

Rotary News

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Rotary

MELBOURNE
2023

Rotary International Convention Melbourne, Australia
May 27 - 31, 2023



Jennifer Jones
RI President

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To lower anxiety, reduce your BP



A well-compiled March issue

I was happy to see the cover photo of slum children in Chennai being taught by Rotaractors near a bridge and learn that Ken Hutt of RC Berry, Australia, has collected \$200,000 by paragliding for a noble cause.

RI President Jennifer Jones' write-up on tea master Genshitu Sen is motivating as it focuses on peace-making. The Editor's note is impressive as it gives a clear picture of unity of Indians in combating hateful remarks against the recently released film *Pathaan* and its record box office collection of over ₹1,000 crore.

RID Mahesh Kotbagi has written a touching message about Turkey/Syria earthquake victims. RID AS Venkatesh stresses the importance of changes to be made in the clubs to keep up membership. TRF trustee chair Ian Risley explains well the necessity of tackling water and sanitation problems. TRF trustee Bharat Pandya gives us a timely reminder of the age-old habit of Indians to give and relates it to TRF giving. Delighted to know about the noble work of Rotaract Club of Chennai Central which runs a classroom at



a slum near Poonamallee. Other articles such as *Unfolding the TRF magic*, *Polioplus — Jewel in Rotary's crown*, the obit on Panduranga Setty by PRIP Rajendra Saboo, *Singapore Rotarians partner with RC Sonkutch*, and *You asked and Gordon McNally answered*, all make enjoyable reading.

The photos, including those giving details of President Jones' visit to Sri Lanka, are beautiful. Also, glad to read about Vani Jairam with an angel's voice.

Club Hop is beautifully presented. On the whole, the March issue is superb.

Philip Mulappone MT
RC Trivandrum Suburban — D 3211

The March issue is full of rich content on Rotary club activities. The tribute to Vani Jairam recalls some of the interesting anecdotes in her life. Thanks to *Rotary News* for publishing the article on the late playback singer as this write-up will be read across the world.

K Ganesamoorthy, RC Kuttralam — D 3212

In the obit feature on *Vani Jairam: An ageless voice tragically stilled*, I notice there are no pictures of her with South Indian music composers. Those could have been included.

Kandasamy Saroja

The article *Nagpur Rotarians work for tribal welfare* is wonderful and the credit must go to RC Nagpur Vision president Dr Shivani Sule for getting the idea of serving the tribal people of Melghat, a hilly area, some 300km from Nagpur.

It is commendable that the club hosted a medical camp even though the village was six hours drive from Pune, with the help of doctors from Mahan Trust.

Kudos to Dr Shivani and her team for arranging 52 surgeries, out

of which 32 were major surgeries, in a makeshift operation theatre.

N Jagatheesan
RC Eluru — D 3020

Soaring high

Members of Rotary Club of Chennai Meraki, an all-women's club, have proved that they are different and can do wonders.

The team comprising its charter president Sivabala Rajendran, president Shrikala Gopi, secretary Preetha Mahesh, and coordinator Kothangi Suchitra has travelled 5,500km with grit. They have campaigned about Rotary themes such as End Polio Now, women's welfare, DEI policy and Go green etc.

Also, their getting a rousing reception from 150 clubs across five RI districts bears testimony to their efforts to showcase Rotary's public image. What a way to promote Rotary. This quartet has soared to Himalayan heights with their *Project Virium Siragugal* (spreading wings) for which we, Rotarians of Tamil Nadu, feel proud. Hearty congratulations to them.

VR T Dorairaja
RC Tiruchirappalli — D 3000

I really appreciate our magazine, *Rotary News*, for apart from various aspects of Rotary, we get to read inspirational articles as well as different club projects.

Geeta Dubey, RC Jamshedpur
Femina — D 3250

LETTERS

The Feb editorial on *Joshimath, an environmental disaster waiting to happen*, is timely as it warns readers of the consequences of disregarding nature. The article *Making Rotary irresistible* is worth reading.

All the articles and features on the Visakha Vista zone institute are very exhaustive and interesting to read for those who could not make it to the event.

S N Shanmugam
RC Panruti — D 2981

Rotary Plus a good initiative

This is really a wonderful effort. Many of the noble projects do not get the exposure in our print magazine due to various

constraints. *Rotary News Plus* is a good platform to showcase the missed-out projects.

Ganesh Pattanshetti
RC Nipani — D 3170

Proud to be a Rotarian. My club in the Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu has taken up a number of

projects that are useful to the communities. Thank you Rotary.

Jawahar Ambalavanan
RC Veeranam
Lake City — D 2981

On the cover: A student from a rural school talks at a *Yadhumanaval* session, a district project of RID 3212 to empower girls.

We welcome your feedback. Write to the Editor: rotarynews@rosaonline.org; rushbhagat@gmail.com. Mail your project details, along with hi-res photos, to rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com.

Messages on your club/district projects, information and links on zoom meetings/webinar should be sent only by e-mail to the Editor at rushbhagat@gmail.com or rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com.

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President Speaks

Introducing the Rotary Youth Network

How do you take the best from the worst?

None of us will forget how the pandemic altered our world and our lives. Each of us had to traverse this period of uncertainty, and no one had a free pass from the effects.

I personally believe this has created space for a different kind of global leadership — one that is courageous, empathetic and vulnerable. I met my good friend Anniela Carracedo online in early 2020. She is one such leader, and I'm thrilled to turn this month's column over to her.

— **Jennifer Jones**

In March 2020, I had a panic attack. I couldn't breathe, and I felt a terrible pain in my chest.

It had been a few days since the World Health Organisation declared Covid-19 a global pandemic, and I was in the middle of my year as a Rotary Youth Exchange student in the United States. Think about it: an 18-year-old girl stuck in a different country, with a foreign language, with people she had only met six months before. It was scary.

But I am familiar with uncertainty. I was born and raised in Venezuela, which is going through one of the worst humanitarian and political crises in the Western Hemisphere. But my mom always said, "Challenges are nothing more than needs that require a solution."

I called up my Interact and Youth Exchange friends. Together, we organised an online meeting to share projects and get inspired by what everyone else was doing during the quarantine. In that first meeting, we had 70 people, mainly students from 17 countries.

From that beginning, we built an online platform for Rotary youths

worldwide to share their experiences and inspire others with project ideas during isolation. We looked for mentors and supporters who would help our group connect young people, share cultures, and open new collaborative opportunities for international service projects. We called it Rotary Interactive Quarantine, or RIQ.

After only a year, we engaged with more than 5,000 students from 80 countries. Several of our team members became district Interact representatives and district committee members, and some of us even serve on Rotary International councils.

Eventually, quarantine restrictions were being lifted, and the needs of our participants were changing. At our last official meeting as RIQ, past RI president Barry Rassin inspired us to create even bigger change, so we transformed RIQ into the Rotary Youth Network, or RYN.

A few of our members, including me, were selected to serve on the inaugural Interact Advisory Council, where we presented our vision for youth in Rotary to the RI Board of Directors.

Our presentation to the Board inspired President Jones and her team to create a Youth Advisory Council in Rotary International, which I am honoured to serve as a co-chair.

The Rotary Youth Network was officially launched during a breakout session at the 2022 Rotary International Convention in Houston. Five of us, who had participated in Interact, Youth Exchange and Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, travelled across continents to launch an organisation we had kicked off online two years before. The convention was the first time we had met in person.

When my friends and I finished our talk, we realised more than 500 people were giving us a standing ovation. Tears filled our eyes, and the feeling of excitement and accomplishment took over.

Who would have thought that a panic attack would lead to this?

ANNIELA CARRACEDO
Rotary Club of Bay St Louis
Mississippi

District 6840 Rotaract chair-elect



Anniela Carracedo addresses the International Assembly in January in Orlando, Florida.



Nari shakti myth and reality

A caveat first... I don't set much store by International Woman's Day... or any other day "celebrating" mothers, fathers, sons and so on. These are marketing gimmicks at best, to fuel the sale of a variety of products.

The image right now before me is that of Rotary's first woman president, Jennifer Jones, appealing earnestly for donations for the victims/survivors of Turkey and Syria's earthquake. In doing so, she displayed leadership, dynamism, compassion and sensitivity to the adversity being faced by fellow human beings far away from where she is stationed — the US. These are the qualities most women bring to the workplace; add to these, focus, sincerity and hard work and you have the formula for success. We know women tend to embrace diversity and inclusion, most of them having faced discrimination in some phase of their career. But when women do manage to break the glass ceiling and reach the top, are their qualities or contributions appreciated? Unfortunately not, finds a McKinsey 2022 report, revealing that 40 per cent women leaders surveyed say their diversity, equity and inclusion (Rotary's very own DEI mantra) work is not acknowledged in their performance reviews.

It is proven that diversity at the workplace increases performance, productivity and hence profits. Yes, corporates do face a dilemma, more in India than the western world, because women workers tend to take long breaks for child birth and later. One IT major, a pioneer in recruiting more women at the entry level, found that after being trained at a considerable cost to the company, women left after a few years for parenting purposes. But continuous engagement and dialogue with the women, offering them flexible working norms, and extra training to up their skills, got dramatic

results. Instead of losing a few thousand trained, skilled and competent women every year, the company managed to reduce that number drastically. It was a win-win both for the woman and the company!

Coming to leadership positions, the picture, though improving, is still dismal. According to a 2022 Ernst & Young report on 'Diversity in the Boardroom,' listed companies in India have only 18 per cent women on their boards, an improvement from 6 per cent in 2013, but still not satisfactory. This too because of a GoI 2013 mandate in the Companies Act that all listed companies must have at least one woman on their board. Now, at least 95 per cent of Nifty 50 companies have a woman director!

But things are improving; while IT major Infosys engages women who have to take a career break for parenting reasons through constant dialogue and assurance of flexibility, additional training etc, Tata Steel has launched a pioneering initiative called *Women@Mines*, to ensure gender equity, under which women are deployed in all shifts and functions of mining, including electrical/mechanical maintenance.

As we await better gender diversity in India Inc's workforce, can we please stop crucifying women and expecting them to slog all the time by paying encomiums to the "sacrifices" they make for the family, first to get up/last to sleep, and drivel like that? This happens even in upper middle class families. By doing so we are not glorifying women, but covertly endorsing the back-breaking work the family heaps on her, expects from her and then applauds her for soldiering on! Women don't need such pedestals; they are happy enough standing beside men, at the ground level!

They need a hand, not the title of a superwoman!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rasheeda Bhagat'.

Rasheeda Bhagat

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Website



Director

Let's make the world cleaner and greener

Recently RI has added environmental protection as a new area of focus and topmost priority is being given to various cleanliness drives and NGOs engaged in environmental activities.

Cleanliness campaigns such as cleaning the Mount Everest base camp, oceans, forts, canals, public parks and temples must be conducted to preserve our environment.

Mangroves give stability to the coastline. They help in preventing floods and reduce soil erosion. They can grow in soils low in oxygen too.

Let us all come together in large numbers and on various platforms to change our earth for the better. Let's help in reducing global warming and promote a better, cleaner and greener environment. The world's climate needs to change and we need to breathe cleaner and fresher air... and it can all start with the first step of planting a tree.

Monsoon is coming soon, so let's get ready to change the future for this generation and the next, so that all of us can live in the midst of beautiful nature.

Mahesh Kotbagi
RI Director, 2021-23

What would you do if you are tired and need a break? Where would you prefer to go on a holiday — somewhere where there is greenery with clean forests, blue oceans and rivers with abundance of oxygen and fresh air?

Let me help you in getting the greenery within the space you live in, to start with. All of us can carve out spaces for plants, whether a garden space or terrace or balcony or even a window sill... You can start with indoor plants in your living room — they not only release tremendous oxygen but also add to the aesthetics and warmth of the place.

Planting trees around where you live can help cool your homes during summer and in winters act like windbreaks. Planting trees and shrubs improves the overall microclimate making it a better place for us to inhabit. All of us must actively participate in reducing our carbon footprint, and we can do our bit by planting saplings wherever we can.

Trees absorb odour, reduce noise pollution and act as buffers by reducing the heat reflected from solid, man-made surfaces such as roads, bridges and pathways. Tall trees with a large canopy cover a huge area, absorb the heat and reduce the surrounding temperature.

Flexibility is the key



Every well-meaning Rotarian wants her club to be a vibrant one. Though different people may have varying definitions of a vibrant club, there is no denying that a club where members are happy will always remain a vibrant one.

The key to members' satisfaction lies in meeting their expectations. More precisely, the value they perceive in their membership. Many have expressed that Rotary has become expensive over the years. While I endorse that we need to be mindful of wasteful expenditure, it is also true that all of us spend much more on seemingly less important things. So where is the catch? I feel the more important resource that members want to spend wisely is not their money, but their time.

Clubs have to be flexible to cater to this need. Over the last few years, clubs have been empowered to take decisions on several things which were earlier governed by a single rule. It is no more 'one size fits all'. The attendance requirement, meeting frequency, nature of meetings, type of clubs, classification of members and several other such issues, where

the clubs now have the choice of making changes that suit them best, require suitable decisions.

Are we really leveraging this new arsenal that we have or are we still stuck in the belief that change is bad? I urge clubs to take a relook at what the members want and whether the club is nimble enough to meet those needs. It could be the meeting timings or location or the roles that people have been assigned or the different rituals which several clubs that I have seen, are inclined to practice.

Progress starts with the realisation that change may be necessary. Let us decide to reinvent our clubs, so that the time that members devote to Rotary becomes worthwhile. Flexibility is the key. When the winds of change blow across, we either remain flexible and grow or remain stiff and break. The choice is ours and is an easy one to make.

AS Venkatesh
RI Director, 2021-23

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Magazine

Think big, act big



In a letter to his brother Theo in 1874, Vincent Van Gogh wrote: “If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere.”

You can see Van Gogh’s love of the natural world in his paintings: luminous sunflowers, gnarled olive trees, and the starry night sky over a Provençal village. When you see nature through Van Gogh’s eyes or through your own, such as during a trip to the park or a beach, you can’t help but stop to appreciate it. And when you love nature, you also want to take care of it.

April is Environmental Month for Rotary, and Earth Day is the 22nd. Marking the occasion with local projects such as roadside cleanups is fantastic and makes a difference. Consider also thinking big about protecting the environment — one of Rotary’s seven areas of focus — by partnering with other clubs and districts on a larger-scale project funded through TRF.

The more our clubs work together on larger projects, the more we accomplish. Supported by a Foundation global grant, Rotary clubs in Pennsylvania and Brazil teamed up to provide plastic processing equipment for a waste pickers cooperative in the city of Rio Claro. The workers, who recover recyclables from trash, increased their income by 50 per cent and expanded the cooperative, while contributing to a cleaner environment.

Acting big is also one of the main ideas behind the Foundation’s Programs of Scale. With each \$2 million grant distributed over a programme’s three to five-year duration, the work done on the ground scales up to fulfil the potential for long-term sustainable change. The 2021–22 Programs of Scale recipient, *Together for Healthy Families* in Nigeria, is hard at work right now on solutions aimed at reducing the country’s maternal and neonatal mortality rates.

Programs of Scale grants are among the most exciting developments of Rotary and its Foundation in recent years. They will have a big impact on the world. Remember that Programs of Scale grants take nothing away from your Foundation grant projects; the money invested is a relatively small portion of the Foundation’s total. In addition, The Rotary Foundation designed Programs of Scale to foster greater partnerships, which can include co-funding the initiative.

So, think big this month — about the environment and about global grants and Programs of Scale — and you will see that, when it comes to the good we can do through our Foundation, the “starry night” sky’s the limit.

Ian H S Riseley

Foundation Trustee Chair

The best of breakouts

Rose Shilling



A breakout session on peacebuilding at the 2022 Rotary International Convention in Houston.

At the Rotary International Convention, the big ideas and inspiration don’t stop at the main stage. In dozens of breakout sessions in Melbourne, fellow Rotary members will present expert advice that you can take home to your club to boost its impact — and make your own Rotary experience even better.

During the May 27–31 convention, choose from sessions that address everything from how to use your listening “superpower” as a leader to ways you can help rebuild a local economy. Rotary members and experts will share tips on how to live the Rotary Action Plan, do what you can to address the world’s biggest challenges, polish your leadership skills, grow club diversity, and interest newcomers.

In other planned sessions, you’ll learn strategies to embrace new perspectives from young people (Reverse Mentoring: Empowering Young Leaders), raise interest in your group and its good work (Promoting Your Club by Inspiring the Community), and make Rotary membership meaningful for everyone (Creating a Comforting and Caring Club Culture).

A variety of sessions will dig into a rich pool of service ideas, including using tech hubs to help young people out of poverty, breaking the silence about menstruation needs, considering a plant-rich diet to address the climate, and stopping slavery, plastic pollution, malnutrition, and more.

Browse the full preliminary list of sessions on the convention website to plan which workshops you want to attend. The sessions are May 29–31. Registration isn’t required, and seating is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org.

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Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 36,947

Rotaract clubs : 11,207

Interact clubs : 19,053

RCCs : 12,745

Rotary members : 1,192,270

Rotaract members: 174,895

Interact members : 438,219

As on March 15, 2023

Membership Summary

As on March 1, 2023

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	136	6,407	7.32	71	462	55	243
2982	82	3,731	6.92	30	760	114	76
3000	132	5,485	10.19	103	1,623	325	215
3011	123	4,719	28.42	82	2,607	144	37
3012	151	3,767	23.17	73	1,278	94	61
3020	84	4,903	7.20	41	1,160	168	350
3030	101	5,448	14.94	126	2,171	371	383
3040	115	2,622	15.75	59	784	94	190
3053	66	2,853	16.37	35	566	55	128
3054	169	6,958	19.80	107	1,536	209	575
3060	102	4,988	14.86	66	2,371	81	149
3070	127	3,443	16.47	47	557	64	59
3080	107	4,331	12.86	120	2,234	215	116
3090	104	2,421	5.33	46	636	120	164
3100	106	2,257	13.65	14	125	39	151
3110	143	3,953	12.42	16	126	33	106
3120	89	3,684	15.74	35	398	36	55
3131	142	5,725	24.80	136	3,013	265	144
3132	91	3,648	12.88	37	514	127	168
3141	111	6,200	26.79	149	6,579	231	170
3142	103	3,906	21.25	90	3,040	149	88
3150	112	4,401	13.02	151	2,034	160	127
3160	78	2,771	9.17	32	233	20	82
3170	145	6,755	15.97	104	1,825	272	177
3181	87	3,650	10.19	37	423	224	117
3182	88	3,653	10.13	44	192	132	106
3190	168	6,967	20.11	219	5,242	288	74
3201	169	6,591	9.92	131	1,921	115	91
3203	94	4,956	7.77	75	972	244	39
3204	75	2,544	7.27	23	194	33	13
3211	156	5,128	8.54	8	108	32	133
3212	127	4,787	11.45	85	3,527	303	153
3231	96	3,467	8.34	37	411	99	417
3232	171	6,846	20.01	136	7,543	246	101
3240	109	3,675	16.79	71	1,438	206	226
3250	103	3,909	21.18	68	1,050	85	188
3261	90	3,274	19.95	17	50	26	44
3262	125	3,860	14.61	75	756	662	277
3291	152	3,993	25.04	138	2,034	111	696
India Total	4,529	172,676		2,934	62,493	6,247	6,689
3220	72	2,147	16.21	98	5,042	145	77
3271	167	3,357	18.05	166	2,546	270	28
3272	162	2,323	14.94	70	938	22	47
3281	311	7,329	18.27	281	2,268	157	207
3282	184	3,642	10.21	202	1,717	50	47
3292	154	5,802	18.80	184	4,928	148	133
S Asia Total	5,579	197,276		3,935	79,932	7,039	7,228

Source: RI South Asia Office

Motivating young girls to combat low self-esteem

Rasheeda Bhagat



When “a 17-year-old smart, intelligent girl, with glowing ebony skin, lovely dark, long, curly hair, stands up and tells you that because of her dark complexion, she is shunned by her classmates and nobody wants to be her friend, it is nothing short of heartbreaking,” says Jayanthasri Balakrishnan, an eminent educationist and motivational speaker on a wide variety of gender issues.

