

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT FOR 1996-97**  
**(Read on Prize Day - 22 March 1997)**

Mr Haridas Rao, Mrs Rao, Trustees & Governors of La Martiniere College, Lucknow, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege for us to welcome you this evening. We are aware of your extremely busy schedule and we consider it a great mark of your favour that you have accepted our invitation to preside over this ceremony. When we approached you in January to preside over this, the most important function in the College calendar, we were most sensible of the fact that you have brought dignity and honour to the high office of Director General of Police, and as such are a splendid example for our students to follow. We were delighted when you accepted the invitation at that time and are most grateful that you and your wife are with us today. We hope that you will remember your visit to La Martiniere with as much pleasure as we have in welcoming you here.

As a token of our esteem and affection we should like you to accept some small floral tributes.

Your coming here, today, is especially meaningful. Quite apart from the fact that we are especially honoured by your presence, we are also greatly reassured. You have boosted the morale of La Martiniere immensely, reeling as it is from the traumatic shock of being confronted with brutal murder only two short weeks ago on this serene campus.

Ladies and gentlemen, never in all my experience of this College, which spans four decades, has the Prize Day ceremony begun on a gloomy note. This year is exceptional owing to the gruesome killing of Mr Fredrick Gomes, the Additional P.T.I. cum Warden of the College. He died on 7 March, 1997.

Death is the most unacceptable of all facts, and the horrendous killing of Fredrick Gomes, our colleague and friend, is all the more difficult to understand or to accept.

What does one say about a young man whose life was cut short so brutally? I would indeed be failing in my duty if I did not express the appreciation of all concerned for his contribution

to La Martiniere.

He was a man fearlessly committed to his job and to La Martiniere. His professional life quite literally began and ended here. There was nothing too small that he would not do. There was nothing in the school so demeaning that he would not give it his attention. He loved his job and enjoyed doing it.

He was a man of courage and determination. He knew what had to be done and he did it fearlessly and with a devotion to duty which is admirable because it is so rare.

Being a man of few words he did not make friends readily but none could deny that he was dependable in need. No one likes to be watched like an eagle ready to swoop down on indiscipline, but neither can one deny that one felt safe to know that the sturdy Warden was about. It may have been difficult to know him well but it was not hard to respect him.

His is an irreparable loss to the College. It was an act of exceptional cowardice that deprived La Martiniere of one of its richest assets. It would not be exaggerating to say that the humble Fredrick Gomes has joined the ranks of the great namely, kings, Presidents and Prime Ministers, whom no amount of security precautions could save from the bullets of assassins.

The threat to our own lives cannot be diminished but we have got to conquer fear. Giving in to fear is to surrender to terrorism. If we are to overcome it, we must be determined to bring to justice those who committed this heinous crime. The College reels with shock and fear because of the sudden and horrific way in which he died. All this is understandable but there is nothing we can humanly do to reverse the finality of his death. However, we have confidence in the police administration exemplified in our Chief Guest today, and we are certain that the system will triumph.

For our own part, let us, in the rich tradition of this College, get on with the task of living,

determined to face life courageously with labour and with constancy as is enshrined in the motto "Labore et Constantia". Together with the College motto the House mottos themselves, "Never give in", "Do or die", "To the end", and "Nil desperandum", take on a new significance today.

Despite the present gloom, aggravated by irresponsible speculation in the press and by the media, I wish to reaffirm my faith in La Martiniere and what it produces. Rarely does any school produce criminals of the kind attributed to us by the press. It is my fervent hope that all who have passed through the portals of this illustrious College, all who are in it today, and all who may enter it in the future, continue to repose their faith in what La Martiniere stands for and provides.

May I request you all to stand and observe a moment's respectful silence while we pray for the repose of the soul of Fredrick Gomes and ask God to bring comfort and peace to his bereaved parents, his brother and his relatives. ( Please stand)

It is now my privilege to present, the report of the College for the year 1996 - 97.

