



So many of people's statements nowadays end with 'the world as we know it.' World Human Spirit Day is a celebration of the fact that what humans truly know about 'our own world' is limited and superficial. It is a day to wonder at the achievements on this planet as humans, as well as to contemplate the endless possibilities that humans possess in their spirits. World Human Spirit Day is a day to search within, for contentment and to embrace the fact that we do not have all the answers and that may be for the best.

#GOOD-CAUSE

The Surprising Benefits Of 'Donating Blood'

Blood donation is safe for healthy adults. There's no risk of contracting disease.



There's no end to the benefits of donating blood, for those who need it. It also turns out that donating blood doesn't just benefit recipients. There are health benefits for donors, too. 'Donating blood' can help people to 'maintain good health.' Read on to learn the health benefits of 'donating blood' and the reasons behind them.

Benefits

Donating blood has benefits for your emotional and physical health. According to researches, helping others can:

- reduce stress
- improve your emotional well-being
- benefit your physical health
- help get rid of negative feelings
- provide a sense of belonging and reduce isolation

A Healthier Heart and Vascular System

Regular blood donation is linked to lower blood pressure and a lower risk for heart attacks. It definitely helps to reduce cardiovascular risk factors. What's the connection? If your haemoglobin is too high, blood donation helps to lower the viscosity of the blood, which has been associated with the formation of blood clots.

A Happier, Longer Life

People usually donate because it feels good to help others, and altruism and volunteering have been linked to positive health outcomes, including a lower risk for depression and greater longevity.

Free health check-up

In order to give blood, you're required to undergo a health screening. A trained staff member performs this check-up. They'll check your:

- pulse
- blood pressure
- body temperature
- haemoglobin levels

This free mini-physical can offer excellent insight into your health. It can effectively detect problems that could indicate an underlying medical condition or risk factors for certain diseases.

During the Donation

You must register to donate blood. This includes provid-



A Jew Singing Sufi

He travelled to India and pursued his interest in *Hindustani classical music*, by studying under the tutelage of *Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar*, for a number of years. Incidentally, even today, he continues to draw inspiration by studying under the guidance of *Dhrupad Maestro Ustad Bahauddin Dagar*. Shye later diverted from Indian classical music and began to compose and sing traditional *Qawwali*, in his own mother tongue, Hebrew. Subsequently, he also began to explore the world of *Rajasthani* folk music and thus, began his journey of collaborating with a number of varied and talented musicians from across the state.



Shye Ben Tzur with Jonny Greenwood.



Sanjay Singh Badnor
Wanderlust, travel writer
and an acclaimed photo
journalist

The melodious *Meera Bhajan* has the august audience entranced and swaying, while the unusual fusion of an array of instruments, performed by an equally interesting ensemble of accompanying musicians, makes

the tempo even more exuberant. Apart from the distinctive lyrics of the *bhajan*, '*Chala Vahi Des, Pritam Pawaa, Chala Vahi Des*,' penned by the renowned poetess-princess, *Meera*, one is also able to hear strains of *Hebrew lyrics* being sung by the acclaimed Israeli composer and Vocalist, *Shye Ben Tzur*, who in tandem with his 10 member band, *The Rajasthan Express*, and is specially performing this evening, under the glorious environs of the fabled art deco, *Umaid Bhawan Palace at Jodhpur*, on the joyous occasion of the 75th birthday of Maharaja Gaj Singhji II of Marwar - Jodhpur.

