



## **LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON, NOT REALLY!** **BY HARESH PANDYA**

Like father, like son. So goes the saying. But it is not always the case - at least not in Indian cricket. Almost a dozen men and their sons have played for India. But barring a couple of exceptions the sons have failed to emulate their dads, let alone better them. Mansur Ali Khan, the Nawab of Pataudi, and Mohinder Amarnath are probably the two sons who have distinguished their lineage by their enormous talents and brilliant performances. Only Sanjay Manjrekar and Aunshuman Gaekwad may be bracketed with them.

It was not without reasons that Mansur Ali Khan was nicknamed 'Tiger'. He was indeed like one, whether batting or fielding. Dashing, dynamic and daredevil, 'Tiger' was a master of on-side play. He was simply the nonpareil when it came to lofting the ball correctly and perfectly. It was 'Tiger' who redefined the art of fielding in Indian cricket. It was quite a spectacle to see him patrol the cover region. And to think he had lost the sight of his right eye in a car crash before he made his Test debut... 'Tiger' was not only the youngest ever Test captain in the history of cricket; he was also intelligent, imaginative and at times adventurous. Some of India's memorable wins have come under his astute leadership - like the ones against the mighty West Indies at Calcutta and Madras, in 1974/75, with Gundappa Viswanath and the famed Indian spinners being the key architects. 'Tiger' scored 2,793 runs at 34.91, including six centuries, and held 27 catches in 46 Tests.

'Tiger' and Iftiqar Ali Khan (the Nawab of Pataudi sr) provided the only father-son pair to have captained India. Iftiqar Ali Khan was coached by the legendary Frank Woolley in England when he was 16. A natural striker of the ball who relished a challenge, he scored 102 on his Test debut for England against Australia at Sydney in the infamous Bodyline series in 1932/32. In all, he played three Tests for England and scored 144 runs at 28.80. He continued to score heavily for Oxford and for Worcestershire in the County Championship. Ill-health brought him back to India. He subsequently led the Indian team on the 1946 tour of England. Although he scored 981 runs at 46.71 on the tour, he was woefully out of form in the three Tests which fetched him only 55 runs at 11.00. Iftiqar Ali Khan died in 1952 while playing polo in Delhi.

### **The Amarnaths**

Mohinder Amarnath's saga of success deserves to be written in letters of gold. He made his India debut as a medium-pacer, went into the wilderness for half-a-dozen years and then emerged as a gutsy batsman who was at home against speedsters as well as spinners. Mohinder's hawk-like eyesight and lightning footwork enabled him to deal successfully with the fastest of bowlers on the liveliest and bounciest of tracks. His hand-eye co-ordination was as amazing as the timing of his shots was superb. He was one of those batsmen who benefited the most from the use of a helmet. The protective gear transformed Mohinder into a fearless batsman who would throw down the gauntlet to the likes of Imran Khan, Sarfraz Nawaz, Michael Holding, Andy Roberts, Joel Garner, Colin Croft and Malcolm Marshall in their own dens.

But the same Mohinder had to suffer a lot at the hands of Indian selectors for practically no fault of his. Maybe he and Navjot Singh Sidhu are on a par with each other with regard to making a number of comebacks. Mohinder used to joke that the selectors either did not like his face or his surname! He even labelled them 'A Bunch of Jokers', à la Sunil Gavaskar. After all, his father was Lala Amarnath, the stormy petrel of Indian cricket. The great Lala was India's first-ever Test centurion and also one of its most talked-about captains. Described by the cognoscenti as "a pure romantic" and "the Byron of Indian cricket", he was a fine batsman in the classical mould with a wide range of attractive strokes in his repertoire. He was a very shrewd medium-fast bowler also.

