

Peripatetic Column
The Doctor's Car

P Madhok

There was a time when doctors were judged according to their personal cleanliness, thickness of their glasses, whiteness of their coat and bedside manners. Not any more. Today's doctors must look smart, wear branded clothes, costly cologne, designer shoes, manicured nails and a Taghuer watch. Besides manner is not important because most doctors depend heavily on their marketing agents for practice.

In these days of speciality and super specialities marketing has also become a complex affair. There are image specialists who help you create an image for yourself and this image ultimately turns to a brand. So most specialist doctors now want to create brands. Once you are branded the sky is the limit. And one of the items to concentrate on is your car, because that will be a moving indication of your status. The old saying is "man is known by the company he keeps", and now the doctor is known by the car he keeps. A Maruti 800 or an Alto means you are young doctor trying to come up. Bought second hand means you are

struggling, not come up yet. A Zen or Swift means things are getting better. More general practitioners would be content with a Maruti Esteem or a Ford Accent or a Tata Indica, they must change cars frequently. And new cars, A Honda City or an Opel is a most convenient car, has good road holding and is easy on petrol. The higher the consultant climbs the more likely he is to change over. A Contessa, Lancer or a Jaguar might be more apt. Some prefer SKODA - roomy and strong. But the real peak will come when he buys a Mercedes, BMW or a Lincoln. These are the last words in auto engineering. They have soft and fluffy upholstery, stereophonic music systems, safety bags for life saving in case of accident and even a car phone. Consultants with farm houses, and who move in and out of the city often should go in for a Qualis or Innova or atleast a Gypsy or a Safari. Most of these are steely cars and look like tanks on wheels. They have all the comfort of long travel. Good leg room and adequate space for luggage.

All this is for brand building. A smart Chaffeur adds to the grandeur of the doctor, especially if he is in uniform. If some day the doctor thinks about global warming or pollution levels in the city, he may prefer to use a good old bicycle. But where will he park it?

Ex. Hon. Paediatric Surgeon, Bai Jerabi Wadia Hospital for Children, Parel; Hon. Surgeon, Arogyanidhi Hospital, Juhu and BARC Hospital, Deonar, Mumbai.