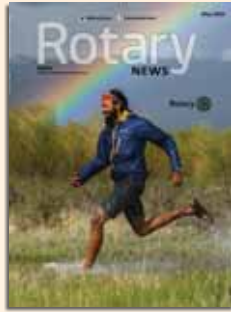


# Rotary

## INDIA NEWS

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Despite the Covid pandemic challenges the Rotary News Trust team is regularly bringing out and despatching the magazine on time every month. We are doing the best possible to ensure that all our subscribers get the magazine on time. But we continue to receive complaints that some of you are not receiving their copies.

### The reasons could be:

- Change in address, about which we are not aware. If you don't receive your copy, please send us a mail immediately, attaching your latest address, and old one with correct pin code if you haven't moved. Reach us at *rotarynews@rosaonline.org*
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- Please check with your postman or post office when you do not get your copy.
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- Do also remember that subscribing to any one Rotary magazine — *The Rotarian* (now titled *Rotary*), or a regional magazine, is mandatory for all Rotarians as stipulated by RI in its Manual of Procedure. Not doing so can result in suspension of the club.

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**On the cover:** Incoming RI President Shekhar Mehta and his wife Rashmi.

Photo: Hemant Banswal



## Brilliant story on cross-country cyclist

The May cover photo with a rainbow in the backdrop offers a 'ray of hope' in this pandemic times. The smile on the face of the runner shows his steely determination, and the article shows this young man's passion to cycle all the way through several countries. My blessings to him. Your editorial on *The Covid Cauldron* reflects the true state of affairs in our country, with almost every family losing a loved one. I feel that a total lockdown is the only resort.

Trustee Chair KR Ravindran asking us to use the MCH grant from Rotary by identifying and helping the needy is timely.

Jaishree's *Girls' day out*, is really touching. Articles such as *Scaling up WASH projects*, Sheela Nambiar's *This too shall pass*, Sandhya Rao's write-up on the book *Peace in the Age of Chaos*, and S R Madhu's *Music & Melody*, along with the *Go Green* column, articles on the kitchen garden in Coimbatore, dialysis centre at Kottayam and the Indian Fellowship for Cycling make this issue remarkable.

RIDE Venkatesh's sincerity and dedication to Rotary and carrying



the team with him are well known. Thank you for sharing the details about Vinita Venkatesh; I loved their wedding photo.

Nan Narayenen  
RC Madurai West — D 3000

The May cover photo is excellent and we, Rotarians, feel proud of Rtn Naresh Kumar who cycled from Chennai to Hamburg. His life story, travel and motto of travel are fascinating. Glad to know his cycle is named 'kindness'.

The Editor's note explains well the devastating effects of the second wave of the coronavirus. RI President Holger Knaack rightly stresses on the necessity of exchange programmes, while the RI directors call for sustaining youth service projects in the near

future. Trustee Chair Ravindran gives a motivating message to all. Glad to read the interesting life story of RIDE AS Venkatesh and Vinita. The article *Tell your Rotary stories to grow our organisation: Jennifer Jones* with colourful photos is great.

Delighted to read RIPE Shekhar Mehta was conferred D Litt for his humanitarian deeds. Congratulations to all those who worked tirelessly for establishing the Rotary Dialysis Centre at Kottayam.

The write up on *Geeta Dutt, the ballerina of song*, is excellent. Photos are colourful and attractive. The May issue is superb.

Philip Mulappone MT  
RC Trivandrum  
Suburban — D 3211

The May issue was energetic with the article on young Rotarian Naresh Kumar's cycle expedition and RIPN Jennifer Jones talking about her climb up the Kilimanjaro. The messages of RIDs Bharat Pandya and Kamal Sanghvi were also inspiring. But the profile of RIDE A S Venkatesh was the cherry on the cake. His take on how we must make Rotary

## Murdering polio workers

I was shocked to learn that three polio workers in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, were killed by extremists. Those workers were on duty to save children from the crippling disease, polio. We, Rotarians, pray to God to bless those departed brave souls. Though all of us are grief-stricken, we will never stop our efforts to eradicate polio from the world.

Ramakrishna K  
RC Puttur — D 3181

The brutal killing of three Polio Plus volunteers in Afghanistan is really shocking. Afghanistan is rife with terrorism. We pray to the Almighty to shower his grace on the departed souls who sacrificed their lives on the altar of love for humanity.

Tomi Eapen, RC Alleppey — D 3211

Saving water is possible if we understand our basic requirement and the quantity needed in a day

for bathing, washing etc. In foreign countries, there is no system of using a bucket of water to take a bath. In those countries, it is a shower bath only, and that saves water.

Govinddas Agrawal  
RC Belur — D 3291

A good blend of Rotary subjects as well as diverse articles of human interest makes *Rotary News* a fascinating read. I laughed my heart



## LETTERS

as the go-to organisation for all is thought-provoking.

G R Bhaskaran  
RC Virudhunagar  
Elite — D 3212

**R**ID Kamal Sanghvi has given a fitting message on investing in youth. Our programmes like RYLA, Youth Exchange, Model UN Assembly and other Rotaract, Interact events are good examples to prove to the world about our care and concern for the younger generation. We can be proud that we are helping the youth to nurture their talent to succeed in life. Your editorial on the Covid epidemic, RI president's views on our various exchange programmes are interesting to read.

R Srinivasan  
RC Madurai Midtown — D 3000

**I**was really happy to know about the project Chotisi Khwaish by RID 3080 as detailed in the article *Girls' day out*. It's wonderful to bring smiles on little angels of an orphanage by fulfilling their small dreams.

Udaysingh Rajput, RC Belgaum  
Midtown — D 3170

out reading the story of the ox nodding its head vigorously when asked about the chances of the writer's promotion! Sad that the jingle of the bells from the ox's neck can't be heard nowadays as they belong to a vanishing tribe.

Gopinath, RC Bangalore  
Indiranagar — D 3190

**R**I President Nominee Jennifer Jones aiming to usher in gender balance is admirable (Editorial, April

issue). But giving examples of New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern and Germany's Angela Merkel as perfect leaders is not judicious. There are hardly 1–2 per cent women MPs and MLAs in our country. The reason is that the women themselves do not come out of their cocoon. There is a dearth of women in law-making, law enforcement, defence, jurisprudence and other government bodies. Women's power should become the basis of a nation's strength as they have proved their mettle in all fields but a patriarchal society doesn't want women to be autonomous and capable.

No nation can progress by neglecting half of its population. If there is an iota of truth in the saying, 'Behind every successful man, there is a woman', then they deserve a bigger role.

Raj Kumar Kapoor  
RC Roopnagar — D 3080

**T**he April cover story on the initiative taken by RID 3232 on training 100 young women under *Project Sundari* is highly commendable. As mentioned by RIPE Shekhar Mehta it's very important that we Rotarians look at impactful projects. Some of the areas which need to be addressed include community empowerment, facilitating

social and economic growth and creating women entrepreneurs.

Ram Bhatnagar, RC Thane  
Premium — D 3142

**I**liked the LBW article *Perils of School-hopping*, and share a similar experience. I am 70 and recently found a group for my former classmates. I asked to be included and they asked me to give names of a few boys who were in my class, which I couldn't remember. They were reluctant to take me in group. But when I pointed out that I can show a few school library books which I have not returned, they immediately made me a member of the group!

Satish Vyas  
RC Bhavnagar — D 3060

**T**he RI president's thoughts on preserving our Earth and the environment are timely. The article *Girls' day out* reveals a great humanitarian gesture by RC Himalayan Ranges Mansa Devi reaching out to orphan girls. Also, RID 3232 training 100 young girls is praiseworthy. Another well-researched article was about River Ganga. All of us must ensure that the rivers and nullahs in our cities and towns are not polluted. In all, a balanced issue. Keep it up.

Vinayak Deodhar  
RC Nasik — D 3030

We welcome your feedback. Write to the Editor:  
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Click on **Rotary News Plus** on our website  
**www.rotarynewsonline.org** to read about more Rotary projects.



# A new exciting post-Covid world beckons us

In January 2020, when I announced my presidential theme, *Rotary Opens Opportunities*, and spoke of the changes that Rotary needed to embrace, none of us had any idea how quickly change would arrive. But I am a longtime believer in seeing challenges as opportunities. This year, we seized new opportunities to reimagine what Rotary could be. For years, we had discussed ways to make Rotary flexible and adaptable, and we had tried a few experiments. This year, we all experimented — and succeeded! Online meetings are a regular fixture now as clubs invite guests from across the globe.

Susanne and I love to meet members of the family of Rotary around the world, and we've missed seeing you in person over the past year. But for me, it was a new way of experiencing Rotary. We travelled the world virtually. I definitely met thousands more of you than I would have otherwise. I never set foot in my office in Evanston as president, yet we found new ways to get the job done while cutting travel costs.

This is the Rotary we experienced in 2020–21: nimble, adaptable and creative. The next step is not to go back to the way things were before the pandemic. We must move forward. Let's apply what we have learned in order to offer new experiences and opportunities for our members, such as online attendance as a regular option.

We need a younger, more diverse Rotary at every level to keep our clubs strong. What diversity means is different from region to region, but I encourage you to welcome people from all backgrounds. Another step we can all take is to increase the number of women and amplify their role everywhere.

I am glad that many now see Rotary and Rotaract clubs as equals. Let's keep going in this direction by inviting Rotaract clubs to be a part of everything we do. Let's not squander any opportunity to reach young leaders, but partner with Rotaract and invest in our many new approaches.

I am very proud of the work Rotary is doing to fight Covid-19 by supporting vaccination campaigns through advocating for fair distribution and combating misinformation. But we must also continue to do everything we can to end polio. And we now have opportunities to work in a new area of focus: the environment.

The world is a different place today from when I first announced that *Rotary Opens Opportunities*. We can all be proud of how we updated what Rotary can be this year. Let's continue on this path, always taking care of our clubs and of our friends in those clubs. They are precious, and they keep Rotary alive and thriving.

Susanne and I are thankful for all the opportunities to serve the organisation during this special year, a year of finding new meaning in *Service Above Self*. We see Rotary as a community of people who live their values by putting them into action. In these extraordinary times, there is no doubt that we must place increased emphasis on service. This is our opportunity to show the world what *Service Above Self* means for Rotarians.

There are so many opportunities waiting for us that will help us change the world. Let's seize them together and get ready to open doors to achieving greater things. And as we open these doors to new ideas, our minds and our hearts also open. Remember that everything we do in Rotary opens another opportunity for someone, somewhere.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Holger Knaack".

**Holger Knaack**

President, Rotary International



## The trauma of long-distance mourning

As the second wave of corona pandemic rips apart India, almost every family we know is dealing with a personal loss. Of the untimely death of an otherwise healthy person. The sudden onslaught of this virus, which we now know mutates and returns in new variants or avatars to demolish lives, is now making the once proud, efficient and modern Indian healthcare system look like some glorified PHC. However harsh this may sound, this is exactly how it appears to the relatives of those struggling to breathe and gasping for oxygen, but are turned away from umpteen hospitals. Forget sparing a bed, as the pandemic assumed monstrous proportions with our daily infection rate crossing the 4 lakh-mark, hospitals in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai etc were unable to provide adequate oxygen support to their patients. Leave alone those waiting for oxygen support and a bed outside hospitals, some of even those who were already admitted and on oxygen support, died because a couple of hospitals ran out of this lifesaving commodity.

The *Rotary News Trust* family was not spared either. My team member Chithra lost her husband; he was only 48 and had a secure job with the Tamil Nadu government. She now faces the grim prospect of being a single parent to her college-going son. K Viswanathan lost his mother, and Pratheesh lost his father. All the three, whose lives were so cruelly snuffed out by the Covid virus, were otherwise perfectly healthy. I am sure most of you will be mourning the loss of a loved one during this horrific period.

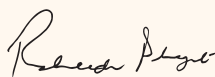
But a bizarre fallout of death due to the corona-virus and amidst lockdown and sealing of borders,

between countries and even states, is people being forced to grieve long distance. And pay their last respects to their dearest ones on Zoom meetings. Thousands of Indians living in Australia, Canada, US and other countries which have closed their borders to India, who have lost a parent/parents, siblings, uncles, nephews, nieces and the dearest of friends back home, have faced the agony of being unable to come down to physically bid goodbye to a loved one. And we are not the only ones caught in this bind.

One of my most favourite writers, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, finds the most expressive and gut-wrenching words to express her grief at the passing away of her father last June, through her latest, short book *Notes on Grief*. He was in their hometown in Nigeria, she in the US. The borders were closed due to the lockdown; on June 7, he was just fine and by June 10 he was gone.

"I was undone. Needle pricks of resentment flood through me at the thought of people who are more than 88 years old, older than my father and alive and well. My anger scares me, my fear scares me, and somewhere in there is shame, too — why am I so enraged and so scared? I am afraid of going to bed and of waking up, afraid of tomorrow and all the tomorrows after. How is it that the world keeps going, breathing in and out unchanged, while in my soul there is a permanent scattering? I am stuck in America, my frustration like a blister, scouring for news on when the Nigerian airports will open. Even the Nigerian authorities don't seem to know."

Read Adichie's *Notes on Grief* if you can... it will help you cope with yours.



Rasheeda Bhagat

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# Message from

## One-to-One



Two roads diverged in a yellow wood and I took the one less travelled by; and that made all the difference.” The men and women who make up Rotary in Zones 4, 5, 6 and 7 have really tread the untravelled path during this pandemic, putting their

hearts and souls into helping people, and doing so in a spirit of enterprise and innovativeness. Rotary gives us the eyes to see, the heart to love and the hands to serve. The seeing eyes, the loving heart and the encompassing hands of Rotarians have made these two years special; for the lives they touched, for the difference they made, for the many achievements, experiences and memories. Thank you Rotarians for the service you do. The Torchbearer Governors and then the Trailblazer Governors have led from the front with passion and enthusiasm. Well done to both batches of governors and their teams!

It has been a special feeling to have been able to communicate with all of you on ‘One-to-One’ through the pages of *Rotary News*. This is ‘feel good’ journalism at its best, bringing to us stories of caring and sharing; love and compassion. Compliments to the *Rotary News* staff led by Editor Rasheeda Bhagat for the great job they do.

This pandemic has shown that the only constant is change. As we move forward with the lessons learned, we are discovering more and better ways to use the virtual format — be it for fellowship or board meetings, virtual youth exchange or Rotary training programmes. A combination of the in-person and virtual format looks set to be the new ‘normal’. This gives us the best of both worlds. I feel that this is the future of Rotary.

Madhavi and I feel very blessed to have witnessed the many projects and activities, the outpouring of love and affection from Rotarians and their families. We thank each and every Rotarian and the family of Rotary for their generosity, warmth and kindness bestowed on us. I have realised the truth in the words of Emerson: “It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.” The person most helped is me. As I lay down the responsibility of RI director I realise that these fond memories, with their fragrance, will remain with me for years to come. I wish the incoming directors all the best for two significant years in Rotary service.

‘Where there is great love there are always miracles’. Share the miracle that is Rotary. As *Rotary opens new opportunities* let us *Serve to Change Lives*. Adieu. Enjoy Rotary, enjoy yourself.

**Dr Bharat Pandya**  
RI Director, 2019–21



# RI Directors

## Adapt to the new normal of virtual world

A new era has set in after coronavirus, bringing in gender equity and sharing home and family responsibilities; breaking mental barriers and finding opportunities for women in education and skill development. This is essential for national development, and gives Rotarians the opportunities to be gamechangers and take up diverse projects like *Project Dignity* — skilling of women/widows and children of widows.

We Rotarians are not laid back, and are trying to steadily regain our position in this world, thanks to numerous technological avenues. Virtual meetings — the new normal — are being organised, as also training and fellowship. With this vast transformation of the world, Rotarians are also getting substantial learning experience, breaking barriers and adapting to change.

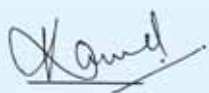
Fellowship is one of the core values of Rotary. June is Rotary Fellowship month. It is when groups of Rotarians, their spouses and Rotaractors join to share a common interest in worthwhile recreational activities. It is a good opportunity to further our vocational development through acquaintance with other professionals and explore new opportunities for service. The virtual medium gives us great opportunities to find innovative methods to explore the fruits of fellowship and friendship. So let's rekindle old friendships and make new ones, enjoying Rotary's worldwide fellowship as we connect the world.

I commend the DGEs for swiftly and efficiently adapting to change and conducting all their training and fellowship meetings on virtual platforms. I have seen so many innovative fellowship meets — *antakshari*, *tambola*, music and dance competitions, meeting with civic personalities, etc. It surely has been a fruitful exercise of reinventing the wheel.

I also challenge all the DGs to continue and complete their OCVs virtually and close their year of service with 100 per cent membership retention. Use the virtual platform to reach out to all your members, inspire and ignite the passion of service in them, for, the world needs our compassionate hands. Do encourage your presidents to induct three new members in your clubs in June. Remember membership is our only sustainable asset.

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." We have to come together to become stronger and do our part in solidarity, the new word for unity and strength.

"One colour does not make a rainbow; one tree does not make a forest, and one leader does not make a change. In these trying times it is innovation and collaboration that result in any and every triumph; it is solidity the key to success."



**Kamal Sanghvi**  
RI Director, 2019–21



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## A time to look forward

“I have no fear of the future,” Winston Churchill once said. “Let us go forward into its mysteries, let us tear aside the veils which hide it from our eyes, and let us move onward with confidence and courage.”

Churchill used the phrase “let us go forward together” in some of his most famous speeches. He had no other choice but to look forward as he led his war battered nation with courage.

Each generation inherits its own share of challenges; we are living through ours, never once stopping in the face of this challenge. In a year when people were unable to meet, families stayed secluded, and businesses struggled to flourish, we still managed to go forward together in many areas. Through Rotary Foundation grants, clubs and districts brought creative solutions to their pandemic-hit communities. Since March 2020, the Foundation has awarded over \$34 million in grants to initiatives related to Covid-19.

The demand for our global grants was high. They were so popular that we had to make adjustments to grant funding policy that will begin July 1 in a prudent effort to balance demand with resources, so that more districts can participate.

This year, The Rotary Foundation took bold steps forward, breaking new ground: The Foundation expanded its reach with recognition of the environment as an area of focus and awarded our

first Programmes of Scale grant to a Rotarian-led programme that aims to greatly reduce malaria for severely affected communities in Zambia.

Even though our polio immunisation activities paused for a few months in 2020 because of the pandemic, they began to resume in midyear. We also were finally able to celebrate a huge step forward in our journey together to a polio-free world: the World Health Organisation (WHO) declaration that the African region is now free of wild poliovirus.

And the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation signed an agreement with us to fully fund the establishment of a Rotary Peace Center in the Middle East and North African region. This welcome development gives Rotary the opportunity to make a tangible contribution to an area where lasting peace has been so elusive.

Our accomplishments are a reminder that Rotary is a great force for good everywhere and that you are the reason we did not stop. At this writing, we’ve raised more than \$282 million, putting us on track to reach our \$410 million fundraising goal. The great work we have done this year, and the work we will do next year and in the years ahead, is all thanks to your support. On behalf of The Rotary Foundation Trustees, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for keeping the Foundation — one of our greatest gifts to the world — thriving.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ravi', with a horizontal line underneath.

**KR Ravindran**  
Foundation Trustee Chair

## Donate liberally to serve mankind better



**I**t seems like just yesterday when we were “this close” to eradicating polio. Today, we are overwhelmed by a virus that mutates rapidly, respects no geographies, and spares no one. All of us have had to deal with the loss of loved ones and close friends. Even as I write this, there are people in some areas who are in need of oxygen and critical care and in

desperate search for hospital beds.

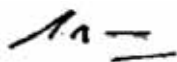
Novelist Shannon Alder said, “One of the most important things you can do on this Earth is to let people know they are not alone.” In these times of a major humanitarian crisis, we must reach out and offer whatever help and succour we can provide to those in dire need. Often, assistance can be information regarding availability of hospital beds, oxygen concentrators, critical care, medicines, etc. “When someone is going through a storm, your silent presence is more powerful than a million empty words.”

In this hour of need our Rotary Foundation and Rotarians all over India have pooled resources to provide assistance to all sections of the community.

As MS Dhoni says, “You learn a lot more when you are going through a rough period compared to the good times when everything goes your way.” Now more than ever before, we must be there for others — not just for our near and dear ones but for mankind as a whole. As RI President Elect Shekhar Mehta so aptly says — “Serve to change lives” — and it is through Rotary and TRF that we continue to serve, change lives and do good, not just in India, but also in the world.

This pandemic has brought home to us the truth in Alexander Pope’s declaration: “No man is an island; every man’s death diminishes me.”

Every donation to The Rotary Foundation will be used to make a difference to those in need and thereby do good in the world. So please open your hearts and purse strings and give generously.



