



World Hearing Day

World Hearing Day was first called International Ear Care Day and was celebrated in 2007. The World Health Organization's Office for the Prevention of Blindness and Deafness started this week-long initiative to focus global attention on this often-overlooked hearing loss. World Hearing Day means a concerted effort to disseminate information and encourage proactive steps towards preventing hearing impairment. It also gets information about hearing care. World Hearing Day is an ideal day for creating even more awareness about early 'detection' of ear problems and 'treatment' of hearing impairment.

#RESEARCH

Smoking Shrinks Your Brain

"As we've started looking at the brain more closely, it's become apparent that smoking is really bad for your brain."



Smoking shrinks the brain and effectively causes premature brain aging, according to a new study. The good news is that 'quitting smoking' prevents further loss of brain tissue, but still, stopping smoking doesn't restore the brain to its original size. Since people's brains naturally lose volume with age, the findings, published in *Biological Psychiatry: Global Open Science*, help explain why smokers are at high risk of age-related cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease.

"Up until recently, scientists have overlooked the effects of smoking on the brain, in part, because we were focused on all the terrible effects of 'smoking' on the lungs and the heart," says senior author Laura J. Bierut, professor of Psychiatry at Washington University in St. Louis. "But as we've started looking at the brain more closely, it's become apparent that smoking is also really bad for your brain."

Scientists have long known that smoking and smaller brain volume are linked, but they've never been sure which the instigator is. And there is a third factor to consider, genetics. Both brain size and smoking behaviour are heritable. About half of a person's risk of smoking can be attributed to his or her genes.

To disentangle the relationship between genes, brains, and behaviour, Bierut and first author Yoonho Chang, a graduate student, analysed data drawn from the UK Biobank, a publicly available biomedical database that contains genetic, health, and behavioural information on half-a-million people, mostly of European descent.

A subset of over 40,000 UK Biobank participants underwent brain imaging, which

can be used to determine brain volume. In total, the team analysed de-identified data on brain volume, smoking history, and genetic risk for smoking for 32,064 people.

Each pair of factors proved to be linked, history of smoking and brain volume, genetic risk for smoking and history of smoking, and genetic risk for smoking and brain volume. Further, the association between smoking and brain volume depended on dose. The more packs a person smoked per day, the smaller his or her brain volume.

When all three factors were considered together, the association between genetic risk for smoking and brain volume disappeared, while the link between each of those and smoking behaviours remained. Using a statistical approach known as 'mediation analysis,' the researchers determined the sequence of events, genetic predisposition leads to smoking, which leads to decreased brain volume.

"It sounds bad, and it is bad," Bierut says. "A reduction in brain volume is consistent with increased aging. This is important as our population gets older, because aging and smoking are both risk factors for dementia." And unfortunately, the shrinkage seems to be irreversible. By analysing data on people, who had quit smoking years before, the researchers found that their brains remained permanently smaller. "You can't undo the damage that has already been done, but you can avoid causing further damage," Chang says. "Smoking is a modifiable risk factor. There's one thing you can change to stop aging your brain, and putting yourself at increased risk of dementia, and that's quit smoking."

A 'PADMA VIBHUSHAN' BUT NO 'DADASAHEB PHALKE'

Bimal Roy must have admired her dedication to her work, be it 'dancing' or be it 'acting,' so, he repeated her in *Madhumati*, the most 'commercially' successful film in his entire career. Vyjayanthimala, in the title role, plays a tribal girl, very good in dance and song and invested the character with a throbbing life of its own. Her performance, in each song, from 'Aaja Re Main Toh Kab Se Khadi Iss Paar' to 'Zulmi Sang Aankh Ladi Toh Ghadi Ghadi Mora Dil Dhadke' to 'Papi Bichhua' reach far beyond being just a visual delight and place them firmly in posterity among the performance archives of Vyjayanthimala's films. 'Dil Tadap Tadap ke,' a duet, carries the essence of romance that forms the core of the story.



Dr. Shoma A. Chatterji
Film scholar,
Journalist & author

This may be difficult to believe, but Vyjayanthimala, the most outstanding dancer-actress-star in Hindi and Southern films will touch 91, this year. She has been bestowed with the Padma Vibhushan this year. Sadly, everyone seems to have forgotten that she even exists, with rare pictures flashed of her present person on the Internet. She has virtually stepped back both, from films and from dance performances, but this cannot negate her rich and long contribution to Indian cinema.

Vyjayanthimala also began her political career in 1984, when she contested in Tamil Nadu general elections. She contested for the South Chennai constituency from the Indian National Congress. Vyjayanthimala defeated Era Sezhian (leader of the Janata Party) and won the election with a margin of about 48,000 votes. Later, she also became a member of Lok Sabha. But she did not remain very active as an MP, and was content with her dancing classes.

