

### From the Editorial Team...

This issue has one common thing i.e. achievement of our Oshwals in different fields. Achievement does not come to your door step; we have to yearn for it. Hard work and sheer dedication is the answer.

The Newsletter Committee proudly presents the journey the three Oshwals have gone through and continuing to stride in their success. Our congratulations to them and their family members. Enjoy reading!

## Bandish Suresh Dharamshi Gudka



A proud Moment for the Oshwal Community as one of our own has been named as one of the Top Ten Wealth Managers and also Outstanding in Field in UK by Spears

Bandish joined Vestra Wealth with over 15 years experience.

Speaking 7 languages, he managed International and UK resident HNW clients at Citigroup, where he was also made founder member of their UK Wealth Management business. Joining Barclays Wealth in 2007, he successfully built and managed a significant onshore and res-non-dom client base. Bandish is res-non-dom certified, with extensive knowledge of Emerging and NRI markets. He has significant experience in structuring broad ranging bespoke investment solutions and a highly prized reputation for excellence in client service delivery.

Bandish sits on the Vestra Investment Committee, Fixed Income Committee as well as the Non Standard

Investments Committee.

He was profiled as the "Top Five" Rising Stars of Wealth Management by Spears in 2012 and a Finalist in the Young Turks Wealth Manager of the Year UK 2012 and Runner up in 2013.

Bandish is a Chartered Wealth Manager, and Fellow of the Charterer Institute. He was made an honorary Committee Member of the Wealth Management Professional Forum at the CISI a position he has held for over 3 years.

Bandish is a professionally trained Sitarist, and in his spare time composes music for film and music collaborations. He widely engages in philanthropy in the UK and Africa, and is a Trustee and consultant on the board of various UK charities

In terms of inspiration, he is a big believer in assisting the younger generation to get ahead. He was part of the graduate committee and cultural committees as Barclays Wealth and also mentored at least 2-3 individuals each year, imparting his knowledge to them and also assisting the less privileged to secure a better future for themselves.

Bandish is a strong believer in the principals of Jainism and use the teachings in his workspace.

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# Meera Mansukhlal Shah

## Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) 2015



Meera Mansukhlal Shah, from Mombasa, was one of 500 fellows selected for the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) 2015. This is President Obama's flagship program to invest in the youth of Africa to lead Africa into a better future.

The Fellowship provides outstanding young leaders from Sub-Saharan Africa with the opportunity to hone their skills at a U.S. higher education institution with support for professional development after they return home. Kenya was ranked 2nd for the total number of fellows representing one country at 40. Fellows pursued one of three options: business entrepreneurship, civic leadership and public management.

By virtue of her work, Meera had selected the public management track and along with twenty four other individuals from various African countries, she was placed at the prestigious Howard University in Washington DC for a period of six weeks.

The program entailed academic coursework, visits to various federal offices and organizations, community service; and networking with other individuals. Following the end of the academic component, all fellows met in Washington for a presidential summit hosted by President Obama. For Meera, the program served as a great opportunity for networking, to learn best practices, overcome challenges; and of course to make lifetime friendships.

On returning from the fellowship programme, Meera shall continue to build her leadership skills with support from the US embassy, the regional leadership centre in Nairobi and the YALI network. Thus helping to contribute to the growth of society.

Back in Kenya, Meera manages the health system in Kisauni-Nyali Sub-County in the larger Mombasa County.

As a Sub-County Medical Officer of Health, she oversees all health programs in the sub county i.e. programs such as immunization, reproductive health, mother-neonatal-child health, HIV, TB, Malaria, nutrition, disease surveillance, public health among others. She also oversees the smooth running of thirteen health facilities of which three are in prisons and five are facilities that also offer maternity services.

In addition, Meera has also contributed to the preparation of the Mombasa County Strategic Health Plan and the Annual Work Plans; managed cholera outbreaks, coordinated polio and school deworming campaigns. Her current projects include mass mosquito net distribution; and the start-up of the medically assisted therapy program for heroin addicts with support from Global Fund and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime respectively.

Her passion is in mother and child health due to the high burden of maternal mortality that Kenya bears i.e. 400 per 100,000 live births as per the Kenya Demographic Health Survey 2014. On a personal level, Meera wishes to contribute more to healthy eating, early cancer screening especially in women, and disability concerns.

In conclusion Meera believes investing in women and youth sets the foundation from which our people can grow to great heights. She encourages our Oshwal youth to grab hold of such opportunities to make advances not only professionally but also on a personal level.

**"Successful leaders grow when they allow others to grow with them"**



Newsletter Committee members with Meera M. Shah (3rd Right)



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# Piyush Zaverchand Gudka

*“Marathon Man”*



The Visa Oshwal Community has produced a great number of high achievers in a variety of fields, of whom, not surprisingly, the largest numbers are in the field of business, commerce and professions. After all, business is in the blood of the greater Vanik Community of which the Visa Oshwals form a part.

It is therefore always a matter of great pride when an Oshwal ventures out into something different, academia, art, media, politics, social service or sport. Even in these fields where generally fewer Oshwals have ventured, sports must perhaps come last and by a long distance, being considered not a serious enough activity to be lauded as worthy of pursuit, perhaps even looked upon as a somewhat frivolous activity.

Piyush Gudka is someone who decided to buck the trend, go off the beaten path and make his mark in the field of sports. Even in this field, Piyush chose not any of the more established sports such as cricket or golf which a growing number of Oshwals have taken up and in which some of them have made inroads at the higher level of the game. Away from these mainstream sports, Piyush picked on something totally different, namely to run Marathons.

For Piyush, running Marathon races is not just as a mere pastime, a leisure activity to engage in if time permits. His commitment to Marathon is total. He has devoted his time and energy with a single minded focus and so far run not one, not just a few, but all of 50 Marathons and 2 Ultra Marathons. He can therefore without any exaggeration be described as a “Marathon Man”.

How did Piyush get into this?

Let us hear direct from Piyush on how it all started. In his own words, the second son of the late Zaverchand Khima Gudka and Vijyaben Zaverchand Gudka, he was “born in Mombasa, the only Gudka of the third generation Khima Deva Gudka Parivar to be born outside Kisumu, except for a younger cousin, Jaini who was born in England.” Piyush wonders, “does that make me different?”

As to the date of his birth, Piyush says cryptically “Had I not missed the leap year extra day by 3 hours I would be 14¾ years old today”. It should not take the numerically savvy Oshwals too long to count backwards and work that out!

Piyush grew up and received his primary education in Mombasa, at MM Shah Primary School from 1962 to 1968 and joined the prestigious Allidina Visram High School in 1969 from where he completed his O Levels in 1972 with 1st grade.

While doing well academically, Piyush did not fall into the all work and no play mode which would have made him a dull boy. He not only participated in various sports but played an outstanding role in some, becoming the Vice-Captain and Captain in the school cricket and hockey teams. He was a self taught swimmer reaching high enough standard to represent Allidina in Kenya Inter-Province Swimming Championship. He also represented Allidina in softball. Other sports which Piyush played include football, badminton, tennis, volleyball and table tennis, quite a wide range, except running!

Mombasa is not a place conducive for distance running so that was one reason Piyush did not engage in that particular sport and only took it up after he went to the UK for further studies after finishing high school in

*(Cont...)*

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Mombasa. While studying in London, pushing pen and crunching numbers, to become Chartered Accountant, a profession far removed from the highs and thrills of the rubber pressing the tarmac, Piyush discovered the lure of running and the rest, as they say, is history.

It is easy to make a start with a hobby but to continue and carry on with the same level of interest and zeal as when you first started requires dedication which few can muster, especially with something as demanding as Marathon running. Piyush has not only continued with what he started but running has now become an integral part of his life.

What also distinguishes Piyush from majority of those who follow their cherished hobbies with devotion is that not only does Piyush run for personal pleasure, great as it is, but he shares his expertise and experience with fellow runners, especially beginners, training them, providing them with encouragement and inspiration to adopt running for pleasure as well as a key to good health and physical well being.

Nor is his pursuit of all those medals he has already bagged, only for personal gratification and glory. Piyush channels his hobby to a more altruistic goal for the benefit of those in need of help. His passion has given Piyush an immense opportunity to raise money for charities and worthwhile causes. Being based in the UK, quite obviously majority of the charities that Piyush has contributed to are UK centred but he has not lost touch with his birth place. One of the projects that Piyush helped raising funds for was the construction of a shelter and work shop for disabled Girl Guides at Shanzu in Mombasa. Piyush credits his involvement in this cause to the late Damayanti Prem Shah, affectionately known as Damuben, who had made this project her life's mission and managed to complete it with untiring efforts even as she fought her battle with cancer.

His devotion to his chosen sport and his efforts in spreading the message of long distance running as a way to good health and for raising money for worthwhile causes has earned Piyush well deserved accolades. An excerpt from a press release before his run in one of the most gruelling marathons, the "Comrades Marathon" in South Africa, is pertinent and worth re-producing here.

"The Comrades Marathon in South Africa!!!  
56 brutal miles (89km), 5 torturous climbs and a ruthless clock. For most people this could really be the greatest challenge; the premier ultra road race in the world!

Animal lovers can name Africa's "Big Five" in a flash but the Comrades ultra-marathon runners have its Big Five hills--Cowies, Fields, Bothas, Inchanga, and Polly Shortts etched in their memory forever. These names can bring tears to anyone who has attempted this race as the painful

memories of these hills bring an instantaneous flashback.

The runners have 12 hours to complete the course and there are a number of cut-off points along the route, which runners must reach by a prescribed time or be forced to retire from the race. This is no ordinary challenge! It comes with a strong health warning just as one would see at the back of a bottle of homemade Jamaican hot sauce with habanero peppers.

Piyush is under-taking this ultimate challenge to help raise money and awareness for 2 charities:

Fit 4 Nothing, a charity that helps individuals improve their mind and body through exercise and One Cause, a charity that helps under-privileged communities in the third world through the provision of Education. "

Since then Piyush has run many more Marathons, a total of 50 completed and counting! The landmark half a century run quite fittingly took place in the place where it all started, the London Marathon which Piyush ran on Sunday 26th April 2015, in 3 hours 45 minutes, proving, as Piyush puts it "there is still some juice left in those old legs." With such enthusiasm, there is no reason to believe Piyush will hang up his boots and sit on his laurels. He shows no signs of stopping and the numbers will continue to grow. However, he derives the biggest satisfaction in motivating and inspiring people to choose the option of running for health, having already reached out to 200 people in the last 20 years for London, Berlin, Paris, Barcelona, Dublin and Brighton Marathons and he hopes to continue to being a trainer, mentor and friend to many more aspiring marathon runners.

Piyush attributes his success to the inspiring words of Mahatam Gandhi "I claim to be no more than an average man with less than average abilities. I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith."

As a tribute to Gandhiji whose philosophy guides Piyush in all his endeavours, he once ran a marathon as 'Gandhi'. The uncanny resemblance is astonishing and the picture tells it all!

To conclude, let us hear the following comments from Piyush which sum up his views on the sport which has now become a way of life for him:-

*"A marathon is a race without race, colour, religion, sex, prejudice, nationality, hate, where everyone starts as an equal, and everyone finishes as a winner."*

**Suhasini Shah Gudka**