In short, he was a genuine all-rounder who somehow did not do full justice to his skills. But then he never got along well with the BCCI bigwigs. He was sent packing from the 1936 tour of England after a row with the team management before the First Test despite being in mid-season form with bat and ball. He made several comebacks and also captained India on her first tour to Australia in 1947/48. In 24 Tests, he scored 878 runs at 24.38, took 45 wickets at 32.91 and held 13 catches. By comparison, Mohinder made 4,378 runs at 42.50, including 11 centuries, claimed 32 wickets at 55.68 and pouched 47 catches in 69 Tests. What is more, he was one of the more successful one-day all-rounders of the 1980s and India's star performer in the semifinal and final of the 1983 World Cup in England where "Kapil's Devils" made history.

Not only Mohinder but also Surinder Amarnath, the eldest of the Amarnath brothers, was given a raw deal by the selectors. An aggressive, attractive left-hand batsman, Surinder had emulated his illustrious dad by scoring a century (124) on his first appearance, against New Zealand at Auckland in 1975/76. Like his brother, he also loved to play the hook shot, which was often his undoing, too. Another stroke he played with aplomb was the square-cut. Surinder was like a rough diamond to begin with. But just when it appeared that he had polished himself nicely, the selectors began to play football with his flourishing career. The loss was certainly India's. In ten Tests, he scored 550 runs at 30.55.

### **Sanjay Manjrekar**

Sanjay Manjrekar, who has now carved a niche for himself as a leading commentator on the game, was hailed as India's next Gavaskar thanks to his technical excellence and hunger for runs. He scored 377 (out of which 277 runs came in boundaries) for Mumbai against Hyderabad in a Ranji Trophy semifinal in 1991. After a Test baptism of fire against the West Indies in Delhi, where his lip had been cut by a Winston Benjamin delivery in the second innings, Manjrekar firmly established himself in the Indian team with his impressive performance in the Caribbean in 1989. He scored a super century at Bridgetown and his two brave efforts at Kingston hinted at what he was capable of against high quality fast bowling. He triggered off great expectations following his 569 runs from seven innings, including a century in the first Test at Karachi and a double hundred (218) in the third at Lahore, in the drawn four-Test rubber in Pakistan later that year. But his subsequent showings turned out to be anti-climatic, to say the least. Green, bouncy pitches of Australia and South Africa appeared to bring the worst out of him. Also missing were the signs of mental toughness he had displayed in abundance in the Caribbean and Pakistan. His increasingly slower batting was also attracting wider criticism although he once scored a whirlwind 105 off 82 balls in a ODI against South Africa at Delhi in 1991. Unfortunately, he failed to live up to his huge early promise and, having lost the confidence of the selectors, had no option but to call it a day and start a new innings as a television broadcaster. In 37 Tests, he scored 2,043 runs at 37.14, including 4 centuries and 9 fifties. In 74 ODIs, he made 1,994 runs at 33.23, including 1 century and 15 half-centuries, with a strike rate of 64.30.

### **Vijay The Remarkable**

His father, the late Vijay Manjrekar, was a more confident and dependable batsman; a fluent driver of the ball on either side of the wicket, he could be both aggressive or cautious depending on the situation his team was in. It was a treat to watch him bat when at his best. He was never afraid of fast bowling and his record against some of the famous speed merchants of his era was quite impressive. He scored 133, adding 222 with Vijay Hazare for the fourth wicket,

at Headingley against an England attack spearheaded by Fred Trueman. On his first Caribbean tour he scored 681 runs at 56.75. His 118 in the final Test at Kingston and his 238-run second wicket stand with Pankaj Roy is still remembered by those who saw it. In all, he scored 3,208 runs at 39.12, which included 12 centuries, in 55 Tests.