## **TRUSTEES AND GOVERNORS**

Mr Brijendra Sahay, Chief Secretary to Govt., U.P. took over charge as Senior Trustee of the Lucknow Martin Charities from Mr Mata Prasad, on the latter's transfer. We were pleased to welcome Mr Sahay and look forward to a long association with him, while wishing Mr Mata Prasad success in his new post. Mr Khem Karan, Legal Remembrancer to Govt. U.P., continued as the other Trustee. We are grateful for his concern and interest in the well-being of the College.

There were a few changes in the Local Committee of Governors of the College as well. Mr Naresh Dayal was succeeded by Mr Desh Deepak Verma as Commissioner, Lucknow Division, and Brig. N. Kumar took over from Brig. P.S. Bhatia as Commander, Lucknow Sub-Area, on the latter's transfer. We were pleased to welcome the new members of the Committee and are grateful for each one's contribution. Their continued support and interest in the functioning of the

College is, indeed, a source of great encouragement.

In April last year, Mr Neil O'Brien was co-opted on to the Local Committee of Governors for a second term. We are pleased to congratulate him on recently being nominated as a Member of Parliament to the Lok Sabha as a representative of the Anglo-Indian community. He also holds the post of Chairman of the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations, the body which runs the two School Leaving examinations which the College takes. His active support and inspiration are a source of great encouragement. His presence and assistance, especially in moments of grave crisis are invaluable.

#### **BEREAVEMENTS**

It is with great sadness that I record the death of Ausaaf Ahmad Farooqui of the Preparatory Class, who fell off a balcony at home, early in April, 1996. We pray for the comfort of his bereaved parents and mourn his loss with them.

It is with no less sorrow that I record the passing of Mr Hugh Dignum, a student and teacher at the College for most of his life. When he first began work at La Martiniere he joined the Office Staff. Later, he trained as a teacher at Pune and was then absorbed as a member of the teaching staff. His duties were full and varied and there was no aspect of College life with which he was uninvolved or in which he was not interested.

He was appointed House Master of Hodson House and the House benefitted immensely from his leadership. He finally retired in 1980 and set up his own Tutorial Establishment.

Teaching was his life. Without exaggeration, he excelled at any subject that caught his fancy. He set up an enviable Art Room at La Martiniere in which he trained many extremely talented artists, some of whom are doing exceptionally well today. As a Geography teacher in Lucknow and perhaps in the country he had no equal. If anyone can serve as an example of the

proverb, "Work is worship" Hugh Dignum did. Many boys from the College, who attended his tutorial establishment, have reason to thank him not only for his teaching skills but for his generosity in providing help without charging a fee.

The organisation of Sports Day as it is now at La Martiniere was his brainchild. He could very well be called its chief architect. What prevails, today, is largely the product of his imagination.

Life at La Martiniere was the richer for Hugh Dignum. It owes him a debt that it will never be able to repay. The College mourns his loss, while praying for the repose of his soul and comfort to his bereaved widow and his family.

#### **STAFF**

Mrs O. Adams retired on account of ill health although she had been granted an extension of service. Mrs P. Cowasji, Ms R. Kapoor, Mrs I. Nathaney, Mrs K. Singh joined the Staff of the Junior School and Mr J. Kapoor was employed to teach Computer Studies in the Junior School. Ms S. Uthwal joined the Staff of the Junior School in the middle of the year but resigned in February owing to personal reasons.

Mrs B. Searchfield, who had earlier filled the post of House Keeper temporarily, was absorbed onto the permanent Staff. Mrs B. Gardner, Matron of Dormitory No. 3 resigned. Her post was filled by Mrs B. Gomes. Mr Raj Kumar was appointed as an Office Assistant in an existing vacancy. They are all wished well.

From October, 1996, till his death in March, Mr F. Gomes was employed as Additional P.T.I. cum Warden, a post which had been temporarily filled by Mr G.F. Gomes.

Mr D. Savaille and Mr B. S. Bisht completed twenty-five years of service at the College in July, 1996, and January, 1997, respectively. Service as long as theirs in any institution is

remarkable and valued greatly. The Local Committee of Governors is happy to recognize their long service. In token of the esteem in which they are regarded they shall receive awards later this evening.

