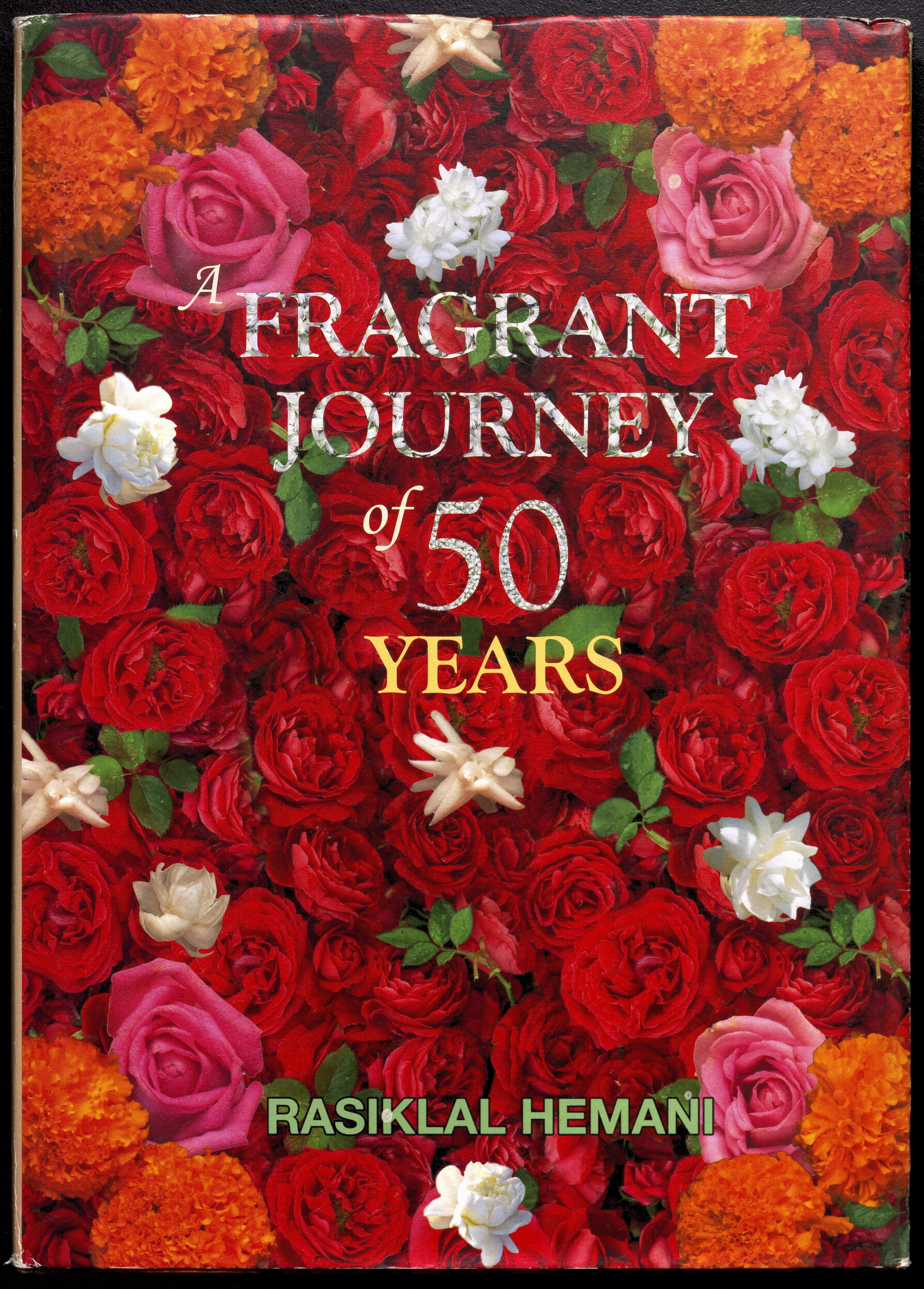
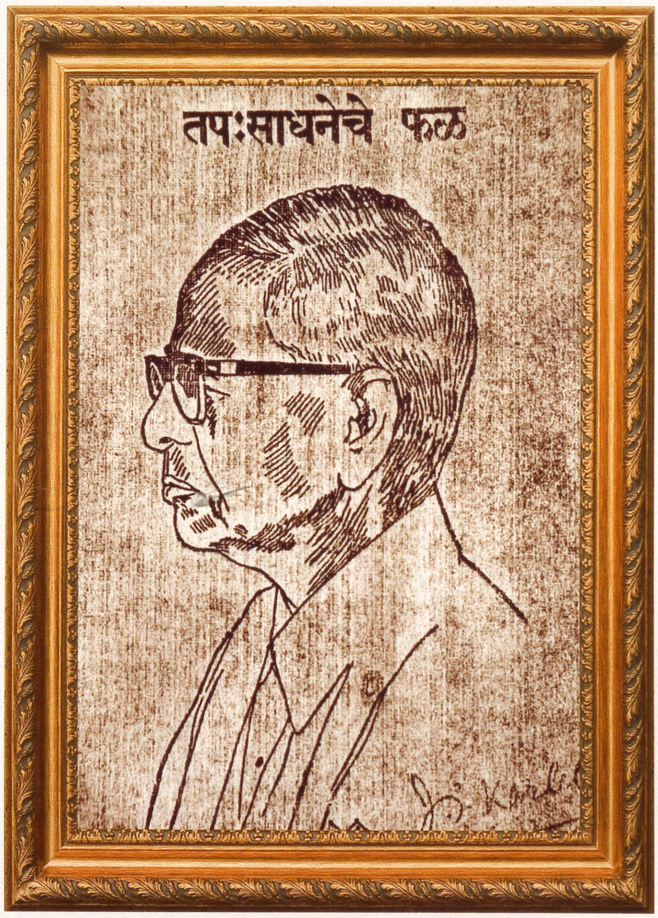

A
FRAGRANT
JOURNEY
of 50
YEARS
RASIKLAL HEMANI

FOUNDER
OF S. H. KELKAR & CO.
SADASHIV KELKAR



THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED
TO MY MENTOR
DAMU SETH





A FRAGRANT JOURNEY OF 50 YEARS

RASIKLAL HEMANI

TEXT
USHA RAI

PHOTOGRAPHS
NITIN RAI



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HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

CHAPTER 1

On India's first Independence Day in 1947, there was a flag hoisting ceremony in Bhavnagar and young Rasiklal was eager to join in the celebrations, but his school teacher would not allow him to go to the parade. He rebelled, chucked the asan (small floor covering) on which he was sitting and ran away from school. The books he read early in life steered him away from religion to become more practical and scientific

It's not exactly a rags to riches story! But it is a story of fighting the odds, the various vicissitudes of life to come up from scratch through sheer determination and hard work... and its' from the enchanting old world of fragrances and flavours... attars and exotic perfumes. This is the remarkable story of Rasiklal Hemani, Bapu to his friends and family, who began in a small way 50 years ago, operating out of a small room in the back alleys of the old city of Chandni Chowk's, Khari Baoli. Taking on the heady world of aromas and fragrances, Rasik chartered his own way to climb to the top of his business. Today Bapu is a crorepati!

Rasik's rise to the millionaire category is more remarkable because he was left-inclined and his ideology would not allow him to amass wealth unless he could share it with others. Nor did Rasik have the educational qualifications and technical skills, no MBA stamp normally considered essential to soar in business, especially in something as rarefied as fragrances. In fact, he did not even have a school leaving certificate. Rolling up his shirt sleeves, listening and absorbing things happening all around, Rasiklal Hemani learnt while on the job.

The eldest of five siblings, Rasik was born in Rajula, Amreli District of Gujarat in 1934 to Shantaben and Nagardas Hemani. Before the country's Independence in 1947, there were 110 princely states in Saurashtra and his father had the responsibility of handling the octroi duty of Rajula. He also had a modest charcoal business in Bhavnagar. Rasik was sent to the city's Sanathan Dharam Charitable Trust High School and though he scored 78 per cent in humanities, maths and other subjects, he failed in Sanskrit and could not get his matriculation degree. Quite obviously a great deal of importance was given to knowledge of Sanskrit around the time of India's Independence for the earnest young man to be denied his school leaving certificate.

THE EARLY YEARS

It is said that the traits of a child can be determined even when he is in the cradle. Rasik was observant, super sensitive and analytical. Once when he was about 10 years old, some Jain sadhus had come to his home in Amreli seeking bheekhsha (alms). His mother immediately thickened some milk with almonds, elachi (cardamom) and sugar to feed the sadhus. Young Rasik who had never been pampered with such delicious milk was angry and resented the feeding of the sadhus. He deliberately pushed the milk from her hand for which he received a sound thrashing.

On India's first Independence Day in 1947, there was a flag hoisting parade in Bhavnagar but there was no holiday in his school. His Jain school teacher did not allow him to go to the parade so he chucked the asan (small rug) on which he was to sit, removed the cloth covering his mouth (a Jain tradition to prevent the breathing/swallowing of insects and



Young Rasik

other living creatures in the atmosphere), rebelled, ran away from school and became an agnostic.

Edgar Snow's book titled 'Sin & Science,' Manav Samaj by Rahul Sankrutyayan and 'Mother' by Maxim Gorky greatly influenced him, steering him away from religion to become more practical and scientific. He kept himself away from emotional exploitation. But when he grew older and started his own business he was sensitive to others needs as long as it served his business interests. "I was selfish to some extent and blunt in speaking the truth," he admits with candour.

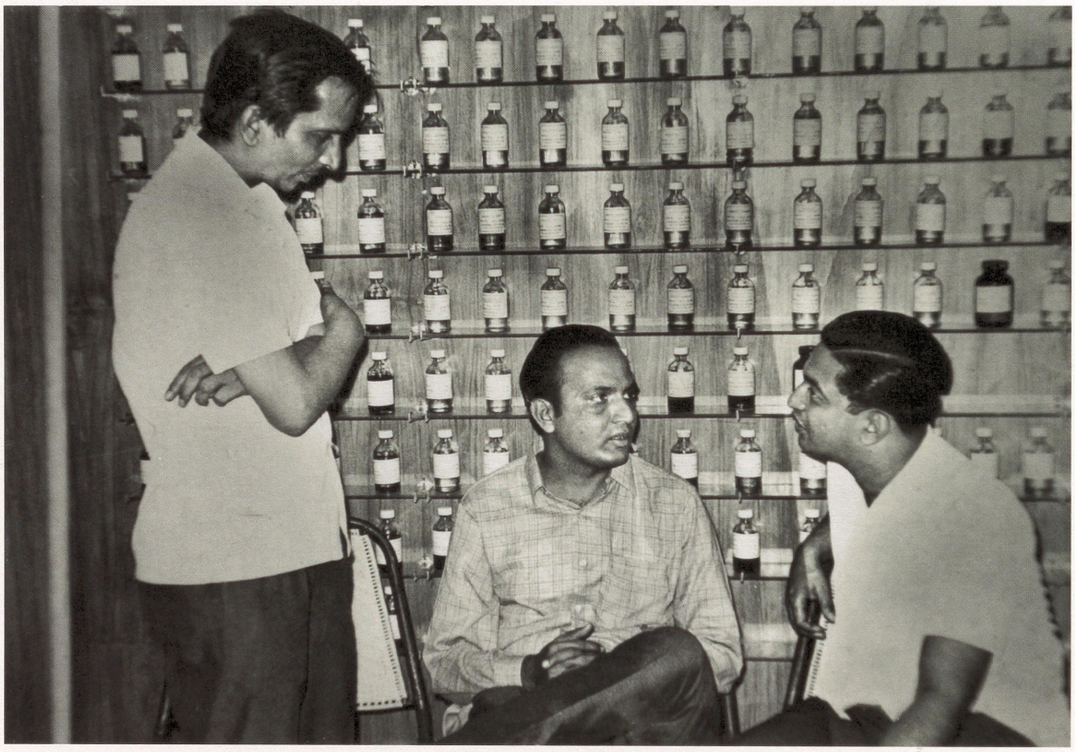
Even while in school he was attracted to Sardar Prithvi Singh Azad, both the individual and his philosophy. Azad was a leftist, a member of the Gaddar Party and an anti-British activist and was given asylum in Bhavnagar State. Bapu has vivid recollection of the hive of political activity in Bhavnagar. Young minds fired by the freedom struggle were attracted to the left thinkers and activists. There were classes in Marxism and Gandhian philosophy and young Rasik attended all of them. Akhadas or wrestling rings, in addition to the food for the mind that the political thinkers offered, were constantly challenging the physical prowess of youngsters on the ideological treadmill.

At Bhavnagar there were mobile libraries for children to read and understand the world around them. They were allowed to keep the books (most of them in Gujarati) for a week and this encouraged Rasik to read a lot. There was even a book reading competition and the most well-read were given awards. Rasik was by nature inquisitive and so the lack of institutional recognition was more than compensated with his knowledge on a variety of subjects.

Sometimes the akhadas also sponsored film shows for the children, so



The bustling Khari Baoli in 1965 by Raghu Rai



Rasik in his Khari Baoli office in 1965 with Govind Kelkar (extreme right) and a customer

he saw a lot of Walt Disney and Charlie Chaplin and films like Good Earth, Les Miserable and Gone with the Winds as well as Indian films made by New Theatres like Roti, Mother India, Hum Log, Do Bigha Zameen, Shaheed, Dharti ke Lal etc which were realistic films based on poverty and the struggle for survival. Quite clearly his early life attracted him to the left ideology.

Rasik began assisting Prithvi Singh Azad and was entrusted with the responsibility of propagating Marxist ideology by selling books by Marx, Lenin and Engel. Rasik's bonus was a 40 per cent commission on the books sold and this provided him the money required to pay his school fees of 50 paise (half a rupee) a month, buy text books and stationary as well as have enough for his pocket expenses.

Rasik was not even 17 years when a close relative, his granduncle from his mother's side, invited him to Singapore to be his understudy and learn his business about spices, cotton, toys and other goods imported from India. But before he could leave for Singapore, there were clashes between the Chinese and the Malay population and the visit was cancelled.

The search for an apprenticeship for Rasik, however, continued and in 1952, when he was just 18 years, on the recommendation of his father, he got his first job with Kantilal Shah, a relative and dealer in industrial perfumes. His first assignment with the Bombay (today's Mumbai) office of the Calcutta Essence Supply Company involved purchasing, packing, retailing of perfumes on a monthly salary of Rs 60. Even from this small salary he had to send some money home every month. It was one of his earliest lessons in life- living frugally and sharing even from the little money he had.

MARKETING MARX & PERFUMES

He was then promoted and sent to the



Rasik with scientists of the Regional Research Laboratories, Dr B C Gulhati and Dr C K Atal

Calcutta (today's Kolkata) office to help run the branch office as Kannubhai Kothari, the manager there, went on leave for a few months. Rasik lived and worked in the office. It was here that he got his first exposure to the perfume business. He was able to extend the skills he had acquired selling Marx and Lenin to marketing industrial perfumes.

Being in Kolkata, he used the opportunity to visit the Vishva Bharati campus in Shantiniketan and its extension, the second campus at Sriniketan. He was impressed by the philosophy, literature and Rabindra Sangeet of the Great Guru. It was in Kolkata that he heard Ravi Shankar playing the sitar, accompanied on the tabla by Anokhe Lal and had his first exposure to the plays of Utpal Dutt and Sombhu Moitra.

After six months work in Kolkata, in 1959 Kantilal Shah asked him to move to Delhi and open a branch office called Marigold Company Pvt Ltd. Rasik rented a place for office cum residence in Khari Baoli and had one person to assist him. In the very first year with products worth Rs 1 lakh, he managed a turnover of Rs 7 lakhs and profit of Rs 2 lakhs.

Even while he worked for Kantilal Shah from 1952 to 1964 he got four agencies to sell Tata's industrial perfumes as well as that of a Swiss and two French companies, Givaudan, Antoni Chiris, Grasse, in France.

During this time, Rasik was entrusted with the responsibility of collecting money from customers to whom the industrial perfumes were sold. It was at Kannauj that Rasik learnt one of his early lessons in life. He had collected Rs 30,000 from a customer and was returning via Kanpur to Lucknow. In Kanpur he stayed in the retiring room of the railway station and slept with the money under his pillow. On reaching Lucknow, he realised he had forgotten the money in the Kanpur retiring room and rushed



At 1972 meeting of Perfumes & Fragrances Association of India.
Left to right-- Rasik, Sant Kumar, P K Seth, Sudhir Jain and Mooradhwaj Saini

back. Rs 30,000 was a small fortune in those days and Rasik was worried about the consequences of losing this large sum. Would his employer believe him or would he think it was a cock and bull story and that he had actually pocketed the money?

Fortunately the handicapped Muslim attendant of the retiring room had kept the money carefully. Rasik offered Rs 100 as a token of thanks to the attendant. The man took Rs 10 and refused a paise more. Two lessons were learnt! To build a business you need to trust people, and more important, the poor and lowly too are honest. All the way back to Lucknow he thought about the incident and decided he would never do a job where he would have to handle cash. It was too risky!

In Delhi, in 1960 Hemani joined the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) as its treasurer and worked with Prof Binoy Roy, founder of the Russian Language Institute in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). He got to know him through his Gujarati wife, Jayabehen. To raise funds for the IPTA's newly allotted office in Shankar Market, the rising actor of yesteryears, Utpal Dutt, staged nine shows at the All India Fine Arts and Crafts (AIFAC) theatre in the heart of New Delhi. Hemani who was organising the various facilities for the artistes decided to provide a farewell dinner to the 50 artistes in recognition of the success of the fund raiser. Utpal Dutt's wife was annoyed and chided him "a packet of methai (sweets) delivered at the railway station would have sufficed—the fledgling Association could not afford the extravagance of a meal". The IPTA was largely left-leaning and even great actors like Balraj Sahni, A.K.Hangal, Dina Pathak, Shanta Gandhi, Asha Singh Mastana and music director Salil Chaudhry were simple, humble people, not demanding like the artistes of today. Almost all of them subsequently moved to Bollywood and added to the burgeoning pool of talent of the film city.

BEGINNING A 50 YEAR PARTNERSHIP

In 1965, Rasiklal Hemani left Kantilal Shah's company and got the agency to market flavours and perfumes of S H Kelkar and Company. Quite obviously news of the shrewd, hardworking salesman of



Rasik receiving cutomers in Khari Baoli office

Delhi had reached Mumbai for the grand old man of the Kelkar family, Damu Seth, known affectionately as Anna, travelled to Delhi, tracked down young Rasik and asked him to work for him. Though excited about his new prospects, Rasik sought Kantilal Shah's advice on the job offer. Kantilal advised him to accept the offer of the Kelkars because his family business was being split and this could affect Rasik's future.

Spurred by the confidence reposed in him, within seven months of working for the Kelkars' he sold fragrances and flavours worth Rs7 lakh. By December 1965, sales had crossed the Rs 8 lakh mark.

It's not quite clear who adopted whom—whether the Kelkars welcomed him into their close family circle or it was Rasik who, attracted by the warmth and hospitality of the Kelkars and their extended business, adopted them. In any case it was a partnership that benefitted both. Perhaps, it was Anna and the Kelkars' who gave Rasik technical guidance—how to create a fragrance, to catch the delicate aroma of jasmines and mogra. He learnt of the emerging market of industrial perfumes—of sweet smelling detergents and the heady flavour of a delicately created paan for the connoisseur and of course about aromatic tobacco that could transport you to another world. It was as exciting a business as sipping the best teas to grade them or blending grapes for wine that lingers on the taste buds. Yet, to be successful in this challenging fledgling industry in the fifties and sixties you needed a hard business head and the ability to market.