### **The Grit Of Gaekwad**

Aunshuman Gaekwad was a right-hand opening batsman blessed with a lot of patience, grit and determination. He appeared to be very strong mentally and demonstrated this endearing virtue by playing a string of valuable innings for India under trying circumstances, both home and away. His courageous handling of the West Indian quicks of the 1970s, in India and in the Caribbean, is as much a part of Indian cricket history as the magnificent batting of Gavaskar, Viswanath and Mohinder against them. His highest Test score was a painstaking 201 (in 652 minutes and off 426 balls) out of India's first innings score of 374 against Pakistan at Jullunder in 1983/84. He was also one of the most prolific scorers in domestic cricket before becoming coach of the Indian team. In all he played exactly 40 Tests and scored 1985 runs at 30.07 and hit two centuries.

His father, Duttajirao Gaekwad, was also a right-hand opening batsman with a fairly good technique and temperament and he was a brave fielder, too. He toured England in 1952 and 1959 (as captain) and the West Indies in 1952/53; at home he played against Pakistan in 1952/53 and 1960/61 and the Caribbeans in 1958/59. Under his captaincy, India lost all the five Tests in England in 1959. He always seemed to be playing under some sort of pressure, whether captaining the side or not, and never ever showed his true calibre. In 11 Tests, he scored only 350 runs at 18.42 before becoming a successful coach in Baroda.

### **The Greatness Of Vinoo**

Vinoo Mankad was inarguably India's greatest allrounder until the advent of Kapil Dev. As a right-hand batsman he had excelled both in opening as well as in the middle-order. He was a very attacking bat who relished fast bowling and hooking the bouncers. Opening the innings, he scored Test hundreds 'down under' against the likes of Ray Lindwall and Keith Miller. But he could also be very dour when required. Mankad was India's finest left-arm spinner before Bishen Singh Bedi came on the scene and he was a versatile fieldsman, too. The 1952 Lord's Test is known as Mankad's Test in cricket's history as he made 72 and 184, bowled 97 overs, gave away 231 runs and claimed five wickets. He was the quickest to achieve the allrounder's double (1,000 runs and 100 wickets), in 23 Tests, before Ian Botham surpassed him by doing so in 21 matches. In 44 Tests, Mankad scored 2,109 runs at 31.47, notched up five centuries, took 162 wickets at 32.32 and held 33 catches.

So much was expected of his son, Ashok Mankad, but in spite of getting a good number of opportunities, he just could not be anywhere near his father in terms of achievement and greatness. The bespectacled Ashok Mankad was an opening batsman, but that was the only similarity between him and his dad. He had neither the technical expertise nor the boldness of his father to take on the fastest of bowlers, although he began his career on a promising note, scoring 74, 8, 64, 68 and 97 in successive innings in his first three Tests against Bill Lawry's Australian team in 1969/70. So long as he played with the Bombay cap, he was a prolific scorer in domestic cricket and remained the scourge of bowlers until his retirement. It was only when he put on the India blazer that he would appear an average batsman. This was one reason why he never led India despite his much-acclaimed leadership qualities. He played 22 Tests and scored 991 runs at 25.41.

### **The Roys**

Pankaj Roy was the first stalwart of Bengal cricket to win international recognition. An accomplished right-hand opening batsman, he had forged a formidable opening pair with Vinoo Mankad for a while. They were a good complement to each other. The two were involved in a world-record first-wicket partnership of 413 runs (Mankad 231, Roy 173) against the Kiwis at Chennai in 1955/56. Roy had often held the innings together in an hour of crisis

with his dogged defence and steely resolve. Statistics do not give a true picture of the kind of batsman he actually was and also his value to the Indian team in those years. Yet, 2,442 runs at 32.56, including five centuries, in 43 Tests do make Roy one of the more successful Indian openers ever.

His son, Pranab Roy, was also a right-hand opening bat - a compact batsman with plenty of patience. He had the makings of a successful Test opener, but the selectors thought otherwise. They gave him only two Tests against England in the early 1980s to prove his worth and cement his place in the Indian team. He did pretty well, offered glimpses of his excellent technique and sound temperament against the new ball bowlers, but the Five Wise Men of Indian cricket were just not interested. A batsman of his class deserved more opportunities. Instead, his India career ended with only 2 Tests despite his fairly impressive performance: 71 runs at 35.50.