She has been the lead speaker in the flagship RI District 3212’s girls’ empowerment project titled *Yadhumanaval* (which in Tamil means ‘she is everything’), the brainchild of DG V R Muthu.

Under this project, along with project chairperson, K Vijayakumari, a member of RC Virudhunagar, she holds talk — or rather ‘listening sessions’ as she’d have you believe — at high schools and colleges for both girls and boys, in predominantly rural areas of RID 3212.

Let’s return to Savitha (name changed), the “beautiful, talented, smart and intelligent 17-year-old girl from Sivakasi,” who stood up during the Q&A part of the session and expressed distress over her self-esteem having hit a dismal low, due to her rejection by schoolmates just because of her dark complexion.

“When in reply I said that you are one of the most charming young persons with such a glowing complexion that I have ever met in my life, and



asked her why do you measure yourself vis-à-vis somebody else's parameters, it took her some time to even understand and digest what I was saying." Jayanthasri, a former HoD of English Department at the PSG College in Coimbatore, adds that it looked as though this was the first time in her life that somebody was complimenting her about her looks or her complexion. "She couldn't even recognise it as a compliment... there was a lingering doubt on her face as though I was teasing her. It took her some time to realise what I was saying and then she became very emotional, broke down and started crying."

The girl was given some water and later composed herself, but the speaker is left musing "whether she accepted my compliment or not."

This interlude that both Jayanthasri and Vijayakumari, who always accompanies her to high schools and colleges where these sessions are held, had experienced is a mirror to the kind of low esteem so many teenaged girls have in our communities vis-à-vis their physical appearance. Says Vijayakumari, a champion of gender rights herself: "Through this district project to empower girls, we are taking *Yadhumanaval* sessions





Educationist Jayanthasri Balakrishnan, the lead speaker in the *Yadhumanaval* programme, with school and college students.

to the doorsteps of rural girl children of Tamil Nadu, to help them come out of their cocoons with confidence and courage.”

She adds that Jayanthasri was chosen to address these sessions as she is a world-renowned motivational speaker who has the knack of making young people talk and inspires them to reach out for their dreams. “She engages with students to help them come out of their mind block, and as the sessions advance, the students start feeling a connection with her and open up to interact with her to get their long-standing doubts clarified. Surprisingly, they ask her questions they would not ask even their own mothers! We believe that this psychological transformation of the girls is the first step to their

freedom, growth and success in life.”

This project, which began in early 2022, even before Muthu became the governor, is sponsored by his own enterprise Idhayam Edible Oils as well as Arun Icecreams, and is held in high schools and colleges in interior South Tamil Nadu.

After conducting over 45 such interactive sessions with girls and boys, both the women realise that rural girls deal with huge problems such as anxiety and depression, an inferiority complex triggered by the comments and abuse that are constantly hurled at them, and are battling with

low self esteem. Jayanthasri firmly believes that boys have to be present when gender issues are discussed.

I chat with both the women as they are returning from one of the sessions held in an interior area, and Jayanthasri explains that this session was on menstruation and MHM and “there were so many boys seated in the hall. They were seriously involved in the discussion and listening in rapt attention. There was no hooting or whistling as you normally find when there are videos or visuals of sanitary pads, with water being poured over them and so on. We have to sensitise men about the physical problems of women and how we need consideration and support from them.”

She makes it a point to be very factual and come straight to the point when discussing the issues and problems that young women face in our communities. “In our sessions there is neither romanticising or glamourising of gender issues... we talk about these issues and problems in the most factual tone. We make it clear that women are not



begging for pity or sympathy; all they need is understanding and empathy.” This inclusion of male students is very important, she adds, “so that when they grow up and start a family, they will not be half-baked men, but adult and mature human beings, ready to take on responsibility for their families.”

Quizzed on the most common issues/questions raised/asked by girl students from rural communities, Jayanthasri says these are mostly related to how to overcome inferiority complex. “Like most adolescent girls, they tend to be pretty uncertain about their physical appearance, which unfortunately is a very important aspect in their lives, thanks to the pressure put by the beauty care industry. We all know about that. Hence, the example of Savitha and her inability to deal with her dark complexion, even though she had a beautiful glowing skin and colour.”

Another common question raised, she added, is on how to overcome stage fear. Most of these girls are afraid to speak up, even during chat sessions with their own teachers. So in many institutions when the girls open up and are eager to ask so many honest and unconventional questions, many teachers have marvelled at Jayanthasri being able to draw the girls out. “When it comes to questions on overcoming stage fear, I sometimes pretend I did not hear the question and ask the girl to come on stage and ask the question from the stage. When she does it, I tell them: ‘There you are; now you have spoken from the stage so you no longer need to get stage fright!’”

Other common questions are about how to deal with catcalls and eve teasing when the girls walk on roads or are in buses. At one place, fortunately, there were some women police personnel in the audience, and they told the girls that “all you have to do is complain to the principal, who will pass on your complaint to us, and we will deal with such offenders.”

In our pseudo wisdom we
think we know everything
about these children but when
we stand before them, and find
that they ask such profound
and mature questions, it can
often make you feel totally
redundant.

Jayanthasri Balakrishnan
Resource person



One aspect which becomes very clear after such dialogues with the young girls is that what they aspire for is very, very different from what their parents want from them. For example, a couple of girls told her that they were very interested in joining the defence forces but their parents are against this idea. “A Class 9 student asked me this question and wanted to know how she could convince her parents... mind you, they are not complaining about their parents... the word used was ‘convince’ them.” So unlike teenagers from well-to-do, urban areas, who can be defiant, the attitude of these girls is very different,” she says.

Both Vijayakumari and Jayanthasri point out that many girls are grappling with their parents’ desire to get them married, while they are interested in continuing their education and finding a job so that they can be economically independent. “So many of them ask me what they should do. So I tell them... don’t throw tantrums or cry, or use

pressure tactics like locking yourself in your room, or not taking your meals. Behave normally, and try to convince them... try to bring them around to your point of view that higher education is the best thing for you. Do it every day and with unfailing regularity and I assure you they will slowly understand that they have to support your dream and will do so,” says Jayanthasri. She reiterates that there should be no complaints, no hunger strike or pressure tactics... “look into their eyes and tell them that you know me since my birth, if you don’t understand and support what I want, who else will do so?”

Vijayakumari, herself the retired headmistress of a government-aided school, and past president of her club, adds that they also give the girls examples of many girls who continue their education after marriage with the support of their husbands and this is particularly true of research students. “So we tell them, that in case you have no choice but get married, try to get the support of your husbands and in-laws to continue your education.”

What about questions on love and romance, or sexuality, I ask Jayanthasri. “There are none,” she says firmly. “We have met over 60,000 adolescent girls through 45 meetings and we have not come across any child talking about romance, love, or anything to do with cinema-fed culture. When the talk is about their future, when you focus on something very positive, they themselves ask very serious and mature questions, which leave their teachers wondering why they never open out like this to them!”

She adds: “Today was our 45th session and I am realising again and again that all that these girls and boys need is a pair of ears and a heart to listen. Once you are willing to listen to them; once you convince them that you are sincere and want to help

them... believe, me they can feel your pulse in two minutes..., they open up and pour their hearts out to you. I am so thankful to Rotary for giving me this opportunity. In our pseudo wisdom we think we know everything about these children but when we stand before them, and find that they ask such profound and mature questions, it can often make you feel totally redundant. This has been such a learning, unlearning and relearning experience for me. If I can help even a few girls get out of their low esteem, it would mean a lot.”

Vijayakumari adds that the central objective of the chat sessions with the girls, aged 14 years and above, is to “convince them that rather than a challenge, life is a big opportunity. We strive to make these girls realise that failure is an essential part of life and build the courage to ask, ‘What next?’”

D G Muthu, whose brainchild is this project, says he got the idea of empowering girls from the great poet Bharatiyar’s poems. “In most place in India, particularly Tamil Nadu, men are always in the forefront, so I was searching for a project that would put the spotlight on girls, especially in rural areas, where girls and women desperately need our support. And I believe *Yadhumanaval* was the perfect answer.”

Perhaps, he adds, the fact that he himself has three granddaughters, must have also contributed to the project idea springing in his head. “Seeing its success, we would be very happy to partner with any Rotary club across Tamil Nadu to reach the benefits of this project across the entire state.”

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

District Wise TRF Contributions as on January 2023

Interim Results (in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution
India					
2981	19,151	512	0	1,125	20,788
2982	10,196	2,238	4,061	33,116	49,611
3000	23,610	3,169	0	0	26,779
3011	38,119	8,063	25,127	238,088	309,396
3012	13,280	752	65,235	140,713	219,980
3020	106,894	7,902	40,000	400	155,196
3030	51,772	290	0	1,275	53,337
3040	18,660	2,006	0	22,156	42,822
3053	41,122	136	0	0	41,258
3054	9,130	826	0	31,500	41,456
3060	71,305	1,500	0	64,635	137,440
3070	47,956	2,570	50,233	11,296	112,055
3080	27,492	7,482	0	38,163	73,137
3090	8,368	0	5,651	0	14,019
3100	52,929	400	25,012	0	78,341
3110	21,034	454	24,304	631,051	676,843
3120	23,823	411	0	0	24,234
3131	305,668	8,789	36,315	302,254	653,026
3132	40,636	2,391	50,000	2,012	95,039
3141	681,895	32,756	102,003	1,451,865	2,268,519
3142	195,175	3,721	24,866	77,045	300,807
3150	76,936	27,423	43,012	417	147,788
3160	3,749	2,363	0	3,675	9,786
3170	80,673	33,854	15,506	862	130,895
3181	77,084	622	25	912	78,644
3182	36,769	2,789	0	0	39,559
3190	63,921	7,350	38,170	36,593	146,034
3201	95,560	23,874	12,295	414,030	545,760
3203	7,124	12,833	1,000	30,054	51,011
3204	5,645	806	0	152	6,603
3211	73,343	5,065	10,000	1,049	89,458
3212	178,860	37,834	305	52,146	269,145
3231	60,394	23,432	32,278	11,569	127,672
3232	60,503	58,338	19,358	201,544	339,743
3240	80,731	14,913	1,000	3,622	100,266
3250	13,030	290	0	13,605	26,925
3261	16,616	917	0	5,277	22,809
3262	46,043	463	700	34,012	81,218
3291	50,452	1,172	40,533	8,190	100,348
India Total	2,835,646	340,708	666,989	3,864,404	7,707,747
3220 Sri Lanka	48,474	8,333	4,000	226	61,033
3271 Pakistan	25	22,125	0	250	22,400
3272 Pakistan	455	12,687	0	5,000	18,142
3281 Bangladesh	58,696	3,546	22,125	154,245	238,612
3282 Bangladesh	46,640	6,701	2,000	10,320	65,662
3292 Nepal	165,773	20,236	49,167	29,830	265,006

Annual Fund (AF) includes SHARE, Areas of Focus, World Fund and Disaster Response.

Source: RI South Asia Office



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Panchayat school students build a telescope

Jaishree

When most of us watched the recent Venus-Jupiter conjunction in the evening sky with our naked eyes, the students of the Thudiyalur Panchayat Union Middle School, near Coimbatore, enjoyed the celestial phenomenon through the school's own telescope built by them.

It was a thrilling moment for all the 20 students when they built

a telescope and dedicated it to their school. This unique feat was made possible through a special workshop sponsored by Rotary E-club of Metro Dynamix, RID 3201, under *Project Vinveli*, at the government school in Thudiyalur, a suburb in Coimbatore. Technical experts from the Open Space Foundation (OSF) guided the young team from Classes 6–8 in constructing the telescope.

These children are not exactly new to astronomy, says project chair Vidya Thathamangalam. Their interest was sparked by their English teacher Chitra who, in 2019, helped them study the sun through a solar filter. She had arranged this through the OSF to ignite a scientific spark in these young minds. “That was the beginning of something wonderful in their school life. Some children even participated in the International



Coimbatore corporation commissioner M Pratap helps a student explore the sky through the telescope built by the students of the Thudiyalur Panchayat Union Middle School.



A student engrossed in the construction of the telescope.

Our vision is to promote equal opportunities among government schoolchildren to make their learning at par with their peers studying in private schools.

Ayush Agarwal

president, Rotary E-club of Metro Dynamix, RID 3201.

Asteroid Search Campaign in September last year,” adds Vidya.

When the OSF approached the school to construct a telescope on its premises, “Chitra approached us to sponsor the project. She passionately explained how useful this workshop will be for the children. We readily agreed to help,” she says.

A night sky observation was conducted at the school during the inauguration of the telescope in which corporation commissioner

Pratap M, district community service chairman R S Maruti and officials from the district education department participated. “Our members from across the world joined virtually in the event.”

The students gave a PowerPoint presentation on how to detect asteroids through the Astrometrica software. Impressed with their enthusiasm the commissioner sanctioned additional classrooms for the school and promised them a visit to the Regional Science Centre in the city.

The club recently honoured Chitra with the Vocational Service Award for her dedication to her profession. “The workshop was a great success and will have a lasting impact on the students, inspiring them to continue exploring the wonders of science and technology,” says the teacher.

In September, the club installed a smart classroom in the school. “Our vision is to promote equal opportunities

among government schoolchildren to make their learning at par with their peers studying in private schools,” says club president Ayush Agarwal.

The club, sponsored by RC Coimbatore Metropolis, was chartered in 2020 with 31 members “who were no strangers to Rotary as most of us are children of Rotarians,” says Vidya, who resides in Toronto, Canada. The club has 38 members from US, UK, Canada, Singapore, Netherlands and India. They meet virtually twice a week to discuss service projects and fellowship plans.

Project Ability

To address learning disabilities in children, the club, under its





PDG Rajkumar V, district community service chairman RS Maruti, Dr Krishnan Swaminathan, trustee, Idhayangal Trust, and members of RC Coimbatore Metropolis and Rotary E-club Metro Dynamix, with a mini refrigerator ready to be given to an underprivileged family, as part of the club's *Combat Diabetes* project.

Project Ability, gave three C-Pen readers costing \$950 and other tools such as pencil grips, reading strips and finger focus tools, all shipped from Canada, to Magizhvi Foundation, an NGO that helps people with disabilities. "These devices will be used for remedial education programmes in seven schools to benefit 80 students identified with learning disabilities," says Vidya.

A C-Pen is an assistive tool commonly used in US and UK by students with reading and writing disabilities, she explains. It scans

the text and converts it into audio, which can be easily followed by the user. The club has signed an MoU with the Coimbatore corporation and the Central Library to conduct reading camps in panchayat schools. Around 40 students attend each camp and volunteers guide them in using the C-Pen and monitor their improvement, she adds.

Addressing juvenile diabetes

Combat Diabetes is the club's joint initiative with the Idhayangal Trust managed by Dr Krishnan

Swaminathan, to address Type 1 diabetes in children. "Our members have contributed ₹50 lakh this year for this project," says the club president. Mini refrigerators, each costing ₹8,000, were distributed to 50 village children for safe storage of insulin. Fourteen continuous glucose monitoring devices (CGM) with ₹5 lakh funding from the Bannari Amman Spinning Mills, an electrolyte analyser and a microscope were donated to Dr Swaminathan's clinic for timely detection of diabetes. "The CGM is particularly helpful for children whose blood sugar has to be monitored throughout the day. It is a wearable device with a sensor and saves them from painful finger pricks," says Agarwal.

A van equipped to monitor random blood glucose levels, HBA1C, thyroid, kidney, eye, ECG and diabetic foot, were donated to the trust to conduct camps in remote rural communities. Project director Reshma Ramesh was instrumental in getting the ₹35 lakh CSR funding from Rasi Seeds for the project. ■



Dr Swaminathan, along with AG Sashi Kumar, project director Reshma Ramesh and Rotary E-club Metro Dynamix secretary Ishita Bhansali, with the CGM devices to help children with juvenile diabetes.

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Rotary trains women drivers in Chennai

Kiran Zehra



Kiran Zehra

She rolls the car out of the parking lot, takes a left turn to the main road, drives over a kilometre, and takes a smooth U-turn back to the Maruti Suzuki Driving School in Chennai, where she is completing her four-wheeler driving course. It's her third practical class and Saroja Devi (29) feels "confident and happy that I could drive the car so far without a single hiccup, that too with passengers in the back seat." Thanks to Rotary, she will be able to "earn extra and support my family in a better way," says the beneficiary of *Project Vahini*, an initiative of the women's empowerment team of RID 3232.

Under the initiative, 250 women will receive professional car driving lessons. "We will try to provide them placements too," says Sharadha Sundaram, chair, district women's empowerment committee.

The beneficiaries are women aged 18–35 years selected by Dorai Foundation, the sustainability partner in this project. "We want to ensure that they take their training seriously and don't discontinue the course. The Foundation keeps track of their progress," she says.

Its founder Dr Sumithra Prasad says that “most of these women are school dropouts and work as domestic help or daily wage workers and suffer domestic abuse. This is an opportunity for them to turn things around.”

Ten Rotary clubs from Chennai have funded the training of the first batch of 20 beneficiaries at ₹10,000 per person. CARS India and Maruti Suzuki Driving School are the training partners in this initiative. “Partnering with Rotary will enhance our brand image and help us be part of an important cause that will improve our community,” says Syed Fahim, managing director of CARS India.

The training comprises 14 rigorous modules over a month and also includes personal grooming and communication skills training. “At the end of the first 21 days of training, they’ll know the basic traffic rules and have hands-on driving experience through simulators and on-road driving, and the confidence to take the driving exam at the RTO to obtain a driving licence,” says TR Rejith, senior manager at the Maruti Driving School where six beneficiaries are being trained.

Sanjana, a transgender and beneficiary of *Project Vahini*, thanks



V Muthukumar

Sanjana, a transgender and a beneficiary of *Project Vahini*, receives her course completion certificate from RIPR Elizabeth Usovicz at the RID 3232 district conference in the presence of DG N Nandakumar, RC Madras South president Jawahar Nichani and women’s empowerment committee chair Sharada Sundaram (L).

Rotary “for providing me an opportunity to learn driving. This is a welcome move to showcase the inclusivity of the LGBTQ community. The sponsorship gives transwomen like me a chance to learn a new skill that I wouldn’t have been able to afford.”

Sharadha says she has received requests from individuals and organisations to hire Sanjana for chauffeur service. “That is a win for *Project Vahini*. Rotary has not only changed the way people look at transgenders but will inspire more members of the trans community to take up decent jobs.”

The first batch of beneficiaries received their driving licence at the district conference of RID 3232. RIPR

This is a welcome move to showcase the inclusivity of the LGBTQ community.

The sponsorship gives transwomen like me a chance to learn a new skill that I wouldn’t have been able to afford.

— Sanjana, a transgender

Elizabeth Usovicz, who was the chief guest at the discon was “happy to handover the licences to the beneficiaries. As the chair of the Empowering Girls Task Force, (which was established as part of PRIP Shekhar Mehta’s initiative) I know the impact of projects like this. This initiative does not just improve the lives of these women but their families too.” She urged that Rotary clubs in RID 3232 “should

develop a framework and resources to participate in and promote service projects that focus on the health, education, safety, well-being, and economic development of women and girls.”

Uma Maheshwari V (33), another beneficiary, was brimming with joy on receiving her licence. “I couldn’t think of sitting in a car but Rotary put me in the driver’s seat and now I will drive my life to success.” ■



Youth Exchange student
Iroha Swai from Japan
dressed in a traditional
costume of Meghalaya.

India's Northeast fascinates youth exchange students

Rasheeda Bhagat

When RI District 3131 was hosting a group of 12 youngsters from six different countries under Rotary's Youth Exchange (RYE) programme, "they felt that these students should spend about 10 days in the Northeast, particularly Assam and Shillong, and get a taste and feel of our culture and lifestyle," recalls Nilesh Agarwal, incoming governor of RID 3240.

Even as the RID 3131 youth programmes chair Shobha Nahar was trying to find a Rotary connection in

RID 3240, Agarwal came to know that a group of foreign students were in Pune for a one-year youth exchange programme and were looking for a partner in his district. As a youth exchange chair of his district (3240), he immediately connected with Shobha and offered to partner with RID 3131 to bring over the students to Assam and Meghalaya and give them an exposure to the natural beauty and diversity of the Northeast.