**Gulam A Vahanvaty**

Trustee

The Rotary Foundation

## \$15 million gift to fund new Rotary Peace Center in the Middle East or North Africa

**T**he Otto and Fran Walter Foundation has pledged \$15.5 million to The Rotary Foundation to start a Rotary Peace Center in the Middle East or North Africa. The new centre will offer a professional development certificate programme focused on peacebuilding and development issues in the region.



Otto and Frances  
Doonan Walter

This generous gift from the Walter Foundation, which is based in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, USA, will fund the centre’s startup costs and operating expenses, as well as an endowment that will provide peace fellowships in perpetuity for up to 40 students to study there each year.


TRF will select a partner institution to host the Otto and Fran Walter Rotary Peace Center in 2024, and the first Rotary Peace Fellows are expected to start studying there in January 2026.

Otto and Fran Walter established their family foundation to promote peace and other charitable causes, and their mission lives on even after their deaths. Otto was a member of RC New York City.

After Otto and Fran both died in 2003, Rtn Frank Helman, a law colleague and friend, became president and director of their Foundation. He and his wife, Martha, the current president of the foundation, helped shepherd the \$15.5 million gift to TRF. The Helmans are both members of RC Boothbay Harbor.

“The Walter Foundation can imagine no better way to remember Otto and Fran and their legacy than through a Rotary Peace Center in the Middle East — a part of the world that has been torn by conflict,” says Martha, who also serves as chair of TRF’s Peace Major Gifts Initiative Committee.

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# Dreaming big, bringing smiles

## Shekhar Mehta

**Rasheeda Bhagat**

**T**he first thing that strikes anyone who watches, or works closely with incoming RI President Shekhar Mehta from RC Calcutta

Mahanagar, RID 3291, is that his dreams are king-size. His boundless energy is legend in the Indian Rotary world and those who work with him whisper: 'But when does he sleep!' RI Director Kamal Sanghvi, who put together the centennial celebrations of Rotary in India in





January 2020 in Kolkata, shared that Mehta had landed up at the venue at 2.30 am to check on the final touches!

Senior Indian Rotarians have got calls from him at 2 am asking: 'What are you doing', before he plunges into the next big idea/project that is bubbling inside him. His planning is detailed and meticulous, the hours he puts into any project long and arduous, and the delegation is bang on. All this comes together beautifully in timely and perfect execution of the mega projects he undertakes and the events he organises. The South Asia Summit that he organised in Hyderabad in 2013 had nearly 6,000 participants. The literacy conferences, addressed by intellectuals, celebrities and senior politicians, followed. Under his guidance, Rotary celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> year in India through the grand Centennial Summit in Kolkata in January 2020.

In our frequent chats, he has always told me: "A leader has to dream big. And he has to choose the right people to create more leaders." Just as happened to him in his Rotary journey.

A physical meeting is impossible as India is battling a severe second wave of the Covid pandemic, so we chat over a virtual interview. So what prompted him to dream big and do mega projects, whether it is literacy, heart surgeries or building homes for the disaster-afflicted, I ask him. He smiles and says, "Initially it was a small nudge from a senior Indian Rotary leader and later it became a way of life. For instance, past director Sushil Gupta always prompted me into action with just a single question. When the 2004 tsunami devastated coastal India, he called and asked: 'Shekhar, what are you doing about it?' I said not much, and he said but

Andaman and Nicobar is your area. That was all."

**B**ut before details of what that call triggered, let's look at Mehta's early Rotary journey. A chartered accountant, cost accountant and company secretary by profession, he was only 25 when he joined Rotary "and service was the last thing on my mind. I was born in a well-to-do family, where everything was taken care of... I often say, my life was

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Can you imagine an organisation not growing for the last 20 years?

I cannot accept this status quo in our membership.

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Shekhar Mehta with RID 3020 PDG G V Mohan Prasad at an Urdu medium school where e-learning kits were given.

‘air-conditioned’, whether it was house, car or office. What did I know about the problems of people in the rest of the world? I joined Rotary to make friends and service was not really on the table.”

It was baptism by fire for the young Rotarian. Within a month he was asked to bring out a souvenir; it was a success because so many contributed, “but they gave me the credit, the best way to keep somebody going.” Next it was the club bulletin, which became a big hit and he got involved as club director, secretary, president and finally became governor.

With his mentor, PDG Chandramohan advising him to write

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Over the years, I have built good buildings, earned money for doing so, but here were the most ordinary buildings I had built, for people I’d never met and probably wouldn’t ever meet.

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down all his goals for his DG year, he drew up a list of what he called “millennium dreams”, as that was Rotary’s millennium year. “This habit of dreaming big came 20 years ago! When I shared these dreams, there were sniggers. Just as the famous saying goes... ‘first, they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they

fight you and then you win!’ This has happened to me several times. But it didn’t bother me, I continued to work and dream big. Being a builder by profession, I thought — imagine building 500 homes with Rotary’s wheel on them for people who never had a home!”

He shared this dream at his PETS and soon enough, somebody donated land for houses for the poor. A 3H grant application, to his surprise, was approved at lightning speed. “Tears rolled down my cheeks when I came to know of this approval within the same Rotary year, and 300 of the 500 houses of my crazy dream were built!”

This was like a miracle which taught him anything was possible if you put your mind and heart into it. With more leadership roles came “service activities of a large scale; that’s when the service bug became even bigger”.

**R**everting to the tsunami, Gupta’s call propelled him into action and along with a team of six Rotarians, he



Shekhar Mehta and Rashi with President of India Ram Nath Kovind at the Rashtrapati Bhawan.

# Shekhar speak

## Leadership

I am a good emulator and a quick learner; I don't want to reinvent the wheel; I am ready to learn from others. I have learnt a lot watching PRIP Kalyan Banerjee and so many others. I saw how these leaders, plan, organise, speak. I learnt to achieve excellence in whatever I undertook. Add to that the support

of my father in my Rotary journey. He never ever stopped anything I did for Rotary. Ours was a family business and suddenly I'd leave office at 2 pm. Never ever did he say that I was giving too much time for Rotary.

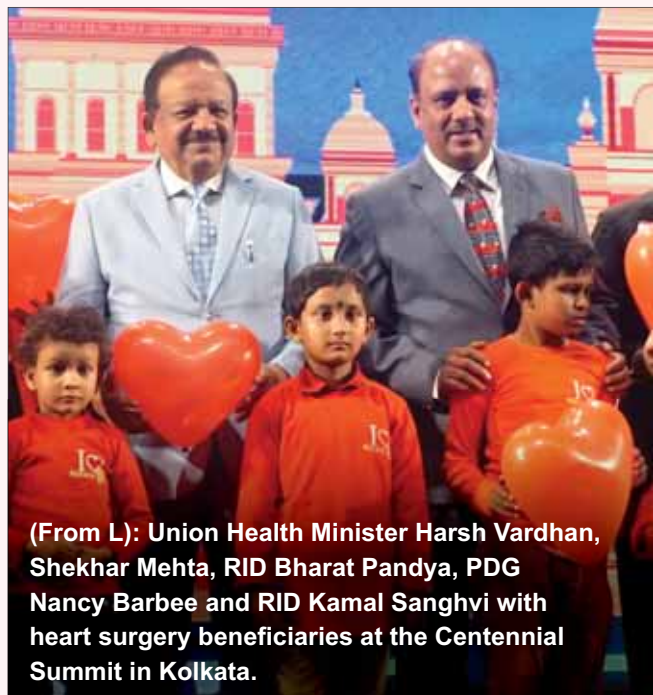
## Literacy

Mehta takes great pride in initiating and motivating Indian Rotarians to work

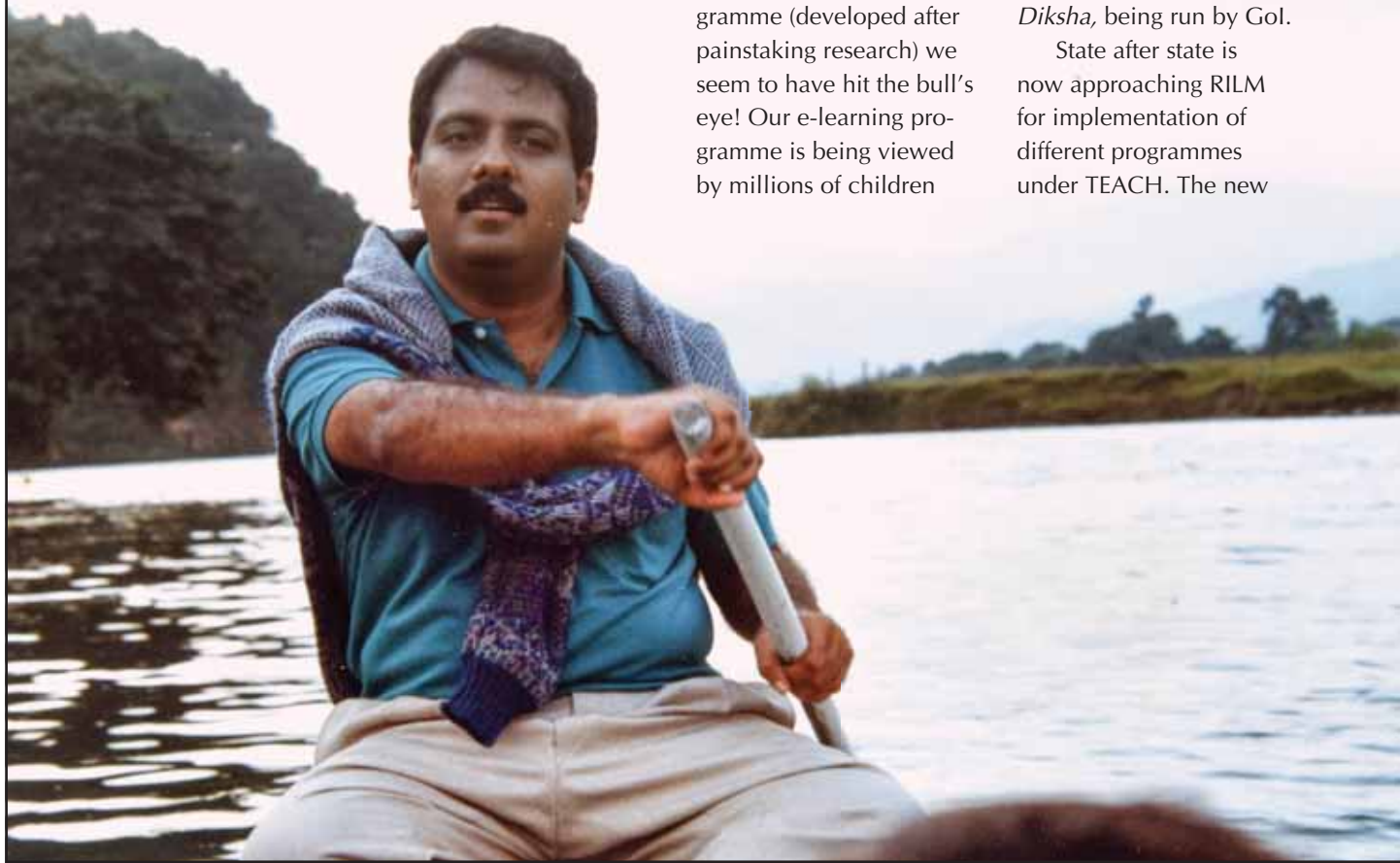
for the goal of making India totally literate. "This was such a big challenge, but with the TEACH programme (developed after painstaking research) we seem to have hit the bull's eye! Our e-learning programme is being viewed by millions of children

everyday over TV channels as well as on one of the largest education e-platforms of the world, *Diksha*, being run by Gol.

State after state is now approaching RILM for implementation of different programmes under TEACH. The new



**(From L): Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, Shekhar Mehta, RID Bharat Pandya, PDG Nancy Barbee and RID Kamal Sanghvi with heart surgery beneficiaries at the Centennial Summit in Kolkata.**







adult literacy programme of GoI is in fact designed on the white paper provided by Rotary to the education ministry. We're raring to go all out to make the difference in the total literacy canvas of India by taking the literacy rate to 90 per cent. This is a herculean task... making literate nearly 20 crore Indian adults in the next five

years, but Rotary is ready to take 50 per cent of the burden, and work shoulder-to-shoulder with the government.

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I adjust myself extremely fast to changing situations, it takes me very little time to adjust my mind to anything in life.

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### Rashi's role

I had once told you that while I am the face, she is the back office; this has been even more relevant in the last 12–18 months. In 35 years of planning and doing Rotary projects, I could do so much because I didn't have to look at so many other things. I know only by colour, and not name, the medicines I have to take. When I travel, she ensures my suitcase is packed. Rashi ensures that everything I plan and undertake comes together without any snags. And above all that, she is also present by my side at all meetings and events, listening to my same speeches again and again! The first response I seek, and value, is hers. She knows exactly

what is happening or has happened. She'll say: 'Shekhar, today you spoke too much, or it wasn't that good, or very nice or excellent.'

### People's president

I ask Mehta what is it that makes him so approachable; so that any Rotarian can just pick up a phone and call him, despite his seniority in Rotary. He smiles, and says: "To me the biggest quality of a leader is humility. I admire this in leaders and have tried to imbibe it, and I suppose that makes me easily approachable. I have no airs, nor do I see myself as an 'RI president'. I see any high position as an added responsibility and I do the work required willingly.



**At one of the 500 homes built on an island in the Andamans after the 2004 tsunami.**

went to the Andamans to build 500 homes in Hutbay, a remote island that could only be approached by a government-operated helicopter service. "We were never sure when that sortie would be available; it would drop us there, go to other islands and pick us up again as there was no place to stay the night in that island."

Several trips to that island and fundraisers with the help of Steve Waugh and the Indian cricket team helped raise some ₹55 lakh. Add to that generous donations from many

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He is a team player and works absolutely selflessly; people love to work with him, and stand by him because of his love for them, and the passion he has while working for others.

**Rashi Mehta**

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people, and 500 homes were built on that island.

His eyes light up and his face mellows as he recalls the day when the homes were handed over. "I was on the helicopter with the Lt Governor and others and as we circled for the landing, I could see the shimmering roofs. Over the years, I have built good buildings, earned money for doing so, but here were the most ordinary buildings I had built, for people I'd never met and probably wouldn't ever meet. And yet the satisfaction and joy from seeing those buildings far outweighed the best of my professional work, because I was thinking of others more than myself," says Mehta.

Another big dream materialised with the shelter kits project. "Shelter kits has now become an iconic national project. Wherever there is a natural disaster in our region, whether Kerala, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Nepal, Bengal, or Bihar, Rotarians rush shelter kits comprising 52 items to the affected area. In most of these

disasters I have personally been there and served hands on," he says.

This happened with the paediatric heart surgery programme too. "I soon felt that my role was to take up service projects at all-India level." Once again Gupta provided the trigger with a call: "Shekhar, can you please take a look at the heart surgery programme? In the North-East so many children require heart surgery." Mehta didn't even know "the left ventricle from the right one or what a hole in the heart meant!"

But when good is destined, things fall in place miraculously. The incoming president of his club, Dr Ram Pal Vidhawan, wanted to do heart surgeries for kids. "His goal was to do six operations that year; we ended it doing 66!"

A new service bug had now bitten our president-elect: "Like a Pied Piper, I'd say at installation meets that we have to save a child's life, and 30

With PDG Ravi Vadlamani on a boat taking Shelter Kits for distribution to flood victims in Andhra Pradesh.





# Rashi speak

I ask Rashi Mehta what quality of her husband she finds most endearing. As he perks up his ears, she smiles and says: "He speaks from the heart to everybody and for everything. He is very emotional but also very practical. He connects very easily to people because he makes heart-to-heart connections. He is a team player and because of that people love to work with him, even if that work stretches from the night to the morning and beyond. They work with him, and stand by him and that must be because of his love for them, and the passion he has while working for others. And he works absolutely selflessly.

In his Rotary journey he has never looked for a position and worked for it. It has always been the other way around; he has worked very hard, passionately and tirelessly and then the positions came to him. We could see the love showered on us during our visits across India when he became RI



(From left) Daughter-in-law Geeta, Rashi, grandson Veer, Shekhar Mehta, son Chirag, mother Vallabh Kumari and daughter Chandni.

director and then president. I believe all that was spontaneous and not due to these positions.

All this doesn't come just like that. It is your inner intrinsic nature which touches people... you can act for some time but such spontaneous affection and love don't come unless you are genuine. He is also very frank and honest. If he finds something is being done the wrong way, he immediately says it, but the manner in which he does so makes the other person understand.

He is a total family man, in all our family gatherings everybody loves to have him around because he is very fun-loving, and has a great sense of humour."

## A petrifying moment

I ask Rashi about the most dangerous moment she has faced while going to natural disaster areas with Mehta to deliver relief material. "Yes, sometimes

it is scary, but when you see your help making such a big difference, it is so satisfying. One unforgettable experience was after the Kashmir earthquake. We were going beyond Uri to Lal Pul near the Indo-Pak border, where nobody had gone with relief. An 18-year-old Rotaractor was driving the jeep. It was a narrow, treacherous mountain road with a 3,000ft-gorge on one side and suddenly our drive had to come to a halt because a landslide had just started. It was so scary; all of us were holding each other's hands. Two other Rotarians with us said we should go back. But then we all know Shekhar! He said: 'No, we have come this far and think of all those people waiting on the other side for this relief material. So, we have to wait and then move forward.' A landslide was also happening behind us! And Shekhar said to me: 'Rashi, this is life's real rollercoaster ride.' As the landslide in front was cleared, we moved forward, totally unaware how we were going to return. But that did not stop us, we went, not knowing if this would be our last day on earth!"











hands would go up. And we also did several fundraisers.”

Once 66 operations were done, the next year 100 more children’s hearts were healed and soon enough it became a district programme. Eventually the heart surgery project was taken to cities across India and till now Rotary has done over 20,000 heart surgeries on children, with over 2,500 operations done directly through his office. “The children would come to my office every day; my day began meeting their parents.”

“Now that I will be RI president, the goal is to do 20,000 heart surgeries in the next five years. When this target was known, Rtn Vivek Gour met me in Delhi and said for each of those

five years, I will sponsor 3,000 more surgeries. So the five-year goal has increased from 20,000 to 35,000 heart surgeries! This is what scaling up is all about. I believe that once you find the goals, the means will follow, as Gandhiji said,” he says with a glint in his eye.

Mehta has also taken up immense work in eye operations and has helped set up 15 eye hospitals across India.

### **An audacious 1.3 million dream**

**M**ehta’s most audacious dream is to get Rotary’s membership up to 1.3 million by the end of his year. He has a simple



With his mentor PRIP Kalyan Banerjee and Binota.

## **Five priorities for presidential year**

- **Membership:** Can you imagine an organisation not growing for the last 20 years? I cannot accept this status quo in our membership. For almost two years, I have been asking each member to get one member. It is possible and I have got commitments from across the world for this.
- **Flexible, hybrid clubs:** When we focus on each-one-bring-one, and bring new members, we will also retain them by having flexible clubs such as cause-based, hybrid clubs, etc. My club has already become a hybrid club; we have virtual meetings and that is the way to go forward. This will also get us young members... when a youngster doesn’t have to drive through traffic and can comfortably log in from home, munching on his samosa, and even attending to a child for a few minutes by switching off the video, they’ll be attracted to join Rotary. Also, elderly members say that young people are not willing to join our club. Okay, form a satellite club with 15 people; when it grows to 25, form a separate club. Or, by that time they may want to assimilate and join your club. Have cause-based clubs; people around the world interested in water and sanitation come together, do water projects in Ethiopia this year, India the next, followed by Bolivia, enjoying worldwide fellowship. Zoom has shown it is possible. The speed with which we can interact is the biggest advantage emerging from this pandemic.
- **Empowering girls** (see box)
- **Presidential conferences:** Seven across the world, including one in Hyderabad, India (May 3–5, 2022), on the different focus areas of Rotary.
- **Rotary days of service:** To showcase the work done by Rotary at the local level by observing heart days, literacy and schools, water and sanitation projects, etc. Let’s make Rotary trend on social media at least twice a month.

formula to achieve this. **"Each one bring one.** The response I get from across the world makes me optimistic about achieving this goal."

He is extremely proud of the Covid relief work being done by Rotarians across the world. "In India, so much was done in both waves of the pandemic; in the first wave, monetary contribution upward of ₹100 crore (\$13.7 million) and grassroots projects worth ₹150 crore (\$20.6 million) were done. In the second wave, the response has been equally swift and even bigger." Thousands of oxygen concentrators, hundreds of ventilators and over 1,000 special Covid beds have been set up.

"And the work continues unabated. A big thank you to Rotarians

across the world who have rallied around India at this difficult moment. If ever the need arises, god forbid, Indian Rotarians will not fall short in reciprocation," Mehta says.

Looking at the very scale and breadth of the work done by Rotarians, he is certain that this pandemic will not have an adverse impact on Rotary's membership. On the contrary, he feels, Rotary's very visible work will draw people to join it and boost membership "as people see the immense opportunity Rotary offers to help those in need."

