

'Delhi is my city, my home. I think of it as inclusive, a city of learning'

In Chandni Chowk, near Nai Sarak, on the Gurudwara Sheeshgarj Sahib side, **Amit Ranjan** bumped into an intriguing old man — a tea stall owner with a handlebar moustache and an army cap perched on his head. He had stacks of pictures of Gods of every religion, posters of filmy heroes and heroines, photographs of freedom fighters. In the middle of all this, was a photograph of Kiran Bedi. Intrigued, he asked the old man about it. The old man didn't say anything. Amit ended up having four cups of tea and pestering the old man. But the only thing the old man told him was: "Only madam will tell about it." So Amit interviewed "madam", who needs no introduction. She had no idea who this fan of hers was but she was as curious as we are. Here is the rest of the interview with **Kiran Bedi**.



I have been roaming around CP trying to figure out beggars' lives. One understands that many of these beggars are drug peddlers. Little street children also seem to be hapless victims of this mess. They look drugged. What do you think the police is doing about it? How can these children be baited out of this mess?

All of them need to be picked up by a joint effort between the social welfare department and the police. But it appears both have given up. This is an area where NGOs could have been of help.

We did a series of stories on juvenile homes. It seems the condition of the children in these homes makes them more prone to crime when they come out of the homes. They are abused in the homes. There was an officer in-charge of the welfare department who was found drunk on Gill road. When our correspondent went to talk to him at LNJP hospital, he misbehaved with her. Will you comment on the decadence that is creeping into these departments, and the reforms that are needed?

Running juvenile homes is not a mere job but requires a missionary zeal and commitment. With this missing, the institutions get neglected. Unless the supervisors take direct and personal interest,

such institutions get ignored and the staff behaves in the manner they have. The fault is in supervision and management.

What measures can be taken to ensure that the city is made safer for women?

Overall sound systems of good policing at the beat level. Greater emphasis on preventive policing.

You were an established tennis player. Did you ever contemplate making it a full time career?

No I did not. I played to win and learn. But not to make it my pro-

What was your happiest moment on court?

Borg, Connors, Billie Jean King, Steffi Graf, Chris Evert, John McEnroe, and many others. My happiest moment was when I won the Asian tennis title in 1972.

What prompted you to make the leap into administrative services? From where you started, do you think you've been able to achieve that vision? Or is reality too grim for dreams?

I am where I belong. The service has been a source of a meaningful and rewarding life. I could not have asked for more.

Your grandfather, Lala Murd Lal, was a great influence on you. Will you tell us more about his influence on you?

If my grandfather had not been what he was, we (my family and I) may not have been what we are. His club memberships and love for sports brought tennis into our upbringing. Besides, his position in society enabled me to meet with senior civil service and police officers of that time, which in turn nudged me towards the services.

Your mother has been a great influence too. Will you share with us some memorable moments you spent with her?

Whatever I am and whatever I have is because of my mother. She

loved me the most, as I loved her. For her, my comfort was of the utmost importance. She saved for me and took care of me to her very last. She knew that in my high pressure work I needed her and she was with me, always.

What was it like growing up with all sisters? Did you miss not having a brother?

I never missed having a brother. There was so much fun and joy in the family. There was so much going on, travelling, tennis, school, rewards, competitions... so much togetherness.

"My idea of Delhi is a safe city. A well-administered city. A cultured city. A very inclusive city. A city of learning and creativity. A green city. A clean city."

You met your husband on the tennis field? Will you tell us about the moment he proposed to you?
We were tennis friends. And he

was very sporting. And very respectful. He never minded losing to me on court. Instead, he used to give up his turn for me so that I could play more.

I liked him as a person. I think the idea of us being life partners probably came from me. For he was not certain about me and did not want to take a chance.

Which places are your favourite in Delhi, where do you like to go and hang out?

I love all the gardens. I walk in them mornings, and evenings.

Your favourite eating joints?
My own Gymkhana club. And the DC. And the south Indian place Sagar Ratna. And even the Baghchi at the top of Talkatora garden.

What does Delhi mean to you?
My city, my home.

Do you worry about the haphazard manner in which the city is growing and the green cover depleting?
More than that, the shortage of water and power keep me worried.

What is your vision for Delhi?
A well-administered city. A safe city. A cultured city. A very inclusive city. A city of learning and creativity. A green city. A clean city.

"I liked my husband, as a person. The idea of us as life partners probably came from me. For he was not certain about me and did not want to take a chance."

fession.

Who are your favourite tennis