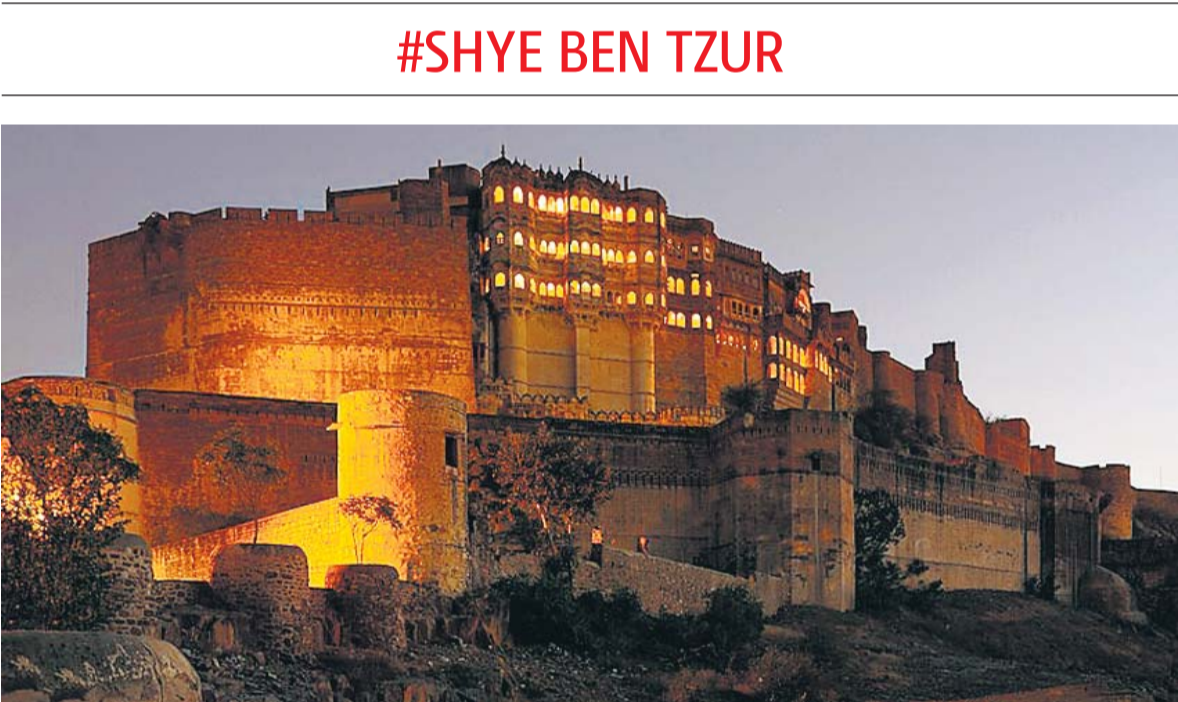
As an integral part of the audience, I can't help but notice the curiousness and the bewilderment amongst the listeners. The rather 'unusual ensemble' certainly calls for introspection.

My association with Shye Ben Tzur goes back to over a decade. At an equally electrifying musical performance at Jaipur at an exotic heritage venue, I first heard the very talented Shye Ben Tzur performing collectively with local



Rajasthani performers and was immediately mesmerized by his abundant talent. Shye was not only singing Rajasthani vocals, he was also intermittently singing in Hebrew, Urdu and Hindi, and this 'heady cocktail' had the audience and me, especially, spellbound. After the conclusion of the performance, I went to him to congratulate and we began talking only to discover our common link of 'Ajmer.' Shye's wife happens to belong to Ajmer.

Formerly, a member of the rock band, *The Suard of Damocles* during his college days in Israel, Shye's interest in Indian Classical music developed in the 1990's after he attended a concert featuring Indian Classical musicians, Flautist, Hariprasad Chaurasia and Tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain at Jerusalem. Soon thereafter, he travelled to India and pursued his interest in *Hindustani classical music*, by studying under



#SHYE BEN TZUR

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Shye began his Indian musical journey from Varanasi. "Ever since my first brush with Hindustani classical music, that I

It was at Varanasi that I learnt about the numerous musical genre's in the realm of North Indian musical styles such as *Dhrupad* and *Khayal* and it was also here that while researching about poetry and Sufi writings, I stumbled upon the *Sufi Qawwali singing*," adds Shye.

experienced when I heard the Maestro Flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia and Tabla exponent Zakir Hussain, at a concert at Jerusalem, I wanted to delve and



Shye Ben Tzur.



having their spiritual gathering at Ajmer due to the sacred shrine of *Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti* and the *Sama* and the *Mehfils*, that would be taking place, would be incredibly ecstatic and Shye thought 'it to be the 'perfect place' to look for answers and the connection between 'Sufi music and spiritual elevation.' Shye then joined a particular Sufi order (*Silsila*), known as the *Gudri Shahi Silsila* and was accepted into its *Khanqa* or the spiritual centre. Shye received tutelage under Hazrat Imam Hassan, the head of the *Gudri Shah Silsila* and lived there for many years. It was here that he met his wife, who was the daughter of *Hazrat Imam Hassan Sahab* and thus began his love story, intertwined with *Sufi music*.

