

# A YUPPIE AND A GENTLEMAN

**D**O you know you sound like a fool if you are in a speciality restaurant at a five-star hotel and check with the captain for the best dish of the day?

Are you sure who takes the seat first if you are the host at a business meeting?

Do you know you are not expected to ask your Arab business associate "How's your wife?"

Would you mind spending a month and around Rs 60,000 to find the answers to all these and more posers?

If your reply is in the negative, Minocher Patel is the guy you would want to meet.

For Patel is trying to add value to the concept of a finishing school by opening Ecole Solitaire, a residential one here in Pune.

Says Patel, "Very often you see people making mistakes when they are say, at a business meeting or at the lunch table. Even the guys with the so called 'public school background' don't seem to know what to do with the many forks and knives laid on the table."

Patel, a management graduate, has travelled extensively all over the world as a marketing professional - first as a brand manager for Vadilal Ice-creams and later for Food Specialities, in Dubai. He returned to India to start his training and development outfit and has been conducting programmes for corporate executives, management institutes and students in India and abroad. His exposure to the training and development activity sparked off the idea of starting a finishing school.

But then, what is it that other finishing schools don't do and Ecole Solitaire will? "Many things," replies Patel. "Those who undergo finishing school training for so many-hours-a-day carry to the school their worries and their concentration suffers. A residential course, away from their usual haunts, is sure to help them focus better on what they

and global travel. This has also rubbed off on business etiquette at home as a whole new breed of self-employed professionals and first-generation entrepreneurs is knocking on the doors of the business world.

Pune may not have been a trend-setter in corporate lifestyles in the past, but with Ecole Solitaire, it has certainly become the first city in India to get a residential finishing school. **Dileep Athavale reports**

"These are the candidates we would like to train," explains Minocher, "as many of them have little or no exposure to dealing with the international community. Additionally, small and mid size family-business houses would also like to train their sons or daughters so that they don't feel at a loss when among the rich and famous."

Ecole Solitaire will offer one-month residential courses at the sprawling Ganga Resorts on the Pune-Ahmednagar Road. There will be four such courses every year out of which two will be exclusively for women candidates. The curriculum for the course consists of table etiquette, protocol and business etiquette; the art of entertaining, personal grooming along

are learning. Besides, staying together for some days will also develop in them a sense of group behaviour and manners."

And the timing is right too. Opening up of the Indian economy over the last few years has exposed the Indian business community to overseas partnerships

There will be short duration, specific courses for the middle-aged managers too, where even spouses will be allowed.

And how big a hole will this burn in the candidate's (or his father's or company's) pocket? "Just about Rs 50,000 for the entire course, everything taken care of. That's only the air fare to Switzerland which is internationally known for its finishing schools."

What about the quality of the courses? Patel feels confident he can deliver international quality, helped by his exposure to the corporate and business world. Additionally, he has roped in George Judah, the flamboyant former air-force officer and director of Symbiosis Institute of Business Management (SIBM), as the course director. Judah's officer-like qualities, duly moulded in the executive lifestyle should add great value to Ecole Solitaire.

Patel claims the idea is already catching the imagination of corporate circles as he's getting a response from places like Mumbai, Indore and Chandigarh. And if things move in Patel's favour, Pune, in addition to its reputation as a major educational and software centre, will also gain a reputation for being a springboard for higher things in life.



**Minocher Patel**

with social and communication skills and a specially developed module, Potential Plus which includes self analysis, self awareness and confidence building.



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