

#HEALTH

What Happens in the Hours Before Death?

A new survey of nearly 1,000 people in the UK found that a majority of people are clueless about the realities of death and dying.



A death has become less common in our daily lives, it has become harder to consider our own mortality or that of those close to us. Lack of openness about death has negative consequences for the quality of care provided to the dying and bereaved. Eradicating ignorance about what can be achieved with modern palliative care and encouraging dialogue about end of life care issues are important means of changing attitudes.

Benjamin Franklin famously quipped that the only certainties in life are death and taxes. Today, most people could justifiably add, “and I don’t understand either of them.”

This is all to say that a new survey of nearly 1,000 people in the UK found that a majority of people are clueless about the realities of death and dying. In the survey, which was released on May 8, 6 in 10 respondents admitted they knew little or nothing about what happens in the final hours before death. What’s more, half of those, who admitted ignorance, also said that they had been present with someone in their final living moments.

This might seem like a grim poll to conduct, but according to *The Academy of Medical Sciences*, a fellowship of more than 1,000 UK medical scientists, which sponsored the survey, that’s sort of the point. According to a statement from the academy, death and dying have become such taboo subjects in many cultures that many people resist talking about them. (Indeed, of the 966 UK adults polled in the new survey, 354 refused to answer any questions.) This reticence has resulted in a widespread cultural ignorance about death, the survey found. For example, only 42 per cent of respondents said that they turned to friends or family for information about death and

end-of-life care, while just 22 per cent said they’d be likely to ask medical professionals for information. Roughly the same percentage (20 per cent) of people said that they get their information on death from documentaries, and 16 per cent said that they get their information from fictionalized TV shows and films.

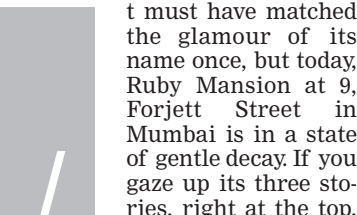
“TV and films rarely ever depict ‘normal’ deaths,” Dame Lesley Fallowfield, an Academy of Medical Sciences’ member and professor at the University of Sussex, said in the statement. “For many individuals, death is a gentle, peaceful and pain-free event. Although grieving the loss of loved ones can be a difficult process, some people do speak about their loved one’s death as having been a positive experience. We need to demystify death and talk about it more.”

Lack of first-hand information may exacerbate people’s fears about death, the survey said. When asked about their concerns about a friend or loved one dying, 62 per cent of respondents said that they feared the person would be frightened. According to Fallowfield, this is not always the case. To help address these concerns and to encourage more open conversation and education about dying, the academy is launching a national awareness campaign.



After 90 years, Agra Gharana has moved out of its home in Mumbai

● Malini Nair



I t must have matched the glamour of its name once, but today, Ruby Mansion at 9, Forrester Street in Mumbai is in a state of gentle decay. If you gaze up its three stories, right at the top, to the left, you will see a flat with a bank of windows, now definitively shuttered. Nothing in the disrepair tells you that, until a year ago, this was a living monument to how Bombay became the epicentre of Agra Gharana, a style that claims a history of at least 400 years.

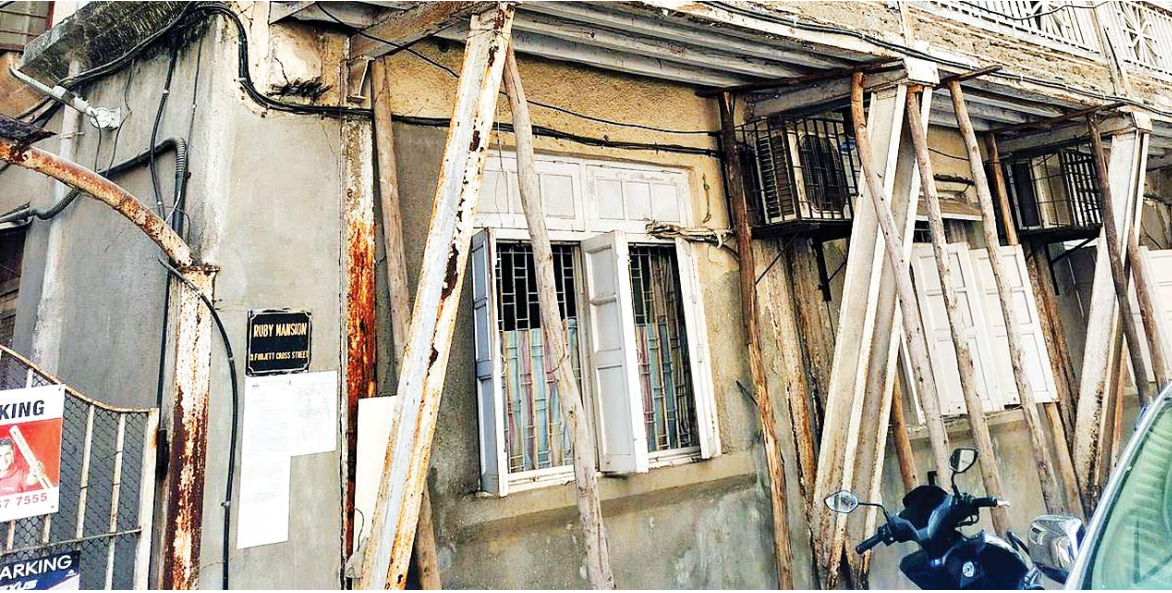
For around 90 years, Ruby Mansions in the Gowalia Tank area had been home to generations of musicians who trace their genealogy to the earliest progenitors of the gharana. That fabled musical past came to an end last year, when vocalist Raja Miyan, among the last in this line to have lived in the building, moved out. It was a wrench, he says, leaving what he calls ‘saangeet ka mandir’.

“It holds a very important place in the history of our gharana, the centre of its famously generous vidyadaan,” said Raja Miyan. “We had a hall and four large rooms that the ustadhs and their families shared and doubled up as music classrooms, so we woke to the sound of *riyaz*. Jagannathbua Purohit, Jitendra Abhisheki and Ram Naik, it was common for us to have great masters at home. Moghubai Kurdikar and her daughter, Kishori Amonkar, who learned from my father, lived one building away.”

The stalwarts of the form, who lived at Ruby Mansion, reads like a list of who’s who of Hindustani classical music of the 20th century. Many of them were connected through criss-crossing familial links with masters of lesser-known gharanas such as Hapur, Khurja, Rangile and Atrauli. There was the legendary Vilayat Hussain Khan, his brother-in-law and the much acclaimed Azmat Hussain Khan, and his nephews, the immensely gifted triad of Khadim Hussain Khan, Anwar Hussain Khan and Latafat Hussain Khan. The flat boasted as many ustadhs as the number of rooms. The succeeding generations saw more musicians in that home, among them, Raja Miyan, Aslam Khan, Yakub and Yunus Hussain Khan. “At Ruby Mansion,



Vilayat Hussain Khan.



Stalwarts of the form, who lived at Ruby Mansion, reads like a list of who’s who of Hindustani classical music of the 20th century.

they made for a true gharana in many senses of the word, they lived together as a joint family, taught, did *riyaz* and ate together off the same platter,” said musician and scholar Satyashel Deshpande, who has memories of visiting the mansion with his father as a child.

Last month, Ruby Mansion and its history were at the heart of a music event at G5A, an arts centre in Mahalaxmi. The renowned Kolkata-based khayal singer Waseem Ahmed Khan performed and later, along with his uncle, Raja Miyan, spoke of the building’s fabulous years. “In my view, at least 70% of the Hindustani music coming out of Bombay now is linked directly or indirectly to our gharana,” said Waseem Ahmed Khan.

Devina Dutt, the curator of the event, says sites of music-making are important in the telling of a city’s history. “For a music lover, a city is also made up of memories of concerts heard and described, of images and anecdotes from a time gone but nevertheless real and lived. The *rasika*’s mind absorbs all these stories and redraws the city map. I think we need to congregate around these stories to listen to this fabulous music again and with passion.”

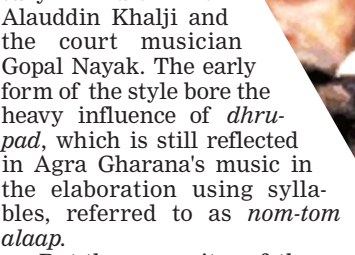
Arrival in Bombay

There is an oral history of the proto-Agra Gharana that traces it beyond the 16th century court of Akbar. It goes back to the 14th cen-

#MUSIC



Azmat Hussain Khan.



Ustad Raja Miyan.



Ustad Faiyaz Khan.

tury rule of Alauddin Khalji and the court musician Gopal Nayak. The early form of the style bore the heavy influence of *dhrupa*, which is still reflected in Agra Gharana’s music in the elaboration using syllables, referred to as *nom-tom alaap*.

But the progenitor of the contemporary Agra Gharana style was ‘Ghage’ Khudabaksh, nicknamed thus because of his hoarse voice. The story goes that distraught at being spurned by his own family for his unmusical voice, he sought out the tutelage of Nathan Peerbhoksh of the Gwalior Gharana. Twelve years later, when he finished his training, his voice had been scrubbed and he had melded the traits of his own and his adopted gharana. The new sound had both, the *dhrupa* and he was trained in and the *khayal* form he picked up in Gwalior.

By the 19th century, hereditary singers of the Agra Gharana, like others, were faced with declining royal and feudal patronage. To make up for this loss, they fanned out across India in search of new patrons, students and fortunes. The Agra Gharana, between the mid-19th and 20th century, scattered across the country - Bombay, Delhi, Kolkata, Vadodra, Mysore and Bangalore. Its most celebrated name Faiyaz Khan, whose fans were legion, had an especially peripatetic musical career.

Of all the places the gharana spread to, Bombay, the nascent

commercial capital of the country, was where the style found its widest and most generous support, a prolific and widespread network of students, keen and appreciative audiences, and wealthy patrons.

Stories of the gharana’s remarkable work in the city, as performers, teachers and even organisers, come through in multiple accounts of Bombay’s musical history. This includes tabla player and scholar Anesh Pradhan’s landmark work *Hindustani Music in Colonial Bombay*, and Tejaswini Niranjana’s *Musciophilia in Mumbai*. There are other books too that offer valuable insights on the subject, such as *Parampara aur Bandishain* by Yashwant Mahale, who, at 92, is the oldest representative of the gharana in the city, and S Haldankar’s *Aesthetics of Agra and Jaipur Traditions*. Accounts of the gharana have also been documented by N Jayavanth Rao, a connoisseur and husband of the contemporary vocalist Lalit Rao, whose

According to Raja Miyan, Vilayat Hussain Khan asked his nephews to seek accommodation for the family in Bombay. The clan first lived in Kandawadi in Girgaum and then in Babulnath, where Alladiya Khan, related to the family and the founder of the Jaipur-Atrauli gharana, stayed with the family for a while.

“The shadow of a war was looming over the world then and there was the fear that ‘yahan kuchh bhi ho sakta hai’, so the family opted to stay together at all times,” said Raja Miyan, who moved to Bombay as a child of two from his maternal home in Atrauli.

Gharana lore

There is something of a joke about Agra Gharana’s overwhelming popularity in Bombay, if you

chucked a stone in any direction in south Bombay from Ruby Mansion in the mid-20th century, chances were that you would hit a home of an Agra shagird.

“Agra gharana was all over Bombay,” said vocalist Arun Kashalkar. “Most institutions of music of the time taught Agra Gharana music, either through the family itself or its disciples. The *mahaul* of the gharana was very cosmopolitan. There were no divisions of caste, class or religion. And they gave generously of their art.” Kashalkar too trained in the Agra gharana. His *guru* was the late Srikrishna (Babannrao) Haldankar, who had learnt under Khadim Hussain Khan.

The Agra Gharana lore has many fabulous Bombay stories, of ustadhs, who could be spotted walking to bus stops around Tardeo on their way to teaching in the south Bombay homes of the upper class or the artistically inclined. Of the magnanimity of the Khansahebs, there are other legends, stopped on the way with a request for a composition, they would oblige readily with the encouraging words ‘Bete likh lo.’

“Khadim Hussain Khan saheb would go to teach across South Bombay: Breach Candy, Napean Sea Road, Peddar Road,” said Raja Miyan. “Vilayat Hussain Khan saheb would go to Dadar where Jagannathbua, CR Vyas and Vasant Rao Kulkarni learned. Younger students used to fight over who got to escort him to a bus or taxi back home because it gave them the chance to seek out a *cheez* (composition).”

Satyashel Deshpande talks of his father getting a *bandish* scribbled on a bus ticket by an *ustad*.

Without doubt, the gharana’s biggest service was to music education, producing an astonishing number of musicians of great merit. In Yashwant Mahale’s book, the list includes well over 100 names and these were those taught by just the six ustadhs, Nathan Khan, Vilayat Hussain Khan, Faiyaz Khan, Khadim Hussain Khan, Anwar Hussain Khan and Ata Hussain Khan. If one were to go beyond the first line of masters they produced, and include the equally generous numbers trained by these masters, the total figure would be staggering.

Mahale’s list of Agra greats includes Ratna Bai, Jagannathbua Purohit, Moghubai Kurdikar, Gajananrao

Asteroid hits the moon



An astonishing moment was observed when an asteroid collided with the moon. This was once-in-a-lifetime moment captured on the camera. It was a surreal moment of astronomical history. The impact was captured by multiple observatories, including NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope, revealing new insights into asteroid behaviour and the dynamics of lunar collisions. While there is no danger to people on Earth, scientists are investigating whether debris from the collision could enter Earth’s atmosphere in the coming months, potentially producing meteor showers or short-term satellite risks.



Ground floor of Ruby Mansion.



Kishori Amonkar.

Joshi, Srikrishna Haldankar, Anjanibai Lolekar, Kishori Amonkar, Srimatibai Narvekar, VR Athavale, among others. Between them, they were to pass their knowledge on to masters like KG Ginde, SCR Bhatt and Dinkar Kaikini.

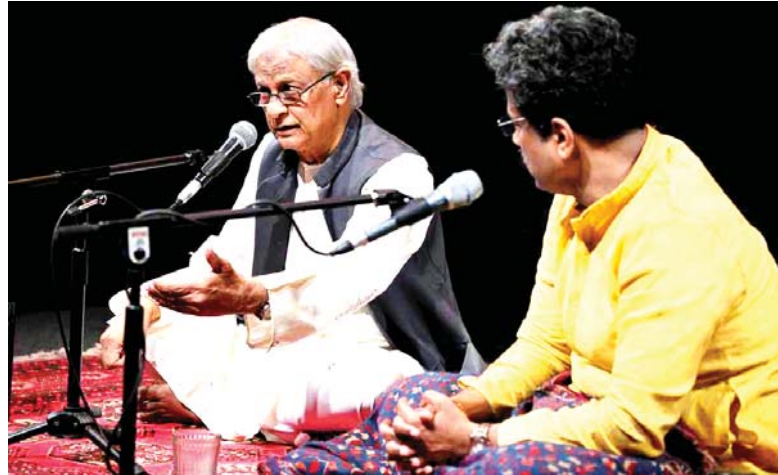
“Gowalia Tank was the main hub of the gharana and since Dadar TT marked the end of the city as we then knew it, most gurus, students and institutions were scattered between these two points,” recalled Kashalkar. “Jagannathbua taught at Mahim, Chidanand Nagarkar at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in Babulnath and there was the Vallabh Sangeet Vidyalaya in Sion.”

One of the most outstanding features of the gharana is its proclivity for composing, it is said to have generated more original compositions than any other style. Most ustadhs of the gharana carried a nom de plume, often suffixed with the word *piya* or *rang*, and inserted into *bandishes*. Vilayat Hussain Khan ‘Prempiya’, Faiyaz Khan ‘Prempiya’, Sharafat Hussain Khan ‘Premrang’, Jagannathbua Purohit ‘Gunidas’ and so forth.

In Pradhan’s book on Hindustani music in colonial Bombay, the Agra Gharana appears frequently in multiple roles. Its musicians were frequent participants in the hugely popular five-day annual concert series held in the memory of Paluskar by the School of Indian Music. They also spearheaded an early effort to create a platform for musicians and music, the Sangeet Prasarak Mandal set up by Vilayat Hussain Khan in 1936.

In the ephemeral, shifting world that Hindustani music inhabits, histories of people and places like Ruby Mansion are being constantly erased, says curator Devina Dutt. “I had landed up on the top floor flat at Ruby Mansion about two decades ago at the invitation of Aslam Khan saheb, who traced his lineage to the Hapur, Khurja and Sikandra as well as the Agra gharana. As I heard his stories, I began to understand how layers of our music history are lost to us. If these stories and memories were shared and collected and celebrated as an important part of our cities, perhaps, we would value the music and the musicians more.”

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Raja Miyan and Waseem Khan remember Ruby Mansion at an event in Mumbai.

#MENTAL-HEALTH

A Surge in Screens

So many people are asking: does screen time affect mental health?



C at memes can make you smile, but too much screen time can worsen your mood. Today, you can do almost anything from your smartphone. You can watch your favourite movie, read a new book, buy a new outfit (or new wardrobe) and even order a full cart of groceries to be delivered at your door. You can book a vacation, register for college courses, apply for a new job and schedule your annual doctor’s check-up, all with the tap of a button.

Not only does technology provide material items, it also connects us to other people via phone calls, email, text messaging, video chats and social media apps. And it’s not just limited to smartphones; many of us have multiple devices in the form of tablets, laptops, smart TVs, artificial intelligence (AI) devices and desktop computers that are accessible in almost every room and building we enter.

So many people are asking: does screen time affect mental health? Is this constant access to screens helping or hurting our mental health? Is it providing an added source of stress and anxiety? Is it beneficial? And what about the kids?

The Effect of Screens on Sleep

M any people use their screens right up until the moment they go to sleep, browsing social media, reading articles or watching their favourite show. Research suggests that increased screen time may be related to a decrease in both sleep quality and sleep duration. This is particularly noticeable for children and adolescents who have screens (TVs, computers, tablets) in their bedrooms, with access prior

Screens and Self-Esteem

S ocial media is one of the primary reasons people are glued to their screens, especially smartphones. In some ways, this resource can support our mental health by allowing us to have contact with loved ones who we may not be able to connect with, in person. There is, however, the component of social media that offers an easy way to compare yourself with others, such as an influencer or celebrity. You may be compar-

ing yourself with an image of a person you’ve never met, who has a large social media following and appears to be living a picture-perfect life. Comparisons like this can contribute to low self-esteem, negative self-talk and body image issues. If you notice a pattern of feeling poorly about yourself while scrolling through social media, it may be time to change your routine by cleaning up your feed and spending less time on it.



Screen Time for Kids and Teens

O fentimes, technology and screens are being marketed to and used daily by children and adolescents. Research suggests that there may be an increased risk for developmental delays in language acquisition and communication skills in young children who spend significant time in front of screens (i.e., 2-3 hours per day). As screens become more prevalent in daily life, the decrease in social interaction becomes more serious. When children grow into adolescence and young adulthood, having a solid foundation of interpersonal skills is very important for their development of healthy relationships with other people. If screens are prevalent in your life (or your child’s life), ensure that you’re still engaging in social interactions and connecting with others on a regular basis.



Yes, There are Positive Effects of Technology

W ith ongoing developments in the world of technology, there are many positive outcomes related to mental health that are important to point out. The recent introduction of telehealth in many areas has made mental healthcare more accessible to people around the world, especially for those who may not have a number of resources in rural areas. Additionally, there are virtual resources and smartphone apps that can provide a line of support for those who need it. With a quick search, you can download supportive apps for depression, anxiety, PTSD and more. Many of these apps have been reviewed by the Anxiety and Depression Association of America for their effectiveness and ease of use.

Connecting with others has been made easier and more accessible for millions of people around the world, thanks to advances in technology. We can keep in touch with family on the other side of the country, have weekly video calls with a friend overseas, and attend reunions, gatherings and community events through a number of virtual outlets. Maintaining relationships with friends, family and the community can act as a huge support system for mental health, and it is because of technology and screens that we now have 24/7 access to the people and communities we value and rely on.

So, does Screen Time affect Mental Health?

W ith so much information floating around, it’s become tough to figure out whether technology and screens are harming or benefiting our mental health. The answer to this depends on how you are utilizing your screen time.

- Are you using it to connect with family?
 - Are you using it to access a mental health resource?
 - Or are you using it to compare your life with influencers on social media, resulting in poor self-esteem?
- Technology is powerful in the way it provides access to just about anything we can imagine. If we are mindful about our usage of technology and screen time, we can use it to support our mental health rather than harm it.

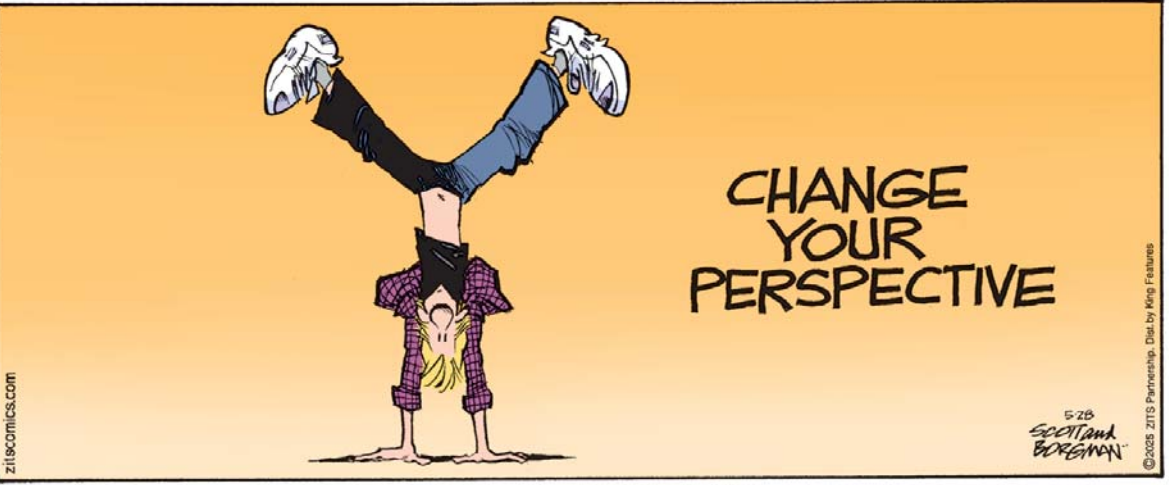
THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman