

# Newton D'Souza

An ordinary hero of Bombay and an asset to the Taj

Jolly, optimistic and cheerful are a few words I could use to describe Newton Dsouza, a fellow Taj employee at the Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai. I met Newton for the first time a week ago when he retired and was amazed at his devotion and love for the Taj that enabled him to serve with his heart and soul for 42 years! That's when I asked him if he would like me to interview him for this assignment and he instantly agreed! He said, "I love telling my story and I am proud of having served the TATAs with devotion that would last a lifetime, and would hopefully inspire the newer generation."

## WHY NOT?

Thwarted intentions. This boy passed his SSC but his parents could not afford further education for him. Unfulfilled dreams. Brilliant artist, his art teacher wanted him to study at JJ School of Arts but paucity of funds made him keep his dreams to himself. You thought that life was over for this young boy? You're mistaken. You missed one little thing. That Newton Thomas D'Souza is a why-notter. Taking whatever he got from life, Newton joined the Taj Mahal Hotel as an apprentice steward at the tender age of 19. That was 42 years ago. In 2000, D'Souza was posted at the Bombay House as Catering Supervisor and was in-charge of the catering for the Directors of the Tata Group. That was his profession. But what about his passion? What happened to those dreams of artistic expression?



## DIE-HARD MULTITASKER

God gave him gifted hands and die-hard Newton has exploited them to the fullest to fulfill those other five to nine passions like Stain Glass Painting, exhibitions of which have been held at Jehangir Art Gallery including a one-man solo show. And sculpting. A JRD bust done by him is displayed at the Tata House. Then fishing, Newton is a deep-sea angler. NO, there's more. Crafting with wax and thermocol. Then kite flying and dancing. Oh! And Newton is also a trained boxer. Is there anything that the guy does not do?



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## HOLY INSPIRATION

Being a Catholic, Newton had visited several churches in Mumbai. He found some of the paintings on glass breathtakingly beautiful. Special favourites were ones at the Holy Name Cathedral in Colaba and Don Bosco's Church in Matunga. This is where he developed a fascination for stained glass and took it to the hilt by putting all his life's savings into it. He started out with making thermocol and wax articles in 1992 and then moved on to glass in 1994 for want of a lasting medium.

## SWEAT AND BLOOD

D'Souza works on ordinary Indian glass because tough glass increases the cost of the painting further. He first copies the picture or drawing on paper, and places the sheet on glass. Then he makes the outline with soft lead. After that begins the most tedious process of applying the secret formula colour mixture. Now this isn't a simple process. The paint is such that it needs to be applied ASAP else it dries up, hardening into little bulbs irreversibly. If it happens in one go, fine. Else start with making the mixture all over again, each application costing more than 800 rupees. Even a speck of dirt can be seen through glass! Hence, everything has to be so clean and perfect. One mistake and the frame is ruined. You'll have to start all over again.



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## LITTLE PARADISE

Newton's residence is a cramped 15 x 10 feet cubicle which is home to wife Veronica and daughter Naomi. The extended family of several paintings also live here. Several of them stacked up and protected by the mattress and pillows to cushion them from the slightest mechanical shock. Which is very important as each of these paintings costs lakhs. Newton's home is on the fifth floor, with no lift. In fact, the staircase to the fifth floor is a rickety wooden one. Imagine carrying a 55" x 5" painting worth lakhs down these stairs, with no room for the minutest of error. One nick and the whole painting is ruined. Each aspect of his work involves an insane

degree of precision and

meticulousness. Which is why Newton's wife Veronica and daughter Naomi stay out of the house at times, just so that he could concentrate. Naomi, in fact hadn't invited any of her friends home nor had she been able to play at home for fear of harming her father's frames.



## PAINTING THE SKY WITH RAINBOW COLOURS

Newton is an artist, one for whom expression is food for the soul, and the whole world is his canvas. He may not have been painting the town red but he has definitely been painting the sky in multiple colours. Newton is an avid kite flyer. Always on a shoe string budget, he did not have the money to buy kites but collected those lost-in-combat kites with their razor-edged threads. He tied those threads to make his own kite string and soon took kite flying to dizzying heights, even winning a prize from the Government of Maharashtra at the Apna Utsav.



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## FISHY BUSINESS, THIS

No, there is more. Newton is also a promoter and master angler of the Kraig Jarvis Deep Sea Fishing club, the only deep-sea fishing club in India. His father was an avid fisherman himself and used to take him to Marine Drive for the big catch. When Newton could not afford a fishing line, he resorted to old badminton racket guts. Even sold marbles he won at marble playing matches to buy some hooks and nylon line.

## SHAPING SCULPTURES

Newton's 21<sup>st</sup> century invention is the use of epoxy resin for making sculptures. Which is basically nothing but common man's M-Seal Which he has used to the hilt. His future dreams include glass sculpting. That is, if he manages the finances involved. But then, nothing is impossible for men like him.



## MENTOR AND MOTIVATOR

He had been in close association with the late JRD Tata, supervising and serving meals to him every day as Catering Supervisor of the Taj Hotels. He regarded him as his mentor, even made a glass painting of his, which he did not have the heart to sell. Hence, he gifted it to Ratan Tata who then kept it in his office.

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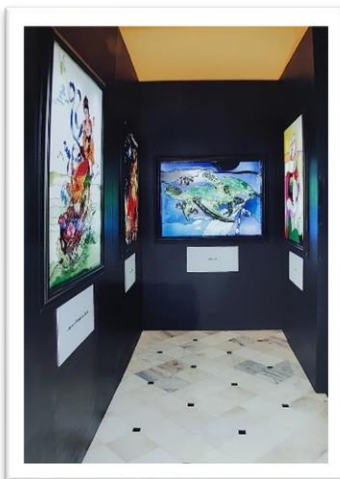
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Motivated by men like JRD, inspired by the Lord himself, believing in his own two hands, Newton has been living life to the fullest. All-in-all the true embodiment of self-actualization.



Here are some of his note-worthy works.



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## THANK YOU



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