

The family of Schworers is on a 10-year global climate mission

Shrabonti Bagchi

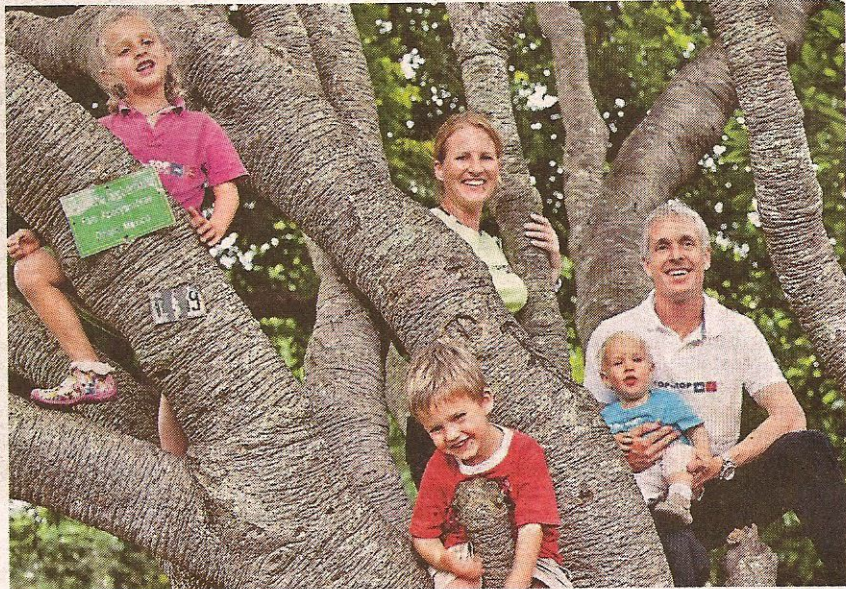
Dario Schworer's idea of introducing himself before an interview is to walk into the room and immediately execute a perfect handstand. "I just finished a long chat and I need some blood in my head," he says by way of explanation in his lilting, heavily accented English.

The Swiss national, who leads the phenomenal and unique TOPTO Global Climate Expedition, is in Bangalore for a week with his adventure-loving family to meet schoolchildren, eco-friendly companies and corporate chieftains. Their ultimate goal? To spread awareness about the environment and sustainable living by talking about the family's epic journey across — literally — seven seas and seven summits.

The journey started in 2002 when Schworer, a climatologist who also worked as a mountain guide, and his wife Sabine, a trained nurse, decided to do something dramatic and attention-grabbing when they saw the Alps affected by changes in the climate.

The Schworers do not see the expedition getting over before 2012. Their aim is to cover seven climactic zones in the world and climb the highest peaks in these zones, meeting people along the way and creating converts for environment-friendly lifestyles. Oh, and they also had three children while on the expedition. The kids are now seasoned travellers and as much ambassadors of sustainability as the two adults.

They landed in India in January; Kolkata being their first port of call. The family's preferred mode of inter-continental travel is a solar and wind-powered sailboat named *Pachama-*



Dario Schworer and Sabine with their children Salina, Andri and Noe

ma, the Inca word for 'Mother Earth', in which they travelled from Australia to the eastern coast of India. From Kolkata, the family cycled its way to the Nepal border and then on to the Everest base camp. Along the way, they did some cleaning, clearing garbage with the help of volunteers who travel with them along with the local people.

"Between Kolkata and Kathmandu, we cleaned up about 1,000 kgs of garbage," says Schworer. Encouraging schoolchildren to clean up their neighbourhood is something of a ritual with them. "They understand that little steps are important," says Schworer.

That's one of the goals of this expedition: exhibiting that small changes we make to our lifestyles (such as going to bed at sunset, which the Schworers practise) can have an incremental impact on the environment, and that great sport and great adventure can be pursued in an eco-friendly manner.

As they travel, the fami-

MEMORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

► **Toughest moment:** Hitting a container vessel on the high seas near Patagonia four years into the expedition and almost giving up. They had to stall the expedition for one-and-a-half years while repairs were made to the boat, which emerged bigger, better and loaded with eco-friendly gizmos.



► **Funniest moment:** Watching a Chilean tribe kill an ox in their honour and being offered the freshly chopped testicles of the animal to eat raw as a high treat.

ly also aims to collect nuggets of local and indigenous wisdom. A Polynesian grandmother, for instance, showed them a really cool way to refrigerate by keeping food in special pots with layered water channels.

As for their own children (Salina, 5, Andri, 3, and one-year-old Noe), Schworer doesn't think it's a hardship for them to be growing up on the move. "They are tough and adaptive. They eat healthy food, get clean air and a lot of exercise.

Their parents are with them all the time. They have friends all over the world. As for us, they open doors everywhere. People can identify with us — after all, even we have to change nappies!" grins the adventurer, who, a few hours before the Ayodhya verdict, cannot understand what the big deal is.

"Why are people fighting in the land of Gandhi?" he asks with great simplicity and, perhaps, greater wisdom. s_bagchi@dnaindia.net