## **FINANCES**

The Trustees and the Local Committee of Governors of the College were pleased to sanction a revision in the scales of pay of all categories of the Staff, with effect from 1 April, 1996. This, unfortunately, had to be accompanied by an increase in the fees.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

Owing to a third section being opened in the Nursery in 1995, it was necessary to open a third section in the Preparatory Class at the beginning of the academic year to accommodate the children who were promoted from the Nursery.

## **ENROLMENT**

The total strength of the students in the academic session commencing 11 March, 1996, was 1730. Of these 225 were boarders which included 34 Foundationers and Demi-Foundationers in keeping with the provisions of Maj. Gen. Claude Martin's Will.

## **HEALTH**

In general the health of the resident scholars continued to be good in spite of the fear of dengue which gripped the country. Perhaps for the first time in the history of the College, the boys did not wear their khaki uniform to College. This was because the boys were advised to cover as much of their bodies as possible in keeping with orders from the District Administration. Short-sleeved khaki shirts were replaced with long-sleeved coloured ones and khaki trousers were replaced by jeans. However, that was only for a short time till the change over to winter uniform was effected.

We are thankful to the Steward and Housekeeper for providing a balanced and tasteful diet for the boarders and also to the Medical Staff of the College in caring for their health.

## **EXAMINATIONS**

In March 1996, the College presented 132 candidates for the ICSE Examination. Of these 117 were awarded Pass Certificates. Ashish Agarwal came first in order of merit securing five points in the five best subjects. He scored an aggregate of 95.2 % Amit Mohan came second scoring an aggregate of 94.2 %. In all, twenty-four boys scored over eighty percent, seven of whom scored over 90% on the aggregate of the five best subjects.

138 candidates were presented for the I.S.C. (Year 12) Examination, of whom 132 were awarded Pass Certificates. Vaibhav Vaish stood first scoring 4 points and an aggregate of 98 % in the four best subjects. He deserves inordinate praise. No boy in this College has ever secured such a high aggregate. Sudip Malik came second with an aggregate of 94%. In all, 25 boys scored over 80% on the aggregate of the four best subjects, five of whom scored over 90%.

## **ANNUAL COLLEGE EVENTS**

The Annual Prize Distribution was held on 16 March, 1996. Lt. General R.K. Gulati, P.V.S.M., G.O.C. in C., Central Command, Lucknow, was Chief Guest. He was presented the traditional Guard of Honour by the N.C.C. Cadets of the Senior Division Army Wing. He graciously gave away the prizes and was most appreciative of the function.

The Annual Inter-Martiniere Meet was held at Lucknow in the last week of August, 1996. The topic chosen for the Inter-Martiniere Debate was "Ambition destroys the happiness of life". The Calcutta team which chose to oppose the motion won the debate and A. Roy of Calcutta was adjudged Best Speaker.

In the Swimming Competition, although the home team did its best and even set a new

record in the 4 x 50 metres Medley Relay of the B Division, the visiting school won the competition.

The Inter-Martiniere Football Match was played in torrential rain and although the game could have gone either way La Martiniere, Calcutta, won by 2 goals to 1.

We are grateful for and commend the efforts of Mr T. Savaille, Mr P. Collins & Mr G.F. Gomes in training the debating, football and swimming teams respectively.

At the Annual Inter-House Swimming Competition, held on 12 September, Rohan Dhillon, Faisal F.Khan and Karmnisht Sarin were declared Champions in the Senior, Junior and Colts Divisions respectively. Three new College records in the Junior Division were set by Faisal F. Khan in the 50 metres Free Style, 50 metres Back Stroke and 100 metres Back Stroke events respectively. In the Colts Division Karamnisht Sarin set two new College records in the 25 metres and 50 metres Back Stroke events respectively.

The Commemoration Service was held on Founder's Day, 13 September, 1996. The Rev. J.W. Adams, Pastor, Epiphany Church, Lucknow, preached the sermon.

Owing to the indisposition of one of the actors the Annual College Play in English, "Down the Hatch" by Dennis Driscoll, had to be postponed from 13 September, to 8 October. The performance involved a great deal of hard work and long hours of practice and all concerned are to be greatly commended and thanked for their efforts. The Metro-Goldwyn Mayer Award for Histrionics is to be presented this evening to Mark Yep.

