

Peaks scaled, an Iranian woman asserts the feminist credo

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

One of the most interesting things I learned while talking with Iranian mountaineer Anoosha Afadpoor is that, far from being weaker, women can prove more resilient than men to the challenges trekking through high altitudes present. The 30-year-old adventurer has climbed several mountains in Iran and Russia. "I am like a warrior. Mountains have held a special allure for me since I was a child. They have this calming effect," she says. Born in Tehran in 1980, Afadpoor's journey as a mountaineer began with a host of problems. "Being Persian, I faced a lot of challenges initially. Due to the political situation in Iran, I was not allowed to join the Muslim group who were part of the international

mountaineering team," she recalls. But this did not deter her, as it would most; instead Afadpoor decided to go it on her own. "There are more than 500 professional women mountaineers in Iran. The topography of the country is such that many Iranian families allow their daughters to go trekking and mountain climbing, but in groups," says Afadpoor, who doubles as a second year student of Indian Classical music in Delhi University. A graduate in Persian Classical Music and Eastern Classical Music, Afadpoor started mountaineering and rock climbing in 1998. She has climbed most of the mountains of Iran, including the country's three highest peaks, Mt. Damavand (5,671m), Mt. Alam (4,850m) and Mt. Sabalan (4,811m) in the Northwest of Iran. She



Anoosha Afadpoor

has also climbed the famous Mt Dena stretch, crossing 35 summit ridges from Yasuj to Isfahan in five days.

In 2008, she climbed the Ullar Peak in Pakistan, which came with a series of unique challenges. Afadpoor recalls,

"The 45 day expedition had several landslides and broken glaciers along the way. But I trusted my gut and that

kept me going. Challenges don't deter me from achieving my goals. But sometimes, being a woman, certain challenges pull me back, but I just tell myself that I have chosen the path I am on myself, so I can't step back." Afadpoor has recently completed a dream trek, to the base camp of K2, to the base camp of K2. And now her dream is to summit Mt. Annapurna (8,091m) in Nepal, the 10th highest peak in the world, in July 2011. This will be her first 8,000m climb. "It will be a solo climb. I always wanted to do something different, ever since I was a child. And since very few people have attempted it so far, climbing Annapurna will be a high point in my life." She plans to make it to the top in less than 45 days, "but this depends on weather conditions," Afadpoor concludes.

HIGH TABLE

PRABEEN SINGH



When mixing egg and milk, a touch of brandy works wonders

"There is a remarkable breakdown of taste and intelligence at Christmastime. Mature, responsible grown men wear neckties made of bolly leaves and drink alcoholic beverages with raw egg yolks and cottage cheese in them."

P.J. O'Rourke

The smell of steaming milk: yuck. The smell of eggy steaming milk: double yuck. I was a thin child with a conscientious mother. She tried to feed me with protein and believed in the twin deities of egg and milk. What better dish than to combine the two for a nutritious breakfast? She tried to make egg milk palatable by adding vanilla, but it never worked. To this day, the smell of hot milk makes me nauseous.

Many years into adulthood. I was invited for a "proper" English Christmas dinner and immediately handed a glass of eggnog. From somewhere in the recesses of the memory box labelled Childhood Horror emerged the memory those 'fatten the child' experiments. However, intrinsic good manners took over, and I valiantly took a tiny sip of this concoction of milk, eggs, cream and [saving grace] superior cognac. One small sip turned to many enjoyable gulps. I was converted, and for life! Eggnog made by my friend Bunny Page is a guaranteed drink to herald good cheer.

The origin and the ingredients used to make the original eggnog are debatable. It may have its roots in East Anglia England. It may have simply developed from Posset, a medieval European beverage made with hot milk. The "nog" part of the name may stem from the word 'noggin' a middle English term to describe a small carved wooden mug used to serve alcohol. Or from 'egg' and 'grog', a common colonial term used for drinks made from rum.

Eggnog is a sweetened, dairy-based beverage traditionally made from: milk or cream for a richer, more substantial base, sugar, liquor and beaten eggs to give it the frothy look. The choice of alcohol could be cognac, brandy, whisky or moonshine. It is usually garnished with either cinnamon or nutmeg powder.

Initially it was a drink meant for the rich, for the aristocrats to herald in the Christmas cheer, as very few Londoners had ever tasted milk. Milk and eggs were the privileges enjoyed by those who had large farms and country estates. The preferred alcohol was Madeira, sherry and superior brandy.

It was imported across the Atlantic to the English colonies in the 18th century. Since brandy and whisky were taxed at a higher rate, rum from the Caribbean was the preferred alcohol. However one of the fallouts of the War of Independence was the loss of regular supplies of 'imported' alcohol. Enterprising Americans switched to domestic whisky and eventually bourbon.

