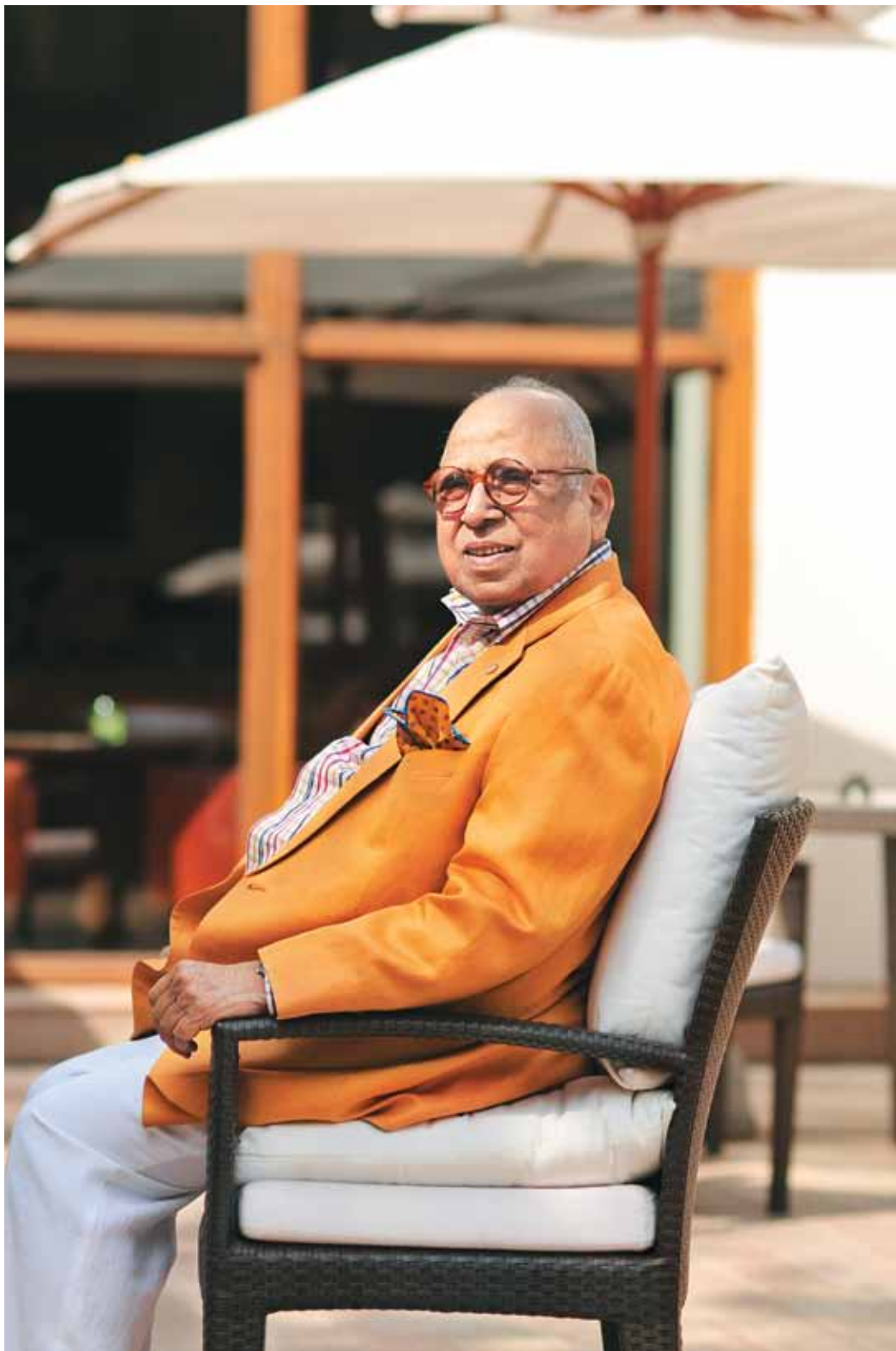


SOLDIERING ON

CP Krishnan Nair has worn several hats in his 90 years: soldier, businessman, hotelier and, always, patriot



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NAIR'S ROYAL START

Chirakkal Thirunal, the reigning royalty of a province, sponsored Nair's college education. He visited Nair's school one day. Impulsively, Nair wrote a poem in his praise and went up and read it. Thirunal was so pleased he said he would fund his college fee. When the time came, Nair went up to the king. He didn't have cash then, but gave him a ring he was wearing. Nair took the ring to Madras, pawned it at the store the Thirunal had mentioned and got the money. He kept what was required and returned the rest.