### **The Singhs**

A.G.Ram Singh played in two unofficial 'Tests' in the 1930s and two of his sons went on to play Test cricket for India. Ram Singh was a topnotch left-arm spinner in his own right and a towering personality in Madras cricket before India became a free nation. He had a knack of running through the batting line-ups. In 1936/37, playing for the Indians against the Europeans, he took eight for 14. Two seasons later, he hit a career-best 126 against them. On both occasions the hallowed Chepauk, Madras, was the venue. He was a more than useful batsman as well. In a first-class career spanning 1934 to 1947, he scored 2,372 runs at 34.88, essayed six three-figure knocks and took 235 wickets at 15.91.

Ram Singh's two sons, Kripal Singh and Milkha Singh, got to represent the country but could not make the most of it. Kripal Singh, in fact, scored a century (100 not out) on Test debut, against New Zealand at Hyderabad in 1955/56. He was an orthodox right-hand batsman who seemed to lack the big-match temperament. He was a useful off-break bowler capable of breaking long partnerships. In all, he figured in 14 Tests, scored 422 runs at 28.13, took 10 wickets at 58.40 and snapped 4 catches. His brother, the left-handed Milkha Singh, did nothing extraordinary to enhance the image of his cricketing family. He played four Tests at home against Australia, Pakistan and England in the early 1960s and made 92 runs at 15.33.

### **The Khans**

Jahangir Khan was a member of the Indian team that played its first ever Test at Lords in 1932. He was a tall fast-medium bowler and a hard-hitting batsman down the order. He had dream figures of 30-12-60-4 in England's second innings. All his victims were phenomenal batsmen - Percy Holmes (11), Frank Woolley (21), Wally Hammond (12) and Eddie Paynter (54). He went to Cambridge and won four blues between 1933 and 1936. He joined the Indian team in England in 1936 but failed to take a single wicket in the three Tests. In all, he played four Tests, scored 39 runs at 5.57 and took 4 wickets at 63.75.

But his son, Majid Khan of Pakistan, indeed did him proud. A delightful batsman who could open the innings and also bat in the middle-order, Majid Khan was a shrewd medium-pacer and an outstanding slip. His cuts, drives, hooks and pulls were always very powerful and executed sweetly. There was a touch of dynamism to Majid Khan at the crease and also that romantic aroma usually associated with those who bat with artistic independence. There was a time when he used to open the batting and bowling for Pakistan. He later concentrated on his batting alone and opened regularly for his country in Tests and ODIs. His cousins, Imran Khan and Javed Burki, need no introduction. Majid Khan played 63 Tests for Pakistan, made 3,931 runs at 38.92, scored 8 centuries, claimed 27 wickets at 53.92 and caught 70 batsmen.

Another member of the Indian team to England in 1932 and 1936 was yed Wazir Ali, an elegant right-hand batsman endowed with a sharp eye and a rich repertory of attacking shots. His off-drive was said to be near to perfection. He was a medium-pace change bowler, too. He also represented his country at

home against Douglas Jardine's side in 1933/34 and led India in the unofficial 'Tests' against the Aussies in 1935/36. In all, he played seven Tests for India and scored 237 runs at 16.92. His younger brother S.Nazir Ali also played two Tests for India. His son, Khalid Wazir, represented Pakistan in two Tests (14 runs at 7.00) as an aggressive batsman and handy medium-pacer without success.