The 21st Century reliance on bottled and instant foods have positioned the eggnog available on shop shelves, with so many choices, such as with alcohol, non-alcoholic, even organic (for the conscientious consumer). A significant departure from the original robust eggnog made at home, with warmth, love, and good cheer all vital ingredients.

Since B. Page has yet to send her guarded recipe here is one from the Internet!
Traditional Eggnog

Ingredients:

12 eggs separated
6 cups milk
2 cups heavy thickened cream
1-1/2 cups sugar
3/4 cup Superior Brandy
2 tsp. either cinnamon or nutmeg powder

Method:

In a large bowl, using an electric blender beat the yolks with the sugar till the mixture is thick and whitish. Very slowly add the brandy. Chill the mixture in the fridge for 6 hours. In a separate bowl beat the egg whites till it has forms peaks. Fold gently into the egg and milk mixture. Beat the cream till it forms peaks and fold gently into the mixture. Sprinkle cinnamon or nutmeg powder over individual servings. A Very Merry Christmas to all of you.

Capturing the contours of Indian cows

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

The Indian veneration of the cow is age-old and Swiss artist Walter Lehmann loves India, so it's not really a surprise that he loves cows. Lehmann is a self-confessed 'obsessive cow artist'. In an ongoing exhibition at Artholics Gallery, Lado Sarai, Lehmann has collaborated with four Indian artists to paint cows in a range of styles and compositions. The work on display is not extraordinary, apart from the bovine subject matter of course. The cows portrayed by the Indian artists in the show, Debashish Mishra, Ronny Kaula, Rohit Sharma and Sandeep Pawar, are largely adorned in rich colours, while those painted by Lehmann show

these creatures in their natural avatar. The cow paintings displayed at the exhibition come with sound effects too. Some of the canvasses have buttons which when pressed to produce Swiss music. Others will make the cows moo. While the horse was a great subject



Lehmann is a self-confessed obsessive cow artist

for everyone from classical European painters to Ottoman miniaturists, cows make for an unusual subject in art work. Lehmann, incidentally, talks to his cows and pets them while painting them. "Cows are almost like humans. I have to gauge the personality of the cow before I take out my paints and brushes. A timid cow needs to be handled in a very different way than a cow which is very friendly. They're fascinating creatures," Lehmann exclaims. There was a time when Lehmann painted other animals too. "We start our mornings with a cup of coffee and nibble at power-packed milk products through the day. And yet, cow have been ignored by our artists who love painting horses, tigers, instead," says Lehmann.

In the shadow of the Qutub, Circa is a treat for the senses

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Circa 1193

Mehrauli, New Delhi
Phone Number: 011-26644329/30/31/32
Meal for Two: Rs. 2500-3000



Circa, the ideal spot for a romantic evening

Circa 1193, a contemporary Asian fine dining bistro lying in the shadow of the Qutub Minar, is an absolute treat to the senses, the elegant decor matching the extensive menu most beautifully. I was catching up with a girlfriend for a long-overdue evening of gossip, but Circa 1193 is the ideal spot for a romantic evening. Set on three levels, it has tables on an open patio surrounded by palms and a water installation, an indoor fine dining area on the first floor and more tables on the terrace, from where patrons can see Qutub-ud-din Aibak's famous tower silhouetted against the evening sky. The décor is chic;

the music (different on each floor) is mood appropriate and has clearly been selected with care. Even though it was a chilly winter night, the waiters took great care that the coal angeethes kept us warm.

We started with the Smoked Salmon Ravioli dressed in a delicately spiced kafir lime sauce. The portion was enough for one person and the dish had just the right amount of spice. Its vegetarian counterpart, the Asparagus Ravioli, had a sprinkling of mustard seeds that added a nice zing, but the sauce enveloping in was a bit like the last

guy that hit on me: too cheesy. The third appetiser, Basil and Coconut Haricot Verts, was served with roasted peanuts dressed in a sweet mustard teriyaki, balanced well by the coconut shavings.

For the entrée, we sampled the Kare Raise, a traditional Japanese spicy curry with broccoli, baby corn, eggplant and pickled ginger shoot, served with steamed rice. The flavours or star anise, pepper, cinnamon and clove were somewhat reminiscent of a Malabari curry. Though we were warned it was one of those dishes we would either

love or hate, I'm happy to report that we loved it.

The Tamar Glazed Sea Bass with fresh Asian greens and chilli flakes had the right amount of sweetness and the fish was fresh. Even though fried rice is a side dish, here the rice with Shibazuke is interesting and a little sticky.