The Annual Inter-House Athletics Meet and P.T. Display were held on 30 November, 1996. The Commissioner, Lucknow Division, Mr Desh Deepak Verma and Member of the Local Committee of Governors, was Chief Guest. Mrs Verma graciously gave away the prizes. The Senior Championship was won by Umang Sethi, while the Junior and Colts Championships were won by Shiv Ratan Bharti and Rahul Sahu respectively.

We are greatly appreciative of and are thankful for the efforts of all the members of the staff who helped with the organisation of the Meet, especially Mr R Robinson, Master in-charge of Athletics, who was in overall charge. We are also indebted to Mr D D Singh and the late Mr Fredrick Gomes for organising the P.T. and the Gymnastics Displays.

The Annual Play in Hindi "Dil ki Dukaan" was performed on Wednesday, 11 December, 1996. It was directed and produced jointly by Mr K.B. Lyall, Mrs Lily Parel and Mrs Ranjana Chakravarti, to whom we are most grateful. The cast is to be commended for their efforts. Aunbhav Chaturvedi gave a remarkable performance and will receive the prize for Histrionics in Hindi this evening.

The Annual Carol Service was held in the College Chapel on 12 December, 1996. The boys participated in the singing, readings and recitations with interest and enthusiasm which added greatly to the appreciation of all. In respect of all matters concerning the Choir we are deeply indebted to Mrs M. Whittaker.

The Annual N.C.C. Inter-Platoon Junior Division Competition was held on 13 December, 1996. The Naval Wing was awarded the Hashman Memorial Shield. The Intermediate Trophy for the Best NCC Troop (Senior Division) was won by Platoon No. 1 comprising of Class XII. In the Inter-Wing competition the Senior Division Army Wing, Platoon No. 1 was adjudged the best and will be awarded the Boardman Trophy this afternoon. Amit Rana was adjudged Best N.C.C. Cadet in the Senior Division. Umang Sethi was adjudged Best N.C.C. Cadet in the Junior Division and Raghiv Abbas Zaidi was adjudged Best Scout.

The Annual Hindi Declamation Contest was held on 14 August 1996.

The Annual English Elocution Contest was held on 11 December, 1996.

The prize winners of both contests will receive their awards this afternoon.

Special parades were held on Independence Day and Republic Day in which the Scouts and cadets in all three wings of the N.C.C. participated. Mr Noor Mohammad, I.A.S., and Chief Electoral Officer of the State was Chief Guest on Independence Day, and Mr N.C. Bajpai, I.A.S., Secretary for Environment presided over the function on Republic Day.

23 cadets of the Senior Division, Army Wing attended the Annual Training Camp which was conducted from 8 October to 18 October, 1996. Cadet V.B. Shah had the honour of being appointed Commander of the camp.

24 boys of the N.C.C. Naval Wing, Junior Division attended the Pre Nau-Sainik camp at Nanakmatta, Katima, which was held from 14 September to 22 September, 1996.

A Seminar on the Teaching of Mathematics was held in the College from 16 July to 19 July, 1996. It was conducted by Mr G.W. Mayer of the Inter-State Board for Anglo-Indian Education, New Delhi. It was most refreshing and we are grateful to him.

A workshop on Career Counselling has become an annual feature. This year it was again conducted in early December for students of Classes X to XII. We are grateful to Dr Amrita Das and her Faculty from the Institute of Career Studies, Lucknow, for their professional guidance. Students have found the workshop of great help particularly in making the correct choice of subjects for the development of their careers.

### **OTHER EVENTS**

I am pleased to record that our boys participated enthusiastically in several competitions during the year and fared rather well.

In a Mathematics Festival called Math - e - Maze organised by the Springdale School, Chakradhar Deo Singh and Ashish Agarwal represented the College. The College Team was adjudged the Best among the sixteen schools which participated.

Akash Banerjee was adjudged Best Speaker at the Mohit Khanna Memorial Debating Contest.