### **Very Few Chances**

In the mid-1970s, a disciplined right-hand batsman from Maharashtra made a polished and powerful 65 on his Test debut, at Bangalore, against Andy Roberts, Vanburn Holder, Keith Boyce, Lance Gibbs and others. It turned out to be the highest score in the Indian total of 260 which boasted Gavaskar, Viswanath, 'Tiger' Pataudi, Brijesh Patel, Eknath Solkar and Abid Ali in its ranks. That batsman, sent in at the fall of the first wicket, was Hemant Kanitkar. He was not only a splendid strokeplayer but also a good wicketkeeper. Promoted to number two in the second innings, he made 18. India lost the Test by 267 runs. He was given one more chance, in the second Test at Delhi, where he scored 8 and 20 batting at number three. The West Indies won by an innings and 17 runs. Kanitkar was one of the first players to be dropped for the third Test, never to represent India again. That is Indian cricket for you.

His son, Hrishikesh Kanitkar, has also not been a particular favourite of the Indian selectors - or so it seems. He had generated a lot of hopes as a determined left-handed middle-order bat and handy off-spinner following a couple of match-winning performances. Poor Hrishikesh! The stunning boundary that he smashed off the bowling of Saqlain Mushtaq in the dying seconds of the match in Dhaka, which gave India a sensational victory over arch-rival Pakistan chasing an imposing target of 300-plus in the grand finale of the Independence Cup in January 1998, proved a big burden for him. People tended to expect such heroics from him every time he went to the crease. Meanwhile he made his Test debut, too, but without doing any justice to his real potential. The 30-year-old Hrishikesh is one of those India discards struggling to stage a comeback. In two Tests, he scored 74 runs at 18.50. In 34 ODIs, he made 339 runs at 17.84 and bagged 17 wickets at 47.23.

Yuvraj Singh, one of the most shining representatives of Generation Next in Team India that has been doing consistently well under Sourav Ganguly in Tests and ODIs for quite some time now, followed in his father's footsteps when he made his Test debut at Mohali against New Zealand in 2003. The handsome southpaw has long outshone his dad, Yograj Singh, by some of his match-winning performances in ODIs. Why, he has already a Test hundred against Pakistan to his credit. Bubbling with joie de vivre, Yuvraj has built a reputation for himself as one of the finest finishers in one-day cricket today. A live-wire on the field, Yuvraj can also roll his arm if required.

Yograj Singh was a well-built right-arm fast-medium bowler and useful batsman down the order. He had the talent to share the new ball with his Haryana mate Kapil Dev for years. He was selected in the Indian team for the twin tour of Australia and New Zealand in 1981. He got to play a solitary Test, against the Kiwis at Wellington, which turned out to be his first and last. He took one for 63 and scored 6 and 4 as New Zealand won by 62 runs. Yograj later switched to acting and carved a niche for himself in Punjabi films. He was recently sentenced to six-month imprisonment for crashing his car with a scooter and seriously injuring the man who was driving it.

Rohan Gavaskar is the latest Indian cricketer to emulate his father by representing his country, albeit in the abridged version of the game only. Much had been said, more written, against Rohan following his 'questionable selection' in the India A side that toured England in early 2003, then in the Rest of India team for the Irani Cup tie in Madras and finally in the India A squad that took on New Zealand at Rajkot simply because his father happens to be one Sunil Manohar Gavaskar. They said it was more because of his surname than showing that Rohan had been getting frequent 'favours' from the BCCI despite lacking in consistently good performances. Batsmen with better credentials had been ignored, they argued. But Rohan has proved his mettle in a few ODIs that he has played for the country.

Unlike his dad, arguably the greatest ever right-hand opener, Rohan is a southpaw and bats in the middle-order. Rohan's full name is Rohanjaivishwa - because his father idolised Rohan Kanhai, M.L.Jaisimha and, of course, Viswanath. Poor Rohan! He has been carrying the burden of his surname since childhood. Want of opportunities in Bombay saw him play for Bengal. Though he has hardly or never set the Hoogly on fire, he has been a steady performer in domestic cricket since 1996. It will be interesting to see whether Rohan, last seen in the ICC Championship Trophy in England, will be able to stage a successful comeback in the Indian one-day side; and if so, whether he will grab the chance and cement his place with a solid performance or two.