He set about making arrangements along with his incoming district YE chair Priyama Goswami

and on Oct 4, when the team of 12 students, along with Shobha, landed at the Guwahati airport, DGE Agarwal was there to receive them along with Priyama, a member of RC Gauhati South, its president Rajesh Batra and AG Bibhuti Dutta.

RYE is an international student exchange programme for students. Since 1929, RI has been sending young people around the world to experience new cultures,



RC Gauhati South president Rajesh Bhatra with the RYE students.

and get a unique experience in becoming well-rounded adults and citizens of the world. Priyama, who also heads the women's empowerment team in her 76-member club, where 60 per cent of the members are women, and is secretary-elect of her club, recalls that when DGE Agarwal called her about the opportunity to plan a 10-day programme for 12 students from Spain, Germany, Japan, Italy, France and Brazil, she was very excited. "We set about the task of taking them to places such as Kaziranga, Majuli island, Cherrapunji and Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya. They were also invited for the Durga pooja held in Guwahati and participated in the Dusserah celebrations at the Nehru stadium."

As RI encourages the exchange students to be hosted by Rotarian families wherever feasible, the visiting students were hosted by Rotarian families from different Rotary clubs of Guwahati and Shillong, to learn about the culture and customs of the region. For these students attending the colourful Durga pooja/ Dussehra festivals was a fascinating experience and they learnt all about this important Hindu festival, which





Clockwise from top:
From R: DGE Nilesch Agarwal, incoming youth exchange chair (RID 3240) Priyama Goswami and RID 3131 youth exchange chair Shobha Nahar with the YE students at the Kaziranga National Park in Assam; YE students at a stadium to participate in the Dussehra celebrations in Guwahati; DGE Agarwal, Priyama, Shobha and YE students with Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma (centre); YE students with Rotaractors of RAC Dibrugarh. DGE Agarwal, PDG Kalpana Khound and Shobha are also seen; A variety of masks at a workshop in the Majuli island.



is celebrated in the Northeast region with great enthusiasm, faith and fervour. The students participated in the *pushpanjali* ritual to offer flowers to the deities and then enjoyed the *prasad* which was served to them, says Shobha.

A highlight of their visit to Assam was their short meeting with the Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati. “Of course, getting an appointment with the chief minister was very difficult, but our incoming DG Agarwal managed it, and the CM did spend some time talking to the students. He wanted to know about their countries, and showed a lot of interest in discussing football with the student from Brazil,” says Priyama. “He was also keen to know from them their impressions of the Northeast region of India and what they thought about its people and culture.” The Rotarians explained to the CM the objectives of the RYE programme and also pinned the RYE badge on him. “The event was widely covered by the media and did a lot to boost Rotary’s public image,” adds Shobha.

Later, the students were also taken to the Raj Bhavan where they were hosted breakfast by the Assam Governor Jagdish Mukhi and the students interacted with him on the various cultural aspects of the Northeast.

But their most exciting trips were to Majuli, “the world’s largest river island which attracts tourists from all over the world, and is fondly called ‘Assam’s cultural

capital'. Our visitors were thrilled to learn that Majuli is also a strong contender for a place in UNESCO's World Heritage sites. Mostly inhabited by tribals, the culture of Majuli is unique. Rotary Club of Jorhat hosted lunch for the students enroute to Majuli," said Priyama. RC Nagoan hosted them to their second meal in Majuli.

On this island the students were fascinated with the art of mask-making. "In the little time they had with the artists, they learnt the rudiments of making masks and bought a few to take home as memories," says Priyama.

She adds that for these youngsters, in the age group 16–19, "it was their first interaction with the tribals; they loved the island, enjoyed the food, our traditional dance dramas, such as the *Mahabharat* and *Ramayana*, and tried to learn how to make the masks."

She herself hosted two of the students and said it was a wonderful experience for her family. "They ate whatever we gave them happily. During the first few days I gave them our local breakfast, made with rice. Leo, who stayed with us, would come to the kitchens and showed a lot of interest

The CM spent some time talking to the students. He showed a lot of interest in discussing football with the student from Brazil.

Priyama Goswami
incoming district youth
exchange chair, RID 3240



in learning how to make some of these traditional dishes for breakfast. He was very inquisitive and eager to learn and asked so many questions. When vegetable vendors came, he would take so many pictures, ask questions about the vegetables, and watched with interest the bargaining which goes on," smiled Priyama.

The Kaziranga National Park was another fascinating experience for them, and they were most impressed by "this park's contribution in saving the Indian one-horned rhinoceros from the brink of extinction at the turn of the 20th century. They were delighted to visit a place which has the distinction of harbouring the single largest population

of this species," says Shobha. A safari ride here where they sighted one-horned rhinos, apart from other wildlife, was the high point of their visit to this beautiful park. They were fascinated by the beautiful cane products that are made locally and purchased quite a handful to carry back home.

In Meghalaya, at Shillong, a perfect holiday destination, the three Rotary clubs of Shillong jointly organised a cultural programme to welcome the foreign students. Here the young visitors participated in various cultural activities, dressed in



colourful traditional costumes and performed folk dances with gusto.

A highlight of their visit to Meghalaya was a trip to Cherrapunji, famous for its pristine, untouched beauty, lush greenery, cascading waterfalls, trekking trails, fresh air, and the world-famous double decker living root bridges made from rubber trees. Also known as Sohra, this is a high-altitude town in Meghalaya, and is well-known for its heavy rainfall. Shobha adds that the RYE students loved watching the waterfalls in Meghalaya, visited the museum, local market and tasted the local food. “They wanted to know what ingredients were used for making the food!”

The students also visited the Tezpur University where they had an interactive session with the local students. Both Shobha and DGE Agarwal say that the RYE as a flagship programme of RI gives youngsters an amazing exposure to the outside world, an opportunity to know all about different regions and cultures. The visit of the RYE students to the Northeast caught the imagination of the media and “we got amazing coverage in so many newspapers,” says Agarwal.

The two YE chairs thanked their DGs Anil Parmar of RID 3131 and Kushanava Pabi, RID 3240, and PDGs Prabhat Kedia, Kalpana Khound, Debasish Das, Manas Chaudhuri, Sunil Saraf and several assistant governors and members from RCs Guwahati, Gauhati South, Guwahati West, Guwahati Luit, Guwahati Icon, Guwahati Metro, Guwahati Elite, Dispur, Guwahati Smart City, Guwahati City, Shillong, Shilong Heritage, Orchid City Shillong, Jorhat, Nagaon, Tezpur, Greater Tezpur, several Rotaract clubs and host families.

Summing up the visit of the students, Shobha adds that for the first three days in Guwahati all the visitors were hosted by Rotarians, and after that they were put up in a hotel.

“I deliberately chose the Dusserah festival period because in the Northeast this festival is celebrated differently from the rest of India. The youngsters enjoyed the incredible love, warmth and hospitality extended to them in both Assam and Meghalaya. They loved the place so much and have made so many friends that in the future

These students will now definitely have a better understanding of what Rotary is all about. Now it is up to the Rotarians in their respective countries to follow this up and motivate them to become Rotarians.

they will come here directly... it is almost as though the region has become a second home to them.”

In her interaction with the students she has gathered that after their visit to the Northeast, as well as the stint in Pune, where they have come for a year, “they have realised that Indians are very loving and caring people. The Japanese girl Iraho Swai, from RI District 2790, has even picked up some Marathi words and learnt to sing a few Marathi songs.” Some others are also learning Marathi from a tutor specially hired for them.

So will these students join Rotary in the future, I ask Shobha. “Well, these students will now definitely have a better understanding of what Rotary is all about. Now it is up to the Rotarians in their respective countries to follow this up and motivate them to become Rotarians. We have certainly kindled their interest in Rotary.” Not only in Rotary but Indian food and culture as well. Vincent from Germany enjoyed *paav bhaaji* and *paani puri* so much, that he has decided to take the readymade mixes with him home to make a few batches there!

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

HIV-infected meet their soulmates

Kiran Zehra



RC Pune Metro team with Manavya volunteers at a Snehbandh Vivaha Mela meet.

Shirish Lawate, past president of RC Pune Metro, RID 3131, says that even though medical advancements enable HIV-positive individuals to live longer and have healthy children without transmitting the virus, it can still be hard for them to find friends or a partner. Lawate works with an NGO called Manavya,

which helps in rehabilitation of orphaned children with HIV. For over 13 years now, RC Pune Metro and Manavya together have been holding a special matchmaking camp called ‘Snehbandh – HIV Vivaha Mela’ for HIV positive people. “This camp has resulted in over 350 happy marriages between those infected with HIV, earning the project three district awards,” he says.

This year the project was executed by the alumni of Manavya. “The young, tech-savvy, and enthusiastic team took charge and developed a safe website where interested boys and girls could register and search for a suitable match. Special precautions were taken to protect the identity and confidentiality of those who registered. It was a paperless and hassle-free affair,” beams Lawate. This technological intervention helped to get over 110 online registrations for the matrimony meet.

At the meet, the Manavya volunteers organised games for the participants, which helped them open up and interact with each other. “In today’s fast-paced world, finding the right partner can be a daunting task, made even more complex for HIV patients due to social stigma and discrimination. But the atmosphere in the hall was relaxed and pleasant, and we felt safe discussing marriage terms,” says Rekha (name changed), a participant at the mela.



The club organised a mass marriage event in 2010 for HIV infected people.



As an additional step, the parents of those who registered were made to sit in a different room where a counsellor helped them understand that

“they should not think about caste and religion while choosing the right match for their sons and daughters. Parents should understand that in

a relationship where both partners are HIV positive, there should be a more open and honest communication around topics like sexual health, medical treatment, and managing the infection. This can help create a stronger and supportive partnership,” explains Lawate.

Vivek Kulkarni, the president of RC Pune Metro, was excited as “two marriages were fixed at the mela and many participants made friends with one another. The beauty of this project is that it recognises the importance of providing resources and support to those living with HIV and their families, helping them find love and companionship while breaking down societal barriers.”

DGN Sheetal Shah who was present at the matrimony meet says, “It was heartwarming to witness the happiness and enthusiasm on the participants’ faces. Projects like these showcase the true power of Rotary.” ■

A wheelchair rally in Thoothukudi

Team Rotary News

As part of RID 3212’s *Support the Girl Children* initiatives, RC Tuticorin Trailblazers organised a

wheelchair rally for the disabled in which a large number of women took part to express their solidarity with the Rotary’s theme

of empowering girls. Rtn Jasmine Tilak flagged off the rally, along with disabled welfare officer Sivasankaran. He distributed

shields and prizes to the winners.

A cyclothon was also organised from V O Chidambaram College, Thoothukudi, to a popular restaurant, covering a distance of 15km, to create awareness on the district theme. Club president T Malarvizhi and secretary A Prathima were present at both the events. ■

Participants of the wheelchair rally and the cyclothon.



Rotarians of RID 3150 set up a special bond with thousands of villagers

Jaishree

With our help and support, hopefully we can slowly arrest migration of villagers to cities. Many of our villages are dying, and have been neglected for long. We want to improve this scenario,” says DG Talla Rajasekar Reddy, RID 3150. Of the 113 Rotary clubs in the district, 64 clubs are actively involved in the district’s signature project — *Grama Vikas* —

a village adoption programme which, he says, will be continued for the next two years. Setting up libraries, check dams, renovating schools, public health centres and anganwadis, and organising medical and veterinary camps, are some of the service projects executed by Rotary clubs in closeby villages.

Recalling his visit to Mallempudi village supported by RC Tadepalli, the DG says that he was “overwhelmed

when a family greeted me and my team with a bunch of bananas, tamarind, organic turmeric and lots of other homegrown vegetables and cereals. I was moved beyond words as they thanked us profusely.” The club has set up a library in the village school, dug a borewell and built a check dam. An RCC with 20 villagers has also been installed in the village.

Rotary clubs in RID 3150 have done service projects worth ₹50,000 to ₹10 lakh in each of these villages solely through member contributions, says the governor. “These Rotary

I was moved beyond words when a family greeted me and my team with a bunch of bananas, tamarind, organic turmeric and lots of other homegrown vegetables and cereals.

DG Talla Rajasekhar Reddy
recalling his visit to a village

DG Talla Rajasekhar Reddy and his wife Uma Devi with RC Guntur Aadarsh president Durga Vani and her team at a village where the club members gave organic vegetable saplings worth ₹40,000.



projects have created remarkable transformation in the villages, with the result that the villagers are more comfortable in communicating with Rotarians than going to politicians for their needs.”

One of his favourite projects was a wedding ceremony facilitated by RC Bapatla for a woman from an underprivileged family in its adopted village, Adarshnagar. “It was a spontaneous gesture where all Rotarians pitched in with gifts worth ₹1.5 lakh. The club’s Grama Vikas chairman sponsored the *mangalsutra*, another Rotarian gifted the wedding sari, a club member took care of the catering and others gifted basic items needed by the couple for setting up a new home.” The club also constructed *rachabandha*, a wide granite platform at a cost of ₹2 lakh, to host village gatherings. A dental check-up camp was organised for the villagers and pushcarts were given for their livelihood support. An RO plant, bicycles for schoolchildren and a vocational training centre in the village are in the pipeline.



From top: RC Bapatla president M Sudhir Kumar and members with a woman whose marriage they sponsored in Adarshnagar village; DG Reddy gifts a waterwheel to a villager.

The district has arranged two cancer screening buses and a mobile eye clinic to visit the villages and patients are taken to the nearest city hospitals for further treatment. “Sapling plantation, campaigns against plastic use and renovation of schools and crematoriums are done in many of these villages,” adds the DG.

RC Secunderabad Cantonment led by Ramani Rao set up a vocational

centre at Thimmajipalli village to train women in tailoring. One group of women will be taught to make reusable sanitary pads and “we will provide them the raw material and help market the pads made,” says Ramani. It will be a joint project with RC Smart Hyderabad. The club constructed wash stations, renovated toilets in the village school and has undertaken to pay extra salary to the support staff. “It was a fun-filled



Farm equipment ready for distribution to farmers in a village.

day when 11 of us, along with our Rotaractors, drove to the village. We conducted a rangoli competition for the women, and involved the villagers and students in a mega sapling plantation programme on the school premises,” she adds. The club has plans to provide soil testers and fertilisers to increase the crop yield in the village, and make it plastic-free.

Eleven youngsters from a village adopted by RC Smart Hyderabad

have found placement after attending a vocational training programme organised by the club. “Our members have appointed them as accounts executives, computer operators and collection agents in their companies,” says the club’s past president Anita Reddy.

RC Nizamabad has provided a 500-litre RO plant, renovated a toilet block in a school and distributed books and school bags

at Lingasamudram. DG Reddy inaugurated a 1,000-litre RO plant set up by RC Ongole Central at the Thimanapalem village. The club also sponsored farming equipment, fertilisers and cattle feed in the village.

RC Parchur Central installed an RCC, and constructed a check dam at its adopted village Nagulapalem and the RCC members contributed ₹2,000 each to repair the roads there. RC Guntur Vikas provided 10 cement benches at Ananthavarappadu village.

The clubs sign an MoU with the local panchayats before undertaking development activities in the villages to avoid clash with government programmes, says Anita. “Now the name Rotary is familiar with the villagers across the district. It fills us with so much warmth when they receive us lovingly and treat us as family every time we visit the village,” she smiles, quoting Mahatma Gandhi’s words — India lives in her villages. ■



A compost pit provided by RC Pandaripuram in its adopted village.

WWS15

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An MHM project for slum women in Ahmedabad

Rasheeda Bhagat

RC Ahmedabad Greater, RI district 3054, has set a great example of collaboration between a Rotary club, RCC Jeevantirth sponsored by it, and another Rotary e-club in RID 3132, Maharashtra — Rotary E-Club of Empowering Youth, Ahmednagar, to spearhead an MHM programme. This well-structured and well-coordinated programme hopes to enhance the livelihood of over 2,000 female ragpickers and other women living in a prominent slum area of Ahmedabad.

Giving details of the project, president-elect of RC Ahmedabad Greater Arup Sinha said the moving spirit of this project is an ophthalmologist Dr Bindu Shirsath, an honorary member of the Ahmednagar e-club,

which conducted a hybrid session with RCC Jeevantirth, that was coordinated by him, as the vice-chair, environment, and club advisor for RCC Jeevantirth.

Jeevantirth Foundation, an NGO in Gujarat, has a phenomenal track record in working for social causes. One of its founding members is Rajendra Purohit (popularly known as Rajubhai), “an honorary member of our club, and the NGO works in the areas of education, creating livelihoods, and protecting the environment. He was a highly successful professor, and both he and his wife Deepti, a successful banker, quit their jobs to run Jeevantirth, which has got



big funding support from the CSR funds of corporates such as United Phosphorus, one of whose directors is PRIP Kalyan Banerjee,” says Sinha.

Both the husband and wife were deeply influenced by JP Narayan and Vinoba Bhave respectively. The Jeevantirth Foundation also has a

Dr Bindu Shirsath (R) with the women as they watch a demo of stitching a cloth sanitary pad.





partnership with the Ministry of Aayush, GoI, for an agricultural initiative.

Under this project, Sinha says, the 2,000 women ragpickers and slum dwellers of Ramapirno Tekro, Juna Vadaj, Ahmedabad, said to be the biggest slum of Gujarat, who are already beneficiaries of Jeevanthir, will now get an opportunity to enhance their livelihood by making and marketing reusable sanitary pads from recycled cloth.



Women display the cloth sanitary napkins they stitched at the Jeevanthir Foundation.

Coming to the specific details of this project, which is centred around MHM, Dr Bindu, who could not physically join the 20 women gathered for the recent workshop in Ahmedabad, due to a flight hitch, addressed the workshop virtually on various aspects of menstrual hygiene. “She fielded questions from the women and smashed many taboos and myths about menstruation, stressed on the importance of menstrual hygiene, and proper nutrition for good health, promoting the use of rash-free, cash-free, and trash-free sustainable cloth

pads to protect their own bodies and the environment from toxic hazards of disposable pads containing plastic and chemicals. She talked to them about the possibility of earning an income from stitching and sale of reusable cloth pads,” says Sinha.

The second component of the workshop was demonstrating the making of reusable and affordable sanitary napkins. The process was beamed live from Ahmednagar and the young adolescent girls, women of slum areas and ragpickers did the stitching on the seven sewing machines provided by Rajubhai’s NGO. Dr Bindu explained that each

such pad is washable, reusable and can last from 2 to 3 years depending on the usage, and then it can be disposed of without harming the environment.

Says an enthused Sinha, “What this will do for this group of 2,000 women as well as the larger community is tremendous as it will upgrade their skills and earning. From being mere ragpickers they will get a better and more sustainable income and become more respectable members of their community. It will also promote environmental awareness by using water and abandoned cloth, as well as responsible consumption.”

Dr Bindu estimates that a pack of six such sanitary pads can easily sell for ₹300–350, while the production cost, including raw material and packaging will not exceed ₹150.

The materials used for this project are PUL (polyurethane laminate), which is used in diapers, food packing, etc, clean old bedsheets, velcro and buttons.

The present president of RC Ahmedabad Greater Pradeep Kamal Chaturvedi was so enchanted by the possibilities offered by this project that he has declared it a permanent project of his club.

Another significant component of this project is the involvement of and partnership with the Upraant Foundation with its founder Riddhika Bhandari and her team as well as some bright young undergraduates from both NIFT and NID brimming with new ideas on packaging and branding. Upraant, a start-up mentored and supported by Rajubhai, segregates and recycles the rags picked up by the women, and upgrades them into handcrafted products such as coasters and other attractive household items. The students of NIFT and NID work

under her to get ideas on design, value addition and scalability. .

Present at this workshop were Jeevanthir trustee Deepti Raju, RCC president Kamlesh Dabhani, and a bunch of Rotary leaders and members including DRFC (RID 3054) PDG Lalit Sharma, AG Mahendra Patel, secretary Babubhai Patel, and secretary-elect Balkrishna Patel.