In the Inter-School Swimming Competition organised by the City Montessori School on 13 and 14 September, the College emerged as the overall champions. Ravi Shanker and Abhishek Gupta in Group I, Faisal Khan and Rohan Dhillon in Group II and I Dhaon in Group IV, need to be specially commended.

Some of the boys also participated in the "Crossroads" Competition organised by the Old Students of St Francis' College. Soumitro Mukerji was awarded first prize for English Elocution in the College Section and Khwaja Umam received first prize for Hindi Elocution in the School Section.

During the year there were several tournaments organised by the Old Boys. In the Past versus Present Football Match, the Past team won the match with a score of four goals while the Present scored only two. However, in the Annual Past versus Present Cricket Match which was held on 26 January, the Present team captained by Tushar Garg emerged the victors. The Past versus Present Hockey Match was held on 7 February and ended in a draw. This year a Past versus Present Basketball Match was also organised. The Present team captained by Amit Rana won the match.

### **JUNIOR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

In April, 1996, an excursion to Agra was organised for the boys of classes IV and V. A number of boys went on the trip and enjoyed it immensely. Later, the same month a special movie show of the film "Dunstan Checks In" was organised for the entire Junior School.

The Annual Elocution Contests both in English and in Hindi for groups and for individuals were held on 24 August, 1996. The winners of the individual contests will receive their prizes this evening.

The Junior School teachers attended specially organised art and craft classes in July. This resulted in a lovely Art and Craft Display in the Junior School which was held on 5 November, 1997. The exhibits were most attractive and it was evident that the boys had taken a keen interest in what they produced.

A special movie show of "The Lion King" was arranged for the entire Junior School as a special Children's Day celebration on 14 November, 1997.

The Junior School Sports were held on 6 December, 1996. Rev Sister Celine, Superior of Loreto Convent was Chief Guest and distributed the prizes. All the items were entertaining and most of them were innovative. The efforts of the Headmistress and the Staff of the Junior School are greatly to be appreciated and highly commended, as there was not a dull moment in a programme which lasted nearly three hours.

Early in February a group of performers called the Covenant Players thoroughly enthralled the Junior School with dramatisation of short stories from which morals could be inferred. The children, too, were encouraged to join in the performances which added greatly to their enjoyment.

In order to celebrate after the final examinations, the entire Junior School went to watch a special show of the Gemini Circus which was organised for them on 26 February. A Bal Mela, too, was organised on 28 February for their enjoyment and entertainment.

Regular monthly visits to Prem Niwas, run by the Missionaries of Charity, were organised for the Junior School students. The children took clothes and toilet articles for the inmates. This helped to create an awareness among them of the tremendous need to care for others in society who are deprived or less privileged.

## **INSTITUTION OF AWARDS**

The Local Committee of Governors was pleased to accept with thanks the proposal of Mrs P. Thadani and her family the institution of awards for good behaviour in all classes from V to XII. Through these awards it was to be hoped that boys would be encouraged to behave courteously, helpfully, and to act with honesty and responsibility. It was their suggestion that the boys themselves vote for the recipients of the awards. The Board of Governors felt that the boys of Classes V to VIII were too young to be able to exercise a vote responsibly so these awards are to be decided on the consensus of the opinions of teachers. However, in the case of Classes IX to XII the process of a secret ballot is to be employed after the recommendations of the teachers are taken into consideration. The whole College is thus involved in the process of selecting the recipients for the awards and we feel that the democratic system has paid rich dividends. The Thadani family has a long and continuing association with the College and we are most grateful to them for their most generous gesture of putting Rs 15,000/- a year at our disposal for these awards. The Gulu Thadani Memorial Awards for Good Behaviour will be presented for the first time this evening.

The Local Committee of Governors was also pleased to accept with thanks also the proposal of Dr S.K. Pachauri to institute an award for History to be presented each year to the student who secures the highest marks in History in the I.C.S.E. (Year 10) Class. Dr Pachauri belongs to the Indian Administrative Service and is presently Secretary of the Ayodhya Commission of Enquiry in New Delhi. He is an Old Student of the College and he has instituted the award in memory of his mother and Mr Trevor Penn-Berkley, his History Teacher when he studied at La Martiniere. We are grateful for his generosity and for his continuing association with his alma mater. The Violet Sumitra and the Trevor Penn-Berkley Award will be presented for the first time this evening to Shashwat Khandelwal.

