



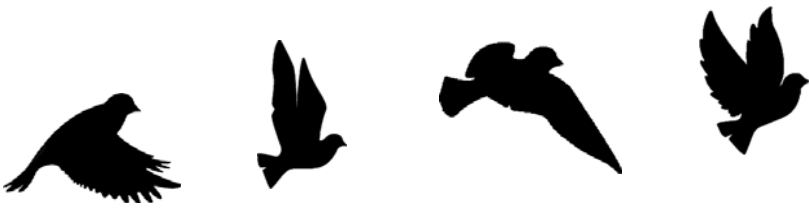
Reaching New Heights: National Skyscraper Day

celebrated on September 3, National Skyscraper Day pays tribute to the towering marvels of modern architecture that define city skylines across the world. These vertical giants are not just feats of engineering but symbols of human ambition, innovation, and progress. From the Empire State Building in New York to the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, skyscrapers reflect a blend of design brilliance and urban functionality. In India, cities like Mumbai, Gurugram, and Bengaluru are embracing high-rises as solutions to urban space constraints. The day honours the visionaries, architects, and engineers who dare to build upward, transforming skylines and inspiring future possibilities.



Freedom is the most terrifying thing in the world. Everyone claims to want it, but when they get it, it frightens them into next week. They are at a loss. Castaways on an island without a clock. Or adrift on the sea in a small boat. That's what retirement does, casts you away from the comfort of schedules, managers, secretaries, time clocks of one kind or another. Watchers, noters of details, monitors of your comings and goings. All claimants on your freedom. But you and they have been in this elaborate game for so long, that to suddenly be cut loose one day in the name of retirement and be 'set free,' is unnerving, deeply unsettling, and you will say, unnecessary. But it happened. Now what?

All That Is Freedom



Mirza Yawar Baig Naturalist and Wildlife Conservationist

What if you didn't know your date of birth? Agreed, you wouldn't be able to celebrate your birthday. But you would also not know that you are 70 or 80 or 90. Then, how old would you feel?

Incidentally, not knowing your date of birth is nothing unusual or novel. There are millions of people all over the world who live in villages and in whose cultures birth of babies happens at home with or without the aid of a midwife. Dates of birth are neither recorded nor celebrated because that is not part of their tradition. Birthday parties are a very Western urban ritual, and I have lived and worked with people who had no idea what a birthday party was. Such people are as old as they feel. That is what I am referring to.

This article is for those who allow the 'old man syndrome,' into their lives, which 'kills' many before their time. Same advice for women, if they need it. Nobody can physically die before their time or live after their time comes. But what happens to us qualitatively or I should say, 'What we allow' to happen to us qualitatively, is really up to us. Age with good health, as a good friend puts it, is a 'genetic lottery.' Lottery or not, it is not defined by us. We don't get to choose how long we live on this planet. But we do get to choose how we want to live. Barring disease and accidents, the quality of life in our dotage depends on us. Geriatric care spe-



cialists say that most geriatric ailments are lifestyle related. Think about this.

The biggest problem, post-retirement, is a loss of purpose. I recall reading somewhere that most men die within two years of retirement. Some companies run courses for 'Post-retirement Life,' to help people to cope with retirement, advising people how to live when they don't need to go to work daily. I don't know how women who work in full time jobs or people today in hybrid jobs working partly from home handle this, but a loss of purpose is a big factor which impacts retired people negatively, who feel that their lives have no value any longer and so their being alive doesn't matter. They may not express this quite so directly but that is what results in them letting things go, as it were and just going to seed. They get sloppy, lazy, drop their standards, stop going out, meeting people and get lonely and depressed.

The Law of Entropy applies to us also and as soon as we stop taking care of ourselves, we deteriorate physically, mentally and spiritually. Going to work forced us to take care of ourselves. A social life did the same. But since the two are linked for most people, as soon as one ends, so does the other in all meaningful ways and the decline is fast and can be final. I say, can be, because it is not inevitable. It depends on what we choose to do. So, to stay relevant, vibrant, and purposeful, is in our hands. But that requires us to change our source of motivation from the external environment to our own internal drive.

The most powerful sign of a loss of purpose is the lack of a compelling schedule. Or to put it more painfully, gaining freedom. The most dreaded answer to, 'What shall I do now?' is, 'Whatever you like.' That is because of how you and I were raised. From the time we

opened our eyes, all through kindergarten, school, college, organizational life, marriage and all the way until yesterday, someone told us what to do and when. And if we didn't, there was a price to pay. A cost. A punishment. Be that physical, financial, career wise, a frown, the cold face, silence, or the doghouse. Freedom is for the birds. And they too must fear the Sparrow Hawk. It is this freedom which scares us. We have been conditioned to justify every breath we take, every move we make, to someone who has formal or informal authority over us. Remember the song, we Boomers who own this world, Gen Z go fly a kite, which also we own....knew in school and college? Police....