RC Ahmedabad Greater president Chaturvedi adds that cost-wise this project may not be huge “but its impact in terms of women’s empowerment and protecting the environment will be great.” ■

Saving eyesight through cataract surgery camps

Team Rotary News

To provide eye care to the underprivileged, RC Mumbai Bhandup, RID 3141, in association with the Bhaktivedanta Hospital and Research Institute and the Billawar Association, is executing *Project Cataract Free Bhandup* since August. Doctors from the hospital visit the locality in a well-equipped mobile clinic on the first Saturday of every month to screen patients for eye ailments.

Though the project is aimed at the residents of Bhandup in Mumbai, “we also get people from other parts of the city,” said Narayana Shagrithaya, treasurer, RC Mumbai Bhandup. Persons diagnosed with cataract are asked to report back after two days when they are transported to the hospital at Mira Road for surgery.

Eight camps have been conducted so far in which over 470 patients were examined and 148 have successfully undergone cataract surgeries at the hospital. While the surgery expenses including medicine, hospital stay, food and transport are paid by the hospital,



From L: Jayashree Shagrithaya; Rajendra Mokul, RC Mumbai Bhandup president Uday Shetty, Narayana Shagrithaya, T R Natarajan, Seema Kshirsagar, club secretary Jennifer Isaac, C R Ramakrishnan, Inner Wheel club president Pratibha Kar and Dr Shalini Saksena (seated, right) with a patient (seated, left) at the hospital.

the club takes care of logistics and other arrangements for the monthly camps. The club monitors the progress of patients after their operation.

Other vision disorders are also addressed at these camps and spectacles are given to people with defective eyesight, said Shagrithaya. “We plan to continue the cataract camps as an ongoing project of the club.” Club president Uday

Shetty is leading from the front with support from Janardhan Poojary, president, Billawar Association.

Some of the other notable projects of the club include *Pink Auto* for underprivileged women, skill development centre to train women in tailoring, and providing interest-free loan scholarships for students to pursue their college studies. ■

A vibrant RID 3000 discon

Team Rotary News



RIPR PDG Ashes Ganguly and spouse Nandita being driven to the conference venue in a chariot.

DGE Anantha Jothi, who will become the first woman governor in RID 3000, introduced her core team at the two-day district conference titled *Caarnival*.

Inaugurating the discon at the PSG Convention Centre in Coimbatore, India's former vice-president, Venkaiah Naidu complimented Rotary for its multifaceted projects for the communities. Orator Sukhi Sivam thanked Rotary and Rotarians for doing 'service above self'. DG I Jerald presented the Distinguished



DG I Jerald and PDG M Muruganandam present a memento to former vice-president of India Venkaiah Naidu in the presence of Margaret Jerald and Sumathi Muruganandam.

Service Awards to PDGs M Muruganandam and Dr Zameer Pasha, and Avenues of Service Awards were given to 10 members.

Vijay TV anchor Gopinath, industrialist M Ponnuswamy and transgender Kalki gave stimulating talks inspiring the audience. Kalki later joined PDG Dr Zameer Pasha and Mala Balsubramaniam in a panel discussion on Rotary's new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy.

On the second day too, eminent people including Lok Sabha MP S Venkatesan, environment activist G Sundarraj and film director SA Chandrasekhar delivered speeches on diverse subjects.

Madras High Court former justice K Chandru, recalling

his personal experiences said, "our judiciary is such that every common man in India will get justice, but it may be delayed." Tamil film actor Parthipan spoke on the new emerging path for the next generation filmmakers. Special programmes were conducted for the Anns and Annets.

Earlier, RI president's representative PDG Ashes Ganguly, RID 3142, and his wife Nandita were given a rousing welcome at the inaugural ceremony with *oyilattam*, a traditional folk dance, and *chenda melam*, percussion drum beat of Kerala.

The discon team led by Ramachandra Babu took care of logistics for the successful conduct of the fellowship meet. ■

Prachi & Pawan Agarwal
District Governor, RID 3110



**District
3110**



Pawan & Prachi Agarwal
District Governor & 1st Lady

प्रतिबिंब

The Reflection

District Conference 2023



Jennifer E. Jones & Nick Koyanich
Rotary International President 2022-23

District 3110 organised its District Conference - प्रतिबिंब at Hotel Leela Ambience and Convention Center, Karkardooma, Delhi on 17th to 19th March. The chief guest was RI Director, Rtn A.S. Venkatesh and Mrs Vinita Venkatesh. PDG George Sundararaj was the RI President's Representative. A special session on Leadership was taken by Gaur Gopal Das. Another session on Team Building & Leadership was taken by Kapil Dev through a panel discussion. Other eminent speakers were Arun Gemini, Ira Trivedi, Ruma Devi, Sundeep Kochar and Dr Jitender Singh Shunty. DG Pawan Agarwal and 1st Lady Prachi Agarwal felicitated the members of College of Governors of the district.



Lighting the lamp with Chief Guest and RIPR



DG Family with Gaur Gopal Das



Address by Gaur Gopal Das



Felicitating Kapil Dev



Panel discussion with Kapil Dev



Panel discussion with RID AS Venkatesh



Felicitating Dr Jitender Singh Shunty



Chief Guest and RIPR



Address by George Sundararaj, RIPR



Ganesh Vandana



Organising Team



Lucky Draw by Ruma Devi

District 3110 in ACTION



Rtn. Raj Mehlotra
CDS (Admin)



PDG Devender Kr. Agarwal
ARRFC

Congratulations

Congratulations Rtn Umesh Gupta of RC Agra
for winning the coveted bat autographed by Kapil Dev
during the District Conference by becoming Major Donor by contributing USD 10,000 to The Rotary Foundation.



PDG Sharat Chandra
DRFC



Two years ago, when around 125 Rotarians from RI District 3000 planned a holiday trip to Turkey under the leadership of their incoming governor I Jerald, they were looking forward to a fun-filled holiday in the land of the Ottomans. “I had planned this trip as in 2013, I had successfully led a goodwill mission trip to China for about 115 Rotarians. We had then visited Beijing and Shanghai. At first we thought we would go to Russia in 2022, but due to the Ukraine war, we changed the destination to Turkey,” says Jerald.

Rotarians from across the district — Madurai, Trichy, Dindigul, Pudukkottai, Karur, Perambalur, Theni, Kodaikanal and Ariyalur signed up; hotels were booked and visas acquired. But 10 days before they could travel, a horrendous earthquake hit both Turkey and Syria, and the tour planners were in a tizzy. “But then, one of our club presidents, C R Venkatesh from RC Madurai Metro Heritage, suggested let us not cancel the trip. We are Rotarians who always help people in distress, so let us go there and do something for those affected by the earthquake. So I told him you plan what we need to do and we will try our best to help them,” says the DG, who was part of the group.

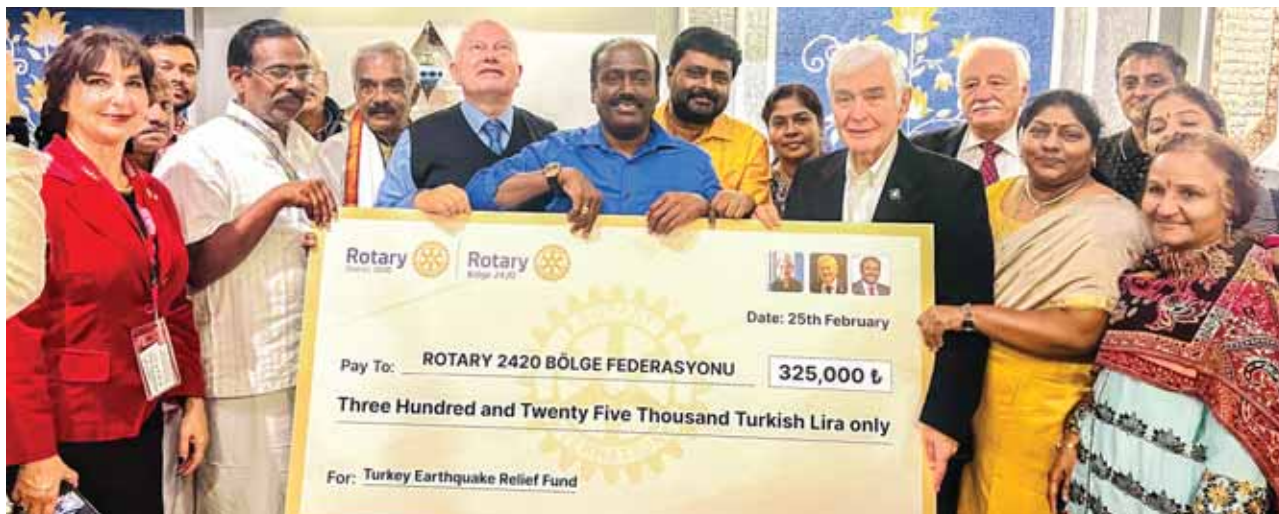
With Venkatesh as the project coordinator,

RID 3000 Rotarians use a fun trip to Turkey to help quake victims

Rasheeda Bhagat



RC Madurai Metro Heritage president C R Venkatesh (second from L) and his team all set for the Turkey trip, along with the relief material for quake victims.



DG Jerald hands over cheque for 325,000 Turkish lira to RID 2420 DG Suat (on his right) and PRID Safak Alpay (third from R). Also seen: RC Istanbul Anatolia president Ayse (L), Venkatesh (on DG Jerald's left), Goodwill Mission chairman Chithra Ramesh, PDG Kara and Margaret Jerald.

the Rotarians from RID 3000 started working on a Turkey Relief Fund; their objective was to collect around ₹10 lakh but they ended up collecting about ₹15 lakh, says Jerald.

Recalls Venkatesh, "In a record three days, our district was able to raise ₹15 lakh for the Turkey Relief Fund. Against the target of ₹5,000 by each club, some clubs contributed more than ₹25,000, with RC Madurai Metro Heritage contributing ₹2 lakh and RC Karur giving ₹1.18 lakh."

It was decided to use ₹2.38 lakh of the money collected to buy tents and beds which were urgently needed by the quake survivors. The Rotarians bought these here, says Jerald, and as 125 of them were travelling and had sufficient baggage allowance, they were able to carry this relief material with them on the aircraft as part of

their baggage. "On reaching Istanbul, we handed over this urgently required relief material to Harbir Kaur Bhatia from RC Santa Clara, US, who is working along with ShelterBox and other organisations to distribute relief to the people affected by the earthquake," he adds.

The rest of the amount, about ₹14 lakh (325,000 Turkish lira), was handed over in the form of a cheque to RID 2420 governor Suat, in the presence of past RI director from Turkey Safak Alpay, PDG Kara, president Ayse of RC Istanbul Anatolia International and few members of the club at Istanbul by the visiting Rotarians. DG Suat said that the funds will be utilised for building a mobile hospital which was urgently required.

DG Jerald adds that the Indian Rotarians, after

rendering this help to the earthquake affected in Turkey, proceeded with their holiday, visiting Istanbul, Cappadocia etc. "We did enjoy the balloon ride, did paragliding, etc, and had fun as well as satisfaction, that as Rotarians, we had also done what Rotary does best — help those in need."

When asked what next, he says, "The devastation caused by the earthquake is very bad and those people continue to need whatever help we can give them. There is a lot of reconstruction work that is required for which huge funds are required. We appeal to Rotarians across India to contribute whatever they can." ■



A Rotarian sets up a tent given by RID 3000 Rotarians in Istanbul.

A fistful of rice to fight hunger

Kiran Zehra



Holding up a fist full of rice, Shainaz Sheik, president of the Interact Club of Samskar-The Life School, Hyderabad, RID 3150, says, “This is all it takes to end starvation deaths and address the issue of hunger and malnutrition in our local communities.” Shainaz and her club members are encouraging students across different schools in Hyderabad to donate a handful of rice to help end hunger in the city through *Project Fist of Rice*.

It all started when RC Hyderabad Legends, the parent club, encouraged the Interactors to bring a handful of rice from their homes while coming to school and drop it into a container kept at the entrance. The first round of donations helped collect 250kg of rice which was given to the Devnar School for the Blind, in Begumpet, Hyderabad. “The Interactors experienced first-hand the joy of giving and we encouraged them to keep the project going,” says Mohana Vamsi, president of RC Hyderabad Legends.

Later, some of the Interactors along with few Rotarians, visited orphanages across the city to carry out research for the project. “An orphanage with 30–40 children needs close to 300kg of rice to provide its inmates with two meals a day. If the orphanage

does not have enough rice, the children have to sleep hungry,” says Vamsi. The Interactors were “deeply moved when they came to know about the struggle these children face,” and began an active campaign to fight hunger.

While researching, they came across a study published in the *Food Policy* journal that said that food aid programmes, including the donation of rice, “can have a significant impact on reducing hunger in India. It said that the provision of food aid led to an increase in food intake in women and children. These food donations can lead to improved health, reduce anaemia and enhance growth in children.”

The Interactors gradually increased the amount of rice they donated and other students followed suit. This initiative gained momentum and spread beyond the school. The project began receiving large donations of rice from individuals and organisations through the Rotarians’ contacts.

“There are children around the world without sufficient food, clothing or home. Whether it’s Ukraine, Syria or Turkey, children are suffering everywhere. The least we can do is help our own communities and make life easy for children around us,” says Shainaz. As an Interactor she “has learnt to appreciate what I have and I want to give back to the community, even in the smallest way.”

Another issue with donating food, points out Vamsi, is that “people are more generous during festivals than they are the rest of the year. The problem here is that the hunger crisis isn’t seasonal. It’s something that needs to



Members of Interact Club of Samskar-the Life School watch as a child donates rice for *Project Fist of Rice*.



be addressed throughout the year.” Last Diwali, the Interactors set up stalls at other schools and conducted awareness programmes to sensitise students and parents about hunger and its drastic effects on the less privileged.

Recently when the district hosted a cricket match between Bollywood and Tollywood actors as a PR event, RC Hyderabad Legends purchased 250 tickets for the match at ₹250 a ticket and sold them to club members at ₹599 a ticket; Interactors too sold 70 tickets at ₹400 each. The money made was donated to the *Fist of Rice* initiative.

The club’s target is to collect 20,230kg of rice by June 2023. “We started with a fist of rice and have already collected over 10,000kg of rice, and donated it to orphanages in our city. Our rice container has literally transformed into an *akshaya patra* — the more we give out, the fuller it gets,” says the 15-year-old Interact president. ■

Project Surya lights up tribal homes in Wai

V Muthukumaran

Reading a Marathi daily one morning as part of her daily routine, DGE Swati Herkal, RID 3132, was aghast at the hardships faced by the Katkari and Dhanger tribals living in the *basti* settlements across seven villages at Wai taluk in the Satara

district of Maharashtra. As there is no electricity in the tribal communities living on the fringes, “they were constantly haunted by the possible attack of wildlife in late hours. They have to trek down for several kilometres to get their basic needs fulfilled. But they have to

return home before dusk as leopards are on the prowl,” she says. She is the chair of *Project Surya* which has installed 148 solar lamps and street lights at these tribal settlements.

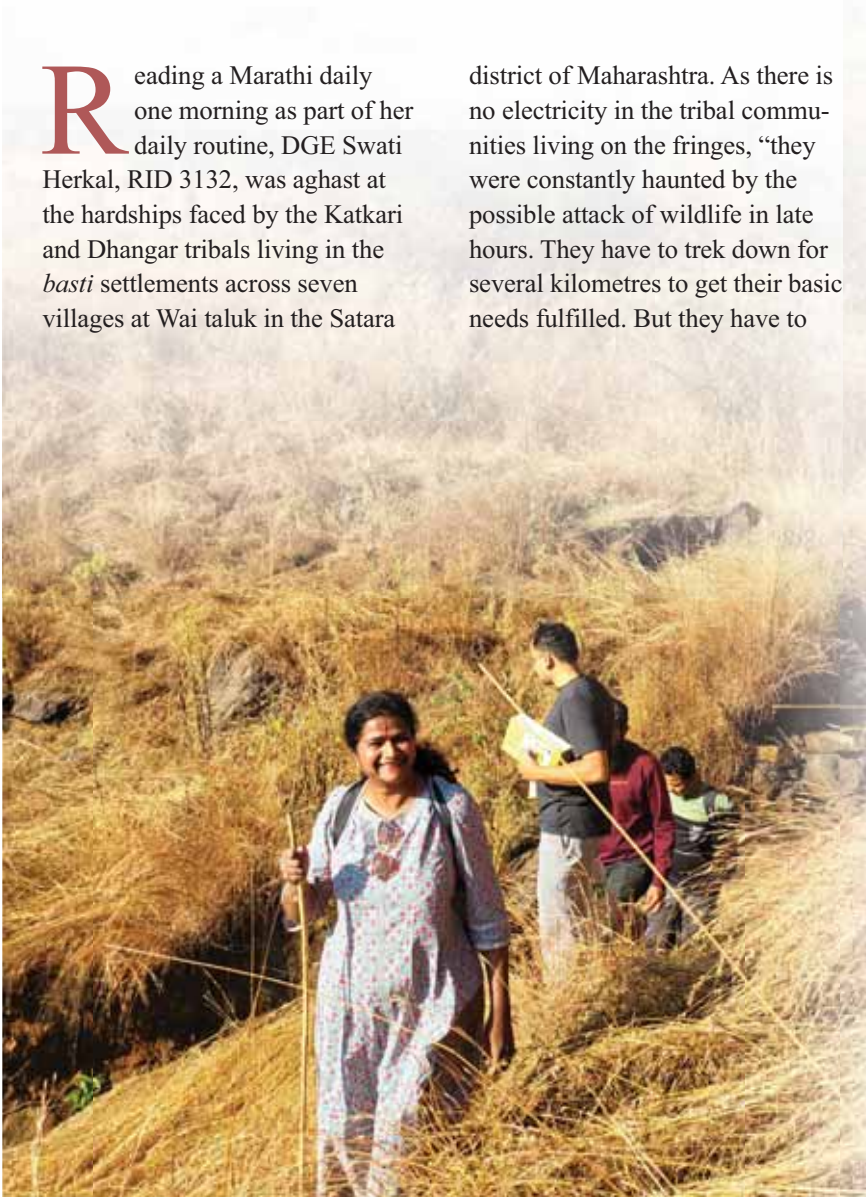
At the board meeting of RC Wai in the first week of January, club president Jitendra Pathak formed a 10-member team led by her to visit the tribal colonies for a first-hand study. “We found that darkness envelops the tribal colonies much earlier. They don’t venture out after 7pm fearing attacks from leopards and can’t sleep peacefully,” recalls Swati. Following the preliminary survey, a five-member project team was formed which made a number of trips to these remote hill areas to monitor the project work.

In the first phase, 72 mud houses and bamboo huts got two solar lamps each, and a solar street light was installed in four colonies. In all, 148 solar appliances costing ₹2.5 lakh were installed. The project was funded through member contributions and a donation of \$1,000 from PDG Meena Patel from Ohio, US. “In the next phase, we will install solar lamps in 238 tribal houses, thus covering all settlements in these seven villages, some atop steep mountains,” explains Swati. The tribal clusters are located in Dhom, Malappur, Vaygaon, Borgaon, Koleshwar, Madgani Moora and Kondhavale villages. Each household will have a solar panel with battery on

We found that darkness envelops the tribal colonies much earlier. They don’t venture out after 7pm fearing attacks from leopards and can’t sleep peacefully.

Swati Herkal

District Governor Elect, RID 3132



DGE Swati Herkal leads her team of Rotarians to Koleshwar *basti*.

the housetop to charge the solar lamps and a mobile phone charger.

Solar streetlights could not be installed at three clusters as “we could not climb the hill with poles and other accessories. But in the next phase, which will be completed by August, the remaining families will have solar lamps and streetlights will be installed in the left-out colonies,” assures the DGE.

A critical need

Explaining the critical need for solar lamps in tribal villages, club president Pathak says, “the people no longer need to remain indoors after dark. The streetlights keep the villages bright and illuminated and will keep wild animals at bay.” Profusely thanking Rotary, Radha Wadkar (70) at Kondhavale, who is living alone after losing her husband 13 years ago, and depends on a buffalo for income, says “my life has got a spark now with solar lamps. I no longer feel lonely.”