The Local Committee of Governors accepted with thanks Mr Raj Kumar Shukla's proposal of instituting two awards, one in the form of a medal for the student who secures the highest marks in Mathematics in the I.S.C. Examination, and the other in the form of a prize for the student who secures the highest marks in Biology in the I.S.C. (Year 12) Class. Mr Shukla's two sons, Nalin and Nitin are Old Students of the College and are doing well in their further studies. The D.N. Shukla Prize and the D.N. Shukla Medal are named after their grandfather and will be presented for the first time this evening to Ankur Agarwal and Vaibhav Vaish respectively. We are grateful to the Shukla family for their generosity and for their continued interest in the College.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am grateful for the support and guidance of the Trustees and Governors of the College in all matters concerning the welfare of La Martiniere particularly in the present crisis we are facing. I am especially indebted to Mr Neil O'Brien for his invaluable assistance and support when it was most needed.

I wish to record my immense gratitude to the District Administration and the officials of the Police Department with whom I have had the privilege of interacting over the past few weeks for their help and courtesy. It has certainly helped reassure all connected with La Martiniere.

The Lady Principal of the Girls' College, Mrs F. Keelor has never failed me in any crisis. She will be retiring this year, yet in spirit, I doubt she will ever leave La Martiniere. Her indomitable strength and tremendous calibre as an administrator have maintained the Girls' College in Lucknow as one of the premier institutions in the country. I wish to record my respect for her and my appreciation for her strength and assistance at all times. It would be a great understatement to say that she will be missed. However, we would like to let her know that we are grateful for her contribution to a great and glorious school. I have had the privilege of working with her and am grateful for her

advice and help at all times. "Thank you," Mrs Keelor.

I am deeply indebted to the Vice-Principal, the Bursar, the House Masters and to the Headmistress of the Junior School. In fact, there is no member of the staff who does not contribute to the activities of the College. It would be ungrateful and callous to ignore it. I can only accept each one's contribution humbly and be deeply appreciative of the co-operation of all my colleagues. No institution can run effectively if it does not have the active support of all its members. I wish to record my gratitude to every category of the staff for all that they do and more particularly in this unfortunate period of our history. Each one has been wonderful and each one is owed a debt of gratitude which I can never repay.

La Martiniere has a wealth of friends and well-wishers. They have rallied in this dark hour of distress and expressed their solidarity with the institution. Their often unspoken words of sympathy have been a source of great comfort and encouragement. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all of them.

My deepest gratitude is reserved for the students who study at La Martiniere. A teacher has a rare privilege indeed. To mould young minds is an awful yet glorious responsibility. We may have a great and wonderful tradition but it would be a sad thing indeed if there were no boys to instruct. To educate young boys in learning to cope with life and into becoming responsible citizens is a wonderful experience. Much is said about gratitude to those who do something for one. Little is ever said about persons who provide one the opportunity to serve. I wish to record my humble gratitude to each boy in this College and all the parents of these children for providing me with an opportunity to do so. Thank you boys and thank you parents. Thank you for your faith in La Martiniere, a faith which is returned in no small measure.

**CONCLUSION**

In a day and age when all about one seems to be crumbling, in the moral vacuum which seems to be developing, in a day where there appears to be much pessimism about the future, one can only hold fast to what has been tried and true. Courage, honesty, loyalty and a desire to do the right thing, irrespective of the cost one has to pay, are the only values which can sustain us. These are the values enshrined in the educational system at La Martiniere. They may appear futile and meaningless in the context of today but do we have any substitutes for them? Rudyard Kipling, once himself a citizen of Lucknow, may have had La Martiniere in mind when he advised:

"(If you can) watch the things you gave your life to, broken,

And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools .....

Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,

And - what is more - you'll be a Man, my son !"

Long live La Martiniere !