It was Shye's interest in Sufi music that had brought him to 'Ajmer' and he began to collaborate with the *Qawwals* from 'Ajmer'

and for several years thereafter, he focused on composing original *Qawwali* music to Hebrew, Urdu and Hindi poetries.

Shye's experiments with North Indian musical forms and rhythms, in conjunction with western elements, resulted in a unique fusion of *Rajasthani folk*, *Sufi devotional* and *Hebrew dominated* style of music, that also saw the beginning of the collaborative musical band, *The Rajasthan Express*. Interestingly, this was a rare combination of percussion, brass, *Rajasthani* folk and Sufi devotional music.

After our first meeting at Jaipur, I used to frequently end up meeting with Shye at Ajmer, during the annual *Urs fair*, held at the shrine of Sufi saint, *Moinuddin Chishti*. Here, he usually performed *Qawwali* at all night *mehfils*, held at numerous private and public gatherings. Over one such meeting, the idea of '*Project Junun*' was born that went on to become a milestone in Shye Ben Tzur's musical journey and I am happy to have been an intrinsic part of this extraordinary musical experience, that resulted in the recording of the ever so successful music Album '*Junun*' and the making of the film of the same project.

At one of our numerous meetings, Shye voiced the idea of recording a collaborative album at a heritage property of Rajasthan, where a live studio could be created and the recording would take place over a couple of weeks. A proposal was drawn out and discussed and eventually put forward to HH Maharaja Gaj Singhji of Jodhpur. His Highness was keenly interested in the project and soon, the Mehrangarh Museum Trust came on board as the main sponsor and venue host of this incredible project. A suitable space was soon identified within the precincts of the sprawling 15th century *Mehrangarh fort*. The ambitious '*Project Junun*' was spearheaded by Shye, who roped in Jonny Greenwood, the lead guitarist and keyboardist of world famous alternative, British rock band, *Radiohead*. The already existing *Rajasthan Express* comprised of the *Qawwali* troupe of Zakir Ali Bhai from Ajmer, Folk vocalist, Chugge Khan and his *Manganiyar* band members, known as the *Rajasthan Josh* from Jaaisalmer, *Nagada* (Percussionists) players, the famous father-son duo of Nathu Lal Solanki and Narsi Lal from the holy city of Pushkar and the brass band from Shekhawati led by trumpeter Aamir Bhiyani, and folk singers from Punjab. A total of 25 members collaborated on this musical odyssey, that was recorded over a period of three weeks in February 2015, at the idyllic and quaint *Chokhelao Mahal*, where a live studio was created by Radiohead's very own talented producer, Nigel Godrich. Godrich, who served as the sound engineer of the '*Junun*' album, shipped over the entirety of the *Radiohead* recording studio from UK, which was then reassembled at the specially identified Chokhelao Mahal, within the medieval *Mehrangarh Fort*, where the entire album was recorded. It was a 3 week, non-stop, intensive recording session that would start from morning and go on until midnight. *Junun* went on to become one of the top 100 albums of the year 2015.

An hour-long documentary was simultaneously filmed by the celebrated, Academy award nominee, Paul Thomas Anderson. Anderson known for making films like *Magnolia* (1999), starring Tom Cruise and Julianne Moore, documented the entire album recording into an hour-long film, that was also named '*Junun*.' *Junun*, premiered at the New York film festival, 2015 and was released in October, 2015 on Mubi, the first, free online movie streaming platform. The 'fly on the wall' approach of the 54-minute film was truly appreciated and it won many awards.