"But it is very important to keep members engaged right now. Those clubs which are not meeting virtually face the danger of losing members," he adds.



The same form of thinking and bold new ideas, and large goals are required for TRF at a time when people realise that they need to be generous in order to help others. "I am sure that the trustees are thinking along similar lines," he says.

Another big dream of his was getting RI nominated for a Nobel Peace. With a twinkle in the eye, he shares that this has been accomplished. "Now let us keep our fingers crossed. But it's not for any glory or fame. A Nobel will take us one step closer towards

## From ₹12 crore to ₹300 crore Covid relief projects

When asked how proud is he about individual Rotary clubs raising crores of rupees and even more to help the community and the government fight the Covid pandemic, RIPE Shekhar Mehta says: "I am immensely proud of the work done by Rotarians in India. Two mega projects have been brought to me by PDG Olivannan and RC Madras North President Venkatraman recently. In the first, a corporate with headquarters based in Singapore wants to do

a ₹12 crore (\$1.65 million) CSR project to provide testing equipment for 100,000 Covid tests in Delhi. They will bring and install it, but they cannot give directly to a hospital and hence Rotary."

Another project for ₹300 crore (\$41.3 million) has also been finalised, "again through their initiative. A group of Indian American philanthropists want to give 50,000 oxygen concentrators in India. Again, these can be transported, "but proper deployment

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A Nobel will take us one step closer towards Rotary emerging as one of the topmost service organisations in the world.

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and usage, and speedy and effective execution requires a partner in India. The pilot has already started in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. They realised that Rotary has the capability to do such mega projects; we have a legacy that goes back not one or two years but 35 years, when it comes to our hard work in polio eradication."

# Empowering girls



Under Shekhar Mehta's leadership in 2021–22, "our overarching theme will be empowering girls. World over there is discrimination against the girl child. It takes different forms in different places. In our zone, a big percentage of girls drop out by Class 7 or 8. Can we ensure that we send back such girls to school; give scholarships to retain them? Many states are giving girls bicycles to ride to schools and back home. How about giving them solar lights where there is no electricity so that they can study at home. A girl educated is a family educated. And after completing their education,

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I have no airs, nor do I see myself as an 'RI president'. I see any high position as an added responsibility and I do the work required willingly.

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let us give them skills which brings economic empowerment.

"Let's take care of their nutrition, especially of pregnant mothers, also teach them self-defence techniques. Surely rapists around the world need to be taught a lesson! Then there is water, sanitation and MHM. The movie *Padman* has shown this subject — reusable pads and menstrual cups — can be discussed freely without inhibitions. Just for ₹300 (\$4), a girl can be given five reusable pads for two years. There is no environmental hazard and social enterprises run by women can get this project started.

So many girls/young women face domestic violence. They need a helpline, with somebody to counsel and solace them in the local language, and get them help. Child abuse, which comes in school education, can also be handled here. There is so much we can do to empower girls and make them equal partners in making this world a better place."



Rotary emerging as one of the topmost service organisations in the world. Today it is nowhere there."

I quiz Mehta on his once saying '*yeh zoom pe milna bhi koi milna hota hei*'; so how badly is he missing the fun and thrill of physical meetings? He says: "I adjust myself extremely fast to changing situations, it takes me just very little time to adjust my mind to anything in life, however difficult it might be. I take these things in my stride, and have no regrets." Though 50 per cent of his two years has gone, "I still have the other 50 per cent! Anyway, the first year for the incoming RI president is more about





planning and less about meeting and inspiring people, because that is the job of the president.”

Yes, he did miss out on a physical International Assembly, “a dream event for any RI president. But even more than that, I was to address, in America alone, 24 MDPETS in 30 days, meeting some 8,000 presidents. I could have sent a taped message for the virtual meets, but I got up at 4 am or 5 am, to give a real-time speech at each of those meetings.” The result is that he has spoken to nearly 15,000 out of about 35,000 changemaker presidents across the world. “I strongly believe the work of Rotary happens at the club level. And the governors and club presidents play the biggest role.”

He had also addressed MDPETS in Japan, Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines. “There is no doubt that physical presence makes a lot of difference, but the silver lining is that physically I might not have managed to speak to 15,000 presidents. We never know what tomorrow will bring, so let’s wait for the borders to open, and work together to grow more and do more, as we *serve to change lives*,” says this diehard optimist!



Shekhar Mehta, accompanied by the then RI Director Sangkoo Yun, visiting a child after his heart had been mended.

**Top:** Rashi and Shekhar Mehta at the Centennial Summit in Kolkata with the then RI President Mark Maloney, Gay, RID Kamal Sanghvi and Sonal.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat and from Shekhar Mehta’s archives.

Designed by Krishnapratheesh S

# Delhi Rotarians

## undertake several Covid-related projects

Jaishree

In Delhi, Rotarians have acted quickly and generously to put up additional oxygen facilities; with RC Delhi Premier, a single club, alone raising over ₹2 crore to help the choking capital of India.

In response to the second wave of Covid, when Delhi hospitals are constantly sending desperate messages for emergency oxygen supplies, and an appeal from the health department, Rotarians in Delhi have come to the rescue. RID 3011 DG Sanjiv Rai Mehra called out to Rotary clubs in the district to help in every possible way. “On behalf of the district initially I committed 10 oxygen plants within a week to the government,” he says.

Responding to the DG’s call, RC Delhi Premier, a two-year-old,

72-member strong club led by Aneesha Dalmia and secretary Sudhanshu Pachisia, installed seven oxygen plants in seven hospitals in Delhi within two weeks. The first plant started producing the life-saving gas within 48 hours. “I posted a paragraph-long note on our club’s WhatsApp group at midnight soon after I heard from our DG and by 8am the next morning I had the funds ready for sponsoring two plants. At 2pm I called the DG and said we will do seven. We still had money rolling in even after that. Now we will be

providing six other equipment by the month-end,” beams Aneesha.

Six plants with a capacity to produce 45 litres of oxygen per minute were installed in smaller hospitals with up to 50 beds and a 500 litre per minute plant was set up at the Deen Dayal Hospital which has 100 beds. “This project, costing ₹2 crore, was entirely funded through the generosity of our members, their friends and relatives,” says the club president. These plants will save hundreds of lives, and in return, these hospitals have agreed to treat underprivileged patients recommended by the club.

“It is heartrending to see people waiting in ambulances and some dying even before they can enter the hospital premises. We can’t let that happen. This is a war where we all have to fight together. Every person who is affected by Covid deserves treatment,” she says. The club has also given 1,100 oxygen concentrators to smaller hospitals and Covid care centres.

All the Rotary clubs of the district are working collectively to provide critical facilities including oxygen concentrators, ventilators as well as setting up Covid care and vaccination centres.

“With such collective efforts, we have scaled up our commitment to provide 10 more oxygen plants to hospitals across the district by end-June,”



RC Delhi Premier president Aneesha Dalmia and secretary Sudhanshu Pachisia give N95 masks to be distributed among the police force.



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RIPE Shekhar Mehta has requested me to help establish at least 10 oxygen plants in every district across India and I am working on this with RID Bharat Pandya, RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi and PDG Ravi Vadlamani.

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**DG Sanjiv Rai Mehra**

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says Mehra. A global grant with three international partners — with clubs from England, Houston and Calgary — will help set up an oxygen plant at the 675-bed Ganga Ram Hospital. “The CM has agreed to inaugurate the plant,” he adds.

### 300-bed Covid facility

Rotary clubs in the district have also set up a 300-bed Covid care facility at the Sarvodaya School in RK Puram, Delhi. “As schools will not be functioning for some time now the Delhi government suggested that we put up this facility here. Furniture has been



An oxygen generating plant being installed at a hospital in Delhi.

removed from the classrooms and we have provided 300 beds, and 100 of these will have the facility to administer oxygen. The facility is equipped with oxygen concentrators for emergency use, and this has really been of immense help to the patients during these desperate times.” The district is working on another 100-bed facility in Delhi. Corporates are also supporting clubs for the cause.

An oxygen concentrator bank with 100 equipment have been set up in the capital and “the facility will work on use and return basis.” The bank will be spread across the district with sub-banks at seven locations for logistic support.

“RIPE Shekhar Mehta has requested me to help establish at least 10 oxygen plants in every district across India and I am working on this with RID Dr Bharat Pandya, RIDE Dr Mahesh Kotbagi and PDG Ravi Vadlamani,” he says.

### Covid care plan

Aneesha has designed a Covid care plan for her club members and family. “We have tied up with testing labs, CT scan centres, tele-consultation and ambulance services and a ready reckoner of their contact details have been circulated among the members. We have also stationed oxygen concentrators and cylinders for Rotarians and their immediate family at a central location in Delhi. We have to take care of the 72 members and their families which will total to at least 300 people,” she smiles. ■



RC Delhi Premier gave 10,000 PPE kits for distribution at government and private hospitals in Delhi.



# Sustainable water conservation projects by RC Belthangady, RID 3181

Rasheeda Bhagat

Rotaractors, Interactors and RCC members pitch in with Rotarians for building check dams in Belthangady.





**K**eeping in mind the need for sustainable water conservation, RC Belthangady, RID 3181, has carried out a clutch of innovative, replicable and money-saving water conservation projects, thereby admirably serving the latest focus area of Rotary International — conserving the environment.

Let's begin with the project for farmers to boost paddy cultivation in the taluk. Belthangady is a town in Karnataka, about 60km from Mangalore, and close to the popular pilgrimage spot Dharmasthala.

In this taluk, in recent years, paddy fields have vanished due to farmers going in for plantation crops. "In the good old days, a paddy field served as a natural water bank in this region. But due to the disappearance of paddy fields, a few years ago, Belthangady was declared as a brown belt region, and its water table was constantly depleted," says president of the club Dhananjaya Rao. The club has 80 members, and is the only club in this town.

The club members devised a project to encourage farmers to revive paddy cultivation in this region,

particularly in land that was lying barren and fallow, by educating the local farmers and giving them necessary support. Explaining the background of the farming practices in this Dakshina Kannada taluk, Rao says that earlier the farmers here grew paddy, and the paddy fields, with standing water, became a natural source of water conservation. "But over the years, as the cost of farm labour went up, along with the cost of processing and converting paddy into rice, most of the farmers gradually moved away to the cultivation of arecanuts, which doesn't require much water."





The flip side is that as arecanut doesn't need much water, and in the rainy season, there is a problem of plenty, the "water actually has to be drained out from these fields. This is the exact opposite of paddy cultivation which is done by flood irrigation, in the sense the water is allowed to stay in the paddy field for five or six months, and because of that natural water conservation happened," Rao adds.

Most of the farmers here have a small landholding of between two to four acres. The admirable thing is that RC Belthangady members have undertaken this water conservation project in a sustainable manner; it has been ongoing for five years. For the last couple of years, they have been giving farmers modern equipment such as power tiller. The actual cost of such a power tiller, needed for paddy cultivation, is around ₹3 lakh. "But there is government subsidy of ₹1.5 lakh. We, club members, raise the remaining ₹1.5 lakh, and donate the power tiller to the farmers."

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Due to the disappearance  
of paddy fields, a few years  
ago, Belthangady was  
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This year, the members are encouraging the farmers to switch over to paddy cultivation, and "we support them by paying the labour cost for tilling or ploughing the land. This cost is around ₹3,000–4,000 per acre, and our club members are happy to raise that money," Rao smiles.

The result of these Rotarians' labour is "establishment of natural water banks in 15 acres of land across Belthangady taluk, including

in the villages of Laila, Mundaje, Andinje, Mithabagilu, Koyyur and Kuvettu.

"Our research tells us that if one inch of water is stored in one acre of land, this will boost and augment water storage in the subsoil by over one lakh litres per day. By this math, our club has conserved 15,41,580x120 days of water per day in the paddy fields in Belthangady."

The result of this, adds the club president, is that both the farms and homes in the region have experienced a sustained rise in the water table.

### **Constructing check dams**

Keeping their focus on an environmental-friendly activity like water conservation, this club has also taken up construction of check dams. Rao explains that "earlier, community-level collaborative activities like construction of check dams was a conventional mechanism of farm irrigation and conserving water. But with the evolution of individualised

**A check dam built with environmental-friendly material across a catchment area.**







The club helped revive paddy cultivation in Belthangady.





# Heartbreaking



Sometimes when Rotarians put in so much of planning, effort and funds into a community service project, it is heart-breaking to see the project “demolished”, within a few months of its evolution. In Feb 2021, members of RC Belthangady, in partnership with RC Mangalore Downtown, started work on a vented dam in a place called Bajakkiresal in Laila village, in Dakshina Kannada district.

Giving details of the project, club service director Yogish Bhide says 11 vents were put up in this dam, and the work was completed in four days. “About 120 NSS students from the Government College, Belthangady, helped us to fill 700 bags of sand, plastic sheets measuring 110ftx14ft were given

by Suresh Hebbar, a member of RC Mangalore Downtown, and 60 bags were used for each vent. Only eight paid labourers were used and we served home-cooked food to all those who worked here, with some people also giving a sweet dish!”

The result of this work was that the water level rose to a height of 4ft, across 4km along the river; “40 acres land were irrigated directly and about 200 local people benefited by getting the water levels in their wells rising consistently. I also live close by and personally benefited from it.”

He added that DG Ranganath Bhat inaugurated this Rotary vented dam.

But the heartbreaking part comes now. Says Bhide, “Sadly, very recently this vented dam was demolished by the administration for construction of a new road to connect two villages.” Till May 1,

there was substantial water in the dam, thanks to this conservation project. Incidentally, Bhide himself comes from an agricultural family.

So this must be heartbreaking for the Rotarians, I ask him. His reply forms the crux of the positive thinking that Rotary inculcates. “Yes it is, I can’t deny that. Actually, this dam was not listed in any government records and to construct the dam my grandfather had taken the initiative some five decades ago. But for many years it was lying unused. And now, we are also happy that the new dam will be constructed along with the bridge which was the only route possible to connect certain areas of the village. This was necessary too for general development,” he smiles.



farming, traditional ethos have been threatened.”

So, to revive the traditional ethos of cooperative and collaborative community work, RC Belthangady members collaborated with another club in the district — RC Mangalore Downtown — and others from the larger Rotary family such as the RCC, Rotaract Club, NSS units of Government First Grade College, Belthangady and SDM Polytechnic College, Ujire, as well as the local community. The result of this vibrant partnership is the construction of six check dams across the natural water streams flowing in Belthangady. “Apart from the local community, we also used the services of members of our three Rotaract and five Interact clubs, and five RCCs. So you see, we have a small army from the Rotary family to help us with our water conservation efforts!”

Locally available environmental-friendly materials like sand, mud, branches of coconut trees, stones and wooden planks were used to build the sides. “We also used tarpaulin and polythene bags to ensure the water holds.”

When I frown on the use of polythene bags, Rao explains that most of the time cement bags are used to fill the sand and other materials to bolster the walls of the check dams. But as cement bags are not leakage-proof, the polythene bags are used to prevent seepage of water away from the sides.

For the construction of each such dam, which took around two to three days, the Rotarians used “nearly 100 members” to provide the labour. “Our role was to ensure that fresh, home-cooked meals were served to each one of them.”

The dams were constructed in the village areas taking into consideration the catchment area of each dam and the number of beneficiaries, and the villages of Mundaje, Thotathady,







**Fresh, home-cooked food being served to Rotaractors helping in construction of check dams.**

Neria, Charmady and Laila benefited. “Over 150 families benefited from the project and more than 50 to 100 acres of agricultural land spread over a radius of 5–10km had water percolating into their tanks and wells. The usage of locally available products and minimum cost were the highlights of the project,” says Yogish Bhide, club service director.

A fallout of this sustainable water conservation endeavour of RCB “has attracted attention from the media,

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More than 50 to 100 acres of agricultural land spread over a radius of 5–10km had water percolating into their tanks and wells.

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researchers, social workers and the larger community. Now we render consultancy services for adopting water conservation techniques by involving local communities,” Rao says with satisfaction.

### **Stopping water wastage**

Even as scorching summer days are on, it is a common sight to see colossal waste of water due to overflowing of the overhead tanks in homes, schools and offices. KP Prasad, a Rotarian and alumni of NITK, Surathkal, who heads the SDM Polytechnic College, under the guidance of Rtn D Veerendra Heggade, a philanthropist and hereditary administrator of the Dharmasthala Temple, has invented and popularised an affordable device to reduce such wastage. This he has done through a device that he has named *SDM Rotary Jala Rakshak*.

This device monitors the water level in the overhead tank as it is being

filled, and an alarm goes off when the water reaches a certain level in the tank. RCB distributed 50 such water saving devices to public offices such as gram panchayat, police stations, schools etc.

### **Filtering rainwater**

Another project titled *Rotary Jeevadhara* is associated with filtering the rainwater before storing it so that silt and other organic residues in the water are removed, and the quality of the water improves. For this purpose, the club members designed a rainwater harvest filter at an affordable cost of ₹3,500 and distributed 10 filters to factories, offices and houses in order to encourage better quality rainwater harvesting. Through this simple device water can be filtered and flown directly to open or tube wells.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



**Holger Knaack**  
RI President

# Take action to support India & Brazil



**K R Ravindran**  
TRF Trustee Chair

Dear District Governors,

We hoped that 2021 would bring us relief from the virus sweeping through the world. Unfortunately, the horrifying second wave in India and the worsening situation in Brazil leave us disconsolate. There is not a region which remains unscathed.

The development and distribution of vaccines brought hope, promise and a vision of a return to normalcy in some parts of the world. Unfortunately, much of the world is lagging far behind, aggravated by the recent outbreaks that are helping to drive daily infections worldwide to their highest levels yet.

With new cases topping 400,000 a day, a critical oxygen shortage, lack of hospital beds, and a mounting death toll, the situation in India shows no sign of waning, and help is urgently needed. Likewise, Brazil and numerous other countries are facing some of the same issues and there is great need for support.

We are calling on district governors to provide assistance by sending supplies and equipment, such as oxygen concentrators and ventilators and anything else they require. We encourage you to work with clubs in your district and coordinate with Rotary clubs in the country in need to facilitate an in-kind donation of supplies, and coordinate shipping — either through a private company or paying to have supplies shipped yourself. You can also establish a joint effort by partnering with other clubs, districts, or local organisations.

Districts, clubs and members have already leapt into action by providing critical supplies and services, and thinking out-of-the-box to assist India, as well as Brazil. Examples include:

- Rotary District 6400 and the Rotary Club of Essex are partnering with Rotary India's Covid Task Force to coordinate donations that will go toward supplying oxygen concentrators.

- Rotary District 6900 is partnering with other organisations, including UPS, to ship medical equipment such as ventilators, anaesthesia machines, oxygen and respiratory supplies to India.
- The Rotary Club of Madras donated two 8ft refrigerated trucks to transport two million doses of vaccine, and Rotary clubs in Kerala have reported nearly 51,000 free vaccinations through Rotary centres and camps over the last three weeks.
- Rotarians in the United States are procuring and sending equipment to India. A club in Rockford, Illinois, coordinated with a private aerospace company to send equipment via jet.
- A Rotary Youth Exchange alumni association has initiated a crowdfunding campaign to procure 50 oxygen concentrators.
- In Brazil, Rotary members are looking into ways to improve the vaccine cold chain to better distribute Covid-19 vaccines, as help is needed to support the funding of refrigeration equipment.

As Rotarians, we have come together in the name of service to support communities in inspiring ways throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. We are asking you to dig deeper and help India and other countries in need to find the light at the end of the tunnel and overcome the current wave of infections.

Thank you,

**Holger Knaack**  
RI President

**K R Ravindran**  
TRF Trustee Chair



# Innovator, reformer, rebel

## RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi

Rasheeda Bhagat







**H**is demeanour gives you no clue of the tremendous pressure he is facing. His 75-bed Kotbagi Hospital is looking after 100 Covid patients when I interview him in late April. “The Covid situation in Pune is terrible, and in the 45 days we’ve been going crazy. We have about 100 covid patients, and see 5–6 deaths every day. About 30 per cent of our staff has tested positive, not once but twice. We vaccinate 400 people daily,” says incoming RI director Mahesh Kotbagi. He has also been managing and closely monitoring, long distance, Rotary leaders in India who have tested positive.

He is surrounded by doctors — both his father and grandfather are doctors, spouse Amita is one and so is his older daughter Chinmayi. Their

younger daughter Sana will also qualify in medicine.

Kotbagi completed his PG in Obstetrics and Gynaecology from the Pune University in 1991. The same year he started the Kotbagi Hospital, choosing a different path from his father who served the government. “I started small; in my last year in college, I decided to build a hospital and took a loan.” When he graduated, only a part of it was ready and

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Rotarians have to realise that you’ll become a past governor or director.

But nobody can make you a past-Rotarian. Once we realise this, other problems will disappear.