One of the saddest irony of film awards is that Vyjayanthimala has not won the *Dadasaheb Phalke Award* even till the age of 90, though she is a much 'deserving candidate' for the honour. Actors, years younger than her, have been bestowed with Lifetime Achievement Awards, including the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, while Vyjayanthimala remained outside the framework. This happened when she had practically quit films and had retired in the South.

Earlier, during her very successful career, however, she went on winning a string of awards such as five Filmfare Awards and two BFJA Awards. She made her screen debut at the age of 16 with the Tamil film *Vaazhakai* (1949), and followed this with a role in the Telugu film *Jeevitnam* (1950). Her first work in Hindi cinema was the social guidance film *Bahar* (1951), which she headlined, and achieved her breakthrough with the romance *Naagin* (1954).

The first time, I met her in-person, was backstage at her solo dance performance at the King George High School Hall in Bombay, where I, then, lived. Her performance was brilliant. So, I went backstage with my mother to congratulate her. I was still in school and was a student of both, *Kathak* and *Bharatanatyam*, myself. She was thrilled to see a young girl coming backstage to congratulate her. Her two gurus, Sohanlal and Hiralal,



Vyjayanthimala in Naagin.



"Chandramukhi" in Devdas.

who were expert trainers in the Kathak school, were her gurus, who later mastered Bharatanatyam also, when they migrated from Rajasthan to the South. They would also do the choreography of Vyjayanthimala's dance numbers in her films, for many years till they retired.

However, it is not very clear exactly when the gurus, Sohanlal and Hiralal, entered her life as she had trained in *Bharatanatyam* from a very early age, from Guru Vazhuvooor, Ramaiah Pillai and Carnatic music from Manakkal Sivaraja Iyer. She had her *arange*-turing in Tamil Nadu, later. She is, perhaps, the first danseuse actress in Hindi cinema, who reigned as the leading lady, not just for her beauty, but for her acumen in dancing. She stuck to the classical dance styles for her film dances, though later on, she innovated and improvised her dancing skills to suit the periodicity of the film, its geographical backdrop and the character she was to play. From her performances on screen, it was evident that she did her homework well but producers and directors chose her, mainly for her beauty and for her skills as a trained classical dancer, and not for her acting skills. But she was not to blame. Her casting, opposite the best leading men of her times, ranging from Dilip Kumar through Ashok Kumar, Pradeep Kumar, Rajendra Kumar, Kishore Kumar, and also Dev Anand, led to scripts that sidelined the character of the 'leading lady'.

Sometimes, roles were written for her solely, built around her dancing talents and this was evident even with her second Hindi film, *Ladki*, which was a super duper hit, filled with dances in every other frame. *Kathputli*, a beautiful film, directed by Amiya Chakravarty, saw her, primarily in a dancing role and though, the film was a super flop, Vyjayanthimala's dance numbers were a 'winner'. Later, she got the opportunity of portraying dramatic and significant roles in *Gunga Jumna*, *Naya Daur*, *Devdas*, *New Delhi*, and

#VJAYANTHIMALA



VJAYANTHIMALA RECEIVING 'PADMA SHRI' FROM ZAKIR HUSSAIN.

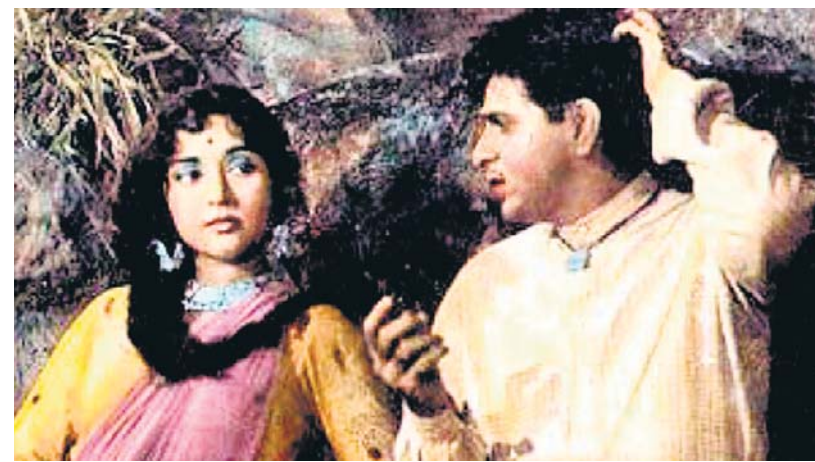
Aasha, which became famous for her wonderful foxtrot innovation in the song 'Eena Meena Deeka'.

She proved her value, as a dramatic actress worth her name, only when she stepped into the role of "Chandramukhi" in *Devdas*, a role rejected by several actresses. In fact, scriptwriter, Nabendu Ghosh had disapproved of Vyjayanthimala for *Devdas*. But other actresses like Nargis had rejected to play the part and so, by default, it came to Vyjayanthimala. She told Bimal Roy, the director, "Dada, take me only if you think I am worth the character," and she was in.

Following *Devdas*, she replaced Madhubala in B.R. Chopra's *Naya Daur* (1957), one of her biggest hits and shot right to the top with Bimal Roy's reincarnation suspense drama, *Madhumati* (1958), perhaps, her most popular film ever, while her sensitive depiction of a prostitute in B.R. Chopra's *Sadma* (1958) fetched her the Filmfare Award for Best Actress, her first. She was, clearly, one of the biggest stars of Hindi cinema, by that time. In this period, she also returned to her 'roots in the South' to do big Tamil

films, opposite the biggest stars of Tamil cinema, M.G.R., Sivaji Ganesan and Gemini Ganesan in films like *Baghdad Thiradam* (1960), *Raja Bakthi* (1960) and then, *Nilaou* (1961), respectively. Gunga Jumna (1961) saw another flawless performance from her. It is to her credit that in spite of her South-Indian upbringing, her

Bhojpuri dialect in the film is near perfect and deservedly fetched her another Filmfare Award for Best Actress. Some of her most outstanding 'dance' films, which will remain archived in history, are *Naagin*, *Amrapali*, *Ladki*, *Jewel Thief*, *Pehli Jhalak*, *Aasha*, *New Delhi*, and many more. Vyjayanthimala got her third Filmfare Best Actress Award for Raj Kapoor's *Sangam* (1964), one of the best triangles in Indian Cinema. She was spotted on as the woman, who loves Rajendra Kumar, but who is married to Raj Kapoor. She tries to be the perfect wife and succeeds too, till a letter from her past catches up with her, and almost wrecks her marriage. While doing *Sangam*, it is said that she got involved in an ill-fated romance with Raj Kapoor.



Gunga Jumna.



Bimal Roy must have admired her dedication to her work, be it 'dancing' or be it 'acting,' so, he repeated her in *Madhumati*, the most 'commercially' successful film in his entire career. Vyjayanthimala, in the title role, plays a tribal girl, very good in dance and song, and invested the character with a throbbing life of its own. Her performance, in each song, from 'Aaja Re Main Toh Kab Se Khadi Iss Paar' to 'Zulmi Sang Aankh Ladi Toh Ghadi Ghadi Mora Dil Dhadke' to 'Papi Bichhua' reach far beyond being just a visual delight, and place them firmly in posterity among the performance archives of Vyjayanthimala's films. 'Dil Tadap Tadap ke,' a duet, carries the essence of romance that forms the core of the story.

Hema Malini, herself a trained dancer, considered Vyjayanthimala her 'idol' and was humbled by her idol, when she went to visit the senior actress at her home in Chennai, when the latter was bestowed the Padma Vibhushan. Said Hema Malini, "It is the most memorable day of my life. It was me, meeting my role model, the iconic Vyjayanthimala, along with her lovely family, at her Chennai residence, yesterday. She is so full of life, still so full of dance in her. She talks dance, lives dance and has a glow and an 'aura' around her. I was as much in awe as I was many years ago. Had a nostalgic discussion about her stint in films and her experiences in the industry. One has to learn a lot from her. It was a great moment for me to have been given so much love by this lovely lady, beautiful inside and out."

The second and last time I met Vyjayanthimala, in-person, was during the shooting of a dance number in Bimal Roy's *Devdas* (1955), being shot on a floor in Mohan Studios in Andheri. The scene being shot was 'Chandramukhi' (Vyjayanthimala) dancing, in the presence of 'Devdas' (Dilip Kumar) and 'Chunilal' (Motilal) to the beautiful song number 'O Jane wale, Rukh Jaa Kei Gam' and though, she appeared to dance, smoothly and flawlessly, there were several takes. I could not speak to her because we had to remain completely silent.

But what surprised me was during the breaks in the shooting, none of the actors present exchanged a single word with each other. She was nominated for the Best Supporting Actress by Filmfare, the following year. But she refused the award because she insisted that 'Chandramukhi' was an equal lead in the film, and not a supporting character. Another time, she refused to portray the role of Vijay's mother in Yash Chopra's *Deewaar*, as she was not interested in elderly roles and the role went to

Nirupa Roy. The rest, as the saying goes, is history. Nirupa Roy gained great heights as a screen mother while Vyjayanthimala disappeared into permanent retirement. In Bombay, her life was entirely within the control of her maternal grandmother, Yadugiri Devi because her mother, Vasundhara Devi lived in Madras. The domineering presence of Yadugiri Devi stopped Vyjayanthimala from choosing films which the older lady did not like, or, if the matriarch did not approve of the hero cast, opposite her, or the characters she was called upon to play, so, her personal life remained more or less 'invisible' for a major part of Vyjayanthimala's youth. The outdoor shoots, the fate, the duration of each schedule had to be okayed by Yadugiri Devi.