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#CONTENTMENT

How To Stimulate The Vagus Nerve

The *vagus nerve* halts stress and regulates emotions. Here's how to get it in tip-top shape.

You're likely very familiar with the calming effects of a few deep breaths. But take a step back. Have you ever considered "*uhh*" deep breathing and its cousins, meditation and yoga, are so dang relaxing? (Hint: It's not just because it forces you to literally 'slow down.')

When you partake in this activity, you're stimulating your *vagus nerve*, which exercises incredible power within your body. It's pronounced 'Vegas,' like the city, but what happens in the *vagus nerve* doesn't stay in the *vagus nerve*. The longest of the cranial nerves, it starts at the base of your brain. It connects your throat, ear, and facial muscles and travels down both sides of the neck to the heart and lungs, through the stomach and intestines, touching almost every organ on its way down.

This superhighway serves as a communication channel connecting the digestive system and your brain, which means it's responsible for any 'gut' feelings you get. Also, hugely important, it helps your nervous system switch between the sympathetic mode (triggering the fight-or-flight response that raises heart rate) and the parasympathetic mode (when breathing normalizes and bodily functions settle into neutral).

But when you're dealing with chronic stress, the *vagus nerve* loses its ability to send you back into parasympathetic mode (called vagal dysfunction), and you remain stuck

on overdrive. This stress then puts you at risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and depression and anxiety, as well as GI disorders, research shows. Problems with this nerve are also linked to symptoms of burnout, such as emotional exhaustion and lack of energy. When, that's a lot!

The reassuring news is that just as with any other part of your body, you can strengthen and improve its function. Working on it isn't a one-and-done situation, though, repetition is key (we're talking at least once a day). The more you practice something, the more the brain reaches for it, when it needs it most. You're essentially carving out new neural pathways, that you can access, in a time of high anxiety.

Here's how to help that big fellow do its job, for the sake of your mental and physical health. And yes, deep breathing is involved, but if that's not your thing, there are plenty of unexpected ways to give it a little push.

Extend Your Exhale

Okay, starting with the biggie because it's the foundation, there are sensory receptors in the lungs that connect to the *vagus nerve* and trigger the parasympathetic nervous system. But it's not enough to just breathe. The calm-down process happens as you exhale, because this slows your heart rate. Therefore, it's important to make your exhale longer than your inhale. This is also why practices that slow your breath,

like yoga and meditation, are useful tools for vagal activation and de-stressing in general. But, deep breathing is tough if you're upset. If you're on the brink of a freak-out, imagine blowing through a straw. Adding resistance by pursing your lips can help lengthen your exhale.

Happily 'Hum'

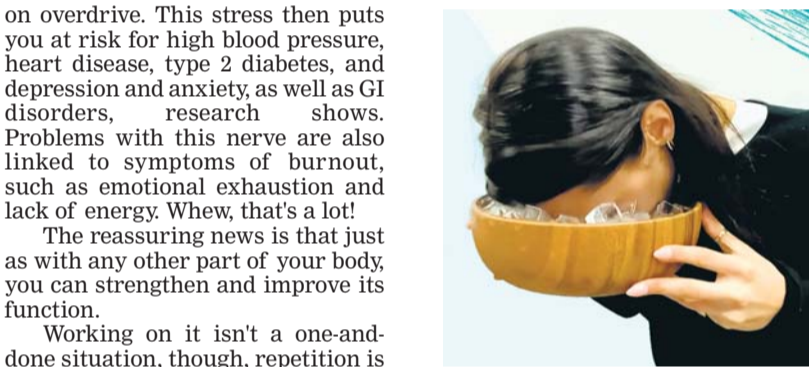
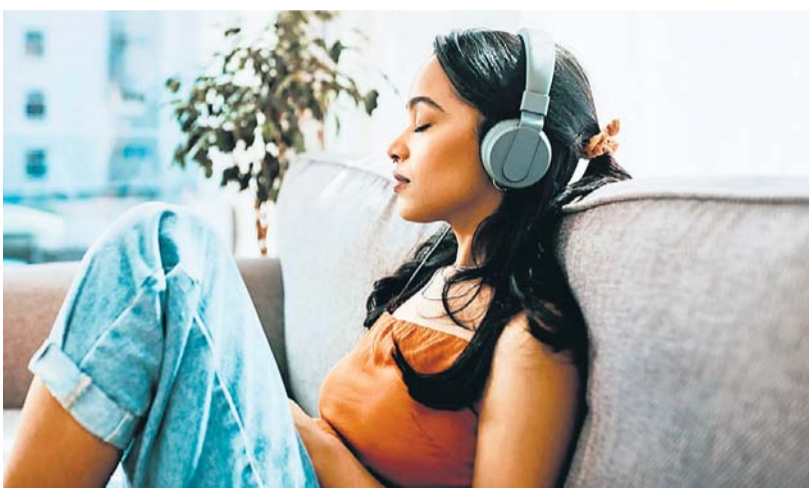
Talk about an earworm! The *vagus nerve* passes through the inner ear, so, you can stimulate it by engaging in active listening to soothing music. That can include not only a favourite song, but an audiobook or a guided meditation, with an especially calming voice. Soft, low sounds, like a cat's purr, are inherently soothing.

