



Saptak members meet every month and say music has given them the strength to deal with the ups and downs of life —Aniruddha Rajandedkar

Who says old age is a burden?

Saptak, a group of friends in their 70s who have been meeting regularly for the last 17 years, started learning music and now have graduated to performing musical shows for audiences of their age. This has helped them in keeping age-related diseases at bay, reports Bhagyashree Kulthe

They cherished music in their hearts all through their lives, which helped them build a connect among themselves. Saptak, a group of friends in their 70s, has been meeting regularly for the last 17 years to sing and play music.

The group which started meeting just to enjoy music and each other's company later started learning music and now has graduated to performing musical shows for older people just like them.

Each one of them cherished listening to music or playing it on different instruments when they were young but unfortunately they did not find the time to develop the hobby. Most of them were college friends who later got busy in their respective professions. After retirement they started meeting and spending time singing songs.

Shrinivas Tophkhane, who was a marketing profession said, "We have been lovers of music since our college days. We thought it was a good idea to meet and sing songs instead of grumbling about old age problems."

Some of them have had formal training in music. They helped the other members to find the rhythm and train their voices. Vishwas Bhopatkar is formally trained in the tabla and is also a 'visharad' in harmonium.

"Music was just a cherished hobby till I joined this group," said Bhopatkar who has been instrumental in shaping the voice of the group members. Anuradha Pathak has learnt music for ten years and teaches music to the

speech and hearing impaired. Arun and Vasudha Brahma nurtured their singing hobby at home and are now the duet singers in the group.

Arun was an IT professional while Vasudha worked as a librarian. Vasudha, who hails from Kanpur, has trained in Hindustani classical for ten years. "I improved on the Marathi style of music after joining the group. Since both of us practice at home, we sing duets during Saptak's show," said Vasudha.

Some of the Saptak members have had formal training in music. They helped others in the group to train their voices. The group prefers singing to grumbling about old age problems

Ashok Budhkar, who was a radio artist, is a versatile singer and equally good on harmonium and accordion. Having worked as an entrepreneur, he now performs on the harmonium in the group. They also have their own instruments which they use when they perform in the musical events.

"During 1953 to 1958, in our college days, we used to participate in the annual function as performers," said Shashikant Tatke, whose in-depth knowledge about the history of songs

and music won him the task of compering the shows of the group.

"Despite being in the finance sector, Tatke's love for music grew with the passing years and so did his database of the old songs and its history," said Chidanand Pathak who is also a part of the company.

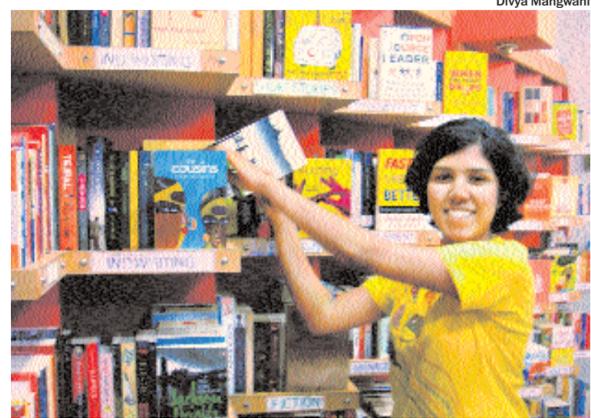
Usha Kulkarni too is a good singer who had joined the group with her husband MR Kulkarni who is no more, but she continues to be part of Saptak, added Pathak.

They sing all types of songs from sugam-sangeet, natyageet, lavani, film songs to qawwali. Social organisations, Ganesh mandals and senior citizen homes invite them for shows. "There is no commercial interest involved. We decide the theme, choose the songs we plan to sing and rehearse. We now have a good database and interesting facts related to music," said Anuradha Pathak.

Saptak has given them the strength to deal with the ups and downs of life besides keeping them occupied with the musical journey.

"We meet every month and keep planning about the theme and practicing at home for this awaited meeting. Music also keeps us away from old age diseases I believe," said Budhkar.

Attending their meetings at Tophkhane's residence is a joyful experience. Calling each other by pet names they actually relive their college days. This cheerfulness seeps into the music that they play thus bringing them peace and joy which they carry back to their families and closed ones. Who says old age is a burden?



Lijya Perayil has picked up a summer job at Twist n Tales bookstore

Working this summer becomes cool

Most employers are willing to hire students who are passionate and don't have any job experience

Divya Mangwani

As a seven-year-old boy, Mihir Velapure was fascinated with snakes at the Katraj Snake Park, especially the king cobra that the keepers introduced him to. Eight years later, the cobra has grown into a 14-foot-long snake but the 15-year-old still hasn't outgrown his love for zoo.

Mihir recently gave his standard X board exams and is volunteering for a summer job at the Rajiv Gandhi Zoological Park. "I made so many plans for the summer but I finished all my work in ten days. So instead of sitting at home and watching television or chatting on Facebook, I decided to do something constructive with my time", he said.

An animal lover, Mihir plans on having a career in zoology or veterinary sciences and volunteering at the zoo is the perfect summer job for him.

Like Mihir, several youngsters are taking up unusual paths to spend their summer constructively. Summer jobs in India were quite rare earlier but the trend is catching on as many students work for hands-on experience and monetary independence in interesting and fun jobs.

Zoo education officer, Ashwini Shitole, said, "Volunteers have to be interested in wildlife and be committed and devoted to the work we do." Students are given different tasks such as working in offices, treating animals, patrolling, animal feeding, acting as a guide and creating awareness about conservation.

Ryan Sequiera also wanted to start work early but wanted a job that was different. An animation and design student by day and bartender at night, he listed the perks of his job: meeting new people, attending theme parties and of course earning your own money. "But it's not just about the money", he said, "I also have fun and it's a great learning experience."

Team work, handling pressure situations, discipline and commitment are aspects of the work culture that these students are imbibing at an early age. "These students learn the basic work skills at their summer or part-time jobs and by the time they graduate, they are far ahead of their compatriots in terms of attitude and basic discipline," said Janaki

Viswanath of Twist n Tales bookstore at Aundh.

For arts student Lijya Perayil, her passion for books led her to her first job at the bookstore.

She said, "When I started, I didn't realise the discipline it would require but now I've got used to the work routine. It's a great joy working at a bookstore, especially when a customer comes up and tells me they loved the book I helped them buy." She's also learnt to be more organised and particular about details on the job, the qualities that reflect in her personal life.

Shraavani Sistla is working three days a week in the summer as an interpreter and translator to help foreign university students in their research. Her work takes her to areas outside her comfort zone and the 18-year-old believes it's an important learning experience that will help in her future career as a film-maker.

Most prospective employers rank innate passion and drive high on their check list and are willing to hire students without previous experience for part-time and summer jobs. So there are no more excuses for sitting in front of TV, working in the summer has just become cool.



Ryan Sequiera loves to work as a part-time bartender —Aniruddha Rajandedkar

Care for an extreme sport? Try zorbing, water pendulum



The Della Adventure, a resort, offers zorbing, a popular sport abroad, in which participants are placed inside a huge inflatable ball which is then rolled on a flat surface

A number of adventure parks are coming up around the city and this has led to a spurt in never-heard-before water sports

Priyanka Naithani

Puneites who are done and over with rowing, parasailing, white water rafting and kayaking, are now turning towards extreme water sports this summer.

A number of adventure parks are coming up around the city and has led to a spurt in never-heard-before water sports. Water pendulum and zorbing are the few latest adventure sports which are gaining popularity among sports lovers.

In zorbing, an activity which is popular outside India, one is placed inside a big transparent soft ball. The ball is then left on water or is rolled downhill, turning the person upside down.

The Della Adventure, which claims to be India's largest adventure park and resort is located at Kune-gaon near Lonavla. Here, zorbing is a popular sport, which makes use of a huge inflatable ball in which two participants are placed.

The ball is then allowed to travel down a gentle downhill slope which carries the players with it. Usually the ball is rolled on a downhill water slide but at some places it is done on a flat surface.

Jimmy Mistry, founder, Della Adventure said, "This sport comes from New Zealand and we have tried to incorporate it our park. In India, people do zorbing on a flat muddy surface but we have a 200 feet long downhill slope which is around 20 feet high full of water."

Interestingly, these extreme adventure sports are becoming popular among corporates to facilitate team building among employees.

"This sport is picking up very fast in our country and is being used for corporate training. Corporate people come here in huge numbers as it helps in building team spirit. It is a very safe sport as the riders are completely packed inside the ball. One has to shell Rs500 for a roll," added Mistry.

The water pendulum is another

unique water slide meant for adventure lovers in which a rider glides up and down in a large U-shaped slide just like a pendulum before coming to a steady halt. One can enjoy this slide at Krushnai Water World located at Khadakwasala.

"We are among the first people in the city to start this exciting water slide. Puneites are increasingly taking up adventurous sports. The safety of riders is our priority so we have appointed several life guards," said Nirmala Ghule, director, Krushnai Water World.

"We have lots of water sports activities for corporate people. From paddle, kayak, water rafting to rowing, this place is crowded during summers," said Sangram Devekar of Adventure Maval, located near Ambegaon, Panshet. Diamond Water Park, also known as Splash Mountain Water Park is located near Lohagaon, 28km from Pune and is spread over 15 acres of land and offers 28 different rides.