When Ramesh Vaze, the youngest son of Damu Seth and the group's business leader, visited Delhi to promote their products in North India, Rasik accompanied him and was entrusted with expanding the Kelkar business across old Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, UP, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir and of course Delhi.



Rasik with Mr Bharmal, K K Chawla, Raghu Rai and Kantilal Shah

BUSINESS OF BLOOMS
1965 TO 1975

At the time the Agency was set up, Rasiklal was a bachelor. He had a Garhwali cook, Bali, who fed him as well as customers and friends who stayed overnight at Khari Baoli. Rasik would begin his day by going to the market and buying vegetables, spices and other requirements of the kitchen. Khari Baoli has a bustling wholesale market in spices, rice, wheat, pulses and other necessities. The business day would begin at 9 a.m sharp, a timing that he observes to this day. By 11 a.m. letters were drafted and ready for despatch. Then he was ready to receive customers.

On May 1 1965, Rasiklal Hemani Agency became a proprietorship company with just three people operating out of Khari Baoli, Rasik, his brother Ramesh and an office assistant S K Bhatia. In the heart of bustling old Delhi where trams, rickshaws, tongas, tempos, hand carts and a sea of humanity fought for space and business, up a narrow flight of steep stairs on the second floor of 506 Khari Baoli was the office-cum-residence. He still has that small office in the heart of Delhi, a constant reminder of his humble beginning, though in keeping with the company's growth, he acquired a larger, modern office on Asaf Ali Road in 2003.

The 400 sq ft space in Khari Baoli was rented from Aminya Muslim Girls School at Rs 33 a month. It had a large hall, a verandah, a small kitchen and a toilet. The hall was partitioned to serve as office and home. Office equipment was kept in the verandah. Space may have been limited but there was no dearth of customers because the office was in the centre of the busiest trading hub of the city in those days.

One of his first clients was Mr Satyapal Gupta of Dharampal Premchand, a leading tobacco manufacturer. He came to his office and placed an order of Rs.11,000 for a special ingredient in the tobacco his company was manufacturing.

Rasik, all of 31 years, was elated! He had made his first move on the chess board of business and had got the knight.

In those early years there were no mobile phones or email facilities to speed up business. There were not many facilities for trunk calls too, so he would send five to six telegrams and letters every day to Mumbai for procuring the various ingredients needed by Delhi businessmen. His slogan to spur up deliveries was "you can win with quick supply." Every two months he would make a trip to Mumbai to get samples and learn about the new products available in India's commercial capital.

Since there was no residential facility near the Kelkar factory site in Mulund, he would stay in Mumbai and catch a train to Mulund at 6 a.m. He would invariably carry samples of products that Delhi traders wanted for use in tobacco, paan masala, soaps, detergents, agarbattis, snuff, mouth fresheners. Early in business he learnt the importance of professionalism and developed an eye for detail. He would send the samples for manufacture, check the final products received to ensure quality and then only deliver it to his clients. Sometimes he even took the customers to the factory and ensured they were satisfied with the final product. Solving the problems of his customers became his forte.

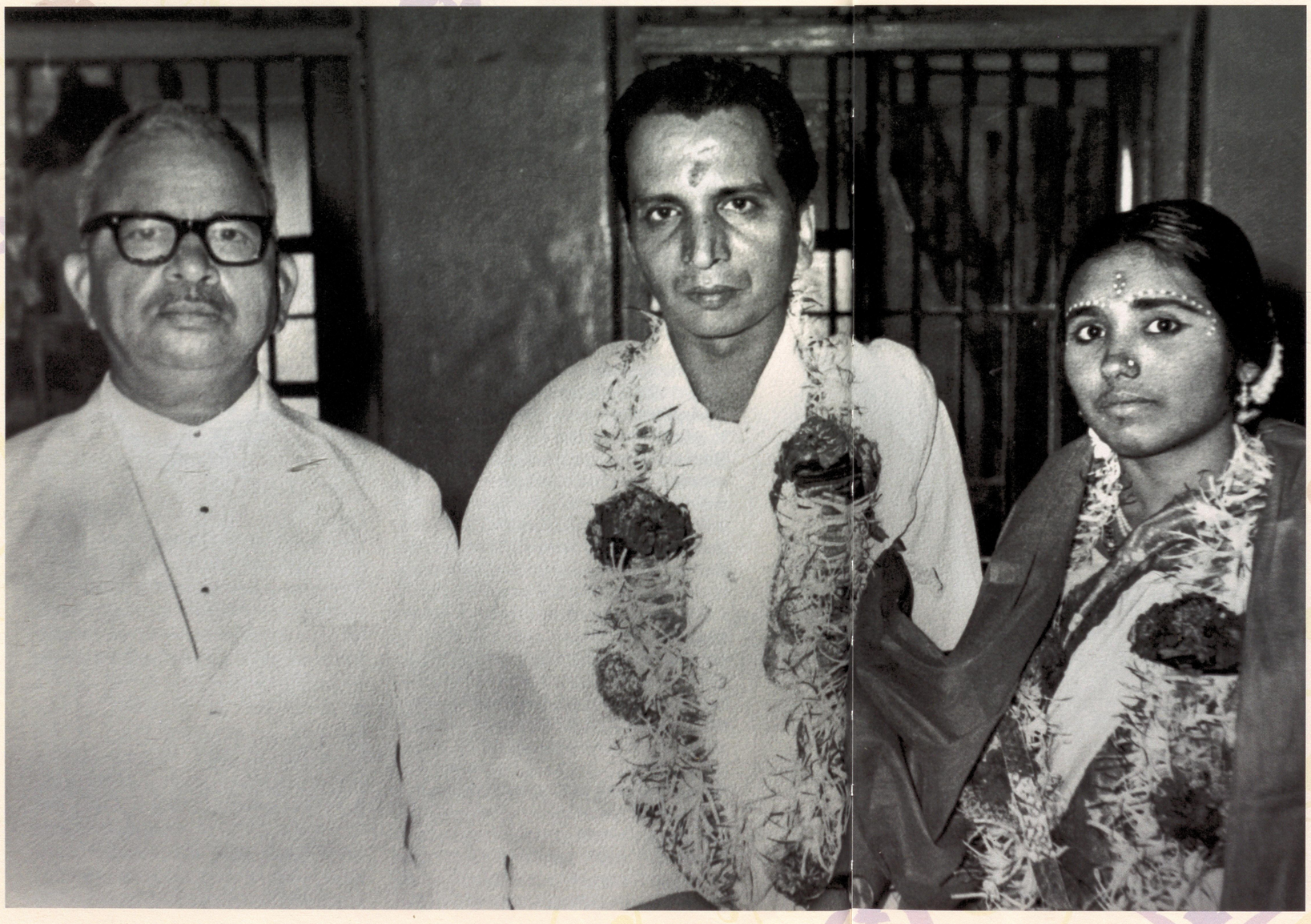
Business reports were compiled regularly and shared with the Kelkars. Once he travelled to Dadar in Mumbai to discuss his business report with Damu Seth. He was excited and needed a puff of his favourite India King cigarette to calm his nerves but in deference to his senior, he would not smoke in his presence. Recognizing the nervous restlessness of Rasik, Anna asked him to go and smoke first and then settle down for business. Travelling and smoking were two important features in his early years on the business ladder. Fifteen days in a month he was shuttling between UP, Punjab and Rajasthan meeting senior sales persons in different companies and getting to know them personally. In places like Kannauj, he would stay in a dharamshala attached to a temple, paying 50 paise for a meal of purees, vegetable and khichdi. Often other sales persons would join him for the meals. There was no showing off, no wining and dining in big restaurants.

As he travelled deeper into small towns and villages of Rajasthan he got new insights on local customs and practices. In Pali, Rajasthan, he learnt the value of water and realized how precious it was for the local population. Given a bucket of water he would bathe sitting on a charpoi or a cot made of ropes. The water that drained out would be collected in a utensil placed under the charpoi and used for washing clothes, utensils or for watering a small kitchen garden. In UP he learnt to cope with floods and the incessant heat. It was so hot that there was a fan in the toilet in Jaunpur, Rasik recalls.

The cost of his travel for promoting sales was not borne by the Kelkars, so he would travel cheap and stay in modest hotels and dharamshalas which were almost free. Since the Kelkars gave Rasik over 6 per cent of the sales as his commission, the more he sold the larger the amount he could keep for himself. However, when anyone from the Kelkar family and management visited him, he would put them up in five star facilities. He even accompanied them to the Vishwanath temple in Varanasi where a bel leaf in gold was offered to the presiding deity. His sales graph which rose from Rs 7 lakh to Rs 8 lakh within eight months of his agency being set up became Rs 15 lakh by the end of the following year—that is how Rasik's own income soared.

MARRIAGE BRINGS NEW PARTNERSHIP

Damu Seth with newly weds Rasik and Panna



In 1968 he married Bombay girl Panna, who was working in the Bank of Baroda and his life and fortunes improved further. A friend of Rasik's, Yashovardhan Bhatt, visited Bombay where he met Panna at a common friend's house and liked her so much that he proposed marriage with Rasik. For two months there was exchange of letters between them for a better understanding of each other. It was a quiet wedding hosted by his benefactor Kantilal. He found that with Panna by his side he had greater access to business circles and their families. Having worked in a bank in Bombay, Panna became an unofficial business partner and gave new insights to his work. Even while on his honeymoon with Panna in Kashmir, his business mind was ticking -- how to capture the fragrance of the myriad blossoms and aromas of the Valley for the industry!

Back in Delhi, he received an invitation to the socialist youth festival in Bulgaria. It was a state sponsored visit so he did not have to spend much from his own pocket. With a modest budget of Rs 2000 he had ventured out of the country for the first time. After a week in Sofia, he travelled to Tashkent and Samarkhand before returning home.

Before setting out on his foreign jaunt, he had put in place a system that enabled his office to function smoothly without him. His strict instructions were that when the office closed for the day, no work would be pending for the next day. Fortunately, in 1969 he had hired as his assistant Ashok Nimkar, an honest, conscientious man who was a big support for Rasik and worked with him till his death in 2012. The office was so well organised that he managed with very little support. He had a part time accountant and a year later a peon to run office errands.

The children of many of his close friends were studying in the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. He particularly remembers his meetings with young Sanjay Guha, Meera Shah and Alpana Shah. While Sanjay was the son of his leftist friend Dulal Guha and wife Kusumben, Meera was the

Kishore, Rasik and Panna with staff at Asaf Ali Road



daughter of Manubhai Shah, minister for international trade in the central government and Vidyaben Shah, president of Gujarati Samaj and a social worker. Alpana was daughter of good friends Hasmukh and Nila Shah. They would share with him their bookish, theoretical knowledge on management and he would tell them about the practical problems of running a business and managing people and work. It was a great learning curve in Rasik's early years as an entrepreneur. Though he never went to a business school, he was able to tap into the minds of those who had been to one.

NETWORKING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

In addition to learning from the young graduates of management institutes, Rasik gained valuable insights into the industry from professional bodies like the Essential Oils Association. Every year they would organise workshops and seminars on trends, research, the various ingredients and innovations in the perfume and essential oils business, and he ensured he never missed a single one.

When Dr C K Atal, director of a regional research laboratory, became president of the Association, he asked him to run a course on perfumery under the banner of the Association. A three-day course was organised and the faculty included Mr G D Kelkar of Kelkar group, Dr R M Wagh of Tata Industrial Perfumes and Mr Nimbalkar of Hindustan Lever from the perfumery side and Dr Atal, Dr Dhar and Dr Sobti representing the Regional Research



Kishore and Ramesh with fragrance bottles and staff in Khari Baoli

Laboratory, Jammu. Twentyfive students joined the first course and their average age was 45. In three days they gathered useful information, both theoretical and practical, about various techniques to improve their products. This was for the first time that industry was tapping into knowledge and skills of the country's national laboratories.

Every year these workshops were held in different parts of the country and members of the perfume industry got good exposure to the country, the demands of industry in those regions and their problems. These refresher courses were the equivalent of the administrative courses run by the Lal Bahadur Academy at Mussoorie for the bureaucrats of the country. Till then there were no courses for people in the business of making industrial perfumes and fragrances. People learnt on the job with knowledge, skills and techniques being handed down the generations from father to son.

Rasik wore many hats and to improve his knowledge joined various professional associations. He was a member of the Essential Oils Association from 1965. He was founder of the Perfumes & Fragrances Association of India in 1972 and founder of the Zarda Manufacturers Association in 1974. His role in the International Congress of Flavours & Fragrances and the International Conference on Essential Oils in 1989 led to the setting up of the Flavours & Fragrances Society.

In 1972, a Mumbai based Perfumery, Raw Material Trade Association, decided to go all-India and asked Rasik Hemani to enrol members from North India for the seminar. Fortyfive members were enrolled and they travelled to Mumbai to attend the AGM and participate in the seminar. The India Perfumery, Raw Material Trade Association constituted four zonal associations in North, South, East and



Asaf Ali Road office with bottles and customer data cardex

West. Rasik was chosen as the joint secretary of the north zone.

Meanwhile Rasik's relationship with the Kelkars deepened. He was treated as the son of the family. Khasnis of Saibaba Sugandh Bhandar had been the Kelkar's agent in Bangalore from 1954. When Rasik took charge, he looked after the Karnataka market too and the Bangalore turnover started improving. In 1968, Kelkars decided to give a commission of 5 per cent of sales to all their agents. For Rasik, however, this was a drop from the earlier commission of 6.4 per cent (6.25 per cent for fragrances and the rest for chemicals). Rasik complained that 5 per cent commission was inadequate. However, Damu Seth did not agree. He said even if I give you more commission you won't be able to save. Even the 5 per cent commission worked out to Rs 7000, enabling Rasik to run his home and save Rs 2000 a month.

Damu Seth, however, compensated Hemani in other ways. A shrewd businessman he had a heart of gold. When Rasik was taking his wife out of India for the first time, Damu Seth gave her US $ 500 for pocket expenses. The gesture earned him the confidence and affection of both Rasik and Panna.

Accepting the commission of the Kelkars, Rasik made forays into new areas to bring in more business. Near Allahabad was one of the biggest tobacco manufacturers of UP, Kesarwani Zarda Bhandar. Its owner, Bholanathji, would take a dip in the holy Ganga before starting business every morning. To get the attention of Bholanathji, Rasik accompanied by Ramesh Vaze, joined the manufacturer for this morning bath in the Ganga and forged a unique bond that laid the foundations for their business. Rasik had an unusual personal way of building rapport with his clients and this



A view of the modern Asaf Ali Road office

enabled his business to grow. Rasik received a huge order for concentrated fragrance that could be blended with any tobacco. There were several such small, personal gestures that helped Hemani in business.

There was a craze for imported cigarettes in those days. It was a luxury for smaller traders and businessmen. Though Rasik's favourite was India King, he often carried imported cigarettes like the State Express 555 for clients in Kanpur and other cities. However, unlike some of his rivals he never offered alcohol or sex as inducement for getting business.

As the sales of the Kelkar products soared so did the fortunes of Rasiklal. He had come into his own and was a tough competitor to beat—cornering large pockets of the perfume business. In keeping with his new improved status, in 1971 he rented a flat in the upbeat Civil Lines area of Delhi at Rs 700 a month. The Khari Baoli flat was retained purely as an office to accommodate the growing business. In six years from 1965 to 1971 Kelkar Company's sales soared from Rs 7 lakh to Rs 50 lakh, thanks to Rasiklal's efforts.

REACHING THE RS 1 CRORE MARK

In the next couple of years sales increased further and his business prospered. Within a decade of starting the Rasiklal Hemani Agency Pvt Ltd, in North India sales shot up from Rs 7 lakh in 1965 to Rs 1 crore in a decade. The year 1975 marked a landmark in his career. Rasiklal Hemani Agency was converted to a Private Limited Company and work plans were drawn up till 2015. In 1987 a branch office was opened in Lucknow and his brother Kishore was put in charge of it. He, wife Panna and brother Kishore are the three directors of the company with Rasik as the managing director. In 2003, he opened his third office, a plush, more modern office on 3000 sq ft on Asaf Ali Road, Delhi. In all three offices in Lucknow, Khari Baoli and Asaf Ali Road, he has a staff of 14 people including himself and Kishore. Though the staff is small, it is well looked after. In addition to Provident Fund, he provides educational support to their children till college as well as medical assistance, the maximum permitted by the tax department. In special cases he even supported heart surgery and paid for treatment of major ailments. Three months' salary is given as bonus every year and in 2013 it was the equivalent of four months' salary. The annual increment in wages of the staff varied from seven to eight per cent. The private limited company which had started in 1975 with Rs 30,000 had a turnover of Rs 12 crore in 2013. Always a good civilian, he was now paying tax of Rs 50 to Rs 60 lakh a year. It was a steady march to reach that magical figure of Rs 1 crore and then Rs 12 crore. A unit for research and development became an important component of the new company. Hemani's travels and contacts had clearly established that R&D was vital to combat competition from multinationals, which saw a big market in India with its growing population and its demands. Further the Indian economy had opened up. In 50 years, sales soared to cross Rs 100 crores!

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE TAX DEPARTMENT

Rasik was now a big league tax payer



A pensive Rasik at his desk on Asaf Ali Road

and there was a sense of pride that he was contributing to the country's development. His accounts were maintained impeccably and unlike many businessmen, there was no attempt to evade tax. Despite his honesty there was harassment by the income tax department. Once he got notice to appear before the department and landed up at the appointed time with lawyer and his accounts books. The officer concerned, however, had not reached and he was asked to come back after lunch. This annoyed him and he made such a noise about the tardiness of the department that he was finally called in. He insisted that the file on his tax payments should be pulled out and placed before the concerned officer. Then he demanded a three year assessment of his returns. Eighty per cent of his earnings were being paid to the income tax department and yet he found he was being hounded by the tax officials. For several years from 1982 he was paying the government Rs 5 lakhs a month as tax. If more tax was due from him, he was willing to pay but there was no question of his greasing a palm or paying a bribe! In the initial years of his entering business, he listed small payments being paid to various people for public services as baksheeksh (tips). The concerned income tax officer had laughed and since he was a novice in keeping accounts advised that he change it to 'miscellaneous expenses.' His honesty and tax payments won him many admirers in the business circles. He got closer to business families who sought his help in solving personal as well as business problems. Not only had he succeeded in bringing businessmen and scientists together for strides in the perfumery business, but he reached out to many of his associates at a personal level. He was like one of King Arthur's 'knights of the round table' always ready to help out a perfumer and industry man in distress.

TAPPING CLIENTS AND PROMOTING CULTURE

The personal relationships Rasik built and his contribution to culture and Gujarat Samaj is borne out by several incidents in his career – many of them when he was still cutting his teeth in the trade in Delhi. As an active worker of IPTA (Indian People's Theatre Association), he was given the responsibility of raising funds for plays being staged in Delhi. For the play Jab hum na honge, he was asked to sell tickets. The front row tickets were Rs 100 each, which was a big amount in 1965. He went to sell a ticket to his friend and business associate Dharampal Gupta from the perfume business. Dharampalji was not particularly interested in theatre but he was keen to oblige his friend Rasik so he bought one ticket and even showed up briefly at the function. Such gestures helped meet the expenses for the play.