Pursue The Cold

Frigid temps activate a physiological response called the diving reflex. This slows your heart rate and breathing and directs blood flow to the brain for relaxation. To trigger it, spend some time outside on a brisk day, or hold ice on your face or neck, or splash your skin with cold water.

Find Fresh Air

Taking a walk outside is one sure-fire way to downregulate your nervous system and improve your mood. And this doesn't have to be a long-hike situation. Nature is inherently relaxing to the nervous system, making it so much easier to slow down your breathing, which, again, helps the *vagus nerve* do its thing.



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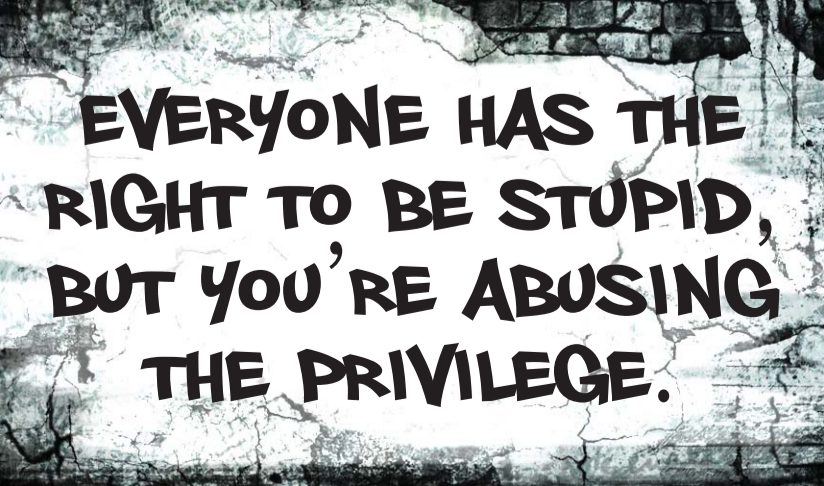
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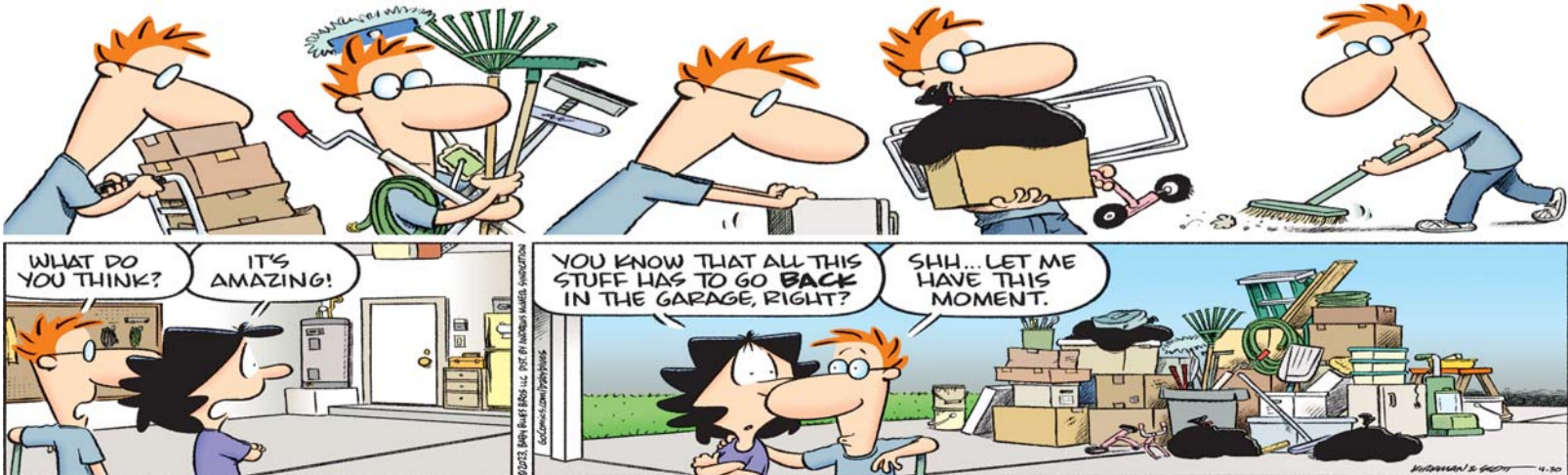
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THE WALL