There should be a viable business in selling Captain CP Krishnan Nair's diet. Or the philosophy by which he lives his life. Because even at 90, the chairman of Leela Hotels, not only has the energy of a man less than half his age, but also the cheerful enthusiasm and optimism that most people forget by the time they are nine. We meet at the Royal Club, New Delhi, the Leela's new property. Nair extricates himself from a meeting of the top brass of the hotel including Dinesh Nair, his son, and Rajiv Kaul, vice chairman, the more public face of the group. We sit down to tea and with the murmur of hospitality industry strategy, including how to attract the 1.5 million Russian tourists, buzzing behind us, get talking.

Though the Leela Group, which Nair started at 66, is the most visible of his enterprises, he spent most of his working life building a garment and textile business. Amid the gloom of slowing growth and corrupt governments, Nair is still optimistic. "We have some problems. We haven't grown at the pace we should have. But the future is bright. Even in my business, we have 100% occupancy in most of our hotels and 60-70% occupancy in this new property," he says.

What the otherwise calm and ebullient Nair bristles at, however, is the extensive cynicism his countrymen are spouting. The morning's papers quote the head a large Indian conglomerate saying he is forced to look outside India to invest in new businesses. "How can you say that? You may be a businessman, but shouldn't you be a patriot first?" he asks.

This is a running theme of Nair-think, an unquestioning loyalty to his nation. Perhaps this is because he was a military man until he got married and his wife Leela suggested he quit a job that largely involved saluting people. His father-in-law was a large textile manufacturer and Nair began marketing textiles. He set up his own manufacturing units later. The first hotel came out of a casual conversation about the potential of land he had acquired in Andheri before Mumbai's international airport came up.

Once Nair finishes working on the next property in Chennai [his eighth], he will move to the new business of managing hotels. "We have six hotels that are interested. I will get busy with that," he says.

Talk of retirement is clearly redundant. Will he even slow down now that he is a nonagenarian? "I have a job to do," he exclaims. But adds, "Age has its own inflictions. I eat simple meals and exercise for an hour a day." His sons insist that he take it easy. And tell him that when he is travelling, he should make sure he goes with the company president. "But I tell them no. I can do this by myself. I am a soldier." b

—VEENA VENUGOPAL

DR SHYAM BHAT, PSYCHIATRIST, INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE SPECIALIST

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

You don't need anything to experience joy

*You can't always get what you want
But if you try sometimes, well,
you just might find
You get what you need
—The Rolling Stones*

As a hard-working, ambitious, rational person, you prefer hard facts to fluff. So allow me to share two formulae with you:

- Dissatisfaction ∝ Unmet Desires (dissatisfaction is directly proportional to unmet desires)

- Desires = Needs + Wants

Dissatisfaction is born in the fire of unmet desires. A deeper look reveals that desires include both wants and needs, but people mistakenly think of one as the other. They are different.

'Wants' are things that you would like to have whereas 'needs' are things that your survival depends on. The new car that you want? The promotion? A TV with a bigger screen? Holidays in Europe? These are 'wants'.

Water, food, shelter, reasonable health, family and friends — these are 'needs'. You know this intellectually but I am not just making a semantic point — needs and wants are emotions attached to objects of desire, and experienced on a pre-verbal, deeper, non-rational level. When your mind mislabels an object of desire as a 'need' rather than a 'want',



you become stressed and restless until you attain the desired object. And when you mistake the object of desire for something that your survival depends on, you hold your breath, you become tense, and you don't relax until you get that object of desire. Of course, this is exhausting because, while needs are limited, wants are never-ending. Once you attain one thing, another ten come up in its place, like the heads of a demon. You can slay this demon of desire only when you differentiate between your wants and needs.

There's no need to postpone life anymore. You have enough. You are enough. You are already complete. To paraphrase Mick Jagger: You can't always get what you want, but you already have what you need.

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