Though there was a Gujarati Samaj in Delhi, it was not very active and Gujaratis living in old and New Delhi did not have cordial relations. To bring these disparate groups on a common platform to promote Gujarati culture, he organised a ras garba competition at Sapru House. For many years it became an annual feature and grew bigger by the year. At one stage Vigyan Bhavan had to be booked because there were so many participants and spectators.

As a governing committee member of the Gujarat Education Society under whose auspices Sardar Patel Vidyalaya was run, he ensured priority in admission to Gujarati children. The school was in the heart of New Delhi on Lodhi Road and children who came from old Delhi were denied admission outright. At his insistence a quota was provided for admission of Gujarati children, in particular those from the old city.

Promoting theatre, especially plays from Gujarat was another important initiative. Since Shanta Gandhi was the director of the National School of Drama (NSD) and a friend, he succeeded in getting permission to stage plays of IPTA as well as those of the Gujarat Sahitya Parishad at NSD.

As a part of his efforts to promote Gujarati culture, he assisted the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad organise a sammelan (get together), bringing a 1000 men and women of arts and literature to Delhi. He arranged for the vegetarian meals at the meeting at Rs 15 per head.

All this promotional work culminated in the construction of the Shah auditorium of the Gujarat Samaj on Raj Nivas Marg, Delhi.

Taking a challenge had become a part of his DNA and enabled him to blaze a trail in the world of culture as well as business.



The three new directors, Kishore, Rasik and Panna

CUSTOMERS ARE MY GODS

CHAPTER 2

In keeping with his motto 'customers are my Gods,' he had jumped into the Ganga at Allahabad with a potential client and got a huge order; he carried imported cigarettes for others who loved to smoke but could not afford expensive foreign brands. Business relationship acquired a personal tone and he attended weddings of his clients. Even though he was the agent for the Kelkar products, he gave personal gifts around Diwali to all his customers and friends.

Often he took his clients/ customers to the factory in Bombay to see how an ingredient they had ordered was manufactured and this ensured they were satisfied with the product sold to them. Since some reconstituted essential oils used in the industry were being sold as imported originals from France and UK, he made it a point to educate them on the difference between the reconstituted product and the originals that were imported as well as replacement of international fragrances.

The biggest market was for industrial perfumes. Personal perfumes accounted only for two per cent of the total sales. The maximum use of fragrances is in day to day products like soaps, detergents, incense sticks, cosmetics, hair oils etc. The slogan of the day was "Start your day with us and end your day with us" (begin with the toothpaste, tea or coffee and end with a fragrant paan). Each of these items had been zapped up with industrial aromas, flavours and fragrances.



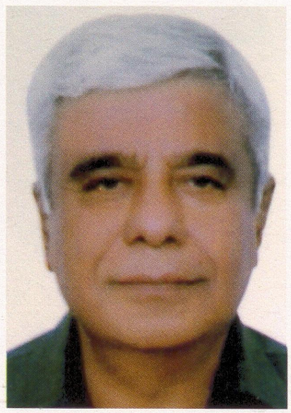
Gulab Singh Johrimal with sons Praful and Mukul in Delhi's oldest perfumery shop in Chandni Chowk



Cutting a cake at the FFAI (fragrance and flavours association of India) seminar at Jaipur.
Left to Right- Rasik, Mrs and Mr Kantilal Shah (Hemani) and Vipin Hemani

NO ONE IS TURNED AWAY FROM THE SHOP IN KHARI BAOLI

J N Nagdev, Chairman,
Hari Darshan Incense and Spirituals



The motto, 'customers are my Gods', enabled Rasik to reach out to all sections of the population. He gave equal respect to new comers entering the perfumery profession, the not so rich perfumers as well as the high-end perfume manufacturers. Mr J N Nagdev, chairman of Hari Darshan Incense and Spirituals, has known Rasik Hemani for 40 years, initially as a client for the Kelkar perfumery ingredients that Hemani marketed and later as a close friend and business adviser.

Sitting in one of his half a dozen factories and offices in Paharganj, Mr Nagdev recalled that when he first met Rasik in the early seventies, he was already a big name while Nagdev was a novice in the perfumery business. Rasik had a range of industrial perfumes for distribution—for Nand Nagari and poorer areas he had cheaper perfumes. No one who came to his shop in Khari Baoli was turned away because he truly believed that each customer was his God and should receive due respect. This was quite contrary to the popular trend to look for big clients. As the relationship grew they began meeting at the various professional associations that they were both members of and again in the evening at business parties. Hemani became a father figure for young Nagdev.

Nagdev set up his first manufacturing unit at Seelampuri in the seventies under Hemani's guidance with 15 employees. The second factory was located at Shahdra with 50 employees and the third in 1984 at Patparganj. In 2006, he split the business at his brother's insistence and was extremely unhappy. Rasik was the only friend who offered to help and provided moral support in those emotionally turbulent years. With



Kelkar family and their agents in India

the help of the Kelkars, he even supported Nagdev's younger son's trip to France to do a course in perfumery. The son returned with qualifications to assist his father in the perfume business and a French wife who moved from being a legal eagle to selling Indian agarbatties in international markets.

It is this caring approach towards clients that took Rasik very high on the business ladder, says Mr Nagdev. The quality of the fragrances that Hemani distributed was always top class. Nagdev was even escorted to Mumbai so that he could meet the Kelkars and see their factory. Rasik's professionalism and insistence on following all government formalities earned him the nickname 'C' Form. This form is required to collect money from clients with whom business is transacted. Another quality of Rasik that endeared him professionally and personally was accepting responsibility for mistakes made.

As family ties strengthened, the Hemanis and Nagdevs travelled to some 40 countries purely for pleasure. "I don't know what my life would have been if I had not met Rasik," says Nagdev.

TEA & BUSINESS WITH PADAM KISHORE SETH

Vinod Kumar Seth



Rasik's earliest client in Delhi was Padam Kishore Seth who operated out of Tilak Bazaar, the old market for the perfume business. Rasik, who was then working for Kantilal Shah's Marigold Company Private Ltd, would visit Seth Bros Pvt Ltd office regularly peddling aromatic chemicals and essentials oils to Padam Seth. In 1959 Rasik received his first order from Padambhai and the relationship blossomed over the years—leading to more business deals and a friendship that only grew till Padam Seth's death in 2010 at the age of 82.

Vinod Kumar Seth, Padam Seth's son, recalls he was still in school and took full advantage of the friendship

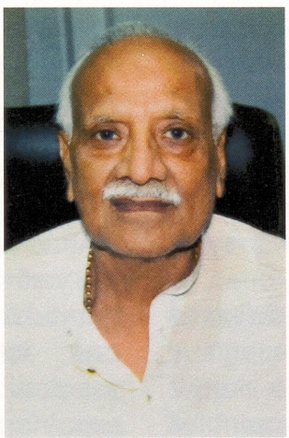


Celebration time: 75 years of Kelkar Company.

between his father and Rasik Hemani. Every Republic Day, he would arrive at Rasik's home-cum-office at Khari Baoli to watch the annual parade of India's tanks and cultural tableaux from the rooftop of his house. Every day Padam and Rasik would meet between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. to share tea and discuss business. In 1986, he inspired Padam Seth to become President of the Fragrances and Flavours Association of India (FFAI) and in 1989 to host the first international conference of the Association. It was Rasik who encouraged Vinod to get into the business and subsequently don the mantle of President of the Association. Rasik was like a father figure, staying in the background while pushing others into key positions in the association. He would raise problems of the industry and encourage them to look collectively for solutions. Vinod recalls that getting a licence to procure the raw material for the industry was a Herculean problem in the sixties, seventies and even the eighties. It was only with liberalization in the nineties that procurement of raw material became easier. Rasik's biggest quality, says Vinod, was his thundering voice and ability to bring together perfumers for positive results. Even when Rasik became an agent for the Kelkars, the friendship with Padam Seth continued --though the Seth Bros were rivals to the Kelkars in business-- making their own fragrances for hair oil, tobacco, agarbatties and cosmetics. Schimmer was the brand name of the Seth Bros products and Cobra, that of the Kelkars. Rasik even helped with formulations, modifying and rectifying fragrances to suit clients. Vinod manufactures thousands of fragrances. Though only 600 are listed, the rest are blended as per choice of the customer.

Rasik was and continues to be an icon for Vinod. When Rasik's mother died in 2001, Vinod recalls she was cremated using firewood. To compensate for the firewood, Rasik planted five trees at Smriti Van behind the Red Fort. For five consecutive years he promoted the plantation of patchouli, an important plant for the fragrance industry, on the west coast of Gujarat. Patchouli was being imported. Now the country is self-sufficient in patchouli and it is even being exported.

JUGAL KISHORE GUPTA, KANTA CHEMICAL COMPANY



This 73-year-old perfumer from Tilak Bazar in the heart of old Delhi, was a member of Rasik Hemani's gang of four along with Padam Kishore Seth and Mooradhwaj Saini in the sixties and seventies. The four had great respect in the market and came together as a group to influence the market and give direction to the FFAI.

The President of the Delhi Sugand Vyapar Sangh, Jugal Kishore says it was Rasik who introduced him to the people in the tobacco world. In the sixties the use of perfumes was limited. Only a few bathing soaps like Lux used fragrances. They were also used in agarbatties or incense sticks and in miniscule amounts in tobacco. In 100 kg of tobacco just 100 gram of perfume was used to mask its natural pungent smell. Getting nostalgic about the days when the foursome were a force to reckon with, he recalls that in 1980 the government banned menthol in tobacco saying that even if 350 grams of menthol entered the body, a person could die. The group of four with assistance from others in the tobacco business and doctors and scientists went all out to prove the government wrong. They collected evidence to show that even if a person ate tobacco 20 times a day, only 0.05 grams of menthol would enter the blood stream and this was harmless. The ban on use of menthol was lifted!

Jugal Kishore never went to school, broke away from the family business in cloth and groceries and



Traditional kuppis and modern perfume bottles

in 1964 ventured into manufacturing perfumes... rose, mogra, kewra...with a capital of about Rs.1.50 lakh. Having grown in the industry, today he has an annual turnover Rs.20 crore and also manufactures essential oils, aromatic chemicals, attars and even an array of packing material. He has factories in Jhansi, Patparganj in Delhi and two in Noida and Noida phase 2.

Jugal Kishore got to know Rasik when he became an agent of the Kelkars and would procure from them the aromatic chemicals needed in his fledgling business. Today Jugal Kishore supplies aromatic chemicals to the Kelkars and they are his third biggest clients.

Rasik, he recalls, never asked for an order, it just came to him. He had a way of garnering potential clients. He greeted them, talked about the new products and fragrances and the direction the market was taking. The quality of the Kelkar products was good and Rasik's quiet, unobtrusive marketing skills, made people place orders with him. The Kelkars and Rasik's stars were on ascendant and their business grew 20 per cent annually.

Rasik never had black money and would not stoop to doing anything illegal. His business was conducted strictly within government rules and regulations. When the postman brought his refund from the tax department and asked for baksheesh, he would say give me a receipt and I will give you money. Jugal is also impressed with the charitable streak in Rasik. "It is seldom that you find a man excelling in business and charity. Rasik is a rare exception. He has a heart of gold and for the last five years has been largely engaged in charitable work," says Jugal Kishore.

Another trait of Rasik is his punctuality. Whether it is a business appointment or a wedding reception of business friends, he arrives five minutes before the baraat and then insists that he should be served his dinner on time. For the host, this could be annoying but those who invited Rasik soon got to know his fastidiousness on such issues and tried to meet his demands.

Bonding with Rasik at a personal and professional level, Jugal Kishore remembers their travel to China to see what their counterparts were doing and raising a toast with the Chinese Head of State. They also travelled to the US and various countries of Europe for business and pleasure.

In Hardwar, Jugal Kishore has retained a nursery of herbal plants that has immense value for the fragrances and flavours business. In Seoni in Madhya Pradesh he has another 17 acres on which he is growing patchouli, eucalyptus citrodora, geranium, palma rosa, lemon grass, citronella and other plants that can be used in perfume manufacture.

BHAIJI ATTARWALA MANINDERPAL SINGH
FROM PERFUMES TO SOCIAL WORK

Bhaiji Attarwala has been in the perfume business in Gujranwal, Pakistan, since 1880. After partition, the Attarwala family set up business in Delhi and Maninderpal Singh joined his father in 1964 when he was not even 20 years. The Attarwalas made fragrant chemicals, scented sprays, perfumes for desert coolers to throw out fragrant air, agarbatties and room freshners. The factory was set up in Model Town in West Delhi and expanded over the years to Bareilly from where his nephew runs the business. They also have shops selling fragrances in Sadar Bazaar, Delhi and in Jalandhar. His elder brother was a friend-cum-business associate of Rasiklal and that is how Maninderpal Singh got to know him.

"I kept wondering how a socialist-cum-communist was in business," recalls Maninderpal Singh. "You seldom meet such people who talk more about society and the nation than about the material world. His style

Maninderpal Singh with special children at his school.



of business was transparent. He has a tough exterior but is like a coconut inside," says Maninderpal Singh.

After the marriage of his two daughters, in 2006 Maninderpal decided to move into social work, a decision he took based on Rasik's philosophy to give back to society. The business is handled by the nephew and he guides and advises him. He runs a play school as a franchise of Mother's Pride. Since 2012 he has been running the Presidium Primary School. With Mother's Pride he has floated an NGO, Sparsh, to cater to underprivileged children, especially those handicapped. A school for 90 children is being run in Rohini with facilities for speech therapy, physiotherapy, tuitions and special classes for those lagging behind academically. At the Sparsh school, which is fully air conditioned and has a ramp for those on wheel chairs, there are hearing impaired as well as autistic children. During holidays, children are taught dance, to participate in fashion shows and learn music. Rasik Hemani has donated money to Sparsh.

For three years now, the three Shakti Centres in Rohini, Model Town and in Mother's School help slum children with English, Maths and their homework. Residents of the area and mothers, who want to do social work, are being encouraged to come and supervise the new venture. After interaction on a one to one basis and six months teaching to improve their confidence and ability in various subjects, the children are admitted to government schools for further studies.

Maninderpal Singh, like Vinod Seth, talks about Rasik Hemani's unusual business style that gives maximum benefit to clients. Old clients get products at old rate. Following in Rasik's footsteps, Maninderpal has won the respect and appreciation of his clients.











Exotic new perfume bottles

HEMANI, GODFATHER TO TOBACCO KING RAVINDER KUMAR

Ravinder Kumar who along with his brother Rajiv runs one of the country's biggest tobacco empires, Baba Zarda, has been a client of Hemani and a consumer of the Kelkar perfumes and flavours for the last 19 years. In fact, Hemani was a friend of his father Satyapal Gupta, better known as Satyapal Sugandhi, the tobacco king from the mid-sixties.

Satyapal Gupta and Rasik Hemani lived in the heart of the city and became good friends and business associates. Both were young, trying out their wings in business. Satyapal was in tobacco manufacture. In 1965, when Hemani was appointed the sole agent for Kelkar perfumes, fragrances, flavours and other products in North India, his friend was only too happy to do business with him.

Like Hemani, Satyapal Gupta moved from the heart of the old city to Civil Lines when his father died. So there was a lot of warmth and affinity in the relationship and it rubbed on the next generation of Ravinder and Rajiv. Ravinder Kumar runs two companies--Dharampal Premchand and Dharampal Satyapal. While the core business continues to be tobacco and paan masala, in 25 years the brothers have diversified to manufacture of water, beverages (soda and soft drinks) and spices (the Catch brand). Just two years ago they went into manufacture of dairy products – milk and ghee — and into the hospitality sector. They run hotels in Rajasthan and other parts of India. Their most recent diversification has been to manufacture fruit candy in five flavours, two of the flavours purchased from the Kelkars.

For the brothers Ravindra Kumar and Rajiv Kumar, Rasik Hemani is like a Godfather. They listen with respect to his advice. Hemani would tell them about new ingredients and products being rolled out of the Kelkar factory and their range and utility. When the Kelkars visited Delhi, he would organise a meeting earlier with the father and later with the two sons. If there was a problem with a product or an ingredient, it was Hemani's responsibility to sort it out. Whether it was the size of the label on the product or a fear of adulteration, it would be Hemani's job to ensure quality.

Sandal wood oil as well as fragrant flower extracts are screened for quality and purity at the Kelkar laboratory in Mumbai. The laboratory is of international standard, says Ravinder Kumar. Even essential oils and ingredients of fragrance and flavours imported into the country, if confiscated by the customs, are sent to the Kelkar laboratory for testing.

The networking of the Guptas, the Kelkars' and Hemani was at different levels. In October 1986, G



Ravinder & Rajiv Kumar of Baba Zarda group

D Kelkar was the chief guest at the opening of their new factory on the GT-Karnal Road. When the Kelkar Company announced its diamond jubilee, the celebrations in North India were held at the farmhouse of Satyapal Gupta at Rajokri. The doyen of the tobacco industry, Satyapal Gupta, was president of the Tobacco Manufacturers Association till 1995. Tobacco manufacturers met all over the world and Hemani, who accompanied the Indian team, spoke at these meetings and was heard with respect.

Though Satyapal and Hemani were vegetarians, Hemani liked tasting new food where ever he went even if it was the 'creepy crawlies' of South Asia. Ravinder Kumar recalls the two friends and business associates returning from Hong Kong with a tall bottle in which a dead snake was floating in alcohol. For the chaste vegetarian families it was a repulsive sight.

The D S (Dharampal Satyapal) Charitable Trust runs two schools and Ravinder Kumar recalls Hemani's contribution to the trust. For Rasik, charity begins at home and he was only too happy to contribute to their school project. The Dharampal Satyapal group also supports a charitable naturopathy centre in Manesar, Gurgaon. It has a 40-bedded hospital and six huts for those coming for treatment.

Even as Ravindra Kumar presides over his vast empire, he recalls having literally cut his teeth on the job. To prepare him for his onerous responsibilities, Satyapal would get him to taste the tobacco, a bit like tasting tea or wine. It was literally learning on the job with the tongue telling you the quality of the tobacco with or without the fragrances and flavours. Ravinder still chews tobacco, a habit imbibed early in life.



GOPAL GUPTA ON PERFUME TRAJECTORY



Sri Gopal Gupta, chairman of Gopal Corpo Ltd, was just 22 years old when he joined his father's zarda business and was introduced to Rasiklal Hemani living and working out of Khari Baoli. "He treated me like a son," recalls the young man who now runs an empire in the tobacco business. After just three or four meetings, "Hemani uncle" had put him on track about the perfumery business. "We bonded well. He would speak to me from the heart and never as a customer. He is still my guru, friend and an uncle and Panna is my aunt", says the tobacco king.

Gopal's father, Harichand Gupta, started Gopal Zarda in 1942 in the old city. There were three big players in the tobacco business then and Harichand Gupta was one of them. The annual turnover of Gopal Zarda was just Rs 5 lakhs in the late sixties, Sri Gopal recalls. Today there are some 800 big and small tobacco manufacturers and the annual turnover of tobacco alone is Rs 4000 crores. With the inclusion of gutka, it is about Rs 30,000 crores, says Sri Gopal.