Another beneficiary, Baburao Khutekar (75), living in Koleshwar, says that earlier he had to walk over two-and-half hours downhill to recharge his mobile handset. “But now with the mobile recharger and battery, I don’t need to make that risky trek down and back.” Also, he can now save

the money he was spending to buy 15 litres of oil a month for the wick lamps. “Solar lamps have changed my life for the better,” he says.

In different phases of distribution, Rotarians visited five *basti* settlements to handover the solar lamps to the tribals. In the last leg, seven Rotarians, led by DGE Swati, including her nephew Annet Ved Herkal and six-year-old Annet Om Shinde, son of Rtn Pramod Shinde, trekked over 18km on mountains for 12 hours

to give the solar gadgets to beneficiaries at the remaining two clusters. “It was quite an experience for all of us. But we are ready to do more for the villagers,” says Swati.

School education

During their frequent trips to the villages, the project team found that children were engaged in fishing, and then selling the catch in the markets, instead of going to school. “They are doing it for survival. We are going to talk with the school management in these villages to provide meals thrice a day to tribal children so that they can attend classes and get basic education. Just giving midday meal alone as is being done now is not sufficient,” says the DGE. By expanding the midday meal programme, drop-outs can be attracted to schools.

After taking charge as district governor next year, she will ask all clubs in RID 3132 to identify tribal villages in need of solar lamps so that *Project Surya* can be expanded across western Maharashtra and Marathwada regions, she adds. ■



Swati presents a solar lamp to Laxmi Pawar, a tribal woman.



Swati and Rtn Deepak Bagade hand over solar lamps to Dhargar tribals in the presence of RC Wai president Jitendra Pathak (right) and Rtn Pramod Shinde at Madgani Moora cluster.

Stem cell processing equipment donated to Bengaluru hospital

Team Rotary News

Under *Project Hope*, RC Bangalore Lakeside, RID 3190, donated equipment for stem cell harvesting and autologous stem cell transplantation. The ₹1 crore project was undertaken in collaboration with the Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology in Bengaluru and made possible with CSR funding from two corporates, Virtusa Corporation and Embitel Technologies.

The Kidwai Institute was previously outsourcing stem cell processing, “but now our club’s *Project Hope* has made the hospital self-sufficient. We have provided an apheresis machine and ultra-low temperature freezers to the hospital,” says club president Prasanna Marar.

Dr Vasundhara Kailasnath, a paediatric oncologist at the hospital, thanking the club, explains that stem cell transplantation is a vital mode of



treatment for a variety of diseases, including cancer, blood and immune system disorders.

It is used to treat cancer patients who have received very high doses of chemotherapy. “Chemotherapy destroys not only cancer cells

but also healthy cells, including blood-forming stem cells. Stem cell transplantation replenishes the body’s supply of healthy stem cells, allowing patients to recover from chemotherapy and receive further treatment,” adds Dr Vasundhara. ■

A job fair in Mandvi



Rotary Club of Mandvi, RID 3054, celebrated Rotary’s 118th founding day on Feb 23 by organising a job fair in the city. Around 500 candidates attended the event and 150 of them were shortlisted by various companies, said club president Tejas Vasani and complimented the project chairmen Bhavin Ganatra, Akshay Maheta and Hariom Aboti.

Industrialist Shailesh Suraiya inaugurated the job fair which had a participation of companies such as Reliance Retail, Vodafone, ICICI Bank, Britannia Industries and Dorf Ketel Chemicals, and other local entrepreneurs and hospital managements. The Kutch District Employment Office and the Mandvi Industrial Training Institute also were associated in organising the job fair. ■

Dialysis equipment donated to govt hospital, Ernakulam

Team Rotary News



Aspinwall CFO T R Radhakrishnan (left) greets Government Hospital superintendent Dr Shahir Sha in the presence of (from L) hospital secretary N Prathiba, RC Cochin Beachside secretary C Ajaykrishnan, DG Rajmohan Nair, club president Sijo Jose, Rtn Shiyas Hashim and past president Murali Nair.

DG Rajmohan Nair handed over five multipara monitors worth ₹5 lakh for dialysis units to the superintendent of Government Hospital, Ernakulam, as part of the CSR grant project executed by RC Cochin Beachside, RID 3201.

Rtn Radhakrishnan, chief financial officer and director, Aspinwall which has supported the project, was also present on the occasion. The equipment will provide dialysis for less privileged patients free of cost at the hospital. Club president Sijo Jose, secretary Ajaykrishnan, governor's group representative Shiyas Hashim and Rtn Murali Nair were also present on the occasion. The hospital superintendent thanked the district governor and the club for their efforts, and expressed his gratitude to Aspinwall for its CSR initiative.■

From RI South Asia Office desk

Club Recognitions

❖ 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 such as 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) and 100% Rotary's Promise Club.

For details on each type of club banner visit <https://www.rotary.org/en/donate/recognition>

Banner recipients listed in the Club Foundation Banner Report may fluctuate throughout the Rotary year due to changes in membership and additional or redistributed contribution. Final banner certification is processed by TRF following the close of the Rotary year on June 30. Club banners earned for the previous year are shipped to the current DG in October or November. You

can request the District Foundation Banner Report at: rotarysupportcenter@rotary.org. It is also available to club/district leaders through their My Rotary login.

Major Donor recognition

TRF recognises individuals or couples whose combined giving has reached \$10,000, regardless of the gift designation. This recognition level can be achieved only through personal contributions and not through transfer of recognition points. Major Donors can opt for a crystal recognition piece and pin(s) commemorating the gift at each new recognition level. (Level ranges: Level 1: \$10,000 to \$24,999; Level 2: \$25,000 to \$49,999; Level 3: \$50,000 to \$99,999; and Level 4: \$100,000 to \$249,999.

- ❖ Spouse contribution may be linked for major donor recognition. Contact Donor Services team (Ashwini. Sharma@rotary.org) for linking your account to spouse account.
- ❖ Major Donor recognition is NOT processed automatically and needs to be reported to RI Staff along with engraving instructions from donor for processing of Major Donor Recognition material.■

An inclusive music fest in Chennai

Jaishree

In Dec 2002, the then President of India Abdul Kalam, presiding over the platinum jubilee celebrations of the Music Academy in Chennai, surprised the audience by bringing on stage a troupe of differently-abled artistes from the DRDO who performed to a poem he had penned on the flowers of the Moghul Gardens at the Rashtrapathi Bhavan, his official residence in Delhi.

“This unique gesture inspired us to conduct an inclusive music fest at the Academy to provide a platform for talented musicians with disability,” says Ramesh Ananth, president, RC Madras Coromandel. The club initiated its maiden edition of the ‘Parallel Music

Fest’ (PMF) in 2005 by inviting musically talented students of Karna Vidya, a school for the blind. “For over two decades we have been supporting the students of this school for their higher education and skilling them for employment opportunities. We were thrilled to see the first batch of our students perform alongside mainstream artistes. From then on, there has been no looking back and this is our 16th edition of PMF,” he smiles. The fest is organised on Dec 3 every year, coinciding with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

“Our aim is to instil confidence in persons with disability and encourage them to develop their inherent talent. We want them to realise that their

handicap is in no way a barrier to what they can achieve if they put their heart and soul into it,” says the club’s PMF chair R Sridhar.

Every year, during the December music season, the Music Academy confers the Sangita Kalanidhi Award on a distinguished artiste. In 2005, visually-challenged violin maestro Dr M Chandrasekaran was honoured with the award and “the Karna Vidya students were in awe of his feat.”

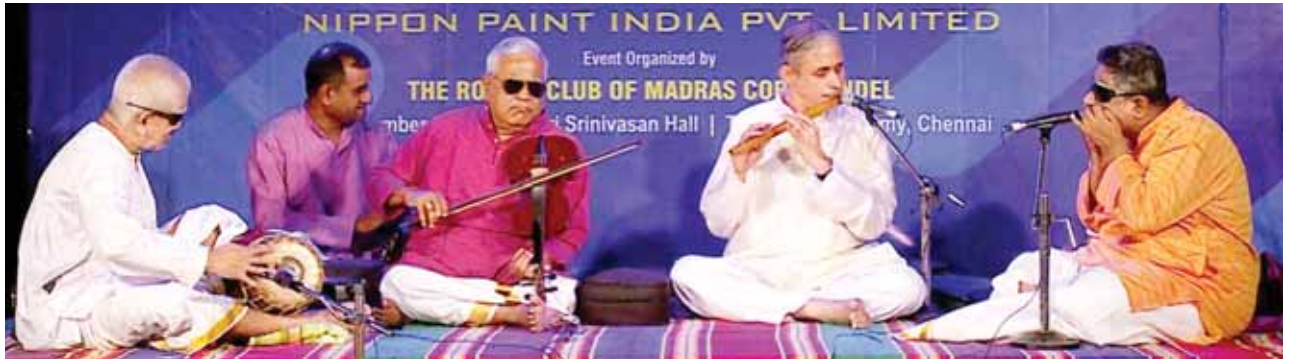
Five years later in 2010, the club, inspired by visually-challenged Hindustani musician Puttaraj Gavai of Gadag, Hubli, instituted the annual PMF Award for the differently-abled Carnatic musicians. “When Gavai died in 2010, over a million fans attended his funeral and the entire town came to a standstill. Such was the popularity of his music, although he was blind,” explains Ananth, adding that the club conferred the first PMF Award on Dr Chandrasekaran.

This year the fest was inaugurated by violin maestro Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi at the Music Academy. “It was a much-awaited event as it was organised after a gap of two years due to the Covid pandemic.” The PMF Awards for three years from 2020 were conferred on eminent differently-abled musicians, along with the Sangita Kalanidhi Awards at the Academy. “It was a dream come true for the handicapped musicians to be honoured by the Academy president N Murali, together with the Sangita Kalanidhi winners,” says Sridhar.

It was a cherished moment for Erode Nagaraj, a physically-challenged PMF awardee, to play the mridangam as an accompaniment for a violin rendition by Sangita Kalanidhi winners Lalgudi GJR Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi at the event. A recital by violinist TK Padmanabhan, flautist T Sashidhar,

Music Academy president N Murali (L), along with Carnatic musician Neyveli Santhanagopalan, present the PMF Lifetime Achievement Award for 2020 to percussionist K Srivatsa.





From L: A performance by PMF awardees K Srivatsa, T K Padmanabhan, T Sashidhar and Nerkunam S Manikandan.

along with K Srivatsa on the mridangam and Nerkunam S Manikandan playing the morsing, all visually-challenged, enthralled the audience. The blind students of Karna Vidya School were equally delighted to showcase their musical prowess for the distinguished audience that included expert musicians.

Every year the club's PMF committee identifies and provides a platform for the differently-abled classical musicians, be it Carnatic or Hindustani, from across the country, to perform on stage along with main stream artistes. Corporates such as Vodafone, India Cements and Nippon Paints have been

partnering with the club year after year for the annual programme. It also helped that "a sizeable number of members were musically-inclined and we have among us Carnatic musician OS Arun who helps us put together fundraisers through his performance," smiles Sridhar. ■

Saving Sri Lankan children at **Kochi**

Team Rotary News



Sri Lankan children with their parents, along with DG Rajmohan Nair and Rotarians of RC Cochin West, at the hospital in Kochi after the CHD surgery. PDG Madhav Chandran is on the right.

Rotary Club of Cochin West, RID 3201, in association with RC Colombo West, RID 3220, Sri Lanka, sponsored the surgical treatment for 10 Sri Lankan children suffering from congenital heart disease at the Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre, Kochi. The

children were treated in two batches during Oct and Nov last year after DG Rajmohan Nair launched the project in October at the hospital.

These children are part of a batch of 60 children from the island nation identified for corrective surgery under *Project Neona*, named after an 18-month-old

baby who died in a boat accident near the Lakshadweep islands. Her family is also extending support for this project which would give a second life for little children.

All 60 children will be treated within six months, said assistant governor Ajith Gopinath. *Project Neona* will also ensure capacity building of paediatric cardiology and fetal medicine in Sri Lanka to make the doctors self-reliant in this field. Thirty Sri Lankan nurses will be provided basic training at the Amrita Institute to handle CHD patients. Three cardiac surgeons will be given two-months observership each in paediatric cardiac surgery at the Kochi hospital. Experts from the hospital will provide workshops twice a year in Sri Lanka for select gynaecologists and radiologists for fetal detection of CHD.

The total cost of the project is ₹1.6 crore, said Gopinath. ■

Making entrepreneurs in Aligarh

Kiran Zehra

Several small businesses run by entrepreneurs from small towns and villages near Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, are ready to begin after participating in a start-up competition called ‘Step Ahead’. Organised by RC Aligarh Icon, RID 3110, in association with the Department of Commerce at Aligarh Muslim University, the competition provided training to 32 candidates on the nuances of entrepreneurship, financial literacy, creativity, collaboration and growth. Some of the participants underwent a 16-week SURE (Stimulating Urban Renewal through Entrepreneurship)

workshop, designed by the University of Houston and initiated by Professor Asiya Chaudhary from the Department of Commerce at AMU.

After presenting their business ideas and products, 10 finalists were selected based on judges’ evaluation and given an opportunity to showcase their ideas and interact with potential buyers, bankers and individual customers at a start-up fair. The Rotary network helped attract industrialists, professionals and influential people to the event. Impressed with the project outcome, DG Pawan Agarwal said that “programmes like this help aspiring small businesses realise

their goals by deconstructing the complexities of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.”

District CSR chair Lalesh Saxena said that the start-up competition included two aspects — showcasing products and idea exchange — and a valedictory session. “Since this was a promotional fair, the participants weren’t allowed to sell their products but if they wished to, they could give out samples,” he added.

“Thousands of people aspire to be an entrepreneur but very few succeed in becoming one. I have been lucky to be part of *Step Ahead*. This well-thought and carefully constructed

DG Pawan Agarwal and Rtn Raj Mehrotra visiting a stall at the start-up exhibition.



programme has helped people like me understand entrepreneurship better and has taken me one step closer to my dream,” says Nazreen Hasan, a participant. She has registered her trademark and applied for GST. Her loan for ₹5 lakh has been approved and she received multiple orders at the start-up fair for fabric patchwork.. “But I was overwhelmed with joy when people called me an artist. Nobody has addressed me like that before,” she smiles.

Although not every participant walked away with a deal, Prof Asiya said that their focus was “to impart financial literacy, ignite creativity, foster collaboration, and provide opportunities for growth while helping them understand their options.” Recalling a recent phone conversation she had with one of the participants post the start-up fair, she says, “the young girl said to me that she feels confident enough to assist her father

in his business and take care of the accounts.” Asiya considered this “a huge victory because the participant had gained the knowledge to run a business.”

The event concluded with a valedictory session attended by eminent guests, including Mohammad Gulrez, pro-vice chancellor, AMU. Awards and certificates were distributed to the participants who gained knowledge and skills to turn their dreams into reality.■

Dombivli clubs host 2-day RYLA

Team Rotary News

A two-day joint RYLA was conducted by seven Rotary clubs in Dombivli area of Mumbai, RID 3142, for youth aged 14–30. First mooted by RC Dombivli East president Vijay Dumbre on the Whatsapp group shared by the clubs in this region, they took 109 participants to a scenic resort at Badlapur, Thane, 20km from the city.

Rtn Ashish Bobada from RC Dombivli East, a certified NLP practitioner and coach, designed the RYLA under the CFL — cyber safety, financial literacy and leadership — theme. Speaking at the inaugural, DG Kailash Jethani briefed the participants about Rotary’s programmes for the youth and the importance of RYLA in shaping leadership qualities. He complimented the clubs for joining hands to conduct *Dombivli RYLA*. Multiple sessions on financial literacy



A RYLA session in progress.

(Rtn Jeevan Mahalkar), cyber safety (Rtn Shirish Deshpande and Amar Deshpande, ethical hacker), leadership (Rtn Sanjay Kumar) and team-building activities by Rtn Bobade made the RYLA an engrossing one for the youth.

Awards were given for the RYLA King, Queen and Best

Team. RC Dombivli Downtown president Annie Bijoy arranged transport for the delegates.

“All participants were given certificates and the event was much appreciated across the district,” said Ajay Kulkarni, president, RC Dombivli Midtown. ■

RC Pune Sportscity focuses on medical services

Jaishree

Cataract and squint surgeries, and sponsoring sophisticated medical equipment have been this year's predominant service projects of RC Pune Sportscity, RID 3131.

The club organised an eye check-up camp at Rahimatpur near Satara, Maharashtra, with the help of club member and ophthalmologist Dr Rajesh Pawar and an ophthalmic team from Sane Guruji Arogya Kendra, Hadapsar, Pune. Of the 500

people registered for the camp, 60 people were identified for cataract surgery which was performed in three batches. RC Pune Wisdom brought in Vulkan Technologies who funded the surgeries, each costing ₹6,000, as part of their CSR initiative.

Eleven children were diagnosed with a squint eye disorder and the host club has scheduled the corrective surgery in May "when the children will have their summer holidays," said club member

Sandesh Savant. The Mahesh Sahakari Bank in Pune will sponsor the surgeries to be performed at the Tarachand Hospital in the city. Reading glasses were distributed to the elderly at the camp.

"Our club has decided to make this our signature project to conduct camps every year to detect and treat cataract and squint disorders, especially among the rural population around Pune. Our members will pool in funds for the surgery," he said.



A person using the robotic glove given by the club to the Sancheti Institute of Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation Centre.



Patients after the cataract surgery.

The club members interacted with the Panchakroshi Shikshan Mandal, a school in Rahimatpur which was the camp venue, to understand its requirements for the students. It will also provide sports equipment and smart TVs for setting up digital classrooms at the school. "Soon we will be organising a RYLA for the students," said Savant.

Robotic gloves

The club sponsored a pair of robotic gloves, and electrical and ultrasound therapy machines to the Sancheti Institute of Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation Centre in the city. The gloves will help treat patients with paralysis of the hand, and people suffering from finger and

hand spasms by stimulating the nerves and muscles. The ultrasound and electrotherapy devices will provide extensive pain relief and muscle stimulation for patient recovery. "These devices were provided by a donor who wishes to remain anonymous," he added.

Research support

The club recently helped in funding research equipment and reagents worth ₹18 lakh through an IT company for the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune. The machines will help in replication and transcription of the SARS-CoV-2 genome, explained Savant. The researchers in IISER will study how

the virus proliferates, find ways to arrest its growth and develop tests to diagnose it. "This prestigious project is led by scientist Dr Saikrishnan Kayarat from IISER, which is probably one of the world's ten such research laboratories."

The equipment includes special chromatographic columns for protein purification, crystal/protein freezing and shipping equipment and pipette set for extremely low volume measurements. "We expect the project to take off from June as these machines are all being imported from Italy. The studies will help our country lead the way in the worldwide war against Covid and similar pandemic viruses," he said. ■

Skilling youth in electrical repair service

Team Rotary News

With the aim to provide a regular income to underprivileged, jobless youth, RC Nagpur, RID 3030, collaborated with the ICICI Foundation to set up The Rotary Centre to train them in electrical and home appliances repair through a 72-day crash course with hands-on knowledge.

The club members donated for the Rotary centre which gets expertise from the ICICI Academy of Skills, Nagpur, for the training programme. Further, the Academy has skilled and placed over 100 beneficiaries in reputed firms after they had completed the programme at the



vocational centre. The well-designed course offers both theory and practical exposure to basic installation, servicing and repairing of electrical and home appliances, and other household accessories. Those who had passed Class 10 are eligible for the programme.

Already, the first three batches of 108 students, including a girl, who had

completed the training course at the centre were placed at service centres run by top firms — IFB, Blue Star, Haier, Reliance Digital, Samsung and Tata Sky. "We are proud to take up this skilling initiative with the support of ICICI Foundation as it will enable a sustainable livelihood for the youth from economically weak families," said Nilufer Rana, president, RC Nagpur. ■

Meet your



Shashank Rastogi

Educationist, RC Bhilai Greater, RID 3261

Medical camps to benefit one million people

Service above self, Rotary's key mantra, attracted Shashank Rastogi to join the organisation in 2001. A second-generation Rotarian, he was influenced by his late father Rtn YP Rastogi, and "having been an Interactor, Rotaractor and then joining Rotary gave me a good foundation," he says.