For dessert we first tried the sweet chilli apple tart, the gentle spice sending a wonderful tingle down the throat. For the more adventurous kind, Green tea caramel chocolate is worth experimenting with. Despite being being full, we decided not to offend the chocolate Gods and ordered the mud cake, which here is very different from other places and was served with spiced pear and red berry compote ice cream. The ice-cream was strongly spiced; my friend said it was star anise while I could detect pepper, but we relished this rare flavoured ice-cream. We argued about it so long that we eventually went to the chef to solve the spice puzzle. As usual when we are arguing, I turned out to be right.

Singing odes to Chang culture

ANJANA PRADHAN

San Francisco based 49-year-old Tibetan singer and songwriter Techung, a.k.a. Tashi Dhondup Sharzur, does not feel the need to place his culture and tradition on some high pedestal. He wants to place it at a level where others can see, explore, appreciate and even take potshots at it. Why else would he bring out an album dedicated to the drinking songs of Tibet? *Changshay: Traditional Tibetan Drinking Songs*, released in 2005, com-

they can't relate with it anymore. "As a musician, I find many young Tibetans aren't appreciating their own culture and tradition anymore. That's why I decided to reinvent traditional Tibetan songs and music for them." His music has been included in several movies, including the IMAX documentary *Everest*.

Techung mostly plays drachen (Tibetan lute) and piwang (Tibetan violin), and sometimes the bamboo flute. But it is his mesmerising voice which has enthralled millions of listeners across the world.



Tashi seeks to ground his culture in everyday reality

pires songs that the community sings between sips of *chang* (a popular barley brew). It has a strong spiritual connect.

Currently in India to promote his new album, *Semshae* (Heart Song), the first Tibetan music album for children, Techung says many Tibetans in exile are losing interest in their culture and tradition because

He has won the best modern and traditional music award at a Tibetan Music Awards ceremony in Dharamsala in 2003 and the best Asian folk album title in the US. Born in 1961 in Sikkim, Techung's family relocated to Dharamsala, the seat of the Tibetan government in-exile, in the early '60s.

I am pregnant with my husband's child but my parents do not know that I am married



Q. While doing my hotel management course I fell in love with a batchmate from a different community. Neither of our families approved of the idea of us getting married. So after completing the course, we got

married secretly but continued to stay with our parents. Recently, I have conceived and both my husband and I have decided that we would like to have the baby rather than get an abortion. But this means we will have to

tell our parents and this is making us very scared as there have been so many cases of honour killings. Please guide us.

—A.

A. You say you got married secretly, but is your marriage legally registered? If so, perhaps you both could try sounding out your respective parents again on the idea of your marriage and see how they react. If they're still implacable and your fears of stiff resistance or reprisals are reinforced, it would be

advisable to move out — you may need to use some pretext — and seek formal legal protection before revealing the truth to your parents. NGO's and societies like Sanjeevani could also be helpful in the matter.

Q. I belong to Manipur and will be getting married to a Punjabi boy in February. It is a love marriage. There will be three different wedding ceremonies and the boy's family is insisting that I should wear a dress of their choice at the three different

times. This is making me very unhappy as I want to wear the traditional Manipuri wedding costume and jewellery at least one of the three times. No one from my family will be attending my wedding so it is very important for me to have at least something Manipuri at the wedding otherwise the regret will haunt me for the rest of my life. I am very upset because it is my wedding so why should someone else decide on what I should wear? What should I do?

—S.

A. Why don't you explain

the situation to your fiancée, tell him how happy it would make you if you could wear your traditional Manipuri dress for at least one of the occasions, and request him to intercede in the matter?

Q. Last week, a well known social worker came to our college to give a lecture. After that, she picked a few of us from the audience to come on the stage and give our reactions to her talk. When my turn came, I suddenly became tongue tied and couldn't say a word and many students

in the audience started laughing and 'booing'. It was all so embarrassing and humiliating. What can I do so that it doesn't happen again?

—Ragini

A. Stage fright can be quite embarrassing but it is a fairly common occurrence, so try to get over your feeling of humiliation. Fortunately, it can be overcome by going in for a good public speaking course which will build up your confidence and give you other skills in the bargain.

If you don't want to go in for a professional public speaking course, you can try and practice with a small group of friends or take help from a teacher in your college. You can also try and address an imaginary audience. But make sure you use a mike in your practice sessions because at the novice stage hearing one's voice magnified can sometimes lead to loss of voice!

Send in your questions to veenu.sandal@sunday-guardian.com