Rasik Hemani played a major role in the forming of the Tobacco Manufacturers Association (TMA) in 1973/1974. At a time when people in the tobacco trade would not see each other's face, leave alone collaborate for work, Hemani was the catalyst that brought them together on a common platform. He was a senior member of the working committee of the TMA. "Professionally I have not met a man like him. Not only is he close to his clients but he fights for their rights, even with the Kelkars," recalls Sri Gopal.

Earlier, the ingredients for the perfume industry were being imported into the country. Then the people in the industry began travelling abroad and based on their links with manufacturers they started directly importing their requirements from countries like Singapore and France. While patchouli oil used in tobacco was imported from Singapore and Malaysia, geranium oil used in perfumery was imported from France.

There were ups and downs in the tobacco business, especially on quality issues, Sri Gopal recalls. Since Hemani was very particular about quality, there was a lot of R&D to ensure quality. Sometimes a hundred samples would be tested to get the perfect blend. Not only did quality of the Gopal group of products improve but it put them in touch with the Kelkars in Mumbai for ideas on quality improvement which boosted sales. Soon Gopal Group started supplying their tobacco for paan masala and the gutka industry.

The Group has also invested in hydro power generation in Himachal. So far they have three plants generating 35 mega watts of power. Another three plants are to be set up in the next six years to generate 100 mega watts of hydro power. An important reason for getting into power generation was power shortage in the State affecting their tobacco factory in Baddi. Now Sri Gopal's son has joined the business and has diversified into foods—chips, namkeens or salted snack.

RAMESH VAZE, GAUGING POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS



Ramesh Vaze, the Managing Director of S H Kelkar and Company Private Ltd and Rasiklal Hemani, the agent for Kelkar perfumes for five decades, wore identical suits at the wedding of Ramesh's daughter and that speaks volumes for the camaraderie and friendship between the two. Damu Seth had groomed both in the business but it is Rasik, the older of the two and a reputed salesman, who honed Ramesh's marketing skills as they traversed North India in search of business.

Though Ramesh was a member of the Kelkar family and a crorepati, Rasik put him through the ropes. They would travel by train deep into the interiors of the country building relationships with customers. They would get up early, bathe and set out for business. If a customer did not have a chair for them to sit, they transacted business standing. There was no demand for a chair or table. "I learnt the hardships of a salesman's life by experiencing it under Rasik's tutelage," says Ramesh.

Like his mentor, Damu Seth, Rasik would call on clients at times that suited them, even if it was at 11 p.m. The agarbatti (incense sticks) makers in Calcutta were busy till that time, so he would call on them just before going to bed. He treated every client with the greatest respect because according to his business rules each brought in business that added to his personal growth and that of the Kelkars.

Ramesh also learnt to distinguish between a good potential client and one who is likely to be troublesome and need not be cultivated. Ramesh recounts that in Varanasi a meeting had been fixed between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. with a potential client but when they turned up early, the client was annoyed. For the second meeting they reached on time but the client was missing. The client was dropped because he seemed "unreliable and arrogant."

It was Ramesh's father, Damu Seth, who taught Rasik how to be thrifty in business. When Rasik left Calcutta Essence to join the Kelkars, Nemchand Hemani, a partner of Calcutta Essence, said "keep an eye on him, he tends to spend money on trunk calls. So when Rasik joined as an agent of Kelkars, Damu Seth kept a part of his commission as a deposit with the company to curtail his expensive habits of just dialling for business. He must have succeeded because instead of trunk calls he began sending telegrams to take stock of business.

Ramesh recalls that he spoke broken Mumbai Hindi when he first met Rasik to learn the ropes. Rasik chided him, "Have you come to make clients or lose them. You cannot speak this broken Hindi to clients in Hindi heartland." Slowly my Hindi improved and I learnt the etiquette of conversing in polite Hindustani to customers, says Ramesh.

Business under Rasik's stewardship was different. There were three clients in Kanpur who loved imported cigarettes so packets of 555 cigarettes were carried from Delhi and given as gifts. Ramesh recalls there was a spontaneous warming of relationships and business discussions became more congenial. In 1974, the clients in Indonesia smoked Benson and Hedges so Ramesh, following the footsteps of his mentor Rasik, offered them their favourite brand of cigarettes but they had just stopped smoking so we felt rebuffed and carried back our precious cigarettes, Ramesh reminiscences.

Rasik, he says, straddled the tight rope between the clients who were his customers and the Kelkar Company that he represented with great dexterity. When talking on behalf of his clients he is ready to cross swords with the company if it defaults in any way or harms the interests of his clients. He was fussy about the timely delivery of quality products from the Kelkar Company for his clients. He would hound the Kelkars, calling twice in a day, if there was any delay in delivery of products to his clients. He was equally fussy that he should receive timely payment for services rendered. He would brook no delay in payments and call up the finance section to ask "Where is my payment. Why has it been delayed?" This kept the Kelkar Company on its feet round the clock. Much as they dreaded his pushing them around, they realized it brought rich dividends for the Company.

Though Rasik had several clients, he ensured the privacy of each client--- never letting on what the other was purchasing. He made three copies of each client's orders. After getting his signature, the client would get his copy of the order. The indent book in which all orders were entered was never shared or shown to others.

Among the qualities that have endeared him to the Kelkars, is his ability to go out of the way, using all his contacts to help them. In 1978/1979, the Kelkars set up the KVR Aerochemicals Pvt. Ltd at Vapi, Gujarat. There was a quota system for cement in those days but Rasik used his contacts in IPCL to get cement on a regular basis so that work never stopped.

Ramesh maintains that Rasik is not just an agent for the company but an excellent PRO (public relations officer). Though he represented the Kelkars in five states of North India, he developed a personal rapport with each member of the family of perfumers and was treated like a member of the family. Each year these bonds of friendship deepened further and Rasik and Panna were invited at every family function.

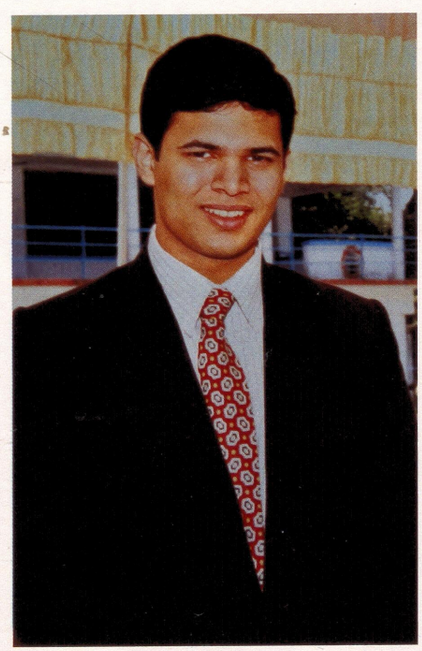
Rasik had a tenacity to get things done. Ramesh, his son Kedar and his wife, Prabha recall the trip to Kulu with Rasik and Panna. They were to fly out on a small aircraft and there were another 16 passengers but suddenly the pilot announced he would not fly. All the passengers were resigned to their fate but not Rasik. He ensured that he would not lose out a single day of his well-planned holiday. He stormed into the pilot's room and created such a hullabaloo that the pilot finally agreed to fly them out to Kulu. A Japanese honeymooning couple was so impressed with Rasik that they decided they would, if necessary, cut short their honeymoon but fly back with Rasik because they could then be sure they would not be stranded in the Valley.

Despite his personal bonds with the Kelkars, it was Rasik who taught Ramesh that all business dealings and meetings have to be professional. There was no back slapping or hugging at business meetings—the necessary distance and decorum was maintained between the director of the Company and the agent who was bringing in business.

It was a great relationship and it enriched both of us, says Ramesh. While in the 50 years of being an agent of Kelkars, Rasiklal Hemani's annual turnover crossed Rs 100 crores, the Kelkar Company's annual turnover soared from Rs 70 lakhs annually to Rs 750 crores.

RASIK KAKA :'AN ANT THAT BUILT THE ANTHILL'

KEDAR VAZE, Director of S H Kelkar and Company Private Ltd and son of Ramesh Vaze, says I am like the child Rasik Kaka never had. Kedar, like his father Ramesh, has been groomed and mentored by Rasik Hemani. As a child Kedar recalls he would get as his "tax" a packet of sweets every time Rasik visited the Kelkars. Now it is his children who have that relationship and get the goodies.



Though Rasik is part of the family, he maintains his business objectivity and keeps his business and personal relationship separate, says Kedar. "My father and he had a great bond and were able to draw the best of each other". The Hemani's home in Delhi had visitors 250 days in a year and they were all welcomed as members of the family. Each relationship was compartmentalised and nurtured as was business and personal equations. Kedar recalls that when a Bangalore agent was given a Maruti car as commission for doing good business, Ramesh wanted a Contessa car that had just been introduced in the market but was available only at a premium. Ramesh was willing to buy the Contessa but did not want to pay the premium. So Rasik Hemani spoke to Satyapal Gupta with whom he had good personal equation. Satyapal Gupta in turn spoke to his friend who had an agency for the Contessa and the car was acquired for Ramesh without paying the premium.

There was also a strong professional streak in Rasik Hemani, says Kedar. Even as a youngster of about 10 years, he would see Rasik coming with his list of things to be done at the Kelkars. "It was his way of showing love and making Company and business relationships better. But it was not an easy relationship," admits Kedar. He would not take "No" for an answer. "In many ways he was like a car with a solid engine but a body that was not shining".

You could also compare him to an ant who built big anthills. He had registers for sales and for defaulters. There were no compromises in the way he conducted business. At every meeting he would bring

up the top five priorities and then push for them. At meetings of the industry and various professional associations, he would come on the public platform rooting for growth, new markets for the business, bringing in disparate elements on a common platform but never for his own personal growth or that of his agency.



Quite obviously Rasik's style of functioning was very different from that of the run of the mill businessman. Though Kedar's grandfather was able to channelize Rasik's energy, the shouting, screaming to put across a point and get the best results continued even as the Kelkar Empire was being built and Kedar was watching from the side lines.

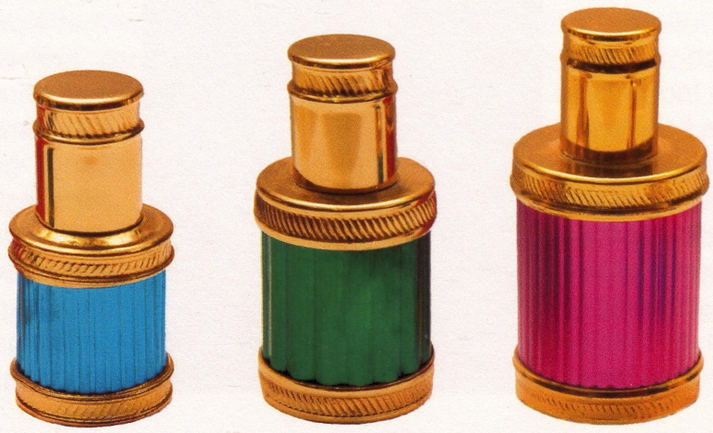
The Kelkar conglomerate, says Kedar, was built over the years, layer by layer like the coral that formed the Great Barrier Reef. While Rasik Hemani has built 450 clients for the company in five states of the country, the Kelkar group has 2500 clients across the country.

"My late uncle Govind Kelkar, my father Ramesh Vaze and Rasik Hemani were the three pillars of the Company, the Trimurti", says Kedar.

PRABHA VAZE EMULATES RASIK

Prabha Vaze, Director of K D Kelkar and Company, was in charge of exports in the eighties and early nineties. When blending of perfumes became computerised in the mid-nineties, she handed the business responsibility to her husband but continued giving moral support. Like Rasik, she has got into working for charity and runs Chaitanya, a centre where children who are mentally challenged learn skills like making candles, agarbatties, greetings cards and snacks. The Centre is run by a group of middle class women. Children love coming to the Centre, giving parents a welcome break from looking after the special kids.

Rasik is like my elder brother. If I have to communicate something difficult to Ramesh, I do it through him, confident that Ramesh will listen! She also credits his organisational capacity, whether it is for a marriage or a business conference.











HOME OF FRAGRANCES 'KANNAUJ'

CHAPTER 3



Kannauj is the epicentre of attars (in Hindi) or ittars (in Urdu) (concentrates of perfumes extracted from crushing flowers, fragrant wood and even wet earth). Kannauj was the capital of King Harsha Vardhan who ruled in Central India for 41 years from 606 AD. After the fall of the Gupta dynasty, he consolidated the small republics and monarchical states that had sprung up in North India and after his accession united the two kingdoms of Thanesar (now Kurukshetra) and Kannauj and shifted his capital from Thanesar to Kannauj. It was in King Harsh's tenure that the attar industry gained prominence in Kannauj. There is a lot of history as well as mystique in the growth of fragrances in this ancient city. It is believed that sandalwood logs thrown in the ocean in the south and pushed with the help of boats through the Ganges reached Kannauj where they were pounded to a fine powder.

The industry got a further boost because Mughal Empress Noor Jehan, wife of Jehangir, in the 17th century, demanded an array of perfumes made from rose petals and a variety of jasmines like motia, mogra, chameli, juhi and mehendi for her perfume box. To cater to her demands and that of other royalty, there was mass cultivation of fragrant flowers in the entire belt of Kannauj, Aligarh and Hathras. Though the perfume business has seen a sea change over the years, fragrant rose gardens can still be seen in this belt.

According to Ramesh Chand Tiwari, a retired professor of Hindi from PSM Degree College, a poet and a walking encyclopaedia on Kannauj, the boiler distillation unit for perfumes was established in Kannauj in 1920 by Pandit Surya Prasad Dubey. According to Tiwari, initially Dubey sold ghee

Marigold fields around Kannauj





My bunch of fragrances

or clarified butter, made in Kannauj and marketed in Calcutta. It was an Englishman who gave Dubey the idea of sandalwood or chandan distillation and imported a boiler from UK for Dubey to move into sandalwood business. Though Mysore was the home of sandalwood, distillation of sandalwood oil began there only in 1925, five years after it took off in Kannauj.

Sandalwood oil is the base for all attars. Heena was the name of the first attar produced in Kannauj. Others followed. There was khus, kewra (known as pandanaus flower), rose water or ruh gulab. Attar gill exudes the fragrance of the earth after the first shower. Kannauj's attars were in demand in the princely states of India as well as among the aristocracy. The attars from Kannauj were bottled and arranged in wooden boxes and then taken by traders to royal families and zamindars of Rajasthan and other states for sale.

Even as early as the era of Harsh, there were five defined uses for sugand or fragrances. They were used as uptan or covering on the body and face-- spreading an aura of fragrance. The hair after it was washed was aired with perfumed coal fire. Vastha sugand is the perfume sprayed on clothes. For bathing too an array of perfumes was created that blend into the water and of course there was sugandith bhojan or fragrant food for the gourmet. Turmeric and astofeida or hing was added to flavour the food. For the connoisseurs the ultimate temptation after a meal was the aromatic paan.

Vasant ritu or holi was played with earth colours. Fragrant as well as colourful flowers like harsingar and palash were dried and preserved and they were put in hot water to extract their colour and fragrance just before holi. It is this coloured water that the holi revellers sprayed on each other.

Rasik made his first trip to this Mecca of the perfume industry in 1954, soon after he started working. There were a hundred families engaged in the business of making attars. Kannauj in the summer months was a steaming hot cauldron and there was no electricity. The attar business, however, was in full flow and different members of the perfumer's family took charge of the production of different attars. They would travel to Bharatpur in Rajasthan for khus production; to Ganjam in Orissa for kewra and to Barwana, near Hathras in UP and to Ajmer in Rajasthan for rose attars. Chinya gulab, a variety of rose, was much in demand for its fragrance. Unlike the European roses, traditional Indian roses are extremely fragrant, spreading their aroma for miles around. Different family members looked after different aspects of manufacturing and marketing. Most perfumers travelled extensively and were secretive about their blends and formulations. In Kannauj they had sprawling homes as well as dharamshalas attached to temples where they put up visitors and held meetings.

On his first visit to Kannauj, Rasik stayed in a dharamshala which was lit by kerosene lanterns. There were no basic facilities like toilets, and transport was by ekkas or horse drawn vehicles. The trips to the railway station and bus terminus were invariably on ekkas, sharing space with half a dozen paan and betelnut chewing local people. When he visited customers and manufacturers they were warm and hospitable. Though natural fragrances dominated the market in those early years, synthetic perfumes from Bombay, Delhi and Madras were already making inroads as raw material for the business.

The switch from attars to industrial perfumes began with the ban on cutting sandalwood trees. There was large scale poaching of sandalwood trees by the notorious smuggler cum dacoit Veerappan. In four decades from 1970 to 2010, the production of sandalwood slumped from 4000 tonnes a year to 400 tonnes. In the early seventies, attar was used as personal fragrance and was made from high grade sandalwood oil. The inferior oils were used as the base for incense sticks and as flavouring for paan masala. As the attar markets shrank with the non-availability of sandalwood oil, manufacturers switched to enriching domestic tobacco and paan masala with fragrances and flavours.

Slowly sandalwood oil was replaced with liquid paraffin and other such compounds as the base product. The restriction on cutting of sandalwood trees in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh and ban on sandalwood oil distillation changed the complexion of the perfume business in Kannauj. Eighty to 85 per cent of the manufacturers switched to making synthetic fragrances.

Realizing that the sandalwood industry was dying, early this century, government encouraged farmers to plant sandalwood and cultivation began in a big way in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The sale of the trees was routed through government agencies which bought the wood at about Rs 3500 a kg and sold it at Rs 16000 a kg. The price of a kilo of sandalwood oil is Rs 90,000 to Rs 100,000 today.

Sandalwood is one tree whose every part is used. While the upper part of the tree is used for making agarbatties or incense sticks, the

middle section is used for making handicrafts and from the roots of the trees the maximum oil is extracted (almost 50 per cent) for making attars and perfumes. The Kelkars in Mumbai and Rasik Hemani with the help of multinationals facilitated the search for substitutes for sandalwood oil for different industries. Though attars are still made, the quantity is limited and the base is synthetic oils.

Today modern technology is being used by manufacturers and traders of Kannauj. The filling of perfume bottles and sticking of labels has been mechanised. In the fifties there was no bank in Kannauj, Rasik recalls. The nearest banks were 80 km away in Kanpur and Farrukabad. C L Awasthi and the company he ran acted as bankers. Awasthi was an extremely honest man and people trusted him with their deposits. Now there are several banks in the city and transacting big consignments has become easier.

In Kannauj the attars and perfumes were packed in bottles made of goat fat called kuppis. In Luckow they were packed in pretty, shapely glass bottles and the more utilitarian, plastic bottles. With the post-Independence extinction of the feudal rulers and the zamindar system, the support for the perfume industry shifted to tobacco and paan masala manufacturers. Kannauj manufacturers also began distilling spice and herb oils like nagar mota, brahmi, sugandh kokila, jattamanshi and roses for synthetic perfumes.

Former Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dixit, who was the MP from Kannauj from 1984 to 1989, had sought the assistance of Mr N D Tiwari, then Chief Minister of UP, to get the help of UNDP in modernizing the essential oils and fragrance industry of Kannauj. The Fragrance and Flavours Development Centre (FFDC) was established in Kannauj and large oil and fragrance extracting machinery, a testing laboratory for products, and gas liquid chromatography for analysing fragrances came to the doorstep of perfumers in Kannauj. Hemani knew the UNDP representative, Dr. Rahula O.B. Wijesekera, a Sri Lankan, who was also the president of the Sri Lankan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and accompanied him to Kannauj. They interacted with the flower growers, manufacturers and traders of the perfume industry. Now courses for various aspects of the fragrance industry are run in Kannauj and other cities.

Representatives of multinational companies were among the many visitors trooping into Kannauj. Among them was a large 6'2" Swiss national Ottomanz, representing the Swiss company Firmench of Geneva. Ottomanz was an inspirational character and a guru of Rasik Hemani. Drinking tea from kulhars (earthern cups) like a native and personally lifting large shipments of perfumes from ships, he taught Hemani the importance of being humble and professional.

THE ATTAR MAKERS OF KANNAUJ



Making mitti ki attar in the traditional deg bhatties



Mooradhwaj Saini outside his factory- Deg with bhapka and raw material for attars

In this ancient fragrance centre of India, even the sewers exude sweet smells. Waters drained out of the attar units flow into the sewers and the aroma of rose and henna mingles with the air, says Lala Kedar Nath Khatri of Kedar Nath Perfumers, a company that started way back in 1914. There were just 50, 60 perfumers in the attar trade and about 14 or 15 of them were leaders in the business in the country.

Damu Seth, the grand old man of the Kelkar perfumes, Govind Kelkar and Rasiklal, the agent for Kelkar perfumes, introduced Kelkar perfumes to Kannauj markets over a period of 70 years and Khatri's company purchased small bottles of perfume for smelling as well as applying on the body. Later these perfumes were used as compounds by the perfume manufacturers.

In Kannauj, initially using a base of sandalwood oil, attars were made only from flowers and fragrant herbs found in the hills. As availability of sandalwood oil diminished it was substituted with liquid paraffin. On a late December afternoon just before sunset, Mr Khatri gave a demonstration of the attar making process using a ton of pink rose petals. He and the other traditional attar makers believe that it is easier to control the heat of the clay ovens fired using firewood and cow dung cakes than distillation units fired by electricity and gas.

The perfume recipe, says Khatri, calls for a ton of flowers in an equal quantity of plain water. In the hydraulic distillation process, the Deg or copper utensil in which the flowers are processed is connected to the bhapka with a bamboo pipe. In the bhapka, distilled rose water was earlier mixed with sandalwood oil and now with liquid paraffin. The water is then allowed to drain out and the scented sandal wood oil or liquid paraffin retained. Henna



Late Amarnath Tandon with Kedar Vaze

is made using the same principle but with herbs like kesar, kasturi, agar and amber in smaller utensils. The mitti ki attar, exuding the fragrance of earth after the first shower, is also distilled in the same manner using the broken pots purchased from the kumhars or potters to draw the fresh earth aroma.

Three varieties of roses are used for making the rose attar, –chinya, phasli and damesna, the last is the most fragrant and also the most expensive at Rs 400 for a kg of flower. This variety is said to have been introduced to the country by Mughal emperor Babur. After the attars are created, the remains of the distillation too are put to use. The distilled kesar remnants are sold at Rs 8000 a kg to mittaiwalas or those making sweets to bring in the zing of kesar flavour and fragrance. Even the ashes generated by the attar units are used as fertilizers.

The Kelkar perfumes use eucalyptus, clove and wood oil. While our flower-based attars are natural and harmless, the chemical based perfumes can be harmful, says Mr Khatri. “In fact our attars are also used to strengthen the Kelkar attars”. In the competition between the natural fragrances and the synthetic perfumes, the latter are clear winners because their fragrances are cheaper, says Mr Khatri. Today, 75 per cent of the Kannauj market is using synthetic fragrances. All Kannauj attar manufacturers have been affected by the surge in the synthetic perfume business. Some of the factories that had 150 to 400 copper deg bhapkas, are lying unused today, says Mr Khatri’s son, Raju, who is the fifth generation in the perfume business. Unsure of the future of the attar business, Mr Khatri is also into making plastic goods and his other son looks after his plastics factory.

The younger generation of the hereditary perfumers are moving

into other professions. Azhgar Ali Mohammed Ali, one of the oldest perfumers of Kannauj, famed for his ruh gulab or rose fragrance closed shop 15 years ago and moved to Pakistan. It is believed that he had a hand written book on attars which was unfortunately not shared with other attar manufacturers.

Trilokinath Tandon, the present owner of Devprasad Sunderlal Khattri Perfumers started in 1870, is a disillusioned man. He does not see a great future for traditional perfumers of Kannauj because the heavy taxation on tobacco and paan masala is sounding their death knell. First the attar business suffered and we shifted to tobacco and its by-products. Now there is government pressure on this too. In Bihar, Maharashtra and Punjab gutka, paan masala and tobacco business has been stopped. Only the smaller tobacco manufacturers who don't pay excise duty are doing well, he points out.

Mr Tandon is exporting attars and essential oils to Saudi Arabia, Dubai, China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. It was at Rasik Hemani's suggestion that he began exporting rose water. Now buyers from Hong Kong and China come to Kannauj and place their orders. Rose water used as a spray and as room freshner is exported in 10 kg packs.

Trilokinath has no sons to take forward his business and three of his four daughters who are MBAs have their own business. I have no choice but to wind up my business, he says ruefully. Apart from exports, he has an outlet for his products in Varanasi, run by his cousins.

Unlike Trilokinath Tandon, Mooradhwaj Saini, 86, another legend of Kannauj's perfume industry, is an optimist. "Kannauj's perfume business will never die. With changing times the base may change, but the perfume business is here to stay," he reiterates. Kannauj's oldest living perfumer is Jaggat Narain Kapur, 94. Mooradhwaj Saini is the next in seniority. I am a born perfumer, he maintains. Though he has some problems walking and his sight is not that good, his mind is sharp and alert as he gets a daily update on how the four companies run by his four sons are doing.

It was in 1919 that his father started the Lala Pragdutt Deendayal Perfumers and as the eldest son, he was put through various facets of production and trade. Tobacco and attars were the two main businesses of Kannauj and since Mooradhwaj did not like the smell of tambaku or tobacco, his focus was on perfumes. He ran his father's business till 1969 when he fell out with his three brothers and walked out without taking a single paisa. At the age of 34, he was virtually on the streets with an old father and three sons studying in Kanpur.

He says "I borrowed Rs 200 from my wife so that I could buy food for the family". After seeking blessings of the Lord at the Gauri Shankar temple, he started his business in a neighbour's house. With a Rs 80,000 order for rose attar he started production with just two degs or copper vessels. Then he began making henna, kewra and khus. In 1974 he began attending sandalwood auctions in Karnataka in July and December along with Jaggat Narain, Tandon and others. In the mid-nineties he attended his last auction and purchased 80 tonnes of sandalwood for about Rs 1 crore. Thereafter the price of sandalwood was out of his



reach and soon there was a ban on sandalwood. From 1985 to 1997 he ran a factory for distilling sandalwood oil, then closed it. Beginning with one firm, he set up four firms—Prabhat Sandal Pvt Ltd, Pragdutt Perfumes Pvt Ltd, M D Saini Sugand and M D Saini Sugand Perfumers in the name of his four sons. Having seen his brothers breaking up over business, he decided this should not happen with his sons so each son got a company of his own to run.

In keeping with the times the companies make synthetic perfumes using pine oil as a base instead of sandalwood oil. Mooradhwaj had so many customers in India that he did not look at exports. The companies make fragrances for tobacco, agarbatties, rose water, kewra. The kewra is used in food items and the khus in sherbet, medicines and even rasmalai, a popular Indian sweet.

Even for Mooradhwaj Saini, Rasik Hemani, just a couple of years his junior, was a mentor. Whenever we asked for money, the draft was on our table the next morning, he says. Rasik is outspoken and as an agent of Kelkar's extremely loyal to them. The Sainis sell their perfumes to the Kelkars through Rasik.

Vinod Saini, the son of Mooradhwaj, says the challenge for perfumers in Kannauj is to keep the industry natural and traditional. Distillation, he says is best in traditional factories and to get the best attars, the flowers have to be fresh. The Saini's distillation factory is in the compound of their residence and is neat and orderly. The long lines of deg and bhapka units are cleaned and looked after like the children of the family.

Vinod has literally grown up seeing mountains of rose petals in his home. He has slept with the aroma of fresh sandalwood oil wafting through his bedroom window and the fragrance of agarbatties rousing spiritual feelings while keeping at bay mosquitoes in the summer months.

Like a caravan traversing through the fragrance zones of the country, in the months of February and March he has travelled with the deg bhatti to Aligarh's Hasyan village to harvest the most fragrant roses. He has camped at Behrampur and Ganjam in Orissa for kewra attars. Though kewra can be processed round the year, the peak season is July to November. In Odisha, the Sainis have land on which they had installed a deg bhatti unit and trained the local labour for distilling kewra. Khus was earlier processed in Bharatpur in Rajasthan but after the bird sanctuary was set up, its processing has shifted to Rai Bareilly, Moosanagar and Hardoi.

Vinod is excited about sandalwood trees growing in his courtyard. Though one of the saplings was destroyed by monkeys, two are doing well. The saplings were provided by the Fragrances and Flavours Development Centre in Kannauj. Since the sandalwood tree grows slowly, it needs supporting plants that draw water for themselves as well as the sandalwood tree, says Vinod. In Madhya Pradesh, the supporting plants for sandalwood are pomegranate and amla (Indian gooseberry or the Malacca tree).



Pink roses with their soft fragrance

AROMA TECHNOLOGY IN ATTAR LAND

CHAPTER 4

PERFUMERY COURSES ROUND THE YEAR

As important as the traditional fragrance units of Kannauj is the Fragrance & Flavours Development Centre (FFDC) set up in 1991 by the Government of India with the support of UNDP, UNIDO and the Government of UP on a sprawling campus of 23 acres. UNDP and UNIDO provided the technical assistance and Rasik Hemani played a small but important role in the project development through his friend Wijesekera, UNDP technical expert, who he had met in 1976 as an agent of the Kelkars.

FFDC serves as the interface between essential oils, fragrance and flavours industry and the research and development institutions in the field of agro-technology as well as chemical technology. The centre sustains and upgrades the status of farmers and industry engaged in aromatic cultivations and their processing so that they can compete in local and global markets.

Mr S K Shukla, director of FFDC, points out that for two-and-a-half years since 2012 the Centre has been self-sustaining and does not need grants from the central government. Right round the year it runs a range of courses on essential oils, fragrance and flavours and aromatherapy with visits to the field as well as industrial units. It also runs short courses on commercial cultivation of aromatic crops, their processing and marketing. About 13,000 to 15,000 people do the course in a year. In 2009 in partnership with the Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun it started a post-graduate diploma in aroma technology. It is also in touch with the Indian Institute of Integrated Medicine, Jammu, and runs courses for them.



Patchouli plantation

The Centre also gives certified aromatic planting material like rose, lemon grass to farmers. Though there are 2000 varieties of roses in the country only two/three varieties are suitable for the fragrance industry. In UP, the Centre has suggested cultivation of lemon grass, basil, palma rosa, a grass which acts as a substitute for rose, menthol mint and vetiver. It also tells farmers the economic value of these plantations and puts them in touch with industry that buys their crops and extracts flavours and fragrances.

At its laboratories it teaches processing of the crops through steam solvents to extract fragrances. After extraction, the fragrances are tested to ensure they match national and international standards. For the last eight years, India has been the global leader in menthol mint. The Centre also analyses forward trading of menthol mint.

However, the most exciting development is the cultivation of sandalwood trees on the Centre's campus. We had to develop the technology for growing sandalwood trees, says Shukla. The seed was treated and its outer cover opened. There are 1000 sandalwood trees in Kannauj. Those in the campus are five years old. The District Magistrate of Kannauj was so impressed with the breakthrough in sandalwood cultivation in Kannauj that he wanted 10,000 sandalwood trees planted. Keeping in mind the immense value of each tree and Karnataka's experience of being looted of its sandalwood plantations, it has now been decided to cultivate them where they would be safe.



Deg with bhapka common sight in Kannauj



Rasik and Panna at a plantation of fragrant herbs in Odisha

NATURAL PRODUCTS & GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Dr C K Atal, director of the regional research laboratory in Jammu and president of Essential Oils Association, played a significant role in providing theoretical and academic knowledge to perfume manufacturers who were basically agriculturists. The courses, though just for five days, taught perfumers how to improve distillation as well as increase the oil content of crops at the plantation stage.

The RRLs (regional research laboratories) as well as other government labs imported aromatic plants from China, Brazil, Eygpt, Morocco, Bulgaria, Russia, Haiti, Indonesia, Madagascar and those doing the perfumer's course were exposed to the rich fragrant plant varieties and how their oils could be extracted. The aromatic plants included patchouli, clarysage, rosemary, lavender, citronella grass, geranium, lavendin, coriander and a variety of fragrant roses.

Dr B C Gulati, scientist now 83 years, endorses the role played by scientists and the RRLs in promoting the perfume industry at its nascent stage in fifties and sixties. There were wings of the RRLs that specifically dealt with plant products—existing flora as well as new ones introduced specifically for meeting the needs of perfume and medical industries. Perfumes were dependent on the essential oil bearing plants.

Initially in the sixties, the Central Indian Medicinal Plants Organisation (CIMPO) was based in the building of the department of science on Rafi Marg, Delhi. In the mid-sixties it moved to Lucknow as an independent, full-fledged laboratory. Dr Gulati was in the section dealing with aromatic and



Sandalwood logs

medicinal plants and was in charge of the zonal centre in Pant Nagar, Nainital. On 250 acres, a farm was established to meet the requirements of the industry. When he was transferred to the Drug Research Laboratory (farms and factories) at Jammu, G D Kelkar and Rasiklal Hemani visited Pant Nagar and Jammu to see what was growing in these farms. They were interested in new plants as well as the status of some of the old traditional plants so essential for the aromatic industry. While five of the farms were on 1,200 acres in Kashmir, the rest were on 1,300 acres at Rajpura, on the border with Pakistan. There were some 300 varieties of plants growing in these farms---some were grown in smaller quantities (in kilograms), others in tons.

One of the important plants in the Jammu farms was Japanese mint—ergot on rye. While the ergot was being cultivated in Jammu, the basic material for the mint came from Japan. Japanese mint is used as a flavouring agent in foods as well as in balms for its medicinal value. Popular plants were peppermint, ergot and dusgene. Sandalwood cultivation was the responsibility of the Bangalore unit. It takes 30 years for the sandalwood tree to reach maturity when it can be cut and oil extracted. However, sandalwood cultivation became a contentious issue and for a long period there was a ban on its cultivation, recalls Dr Gulati. Now Australia and Burma have overtaken India—systematically cultivating and cutting sandalwood trees.

Gulati knew the Kelkars from 1953 and through them got to know Hemani. Their relations were professional as well as personal. More and more people from the perfume industry began visiting the aromatic plant farms to see what was available. Because the demand

for natural plants was not met, the industry began searching for other compounds, says Gulati.

Dr Gulati also worked for the aromatic and perfumes division of UNDP in Nepal and Bhutan for a dozen years. The perfume business is so heady that in 1990, after retirement, Dr Gulati started his own factory for manufacturing perfumes. Now his son has got into the perfume business and has a factory in Greater Noida.

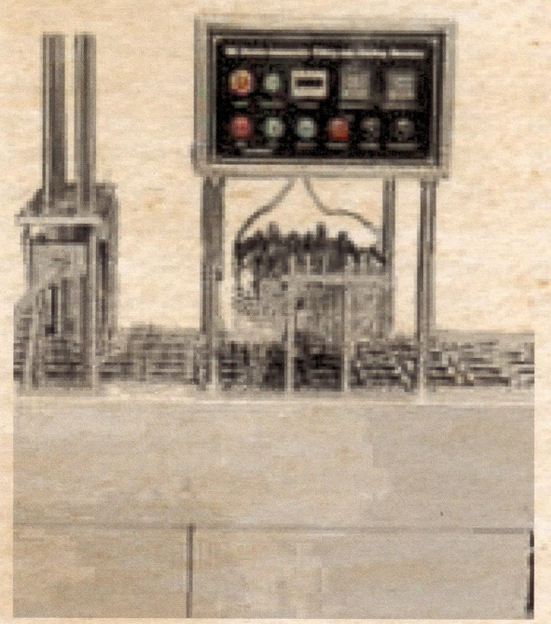
Role of tissue culture

In those early years of growth in the perfume industry, tissue culture technology was still at a nascent stage of development but those doing the course were taught about its immense potential for multiplication of crops and large scale farming. A scientist from the Indian Agriculture Research Institute at Pusa was called in especially for the lecture on tissue culture. As a member of the governing council of the Essential Oils Association of India in 1965 and the Fragrance and Flavours Association of India in 1972, Hemani played a key role in bringing science and technology to the perfume industry.

During the course, perfumers were introduced to the gas chromatography machine that helped analyse oil and other components of aromatic plants. Several perfume entrepreneurs purchased a machine for improving their business. Now the machine is manufactured in India and is more easily available. Kelkars have the latest technology for testing all their fragrances and flavours.

LOSING PART OF A FINGER

A distillation plant



In the mid-seventies, the Kelkars sent a machine for manufacture of scented soaps. The soap powder and fragrances were blended together in the machine. Hemani was entrusted with demonstrating the new machine and its many virtues. So intense and focussed was Hemani in holding his audience with his narration that his right hand finger got caught in the machine and before he realised what had happened, the top of one finger got blended with the detergent and the fragrance!

DREAMS OF TISSUE CULTURE

Hemani's dream was to set up a tissue culture centre for vegetables as well as aromatic and medicinal plants. He found that a variety of green chilli, indigenous to Saurashtra with good flavour but not too hot, could not be found elsewhere in the country. Sandalwood trees could be grown in Saurashtra which has the same climate as Karnataka; the patchouli plant of Indonesia in coastal areas of Gujarat on volcanic land. Basil or tulsi cultivation on a large scale was seen as vital for oil extraction but there was a resistance to modern technology that Hemani was eager to break. Thanks to all these efforts the patchouli plants (indigenous to Indonesia) are now grown in Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Lavender oil is being produced in Jammu and Kashmir. In fact India is the largest exporter of mentha arvensis oil produced largely in UP. Its growth exceeds that of China and Brazil.

With the facility of biotechnology and tissue culture, there could be mass production of crops, bringing down the cost of vegetables and making them accessible to the common man. Fuel plants like babool or prosopis juniflora could be grown in the deserts of Kutch and Rajasthan. The challenge was to break the traditional mind sets of farmers and find land for growing the tissue culture generated plants.

Some of Rasik's dreams for tissue culture are being met in the Kelkar's K G Vaze College, Mulund,

Sandalwood tree



Mumbai, to which he has contributed generously. The college has a laboratory for advanced research in natural and synthetic chemistry. It has a large tissue culture unit.

Hemani was now travelling abroad more often and tapping international markets. In 1983, in addition to his business with Kelkars he got the K L Koh Enterprizes Pvt Ltd, Singapore, agency to import the essential oils for different perfume manufacturers in India. The import of raw material like patchouli, nutmeg and vetivert (khus) oils further galvanized the industry.

Hemani also enabled import of saffron or kesar from Spain for the industry. Saffron is in great demand for manufacture of tobacco not only because it adds to the aroma of tobacco but helps reduce the impact of nicotine. The world's best saffron is available in Kashmir but often there is crop failure and the price of saffron, if available, could shoot up to Rs 5 lakhs for a kilo. The saffron from Kashmir is rated the best, followed by saffron cultivated in Iran and Greece. Saffron grown in Greece is bought in bulk by Spain and exported from there.

It was at one of the Jammu RRL workshops, a Greek agronomist, Bryan Scurbiss, shared the information that in Cocus (which means saffron in Latin) village in Greece, a cooperative society grew a huge crop of saffron, bought by Spain and marketed internationally. During one of his travels abroad, Rasik made it a point to visit Spain and meet one of the biggest exporters of Greek saffron, Mr Braganza, working in the Indian Chancery. Back in India he shared this information with a couple of Indian tobacco manufacturers and facilitated its import to this country. But subsequently Greece, realizing the immense value of its saffron stopped selling it to Spain.

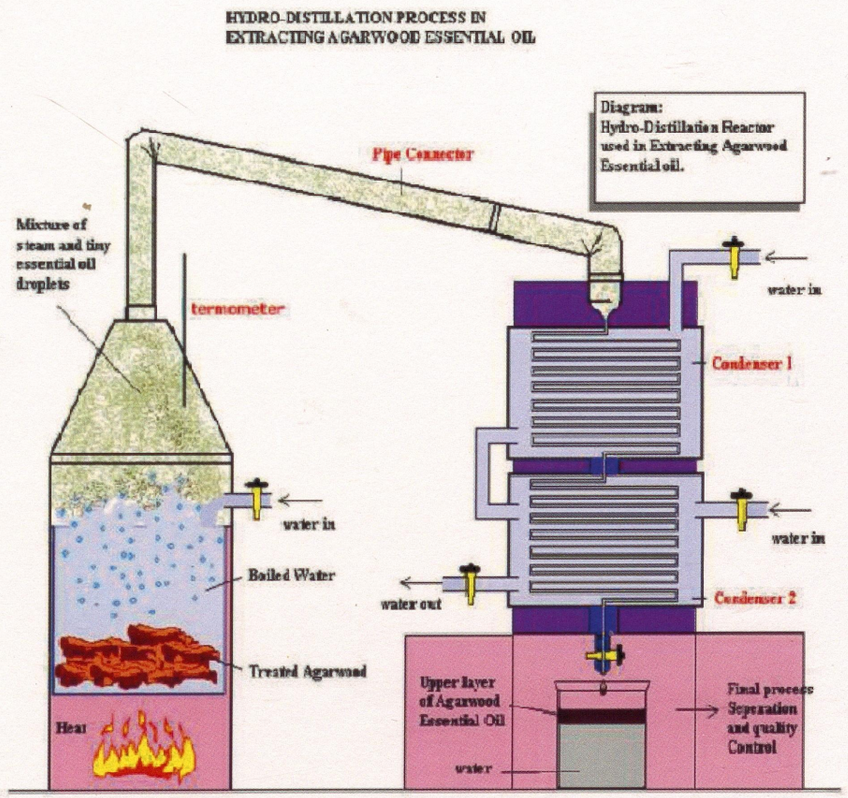
Unlike other salesmen, Hemani likes to know what he is selling. He believes in a scientific approach to marketing and management. At the same time he feels his marketing of products is better when he knows everything about them. It's a desi approach to marketing and buyers are bowled over by this knowledge and the rapport he develops with the essential oil producing companies. Hemani and Panna travelled to Malaysian forests to see the trees from which oils are extracted. In fact, Hemani's visit was covered by business newspapers. After seeing the trees in the forests, Hemani went to see the extraction of oil from gurjan balsam and the patchouli shrub.

Agarwood logs



AGARWOOD OIL MAGIC

Among the many interesting scientific developments of the Centre, the most fascinating one is the tissue culture of the agarwood trees which grow only in the tropical areas of South East Asia, in particular in Assam, India, Indonesia and Thailand. Dr SS Barve, Director of SRC, says a kilogram of agarwood oil sells for Rs 85 lakhs. A 10 ml bottle sells for Rs 25,000. In great demand by pilgrims going to Mecca and Medina, a dab of the oil exudes fragrance throughout the day. The fragrance varies from camphor to sandalwood to musk as the day spreads into night. At night it is said the fragrance or its medicinal properties reach the brain, leaving a person relaxed and spiritually elevated. In a lifetime, a single tree can give you a return of over Rs 2 crores, says Dr Barve.



PHILANTHROPY & EDUCATION

CHAPTER 5



Panna at a women's meeting in Gujarat

Maybe it was the progressive streak in him or the exposure to books of great writers when he was still in school that motivated Rasik to support education. The V G Vaze College of Arts, Science and Commerce was started in 1984 in Mulund, Mumbai, on 2.5 acres of land. Though the Kelkar Education Trust set up the College, Hemani not only ran around with the Kelkar's representatives meeting government officials for the land but contributed Rs 20 lakhs towards the college—Rs 10 lakhs before the college was built and another Rs 10 lakhs at Rs 2 lakhs a year for its biotechnology department on aromatic plants. The department successfully developed 100,000 aromatic plants.

Within 10 years of it being started, it was ranked among the top 10 colleges of the country running courses in arts, science and commerce.

Dr M R Kurup, principal of the College from 1984 to 2003 and secretary of the Kelkar Education Trust, says Rasik's relationship with the College started from the day it started. Whenever he visited Mumbai he would drop in at the college to find how it was progressing. Keen about the education of the underprivileged, he offered financial help for the meritorious and needy students. Dr Kurup was given standing instructions that whenever a student approached him for help, he should contact Rasik. He was one of the four persons who supported 16 year old Rupali Ramdas Repale of the college to travel and swim the Cook Strait, New Zealand, enabling her to get into the Guinness Book of World Records in 1998.

Equally keen to promote research and development activities of the College, he helped set up the Scientific Research Centre (SRC), the dream of the late Govind D alias Bhausaheb Kelkar. As a man from the industry, Rasik took special interest in promoting plant biotechnology and cultivation of aromatic and medicinal



Rasik being presented a book by Dr. Praful Shah of Sonal Foundation

plants. The Centre pioneered the 'patchouli revolution' in the country and Govind Kelkar was awarded the Life Time Achievement Award by the Ministry of Commerce and Industries for his contribution. The plant tissue culture facility is made available for micro and clonal propagation of elite medicinal and aromatic plants like geranium, pink pepper and medicinal plants like Mappia, Taxus and Aquillaria—a major source of agarwood oil and cash crops like banana.

Since R&D activities were outside the government grant-in-aid scheme, Rasik offered financial support of over Rs 50 lakhs for getting modern equipment between 1995 and 2004, says Dr Kurup. Rasik Hemani's total contribution to the Kelkar Education Trust from 1979-1980 to 2010-2011 is over Rs 4.28 crores.

He was equally involved in starting the post-graduate diploma in Perfumery and Cosmetic Management. Aware of the gap in trained human resources in the perfumery and cosmetics industry, he supported Govind Kelkar, founder of the College, to enter into collaboration with ISIPCA, France, the world leader in training personnel for the perfumery and cosmetics industry. Rasik was also instrumental in the Delhi Cosmetics Group instituting a scholarship for the PGDPCM (post graduate diploma in perfumery and cosmetic management). His contribution to the Scientific Research Centre between 1995-1996 and 2013-2014 is Rs 5.20 crores.

With 20 years of experience, the Centre is recognised by the central government's Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and the Food and Drug Administration has approved it as a testing laboratory for aromatic and medicinal plants. The SRC's Cosmetology Centre was inaugurated in 2002 and its clinical trials section in 2008.

BONDS BEYOND BUSINESS

DELHI'S OLDEST PERFUMERY SHOP

Gulab Singh Johrimal is the oldest perfume shop in Chandni Chowk. It was started in 1816 and its proprietor, Ram Singh, 76, has been a friend and business associate of Rasiklal Hemani, a few years his senior, since 1960. "In business you don't get to meet people like Rasikbhai. I do business with thousands of people but the bond that I have with him is different. He is an agent between manufacturers and buyers-- a kind of tightrope to walk—but he earned the trust and confidence of both sides".

Ram Singh compares Rasik Hemani to a large umbrella in whose shade various members of the industry have taken shelter. He has earned the respect of all his business associates because he initiates all discussions and has given a scientific thrust to perfume manufacture and trade.

He set up the Zafrani Zarda (tobacco) Association and its members were like a large family, often travelling abroad as friends and not just business associates. Ram Singh recalls the time he sent a packet of sweets for Janamashtimi to his son Praful, studying in Powai, through Rasik Hemani. Rasik went to the IIT, where Praful was studying, located him and asked him to take him to his room before handing over the packet from his parents. There was a personal touch in whatever he did, says Ram Singh. When Rasik Hemani got into promotion of library books for schools in Saurashtra, he gave a set of books for Ram Singh's grandchildren too.

Ram Singh has a fine collection of crystal and perfume bottles made in Firozabad. Many of them are very old. Though initially the attars and fragrances



were sold in kuppis or bottles made from goat fat, sparkling crystal bottles of various sizes added their own allure to the attars and perfumes. Many of the bottles were decorated with silken tassels.

Recalling his long innings in the perfume business, Ram Singh says initially he sold orthodox perfumes like attars, gulabjal (rose water) and kewra used in kulfis and sweets, then as per demands of the market, fragrant tobacco. He also made handmade fragrant bathing soaps. His two sons have done MSc in chemistry and B.Pharma to improve their understanding of the business and have joined him. Ram Singh runs a perfume factory near Kirti Nagar in West Delhi which his eldest son oversees. To understand market demand through retailing, Ram Singh still sits in his shop in Dariba Kalan which over the years has got more and more crowded. Now, Ram Singh exports agarbattis to US and handmade soaps to France.



DONATING BOOKS, CREATING JOY

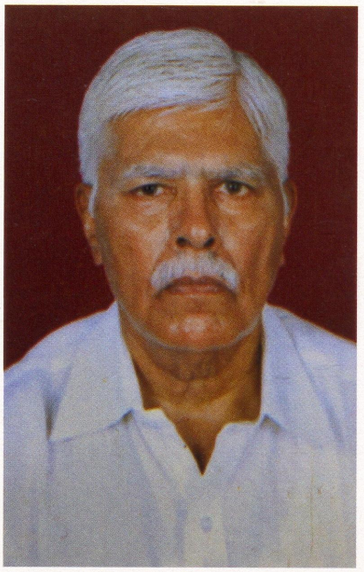
Hemani had a great desire to get back to his roots and do something for children's education in Bhavnagar. The opportunity came in 2006 when he met Dr Praful Shah and Indira Shah who had set up the Sonal Foundation in Saurashtra in memory of their daughter who was killed in a road accident. They ran a small library in their home with 500 books that children could borrow, read and return. Rasik and Panna decided to support and expand the project by contributing books to set up libraries in primary schools in seven districts of Saurashtra. In three years from 2006 to 2009, the Sonal Foundation donated 20 lakh books to 7015 primary schools.

Even if a school had just 15 to 30 children, it received books to start a library. Each school got 400 books in Gujarati worth Rs 8000. The language of the books was simple and ranged from folk stories to history, mythology, the inspiring story of India's heroes and achievers. The Shahs and Hemanis would scout the market for good, well-illustrated, attractive books for children.

The response from the children has been heart-warming. Some 35,400 thank you postcards received discussed the books and expressed their love for reading. Most letters get a reply. Sometimes it's a common reply to 20 children from the same school. The reply, which has the names of all the children, is put up on the school notice board and opens up further communication between Praful Shah, the over 80-year-old doctor cum teacher, and the children. Some 374 letters of the children have been published as a book. The success of the libraries project for schools made it to the Limca Book of Records in 2014.

'RASHIKBHAI - AN IDEAL TAX PAYER'

K G SOMANI, CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT



Chartered accountant, K G Somani, who filed Rasik Hemani's tax returns for 45 years found him to be an exemplary tax payer. Not only was he meticulous about paying the staff on time with their full quota of medical benefits and perks, but his advance tax too was paid a whole month before the last date. "Why should the money be lying in my bank account, let the government get the benefit", he would say. This is a rare quality in big tax payers, says Somani. The chartered account too received payment for services rendered on March 29/30, even before the bills were submitted. On April 1, he received his first cheque.

There were lakhs of rupees in Hemani's current account and Somani would advise him to put it into a fixed deposit and earn interest but he never agreed. He would say let us concentrate on work and add to the business instead of focussing on these small income generating schemes. For 15 to 20 years Hemani's income was Rs 2.5 crores annually and 75 per cent went as income tax.

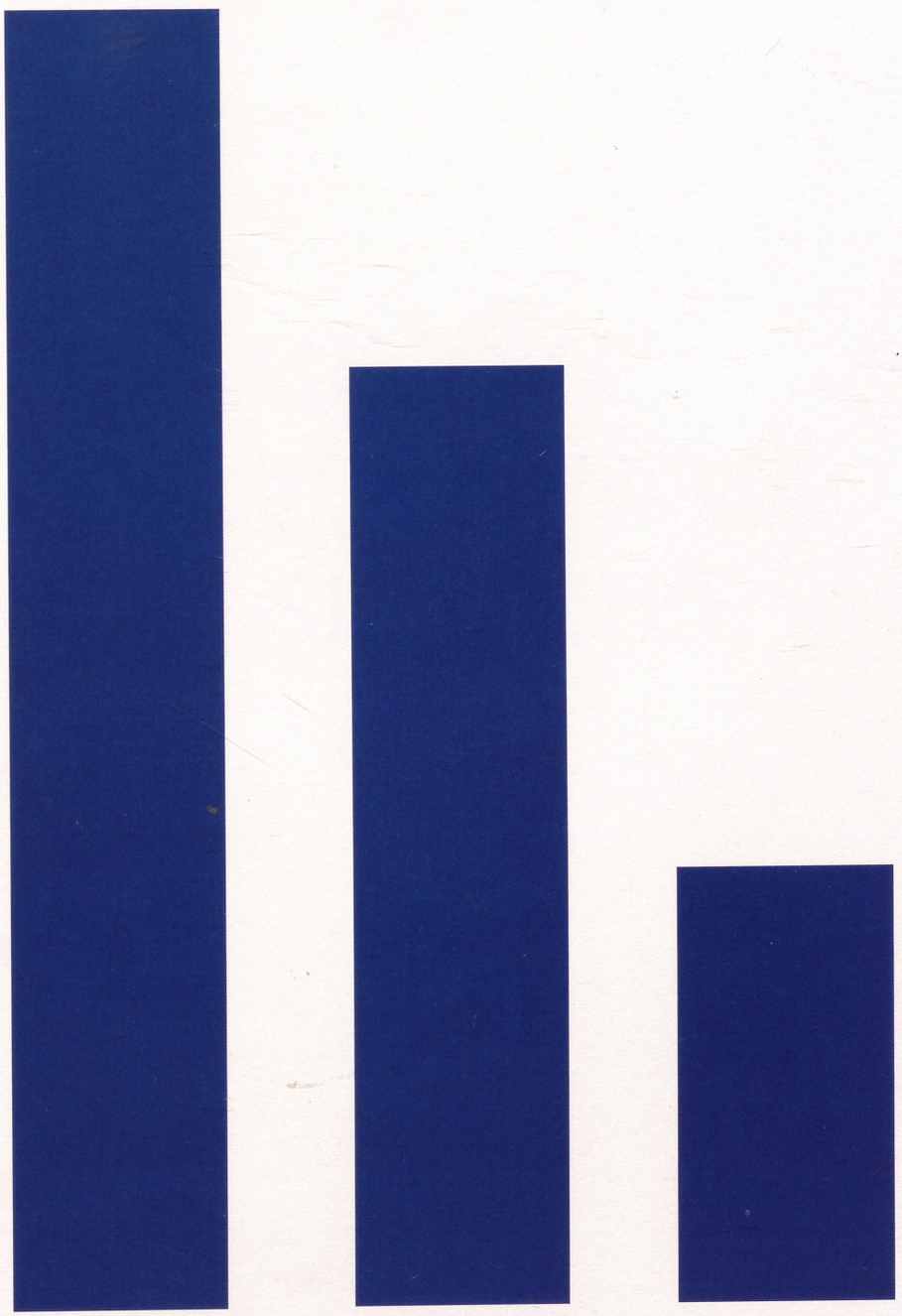
Left-inclined with a streak of socialism, he worked hard and earned well but ensured he was always fair to his clients as well as staff. Hemani's growth was because of Kelkar's name and the products marketed were good. So impressed were the Kelkar's with his loyalty, his marketing skills and sense of fair play that he was their only agent in North India.

This sense of loyalty is also reflected in his dealings with clients, says Somani. When one of Dharampal Premchand's sons left the family business to start off on his own, he approached Hemani and the Kelkars for aromatic ingredients used by tobacco manufacturers. Hemani categorically turned down the request. His loyalty was quite clearly with the original group of Dharampal Premchand, not the breakaway group.

Hemani has not forgotten his humble beginnings, says Somani. He likes to share his wealth. Since books gave him so much joy in his early life, he has been setting up libraries in schools in Saurashtra for which he contributed Rs.1.5 crores. He does not believe in contributing to temples and Godmen. He prefers to give to charities that have a purpose.... so currently he is supporting the food requirements of a 100 girls living in ashrams and studying. He has paid substantial donation to the Gujarati Samaj and its work in Delhi. His maximum donation was Rs 1 crore in a year to a school started by Dharampal Satyapal. He also contributed to Sparsh, an NGO working for children with disabilities in slums and poor areas of Delhi.



FROM YEAR 1977 - 78 TO YEAR 2014 -15



INCOME
Rs. 759956442/-

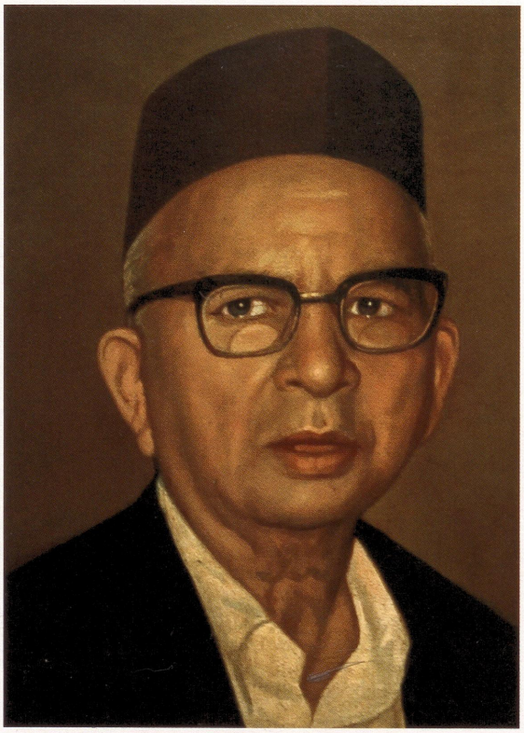
TAX
Rs. 218968225/-

DONATIONS
Rs. 34824407/-

GIVING DIRECTION TO RASIK'S LIFE

CHAPTER 6

LEARNING FROM DAMU SETH



After Kantilal Shah if there was one man who moulded Rasik Hemani, it was Damu Seth who was born Damodar Kelkar and after his adoption by his elder sister assumed the family name Vinayak Vaze. However, in business circles he was Damu Seth, or Anna. It was he who as head of the Kelkar business empire in Bombay saw the potential in Rasik and invited him to be an agent of his company in North India in 1965 when he was just 31 years.

Damu Seth's eldest son was named Govind Kelkar, but his younger sons Suresh and Ramesh—were called Vaze. A Maharashtrian to the core, Damu Seth was religious, honest and excellent in marketing. The senior Kelkar had purchased 35 acres of a mango orchard in Mulund and built on it a factory for manufacture of aromatic chemicals. His oldest son was given the responsibility of running the factory. Govind had a good rapport with customers; he could gauge their requirements and provided whatever was needed-- even if it meant importing it. One day a customer came to Damu Seth and said he had found a replica of the fragrance Fancy Bouquet, a special product manufactured by Kelkars, being sold by another company as their own. The Kelkars commanded a lot of respect and even imitations of their products found a market.

Clients whether big or small were given equal importance because Damu Seth believed even the smallest client has potential to grow. It was he who spotted the spark in Rasik and employed and trained him in marketing. Based on the simple logic that vendors should have the option to buy Kelkar products from their retailer without having to travel to the factory in Mumbai, he encouraged Rasik to distribute product samples to vendors in Chandni Chowk. Rasik's job was to create the demand for the Kelkar products among new clients.

Every visit to the erstwhile Bombay was a learning lesson for Hemani. As in Delhi where he started work at 9 a.m, in Bombay too he would be at Damu Seth's house in Dadar at 9 a.m. After a quick breakfast of typical Maharashtrian snacks, he would drive down with Anna to his office in Princess Street. A simple man wearing dhoti, kurta, cap and coat, Anna would take off his slippers before entering his office and begin the day offering

prayers at his small office temple. There would be a stream of suppliers and brokers waiting for Damu Seth. For the next three hours, Hemani would sit in and get practical lessons on marketing and building a business. Damu Seth not only sold goods produced in the Mulund factory but also imported aromatic chemicals and essential oils.

As the demand for Kelkar products increased, there was search for another piece of land for another factory and Hemani's assistance was sought for finding land. Through the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation, 16 acres of land was acquired at Vapi in Gujarat, some 200 kms from Mulund and the running of the factory for producing chemicals was entrusted to his younger son Suresh Vaze. Hemani was invited to the bhoomi puja. From Damu Seth, Rasik learnt the cardinal principle for business-- 'earn first and then spend.' This is quite different from today's culture of borrowing with high interest rate to invest in business. Seth hardly ever took bank loans for his business. It was such simple principles that enabled the growth of the Kelkar Empire. Suresh too ran his office from a temporary office in Vapi till the business was set up and then built his permanent office. The new company was called K V Aerochem Pvt Ltd.

Meanwhile, son Govind Kelkar had created a new fragrance called Fasli Gulab which he tried to market to Tata Oil Mills. Ms Khambhatta of Tata Oil Mills showed interest in the product and this was enough for Damu Seth to challenge his son to sell 100 lbs, a little over 50 kgs of the fragrance for which he offered an incentive of Rs 10,000. Rasik and Govind teamed up and with small sample bottles went selling it to their various clients. The two sold the required quantity and won their incentives.

Damu Seth had a contract with a supplier from Cochin for lemon grass oil but when the natural product was unavailable due to crop failure Damu Seth cancelled the contract because he did not want the supplier to suffer. His philosophy was simple "if my supplier is suffering from a slump how can I grow. The unwritten understanding was when the product would be available again, the contract would be renewed".

To stay in the good books of his clients, Rasik wanted to give Diwali gifts and diaries. Since he was an agent of the Kelkars, he sought and received permission from Damu Seth to go ahead.

Damu Seth, his wife, son Ramesh Vaze and his wife visited the Hemanis in Delhi in 1973 and the youngsters decided to go to a Chinese restaurant in Connaught Place for dinner. Damu Seth and his wife were not connoisseurs of Chinese cuisine but decided to join the youngsters. At the restaurant, Anna's wife wanted to enter only after leaving her chappals (footwear) outside. The traditional family could not understand how slippers could be worn in a dining area. It was with great difficulty that she was persuaded to keep her slippers on. Rasik regrets that many of these traditions and habits are now being forgotten by the upwardly mobile younger generation.

When Damu Seth died in 1980, there was not a single picture of Rasik's mentor. Kishor Parekh, pulled out the image of Anna from a group photo and enlarged it. An oil painting was created from this image and holds pride of place in the Kelkar home.

SATYAPAL GUPTA, CREATOR OF RAJNIGANDHA

Satyapal Gupta of Dharampal Premchand Ltd. was the president of the Zafrani Zarda Association and Hemani was one of the founder members of the Association. Clarity of accounts and strictly observing time schedules, speaking the truth without hiding anything were the disciplines imparted by Satyapalji. He was an expert on various products that the industry required whether it was saffron, natural musk pods (extracted from the musk deer) or sandal oil whose quality he recognised by smelling and tasting. Duplicates and impure products were rejected outright by Satyapalji.

He used a lot of attars in tobacco products and this gave a new lease of life to the industry in Kannauj. Rasik learnt a lot about attars from Satyapalji and travelled with him to Kannauj, Kashmir, Barwana, Ganjam and other places collecting samples of the best raw materials.

He made a lot of experiments by combining natural and synthetic fragrances for tobacco products. Today, his company is the world leader in 'smokeless tobacco'. He loved collecting international and national coins, match boxes and statues of the laughing Buddha. His brother loved collecting chandeliers and his father, the best carpets of the world. Rasik got closer to him because of the Zarda Association and spent several evenings together. As members of the Association they travelled abroad extensively. Once when he was travelling to Japan for the Japan Expo in the early seventies, he had to take a

Left to right Satyapal Gupta, Govind Kelkar, Hasmukh Shah and Rasik



break in Hong Kong and asked Rasik to organise a pure vegetarian breakfast at his friend Kishor Parekh's house. Thereafter Kishor and Satyapalji became good friends and Kishor, who loved to smoke a pipe, added some fragrant tobacco given by Satyapalji to enhance the aroma. So there was a bonding of friends and business associates for mutual support.

Satyapalji was the creator of several new products Tansen paan masala and Rajnigandha paan masala. He also introduced in the market silver coated cardamom and supari (betel nut). For growth in the business world, Satyapalji was keen to make his company a private limited one and sought Rasik's help in getting the company memorandum of S H Kelkar and company on which he based his new company with the advice of G D Kelkar. To acknowledge the support of Mr Kelkar, he invited him to inaugurate his first factory under the stewardship of the new company in Delhi. Full page advertisements of the event appeared in all newspapers.

KANTILAL SHAH (HEMANI)
GODFATHER TO YOUNG RASIK

One of the first persons who helped Rasik take his baby steps in the competitive world of fragrances, flavours and industrial perfumes was Kantilal Shah. A marketing man, not only did he launch Rasik's business career but inspired and supported him to double sales. Yet, when Rasik was invited to join another company, he let him go, because his own company was going through a crisis and was on the verge of a breakup.

Kantilal was also a philanthropist who not only launched Rasik on the business firmament but when he married Panna in 1968, organised the wedding and all the functions catering to a barat of hundred people. There was no representative from Rasik's immediate family but there were close friends who attended the wedding. Kantilal did not take any money for the entire event and acted as the elder brother.



After Kantibhai's death, Rasik donated Rs 10 lakh to the Fragrance and Flavours Association of India, Mumbai, in his memory. Another Rs 11 lakh was donated by Kantibhai's son Girish Hemani.

FOREIGN INFLUENCES

Foreigners who influenced and supported Rasik's growth in the industry were :

MR OTTOMANZ

of Swiss Company Fremencih, Geneva, Robert Venel of RBD, France, Allenbossio of Lautierfills SA, France, Y.G.Gutsaz, French perfumer of Industrial Perfumes Ltd of Tata Group, Frederick Zeick of Givadaun SA, Geneva, and K L Koh of K L Koh Enterprise Pvt Ltd, Singapore.

Over 6'.3" tall, Ottomanz was a giant of a man based in Bombay and Kantilal Shah introduced Rasik to him as his assistant. Ottomanz gave Rasik many lessons in marketing. He had introduced half-ounce packets of rose fragrance in small bottles. They were imported from Geneva and sold in these small bottles till they caught the attention of the buyers. Some of these imported products were introduced to markets in Kannauj and other cities to enhance the fragrance of various products.

MR ROBERT VENEL:

Calcutta Essence was the agent for Rour Betrand Fills of Grasse, France and Mr Venel would visit Delhi to show how his fragrance could be blended with the choice of the customer. A famous product was clematics C, a replacement of the famous Chanel 5 perfume. Rasik learnt from Venel how to sell Kelkar products.

MR ALLENBOSSIO

would visit India in search of markets for Lautierfills products and it was at the new Calcutta Essence Supply Company that he met Rasik. When travelling through France, Rasik visited him. They drank coffee and the Frenchman shared information on markets in India and how to tap them. Interestingly, Allenbossio was a reputed football player too.

MR Y G GUTSAZ:

Mr Gutsaz used to make new products and personally deliver them to shops, winning customers though he was a perfumer and not a marketing man. He cultivated a lot of small buyers unlike young people today who go in for big names and big business houses.

MR FREDERICK ZEICK

was introduced to Rasiklal by G D Kelkar. He would visit India twice in a year on behalf of Givaudan SA and had a good rapport with buyers. He maintained good relations with the families of customers and often presented technical papers on marketing at seminars of industry associations. He took to Indian food as a way of cultivating Indian markets and building a personal rapport with customers. Like Ottomanz he would introduce new products in small packets till he was sure of his customers. He also established a special bond by inviting customers to his factory in Geneva. This was reciprocated by Rasik who played host to Zeick's children in Delhi.

K. L KOH

was introduced to Rasiklal by Ramesh Vaze of S H Kelkar at the Oberoi Hotel in Mumbai in 1983 and it is a business partnership that has grown

and remains strong. Rasik is still the agent for sale of his company's essential oils in north India. With his close association with businessmen and perfume manufacturers, Rasik built our business in India, says Koh.

Together Rasik and Koh travelled all over Indonesia and Malaysia to study as well as source the supply areas of Indonesian essential oils such as patchouli, vetiver and cananga. They watched the farmers' primitive ways of distilling essential oils and visited patchouli fields where Koh's major export item, its oil, was extracted from the leaves. In Malaysia they went to Segamat to see the collection of gurjan balsam from tree trunks. The bark of the tree trunk would be scorched and within days the resin would flow out. "Business or leisure,



K L Koh, Rasik with plantation workers in Indonesia

there is nothing more enjoyable than time spent with good, trusted family friend Bapu," writes Koh.

DR RAHULA O.B. (ROB) WIJESEKERA, UNDP TECHNICAL EXPERT

"I first met Rasiklal Hemani during my UNIDO-ESCAP mission in 1976," says Wijesekera. He was in a team led by Govind Kelkar, visiting five Asian countries-- Thailand, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia-- to report on the essential oil industry. They visited all the countries, except Indonesia which they had to skip because of some logistic problems not envisaged by ESCAP. It was during the Indian leg of the mission that Govind Kelkar, - not yet then the iconic figure he became later- introduced him to Rasiklal, his company's representative and agent in Delhi.

Thereafter he met him several times during his visits to Delhi and

From right Wijesekera, Govind Kelkar and Rasik



during his tenure as the Special Technical Adviser to UNIDO in Vienna, 1980-1991.

Wijesekera says, he developed a great and warm friendship with Rasik

and his wife Panna, who later visited them in Sri Lanka. His wife Marina and he count them among their treasured friends. Rasiklal, was a connoisseur of art, and their home has many of the paintings and art works gifted by him and Panna.

Rasiklal was to play an important part in Wijesekera's work at Kannauj to develop a UNIDO-UNDP Technical assistance project for the perfumery and fragrance Industry there. It was the spring of 1990 and the Indian government had requested UNDP and UNIDO to assist it in turning the historic facility at Kannauj into a modern fragrance centre such as Grasse and Millitzer. Though Wijesekera was familiar with the two centres abroad having visited them, he was unaware of the celebrated Kannauj centre, which was renowned for its own brand of products such as the attars, as well as the unique Deg-Bhapka system of distillation of sandalwood-based flower fragrances.

Taking a break from a meeting that he was officially attending in Delhi, in the spring of 1990 Wijesekera made his first visit to Kannauj. Because he did not know how to get there, he told the UNDP that he was taking with him as a guide and adviser, Rasiklal Hemani, who was conversant with the industry in Kannauj. The UNDP in Delhi readily agreed, and so Rasiklal accompanied him and assisted with the mission on behalf of UNDP- UNIDO and the Government of India.

Quoting from his book "Clouds are not Spheres, nor Mountains Cones" Wijesekera writes:

"When Rasiklal came to fetch me he noticed that I was in a newly tailored Indian safari suit and he remarked: I am not taking you like that. They will think I have caught hold of some Indian 'bugger' and brought him, - Get back to your blue jeans and shirt." I had no choice but to oblige.

The UNDP project proposal for Kannauj envisaged part financing by UNDP, the Government of India, and some financing by the state government. Rasiklal helped in the negotiations with the regional government. The UNDP, Delhi, had arranged his stay in a hotel in Kanpur and travel to Kannauj by taxi. Since this would be time-consuming, Rasiklal arranged for his stay in the comfortable residence of Mr Mooradhwaj Saini, a prominent perfumer of the area. Wijesekera welcomed the arrangement. Rasiklal seemed to know everyone in Kannauj and introduced him to a broad cross-section of the industrialists. Because of Rasik's friendship with people of Kannauj they were able to meet for long hours in the evenings. The interaction, as well as the inevitable fellowship enabled Wijesekera to accomplish a lot of work in a couple of days and lay the foundation of the project.

The present technical facilities at Kannauj can be traced to that era. The buildings had been provided by the state government but they had to be redesigned to house a common technology service facility for the many perfumery companies in Kannauj. The project laid the foundation that led to the present Flavours and Fragrances Development Centre now referred to as the FFDC. Wijesekera visited the site many times until the project was launched. A lot of ground work had to be done as the Kannauj perfumery companies were largely family owned and not all were in favour of a common facility for quality control and other technical aspects of the

industry. Finally Wijesekera and Rasik persuaded them that a single facility with the capacity to service all of them as well as to liaise with other scientific laboratories in India would benefit all. In these negotiations with the Kannauj perfumery community, Rasiklal was immensely helpful, says the international civil servant.

After his retirement from UNIDO and departure from Vienna to his home in Colombo, Wijesekera visited the Centre again in 1996, on the special invitation of the FFDC, and the Indian Mint Industry -- which had also developed to great heights from the UNIDO-UNDP initiative.

"However, I must confess that I was to come away from that first original meeting as well as other subsequent visits with Rasiklal, with many 'pluses'. It was the secure beginning of one of the most successful ventures initiated by the UN system. Personally, I collected many souvenirs which I still treasure. .. genuine Kuppis - the raw hide distilled oil containers of various sizes and a model of the unique Deg-Bhapka distillation system. On behalf of all Kannauj industrialists, Arun and Pankaj Mehrotra presented them to commemorate my first visit to the city. The role Rasiklal played in assisting me and thereby UNIDO-UNDP and the government of India, in initiating a notably successful technical assistance project to lift the facility to eventually become another of the world's celebrated Centres of Fragrance cannot be overstated", he says.

Late Govind Kelkar autographing his book for Rasik



MR ASIT PATEL,
MC DAVAR AND COMPANY

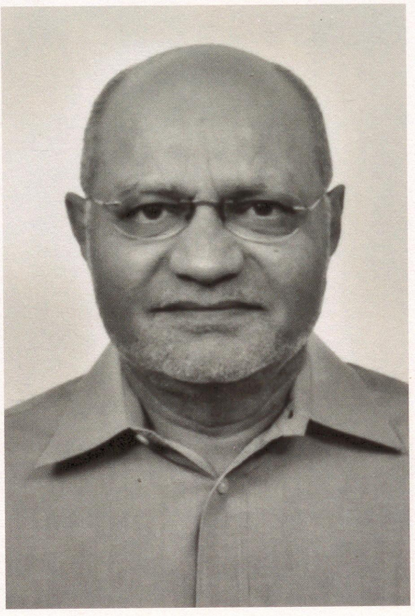
Mr Patel first met Rasiklal in the sixties when he was a young student and Rasik a friend and business colleague of his father, Madhubhai Patel. The Patel family was on its way to Kashmir and stopped in Delhi where they met Rasik and Panna. Rasik had just taken up the agency of S.H.Kelkar & Co and Asit Patel remembers his father commenting that Rasik and Kelkars would go far because "it's a right fit".

At that young age, Asit Patel did not grasp the deep meaning of the statement. He remembered it simply because it was the first time that his father had talked about business with the family. "What attracted my young (15 years) inexperienced mind was his sincerity, confidence and affectionate nature. Though we hardly had any interactions, the impression stayed with me", says Patel. The next meeting with him was almost 12 years later. He had joined his father's business, M.C.Davar & Company as a fresher. Rasiklal recommended that he attend a course at RRL-Jammu to learn more about the technical side of the perfumery industry.

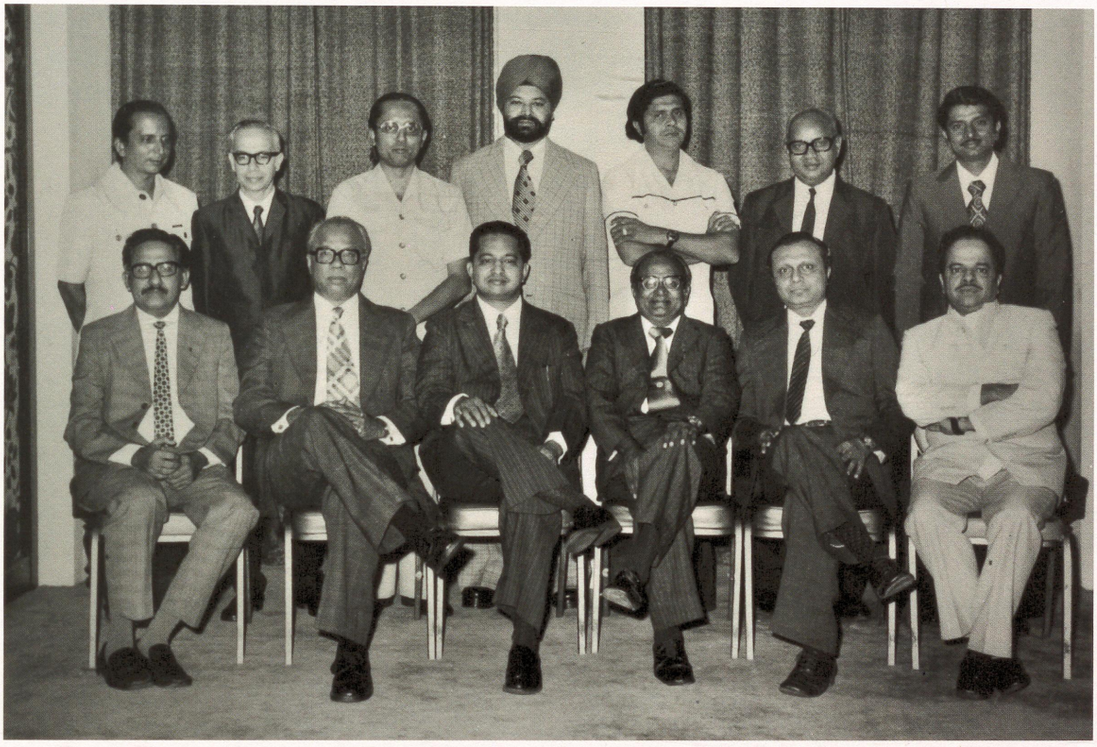
He as well others from Delhi travelled by car to Jammu, taking the opportunity to stop at various dhabas of Punjab. Rasiklal's knowledge of local food, customs and history, indicated that he has been a true travelling salesman – not only selling, but also learning and blending into the cultures of the regions he transited.

For Asit, new in the industry after a few years in the US as a student, the entire experience was starkly different from what he knew and what he needed to know, to succeed in his career. It was a huge learning opportunity, says Asit. For the next 20 odd years as sales person he built on the early foundations. He has always been and continues to be very proud of history and the legacy of the industry and its early contributors. All the stories Rasiklal picked up from his travels would come out during the occasional evening parties.

"Many people have suggested that he should write a book sharing what he knows. I hope he does that, for the future generations. His love for Gujarati literature and bringing it to students is well known. He has helped revitalize several libraries in Saurashtra – a passionate act that's supporting and encouraging thousands of young boys and girls to reading and improving their knowledge. I wish Rasiklalji much success in his endeavours and satisfaction from his work for the society," says Asit Patel.

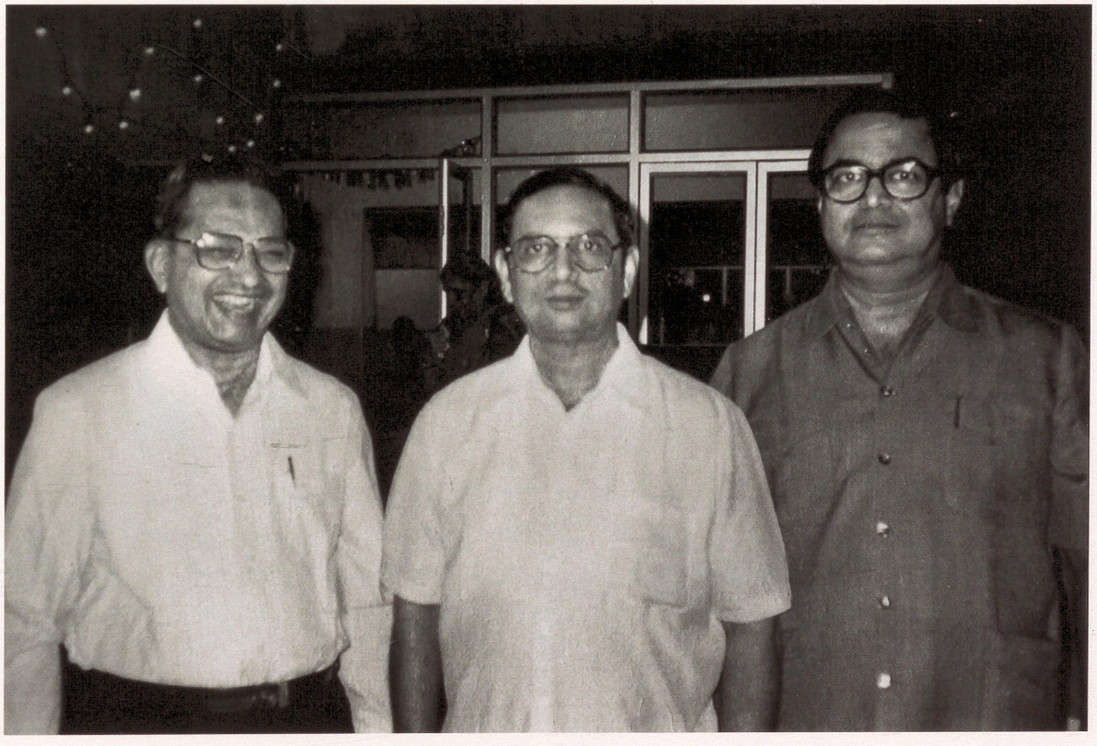


Asit Patel



First elected managing committee of PAFAI, 1972

Govind, Suresh and Ramesh Kelkar, sons of Damu Seth



LEARNING FROM LIFE

One of Rasik's earliest lessons in life was living frugally and sharing even from the little money he had. At his first job at the Calcutta Essence Supply Company when he was just 18 years, he was earning just Rs 60 a month. Not only did he have to live on this amount but send home some money!

In the late fifties a lot of the business was through cash transactions. After he got back the Rs 30,000 that he left under a pillow in the railway station in Kanpur (Pages 17/18), he learnt that to build a business you need to trust people. The second lesson he learnt on recovering the money was that the poor and lowly too are honest. After the Kanpur incident he decided he would never do a job where he would have to handle cash. It was too risky!

No one who came to Rasik's shop in Khari Baoli was turned away because he truly believed that each customer was his God and should receive due respect. His philosophy was clearly 'it is the small drops that make the mighty ocean'. This was quite contrary to the popular trend to look for just big clients.

One of Rasik's cardinal principles in business, which he learnt from his mentor Damu Seth, was 'earn first and then spend.' This is quite different from today's model of borrowing with high interest rate to invest in business. Seth hardly ever took bank loans for growth of his business. Damu Seth's son, Suresh, too imbibed the same philosophy and ran his office from a temporary office in Vapi till the business was set up. The permanent office was built only after that.

Another important learning was the need for collaboration between science and industry. At a time when people in the tobacco trade would not see each other's face, leave alone collaborate for work, Hemani was the catalyst that brought them together on a common platform. He became a senior member of the working committee of the Tobacco Manufacturers Association.

Though Rasik has a scientific approach to marketing and management, he feels his marketing of products is better when he knows everything about them. It's a desi approach to marketing and buyers are bowled over by his knowledge and the rapport he develops with the essential oil producing companies.

HIS INNER CIRCLE OF FRIENDS AND FAMILY

FRIEND, PHILOSOPHER AND GUIDE KISHOR PAREKH

One of his most abiding friendships was with Kishore Parekh, the photo editor of Hindustan Times and his wife Saroj. He had known them from his school days in Bhavnagar. After a busy day at work, Rasik, still a bachelor in the early sixties would land up at Kishor's home in Karol Bagh to play cards and relax with drinks and dinner. Others who joined him in these outings were Raghu Rai, Prabha Bahl and Usha Rao, all journalists working with Statesman, Hindustan Times and Times of India. Hasmukh Shah, who was working in the office of Prime Minister Morarji Desai, and his wife Nila would join them whenever Hasmukh could find time. They were fun-filled, carefree years of bonding.

Towards the end of the Indo-Pak war of 1965 Rasik went to Amritsar to receive Kishor, who was to return home with war pictures from the border for his newspaper. Suddenly a bomb fell on a hospital in the city and Kishor and Rasik carried home trophies of the spent bomb shells and other artefacts from the war.

Subsequently Kishor Parekh moved to Singapore and Bombay, Rasik kept visiting him and remained close to him. In 1982 on a holiday together in Himachal Pradesh, Kishor Parekh, barely 52 years, died of a heart attack in Rasik's arms at Hemkund Sahib. It was Hemani who had the painful job of bringing the body down in a taxi and handing it to the family for cremation after completing all the police and medical formalities.

After Kishor's death, Rasik was and continues to be the father figure for his four children!



Fun times: Panna and Kishor Parekh

HASMUKH SHAH ON FRIEND BAPU

Bapu could mean father (usage becoming rare with western expressions of papa or daddy), or ruler of a small principality (no longer to be found thanks to Sardar Patel's abolition of princely states), or a large-hearted person oblivious of his own needs or comfort. Rasiklal Hemani belongs to the third category, writes Hasmukh Shah.

Rarely does one come across an individual who believes that one need not have money to give to others. Rasik's unstated philosophy was "Never say 'No'. Borrow and Give, if necessary". Generous to a fault, Rasik has a hole in every pocket, often more than one. Though the son of a businessman, due to financial constraint his education was limited. Higher education remaining a distant dream!

However, nothing deterred Rasik. Early in life he learnt to create a space for himself and lead life on his own terms. When he shifted from his birthplace, Rajaula to a larger town – Bhavnagar – Rasik found his alma mater in the town library. He learnt to argue from intellectuals, mostly leftists; came closer to activists helping them to organize a strike here or a bandh there; made friends with slum children helping them to read and play tough inexpensive desi games.



Hasmukh Shah

"Rasik is not ambitious. However, he is eager to understand and execute efficiently the task in hand; looks for larger issues of business and builds the business on professional relationships ensuring customer satisfaction. Anyone who has done business with him has thought of widening and deepening it; never has any one thought of diluting it," writes Hasmukh.

Business, however, is not the prime driving force for Rasiklal Hemani. His commitment is to larger social causes. Though he takes business seriously, his heart is with the deprived. NGOs from all over the country look to him for support. Crossing swords with people in position and power comes easily to him when 'right' is challenged. He is comfortable in the company of his leftist comrades and old IPTA (Indian Peoples Theatre Association) friends. His buddies include eminent photographers like Kishor Parekh and Raghu Rai, well-known artists such as Himmat Shah, Jeram Patel and the late J. Swaminathan; social workers, senior civil servants, professionals of all hues, gen-next everywhere. Friends' children are thoroughly spoiled by Bapu Kaka, as they call him.

As friends, Rasiklal

and Panna are rare. Panna is a popular figure in her constituencies—the Mahila Samaj and the Gujarati Samaj. She initiated and runs a school for poor children and facilities for senior citizens. Rasiklal chooses to carry his own china shop with him when dealing with issues on what is right and what is wrong.

The Hemanis maintain an open house and keep a ready cheque for a friend in need of assistance. Friends and their neighbours and their friends, both Indian and foreigners – turn up at odd hours with loads of baggage and stinking laundry. The house is open. Food is served at short notice and beds are ever ready. The result is that no one is eager to leave quickly. The car drops them. Their bookings are made, cancelled and made again. With easy availability of loans, not necessarily to be repaid, who would be in a hurry to catch the next train or flight?

(Hasmukh Shah is a well-known former bureaucrat and close friend)

At a wedding lunch (Left to Right) Rasik, Kishor Parekh, Jyoti Bhatt, Hasmukh Shah and Raghav Kaneria



A TOUGH BUT RESPONSIBLE ELDER BROTHER

Kishore Hemani, youngest brother of Rasik and director of the Rasiklal Hemani Agency Private Ltd, joined the business in 1985 and in 1987 opened the office in Lucknow and ran it for 14 years developing clients and spearheading the growth of the company across UP. New customers were wooed by freely distributing 10 gram perfume samples

Kishore became a shareholder in 1975 when the agency became a private company and in 2004 he became a director. For the past five/ six years while Rasiklal has turned his attention more towards charitable work, spending over six months in a year in his home town in Bhavnagar, Saurashtra, Kishore has been the face of the company in Delhi. Like the youthful Rasik, he is constantly on the move reaching out to new clients and keeping the old happy. His phone never stops ringing.

An automobile engineer by profession, when he worked with Usha Piston he won the salesman of the year award and says with pride that it was the President of India who bestowed this award on him. Being a marketing person, he fitted well into the new company developing more markets for perfumes. Rasik, Panna and Ramesh Vaze of Kelkars provided him all support and encouraged him to grow in the company.

To get into the groove, he did courses in perfumery in 1985 and a more advanced one in 1987 at the Kelkar factory in Mumbai. Regularly visiting the factory he learnt about the technical as well as business aspect of the industry. Following up on orders delivered, he ensured full payment from clients. These days he is paid in advance and then delivers the products. The cash flow to the company has improved. There has been an annual growth of 10 per cent in business since 2000.

Two-third of the company's business is in tobacco and tobacco related products, the rest in cosmetics, agarbatties, deodorants, shampoos and hair oil. Seventy five per cent of the manufacturers and traders in Kannauj use the Kelkar products. The Kelkars set the bench mark for perfumes and all perfumes made in India are compared to their products. Fragrances are used in tobacco to mask its flavour as well as give it taste. The kesar, heena, musk, kewra and gulab also have medicinal value. The heena in tobacco warms the body. The attars used were natural products but slowly synthetic fragrances were added to tobacco because they were cheaper than attars, says Kishore.

Brother Rasik has been the father figure in his life. Kishore was in class 10 when his father died and it was Rasik who educated him and brought him into business. In fact as the eldest he was the guardian of the entire family. Bapu, as Rasik is called by family and close friends, is not sentimental—there is no public demonstration of affection—but he has taken full responsibility for the whole family.



The two brothers Rasik and Kishore

PANNA
THE BETTER HALF

Panna writes: In 1968, at the age of 28, I married Rasiklal Hemani. A common friend had approached me with the marriage proposal. He is only 10th pass and a divorcee but he has his own business, I was told. I met Rasik briefly when he visited Bombay and I liked his values and straight forwardness. He did not want any dowry, said I could keep my earnings as a bank employee and he would bear all the wedding expenses. With an ailing father and five siblings, I still had responsibilities towards my family and appreciated his gesture.

There was no period of courting but he did write three letters at my bank address persuading me to marry him. It was a simple Arya Samaj wedding that heralded a 48 years relationship that would take me to the ends of the earth with Rasik and his groups of business contacts and friends. My life changed phenomenally after marriage.

I had come straight out of my village Chinchni, 100 kms from Bombay, determined to 'earn and learn'. With a scholarship, I got into an arts college in Bombay and stayed as a paying guest at Malad. My day began at 6 a.m. and ended at 10 p.m. After college, I went for work in the Maharashtra government secretariat as a clerk. I also took tuitions to support myself. After my graduation I sat for a bank job and was selected by the Bank of Baroda. It was a hectic life with plenty of hard work.

After settling down in Delhi we both tried hard to shoulder the responsibilities of our families. At times we borrowed to fulfil the family obligations. As I took charge of many of his family and business responsibilities, Rasik got more time for business. I looked after the guests. Having lived in Bombay, I was fluent in Marathi and this enabled me to build good relationship with the Kelkars, in particular with Damu Seth Kelkar and his wife, Radhabai, who I called Akka. The Kelkar children came to Delhi confident that Panna aunty will take care of them. We liked giving gifts. I remember how the eyes of the housewife we visited in Kerala lit up when we presented her with a

Panna at home



basket of fresh vegetables from the fields. On another occasion, a friend's daughter wanted to visit the Taj Mahal on her 25th wedding anniversary but there was a problem and the visit was cancelled. We arrived at the hotel with a huge bouquet of flowers for the young couple and they were overjoyed.

Since I knew banking, Rasik made me a director in the company in 1971 and I gave up my job with the Bank of Baroda. Rasik was at peace. His business was growing and this gave us time to travel and look beyond the boundaries of India for business and pleasure. Business associates became personal friends and our home was always open to them. In fact one of our friends called it Panna Sarai! We want to keep it this way. Our home open for friends to the end of our lives!

When Rasik was not around, it was my job to look after the staff. I knew all the business clients and their families and was often referred to as Rasik's Walking Telephone Directory. Whether in India or abroad, whenever Rasik wanted a telephone number, I could rattle it off.

On this historic year when we are celebrating Rasik's golden jubilee in business, I should not forgot some of our good friends and those from the medical fraternity who ensured our good health and happiness. The late Dr. Vinodra Gami, Dr. Indu Rambabu, Dr. Pravin Dalal, Dr. K.N.Jain, Dr Rajiv Passy, Dr. Rahul Shridharani, Dr. Tejas Parekh, Dr.Noshir Shroff, Dr. Ashok & Dr. Naresh Ved were ever ready with medical advice and kept our spirits high despite aches and pains.

I would like to pay my tribute to the late Shri Ashok Nimkar, who came to work with us as a young man of 20, through Karol Bagh Councillor Pushpa Kale, and good friend Nagin Dedhia. A highly capable man, Nimkar was with us for 40 years, looking after office administration and business with S H Kelkar & Company. Driver Kumar too served us for 26 years till his death.

FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD COP PRADEEP SRIVASTAVA

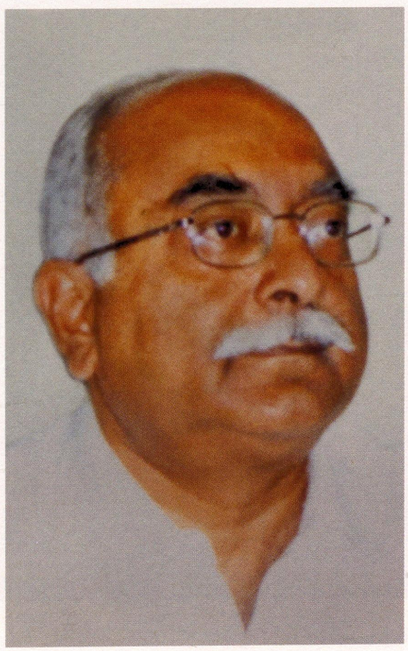
Pradeep Srivastava writes "Our acquaintance and close friendship with Rasikbhai and Pannaben is now three decades old. It was in 1987 that we were trying to get admission for our son Kanishk in Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, a prestigious school of the capital. My brother Pankaj, who was teaching at Baroda University in those days, knew several famous artists like Bhupen Khakhar, Ghulam Sheikh and Jyoti Bhatt who in turn knew Rasikbhai who was on the school's board of management. I was given a letter of introduction to Rasikbhai by Bhupen Khakhar.

With great intrepidation we went to meet Rasikbhai and Pannaben at their Alipur road flat. We were apprehensive of rude behaviour and the typical Delhi arrogance but were in for a surprise. Not only did they ensure Kanishk's admission to the school but admitted us in to their family. There has been no looking back since then.

Every visit to the Hemanis residence was a culinary trip to Gujarat. Pannaben excelled in preparing delicacies like muthia, thepla and patore and we feasted on them. Being in the city police and posted nearby I used to drop in often, giving very short notice to Pannaben, but she was ever ready with her treats. Rasikbhai is a disciplinarian in every field of life. During dinners, Rasikbhai would remind Kanishk and Ivan not to waste food and take only as much as they could eat. He would not hesitate in giving small sermons to the children on the importance of savings and honest, hard labour.

It was not food alone that enriched our lives. Being a much travelled man, Rasikbhai would give deep insights into various societies. His rich collection of paintings, sculptures, photographs and books were a treat for the eyes. He is a true philanthropist, always supported painters, writers and photo artists. It was at his place that we met Raghu Rai.

Rasikbhai has a streak of leftism, probably a vestige of his days of struggle. Every time we met at his place or mine, the conversation would somehow veer round Hindu practices and dogmas and Rasikbhai would take an anti-religious stand. After heated and animated discussions we always decided to settle these issues the next time we met. But I believe Rasikbhai is a deeply religious person in the true sense of the word because he adheres to his dharma. He never hurts anyone, has phenomenal compassion for the poor and is always ready to support the able and enterprising. I do not know many businessmen who do their business as honestly as Rasikbhai or pay their taxes so regularly that they never have any unaccounted cash. Today he is one of the highest tax payers in the business community of Delhi.



Rasikbhai owned a few pieces of land around Delhi. When he wanted to dispose them, he first offered them to his friends. He said he would neither give it free and lose the friend nor make any profit and suffer the guilt. He sold land at circle rate, which is usually half the prevailing market rate. In today's materialistic world not even a real brother would do that!

Not having had formal education and children of his own, he has dedicated his life to improving the quality of primary education in Gujarat schools through books. He has so far enriched 7000 school libraries around his home town Bhavnagar. "An incredible feat for any individual"!

Recently, Rasikbhai told me "now I am a satisfied man. Coming from a very humble background, I have made it big through hard work and integrity. I have earned well, travelled extensively and am now redeeming my debt to society".

Pradeep Srivastava

Rasik, Panna and cartoon

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