During his year as DG, an ICU facility (GG: \$30,000) was set up at the government hospital in Durg, Chhattisgarh. "A Rotary Tower was installed at a prominent site in Rourkela to enhance our public image. So far, 50 Happy Schools have been done through a mix of CSR grants, district funds and member contributions," says Rastogi. Artificial limbs were fitted on 1,500 amputees at 12 special camps at a cost of ₹2.25 crore. A four-day Rahat medical camp at Narsinghpur, MP, examined over one lakh patients; and 3,000 cataract, oncology and other surgeries were done. "In certain parts of MP, Odisha and Chhattisgarh, medical camps are held on Sundays to benefit the rural and urban poor," he says. Rastogi has a target to reach out to 10 lakh people through medical camps this year. RC Raipur Greater has done 108 WASH programmes in schools where students were taught best hygiene practices.

His target for TRF giving is \$100,000 and he is confident of adding 150 new members. Five new clubs will be added to take the count to 92. "I am inspired by the leadership of PRIP Shekhar Mehta, PRIDs Kamal Sanghvi, Bharat Pandya; and also, the present directors Venkatesh and Mahesh Kotbagi. I will continue community service to strengthen Rotary," he adds. His mother was an Inner Wheel member.



Dinesh Kumar Sharma

Printing, RC Bulandshahr, RID 3100

Rotary Friendship Exchange with Sri Lanka

Having joined Rotary in 2008, "drawn to it so that I can help the poor and marginalised, its service motto keeps me going. Now as governor I have taken up path-breaking initiatives," says Dinesh Sharma. He led a team of 60 Rotarians to a six-day tour of Sri Lanka and signed an MoU with DG Pubudu De Zoysa, RID 3220, in Colombo for a Rotary Friendship Exchange. "It was a great experience for us as we went around Colombo, Kandy and Nuwara Eliya," he recalls.

An Endowment Fund of \$25,000, the first in RID 3100, was created by him and its interest will be routed as DDF for service projects. "For the first time, we have five Major Donors, a proud moment for us all in this district." So far, he has inducted 175 new members and is confident of adding 75 more Rotarians, taking their total headcount to over 2,600 by June-end. Three GG projects (around ₹40 lakh each) are being processed, "while one more is being drafted and we are waiting for a foreign partner." The clubs have distributed 750 bicycles to school girls, and another 250 will be given shortly. "We have also distributed 350 wheelchairs till now." A five-acre Rotary forest was inaugurated in Moradabad recently and two Happy Schools (₹8 lakh) have been completed.

At the Lakshya seminar, a target of \$83,000 was fixed for TRF giving. "We have already collected \$91,000 and hope to touch \$150,000 by June-end," he smiles.

Governors

V Muthukumaran



S Rajmohan Nair

Insurance, RC Cochin Central, RID 3201

500 houses for needy families

With an all-inclusive district theme of *Rainbow*, Rajmohan Nair has unveiled his grand mission under VIBGYOR — Value-added education; Inclusion; Building responsible communities; Go green; Youth engagement; Old age people; and Reach out to rehabilitate and rebuild. *Rotary Parpidam* project is building 500 houses for the homeless and needy families, “of which 200 were already handed over to the beneficiaries. We will complete and hand over the remaining 300 houses by June,” he says. The *home for the homeless* initiative is funded by AKS member Kochoseph Chittilappilly (₹10 crore) and club donations. Governor’s Excellence Awards for Teachers (GREAT) are given to 150 teachers. Over 1,000 bicycles were donated to school-going girls.

Each club has adopted a stretch of 1.5-2km road as part of building a responsible community. While an ICU ambulance will be flagged off in Thekkady (GG: \$80,000) shortly, four machines are ready for a new dialysis centre (GG: 32,000) at the government hospital, Palakkad. A GG application for \$125,000 was filed for the next phase of artificial limbs project, an ongoing project by RC Coimbatore Midtown which had distributed over 25,000 prosthetics so far. His target for TRF giving is \$2 million. A Rotarian since 1996, Nair says, “Rotary leaders PRIP Shekhar Mehta, Trustee Bharat Pandya, PRID Kamal Sanghvi and RIDs Venkatesh and Mahesh Kotbagi motivate me to strive for the betterment of society.”



Jayagowri Hadigal

Paediatrician, RC Manipal, RID 3182

“Being Rotarian is a great experience”

Constant learning through interaction and networking with people in Rotary “helps me to grow as a person. Hence, I enjoy being in this organisation,” says Dr Jayagowri Hadigal. A paediatrician, maternal and childcare projects are close to her heart. “Our clubs across the four revenue districts are holding awareness camps and seminars on learning disorders among children throughout the year.” Medical camps are being held in rural areas on a weekly and monthly basis reaching out to villagers.

She will inaugurate two physiotherapy units (GG: \$400,000) at Kundapur and Karkala shortly. A human milk bank will be set up at Hassan district of Karnataka, funded by a global grant of ₹40 lakh. “We have given 400 sewing machines to BPL women, and 150 more will be distributed by June 30.” For TRF, she hopes to raise \$200,000 by the end of this Rotary year.

With 3,700 Rotarians across 88 clubs, “I have set a target of 10 per cent in net membership growth. We will be starting one new club this year.” A Rotarian since 2002, Jayagowri says, “Trustee Bharat Pandya is my role model in Rotary. I would like to be in Rotary just to serve the people. Also, as a Rotarian, you get to know people through interaction which is a great learning curve and rewarding experience,” she says.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

‘Ride for Rotary’ to connect Rotarians

V Muthukumaran

Forty-two foreign Rotarians from 16 countries went on a 11-day motor rally from Mahabalipuram, a Pallava-era beach town near Chennai, to Mangaluru in Karnataka via Ootacamund in the Nilgiris on the western ghats. They got to know Indian Rotary clubs better as they hosted them enroute, and had a good exposure to Indian heritage, culture, while savouring its traditional cuisine and hospitality.

Ride for Rotary is a not just a prestigious fundraiser for TRF organised by RID 3181, “but a rally that celebrates Rotary fellowship by connecting foreign

Rotarians with Indian clubs which welcome them and extend a pleasant stay during brief stopovers,” says Kamlesh Kataria, president, RC Ootacamund, RID 3203. At the fellowship meet in Ootacamund, five rallyists spoke about the myriad activities of their clubs, while another one recalled “their visual delight riding through scenic places that gave them so much joy,” he says.

Kataria briefed the foreign delegates about the service projects of his 51-year-old club, the first in Nilgiris, which was followed by the exchange of club flags, an entertainment show, and dinner. “It was an elite ceremony, where

the visitors enjoyed the fellowship and interaction with 20 Rotarians — 10 each from our club and RID 3181. While promoting TRF is the main goal, the platform enabled the foreigners to connect with us in such a significant manner,” he says.

Flagged off by DGs JKN Palani, RID 3231, and Prakash Karanth, RID 3181, at Mahabs, the motorists were given a warm send off by members of RC Eagle Town Thirukkazhukundram on Jan 15. “Over the next 10 days, they were hosted by clubs at Puducherry, Thanjavur, Madurai, Tirupur, Coimbatore, Ooty Mysuru and Madikeri, before reaching the destination, Mangaluru on Jan 25,” explains R Muthukumaran, vice-chairman, *Ride for Rotary*, and charter president, RC Ivory City Mysuru. A distance of 1,380km from the east coast to the west coast of India across well-chosen heritage sites and towns in Tamil Nadu would have given the foreign Rotarians a “good peek into the Indian way of life, our culture, food and historical richness,” he says.



DG JKN Palani (R) honours participants from France at the start of the motor rally in Mahabalipuram. Also seen are (from L) DG Prakash Karanth, RID 3181, Rtn Sundarraj, project committee chairman Krishna Narayana Muliya and RC Eagle Town Thirukkazhukundram president T Balasundaram.



Ride for Rotary Committee chair Krishna Narayana Muliya (third from Left, middle row) with foreigners during a stopover at Madikeri. Event vice-chairman R Muthukumaran is at the back row, left.

In Thanjavur, PDG C Gunasekaran welcomed them, and the visitors were taken on a guided tour of the Brihadeeswarar temple, a grand edifice built by King Rajendra Chola and a UNESCO heritage site. “Around 20 clubs in Madurai jointly staged a reception where traditional arts including folk music and dance were performed. The foreigners were simply overawed by the art spectacle,” says Muthukumaran.

Save Soil, Save Water

Every year the rally theme changes, and for this seventh edition, RID 3181 has taken up a tagline, *Save Soil, Save Water*, as part of its efforts to protect and conserve nature. “Depending on the states and its topography, our branding for the expedition will differ,” he says. For this edition, a special panel was formed and led by Krishna Narayana Muliya from RC Puttur East.

All 42 participants from the US, UK, Canada, Germany, France, Australia, England, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Belgium, Poland, Denmark, Austria, Norway and Romania have to pay ₹2.5 lakh each as rally fee, a part of which will be used for the travel and stay expenses; the balance will be donated to TRF. “It is a sort of mini RI convention as foreigners raise a toast to Indian clubs after coming to know about our diverse work in our communities. We donate a sizeable amount from the proceeds, to TRF each year,” says Muliya.

A participant for the third time, Torbjorn Vik from RC Heimdal, RID 2275, Norway, says, “I really enjoyed the hospitality extended by the Rotary clubs along the way and was moved by their impactful service activities.”

Raj Patoli from RC Wettingen, RID 1980, Switzerland, says, “I have brought three members from my club to this unique rally which I am attending for the third time. Good homework by the organisers to ensure a zero-error motor rally.” The foreigners were honoured at the valedictory event presided over by DG Karanth in Mangaluru. ■



Rtn Sondra M Russ from RC Schenectady, US (centre) lights the traditional lamp in the presence of (from L) RC Ootacamund international service chair Pamela Clarke, bulletin editor Thelma Nethaji, joint secretary Shanthy, Rtn Dirt Callaert from RC Sint Niklaas, Belgium, and host club president Kamlesh Kataria at the fellowship meet.

Doing good with TRF help

A renal care centre in Jaipur

Team Rotary News



From L: Club president Suneel Dutt Goyal, Devesh Bansal, PDG SVS Rao (RID 3020), PDG Ramesh Agrawal and past president Manoj Bansal at the Renal Sciences Centre in Jaipur.

RC Jaipur Round Town, RID 3054, and RC Rajdhani, RID 3292, Nepal, collaborated to establish the Renal Sciences Centre at the Rajasthan Hospital in Jaipur through a GG worth \$288,000 (₹21.6 million). The centre will provide low-cost dialysis and associated services such as treatment for retinopathy and neuropathy to less privileged patients. Project coordinator PDG Ramesh Agrawal said that the project has already benefitted over 5,500 patients.

The new facility will provide a complete spectrum of care from simple dialysis to a renal transplant procedure, cataract and laparoscopic surgeries and other related treatments at much lower costs than private hospitals. It has also helped in providing employment opportunities by training over 100 paramedical staff. ■

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A special RYLA in Chandigarh

Kiran Zehra

Special children differ socially, mentally and physically from other children. They require special attention and can't be expected to sit in meditation, art, dance workshops, and sports sessions without prior preparation. They are enthusiastic but we have to break the information down into smaller units to engage them," says Sangeeta Jain, principal of SOREM (Society for Rehabilitation of Mentally Challenged), Chandigarh. So, when RC Chandigarh Midtown, RID 3080, hosted a special RYLA called *Vishesh* (special in Hindi) to commemorate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, SOREM ensured "we had trained faculty to prepare the children for a fun-filled day."

This year, about 100 'special delegates' between ages 15 and 35 registered for the event, which was held at SOREM. "The atmosphere was filled with excitement and fun, as children with visual, hearing, and speech impairments, as well as those with mental and physical challenges, connected with each other enthusiastically," says club president Sanjay Kalra. "We were worried if we could keep the children occupied with the



RYLA participants with Rotarians.

activities, but they surprised us with their determination and confidence to keep going," he adds.

Kalra says that the event focused on the holistic growth of children and adults with special needs and enhanced their personal and leadership qualities through fun activities. "These children can do wonders if supported by the right people." Awards and certificates were given to the best performers while all children were given RYLA certificates.

Through RYLA *Vishesh*, says Kalra, "our club had the unique opportunity to demonstrate our concern for special children. The event helped to showcase the abilities of those with

disabilities and the transformative power of empathy, inclusivity, and compassion."

One of the sessions that was enjoyed thoroughly by all the participants was the dance workshop. "It was heartwarming to watch these children dance joyously without any inhibition," smiles the club president. The event was inaugurated by Deepak Dhiman, channel head and editor of *Zee News*. *Radio Punjab* was the official radio partner.

The club also organised a 'Rotary Walk with a Difference' to commemorate the success of *Project Sahyog*, which provided artificial limbs to amputees.■

Wheelchair-bound youngsters and other differently-abled participants at the RYLA organised by RC Chandigarh Midtown.



A safe **drinking water** solution

Preeti Mehra

The Maji Reactor technology holds the promise of eradicating water-borne diseases for rural population aided by CSR initiatives.

You could call it his Eureka moment. Marine engineer Anjan Mukherjee was reading an article in *Nature* magazine on the technique used by the snapping shrimp (Alpheidae) to harness energy to attack its prey, when the thought struck him that the same method could be employed to

purify water and rid it of microbes. At that time little did he know that from his inspired thoughts would evolve a technology with the potential to rid the world of waterborne diseases.

This was way back in 2001 when Mukherjee, then in the merchant navy, was trying to get his head around a solution to purify the water carried in

the ballast tanks of vessels to stabilise the empty ship till it was loaded with fresh cargo. Before loading, the ballast tanks were emptied, and the untreated water discharged into the sea which could be detrimental to the ecosystem. “When I chanced to read the article, I was waiting in the office of a senior scientist I had gone



to see about the discharge water issue. It suddenly struck me that biomimicry of the snapping shrimp may be a way forward. The scientist put me across to the right people to work out the solution,” recalls Mukherjee.

In 2016 when Mukherjee, who travelled extensively across the world, accidentally visited a diarrhoea-hit village in India, his attention was suddenly drawn to the fact that every year thousands of children die in India due to sanitation-related diarrhoeal diseases because of consumption of unsafe water. Also, that contaminated water transmits not just diarrhoea, but cholera and typhoid as well. Further research revealed that in the country’s 650,000 villages, 85 per cent of water is drawn using borewells through pipes and hand pumps. These tap into the groundwater or aquifers, which are widely contaminated with disease-causing germs and pollutants. Hand pumps that serve a large population usually deliver water unfit to drink. Also, of the 11 million hand pumps in India only eight million are in working order.

Taking the most commonly used hand pump, India’s Mark II model, Mukherjee developed a device in 2017 on the same snapping shrimp scientific principle. The device could be fitted



to the pump in less than 30 minutes by even a person who did not have any technical skills. He patented his invention, the Maji Reactor evoking the concept of ‘Ma’—the mother, the nurturer. Interestingly, in Africa, where the reactor may soon be introduced, Maji means water in the Swahili and Afrikaans language.

So, how does the invention work? Mukherjee explains, “In the case of the snapping shrimp, it attacks its prey by shooting a jet of water at 60mph by snapping its claw. This creates a low pressure ‘bubble’ in its wake. When the bubble collapses, it makes a bang louder than a rocket launch or jet engine. For a tiny fraction of a second, temperatures in the bubble soar to more than 4,426 degrees C (8,000 degrees F), essentially destroying its prey. The popping also creates a flash of light for a billionth of a second.

“Similar to the snapping shrimp, the Maji Reactor device converts kinetic energy of the fluid into millions

of targeted microbubbles each acting as a localised reactor. These bubbles release a large amount of intense energy during their collapse. The resultant shock waves physically kill microbes and deliver water to those drawing it over 99 per cent safer than before.” Incidentally, the device works by reacting to the strokes of the human hand on the hand pump while he or she withdraws water.

Soon Mukherjee launched his company Taraltac Solutions to enter the market with his invention. However, to manufacture the device, the marine engineer finds the third-party manufacturing route for small parts the best, with him putting all the parts together. “This is cutting edge work and I go to the best talent available,” he says.

The Maji Reactor has given Mukherjee huge traction. He has won several awards including in 2017 the Indian Innovation Growth Programme Award 2.0 organised by the Department

In 2021, the Maji Reactor was selected as a permanent exhibit in the New Technologies of the Future gallery at the Deutsches Museum, Nuremberg, Germany.



Taraltec founder Anjan Mukherjee explaining about the working of the Maji Reactor to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at Tel Aviv, Israel in 2017.

of Science and Technology, Lockheed Martin and Tata Trusts; in 2019 the Best Innovation Award from the Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj; in 2020 he was the Winner of Sustainability, Maharashtra Start-up Week; and in the same year he won the National Start-up Award (Water and Water Network).

In 2021, the Maji Reactor was selected as a permanent exhibit in the New Technologies of the Future gallery at the Deutsches Museum, Nuremberg, Germany. Mukherjee has no idea how that happened. The museum, obviously looking for innovations that had great potential, found his to be an appropriate exhibit.

Despite all these recognitions, Mukherjee is a pioneer who claims to be no businessman out to make huge profits. He wants his invention to benefit humanity to the maximum. As the founder of a pure science bootstrapped company providing a social impact service, he is always on the lookout for companies which will use the Corporate Social

Responsibility (CSR) route to provide more Maji Reactors to the rural population. Companies such as Reliance, Godrej, Jubilant, Lupin, and organisations such as Tata Trusts, Water Aid and Nalanda Foundation have already chosen Taraltec for providing the Maji

Reactor as part of their CSR activity. It is presently dispensing safe water in pockets of Maharashtra, Bihar, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

“We have impacted close to a million people through CSR funding,” says Mukherjee, who is looking for more organisations that recognise the potential of the device and take forward the work of installing it in every village where the water is not potable and safe.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has also written to all states that the Central Finance Commissions’ grants can be utilised for this purpose. With the device providing good results during trials, the marine engineer hopes that his device will be used across the country and the world to eradicate waterborne diseases.

Designed by
N Krishnamurthy



Team Rotary News

Dialysis machines for Dindigul hospital



DGE Anantha Jothi along with club members at the inauguration of dialysis machines.

RC Dindigul, RID 3000, in association with RC Saitama Shintoshin, RID 2770, Japan, and TRF, sponsored 10 dialysis machines to Christian Fellowship Hospital at Oddanchatram near Dindigul. DGE Anantha Jothi inaugurated the project. ■

Rotary Hall to boost community initiatives



PDG Gaurish Dhond and DG Venkatesh H Deshpande along with club members in front of the newly constructed Rotary Hall.

RC Bailhongal, RID 3170, inaugurated its Rotary Hall. The structure spans across 2,500 sqft and was completed at a total cost of ₹90 lakh. The new facility is expected to serve as a hub for various community-oriented activities and events. ■

Boosting public image in Surat



DG Shrikant Indani along with club members after unveiling the statue.

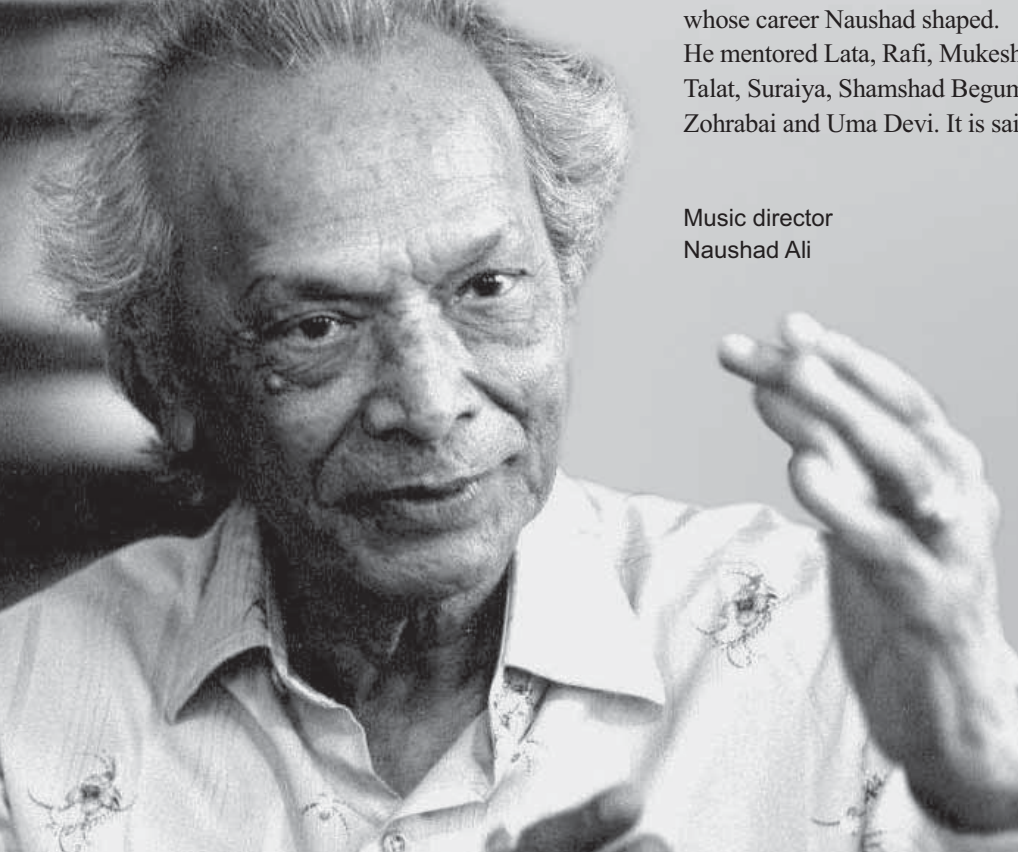
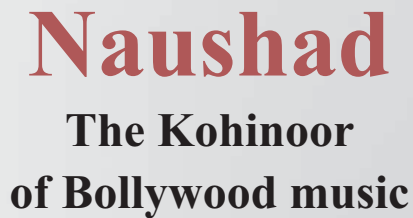
To promote Rotary's public image in the city, RC Surat East, RID 3060, in association with RC Emory Druid Hills, RID 6900, Atlanta, USA, set up a statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at a busy traffic intersection point in Surat at a cost of ₹8.57 lakh. The statue was unveiled by DG Shrikant Indani. ■

A reminder to conserve water

To celebrate World Wildlife Day, Rotary Water Mission, a RID 3232 initiative to save water, and Prakruthi Eco Care Solutions unveiled a 10-foot-tall sculpture titled *Kalpavriksha* made entirely from scrap metal, at Spencer Plaza, Chennai. The sculpture serves as a reminder to use water with care and respect to avoid future droughts and famines. ■



Kalpavriksha, the sculpture.



Naushad: "I wish I had worked with you earlier."

Saigal wasn't the only singer whose career Naushad shaped. He mentored Lata, Rafi, Mukesh, Talat, Suraiya, Shamshad Begum, Zohrabai and Uma Devi. It is said

Music director
Naushad Ali

Saigal wasn't the only singer whose career Naushad shaped. He mentored Lata, Rafi, Mukesh, Talat, Suraiya, Shamshad Begum, Zohrabai and Uma Devi. It is said

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that he not merely made great songs, he made great singers.

Hailed as “sangeet samrat” and Kohinoor of Bollywood music, even though he composed music for just 65 films, the pristine melody of his songs — many immortal, makes him a colossus of creativity. His work was a synthesis of Indian music — classical and folk, ghazals, bhajans and qawwalis. Said SD Burman “It’s from Naushad that composers have learnt how to blend quality with popularity.” But Naushad himself remained humble about his musical prowess. “Allah is the only composer. He lifted me to the skies,” he said once.

He gave Indian cinema three of its great music epics — *Baiju Bawra* (1952), *Mother India* (1957) *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), and numerous other masterpieces. Just a couple of such films would have conferred stardom on a composer. Together, they constitute a treasure beyond compare. Of his 65 films, 35 celebrated silver jubilee, 12 golden jubilee and three diamond jubilee.



Naushad with Lata Mangeshkar.

Even though Naushad composed music for just 65 films, the pristine melody of his songs — many immortal, makes him a colossus of creativity.

He introduced innovations with orchestra, instrumentation and sound that were transformational. He was the first to separately record voice and music tracks in playback singing; the first to combine the flute

and the clarinet, the sitar and the mandolin. He also introduced the accordion to Hindi film music and created special rhythms by blending percussion instruments like tabla, dholak and ghatam with the khanjuri. He presented an orchestra of 100 instruments in the film *Aan* and a chorus of 100 singers for a single song (for *Ae mohabbat zindabad* in *Mughal-e-Azam*.) He excelled in the use of background music to create mood and feeling and dramatise the story.

But Naushad’s greatest contribution of course was to create classical music for the masses with tunes they loved. He even brought titans of classicism to cinema. Ustad Amir Khan and Pandit DV Pulaskar sang in *Baiju Bawra*, and Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan in *Mughal-e-Azam*.

His best songs

Naushad was considered the man with the Midas touch. He turned everything to music gold!

Examples

- *Awaz de, kahan hai* — *Anmol Ghadi*, 1946: A triumphant



From L: Majrooh Sultanpuri, Urdu poet Qateel Shifai, Rajinder Krishan and Naushad.





With Lakshmikanth, Pyarelal and Manoj Kumar.

paean to the power and majesty of Noor Jahan's voice.

- *Tu kahe agar jeevan bhar — Andaz*, 1949. Dilip Kumar at the piano captivates heroine Nargis in Mukesh's voice. Mukesh went to Naushad's house 23 times to rehearse the song before the maestro okayed it. Mukesh first, then Talat, shone as Dilip's voice in Naushad's music, before he settled on Rafi.
- *Duniya badal gayi* and *Mera jeevan sathi bichad gaya — Babul*, 1950. Searing melancholy, haunting melody. Talat and Samshad at their best. Filmed on Dilip and Munawar Sultana.
- *Dil mein chhupake pyar ka toofan le chaley — Aan*, 1951. Naushad had Rafi singing "I love you" in many voices. Here a smiling, teasing Dilip woos a frowning Nadira in Rafi's vocals.
- Songs of *Baiju Bawra*, 1952: Three Rafi songs from the movie — *Man tapdat hari darshan ko aag*; *Insan bano*; and *O duniya ke rakhwale* — were testaments to Rafi's

full-throated magnificence and Naushad's genius. Both wizards soared to the pinnacle of stardom with these songs based on classical ragas, and transformed the Hindi music landscape. Lata's *Mohe bhool gaye sawariyan* blended beauty, melody and melancholy. Rafi's riveting lover's call *Tu ganga ki mauji* won Naushad the Filmfare Award for best music of the year.

- When *Baiju Bawra* celebrated a silver jubilee at Royal cinema, Naushad said, "I used to sleep on the footpath opposite this place. It took me 16 years to cross the road."

He presented an orchestra of 100 instruments in the film *Aan* and a chorus of 100 singers for a single song — *Ae mohabbat zindabad* in *Mughal-e-Azam*.

- Songs of *Mother India*, 1957. This epic presented 12 songs rendered by Lata, Shamshad, Rafi and Manna Dey. *Duniya mein hum aaye hain to jeena hi padega* and *Nagari nagari dware dware* are two songs of heart-rending melody by Lata, which capture Nargis's angst as she battles the iniquities of fate. A few infectious duets and group songs also adorned this titanic movie.
- *Pyar kiya to darna kya — Mughal-e-Azam*, 1960.



Madhubala sets the screen ablaze with a dance that glorifies love and scorns its foes. Lata's song filmed on Madhubala is as immortal as the film, with a matchless symphony of voice, words and images.

- *Mohabbat khi jhooti* — *Mughal-e-Azam*, 1960. The Venus of Indian cinema is in chains. The sangeet samrat and the queen of melody weave magic with this song of despair.



When *Baiju Bawra* celebrated a silver jubilee at Royal cinema, Naushad said,

“I used to sleep on the footpath opposite this place. It took me 16 years to cross the road.”

- *Mere mehboob* — *Mere Mehboob*, 1963. Rajendra Kumar in Rafi's mesmerising voice implores the ravishing Sadhana. Naushad immortalised all three with this song!

Naushad was born on Dec 25, 1919, in an orthodox family in Lucknow. Enraptured by movies and music, he often skipped school and went to the Royal cinema in Lucknow. He listened in rapture to the live orchestra that accompanied silent films — it's here that Naushad the instrumental genius was born. Getting himself a job

as a cleaner in an old instruments shop, he played the harmonium on the sly. He was caught red-handed one day, but the shop owner was more impressed than angry at the boy's talent and gifted him a harmonium.

Naushad learned to play the harmonium from Babbar Khan, the sitar from Ustad Yussuf Ali. But his father was upset at the boy's craze for music, threw out the harmonium and told him to choose between home and music. Naushad chose music. It was 1937, he was 18.

The youngster spent some time with an amateur theatrical company that did shows in north and east India, and learnt the folk songs of Punjab, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Saurashtra. When the company folded up, Naushad moved to Bombay — the large city of opportunity where, however, he had no home, no friends, no job.

It was a tough life in Bombay for a few years. Naushad often slept on the footpath opposite Royal cinema. He would walk from Colaba to studios in Dadar in quest of work and did sundry



With Shankar Jaikishen and O P Nayyar.





Bimal Roy, Meenakumari and Naushad — winners of the first Filmfare Awards.

assignments assisting composers. His first break as independent composer came in *Prem Nagar* (1940). But it was some four years and 10 films later that fortune finally smiled on him. His film *Rattan* became a blockbuster. *Ankhiyan milake* sung by Zohrabai Ambalewali was a smash hit. The lovely duet *O jaanewale balamwa* (rendered by Sham Kumar and Zohrabai) was hummed by one and all. Naushad's fee soared to ₹25,000 per film.

It was at this time that his parents got him married, telling the bride's parents that their son was a tailor, hiding his "disreputable" music connection. Ironically enough, the marriage band played songs from *Rattan* composed by the bridegroom — which he enjoyed in silence!

Anmol Ghadi in 1946 was a superlative triumph. *Awaz de kahan hai* (a Noor Jehan-Surendra duet) was a sensation, a landmark of Bollywood music. *Ajaa meri barbad mohabbatke saharey* and *Kya mil gaya bhagwan* were other unforgettable jewels.

His parents got him married, telling the bride's parents that their son was a tailor, hiding his "disreputable" music connection. Ironically enough, the marriage band played songs from *Rattan* composed by the bridegroom — which he enjoyed in silence!

A string of musical masterpieces followed — besides the epics *Baiju Bawra*, *Mother India* and *Mughal-e-Azam*. These included *Shah Jehan* and *Andaz* in the 1940s; *Babul*, *Deedar*, *Shabab*, *Aan*, *Amar* and *Udan Khatola* in the 1950s; *Kohinoor*, *Mere Mehboob* and *Ganga Jumna* in the 1960s. Every one of them has several songs of transcendental beauty.

Naushad and Rafi

The Rafi-Naushad pairing was one made in heaven. From Rafi's first big hit *Suhani raat dhal chuki* in *dulari* (1949), he sang 149 songs for Naushad including some 80 solos, and rose to be the most versatile male singer of Bollywood. The two shared a rare empathy, perhaps because they were born on successive days! Rafi was Dilip Kumar's voice in most Naushad films and gave Bollywood many iconic songs. Rafi went through a period of self-doubt in the 1970s when Kishore Kumar ruled the roost; it was Naushad who shook him out of this phase.

Naushad and Lata

Lata's voice could electrify or coax, enthrall or titillate. Once Naushad realised her phenomenal talent, she became his No 1



Naushad with Mohammed Rafi.

female singer. She sang 160 songs under his baton. Whether it was *Uhtaye jaa unke sitam* (*Andaz*), *Mohe bhool gaye sawariya* (*Baiju Bawra*), or *Dhoondo dhoondo re sajana* (*Gunga Jumna*), Lata's voice and talent spelled magic. She described Naushad as a perfectionist and said his knowledge was not confined to music. "He is an accomplished piano player, is proficient in Western notations and all instruments." He was also a poet himself and scrutinised every lyric before composing music for it.

Naushad and *Mughal-e-Azam*

Mughal-e-Azam was a monument in celluloid, a music epic and Naushad's greatest triumph. *Baiju Bawra* had showcased the towering talent of Rafi, but it was Lata who dominated *Mughal-e-Azam* with eight



With stalwarts of Urdu poetry — Ali Sardar Jafri, Majrooh Sultanpuri and Kaifi Azmi (seated).

bewitching songs and a beguiling qawwali with Shamshad. But what was exceptional were two epoch-making songs by Bade Ghulam Ali Khan (*Prem jogan ban ke* and *Shubh din aayo*). The Hindustani music legend said he didn't sing for films and quoted a ridiculously high fee of ₹25,000 per song to put off Naushad and producer K Asif. (Top singers those days were paid ₹500 to ₹1,000 per song.) To his astonishment, Asif responded "Is that all? You are priceless," and gave him an advance of ₹10,000 on the spot. Rafi had just one song in the film (*Mohabbat zindabad*) but it was a high-octane stunner, rendered with a chorus of 100 singers.

Ram aur Shyam (1967) was perhaps Naushad's last success. He did compose a few good songs in *Leader* (1964), *Dil Diya Dard Liya* (1966), *Sunghursh* (1968), *Palki*

(1968), but the creative fire of old was missing. *Pakeezah* (1972) made waves, with several poignant songs filmed on Meena Kumari, but the credit for its success went to the original composer Ghulam Mohammed. (Naushad completed the music after Ghulam Mohammad's death.)

This "sangeet samrat" left an indelible mark on Indian cinema as a classical purist with a populist touch, and as the creator of peerless melodies in the 1950s and 1960s and scaled phenomenal heights in popular music. Naushad passed away in 2006. The Dadasaheb Phalke Award (1981) and the Padma Bhushan (1992) were just two of the many honours accorded to him. His legacy lives on.

The author is a senior journalist and a member of the Rotary Club of Madras South



To lower anxiety, reduce your BP

Bharat and Shalan Savur

Anxiety can increase a person's blood pressure. When we are intensely worried, our body responds by releasing stress hormones epinephrine and cortisol which increase our heart rate and narrow our blood vessels. These two changes cause our BP to rise. In 2015, researchers suggested that hyper-anxious people were at risk of sudden spikes in BP which could damage the heart, kidneys and blood vessels.

It was also found that once the anxiety was dealt with, the BP returned to normal. At the same time, since stress seems to be very much a part of today's times, there were secondary symptoms such as stomach pain, depression, insomnia, inability to make decisions or remember certain things, unexplained tiredness, and a weakened immune system. Some people who binged on snacks and beverages to feel better, also gained weight and had elevated levels of fats in their blood. Many drink too much coffee during the day and too much alcohol in the evening to stave off the dread and despair they feel.

Overcome anxiety

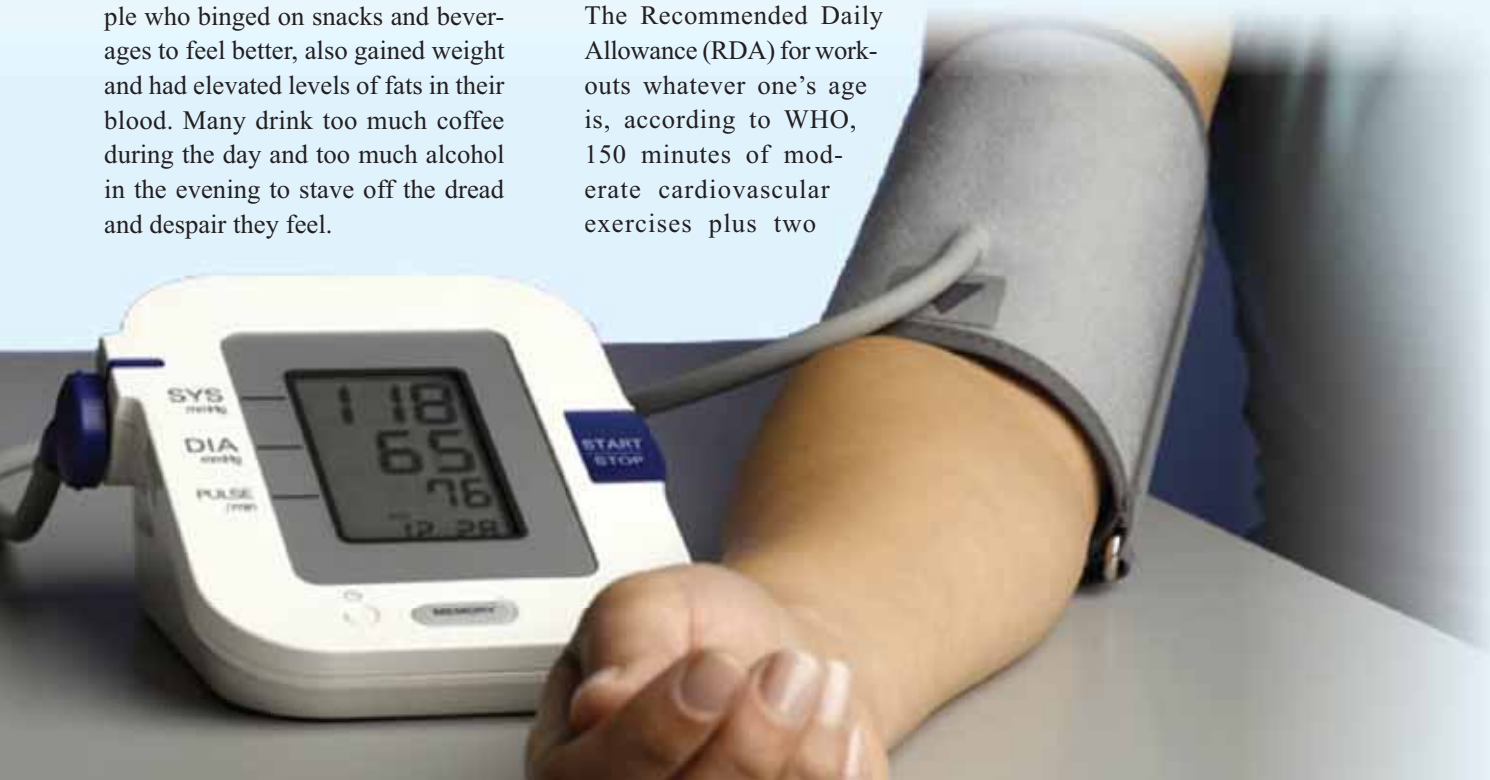
What causes such acute anxiety? One prime cause, it has been found, is being cut off from family and friends. The sense of isolation can be devastating. There are steps that can be taken to stem hyper-anxiety and prevent blood pressure spikes:

- ~ Keep in touch as often as possible personally, through social media and phone with family and friends. Meeting a loved sibling or a beloved friend is heartwarming and reassuring. Join a group where you get good vibrations, enrol in a gym. Recently, I saw a video of an 83-year-old man working out in a gym. His smile is as wide as his stomach is six-packs flat. It's wonderful. In addition to the benefits of working out, it's great to have friends with shared interests with whom you can do high five at every achievement.

The Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) for workouts whatever one's age is, according to WHO, 150 minutes of moderate cardiovascular exercises plus two

strength-training exercises a week. Join a group that holds rousing sing-along sessions. Music lifts the heart and the melodies linger long after the session is over.

- ~ Anxiety can make you forget to take your medicines. Stick reminders at key places — the medicine cabinet, refrigerator, your desk. Use a pill box with the days of the week written on its compartments. Take your medicines with an everyday activity — brushing your teeth, at mealtimes. Have a fixed place for medicines. Flip the pill bottle over each time you take your medicine — it's a visual affirmation that you've taken it. Be open to anti-anxiety pills if your doctor feels they are required.
- ~ If you feel you can't cope with all your work and responsibilities by yourself, reach out to experts.



Delegate wherever is possible to somebody on your team. However, delegation should not add to your stress where you worry if it is being done right! Say no to things you don't want to do and give less time to activities that aren't important to you.

- ~ Breathe consciously. Get enough restful sleep. Both lower anxiety and blood pressure. Eat regular meals containing food that is familiar and comforting.
- ~ Do things that matter to you. Read a good book that is rich in wisdom. I heartily recommend *The Book of Joy* by Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama and Douglas Abrams. I've read it several times. It's wise, full of insight, humorous and you feel a lightening in body and mind as you read it. Read articles on health. They inspire you to make lifestyle changes and sustain them. At bedtime, listen to Dr Wayne Dyer's five-minute podcasts. They uplift and soothe at the same time. Speak of good health and spread the word. Write a journal of positivity and gratitude. Make videos on Youtube to inspire others. The more you dabble and draw in health, the more you live a healthy lifestyle. The more you live it, the more you have to share. It's like building a second spine. You stand taller, stronger.

Lower blood pressure

The American Psychological Association found that having high BP for years can raise people's anxiety levels about their health. The future becomes fraught with worry. Would long-term hypertension lead to other complications? Would you be able to afford escalating medical costs? So, sometime last year, researchers looked at the issue from the opposite end — would lowering BP lower

anxiety? By November 2022, they had the answer — yes!

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention embarked on a new study on 'neuroticism' or acute anxiety. And they found a link between the diastolic reading and neuroticism. When elevated, the diastolic pressure (the 80 in the 120/80 mmHg reading) had a 'significant genetic causal effect on neuroticism rates,' they reported in the magazine *General Psychiatry*. It meant that those who had a parent or grandparent with hyper-anxiety symptoms, had to be extra careful about their BP and lifestyle. To get an idea of neuroticism, there's a restlessness apparent in the body where you can't sit in one place, you can't focus on a task, you can't stay still while being x-rayed or undergoing an MRI scan.

Neuroticism is not a disorder

At the same time, experts point out that 'neuroticism is not a mental health disorder'. It's just that such people view everything negatively and are prone to overthinking, moodiness, and fear virtually anything — a war, inflation, a friend ignoring their sms — and are often insecure, defensive, edgy. Yet, their sensitivity helps them take more care of their health. Plus, they are great planners as they are always alert to situations possibly going wrong. For after all, everybody wants to be emotionally stable.

The good news is that lowering the BP to a normal range of 130/80-120/80 brings down anxious feelings and the hyper-anxious can feel relatively steady and stable. Fortunately, BP and anxiety can be treated so there's no worry on that score. There are about 15 medicines to lower BP — from diuretics, calcium channel blockers to beta blockers. Some people may need more than one type of medication — say, a combination of beta blockers for hypertension, a tranquilliser (which is

Breathe consciously. Get
enough restful sleep.
Both lower anxiety and
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regular meals.

not a sleeping pill, but calms the mind) and, sometimes, an anti-depressant, according to the symptoms the patient speaks about and exhibits. Some BP lowering medicines also have a diuretic element in them. If your tablet has these, check with your doctor whether you should lower your salt intake or not.

Be fond, not frustrated

Above all, remember, there is nothing to worry about. As the wise doctors say: your biology need not be your destiny. To keep your BP within a healthy range, get your medication and lifestyle factors right — they keep health flowing in your body, mind and life. We should choose fondness over frustration. Frustration leads to anger, despair and feeling isolated. Fondness connects you to your doctor, family, friends, colleagues and situations which makes your mind delight and heart rejoice. Fondness releases feel-good hormones endorphins, dopamine and oxytocin that give a feeling of deep connection. It makes you understand instead of critical. You find yourself in a bigger space and, gradually, you find more good days than negative days and... it's time for that high five!

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



Wordsworld

Do You Read Me?



Sandhya Rao

That's the name of a bookstore in Berlin: Do you read me? And the name of a book about bookstores around the world.

To be perfectly honest, I visit my local bookstore simply because it's in the neighbourhood. Each time, I drop by hoping that it will yield bountiful treasures. That hope is often belied, but I persist because the two bookstores in my city that I used to visit regularly don't exist anymore. Giggles, which Nalini Chettur says she opened for a laugh, is a smallish nook in what was once the Connemara hotel. It carried the most exciting titles until one fine day it overflowed to such an extent you couldn't step into it anymore, literally. You stood tippytoes at the entrance and yelled out what you were looking for and Nalini fished it out for you if she had it; she always knew right off. Other times she would look at you and say, oh yes,

I have just the book for you. The other was Landmark, a massive space also overflowing full with books, books, books and regular book readings and events until another fine day it shut shop. And that was that.

Sadly, it appears my fellow city dwellers don't have a 'thing' for bookstores. Innovations by way of bookstores have come and gone; the ones that remain have become variety stores selling novelty items, chocolates, bags, mugs, toys, artificial jewellery, some magazines and... a few books. Disheartening for someone whose favourite haunt and hunting ground is a bookstore — in any country, language no bar. There's something about books, their look, smell and feel, that fills the heart and uplifts the soul.

Then, round about my last birthday, I received a gift: a solid, hardbound book about bookstores! Weighing at least 2 kilos! Delighted beyond words, I browsed the pages — then put it away. There it sat, among other special books... until a few days ago, felled by a week of dental action, I woke up at 3am, toothache gone!! Wide awake, I made for the little book space below the TV and pulled out *Do You Read Me?* It opened to over 60 stores featured in it: FiLBooks in Istanbul, Turkey. In a jiffy I was under the spell of a very special kind of magic.

'The aroma of coffee mingles with the smell of freshly printed pages,' the short description begins amid well-displayed photographs of the bookstore exterior and interior. 'Milk and sugar stand alongside the owner's own photography book, *For Birds' Sake*, at Cemre Yesil Gönenli's bookstore-café. "My bookshop is an elephant," says the photographer, publisher and owner of FiLBooks. "Fil" literally translates as "elephant" in Turkish. Its name "had to do with

our intention of creating a space that is living," he says. "This is how we tried to give a strong soul to our space."

The best bookstores have soul, they throb with the lives and times of civilisations; they reflect actions, thoughts, words, ideas, dreams; they represent all forms of creation, animate and inanimate. Jessica Reitz, who runs Do You Read Me? in Berlin along with Mark Kiessling, recalls how people thought they were crazy to start a bookstore when the printed media was in a crisis: '...the great thing is that an analog medium like books or magazines helps us to see the world through different eyes. In that light, bookstores and libraries, like museums, are places that allow you to simply lose yourself.'

You can lose yourself even in the names of some of these bookshops, like, for instance, The Writer's Block, Las Vegas; Books Over The Clouds, Shanghai; Under The Cover, Lisbon; Desperate Literature, Madrid; The Jazzhole, Lagos; Dyslexia Libros, Antigua; Bookoff, Warsaw; The Book Barge, Canal du Nivernais, France; Happy Valley, Melbourne... According to the editors at Gestalten which published this book, the most beautiful bookstore is in Buenos Aires, Argentina: 'With its crimson theater curtains



and shimmering gold boxes, El Ateneo Grand Splendid must be one of the most spectacular bookstores in the world. Visitors browse through the large selection of titles to the strains of soft piano music; a pianist plays live, in an echo of the magnificent hall's previous life. The theater, which opened in 1903, initially put on classic stage shows, before being used as a cinema, radio studio, and tango hall, and finally reopening as a bookstore in 2000.'

In Antigua, Guatemala, John Rexer always dreamed of having a bookstore but he didn't know how to put together his collection. One rainy night, he was at the veterinary clinic with his dog when he noticed shelves full of books for sale to raise funds for street animals. Upon closer examination he discovered that the collection was a treasure trove, each title priced at less than a dollar-and-a-half. He managed to buy all 300 books for about \$400 And:

'... it turned out that US writer Gore Vidal had lived in Antigua for a time in the 1940s. These very books had belonged to one of his lovers. Before Vidal died, he had donated the books, each of which contained his dated signature on the first page, to the veterinary clinic.' If it's Antigua, it must be Dyslexia Libros.

I was thrilled to discover that I had been to three of the bookstores mentioned in the book: Moe's in Berkeley and City Lights in San Francisco, both in California, and Bahrison's in New Delhi. Manager Elaine Katzenberger of City Lights points out that, 'Even though the experience of writing a book or reading a book can be a very personal and solitary project, a book is a record of our communal experience. So, a bookstore is like a storehouse for our souls.' The soul of Libreria Acqua Alta lies in the chaotic delight of books lying unsorted in old gondolas, bathtubs and barrels. A staircase built of books — the idea of stepping on books is sacrilegious to some of us — leads to books. 'Acqua alta' means 'high water,' flooding in other words. So, in case of flooding — this is Venice — the books find refuge in gondolas.

There are open air bookstores, a town of bookstores, bookstores open to cats and dogs, bookstores on mountain tops and one in a boat where books sit alongside the shop-owner's personal effects! The Welsh village of Hay-on-Wye has several bookstores, including an honesty bookstore where, 'Those who find something to read at that store just throw the right amount of change into a box provided for that purpose.'

Sarah Henshaw's floating bookstore, The Book Barge, reminds me of a

bookstore not mentioned

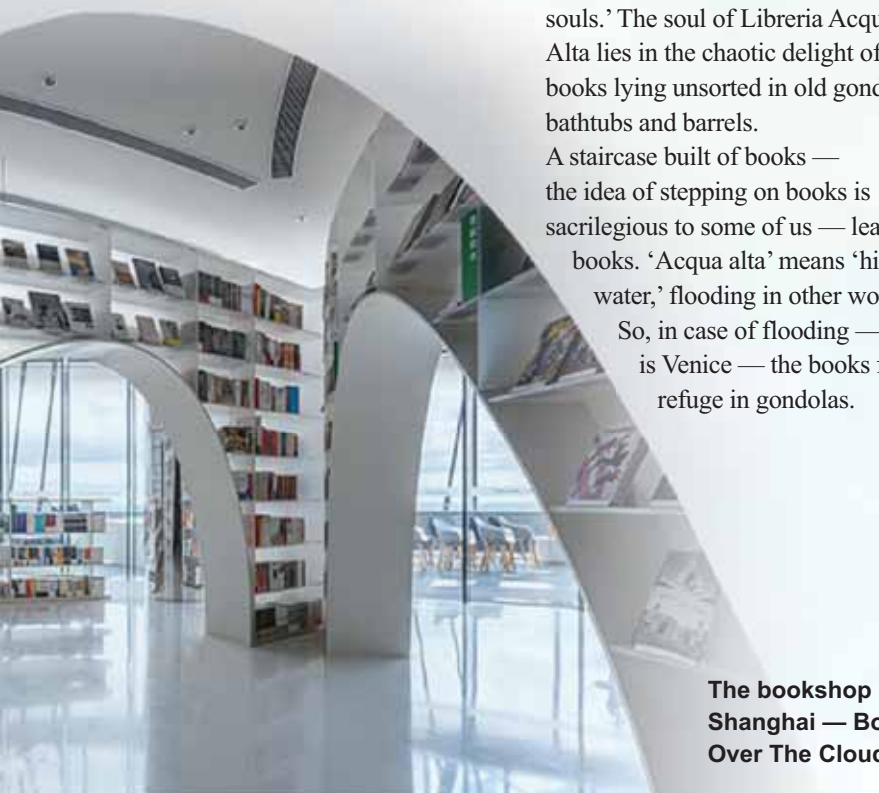
in this book: Gulshan Books in Srinagar, situated in the middle of Dal Lake, and accessible only by shikara! This bookshop-cum-café provides a magnificent view of Shankaracharya Hill and Hari Parbat, apart from the lake itself; there you will find practically every kind of book to do with Kashmir, from history to poetry to art and more.

It's impossible to mention here the names of all the bookstores in the book, but here's one last word — about the legendary Shakespeare and Company, Paris, which has possibly hosted the most number of literary figures, including Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, TS Eliot, Anais Nin and James Baldwin. The resident cat, called Aggie after Agatha Christie, apparently receives her own fan mail!

On your travels, then, dear readers, take the opportunity to be enchanted.

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist

For more bookstores featured in the book please read <https://rotarynewsonline.org/do-you-read-me/>



The bookshop in Shanghai — Books Over The Clouds.

RC Chidambaram Mid Town — RID 2981



At an eye check-up and skin disorder detection camp at Shemford School, 350 students were screened. RCs Chidambaram Central, Temple Town, and Government Hospital were partners.

RC Delhi Heritage — RID 3011



The club did 58 cataract surgeries for patients at the Vrindavan Old Age Home in Uttar Pradesh with the support of Dr Shroff Eye Care Institute, New Delhi.

RC Salem Metropolis — RID 2982



Twelve Rotary teams took part in a two-day Rotary Kings Premier League at the Vinayaka Missions Medical College, Ariyalur. IPDG Sundaralingam was the event mentor.

RC Sonepat Midtown — RID 3012



Over 2,000 sanitary pads were distributed at an MHM camp held at the Saraswati Shiksha Sansthan.

RC Tiruchirappalli — RID 3000



To mark the charter day, club members served mid-day meals to around 300 inmates of an old age home at Woraiyur, Kangaroo Mercy Home and Libra Blind Home.

RC Bhusawal Railcity — RID 3030



Club president Makarand Chandwadkar, a dental surgeon, led an oral health awareness seminar at the Jijamata Primary School. Tooth-pastes were given to 400 students.

RC Surat Round Town — RID 3060



RI director AS Venkatesh was the chief guest at an event to mark the completion of the club's golden jubilee year. DG Shrikant Indani was also present.

RC Muzaffarnagar Midtown — RID 3100



50 girls were vaccinated against cervical cancer at a special camp at Kasturba Gandhi Residential Girls' School. The second dose will be administered after six months.

RC Phagwara Midtown — RID 3070



Sewing machines were donated to five women in the presence of IPDG Upinder Singh Ghai for the beneficiaries to earn a regular income.

RC Bareilly Metro — RID 3110



Around 90 people were examined at a medical camp conducted at the Ram Lila Ground in Bareilly. The club has been holding this camp for over a decade.

RC Ferozepur Royal — RID 3090



Blood sugar and BP check-up were done on 135 persons at a medical camp at Frances Newton Mission Hospital, Ferozepur. It created awareness about good health among patients.

RC Varanasi North — RID 3120



Sewing machines funded by club members were donated to four women at the Maharshi Valmiki Seva Sansthan, Dewakhat. A magic show was organised for the children.

RC Pune Metro — RID 3131



A two-day beautification activity was carried out near a stream that joins Mula river. Wall paintings were done to create awareness on ecology.

RC Gudur — RID 3160



The temple tank of Kodanda Rama Anjaneya Swamy temple, Gudur, was renovated at a cost of ₹4.12 lakh. Local MLA Vara Prasada Rao inaugurated the *pushkarini*.

RC Dombivli Diamonds — RID 3142



Self-defence training was given to 75 girls at the Saraswati High School, Dombivli, with the support of Champions Karate Club.

RC Manipal Town — RID 3182



A school bus was donated by Rtn Ganesh Nayak to Udupi Patla School in the presence of PDG Rajaram Bhat, AG Ramachandra Upadhyaya and club members.

RC Guntur Vikas — RID 3150



Sewing machines were distributed to underprivileged women to provide a sustainable income to them. The project cost ₹21,000.

RC Bengaluru Platinum City — RID 3190



An e-learning project was inaugurated by club president Pavan Kumar Jain at the MEC School, Yelahanka.

RC Coimbatore Gaalaxy — RID 3201



A vocational training centre with three machines worth ₹3 lakh were inaugurated at Nirmala College for Women to promote entrepreneurship.

RC Ramgarh City — RID 3250



DG Sanjeev Thakur inaugurated a Saheli centre for training women in tailoring in the presence of club president Harish Choudhary.

RC Marthandam — RID 3212



A mammogram facility was installed at the Kanyakumari Government Medical College, Nagercoil. The GG project was done with RC Ivinhema, RID 4470, Brazil.

RC Raipur West — RID 3261



Ninety amputees were fitted with artificial limbs at a mega 5-day limb transplant camp hosted with the support of Raipur Central Marwari Yuva Manch and Young India.

RC Vellore North — RID 3231



DG JKN Palani handed over the keys of a new house to a beneficiary at Kangeyanallur village in Katpadi in the presence of project chairman Dharanivasan.

RC Calcutta Presidency — RID 3291



A vocational centre was started with the support of Singer company and RCC, Sri Ramakrishna Seva Samity, under *Project Ek Nayi Pehchan*.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran

Women's IPL arrives with a bang!

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan



The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) pulled off a major feat last month. It successfully organised the first edition of Women's IPL in which five teams took part, namely, Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Lucknow and Gujarat. The women played perfectly acceptable cricket and I must say I enjoyed the matches as much as any men's cricket match. Of course, the women don't hit the ball as hard as the men do or bowl as fast. They lack the kind of upper body strength that men have. But in every other respect they were just as good. That's been obvious for a couple of decades now but it's well worth repeating.

All in all, it was a wonderful showing and I am so glad this tournament will now go on for a long time. In fact, as more teams are formed and join the tournament, it is likely to be more sustainable if it continues to be played in March rather than in the summer like the men's IPL, which starts at the end of March and goes on till mid-May. By then it's very hot and players find playing in 40 degrees Celsius very taxing. They need a lot of rest between matches. If you add humidity of the sort we have in the coastal cities, it can be extremely exhausting. Fortunately the world cricket calendar is such that spring is now the only time available for the Women's IPL. Nothing could be better.

Women have been playing cricket for a long time. In Australia they started more than 100 years ago. In India they played their first official match in 1976. For a very long time after that they were seen as a sideshow, more to be tolerated with amusement than encouraged with proper resources. And, at the risk of sounding rude, I must say the earlier generations of female cricketers were not very good. But now all that has changed. The women have caught up. Those who play the game these days are every bit as good as the men. The Women's IPL just proved that. Indeed, the level at which the women play now is the level at which the men played until

In India women played their first official match in 1976.

For a very long time, they were seen as a sideshow, more to be tolerated with amusement than encouraged with proper resources.

the 1970s. Today most college men's teams would lose to the national women's teams.

With time, the women will develop what are known as cricket smarts even more. They do have them now but not quite in the same measure as men. 'Cricket smarts' is the term used for the ability some players have to play tactically depending on the state of play. It's largely intuitive but match experience plays a huge role in it. The player knows exactly what needs to be done at any point in time. M S Dhoni had it by the bucketful as do players like Ravindra Jadeja. Cricket is a game of chance and just a few millimetres and slight change in angles can make the difference to the outcome. Cricket smarties know how to exploit this.

What I find strange is that it took cricket so long to do the right thing. Tennis, badminton, golf, swimming, gymnastics and a host of other sports included in the Olympics have given the space that women need. But cricket has been a laggard. It has begun giving women the space they need only in the last two decades. The loss has been entirely of the game and its fans. What a pity. But that neglect is a thing of the past now, as the recently concluded Women's ICC World Cup and the Women's IPL have shown. The women played superb cricket. What more can one want? ■

In Brief

UN for ocean protection



After negotiating terms for over 10 years, almost all the United Nations member countries have signed the legally-binding High Seas Treaty, which aims to

grant protected status to 30 per cent of the world's oceans lying outside national boundaries. The European Union announced nearly 820 million euros towards the cause.



First female boxing club in Gaza

A female-only boxing club in the Gaza Strip is training 40 girls in boxing. This first female boxing centre has a full-

size boxing ring, training equipment and posters of boxing heroes such as Mike Tyson, on the walls. Through the club, Palestinian women are challenging traditional gender stereotypes in sports.

Bill for cigarette butts clean-up



Tobacco businesses will have to pay for the clean-up of millions of cigarette ends discarded by smokers each year under a new

environmental legislation in Spain. The decision is part of a package of waste-reduction and recycling efforts.



Second life for car batteries

Nottingham authorities have installed 40 two-way electric vehicle chargers that are connected to solar panels and a battery energy storage system.

This will power a number of onsite facilities as well as charge a fleet of 200 municipal vehicles, simultaneously helping to decarbonise the UK's electrical grid.



Show of solidarity by football fans

Fans of Turkish Super League club Besiktas Istanbul interrupted a match against Antalyaspor by throwing thousands of stuffed toys onto the pitch in a show of support for children impacted by the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. The game was paused after 4 minutes and 17 seconds — a reference to the time the earthquake hit at 4.17am local time on Feb 6.

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