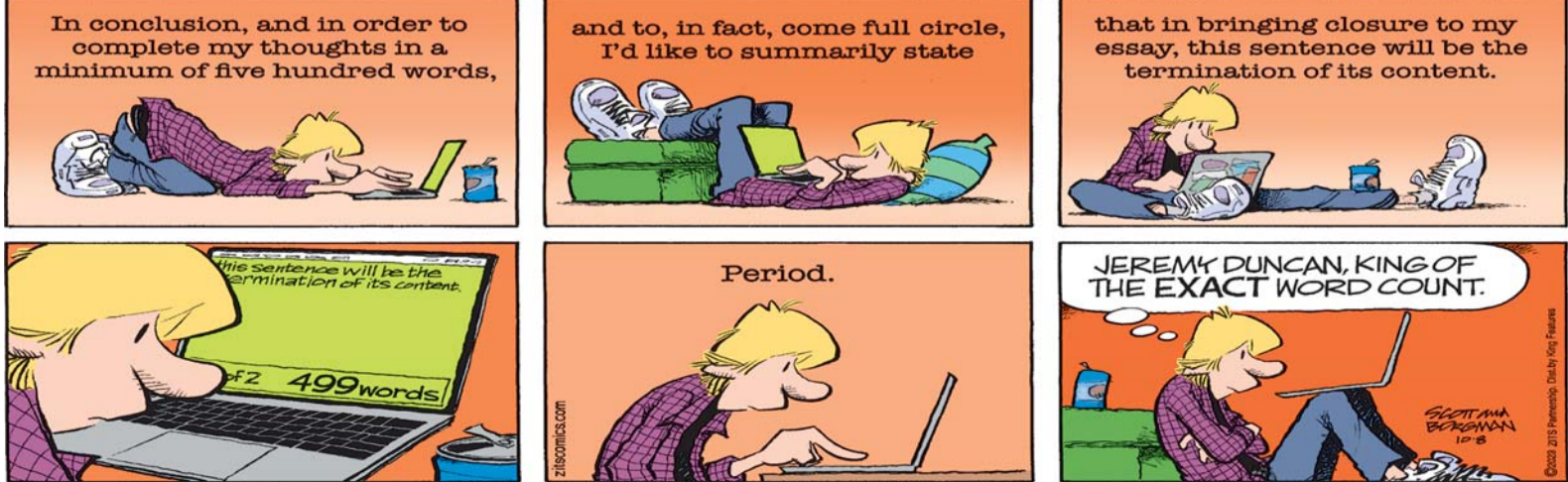


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman