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A well-compiled April issue

It was a pleasure to go through the April 2023 issue of *Rotary News*, more so because there is an article about our club project in it. I always enjoy going through the magazine for two reasons: one, its beautiful and attractive presentation and second, excellent articles with great content both for Rotarians and non-Rotarians. This issue is no exception. The article *India's Northeast fascinates youth exchange students* is excellent. It was great to know that Pune Rotarians took the trouble of taking the RYE students to the Northeast and exposed them to the rich cultural heritage of the region.

RI President Jennifer Jones loaning her column to RYE student Anniela Carracedo and the launch of Rotary Youth Network programme was something out of blue. It made an interesting reading.

Finally, I was touched by the beautiful coverage of legendary music composer Naushad. Although I knew that he was a great music composer — I love his compositions — I never had an idea of the phenomenal number

of hit compositions he has delivered from the 1940s to the 60s. Coming from such a humble background, his contribution to the Indian music industry is breathtaking. It was a great experience to read about him.

Though many times I have wondered why a Rotary magazine should be publishing articles on people not connected with Rotary, now I feel that it is a good practice which makes the magazine more interesting, readable and enriching.

My compliments to the editor and other writers for setting a high standard.

Narayana Shagrithaya
RC Mumbai Bhandup — D 3141

I was delighted to see the photo of a girl student from a rural school at a *Yadhumanaval* session, a project of RI District 3212 to empower girls, as the cover photo of the April issue depicts so beautifully. I really appreciate this district's



great work to empower girls and enable them to face any challenges that lie ahead in their lives. The work of motivating young girls to combat low self-esteem by RID 3212 and DG Muthu is praiseworthy. The Editor's note *Nari Shakti: Myth and real-*

ity depicts clearly the importance of gender equality and support from society which is critical for the empowerment of women.

RID Mahesh Kotbagi explains the necessity of planting trees to make our world cleaner and greener, while RID AS Venkatesh stresses the importance of flexibility in meeting the expectations of Rotarians of different calibre. TRF trustee chair Ian Riseley motivates Rotarians to love nature and preserve its beauty.

All other articles like *Panchayat school students build a telescope*, *Rotary trains women drivers*, *India's Northeast fascinates youth exchange students*, *HIV infected meet their soulmates*,

A fitting tribute to Naushad

The article on music composer Naushad was one of SR Madhu's best tributes to those who contributed to Hindi film music. It is easy to write a tribute about Lata Mangeshkar, Kishore Kumar or Mohammed Rafi. But it takes a lot of effort to bring out the genius of Naushad or Khayyam. I am looking forward to the

author's write-up on Khayyam which I hope Rasheeda would commission him to write!

Sampath Kumar, former editor
The Hindu Businessline

It is commendable that in the April issue, President Jennifer Jones gave her column to an Interactor-turned Rotaractor Anniela Carracedo, 18, who was a Rotary Youth Exchange student from

Venezuela to the US. She recalled the challenges faced by her during the pandemic period. Also, her account of the online Interact meetings she conducted during that time, in which 5,000 Interactors from 80 countries participated, was interesting. The vision for youth presented by her is worth emulating by both Interactors and Rotaractors.

KMK Murthy
RC Secunderabad — D 3150

An MHM project for slum women, RID 3000 Rotarians help quake victims in Turkey, and An inclusive music fest are read worthy. Also, delighted to read the article about Naushad, the Kohinoor of Bollywood music. Club Hop photos and illustrations are excellent. As a whole April edition is superb.

Philip Mulappone MT
RC Trivandrum
Suburban — D 3211

Many congratulations for the rich content in the April issue. I thoroughly enjoyed all the articles! Every picture in this issue is such a happy picture.

I always read the editorial and am inspired by the editor's style of expression... straight from the heart. I see myself in the last paragraph of *Nari Shakti*.

The LBW column by TCA Srinivasa Raghavan is one page that I never miss. What a subtle sense of humour! Thank you, team *Rotary News*.

Chandrika Raghu
Inner Wheel — D 318

An inspiring project

The April edition of *Rotary News* is really inspirational, with so many positive stories on the expanding horizon of Rotary. *Project Surya* which lit up tribal homes in Wai is a great Rotary success story which will boost our public image.

The tribal population across the country is embroiled in various difficulties, as many live without even basic amenities. In the Wai

taluk, Rotarians, by the simple act of installing solar lamps and street lights, have protected the tribals from wildlife.

The feedback from the beneficiaries after the installation is moving. The decision to expand the midday meal programme, thus directly influencing the needy, is the best way to implement a project and it is a role model for all Rotarians to connect directly with the masses through meaningful action. Hope such incredible deeds of clubs take Rotary into each and every house of our country.

Dr Jayasekharan VP
RC Payyanur — D 3204

In the March issue, President Jones wrote about her experience of meeting with Japanese tea master Genshitsu Sen, who helped charter RC Kyoto-South, a past president of RC Kyoto and past governor of RID 2650, Japan. She found Sen a remarkable person and an honour to meet. Every month, Jones talks about Rotarians in countries she visits who had excelled in 'Service above Self'. Her meetings with selfless Rotarians across the world help us to know more about Rotary

in general and those who have contributed to its growth.

S Muniandi
RC Dindigul — D 3000

Where hate still reigns

I just went through the March editorial titled *When love defeats hate*, which is nicely written and with interesting facts. Well said!

I am from RC Chikmagalur, RID 3182, and our club has 87 members. We have two whatsapp groups — one as a Rotary club and the second as 'Unofficial Rotary'. Unfortunately, in the 'unofficial group all Muslim Rotarians are kept out. In this regard, your editorial is an eye-opener. I don't know how many of our club Rotarians have gone through it, but wish they all do!

GL Venkatesh Murthy
RC Chikmagalur — D 3182

Correction

With reference to the article *Rotarians have the power to change lives* in the January issue, the Lakshya scholarships in the RILM programme are worth \$1 million (₹8.2 crore) and not \$1 billion, as reported. The error is regretted.

Editor

On the cover: Village women enjoying a day out by the banks of a desilted 1,600-hectare lake atop a hillock as part of a watershed project in Kuppachiparai district done by RC Madras Coromandel, RID 3232.

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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Click on **Rotary News Plus** on our website www.rotarynewsonline.org to read about more Rotary projects.

People of Action — and empathy

I believe it is a time in our world for brave, courageous, intentional leadership.

Last month, in this column, you heard from my dear friend Anniela Carracedo. She is an amazing member of our Rotary family, and as a past Interactor and now Rotarian, she is this kind of leader.

Anni shared a very personal story about coping with a panic attack, something that I have also experienced. The outpouring and response to this story have been tremendous and punctuate how critical it is that we acknowledge not only our strengths but our vulnerabilities too.

When we talk about finding space for one another — creating comfort and care within Rotary — we're describing a club experience where we can all feel comfortable sharing like Anni did, and we can all empathise with and support one another. Whatever we are facing in life, Rotary is a place where we know we're not alone.

We spend so much time helping our world, whether it's working to end polio, cleaning up the environment, or bringing hope to communities that need it most. Sometimes we can lose track of the



RI President Jennifer Jones (centre) with 2023–24 President Gordon R McNally and his wife, Heather, at the International Assembly in January.

need to apply some of our energy and care to our fellow members and partners in service.

The comfort and care of our members is the single greatest driver of member satisfaction and retention. We need to ensure that it remains a priority — and that we further strengthen these bonds by performing service that helps reduce the stigma of seeking out mental health treatment and expands access to care.

That is why I'm so heartened by President-elect Gordon McNally's wonderful vision to help improve the global mental health system, not only for

Rotary members, but for the communities we serve.

When Gordon announced our focus on mental health at this year's International Assembly in Orlando, Florida, he reminded us that helping others benefits our mental health by reducing stress and improving our mood. Studies show that performing acts of kindness is an effective way to improve your own mental and physical health. Rotary service brings hope to the world and joy to our lives.

Our new focus on mental health will take some time to do it right, and yet it builds on something that has been part of who we are for 118 years.