Every breath you take and every move you make

Every bond you break, every step you take,

I'll be watching you

That, my friends, is literally how our lives were until we retired. We have become used to being watched so much that we take comfort in it. Slavery and subjugation are very comforting. When we accept subjugation, we deceive ourselves that we are not responsible for the consequences of our actions



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and feel justified to conveniently blame 'AUTHORITY,' if things go wrong. But does that blaming save us?

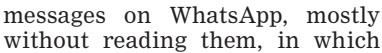
Stop for a second and ask, who pays the price when things go wrong? We? Or those who made the rules that we followed so slavishly without question? For example, who gets sacked if a business starts to lose money? The Board and Top Management or workers who had no share in the decision making? Who lose their home if banks collapse? If you forgot, go look up Subprime crisis 2007-2010 and see who got a bailout? Who can't get a job because the education system failed to keep up with the pace of changes in technology, environment or discovery so, you graduate with a degree that has no relevance? In that case, will they refund your fees? Ironically therefore, the panic of retirement is akin to what the bird which has lived in a cage all its life feels when the cage door is opened for it to fly free, it retreats into the innermost recesses of the cage because it knows the cage. It

doesn't know the open sky and is terrified of it. Its fear is justified because cage birds can't survive in the wild. They are easy prey for every hawk. But you're not a bird.

Freedom is the most terrifying thing in the world. Everyone claims to want it, but when they get it, it frightens them into next week. They are at a loss. Castaways on an island without a clock. Or adrift on the sea in a small boat. That's what retirement does, casts you away from the comfort of schedules, managers, secretaries, time clocks of one kind or another. Watchers, noters of details, monitors of your comings and goings. All claimants on your freedom. But you and they have been in this elaborate game for so long, that to suddenly be cut loose one day in the name of retirement and be 'set free,' is unnerving, deeply unsettling, and you will say, unnecessary. But it happened. Now what?

The biggest challenge is what to do with time? Suddenly, you have a lot of time. Some people take refuge, albeit unconsciously in forwarding

#FACE TO FACE



I find serious reading to be most beneficial. I love reading biographies and history. Especially social history. I also like reading political analyses and then looking at that situation and doing my own analysis. I challenge myself by holding myself to the rule that every conclusion I arrive at must have a data-based reason for it. It must not simply be my opinion. I play a mental game by asking myself, What if? I take a historical incident and ask, 'What if such and such were different?' and see what conclusions I draw. Another game is to ask myself what I would do if I was in the place of one or the other of the protagonists in the story.



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doctor tells me, "Do whatever you want, but don't fall."

Do a set of stands from a chair, as many as you can do comfortably, a few times a day. A third way to test as well as a very good exercise is to see if you can climb stairs without pulling yourself up using the banister. Do keep a hand on it to steady yourself. Once again, don't fall. But if you can stand up from your chair and climb stairs without support, then you can pat yourself on your back, you are doing well. If not, you need to get into action before you get to the point of no return. I can't emphasize this enough. For older people, to recuperate lost muscle is very difficult indeed. I don't like to say impossible, but it can be. So, you don't want to reach that level. Third item on the list is the mind. Incidentally, all items are equally important, and my list is not in order of importance or priority. The brain is also a muscle and subject to the same rule, don't use it, lose it. There are two things to do with using the brain. Reading and problem solving. Reading is

reading. I find serious reading to be most beneficial. I love reading biographies and history. Especially social history. I also like reading political analyses and then looking at that situation and doing my own analysis. I challenge myself by holding myself to the rule that every conclusion I arrive at must have a data-based reason for it. It must not simply be my opinion. I play a mental game by asking myself, What if? I take a historical incident and ask, 'What if such and such were different?' and see what conclusions I draw. Another game is to ask myself what I would do if I was in the place of one or the other of the protagonists in the story.

The biggest danger is to use things that make the brain lazy. ChatGPT, for example. It is much better to force yourself to think, analyze and write. If you need to research, do it the hard way. That will make your brain stronger. Please remember, the price of convenience is disability. Spending endless hours scrolling reels, or on TikTok, Instagram or forwarding WhatsApp doesn't qualify as brain exercise. It is highly detrimental and a total waste of our and other people's time.

The best thing to keep the brain not only healthy but generate new neurons is to give it difficult tasks. The more difficult the task, the better it is for the brain. The best is to learn a new language. Remember, it is not about learning, so, don't get frustrated if you find that you can't remember new words and the rules of grammar. It is about exercising

your brain and the more it has to struggle, the stronger it gets. Learning anything new works. So, if language is not your thing, then do whatever it is, as long as it is new, unfamiliar and challenges you. Finally, and most importantly, spiritual health is critical to living a healthy life. It begins with an attitude of gratitude. My favourite reminder is what the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said, "If you wake up with a healthy body, a roof over your head, and enough food for the day, it is as if the entire world has been created for you." Just think about that. Food for that one day only. We have refrigerators stocked with food for months and still complain. Complaining drains you. Gratitude fulfills you and fills your life with light. Feel grateful and express gratitude. It is important to express gratitude. Gratitude helps us to be conscious about the blessing that we are feeling grateful for, which enhances our enjoyment of it. It is as if it has been increased just because we are thankful for it.

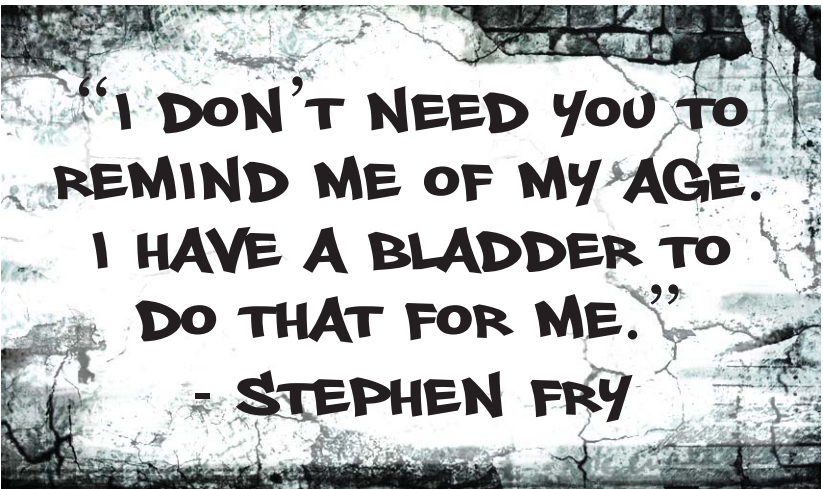
Remember that the most important blessings have names. It is the people in our lives, often those we take for granted until one day we lose them, and then, we don't understand what happened and why we feel so desolated. Show appreciation and express gratitude while those people can still listen to you. The dead don't hear their eulogy. Don't wait that long to say what you should say today.

Even more finally, and importantly, laugh. A good sense of humor is a lifesaver and a source of great goodness for all around you. Be silly. Laugh at yourself. Laugh with others. Never laugh at anyone. That is not funny. Have fun. Not everyone gets to be old. It is a privilege. Enjoy it in good health.

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THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



#LIPPAN

A Desert Craft That Reflects Light and Beauty

Lippan art is more than decoration, it became a way of bringing light, energy, and joy into desert homes

In the hot desert regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat, people developed unique forms of architecture and decoration that were not only beautiful but also practical for survival in extreme heat. One of the most remarkable traditional art forms is Lippan Art, also known as Mud and Mirror Work.



Originating mainly in the Kutch region of Gujarat and later influencing nearby desert cultures, Lippan art reflects the creativity of communities who transformed simple mud walls into glowing works of art.

Art Born from the Desert

The desert climate of Rajasthan and Gujarat is harsh, with intense sunlight during the day and cooler temperatures at night. Traditional homes were made from mud because mud naturally keeps interiors cooler in summer and warmer in winter. The thick earthen walls acted as insulation against desert heat.



Women of local communities began decorating these mud walls using a mixture of clay, camel dung, and natural fibers. From this practical architecture emerged a stunning decorative tradition.

Patterns inspired by nature, peacocks, flowers, camels, trees, and geometric forms were carefully shaped onto walls by hand. Small mirrors were then embedded into the wet mud surface, creating sparkling reflections.

Mirrors and Light in Darkness

One of the most fascinating features of Lippan art is the use of mirrors. In desert homes, especially in earlier centuries when electricity did not exist, light was limited at night. Families lit small oil lamps called diyas inside their homes. When the flame of a diya reflected on

dozens of tiny mirrors placed in the mud walls, the entire room shimmered softly with dancing light. A single lamp could brighten a dark room through multiple reflections. The mirrors transformed darkness into warmth and beauty.

This made Lippan art more than decoration, it became a way of bringing light, energy, and joy into desert homes.

Beauty Integrated with Architecture

Unlike paintings hung separately on walls, Lippan art is integrated directly into the architecture of the house. The walls themselves become living artworks. The raised mud patterns create texture, while mirrors add brilliance and movement.

The art also reflects the philosophy of desert communities: using natural materials available around them to create something elegant and functional. Mud, often considered ordinary, became a medium of artistic expression.

Today, Lippan art has moved beyond village homes and can be seen in hotels, cultural centers, modern interiors, and handicraft exhibitions. Designers use it on panels, furniture, and decorative installations while preserving its traditional essence.

Yet, its soul remains rooted in the desert, where mud, mirrors, and light together created beauty in the middle of harsh landscapes.

Cultural Identity of Rajasthan and Gujarat

Lippan art remains closely connected with the folk traditions of western India. It represents the artistic spirit of rural women who passed these skills from one generation to another. Every region developed its own style and motifs.

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Symbol of Harmony Between Utility and Art

Lippan art is a perfect example of how traditional Indian communities combined utility with aesthetics. What began as a climate-friendly mud structure evolved into a luminous folk art tradition.

In the silent desert nights of Rajasthan and Gujarat, a small diya reflecting across mirrored mud walls created an atmosphere of warmth, spirituality, and wonder. Through simple materials, earth, light, and reflection, Lippan art turned homes into glowing spaces of comfort and cultural identity.

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman