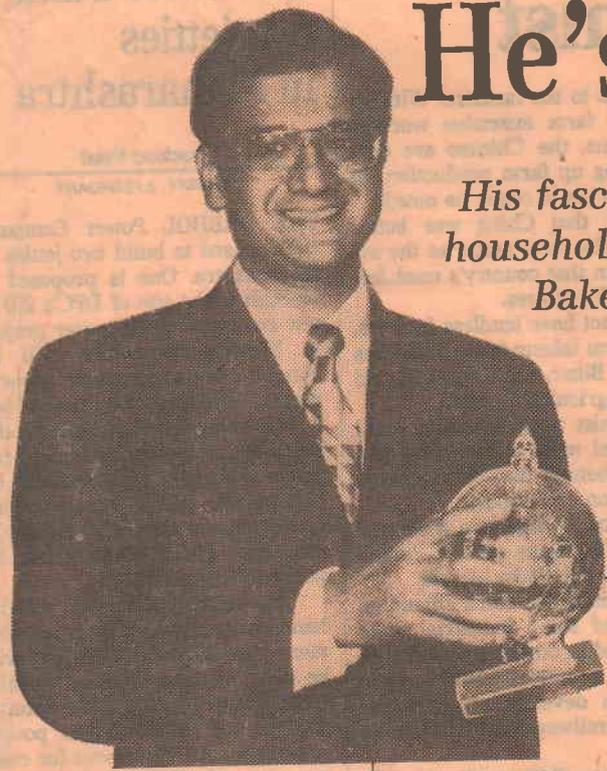


# He's a cool achiever

His fascination for beauty turned Symphony into a household name. E Jayashree Kurup profiles Achal Bakeri, the Young Business Achiever 1994.



ing his basic criterion of functional aesthetics. "In each instance I picked up a product for which the demand existed but the available product did not satisfy the market," he explains.

Bakeri's love for beauty goes far beyond his products. "I like to collect beautiful things," he says

huge terracotta figurines placed strategically all over.

"I have tried to create as nice a working atmosphere in the factory as possible," Bakeri says. Which was simpler as it is an assembling unit rather than a manufacturing one. This is again a new concept of product development evolved by Bakeri. The parts for the various products are manufactured by different vendor units. The vendors manufacture the components according to the company's design specifications. The company provides the tools, moulds and dies required and ensures quality checks to ensure that each component meets ISI standards.

"This arrangement allowed me to concentrate on our core strengths and invest in research and development rather than in the plants for manufacture of components," says this man whose hallmark is innovation. This policy also gives him the additional advantage of being able to change designs without bothering about what to do with the existing capacity.

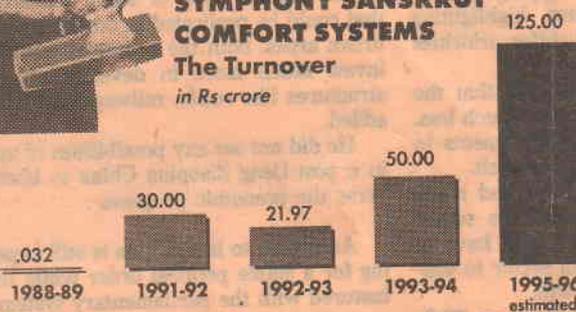
With this kind of flexibility, innovation has been the watchword at Sanskrut from identifying products to crafting, redesigning and adding value in performance and aesthetics.

Bakeri's innovations extend even to the marketing network with RISC-based computers providing on-line information to an entire national network of dealers and branches.

As in everything else, this unassuming, bespectacled entrepreneur likes to unwind quietly. All his after-work hours are spent with his wife and two daughters. And when time permits, he likes to travel with his family. "I have travelled all over the world barring South America and Australia. And these are the destinations I plan to visit next."

But his immediate trip is to London as one of the 19 world finalists for the World Young Business Achiever 94 award. As he himself says of his chances of emerging the winner in today's contest, "I wouldn't even hazard a guess."

**SYMPHONY SANSKRUT COMFORT SYSTEMS**  
The Turnover  
in Rs crore



ET Graphics / SANJOG

**"The noiseless, aesthetically-designed Symphony cooler bridged the gap between air-conditioners and desert coolers"**

**ACHAL BAKERI**

**A**CHAL Bakeri has one major obsession in life: beauty. And his emphasis on functional aesthetics has won this 34-year-old chairman and managing director of the Ahmedabad-based Symphony Sanskrut Comfort Systems, the Sistas Worldcom Trophy for the Indian Young Business Achiever of the Year award for 1994.

Bakeri's success story began in 1988 when he launched his sleek, light-weight Symphony room cooler into a market flooded with unweildy, noisy, metal coolers. The market lapped it up and in the first year alone thousands of pieces were sold. "For the first time in the world I upgraded the body component from sheet metal to plastic," Bakeri says proudly. Today, with 10 models of coolers and other products like domestic flour mills, water heaters and water purifiers to their credit, the company's turnover was an impressive Rs 50 crore in 1994. They are confident this figure will rise to over Rs 125 crore by 1996.

Bakeri's foray into the world of functional aesthetics began in the mid-eighties, when he was looking for coolers to install in the family's newly-constructed house in Ahmedabad. The standard, square, noisy, metal desert coolers available in the market did not fit the bill for this trained architect who comes from one of Ahmedabad's foremost families of builders. "I felt that there would be others like me who would be seeking a better-

-looking functional product," he says. The outcome of his research was the low-noise Symphony coolers. These light-weight plastic coolers are certified by the Bureau of Indian Standards with an ISI mark and are approved for supply by the DGS&D.

About his award, Bakeri feels that out of the 2,000 Indian contestants, he has scored on the new product launched category. His light-weight plastic coolers have changed the way the world looked at the product and become a trend-setter. Symphony alone markets 10 models in different categories including portable, desert, window and personal coolers.

The entire range of Symphony products has now expanded to include water filters, domestic flour mills, washing machines and storage water heaters — all exemplify-

frankly. This includes art objects, furniture, clocks or anything beautiful. His corporate office in Ahmedabad bears out his love for beauty. Walk in and a traditional *sandook* and a *jharokha* with Urdu inscriptions greet you. Two giant urns with war scenes inscribed upon them are set off by a huge brass lamp with human and peacock figures on it.

His own office is a study in time. Clocks of all shapes and sizes dominate the office. These include a black-and-white round clock, a square metal clock, a triangular black clock with a moving pyramidal dial and even a round paper weight clock. "There was no conscious effort to create a particular image," he says. "I feel art objects add character to space." Which is probably why even the factory on the outskirts of Ahmedabad has