Perhaps, it was after Yadugiri Devi became too old to control her grand-daughter's movements and life, or perhaps, after her demise, Vyjayanthimala had the first taste of love. But all these stories are based purely on reports in glossy film journals, known for their gossip columns. But what is common knowledge is that she had a serious affair with Dilip Kumar, as they worked in several films, together. But they fell out and the story goes that during the shooting of *Sangharsh*, adapted from a Mahasweta Devi story, they did not exchange a single word. The 'affair,' if there was one, was over. They did not speak to each other for years till the ice melt, after Dilip Kumar married Saira Banu.

During the making of Raj Kapoor's *Sangam*, the story goes that Raj Kapoor was smitten by Vyjayanthimala, and Raj Kapoor was known for falling 'head over heels' for his leading ladies. But some conflict in the relationship. Sometime later, Vyjayanthimala fell in love with Dr. Chamanlal Bali, who was the Kapoor family's regular physician. He was *Punjabi*, a married man with growing children, but the pair got married, nevertheless, and Vyjayanthimala slowly began to back out from films, and retired to run her dance school in Chennai, then Madras.

She gave up films almost completely. Bali passed away but her stepsons are said to have invested her earnings wrongly and also got her embroiled in court cases. She has a son, Suchindra, from her marriage to Dr. Bali, who passed away before he could grow up. The son tried his luck in Tamil films but, perhaps, could not make it.

The question remains, 'why should she NOT be bestowed with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award?'

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

#AWARENESS

World Wildlife Day

Even though, we might like to think so sometimes, humans aren't the only living things on Earth



The World is full of 'amazing' creatures from every possible medium. From the 'birds' of the air to the majestic 'whales' of the sea, wildlife abounds in the most unusual and unexpected places. Wildlife benefits us in many ways, and has since time out of mind. *World Wildlife Day* is a day to remind us of our responsibilities to our world and the lifetimes we share it with.

Even though, we might like to think so sometimes, humans aren't the only living things on Earth. In fact, we're far outnumbered by other living things, from animals and plants to fungi and bacteria. Wildlife isn't just something that we passively observe, it's part of 'our world,' and something we need to care for. *World Wildlife Day* is your chance to celebrate all wildlife, from the smallest insect to blue whales. No matter what you love about wildlife, you can spend the day taking action to help protect it.

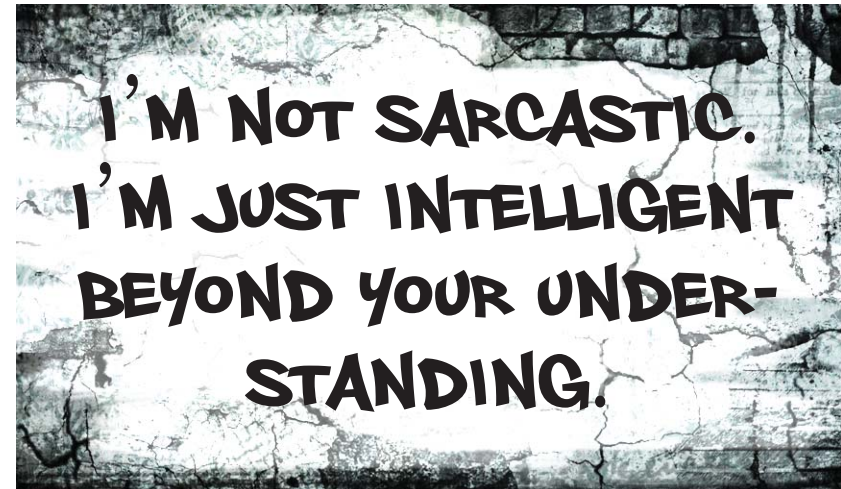
This day is all about raising awareness of 'wild flora and fauna' across the world. Whether you love animals, you're passionate about plants, or you're concerned about climate change, it's the day that you can use, to educate yourself or others. You can celebrate the incredible biodiversity across the world and perhaps, get out there to explore the huge range of flora and fauna that the world has to offer. Celebrating *World Wildlife Day* is a must for anyone who loves our planet.

Sometimes, the day highlights an endangered animal or group of animals, while in other years, it has focused on a specific issue affecting the world of wildlife.

The day might not have been around for long compared to some others, but it's already made a big impact. If you are passionate about the Earth and everything on it, celebrating is a must!



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

