have deficient supply of insulin. When insulin is absent or deficient or is defective, sugar (glucose) cannot enter the cells and remains in blood in high amounts.

Is diabetes serious?

Diabetes is of two types. Type one develops at an early age. The sus-

tenance of life in Type one patients is dependent on insulin injections. If the patient stops taking insulin or insulin requirements increase due to illness or fever, diabetic coma can develop. If untreated, unconsciousness or death may occur.

Long term complications with diabetes can affect other organ systems. Most common are eye, blood vessels, circulation and kidney complications. Its a multi-system disease affecting all systems. If your blood sugar levels are high, any disease becomes more severe and more difficult to treat. Diabetes itself makes you more prone to cardiovas-

cular and cerebrovascular problems.

Is it genetic or are environmental factors responsible?

It is genetic, but lifestyle and diet also impact on the disease. If a person has a strong family history of diabetes, chances are more of having the same. But sedentary habits, obesity, stress and emotional disturbances and eating too much of refined food are all contributory factors. Gestational diabetes occurs in women during pregnancy. Obesity is the most significant risk factor.

Is there a cure for diabetes?

Diabetes is not curable. You've got

SHANTI THATAL: MARRIED TO MUSIC

Contd from pg (i)

There has never been dearth of accolades and appreciation for Shanti Didi. Numerous cultural organizations from all over the region and from Nepal have felicitated her for her contributions. She has, however, never been known to have indulged in self-promotion. Rather, she is known to be a selfless and dedicated woman to the point of being taken advantage of. A suggestion Shanti Didi laughs off.

Life has been fulfilling, says Shanti Didi. Throughout this long journey with ragas and taal, she did mostly what she wanted to do. Like, for instance, the conscious decision to remain single. But in no way does she feel incomplete or that she has missed out anything in life. "In



fact, my life has been thoroughly fulfilling as well as exhilarating. It is not that everything was perfect.

I have had my share of disappointments and difficult times. But all this has contributed to the person I am today. I have grown with each experience, no matter how good or bad. I have no regrets, whatsoever," she says.

Having devoted her life towards the promotion and preservation of music and culture, retirement from active service will give her more time to devote to her other pet projects, like documentation work of folk traditions of different ethnic communities.

Is there any other thing that interests her apart from music? "Yes, good food. I am very interested in cooking and trying out

new recipes. Maybe I will now have more time to take up this interest too," Shanti Didi says.

Her retirement is also a subject of discussion with people closely associated with her. "Will she now leave Sikkim and settle down in Darjeeling?" everyone seems to be asking. Sikkim is reluctant to let go of its "melody queen".

"I may be retiring from service but certainly not from active life. I will be closely associated with both Darjeeling and Sikkim, the way I have always been. I will continue to create music and promote art and culture till my dying moments."

Shanti Didi is an epitome of today's woman - strong, independent and dedicated to her work. Someone who is not afraid to live a life in her own terms.