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# At a glance

**Religion:** I believe that god is everywhere; I go to every religious place, mosque, church temple, etc.

**Food:** I am a foodie, and my favourite cuisine is Indian non-vegetarian.

**Favourite holiday destination:** I am a globetrotter; have done biking, car rallying and flying in over 50 countries. Difficult to list one place but the Indian Himalayas, Norway, Ireland and New Zealand are my favourites. Though Amita likes Alaska. In New Zealand, with my family, I drove in a recreation van from north to the south. In every country I drive; no packages or hotel reservations!

**Reading:** A very poor reader. My mother would give me 25 paise per page to listen. That's how I became a doctor!

**Music:** I love world music... all kinds of *jugalbandhi*, piano, rap, saxophone, tabla, etc.

**Movies:** I don't go to a theatre for 5–10 years at a stretch!

**Favourite actor:** Amitabh Bachchan, forever.

**Relaxation:** I don't ever relax.

**Fitness:** I do a lot of adventure activities. Dirt track, long rides of 1,200km in a single day on a Harley Davidson. I ride BMW and Mercedes Benz and have done car rallies from my college days.

**oo ing:** I love doing barbeques and grills, which are loved by my friends. I can do all kinds of meats, fish, lamb, chicken.

**Fitness:** I did gymming and cardiac activities regularly, but in the last 18 months Rotary hasn't left me any time.



the hospital started with just 10 beds, and expanded later.

A votary of low-cost healthcare, he has served as a consultant for developing many low-cost healthcare hospitals. He set up the Chinmayi Medical Foundation Charitable Trust to support low-cost healthcare services and children's education.

## Early Rotary journey

His Rotary journey began when a visually-challenged Rotarian,

Niranjan Pandya, later given a Padmashree for his service to the blind, approached Kotbagi's father to join a new Rotary club — RC Pune Sports City — that he was starting. "He did not have physical vision but a huge mental vision. My father suggested that he take me instead."

The reason was the son's track record in the Pune University over 10 years. "I was the only student's union representative to continue in office for 10 years, including

being chairman for two years," Kotbagi smiles. He also became the youngest member of the Senate as a student representative, and was at the forefront of student agitations "to get justice for rural students and women. Pune was an education hub even then and had students coming from over 25 states, there were a lot of problems they faced, migration, admission, delayed exams, and we launched an agitation for something called ATKTK (allowed to keep term)



demanding that a student failing in one subject should not lose a year.”

So, did he also need this ‘ATKT’, I ask him jokingly.

“Luckily not,” he laughs, adding, “I was a brilliant student. I didn’t need it but fought for others.” A very popular student leader, he could easily organise student rallies 25,000–50,000 strong. “People thought I would join politics!”

Did he have the opportunity, I ask him. “Oh yes, I was offered all the seats... municipal corporation, MLA’s seat, a Mayor’s post and even a Rajya Sabha seat. But I turned them all down because my parents dissuaded me, even though in those days educated people used to join politics. Asking me to join Rtn Pandya was perhaps my father’s indirect way to stop me from getting into a political career!”

**T**he young Kotbagi asked Pandya what was expected from him. “His dream was to build one of the largest eye hospitals in Maharashtra and he banked on my experience in the hospital industry. He wanted a trustworthy person who could sign cheques and do other work.”

Taking up the challenge, Kotbagi joined the club in 1995

and researched blindness. “I was connected to the Christopher Blind Mission, Germany, Sightsavers India, The National Blind Mission; visited the Aravind Eye Hospital, Madurai, and attended the World Blind Forum in Australia. I learnt all about the blind and their psychology... how they think and plan; how a dog can be trained to accompany a blind man on travel, etc.”

He became club president within three years, participating in service activities and “getting great experiences, one of them being people promising to donate, but not doing



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Our members regularly visit the recreation centre for spastic children, and thanks to their involvement in this centre, our club’s membership has remained at cent per cent.

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so. After six months, I couldn't even raise enough money to pay the printer for the donation receipts printed," he recalls.

But it taught him what fundraising involves. "Later, with people's contributions we could achieve so much but the beginning was sketchy." Pandya was the executive secretary of the Pune Blind Men's Association (PBMA), one of the largest organisations for the blind in Pune, and the hospital was meant

for the PBMA, Rotarians and CSR partners. "The hospital took 10 years to build, the government gave subsidised land, and today it is the largest hospital for the blind in Maharashtra and does 100 free eye operations daily," he says with pride.

**K**otbagi was the youngest member of his club and district (then 3130) which had 155

clubs. In 1997, when the president-elect was suddenly transferred to Europe, "the board said the only person who can take over at the last minute is Mahesh."

How he became governor is an interesting story; after his presidential year, he applied to be the leader of a GSE vocational team, and got selected too. "But in the group discussion with the DG and PDGs, they said you are the best candidate, but being much younger than the team

members, you can't be selected. But you still have age on your side, and can do this later."

Feeling "discriminated against", he resigned as a member of the district secretariat; "the DGE asked me are you angry. I said no, I resigned because a district bylaw says this membership disqualifies me from contesting for the DG's post. And I am going to do that. So that in the future I will not be interviewed, but do interviews as a DG."



Amidst shock and disbelief from the “elders”, Kotbagi contested, and won, with “a thumping majority”.

Coming to the highlights of his governor year, Kotbagi says along with Japanese Rotarians, they put up women’s literacy centres. “Amita and I did a friendship exchange visit to Japan, they visited Pune, we adopted 13

villages and built many vocation centres, schools, trained batches of women and donated buses to them.”

But the project dearest to his heart and a trail-blazer was putting up recreational facilities at the Bal Kalyan Sanstha in Pune, a small school for spastic children. “We worked with them to set up the first audio-visual room, a big screen to put up cartoon and other films, taught them singing and swimming, organised

## District conferences of yore

In many district conferences, including ours, in those days, all the past district governors would sit on the stage for all the days... the entire duration of the conference, not only the opening session,” recalls Mahesh Kotbagi. So and so that “as a young and naughty Rotarian” he used to ask those seated around him, “Don’t these PDGs need to use a wash-room? How can they sit on the stage for so many hours on end? All the delegates around me either had grey hair or no hair. There was no concept of a young Rotarian in our district in those days. The average age of the governor was 65–70.”

During his DisCon as DG, Kotbagi condemned the system of all DGs sitting on the stage, saying “when the star speakers are addressing the delegates the VIP delegates are seated behind, watching his back. With no interchange of facial expressions or eye contact, the speech has

less impact. I said only the speaker should be on the stage, and everybody else, including the DG, should be in the audience. The blank podium and stage that you see in district conferences today began with my year as governor.”

Kotbagi says he was involved in the planning of 10 Rotary Institutes; “these used to be equally dry, with half the time taken up in recognising past directors and senior leaders, and people used to get totally bored.”

The other bane was long introductions; 10 minutes intro for an 8-minute speech! “Most of the times it was ‘you scratch my back I will scratch yours’. I am very blunt and said all this nonsense has to stop. The first AV intro clip was introduced by me at Shekhar Mehta’s institute as director. I said no AV above two minutes!” The same was done at Literacy summits, where he was closely involved in the planning and execution.





**Clockwise from bottom left:**  
Mahesh Kotbagi at the Golden Temple in Amritsar; with an RV in New Zealand; sailing in Norway; with his parents Dr Shripad and Usha Kotbagi; with Amita.



## Amita's role

**B**oth Amita and my parents have played such a huge supportive role. I am the youngest to become director in our zone. We needed to travel a lot and my parents always said you are doing social service, so travel wherever you want. And they said the same to Amita, who they consider their daughter. When I won the DG election, Amita was holding our younger

daughter! When we went to the IA, Amita literally put together an army of relatives — my parents and sister, her parents and sisters — to take care of the children. (Amita adds: "The kids were very happy because they were being pampered, it was I who used to be crying when I called them on the phone. At some training sessions,

Rotarians would have our children on their laps while both of us were on the stage!")

Amita has been absolutely supportive in my hospital work, family work, Rotary work, and was involved in all Rotary activities. She joined Rotary in 2000, has been president, assistant governor, trainer and held all posts except that of governor!



# Mahesh speak

**Leadership qualities:** Quick decision making, innovation and transparency.

**Priorities in next two years:** Training; I'm a hardcore trainer. I also want to arrange 15 medical missions to 15 Indian states, to provide free surgery and medical assistance to nearly one lakh people. We are talking to CMs and state health ministers. Two, RILM will always be given priority as literacy is our future and it's a shame that from 1947 to 2021, we haven't been able to make India literate.

**Rotary India's strengths and weaknesses:** The service projects we do and the man hours put in; we are on one side and the rest of the world on the other! We have single districts doing 40 GGs, 20–25 CSR grants and other projects which are not even reported.



The highest number of GGs are done in our zones, because we have the platform and opportunities to do service. Also, all our religions equate service to *punya* so it is in our DNA and culture.

Our challenge is that as we grow, there is more competition and politics. We can't say we'll grow but not have politics. How do we deal with it? We need a magician! Not having elections is not correct; it is the members' democratic right. But Rotarians need to realise that a DG or director is only for a period; you'll become a past governor or director. But nobody can make me a past-Rotarian. Once we realise this, other problems will disappear.

**Pandemic challenges:** Several formats will have to change; if you want youngsters, you can't have 20-minute introductions or a club newsletter with 20 pictures of the president and his wife! If you want women, meeting venues can't be too far and events late into the night, where some people might get drunk and pass unpalatable comments. Women will simply walk away. Meetings too will have

to be flexible, and can be held over breakfast, lunch or online. We say Rotaractors are now part of Rotary. Good, but one Rotaractor asked me why a pin of a bald Paul Harris. We'd like a pin of a young Harris. Post-pandemic, a hybrid version of Rotary has to evolve with 40 per cent online meetings. In big cities, they'll give relief from long drives with traffic jams!

**cherished values, learning:** As a child I saw my father go on bullock carts to villages to deliver medical care or medicines. I watched farmers bringing rice bags, jaggery or vegetables to my mother saying he saved our lives, this is a small token of appreciation. I learnt as a child that money is not necessary for appreciation; or a degree to impart knowledge. And that muscle doesn't necessarily give strength.

**ream:** I never asked anything from Rotary but Rotary gave me great platforms, a friend in every corner of the world, so many opportunities to speak, interact, learn and act. I never asked for anything and came up to here, and will surely take me farther.







## Amita speak

**From left:** Mahesh Kotbagi, Amita, Chinmayi and Sana.

**H**ow did she meet Mahesh, I ask Amita. “Oh, Mahesh is my childhood friend and we met when he was in Class 12 and I in Class 11. We became close friends, and initially I had thought of joining engineering because my father was an engineer but Mahesh said he was going to be a doctor and said it will be better if you join me in my profession.”

Under his influence, the girl who had in Class 11, dropped biology and taken math, did a switch again the next year!

As to when friendship turned into love, she says, “As we were in the same profession, we kept meeting each other on different occasions and there came a time where there wasn’t even the need to say that we were in love. Of course, it was Mahesh who proposed

and we were married in 1991, and had our first daughter in 1993.”

Kotbagi was only 24 and “his mother says he was a small boy when he got married!” She first practised as a GP, and as their hospital grew, did a course in hospital management and is now into administration.

On how she responded to Rotary taking away so much of her husband’s time, Amita says: “I was busy with my own career and the kids were also growing up. His parents are great philanthropists, so service is part of our family.”

She was so closely involved with his Rotary activities, that she too joined the same club in 2000 and in April 2009, when the incoming president resigned at the last minute, “club members requested me to take over as president.”

On her year as president, she says she got full cooperation from everybody. “They were so happy that I heeded their request that they happily assisted me in whatever I asked and I thoroughly enjoyed my year. Also, I had the great help of Mahesh, an encyclopaedia on Rotary, so I didn’t have to worry!”

Finally, on Kotbagi’s finest qualities she says: “He is so passionate about what he does, is a great orator and I am so proud of the power he has to motivate and convince people to implement his smallest ideas. Above all, he is a people’s man; he can spontaneously sit on the floor and share a meal with people, this makes them very happy and they feel he is part of us... and their friend for long years. That is an outstanding quality that he has!”

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At district conferences, all the delegates around me either had grey hair or no hair. There was no concept of a young Rotarian in our district in those days.

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horse and camel riding and other cardio-related activities. We got some buses from corporates, modified them to give easy access, and bring some 2,000 special children, including from rural areas, to this centre every week for recreation.”

At his initiative his club gave up holding meets in star hotels and met here; “this gave us more money for this centre and made the members really involved and attached in its service activities. For 25 years now, our club meetings are held here, our members meet the spastic children and with or without Rotary visit, the centre and the children treat us like their guardians. Thanks to involvement in this centre, our membership has remained at cent per cent.”

**O**n the journey to an RI director’s post, he feels those who helped his

# Challenges of running a hospital during pandemic

**W**hile chatting with *Rotary News*, RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi gave an interesting insight into the unique challenges involved in running a hospital for Covid patients. “We are looking after 100 Covid positive patients and are stretched to our limits, especially in terms of administration and facilities. There is no oxygen supply, there is no Remdesivir supply, and many of our staff members, despite offering any amount of money, are not willing to come to work

because they are worried about their own families, which is understandable,” he says.

He explains that in normal times a unique aspect of the Indian hospital industry is that the “relatives do a lot of work in terms of getting food, doing the laundry, and provide a lot of mental support to their hospitalised relatives. But in the Covid scenario, where the relatives cannot come to either visit or stay with the patients, right from giving the patients a cup of tea at 6am to managing

their hygienic and nutritious food and laundry is all our responsibility. Managing a Covid unit and a normal medical facility are very different experiences, and pose so many challenges.”

Another major dilemma arises when “sometimes the husband, wife and children are positive. There is nobody to even buy the medicines or withdraw money from the ATM. So there are a lot of socio-psychological issues involved in managing Covid patients. The death of a Covid patient is also an emotional factor as you cannot hand over the body to the relatives and hence we had to manage more than 100 funerals,” he adds.

Kotbagi’s hospital is one of the largest in his region; about 400 vaccine shots are given daily here.

growth were PRID Sushil Gupta, “who despite having such a huge business empire, when it came to Rotary, he was connected to ground reality. We started working together on projects. Then there was my association with Shekhar Mehta, who wasn’t even an RID then, Kamal Sanghvi, Manoj Desai, Gulam Vahanvaty and Ravi Vadlamani. Shekhar’s energy, even today, is phenomenal. The six of us were founders of

the Rotary India Humanity Foundation which led to the RILM.”

As Mehta, Desai and Sanghvi became directors, “I felt when you get involved in work and deliver, your worth is recognised.”

**A**bout women’s membership, he says that his own district 3131 has over 30 per cent

women, which is above the international average. “In cities educated and professional women are available but rural areas are a challenge. Women prefer to go in groups, so let’s develop a module to recruit them in small groups and follow the same one for involving them in projects. If you put two women in a club of 35, they won’t stay for long. Women above 40 also is a good target group.”

As RI director, Kotbagi will also be part of the RI Board’s Executive Committee (EC) comprising the EC chair, RI president, RIPE, RI vice-president, treasurer and an RI Board member.

Pictures of RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi and Amita by Sana Kotbagi.

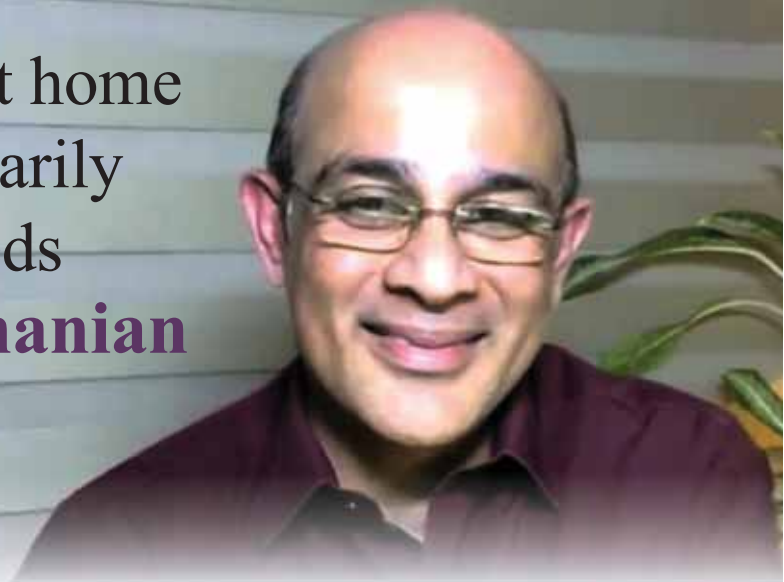
Designed by Krishnapratheesh S



# Calm down, isolate at home and don't unnecessarily block hospital beds

## Dr V Ramasubramanian

Rasheeda Bhagat



*As the second wave of the Covid pandemic ravages India causing trauma, panic and paranoia, a voice of calm, common sense and sane medical advice is that of Dr V Ramasubramanian, a specialist of 30 years in infectious diseases. A member of the Rotary Club of Madras, he frowns on the noise and “sensationalisation” of the media, the lack of empathy in so many people who should know better. In an interview to Rotary News, the good doctor, who was seeing over 150 patients a day by May-end, said, “first and foremost we all need to calm down”. Excerpts...*

### **Why did you decide to specialise in infectious diseases?**

My father is a GP; he is 90 and still practises at his clinic in Chennai. After completing an MD in general medicine from the PG Institute of Medical Education and Research in Chandigarh in 1992, I didn't want to narrow down my focus to a single specialty such as cardiology or neurology, so I specialised in infectious diseases, which is an integral part of general medicine.

### **In your 30 years in the medical profession, have you ever seen a virus-inflicted pandemic such as this?**

No, neither has my father! But it was inevitable, and on the cards, and not something which came out of the blue. We've had episodes like this starting from 1918 and we have improved tremendously in

medicine but our memories are very short. We never prepare ourselves for what can happen.

### **Were we caught on the wrong foot; could we have handled this better?**

In retrospect, we could always have done better. But in any epidemic or pandemic, any measures done beforehand seem too much, and any measures done later seem too little.

### **It looked as though India had handled the first wave rather well, and then like a tsunami, the second wave hit us. Did doctors like you think we are celebrating too soon?**

I was always sure that the second wave would come, and had no doubt in my mind. I was the odd man out in my fraternity or field. But I expected the second wave to be milder. The numbers are higher this time, but

there were many reasons for the low numbers in the first wave... difficulty in getting tests done, expensive tests and the stigma attached to anybody testing positive, with boards and barricades at their homes, so people were very scared to get tested.

Also, that time, the working classes got infected, and got better in a few days, so they didn't bother too much. I would guarantee that for every one person tested, there were at least 10 who were not tested but were positive/infected.

### **Was the higher cost a reason for lower testing?**

Yes, even the cost — ₹4,000. So very few did the test initially. At that time the elderly went down; the younger ones did very well. I have counselled several people saying you're only 30, isolate yourself, don't do the test and you

will do well. And they've all done well.

But the second wave hit the more affluent, the middle classes, people working from home... they had the money, the knowledge and knew they had to take care of themselves. So anybody with an itchy throat, a slightly stuffy nose, heavy head, immediately took the test, now available and cheaper.

**Are you saying the numbers reported are more now because of more tests?**

Absolutely.

**But the way our medical system and health infrastructure, of which we were once so proud, has crumbled is surprising. People lining up outside hospitals for oxygen, no hospital beds, people dying in Casualty. Why and how did this happen?**

Even the best of places, Spain, Italy, England or even New York, went through the same experience in the first phase when they were badly hit. Now they may turn around and say the Indian government did badly. Rubbish. They were far worse during the peak of their first and second

phases. I have seen pictures of their emergency departments and people falling dead on stretchers in the developed countries. They just did not have the hospital beds or facilities to cope with the numbers. I am appalled at the righteous attitude of the western world towards India because they have all gone through this. When you are equipped to handle 10 people and you get 1,000, nobody can handle it. Yes, let us accept that we have all made mistakes, and not point fingers at India. That is not only condescending but not right. Considering our population which is 10, 50 or even 100 times more than theirs, we have done reasonably well.

**At least from 4 lakh our daily numbers have come down to around 2 lakh; are you optimistic that the numbers will come under control?**

Absolutely! In Chennai we have already seen a decline in the outpatient load and the inpatient numbers always lag behind the OP numbers by two weeks. I am sure in two weeks the inpatient numbers will come down.

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Most people with Covid can do well if they isolate at home. Rushing to hospitals and blocking beds which a person with oxygen requirement cannot access, or refusing to vacate a bed after they get well, is the sad part.

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**Do you think there is more panic than warranted?**

Yes, we would be reasonably better, not well off, but reasonably better, if people calmed down and understand that most people with Covid can do well if you isolate at home. Rushing to hospitals and blocking beds which a person with oxygen requirement cannot access is the sad part.

I have patients in hospitals who get well, I tell them to go home as we need the bed for somebody else and they say but today is Tuesday, an inauspicious day, or the ninth day of my admission; I can go only on the 11<sup>th</sup> day. Or I don't have anyone to take care of me at home; I'll be here for three more days. Depriving a bed for somebody else more deserving when you are already well is something I feel very sad about. The empathy is lacking.

**So as usual the privileged corner everything?**

(Smiles wryly) Everybody is equal; but some are more equal than others!

**There is so much of information and misinformation floating around. What do we believe?**

We are in a situation of information overload. When I was young, I had to go to a library for information





I needed. Now four taps in the comfort of your home and you can access anything you want. Add to that Whatsapp, FB and Instagram! After practising medicine for 30 years, I find it difficult to analyse and chronicle so much information. How do you think a lay person is going to process it?

**Do people come and ask you all kinds of crazy questions, should they do a lung scan, a D-dimer test, etc?**

(Laughs and nods his head).

**Are you still seeing 100 patients a day?**

More like 150 — both inpatient and outpatient in Apollo Hospitals and

my clinic. But with the lockdown, in the last three days the numbers have dipped. It is sheer madness out there.

**In the second wave, more people are dying; do we know why this variant/mutant is more lethal and dangerous to the lungs?**

We still don't know the entire reason, but have some hypothesis. The second variant has more mutants which are definitely more infectious than the first one. If, in a household two people were infected in the first wave, this time at least 4–5 tend to get the infection. With the numbers, the mortality rate goes up too. We also know it is causing more harm to the younger people than the first time, and their mortality rate is high, but we still don't know the reason. Is it because this time the virus is targeting people who are a little more affluent and less robust, I don't know!

**Do you see a third wave coming?**

Yes, it will come by the end of this year, but I don't know how severe it will be. But it is inevitable and will come.

**And those vaccinated will be safe?**

Yes, they will be safe but the infection cannot

be prevented. We might see less severity, hospitalisations and death. No question about it. Infections will happen, but they will definitely be milder.

**Coming to a lay person, if I have a cold, cough, low-grade fever, what should I do?**

The first thing to do if you suspect Covid infection is to isolate yourself. You can wait for a day or two to reassess whether you need to do a test. After the stuffy nose the first day, if you feel absolutely fine the next, I wouldn't worry. But if you still feel feverish, lethargic, have a severe headache, backache, diarrhoea, loss of smell and appetite, then do the test. But isolate yourself first.

And if you test positive, don't panic. Stay calm. People call me at 10 pm after testing positive, saying they need to see me immediately! You have to see the doctor the next day and let him/her decide if you need any tests. CTs and blood tests are not mandatory for everyone.

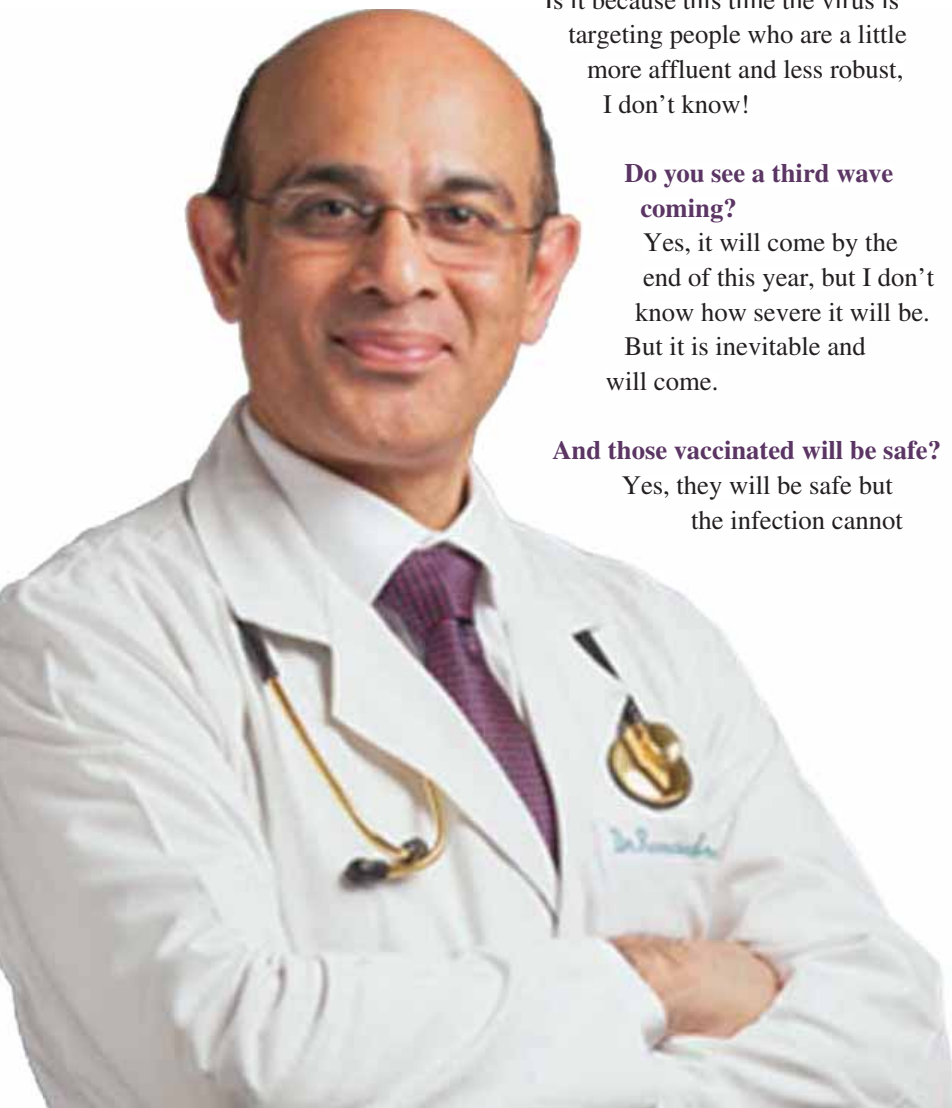
**You, the AIIMS director and so many specialists have said that the CT scan exposes you to radiation levels 300–400 times more than that of a single x-ray. Is that so?** Absolutely.

**So when is that indicated?**

Medically speaking, we do that for people with persistent symptoms for 7 days. If the cough is persistent or worsening, people whose oxygen levels are dropping slowly, if there is a sudden drop in saturation or pain. A routine CT is not necessary; less than 10 per cent need it.

**Can there be complications after recovery?**

Almost 30–40 per cent of the infected who recover, after two



weeks of the onset of Covid symptoms, will have some issues. Maybe something as trivial as a dry mouth, a heavy head, a little bit of a joint pain, disturbances in sleep, lack of sleep or too much of sleep. Some might have more serious symptoms such as absolute loss of appetite, tightness of chest, disabling cough, sudden loss of hair, panic attacks, inability to concentrate and work, fear and paranoia. All of these are possible. We have to treat individual cases.

### **Have you asked your patients to seek psychological counselling?**

Absolutely; because people can't sleep, they have paranoia. They think they will die.

### **How do we handle the third wave if such a rush on hospitals again occurs?**

Unless we tone down the social media and the press, unless the media tones down the severity of the assault of bad news and negativity on the public, things will not improve. I keep repeating; handling the physical fallout from the infection is easier than dealing with the psychological

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I am appalled at the righteous attitude of the western world towards India because they have all gone through far worse during the peak of their first and second phases. Their pointing fingers at India and being condescending is not right.

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## **Five ways to stay healthy in pandemic**

How important is exercise during this pandemic, to stay healthy and boost immunity, I ask Dr V Ramasubramanian, the quintessential expert in infectious diseases.

His response: Exercise is very important. Here are five ways to stay healthy and robust.

- \* Ensure a balanced meal, veg or non-veg doesn't matter.
- \* Sleep and exercise: At least 6 to 8 hours of sleep every night.

And half-an-hour of physical activity five times a week, with a minimum of 90 minutes a week in any game or sport, walking, cycling, swimming, whatever.

- \* Alcohol and smoking: Avoid smoking, alcohol in moderation...less than 7 units a week.
- \* Reduction in stress. This is the most important factor.
- \* Vaccination: Non-Covid times it is flu, tetanus, etc. During Covid times take the Covid vaccine. It will keep you safe and healthy.

issues. If patients insist on getting admitted when there is a lack of beds, how do doctors convince them they don't need hospitalisation? It is very difficult.

### **What kind of food does one take during and after this infection?**

Doesn't matter. Food plays the least role in Covid, it just needs to be a balanced, nutritious diet; vegetarian or non-vegetarian.

### **Which vaccine?**

Whichever is available. All of them are safe and found to be effective.

### **How do we deal with the fear of blood clots?**

Any intervention, be it just a paracetamol, has side-effects. The question is what are the chances. When you drive on the road can't you die or get a head injury in an accident? You can. Does that prevent you from travelling on the road and just staying at home? No. So this is also like that. You have to weigh the benefits and the risks. To me the benefits far outweigh the risks.

### **What is the window of safety after taking a vaccine shot?**

Two weeks after the second dose. First dose doesn't do much.

### **The interval between two jabs?**

For Covaxin it is 4 weeks, and Covishield at least 12 weeks.

### **Will a booster dose be required after a year or so?**

Let's wait and see. Probably it will be like flu where you will need annual shots but no data is yet available.

### **What do you feel about the fantastic claims made by different kinds of medicine promising wonder cures for Covid in the background of the controversy between the IMA and a yoga guru?**

I have a healthy regard for alternative systems of medicine. There are situations where homeopathy is better, or Ayurveda, no question about it. But I only wish they had a little more scientific rationale in analysing and coming to a conclusion. You can't just say I have given this to 50 patients; they all survived and hence it is working.





Dr V Ramasubramanian, at a meeting of RC Madras, with former club president Dr Vijaya Bharathi.

No, there should be some scientific analysis. The fact is that they have survived for centuries, which means they have made effective interventions.

### **Do they help in treating infectious diseases?**

Oh yes, they do, but usually for acute situations, allopathy is better. This is my feeling.

### **You are a Rotarian, what do you feel about the way Rotary,**

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I have a healthy regard for  
alternative systems of medicine.

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in analysing and coming to a  
conclusion.

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### **and the larger community has responded... with so much of kindness and generosity during this pandemic?**

Despite criticising the media for creating panic, I have phenomenal faith in human beings. Both Rotary and the larger community have rallied around splendidly, giving oxygen concentrators, trying to get beds for people, running vaccination camps. On similar lines we need to tone down the panic and this is the best thing the media can do.

Coming to Rotary, it is making a huge difference in the lives of so many people, earlier and now during this pandemic. Whether it is helping somebody to survive, or feel better... showing empathy which is so important, and getting a warm glow which only helping others can bring. Rotary is a fantastic organisation, so well organised and regulated. I am proud to be a Rotarian.

### **I know you're really working long hours. What does your day look like?**

(Smiles) I get up at 5.30 am, go to my clinic (Capstone Clinic, a multispecialty clinic he initiated) at 7 am, leave it at 9, reach Apollo Hospitals (Greaves Road) by 10.15 am, where I attend to both OP and inpatients, return to my clinic at 3.30 pm and work there till 7 pm. So it is 12 straight hours of work. And then in the evening I talk to people like you, attend Zoom calls, meetings, committee meetings, print and electronic media interviews, Insta and FB chats... all that goes on.

### **How do you get your exercise?**

Physical exercise is not a problem at all. I clock at least 10,000 steps a day walking around the hospital. I am exhausted when I finish for the day, and within 5 seconds fall asleep until the alarm wakes me up. I also do yoga thrice a week, each session being 45 minutes. ■

# Fighting Covid is our priority



**Ashok Mahajan**

**O**n one hand, we receive daily news of the havoc being caused by the Covid-19 virus. At the same time, it is heartening to see that Rotarians across India have come to the forefront of the battle against the dreaded virus. Take a look at the great work done by Rotary in the last few months.

Free vaccination centres have been established in many states; oxygen plants have been set up in hospitals; oxygen concentrators are being provided; plasma supplies are being coordinated; and call centres have been set up to provide accurate information and ensure coordination of Covid relief work.

RC Madras was the first to enter into an agreement with the Tamil Nadu government to partner in the Covid relief work including vaccination. The club donated four refrigerated trucks and other cold chain logistic facilities, all costing over ₹1 crore, to the state government for vaccine transportation. Along with the Chennai Corporation, it also organised nine camps over two days across the city, vaccinating 3,000 people free of cost. I congratulate the club president, secretary and other office bearers for their yeoman service.

RC Ujjain has established a 100-bed quarantine centre in

Prashanti Garden which belongs to Rtn. Avanish Gupta. Many Rotarians have helped in this wonderful project which was dedicated to the community by the Education Minister of Madhya Pradesh in end-April.

In Delhi, DG Sanjiv Rai Mehra had committed to install 10 oxygen plants in hospitals and one single club alone, RC Delhi Premier, installed seven plants in seven hospitals within two weeks. This ₹2 crore project will benefit hundreds of patients immediately.

I congratulate and salute district and club leaders for their exemplary leadership during this national crisis.

Various factors, including a surge in number of cases, has resulted in shortage of medical oxygen in hospitals across the

country. With just over 1,200 cryogenic tankers available for transport of liquid medical oxygen, today we need oxygen concentrators to reach every hospital and nursing home.

The GoI has reduced the GST on oxygen concentrators to 12 per cent till end-June and waived Customs duty. Custom clearance will be granted for such imports by treating them on par with life-saving drugs. I request every Rotary leader to talk to their batchmates and sister clubs overseas and co-ordinate the shipment of oxygen concentrators to India. Rotary clubs must be able to fund this life-saving equipment by approaching philanthropists in their community and other organisations.

As vaccine supplies get restored to adequate levels, we must gear up to ensure that the communities that we live in become safer. There is a genuine concern that the virus may infect the younger population. The safety net of vaccination needs to spread far and wide to cover as many people as possible, as fast as possible.

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*The writer is a past Rotary International director and chairman, Rotary India's Covid Task Force.*



# RC Madras donates equipment worth ₹1.1 crore for Covid vaccination

V Muthukumaran



RC Madras president Kapil Chitale along with RIDE A S Venkatesh, TN health secretary Dr J Radhakrishnan (centre), former IT secretary Vivek Harinarain (5<sup>th</sup> from right) and TN public health director Dr TS Selvavinayagam (4<sup>th</sup> from right) at the hand-over of cold chain equipment for Covid vaccination.

**A**s part of its support initiatives for the Tamil Nadu government's ongoing Covid vaccination programme, after being chosen as the nodal club in this endeavour, RC Madras, RID 3232, donated a slew of cold chain logistic facilities worth \$150,000 (over ₹1.1 crore) to the State Department of Public Health and Hygiene.

The facilities include two 14-foot-long refrigerated trucks with a total capacity to transport 44 lakh doses from the

central vaccine storage facility to the zonal vaccine stores; two 8-foot refrigerated trucks that can transport 20 lakh doses from the zonal stores to the district stores; 15 ice-lined refrigerators that can store 10 lakh doses of vaccines in the district stores; five deep freezers; and 1,000 vaccine carriers (box type) that can be used to vaccinate up to 30 lakh people each time.

RIDE A S Venkatesh presented the keys of the cold chain facilities to the TN health secretary

J Radhakrishnan in the presence of state public health director Dr TS Selvavinayagam, club president Kapil

*Along with polio, once again in 1995, Rotary helped us in our hepatitis-B vaccination drive and now it is filling the infrastructure gaps, especially in ensuring cold chain networks.*

**J Radhakrishnan**  
TN Health Secretary.

Chitale, secretary PB Prasad, project chair Dr Gautamadas Udupi, co-chair A M Vishwanathan, special projects director S Balakrishna and medical officials. The hand-over ceremony was held at the Government Multi Super Speciality Hospital, Omandurar Estate.

Speaking on the occasion, Venkatesh said, "all the 35,000-plus Rotarians in Tamil Nadu are ready to provide all necessary help, and donate equipment to the government to meet the

complete needs of the cold chain infrastructure and other facilities for vaccinating the people in the fight against this pandemic.”

Over the last 35 years, the 92-year-old club has taken the lead in polio eradication in this part of the world; and now it is providing delivery trucks and vaccine carriers for the “last mile reach to inoculate every single people of the state,” he added.

Venkatesh gave citations to five major sponsors — Cookson India, SRF, Vinayaka Missions Hospital and Research, Godrej Boyce and RC Madhavaram — and 15 smaller sponsors including club members and RC Chennai IT City.

Club president Chitale said that the club will be launching a mobile vaccine unit (MVU) in collaboration with the Apollo Hospitals to provide vaccination to

people in remote hamlets and areas where there is no primary health centre or any medical facilities. The club will also join hands with the Sundaram Medical Foundation to roll out vaccine-related programmes such as creating awareness on vaccination.

The Covid trucks were custom-built so that its interiors can

maintain the required constant temperature in the range of 2–8 degree Celsius to ensure the vaccine’s potency, said Dr Gautamadas speaking to *Rotary News*.

Referring to the Union health minister Harsh Vardhan’s statement that the GoI is expected to receive 400–500 million vaccine doses to cover around 20–25 crore people by July

2021, the project chairman said the Centre has directed states to make a robust plan for vaccine storage and distribution by Oct 15. The task of securing ‘end-to-end connectivity’ — from the time the vaccine is received from the manufacturer at the central vaccine store, Chennai, till it is

received at the point of administration in cities, towns and villages — and ensuring that nothing goes wrong before the shot is administered is very important. Only this will ensure the success of the vaccine programme, he said.

### A big ‘thank you’

Recalling the eventful relationship with Rotary since 1985 when the state had partnered with it for the Pulse Polio campaign, Radhakrishnan expressed a ‘big thank you’ for all the health-related service extended by Rotary clubs in Tamil Nadu. “Along with polio, once again in 1995, Rotary helped us in our hepatitis-B vaccination drive and now it is filling the infrastructure gaps, especially in ensuring cold chain networks,” he said. ■



From L: Club president Chitale, TN health secretary J Radhakrishnan and RIDE Venkatesh.





# Coimbatore Rotarians shore up healthcare facilities

Jaishree

**I**n its fight against the second wave of Covid, Coimbatore hospitals faced severe oxygen shortage following a high influx of patients in need of oxygen.

Dr A Nirmala, dean of the Coimbatore Medical College and Hospital (CMCH), made a desperate call to Dr Balavenkat, senior consultant-anaesthesiologist, Ganga Hospital, Coimbatore, seeking support. The Rotarian, a member of RC Coimbatore, immediately circulated a video among Rotary, Round Table and other organisations with an appeal to help. “In the next 48 hours we had ₹2.4 crore in our kitty!” he says. Rotary clubs of Coimbatore pooled in ₹1 crore and Dr Rajesh and Dr Nitya, alumni of CMCH, raised a similar amount from the US. Funds are still pouring in and are being used for various Covid-related activities, he adds.

This money helped in setting up four oxygen plants in the GH and three in the ESI Hospital in Coimbatore. Each of these plants, costing ₹27 lakh, can generate 100 litres of oxygen per minute.

“It is all a joint effort. Boundaries have blurred and all clubs are huddling up together for service at this critical time,” says Chella Raghavendra, member of RC Coimbatore Spectrum, RID 3201. The club placed orders for two plants to be installed at the CMCH and RC Coimbatore East pitched in

with one more. Each of these plants will provide piped oxygen to 20 beds simultaneously. Additionally, RC Coimbatore Satellite, along with Aquasub Pumps, installed a high-flow oxygen plant at the CMCH. It can fill up 72 cylinders a day and thus support another 40 beds there.

Vivekanandan, a member of RC Coimbatore North, arranged to supply these machines within a week through his company, Faraday Ozone. “He slashed his prices and even put on hold his export orders to meet our emergency need.”

RC Coimbatore Spectrum roped in an NGO from Taiwan to provide 200 oxygen concentrators. “We will give them to the district collector to be installed at PHCs which have been



Rotarians overseeing the manufacture and testing of oxygen concentrators at an assembling unit.

converted as Covid care centres,” says Raghavendra.

### Project Sanjeevani

Rotary India’s Covid Task Force zone coordinator Sunil Zacharia called an online meeting with DG Jose Chacko, assistant governors and district directors to extend relief on a war-footing. “‘If we Rotarians do not act now it is a crime,’ he said and this made a strong impact,” says district director RS Maruti. Rotarians from the city’s 41 Rotary clubs immediately formed a Covid Action team called G41 to extend support to the public, hospitals and frontline workers through what they termed *Project Sanjeevani*. Volunteers from the clubs were put on its committee, led by Maruti and district chair — community services PP Lakshmanan. “We pooled in resources from each club and categorised them under headings — doctors/hospitals and nursing homes, medical equipment, catering and ambulance services. This helped in speedy contact whenever needed,” he says.

Chacko formulated a 20-point agenda which was channelised into three verticals in consultation with DGE Rajasekhar, PDG A V Pathy, Raghavendra and AGs. These dealt with providing vaccination for Rotarians, their families and employees and Rotaractors; advocacy through digital and print media; and providing required equipment to government and private hospitals and PHCs. Popular You Tubers, influencers and Annets were roped in for its promotion. Rotaractors led by DRR Janani are working closely with the team in helping the public with online registration for vaccination, setting up online help desks and a Covid war room that can respond to queries from the public and doctors.

“We will soon provide seven machines to the ESI Hospital,” says



Maruti. The hospital has increased its beds from 600 to 1,000 to treat Covid patients and hence the acute oxygen shortage. RC Coimbatore Sai City, in partnership with Coromondal Fertilisers, Chennai, has provided oxygen concentrators worth ₹50 lakh to the GH in Ooty and medical support worth ₹3.5 lakh to the CMCH..

Recently the G41 team received a request from the CMCH and ESI Hospital for RTPCR testing machines and other basic medical equipment which will be provided. Along with manpower acquired through Rotarians who run HR agencies, the team has rented 33 autorickshaws for use in PHCs during the lockdown. The rent, ₹10,000 for each autorickshaw, is borne by the clubs. The clubs are also taking care of consumable requirements such as masks, sanitisers, oximeters, gloves and PPE kits at the PHCs and hospitals.

Rotary clubs of Coimbatore will be providing oxygen assistance for a total 180 beds in the CMCH and 260 beds in the ESI hospital, says Maruti,

adding that three clubs — RCs Coimbatore Uptown, D’elite and Greencity — are together sponsoring an ECMO machine worth ₹40 lakh for CMCH.

Several Rotarians are working with CSR partners and friends abroad to extend support to hospitals in Coimbatore. “Even the local community is involved. Recently one Rangaraj called me and said that he had heard about our work and wished to donate ₹1 lakh. Funds are pouring in and we are coordinating with clubs that have FCRA-registered accounts to bring in foreign funds,” he smiles. Business forums such as CII, SITRA and CAI have also shown interest to channelise their contribution through Rotary.

The Rotarians are also helping critically-ill patients get hospital admission. “One such patient, who I got a bed after nine hours’ coordination, told me that the first thing he wants to do after he recovers is join Rotary!” says Maruti, adding, “once this crisis is behind us, we all will have powerful stories to relate.” ■



# Indian Rotarians help fight the second Covid surge

V Muthukumaran

**W**ith the second wave of Covid surge causing untold misery, leading to panic in hospitals and an overburdened healthcare system and government mechanisms all over the country, as the infected gasped for oxygen, Rotary clubs across India have joined hands with local authorities to set up treatment facilities and hold vaccination camps throughout the RI districts.

## RC Gandhidham, RID 3054

In a span of 10 days, RC Gandhidham, RID 3054, set up a 40-bed Covid hospital at an unused building at Nagalpar, Anjar, a municipality in the Kutch district of Gujarat.

Anjar deputy collector Dr Vimal K Joshi sent his tahsildar AM Mandori to meet the club members with a request to set up a hospital with oxygen beds on an emergency basis to accommodate the increasing number of Covid patients. On the 63<sup>rd</sup> charter day of the club, a seven-member project team lead by club president Ghela Ahir visited the site and formulated a plan to install a Covid hospital at this vacant building in Nagalpar. “We assigned different roles to Rotarians and started to work. The project was divided into two phases with the target to create 80 oxygen beds. In the first phase, we focused on the development of two separate wards for males and females with 36–40 Covid beds,” said Ahir.

While the total project estimate was ₹50 lakh, the district administration led by Joshi assured the club that Indian Oil, Kandla, will contribute ₹25 lakh for the Covid hospital. Before moving in the medical equipment, the old building was given a new look following a thorough clean-up of its rooms and premises, painting of walls, repair work, installing electrical fittings like tube lights, fans, oxygen lines, fire safety and other hospital accessories.

The Nani Nagalpar panchayat led by sarpanch Samjibhai deputed a team to assist the club members at the site in completing the first phase of the project in a record time of 10 days. Gujarat minister for social and backward classes Vasanbhai Ahir,





Project team of RC Gandhidham at the inauguration of Covid Hospital in Anjar.

**Below: PDG Deepak Shikarpur (2<sup>nd</sup> from left, back row) donating Covid kits to Pune mayor Murlidhar Mohol, along with members of Pune clubs.**



local MLA Maltiben Maheshwari and district collector Pravina DK visited the project site and appreciated the “wholehearted contributions of Rotarians in setting up the Covid hospital.”

All the infrastructure, related network and feeder lines including oxygen supply, running water, toilet blocks and other amenities were made available for Covid patients. “All went according to plan and in 10 days we opened the 36-bed fully-oxygenated hospital after testing the oxygen and fire safety lines in the presence of Anjar SDM Joshi and other district officials,” said Ghela Ahir. His entire team is extremely satisfied for completing in time a crucial emergency project.

#### **RC Howrah, RID 3291**

RC Howrah, RID 3291, met its three-fold objectives — creating awareness on Covid vaccination, addressing local resistance due to misinformation and providing logistic support to the

government — by giving free inoculation of Covishield doses to residents and club members.

Club president Dr Pamela Ghosh, in partnership with the local administration, arranged Covid shots at the club hall. A team led by Rtn Dr Monosij Dhara helped in giving the required doses. “We tried to cover all our members above 60, district Rotarians and spouses of our members, besides local residents, in our vaccination drive,” said Dr Pamela. Over 100 people were vaccinated.

The medical team was assisted by club members including Dr Dhara, vice-president Dr Debasis Sanyal, past president Dr DK Datta and Dr Guru Prasad Bhattacharjee.

#### **RC Sunam, RID 3090**

RC Sunam, RID 3090, gave free doses to 120 persons at its Rotary Complex, Sunam. Dr Munish Gupta and a five-member medical team from the



Civil Hospital rendered this service at the vaccination camp. Club president Rakesh Singla, project chair Ashok Goyal, Rtns Vaneet Garg, Kamal Garg and Haridev Goyal took care of the logistics and Covid-appropriate behaviour was maintained at the venue. A selfie stand was put up for those inoculated to take snaps and spread the message across social media.

The club also installed four automatic hand sanitiser machines at the sub-divisional complex, Cheema, and in three schools in Sheron and Sunam including the Rotary Public School. President Singla along with project chair Subhash Katyal, Naveen Garg and Devinderpal Singh, was present at the project sites. The club is making efforts to sensitise the public on hand-washing, wearing mask and observing social distance to prevent the spread of the virus. Rtn Shiv Jindal is leading this awareness campaign.

#### **RC Tellicherry, RID 3202**

Down south in Kerala, RC Tellicherry, RID 3202, jointly organised a

vaccination camp with the Iritty Municipality and the taluk hospital on two days (April 9, 16) at the Falcon Plaza auditorium, Iritty, 40km from Tellicherry. "We provided the logistic support and few of our Rotarians were present at the camp in which around 2,700 persons were vaccinated," said past president Raveendranathan. DG Harikrishnan Nambiar inaugurated a free vaccination camp at the Mallya Hospital, Kasaragod, which drew a good response from the local people. Rotary clubs in Kerala have done over one lakh free vaccinations till April 30 at their Rotary centres and special camps across RIDs 3201, 3202 and 3211.

Following acute shortage of pulse oximeters in the state the Kerala government has launched a "pulse oximeter challenge' urging people to lend their pulse oximeters to hospitals temporarily for monitoring oxygen levels of Covid patients. Rotary's Covid coordinators are mobilising these equipment through Rotary clubs of the three districts.

#### **RCs Pune East, Pune Shivajinagar, Pune Downtown, RID 3131**

Following a request from Pune mayor Murlidhar Mohol, three clubs — RCs Pune East, Pune Shivajinagar and Pune Downtown, RID 3131 — along with Rtn Prabhakar Batwal donated 20,000 masks, 500 litres of sanitisers and 1,000 PPE kits to Covid warriors including over 10,000 contract workers of the city corporation. The project was executed in partnership with RMB (Rotary Means Business), Pune circle. The corporation will distribute these anti-Covid kits to the frontline workers including conservancy staff. RPIC Deepak Shikarpur, a past governor, district service director Shital Shah and other Rotarians were present at the hand-over event. Later Mohol tweeted to thank Rotary clubs for donating the protective kits.

#### **RC Amreli Gir, RID 3060**

An oxygen bank was started by RC Amreli Gir, RID 3060, in just three days with liberal donations from Rotarians and philanthropists. This bank has 55 oxygen cylinders of 15kg capacity, six

**RID 3211 DG Thomas Vavanikunnel (L) visiting a Rotary Covid vaccination centre in Kerala.**



jumbo cylinders of 35kg capacity and two oxygen concentrators. “This oxygen bank is serving needy patients and so far more than 320 people had benefited from it,” said Pratik Sanghrajka, a club member. RID 3060 has given 62,000 doses at 11 Rotary vaccination centres, 21 adopted centres and 44 vaccination camps across the district.

### Rotary clubs in Latur, RID 3132

Five clubs in Latur, RID 3132, came together to start *Project Mission Oxygen* last year during the first lockdown. They purchased 15 oxygen concentrators and chose an NGO Savarkar Rugna Sewa to handle the delivery of these machines to needy patients. District collector G Shrikant



Haryana deputy speaker Ranbir Gangwa (3rd from right) and Hisar mayor Gautam Sardana (2nd from left) at the inauguration of oxygen therapy machines.



PDG Hariprasad Somani at the launch of Project Mission Oxygen in Latur.

and Mayor Vikrant Gojamgunde were the chief guests at the launch of these machines.

A token amount of ₹50 per day is charged for a machine (as against ₹500 a day in the market) which is delivered only after the doctor’s advice. So far, 80 patients had benefited from oxygen concentrators. The clubs will procure five more machines with rising Covid cases in Latur. PDG Dr Hariprasad Somani is the chief promoter of *Mission Oxygen* which is being led by project chair Sudhir Lature and his deputy Raj Dhoot.

### RC Hisar, RID 3090

Three high-flow oxygen therapy machines (₹9 lakh) were donated to the Sevak Sabha Charitable Trust by RC Hisar. Club president Mohit Gupta, secretary Anand Bansal and project chair Arvind Bansal coordinated for the success of the project. “These machines offer effective treatment for Covid patients, especially those in the second or third stage. They perform the functions of ventilators in saving lives by providing oxygen support,” said Rtn Naveen R Garg from RID 3090. ■



# A photo contest helps fund mega projects in RID 3190

Kiran Zehra

**T**he Environment Sustainability Rotarians Action Group (ESRAG) of RID 3190 and the International Fellowship of Rotarian Photographers (IFRP) organised a photo contest to create awareness on conservation of biodiversity and diverse culture, and also raise funds for three major district projects. The contest brought together various Rotary action groups, Rotarians and Rotaractors in the district through an online platform. “The strategic partnership between RAGs, International Fellowships and local clubs

will breathe new life into Rotary as it allows members across the world to raise funds, grow membership and exchange project ideas virtually. All the initiatives were carried out locally,” says Latha Krishnan, coordinator of the photo contest.

Three projects — *Rupantara*, a menstrual health programme at Rajakunte village, Koira Lake rejuvenation and rain water harvesting (RWH) at government schools — were chosen for funding keeping in mind the scale of impact they will have on people and the environment. After the District RAGs chair Raghu Allam gave the green

signal, a virtual *The Rotary En-vision Photography Contest* was announced. “It showcased environment-related projects carried out by our district. We encouraged amateur and professional photographers to capture the rich biodiversity and share it with the world,” she said. The IFRP experts judged 500 entries from across the country. DG B L Nagendra Prasad was the chief guest; 28 Rotary clubs and four Rotaract clubs participated. The event helped raise ₹5.27 lakh, which was allocated for the three projects. The photo contest was supported by the Rotary Fellowship of Wildlifers for Conservation.



### Project Rupantra

District MHM chair Nisha Ballerie says that the MHM initiative began three years ago with the mapping of existing knowledge, attitude and practices in Rajakunte, a semi-urban locality near Bengaluru. “With the help of self-help groups, Asha workers and anganwadi staff we engaged the girl students for behaviour change at the school and community level.” As part of the training, 12 implementation partners, *Rupantara Sakhis* as they are called, were given free kits consisting of cloth pads and menstrual cups and were told to first try them out before advocating them to the village women. The MHM kits were sponsored by NariYari, a social enterprise in Bengaluru.

At the ground-level, the *sakhis* went from door-to-door urging women to switch to reusable menstrual products to reduce the toxic waste generated by single-use sanitary napkins. “Since the volunteers are known faces

and have built trust over the years, the message was readily accepted,” says Nisha.

Shylaja, an Asha worker and a *Rupantara sakhi*, who promotes menstrual cups in the village says, “I have tried it myself and now have rash-free periods. It also saves me a huge amount of money that I used to buy sanitary napkins every month. I am contributing in a small way to keep Rajakunte green and bring transformation.” A recent survey conducted by the *sakhis* shows that 75 per cent of the women are willing to buy cloth pads and 30 per cent of them are willing to switch to menstrual cups when available at reasonable rates “if it ensures chemical-free periods and doesn’t pollute their surroundings,” says Shylaja.

Before she came up with *Rupantra* with the help of her club, RC Bengaluru Platinum City, Nisha had conducted MHM awareness programmes for over 10,000 girls and women in and around the city.

Five clubs came together to form Gramalakshmi, a self-help group, with seed funding in 2019. This SHG is now producing and supplying *Aaram* cloth pads to the government schools, colleges and for the Rupantra Project. “Four women from Sriramanhalli near Bengaluru are successfully running the SHG. Around 350 women were trained across seven villages to carry forward our mission. Along with a couple of NGOs, we are working to stop around 200,000 single-use napkins from being dumped into landfill sites each year.”

### Lake restoration

Rampant quarrying of granite boulders over decades had left the residents of Koira village in Devanahalli taluk in rural Bengaluru jobless as agriculture was destroyed due to drying up of lakes and other water bodies. “We had no choice but to move out of the village or join the quarrying business,” said Chikkegowda (54), a local resident.

**The Koira Lake rejuvenated by  
RC Bangalore Raj Mahal Vilas.**







Paddy being cultivated at Koira village.

He sought the help of RC Bangalore Raj Mahal Vilas and its president Sanjay Krishna decided to take up lake restoration in Koira. A study report was submitted to the project committee and it was first decided to clear around 57,000 cubic metres of silt while cleaning the feeder canal. “The villagers had already

desilted 15,000 cubic metres of muck on their own. We completed the project in two years,” says Krishna.

The project cost was pegged at ₹80 lakh and through the photo contest, they had received ₹1.8 lakh. The additional funds were contributed by villagers who also joined the manpower and pooled in other resources for the

lake restoration work. “Eight families gave up their 10-acre land, which was an encroachment, near the lake as they wanted to restore the lake and help regain lost livelihoods,” he says. Today, the Koira Lake is brimming with water, along with the wells in all the four villages, and farmers have begun work on their land. “We want those who left the village to return,” smiles Chikkegowda.

The RWH project, which aims at setting up rainwater percolation units at 100 government schools in Karnataka, has recently inaugurated two units at Hoodi Government Schools near Bengaluru. The project cost of ₹1.25 lakh was contributed by the employees of Caterpillar, a construction and mining equipment manufacturer. The units will be maintained by a student committee and monitored by RC Bengaluru Lake World. Project in-charge John Daniel says there are plans to convert the student committee into a Rotaract club. The funds received from the photo contest will be used in the setting up of RWH units in other schools. ■



Rupantara Sakhis promoting cloth sanitary napkins.

# Rotary constructs check dam at Bandipur

Jaishree

**R**otary Club of Mysore South East, RID 3181, has constructed a 48-foot-long check dam in the middle of a dense forest, 10km from the Bandipur Tiger Reserve near Mysuru. “The region, spread over 800 sq km. has a thick wildlife population. After the monsoon, when the dam fills up it will help animals and birds get enough water,” said assistant governor Harish H M. Every February and March, a majority of waterholes dry up, resulting in severe hardship for animals.

The district has undertaken watershed development as one of its focus

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The region, spread over  
800sqkm, has a thick  
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birds get enough water,

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**DG Ranganath Bhat inaugurates the check dam in the presence of Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa, assistant governor Harish H M, club president M Rajeev and secretary M Mohan.**

areas this year and Rotary clubs have been urged to construct check dams wherever possible. The club, led by M Rajeev and secretary M Mohan, agreed to implement the project which cost ₹6.5 lakh after taking due permission from the forest department. “As the region is located deep into the forest we had to spend double the money for transport of material. We were happy to engage local labour,” said Rajeev.

DG Ranganath Bhat inaugurated the check dam in the presence of district secretary Vikramdatta, conservator of forests SR Natesha and Kannada film actor Darshan Thoogudeepa. Bhat congratulated the club members for “implementing one of the best projects of the district”.

Generally monsoon sets in Bandipur in July and the area sees good rain until December. The six-foot deep

check dam can collect enough water to last through the summer months, said Harish. The facility will benefit a local tribal community in the vicinity too, and the dam will be maintained by the forest department.

Earlier this year this club, along with its Inner Wheel club, rejuvenated a pond at Hadinaru, a village 18km from Mysuru. “The place used to attract several migratory birds but over the years the numbers dwindled due to poor maintenance of the water body. We spent ₹4 lakh and removed around six tonnes of waste from it,” said Rajeev. An RCC was formed in the village to take care of its sanitation, hygiene and other needs.

In addition, a hearing aid distribution camp was conducted in association with the All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, and hearing aids were given to 100 villagers. ■



# Homage to Rotary leaders who we lost recently

## MV Ravikumar

In less than a month, RID 3190 lost three extraordinary Rotarians — past district governors S Uday Kumar (1989–90), Dr Prithvi Raval (2000–01) and UB Bhat (2008–09) creating a huge void. I was privileged to have been associated with these leaders who shaped my Rotary journey.

My first meeting with Bhat (UB) was when our club chartered his home club with him as charter president — Rotary Bangalore South Parade — in June 1996. In spite of his academic and professional achievements — an engineering graduate

from REC Surathkal and post-graduate from IIM-Ahmedabad, brilliant marketing career in United Breweries — UB was a simple and down-to-earth friend to everyone. He was one of the passengers on board Flight IC 814 from Kathmandu to New Delhi on Dec 24, 1999, which was hijacked to Khandahar. UB captured those excruciating, restive hours in his book *Terror on Board*. I closely worked with him during 2002–03 when he was conference chairman and during the centennial Rotary year, when I was the district membership chairman and his home



PDG U B Bhat

club hosted ICGF (Inter City General Forum) on club service. He was the chairman. To increase participation in ICGF he designed a special lapel pin and honoured all Rotarians who had completed 25 years in Rotary. When he was elected DG for 2008–09, he called me and said, “I know your passion in Avoidable Blindness (AB) but I also want you to be deputy district trainer.” He entrusted me the responsibility of developing training programmes for AGs training, PETS and SETS. That year, our district launched *Cataract (backlog free) RI District 3190* project and we have come a long way in reducing blindness due to cataract.

I recall my first meeting with Dr Raval in July 1999, to finalise dates for my installation as president and the Governor’s Official Visits as he was taking over as DG during

2000–01. This initial meeting immediately struck a chord between us, for he and I were both very strict about punctuality. During 2002–03, when he was appointed the regional AB coordinator for South Asia, he requested the incoming DG Bhansali to appoint me as the district AB committee chairman. Thus began my long journey with AB which got me the *Service Above Self Award*. Raval initiated the *International Fellowship of Motorcycling Rotarians* — India Chapter in 2003 making it a second-level Major Donor to TRF.

When I joined Rotary in 1988, Uday was the DGE. He developed several MG projects to ensure water availability in 40 villages by restoring wells and building storage tanks. He was particular that once a person was invited to join Rotary, he should become a lifetime Rotarian and would



PDG Prithvi Raval

# Vinod Bansal: a devoted Rotarian

Aishani Bansal

Vinod Bansal was a dedicated and highly qualified professional in field of finance, local and international, and a renowned corporate consultant. As a devoted Rotarian, he has worked in every area of focus with distinction. He became district governor for RID 3010 in 2013–14 after a trailblazing start in Rotary in 2001. His term was marked with consistent successes and new milestones for Rotary at the district, national and international level.

Bansal was a member of the prestigious Investment Committee of The Rotary Foundation for 2019–22. He raised the maximum funds for TRF as DG, as ARRFC for two years and now as EMGA. He raised a record \$1.7 million 2013–14, which was the highest contribution to the Annual Fund in the world.

Taking charge as president of the Rotary Blood Bank in 2016–2020, Bansal transformed the institution with his clear understanding of its potential to fulfil the current needs of society by making bold choices and futuristic investments



in upgrading infrastructure and expanding activities.

His commitment to the future of Rotary was inspirational. His compassion, excellence and focus drove him to lay the foundation of a long-lasting vision for Rotary, with a clear focus on the role India played in this story. No wonder he was invited to serve as member of Shaping Rotary's Future Committee for 2021–22.

First among equals, he always led from the front. Every single colleague remembers him as a humanitarian who rose to each challenge with grit and enthusiasm, identifying opportunities

even in adversity. His keen acumen and unique charm helped shape many formative Rotary projects and sustainable collaborations; “no” was just not an option.

He is dearly missed and his legacy is carried forward by his wife, Sangita Bansal, also a Rotarian, daughters Damini and Aishani, son-in-law Neil and all his cherished friends and colleagues around the world and in Rotary.

*(The writer is daughter of late PDG Vinod Bansal)*



PDG S Uday Kumar

stress on inviting the right professionals after thorough verification and ensuring that they understand Rotary's motto — *Service Above Self*.

Uday Kumar was a regular speaker at club meetings and the topic mostly was on Model Club, which was his passion. He was one of the staunch supporters of the Rotary Leadership Institute — educating Rotarians to become great leaders through training and collaboration. He motivated everyone to think big and Dr Srinagesh Simha,

past president of Rotary Bangalore Indiranagar, recalls how Dr Kishore Rao, Gurmeet Randhawa and he worked passionately and conceptualised the club's signature project — *Karunashreya*, a hospice in 1994.

All the three past governors were recipients of the *Service Above Self* Award.

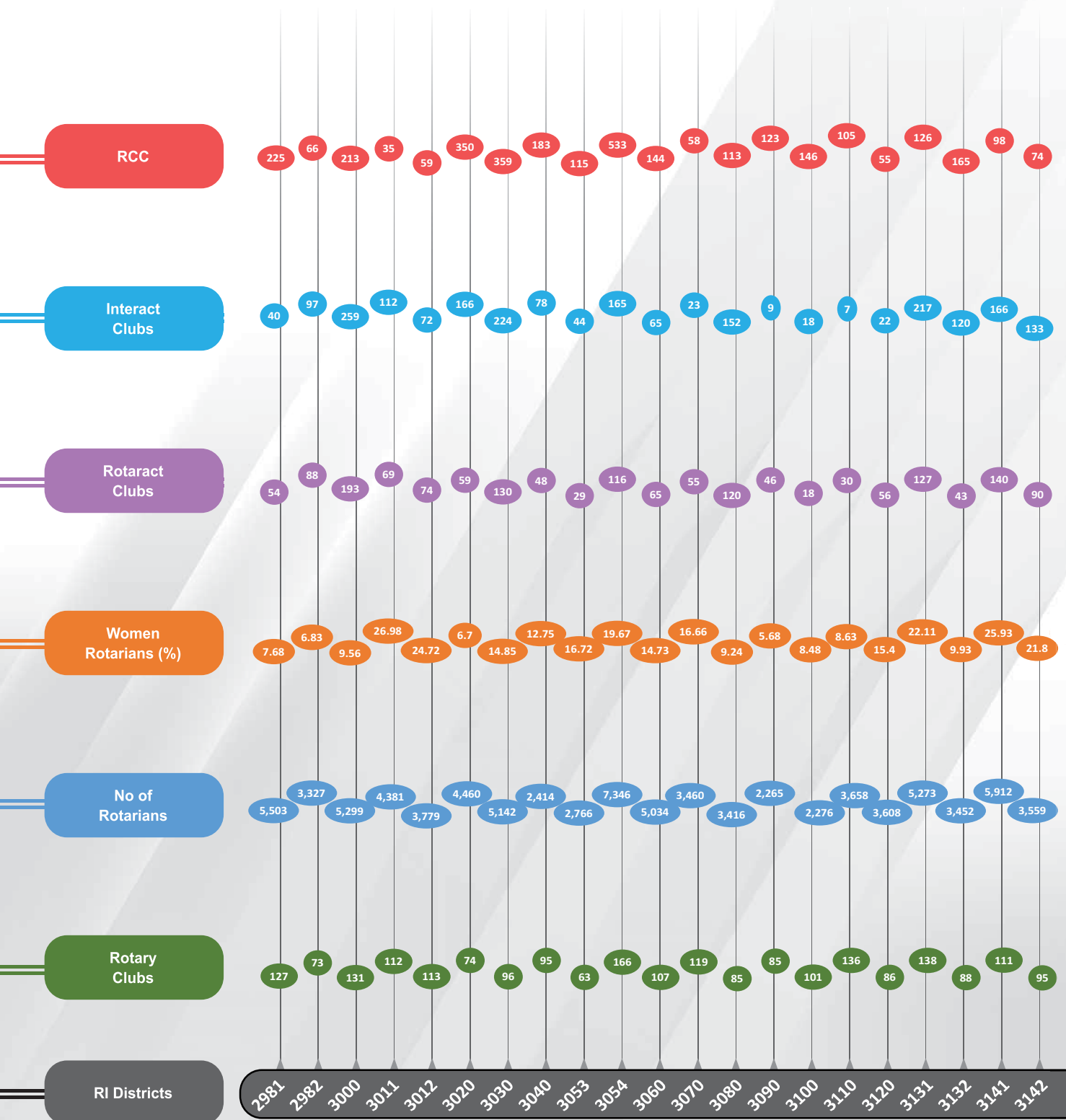
May their souls rest in eternal peace!

*(The writer is chairman - district Avoidable Blindness committee, RID 3190.)*



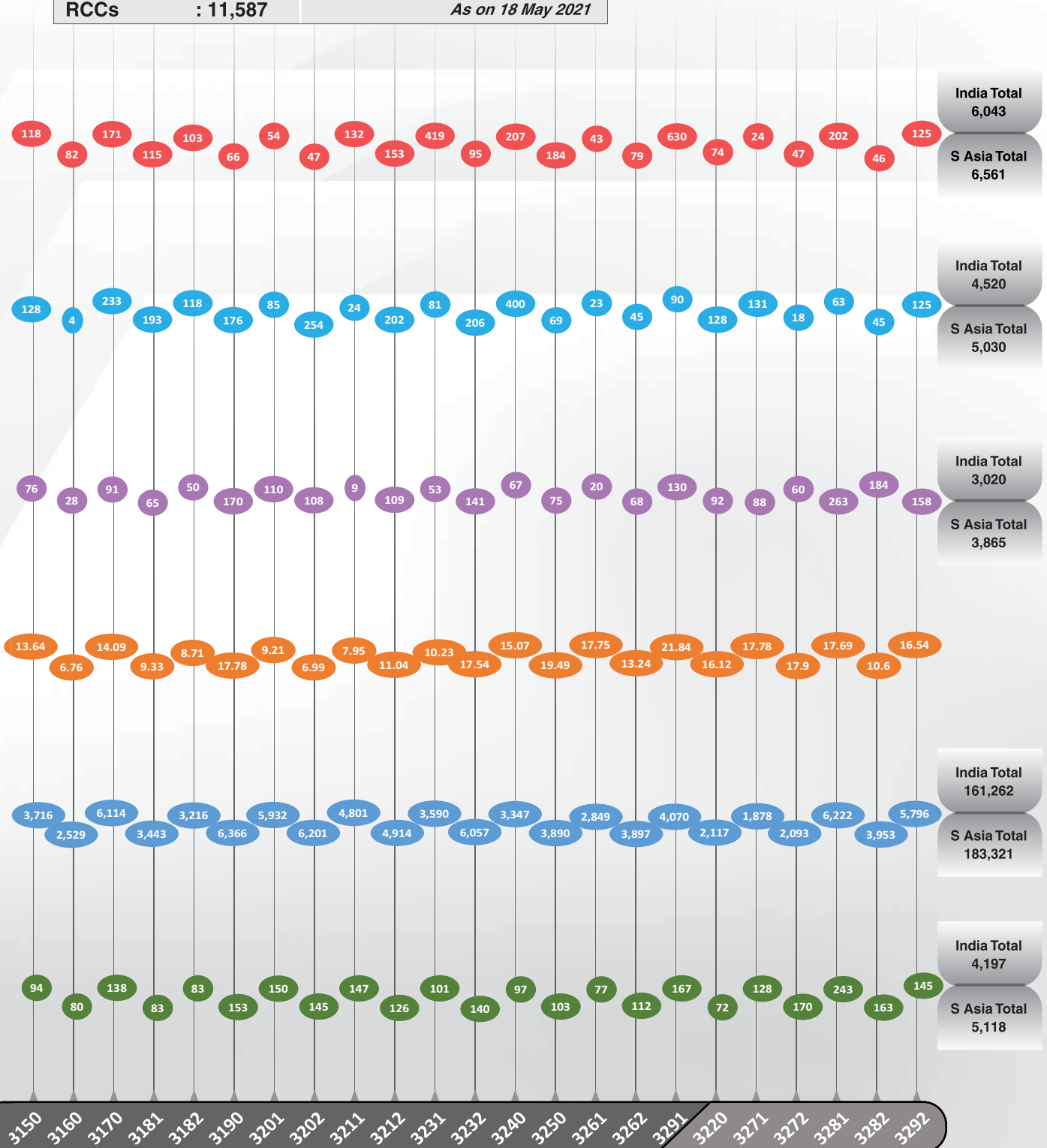
# Membership Summary

(As on May 1, 2021)



## Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 36,782	Rotary members : 1,198,766
Rotaract clubs : 10,063	Rotaract members : 217,186
Interact clubs : 15,035	Interact members : 368,805
RCCs : 11,587	As on 18 May 2021







# Let the better light shine

Preeti Mehra

**N**o modern urban dwelling can do without electricity. It is the source of energy that enables us to run a host of appliances which help us maintain indoor temperature, cook, wash and what have you. It also lights up our homes and runs devices that entertain and enlighten us. Our focus this time is on lighting. It is that magic illumination that we switch on when dusk sets in or whenever natural light needs to be augmented to facilitate indoor activity.

Happily, the switchover to energy-efficient and environment-friendly lighting is easier said and done. All it requires is an evening of shopping and changing the lights you currently use. This simple exercise could help you save upwards of six per cent on your electricity bill.

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A switchover to energy-efficient and environment-friendly lighting could help you save upwards of six per cent on your electricity bill.

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So, here is a rundown on the various lighting options available in the market. Along with it is a little review on each option and what makes your choice closer to going green.

The source of light found in most homes is the incandescent bulb, which has seen many improvements since Joseph Swan and Thomas Edison invented it in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It works on the simple principle that when electricity passes through the tungsten filament encased in a glass bulb it glows and produces heat and a yellow glow of light. The incandescent bulb comes in several sizes and voltages.

However, in recent years this bulb is slowly being replaced by more efficient Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs), Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs) and Fluorescent tubes. For commercial and other special purposes and spaces there are halogen lamps, metal halide lamps, neon lamps, high intensity discharge lamps, and low-pressure sodium lamps.

Currently, LED is the one that is most popular. It has a long lifespan and is rated as being the most environment-friendly. It basically emits light through the movement of electrons in a semiconductor device that is assembled into the bulb. It does not have a filament and uses less power. LEDs give more light than incandescent lamps and help save energy. It may cost much more than an incandescent bulb, but in the long run proves to be cheaper as you save on replacement costs. LEDs are known to last up to 8–25 times longer

than incandescent bulbs, while using only 25 to 30 per cent of the energy.

Many people are reluctant to replace all incandescent bulbs with LED lights because the upfront costs are higher. This is all the more so if the house or apartment is a fair-sized one. In fact, many consumers prefer to replace one bulb at a time. It is not a bad idea since this way the expense is divided over a longer period of time. Nevertheless, the benefits in terms of saving energy will begin trickling in and will soon build up.

Very often incandescent lighting is replaced by Compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs). These consist of a few tubular loops and resemble the incandescent bulb. It gives the same amount of light, uses less power, and lasts at least 10 times longer. However, CFL comes with a rider. It contains a small amount of toxic mercury and hence needs to be handled delicately after its life is over. If you are inclined to using CFL bulbs you will have to ensure they are disposed of in the correct manner along with other e-waste so that they reach the right place for recycling. CFLs may look pretty, but they are not the best environment-friendly option.

Quite popular for areas of the home that need a lot of light like the kitchen, the balcony or the bathroom is the fluorescent tube. This is a gas discharge tube that uses fluorescence to produce white visible light. It has a long life and has high luminous efficiency. It uses less power than an incandescent bulb but is more expensive. However, like CFLs, it needs to be disposed of carefully because of its gaseous content. It needs to be given to an e-waste handler for recycling.

There is no doubt that the best option for those who want to go green is switching to LED bulbs. They have two advantages over the others. They are mercury-free and give off little

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The best option for those who want to go green is switching to LED bulbs.

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heat. Experts always explain that since you are looking for light from a bulb and not heat, any heat that is given out from a bulb means waste of energy. Also, bulbs generating heat require more air conditioning to keep a house cool in the summer months.

With governments encouraging citizens to switch to LED lighting and many states providing a subsidy on the bulbs, slowly and steadily the prices of LED bulbs are decreasing, making them more accessible. For long-term lighting options they are the best and help you transition to a greener lifestyle. The disposal of LEDs is also simple. They can be disposed of in the general trash can after wrapping them up carefully so that in case one of them breaks, it does not hurt the waste collector. Ultimately, the bulb will reach a recycler who will recover materials like glass and aluminium from it.

In the home, energy has many dimensions, and its efficient use is now a mantra for not only cutting electricity consumption but also reducing greenhouse gases and mitigating climate change.

Next time we will be looking beyond lighting to other avenues where we can do our bit to promote energy efficiency.

*The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues.*





# Bookmarks as signals and sentinels

Sandhya Rao

Mostly they tell us how far we've travelled  
in a book, occasionally they remind us  
that the journey remains unfinished.

**E**arly April, I returned to *The Library Book* months after having inserted a bookmark to indicate where I had stopped reading. Some of you may remember the name: it's a book by Susan Orlean about a massive fire that was deliberately set off at the Los Angeles Public Library on April 29, 1986, in which some 400,000 books were destroyed. It begins: 'Even in Los Angeles, where there is no shortage of remarkable hairdos, Harry Peak attracted attention. "He was very blond. Very, very blond," his lawyer said to me, and then he fluttered his hand across his forehead, performing a pantomime of Peak's heavy swoop of bangs. Another lawyer, who questioned Peak in a deposition, remembered his hair very well. "He had a lot of it," she said. "And he was very definitely blond." An arson investigator

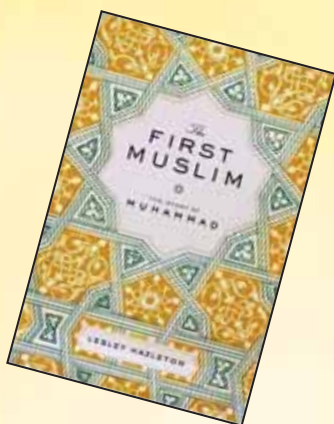
I met described Peak entering a courtroom "with all that hair," as if his hair existed independently.'

I remember the book was so compelling that I told many friends about it. If the felicitous writing and amazing accounts of people, events, places, libraries and reading was so fascinating, why had I left it half-way?



Returning to it now is proving as engrossing as ever, the historical details enlightening, the anecdotes engaging, the descriptions of librarians and patrons absorbing. For instance, around page 160, we are introduced to a young man 'with a sweet, distracted look on his face'. This is CJ. He is deaf and autistic and has an extraordinary knowledge of maps. When the library acquires the Feathers Collection, maps occupying 'the equivalent of two football fields of shelving', it is found to be all jumbled up. CJ is called in to help organise the maps. In the course of putting the maps in order, CJ finds one stuck between the pages of a street atlas. It turns out to be a 'map of the 1932 Summer Olympics, which were held in Los Angeles just as the Great Depression bore down. ... along the top of the map was the encouraging yet commanding phrase AVOID CONFUSION. The map had the frozen-moment quality of a snapshot.'

So, again: Why had I stopped reading? If you look online for reasons why people don't finish reading books, the most common answer is that they lose interest in them because they are bad or boring. In my case, two things happened: I was distracted by a whole pile of new books, and laid low by a mountain of work-related deadlines. After a while *The Library Book* was forgotten, although it remained — bookmark visible — on my open reading shelf, it was not consigned to a cupboard with closed doors. There were several occasions when I could have picked it up, given the ever-lengthening of our collective coronavirus isolation period, but the mood did not permit. Until this



moment. Thanks be for the return of the mojo because *The Library Book*, with its unprepossessing, old-fashioned cover design, is a book lover's delight.

The fact is, I rarely read only one book at a time, although usually I prefer to generally do things one at a time and cross them off the list as I complete the tasks. With books, however, three at one go is normal; it's like savouring the flavour of the moment, each book a different flavour. *The Library Book* is quite distinct from Lesley Hazleton's *The First Muslim* (brilliant) which is a far cry from Naguib Mahfouz's *The Quarter* (not as compelling as his other work) and Burhan Sönmez's *Istanbul Istanbul* (a tough read). You could argue that there's some similarity between Mahfouz and Sönmez, but while *The Quarter* is a collection of quirky, short sketches featuring individuals inhabiting a certain part of Cairo, Sönmez sets the complex and sometimes confusing narratives of his characters inside a prison ward. Other titles awaiting my return include *Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line* by Deepa Anappara and *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett.

This is where the game of algorithms comes into play. And we all know that the world of cyberspace is completely ruled by algorithms. So, I really shouldn't have been surprised to see the June 2019 article by Nilanjana Roy pop up on my Google menu: 'Why adults abandon more books than children'. The Internet Of All Things (sorry, IoT) had probably tracked my search for reasons why books are left partially read, and decided to help out. Writing in the *Financial Times*, she — I absolutely loved her book, *The Wildings* — says, 'An unfinished book is not necessarily bad or good — perhaps it is only that it took the reader by surprise. It was not the story they were expecting; they didn't like the main characters; they found the book unsettling. You might feel sympathy for readers who turn to *Moby Dick* expecting a rousing man-versus-great-white-whale adventure, and discover a book rippling with digressions on church services, and an entire chapter on the glories of tubs of whale sperm.'

Respectfully going by Nilanjana Roy's explanation, I shall most likely not pick up *Djinn Patrol* again: the prose is lucid and the plot sufficiently twisty-turny, but in my



view, the book is overwritten, the voices are not entirely in character, and some of the stylistic devices are definitely illogical. Mind you, this is a subjective opinion, so please feel free to make of it what you will. Still, I would urge you to take a shot at *The Vanishing Half*: it holds your attention from the very first page and the storyline seems promising. That's next on my CTR (continue to read) list. As against TBR (to be read), *Istanbul Istanbul* will take a little more fortitude and possibly time, but fortitude shall be garnered and time made because for one, the cover is too dramatic to disregard, and for another, the voices too compelling to ignore. So, too, *The First Muslim*. There's no way I'm not going to finish that book, and since *The Quarter* is our book club's choice, besides being an easy read, that's going to breast the tape as well. This time, on my Kindle.

Which brings me to a question: Would I (or you or we) love a book more if it were an object 'in person' so to speak, pages, jacket, smell and all, rather than on a 'device'? What do you think?

*The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist.*



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8. Language preference (**English, Hindi or Tamil**) should be stated alongside member's name.
9. Please send the updated mailing address and contact details of your members **directly** to *Rotary News*.
10. Members to ensure their names are included in the Subscribers' list their club sends us. If you've paid, but your name is not sent to us by your club, you will not get a copy of the magazine.
11. When members leave, clubs should inform *Rotary News*. Please help reduce wastage of copies.
12. Clubs are liable to pay for the number of magazines we despatch according to the list available with the Rotary News Trust.
13. Unpaid dues of the club will be shown as outstanding against the club. Any payment received subsequently will be adjusted against earlier dues.
14. Clubs with subscription arrears will be notified to RI and are liable for suspension.
15. We are in the process of tallying our subscriber list with RI membership from India.



# From RI South Asia Office desk

## Foundation recognition delay due to office lockdown

Due to Covid-19 outbreak and resultant lockdown, shipping of recognitions will commence after the office opens for business. In the meantime continue to share the scanned copy (in PDF format only) of signed recognition transfer request form and Paul Harris Society membership form for processing with Manju Joshi at [Manju.Joshi@rotary.org](mailto:Manju.Joshi@rotary.org). The engraving instructions for major donor recognition may also be shared on the same email address.

## Club recognition

The Rotary Foundation offers clubs several opportunities to earn recognition for their support of its grants and programmes. The Club

Foundation Banner Report available to district/club leaders in My Rotary displays a club's progress in the current Rotary year toward various club banners listed below:

- 100% Foundation Giving Club
- 100% Every Rotarian, Every Year Club
- Top Three Per Capita in Annual Fund Giving
- 100% Paul Harris Society Club
- 100% Paul Harris Fellow Club (one-time banner).

Effective Rotary year 2015–16, new club members (those who joined or transferred from another club during the current Rotary year) are not included in participation requirements for club banners (except for the 100% Paul Harris

Fellow Banner). However, new members' contributions will be used for per capita calculations.

## WASH-in-Schools Target Challenge

The WASH in Schools Target Challenge's India Recognition committee has, as on April 15, awarded 233 Rotary One Star Awards to the implementing Rotary clubs/schools. Congratulations to all participating Rotary districts/clubs for their incredible effort! WinS Target Challenge pilot is coming to an end by June 30, 2021. Currently, the pilot is under evaluation and the findings will be shared to the WinS steering committee for reviewing the programme evaluation results and to make their recommendations to the trustees.■

## Honouring Paul Harris and enhancing Rotary's public image

### Team Rotary News

"Our 1.2 million-member organisation started with the vision of one man — Paul P Harris and in his honour we have installed his bust at nine Rotary buildings in our district," said DG Gajendra Narang, RID 3040.

With the help of PDG Bagh Singh Pannu of RID 3090 the busts were sourced and transported to Indore, Mandsaur, Neemuch, Jhabua, Khandwa, Sonkatch,

Sehore, Bhopal and Chhindwara where they were installed by the clubs in their Rotary Halls.

In 2017, when he was the governor, with the objective to promote Rotary's public image in RID 3090, Pannu initiated installation of the bust of the Rotary founder in 20 clubs in the district which have their own community halls. The bust is sculpted out of black metal, said Pannu.



RID 3090 PDG Bagh Singh Pannu (third from R) and RID 3040 DG Gajendra Narang (4<sup>th</sup> from L) at the installation of Paul Harris bust by RC Sehore.

Inspired by him, DG Narang is also urging the clubs in the district

to carry on this initiative to strengthen the public image of Rotary.■

# District Wise TRF Contributions as on April 2021

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contributions	EREY Donors (in numbers)	EREY %
India							
2981	78,363	5,351	12,128	0	95,843	356	7.3
2982	40,731	16,977	20,770	49,946	128,424	120	3.9
3000	85,046	27,496	492	47,958	160,992	83	1.6
3011	86,648	16,120	65,653	282,154	450,576	123	3.4
3012	12,808	2,580	0	42,321	57,710	76	2.1
3020	162,332	67,334	81,660	42,726	354,053	280	6.9
3030	54,832	2,315	27,743	143,546	228,436	140	2.7
3040	37,139	354	0	11,876	49,369	50	2.4
3053	22,076	3,298	0	211,400	236,774	53	1.9
3054	74,395	3,562	0	368,873	446,830	266	4.4
3060	94,114	1,341	105,257	161,665	362,377	1,350	31.0
3070	46,199	1,813	0	52,573	100,586	299	9.5
3080	54,707	13,069	0	(13,308)	54,468	181	5.5
3090	35,919	533	0	(736)	35,716	117	5.3
3100	58,126	252	0	15,630	74,009	193	8.6
3110	43,364	200	0	0	43,564	70	1.9
3120	14,665	1,769	0	8,609	25,043	116	3.5
3131	239,586	43,760	136,935	778,326	1,198,606	1,068	20.8
3132	24,107	4,012	15,000	6,451	49,570	57	1.7
3141	652,937	44,754	397,179	1,250,422	2,345,292	968	18.2
3142	232,306	33,969	451	50,782	317,509	802	25.0
3150	128,947	10,115	160,043	38,280	337,385	794	24.0
3160	40,246	9,486	16	440	50,189	82	3.3
3170	55,582	24,189	1,240	206,105	287,116	260	4.6
3181	87,308	6,618	0	7,050	100,976	338	10.1
3182	93,031	6,138	0	16,207	115,375	400	13.0
3190	200,360	80,872	52,035	220,236	553,503	1,092	21.9
3201	170,413	39,821	0	398,400	608,633	595	10.7
3202	54,103	24,622	8,468	54,957	142,150	161	3.0
3211	47,482	3,441	0	106,447	157,369	71	1.6
3212	19,281	55,154	10,153	140,733	225,321	55	1.3
3231	4,776	589	0	23,767	29,132	25	0.6
3232	90,357	45,062	21,500	1,142,888	1,299,807	200	3.5
3240	123,691	25,428	0	49,328	198,448	283	9.3
3250	47,820	4,439	7,195	62,199	121,653	345	9.4
3261	105,540	1,733	50,000	47,471	204,745	37	1.4
3262	100,581	3,253	2,777	(2,060)	104,552	146	4.1
3291	77,124	13,027	35,758	71,251	197,160	138	3.8
<b>India Total</b>	<b>3,597,043</b>	<b>6,44,848</b>	<b>1,212,456</b>	<b>6,094,914</b>	<b>11,549,261</b>	<b>11,790</b>	<b>7.95</b>
3220 Sri Lanka	168,897	21,022	26,000	48,781	264,701	258	13.6
3271 Pakistan	48,292	97,291	0	239,793	385,376	202	12.4
3272 Pakistan	72,158	20,559	0	1,168	93,885	445	26.6
3281 Bangladesh	188,712	15,881	33,012	303,777	541,383	440	6.2
3282 Bangladesh	62,851	8,235	0	8,270	79,356	123	3.0
3292 Nepal	286,637	9,867	0	242,429	538,934	1,768	35.8
<b>South Asia Total</b>	<b>4,424,591</b>	<b>8,17,703</b>	<b>1,271,468</b>	<b>6,939,133</b>	<b>13,452,894</b>	<b>1,5026</b>	<b>8.86</b>

Source: RI South Asia Office



# Stability on a seesaw

**Bharat and Shalan Savur**

**I**t has been a seesaw of a year, hasn't it? One month up, one month down. When the vaccines entered the scene, we all rolled up our sleeves and it looked like immunity and economy were climbing along with our spirits. But, woefully, so did the Covid-19 virus spike up its act — of course, with a lot of help from a lot of citizens who let down their masks as they let down their hair and well... the seesaw tilted again.

For all that, let's not get disheartened, ever. We don't need to grin and bear it. There is a middle path, an old new normal — old to the Japanese, new

to the rest of the world — we could choose to embrace. It's called *wabi-sabi*. It's a lovely, lovable, laudable concept, an art really, of celebrating everything as it is in all its imperfect, impermanent, broken, uncertain state. You accept, even appreciate the beauty of imperfection, you allow yourself to relax in it as you would in an old, familiar, comfortable tee shirt.

It's a great attitude to settle yourself in. You laugh over spilt milk and through the prism of laughter, you see the crazy design on the floor and get the verve and energy to clean it up. You can love your wrinkles and gaze

fondly at the lined face in the mirror that has grown old and is still with you. You admire the sunlight spilling through the broken part of the bowl giving out myriad iridescent colours and it becomes a treasured piece of art in your heart and home.

**Make peace with the pandemic.** Similarly, the worried, wandering mind quietens as it makes peace with the pandemic and the changes it has brought in your life. There's a lot of uncertainty like a she-loves-me-she-loves-me-not dilemma. Just as people got comfortable in working from home, they were asked to report back to the office premises... there could be several mini-lockdowns, salary cuts, demotions, operating from hybrid set-ups....

Here's the deal. The first thing to do is not to let your mind ruin your resolve. Quieten it. Take a few deep breaths. Exhale all the toxic fears. Decide that you are not just going to tolerate, you are going to accept uncertainty. *Wabi-sabi* says: uncertainty does not mean something bad will happen. It's okay not to be able to control everything. Let go the fixed idea that everything has to be certain. Life is always changing, unfinished, imperfect... don't resist its nature, just flow with it. Accept it. See the beauty in it. A *wabi-sabi* teaching goes: 'Take responsibility for the ongoing creation of your imperfect, uncertain and beautiful life.'

**Think differently.** How do you "take responsibility"? Be curious, be excited. Rub your hands in anticipation. What are the possibilities? The great news is: you can lead your brain into creative waters.



The brain has neuroplasticity and we can free it of old concepts by thinking differently, by going the *wabi-sabi* way. Our concepts freeze our thinking, *wabi-sabi* makes thinking more flexible by melting it with acceptance. I know from personal experience that depression, a symptom of non-acceptance, sends us into a tailspin, whereas acceptance forms a wonderful foundation and helps build resilience and stability.

And you begin to realise that it is possible to experience stability on a seesaw! Where do you begin? First, please understand that the brain has three systems you can work with and gift yourself a wonderful life. The systems are broadly influenced by three neuro-modulators — the chemicals dopamine, epinephrine and serotonin. You have the means to help your brain release these chemicals that bring on excitement, urgency and contentment respectively.

**Move with purpose.** Every morning when you wake up looking forward to going to work, you set off your dopamine-system. This chemical rises with anticipation. So, here you are, all set to go to office and you're told there's a lockdown... is it any wonder that the disappointment brings the dopamine swooshing down? Now you see how the seesaw works in you? You've been up one moment, down the next. Here's how you take the reins. You move with purpose. All along, your brain has worked well because you moved with the purpose of going to office, right? Now, just tweak it a bit. Your purpose is to get fit, improve your immunity and for that you have to go for a morning walk. This forward movement is great for the brain. Dopamine, the anticipator, calls out to its pal, epinephrine who supplies the urgency that sets you off. So, you stride purposefully on the path of good health and your day gets a good rousing start. The opposite of depression

is not happiness, it's not feeling helpless, hopeless and let down. Your stride forward is the stride to successful living.

**This self-pat sings.** The next brain-influencer is to be your own cheerleader. Applaud yourself through the day for the walk, for an idea, for a project completed on your computer, for eating healthy, for managing so beautifully. There's a good reason for self-congratulating. It keeps the dopamine, known as the reward chemical, raised. And epinephrine needs dopamine as its companion. Without dopamine, epinephrine urgency turns into agitation and stress. So, simply put, be pleased with all that you've done and your brain will feel good about itself.

**The here-and-now happiness.** There's one more thing you owe yourself and to your well-being — raising another reward chemical called serotonin. While dopamine enjoys the rewards of what you go out and do, serotonin enjoys the rewards of what you already have in your immediate environment. It can be your home, friends, family, pet... it calms you, promotes a tranquil, contented feeling. Serotonin rises when you hug your spouse, your kids, pet your dog or cat, speak over the phone to a loved sibling or friend... it loves bonding. And bonding is a great support not just in pandemic times, but all times. Bonds are the mental spine that give us the courage and confidence to go out and do stuff. We feel safe and reassured knowing they are there.

It's amazing, isn't it, that we have three friendly chemicals sitting right there in our brain, answering our summons? When you are able to control the controllable and influence your feelings, you begin to feel more yourself. When you connect the three systems in your brain, you can connect the dots in your life. You feel more comfortable, become more accepting and don't feel

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Most of us have sunk so deep  
into our ideation of what life  
should be that we've lost sight  
and sensitivity of what life is.

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'forced', rather you flow gracefully with the current as the need of the hour.

For one or two years, there is a possibility of this continuing uncertainty. The coronavirus may not go away entirely, but it is weakening. Besides, our vaccines, masks, social distancing will make it virtually harmless. Experts expect it to be just another 'cough and cold' virus in another five years. Meanwhile, they say, even if we are infected, it will boost our immunity against other viruses as well.

**I am enough.** Meanwhile, don't fret about having to remain indoors during mini lockdowns which could be part of our collective future. In a film titled *Country Girl*, seeing the city-bred teenager fret in the rural surroundings, the equine therapist gently shares her philosophy: 'I am where I am meant to be... I am enough.' The fact is, most of us have sunk so deep into our ideation of what life should be that we've lost sight and sensitivity of what life is. When we climb down from our arrogant assumptions, our stubborn suppositions, we'll see its uncertainties as mysteries to be lived and it will slowly dawn on us that 'it is all as it is meant to be. I am where I am meant to be. I am enough.' It could be our tune for June.

*The writers are authors of Fitness for Life and Simply Spiritual – You Are Naturally Divine and teachers of the Fitness for Life programme.*

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



## RC Thiruvapur Midtown — RID 2981



A medical camp was held at the Thiruvapur Medical Centre in which over 400 women were screened for problems like skin diseases, diabetes and eye disorders.

## RC Rajahmundry River City — RID 3020

A two-day mega health camp was organised for sanitary workers on World Kidney Day. DGN Bhaskararam V was present and doctors led by Dr P Sasanka screened around 500 patients.



## RC Salem — RID 2982



A Covid vaccination camp was held at the Rotary Hall in which 160 people were inoculated with support from the Salem Corporation.

## RC Sangam Chalisgaon — RID 3030

The club donated grocery bags to 25 physically-challenged hawkers who are selling their wares on buses and trains. The project cost ₹30,000 was contributed by members.



## RC Delhi Connaught Place Raisina Hills — RID 3011



The club opened its second sewing centre with seven more machines at Ghaziabad. The expansion of the vocational centre will benefit around 50–80 women.

## RC Bikaner — RID 3053

Respirators and PPE kits were donated to a government hospital to treat Covid patients. This GG project was done with the support of RC Denver, RID 5450.



## RC Udaipur Vasudha — RID 3054



A menstrual hygiene session was conducted for girl students at the Rajkiya Balika Uch Madhyamik Vidyalaya in Bedla village. Sanitary napkins were distributed to them.

## RC Saharanpur — RID 3080



Over 50 Rotarians and their family members were inoculated at the Covid vaccination camp held at the Civil Hospital. AG Pawan Arora and nodal Covid vaccine officer Dr Mandeep Singh were present.

## RC Tarapur — RID 3060



A sewing class was started to train 24 underprivileged women from Tarapur and nearby villages. The classes are being supervised by a Rotarian and the project cost ₹36,000.

## RC Kanpur North — RID 3110



A car rally was organised in partnership with five other clubs and RID 3110 to create awareness on Covid vaccination in the city.

## RC Kangra — RID 3070



Sanitisers, masks and soaps were distributed to migrant workers from Bengal. Club president Sunil Dogra and past president Navneet Sharma listed steps to ward off the virus.

## RC Varanasi East — RID 3120



Around 190 patients were examined for eye, dental, BP, sugar, ortho and neurological disorders at a medical camp held in partnership with the Ayaz Surgical and Critical Care Unit.



## RC Malkapur — RID 3132



An ayurvedic medical camp organised by the club benefited 100 patients. Club president Salim Mujawar and secretary Pravin Jadhav were present on the occasion.

## RC Mangalore Seaside — RID 3181



A desktop computer (₹23,000) was donated to the DKZP Higher Primary School, Bengre, to support their smart class. Club president Suresh MS handed over the computer to the school head.

## RC Sullurpet — RID 3160



Five homemakers were felicitated on Women's Day for their service to needy people. Also, 250 sarees were distributed by club president Prathima Sunkara to the poor.

## RC Manipal — RID 3182



The club has set up a Centre for Social Empowerment to implement its vocational service projects. The facility was inaugurated by DG Rajarama Bhat.

## RC Sangli Midtown — RID 3170



A medical camp for pet animals was conducted at Karnal village in which over 50 animals were examined by vet doctors. The club assured villagers that they will conduct this camp each year.

## RC Palarivattom — RID 3201



A newly-built house was handed over to a widow having two girl children in the presence of district director Balagopal, AG Chitra Asok and club president Ramesh Kumar who handed over the key to the beneficiary.

## RC Kasaragod — RID 3202



Traffic barricades were handed over to police department under district *Project ROPE* by DG Harikrishnan Nambiar. It enhanced the public image of Rotary.

## RC Dharmanagar — RID 3240



Rtn Moley Kanti Roy donated his building in North Tripura for converting it into a vaccination centre. A training session was conducted by district officials for club members to handle the vaccination drive. Over 950 people were inoculated in April.

## RC Trivandrum Suburban — RID 3211



The club presented a cheque for ₹1 lakh to the Kerala Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF) to a government official.

## RC Rourkela Riverside — RID 3261



The club distributed blankets to children at an orphanage school on the premises of Kalpataru Ashram. Twenty wheelchairs were donated to High-tech Medical College and Hospital.

## RC Vellore Cosmos — RID 3231



The club donated pulse oximeter, BP apparatus and a mega speaker phone to the Government Pentland Hospital, Vellore, as part of its Covid-relief efforts.

## RC Kasba — RID 3291



Rotarians commissioned the cleaning of a public toilet near the Kayasthapara bus stop. The hygiene station was in neglect though over 1,000 commuters use this bus stand daily.

Compiled by V Muthukumar



# When my “second-rate skills” got a premium

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan



Luck plays the most important role in how much you earn. In 1991 I, along with a handful of other fellows, suddenly found our luck changing. In my case the reversal of fortune was especially startling. I had finished my Masters degree in economics in 1972 and started applying for jobs. For three long years I was rejected serially by the State Bank of India, the Reserve Bank of India, Air India and of course the UPSC, which ruled that my knowledge of British political and constitutional history was more comprehensive than of economics. No matter that I had an advanced degree in the latter and had learnt the former from those *kunjis* as made-easies were called in Hindi.

Eventually, a few months before I turned 25, I got a job in a leading British publishing house as their economics editor. That was the first slice of luck that came my way. The pay was double of what I would have received in one of the public sector/government jobs that refused to recognise my worth. But I got bored after five years of it and decided to switch to journalism. The pay was reduced by a third, from ₹1,800 per month — in 1980 that was a small fortune — to ₹1,200. But I didn't mind. The work was also less by three hours a day. In a sense I bought more leisure. It was an expensive purchase but well worth it as I could now spend more time with my wife and later my sons.

Print journalism has always been a low-paying profession and between 1980 and 1990 my salary went up to just ₹4,000, an increase of ₹2,800 in ten years. Yes, that's how it was because the thrill of seeing your name on the editorial page or the front page more than made up for the poor pay.

But, as I said, into every life some money must fall and in 1993 with the coming of TV news there was a sudden demand for journalists. So TV poached on print and the laws of market economics quickly kicked in. Salaries suddenly increased for everyone. It was like the price of whiskey during a lockdown — you want, you pay. Or, as the saying goes, a rising tide lifts all boats. Mule or racehorse, it didn't matter. We all became quite a bit richer.

I wasn't quite a mule, I wasn't a racehorse either. I not merely had a strong preference for leisure, I was

also — still am, actually — very lazy. I justified this approach to people who criticised me by pulling some faux economics on them. “The marginal utility of work to the worker is less than its marginal revenue.” My sons, who have taken after me, call it *Baba's First and Only Law*. Fortunately for us, my wife is a hardworking professional and has never made a fuss. She always earned enough for us to live in reasonable comfort. Even now, as a full professor, she earns three times as much and works six times harder than I do.

But getting back to pay, TV and luck, those of us who could not move to TV because we were neither good looking nor young, suddenly found our salaries soaring. Between 1990 and 2000 my income went up by almost 15 times. The icing on the cake was that I was working only a little bit harder now.

We were taken completely by surprise by this increase, till one day the proprietor's right hand man explained it to us. “Guys like you are rare. You know some economics, just enough. You know some English, just enough. But self-respecting economists don't want to become journalists. Nor do the serious literature types. That puts a premium on your otherwise second-rate skills.”

Now if that isn't luck, excellencies, what is? To be in the right place at the right time and with the right skills? ■

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**The marginal utility  
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# In Brief



## Recycling masks

A start-up in London has found a fitting use for used face masks. Waterhaul, a company which recycles fishing nets and plastic waste, has launched a project to melt old masks into plastic blocks that will

be used to make new products like dustbins. The social enterprise is trialling the initiative with a hospital which pays £550 per ton to have used PPE suits incinerated. The start-up will pay the hospital for the used face masks that can create positive outcomes from the waste.

## Recycled rocket boosters used to send astronauts to space

NASA and SpaceX used a recycled rocket booster to launch a rocket with a team of four astronauts into space. Since 2017,



SpaceX has used recycled rocket boosters multiple times only to transport cargo. The 'Crew-2' of astronauts was launched into space by the same Falcon 9 rocket booster that sent four of their colleagues to the International Space Station (ISS) in November 2020 during the Crew-1 mission. The rocket that took off from Kennedy Space Center in Florida is now orbiting in the Crew Dragon spacecraft to begin a six-month science mission on the space station.

## A hospital dean thanks nurses

On International Nurses Day, nurses who had gathered around the portrait of Florence Nightingale at the Government Medical College and



ESI Hospital, Coimbatore, were taken by surprise when the hospital's dean prostrated before them and thanked them profusely for their services rendered on the Covid frontline.

## Zoo shuts down after lions test Covid positive

Zoo officials at the Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad raised an alarm when they saw a pack of lions wheezing with dry



cough, nasal discharge and loss of appetite and the pack was tested for Covid -19. Eight lions tested positive and were found with mild symptoms. They were isolated and the zookeepers taking care of them were asked to wear protective gears and masks. The park was shut for the public as a precautionary measure and other animals were put under observation.



## Bee hotels in Dutch cities

Bee hotels, bee stops and a honey highway are some of the techniques the Dutch have used to keep their urban bee population steady in recent years. A bee hotel is a collection of hollow plant stems or thin bamboos that provides cavities for solitary bees to nest and bee bus stops have their roofs covered in native plants to attract bees, absorb dust particles and rainwater. As part of a bee-counting exercise 11,000 people from across the Netherlands participated in the fourth edition of the national bee census and researchers have said that the results are encouraging.





# DISCOVER NEW HORIZONS

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