

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

Mumbai, Monday, November 25, 2002 [www.timesofindia.com](http://www.timesofindia.com) Pages 38 \*\* Price Rs. 3

SPICE CITY

BOMBAY TIMES, THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Family ties

Psychiatrists **Bharat and Smitha Vatwani** are proud parents of four children, three of whom are adopted

**SHARMISTHA CHATTERJEE**  
Times News Network

For psychiatrist couple Bharat and Smitha Vatwani, adoption was something that came naturally. Having contemplated it for a long time, they resolved to go for it at the first opportunity. "We had decided before marriage that after our first child, we would go in for adoption," says Bharat. "We wanted do something good for children who are not our own."

From their four children, only Akshaa (14) is their biological child. Arjun (12), Kanika (11) and Karmanya (7) have been adopted. Caring little about social stigma and family resistance, the couple went ahead with their plan two years

after Akshaa was born. They adopted a boy and named him Arjun. Though the Hindu Adoption Act doesn't bestow parenthood on people who adopt after two children, it didn't stop them. The Vatwanis took Kanika and Karmanya under their wing and became their official guardians.

As psychiatrists, the Vatwanis had an edge over others. They let the children learn about their adoption quite early, enabling them to deal with the situation better. "My children are well adjusted," beams Bharat. "It is very important to let them know. For later in life, it could prove to be extremely upsetting and play havoc with their minds." Agrees his wife, "The earlier the



Amol Kamble

**HAPPY HOME:** (Sitting, top) Akshaa, Smitha, Bharat, Arjun, (sitting, below) Karmanya and Kanika at their residence

exposure the better."

Such mature handling of relationships is evident among the children, who accompanied their parents when they went for a third adoption. "Karmanya had been crying and that drew our attention," recalls Akshaa. "And the three of us told our parents that we wanted to take him home."

Such is the children's level

of orientation that snide remarks about their lineage has little or no impact on them. "I tell them you can say what you want, but they are my parents," says Kanika.

The parents' compassion has so rubbed on to the children that they insisted on taking in an abandoned puppy. The Vatwanis' efforts has indeed paid off, for their children want to follow in

their parents' footsteps. As Arjun says, "When I grow up and get married, I will adopt a child."

That's in the distant future. As of now, the doctor couple and their four children continue to raise many eyebrows. For the Vatwanis, it's a source of amusement. "It's funny," says Smitha. "But then it's all for a good cause."