We are *People of Action*, and behind that action is care, compassion, empathy and inclusion.

Becoming champions of mental health is not only the right and kind thing to do, it is a tool that can *Create Hope in the World*, Gordon's inspiring theme for his upcoming year as president.

If we serve our members, we serve our communities, and if we can meet people where they are and lift them up, they will imagine Rotary in a new light and come to fully understand our value and our infinite potential.

Jennifer Jones
President
Rotary International



Real life heroes... all of them

It doesn't have the colour and razzle-dazzle of *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, the multi-crore Bollywood blockbuster starring superstar Salman Khan who risks his life for the deaf and mute beautiful little girl Munni, who has accidentally strayed across the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir border, into an Indian city. The angelic looking girl is unable to speak or give any details and the Hanuman-bhakt Bajrangi takes on the challenge of taking the girl across the border, facing the ire of the Pakistan security personnel. But he is helped in this task by a journalist. The movie came to mind when a couple of months ago, a Bangladeshi journalist, Shamshul Huda, who is a Rotarian and member of RC Banani Dhaka, stumbled upon a mentally and physically-challenged young man Subhash, languishing in a government-aided shelter home for the handicapped. Subhash, an Indian, who was most likely trafficked from his village in Uttar Pradesh into Bangladesh, but hastily discarded because of his handicap, was found by an auto rickshaw driver on the roadside, and he took him to the police. You can read the rest of the details in this issue.

Subhash's return home to his parents, thanks to the deep and dedicated involvement of two Rotarians on either side of the border — Huda in Bangladesh and Rizwana Zamindar, a Rotarian from RC Bharuch, RID 3060, all the way across the breadth of India in the western state of Gujarat — restores your faith in humanity. The persistence and passion with which both Huda and Rizwana set about, with clenched teeth, I am sure, to nip away at the strong layers of red tape that firmly blocked Subhash's return home, is mindblowing.

The irony is that the person who they helped reunite with his family wouldn't even have been able to thank them properly, given his mental status. It is commendable that in this humanitarian task, PRID Kamal Sanghvi also got involved and guided the Rotarians on how to finish this challenging task. Finally, when the reunion of Subhash and his family took place at the Indo-Bangladesh border in March, he was physically present to celebrate the event.

Just like Huda and Rizwana, we have real life heroes all around us, in Rotary and outside of it. And they don't come in shiny armour. Nobody knows what prompts a man to jump from the platform even as a train is approaching to rescue someone who has accidentally slipped and fell on the track. Or dash into a burning house to rescue children, or pets, who are trapped there. These decisions are taken in a split second, where there is no time for thinking. Goes to prove that by instinct a human being is innately good!

But while welcoming Subhash back home, thousands of Rotarians across the world have bid a tearful farewell to PDG Rekha Shetty from RID 3232. The ever-smiling, dynamic, innovative, articulate, vivacious and helpful woman held a number of powerful positions in Rotary and fulfilled the responsibilities given to her diligently and cheerfully. Only with her sudden demise, when the social media erupted with sorrowful messages, did the Rotary world in India realise what a trailblazer she was and enjoyed so much popularity. In a milieu where women Rotary leaders are still few and far between, Rekha's leadership will be missed.

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

Rasheeda Bhagat

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Director

The importance of Lakshya

Goals are crucial in shaping our lives, and to provide direction and purpose to our action. Whether personal, professional or in Rotary, setting goals help us prioritise our time and resources, and focus our efforts towards achieving the desired outcome. Without goals, we may find ourselves wander aimlessly, lacking motivation and a sense of purpose.

As a teenager, I struggled with time management and often procrastinated on essential tasks. It wasn't until I started setting specific goals that I saw real progress in my academic and personal life. I could break down larger tasks into smaller, more manageable steps, making them less daunting and easier to complete. In my professional life too, setting goals has helped me focus on what matters most.

Goals give you direction in life and provide clarity, purpose and motivation to pursue what truly matters. It motivates and aligns you with your values, beliefs, passions and interests, making you enthusiastic, engaged and committed to achieving them. It gives you a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction when accomplished, boosting self-confidence and self-esteem.

SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) goals help individuals realise what they want to achieve and to measure

progress. Goals help develop resilience, give a sense of purpose, direction and control which can help you navigate difficult times and cope with adversity; they help you stay focused, optimistic and determined.

Goals enhance self-confidence and give you opportunities to learn new skills and develop competencies. Setting and achieving goals can help you overcome self-doubt, fear and insecurity, replacing them with a sense of empowerment and self-assurance. Goals can help individuals contribute to something greater than themselves — a cause, the community or a profession.

The recent *Lakshya* programme taught incoming leaders to focus and set meaningful goals for the coming Rotary year. The district assembly and many training events are happening in your districts. I urge you to plan perfectly. Think and act big. Our clubs are the souls of service. We are people of action; let us give a sense of security to the needy and underprivileged and make the world empowered and happy. Your focus in life will change someone's focus forever.

Mahesh Kotbagi
RI Director, 2021-23

Speak

Retaining our members

As we approach the home run of this Rotary year, two activities occupy the agenda of most vibrant clubs. One is the plan for the year ahead with focus on timelines, fund raising and the teams responsible for those. Next is the assessment of those members who are not likely to continue their membership and the ways to retain them.

I wish to focus on this second activity of the clubs. While it is necessary to do this exercise of motivating members to stay on, it is also necessary to make it an all year focus rather than a year-end activity. Our region has been the front runner in recruitment of new members. While every club deserves congratulations for its efforts, it is disheartening to see the numbers that leave every year. Much has been said on this issue, yet the impact of this can never be overstated! While we open our doors, we need to ensure the back door is shut. Nobody joins Rotary to leave it after a year or two. Everyone joins with some expectation and a hope for fulfillment of a latent desire to be useful and relevant. The

subscription that everyone pays to the club is not a donation but a fee. A fee with an expectation of something in return.

My request to the club leaders is to pay attention to this aspect throughout the year. Understand the needs and expectations of all members and make plans to fulfill all their legitimate and reasonable expectations. Members are the primary customers of every club and as an entity, a club cannot afford to have dissatisfied customers. When people leave Rotary it is rarely due to the demands on their time that Rotary makes or the cost involved. More often than not, it is lack of engagement in the club that leads to their disenchantment.

While we plan for the next year, let us ensure that every member has some role that is interesting and helps keep him invested in Rotary. This is the least we can do.



AS Venkatesh
RI Director, 2021-23



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Magazine

Our limitless potential

“Do all the good you can, to all the people you can, in all the ways you can, as long as ever you can.”

While we don't know its exact origin, this widely quoted saying summarises what Rotary and The Rotary Foundation are all about: We do quite a lot of good, serving people around the world in myriad ways, and we are in it for the long haul.



How many other charities do so much good in so many ways for so many as The Rotary Foundation?

Not only do we, the volunteers, fund most of our projects, but we often contribute significant volunteer hours in organising and executing them. The “regional offices” of our charity — also known as Rotary and Rotaract clubs — are our reliable go-to partners in the more than 200 countries and geographical areas in which we operate. And when we lack expertise in an area, we partner with outside organisations whose trust we have earned, such as the World Health Organisation, to deliver results on the ground that truly change lives.

Unlike some charitable organisations, we don't take the “parachute approach” to humanitarian work. We solve problems in a sustainable way. Before we lift a shovel to start any Foundation project, we conduct community needs assessments and work closely with members of the community. The Foundation also acts quickly when needed, such as through our disaster response grants, as we did with the recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

Accountants like me and business and community leaders like you pay close attention to the numbers, and in this area, the Foundation is a cut above. In funding projects, we apply Rotary's traditions of fiscal responsibility and ethics to ensure the best use of the resources of our fellow members. We in Rotary are excellent stewards of our grants, with most of the funds going toward humanitarian support itself and relatively little going to grant administration costs. This is why Charity Navigator has consistently given its highest rating to The Rotary Foundation, year after year.

Because our worldwide operation is dedicated to seven areas of focus, volunteers and donors alike have ample opportunities to make a difference where help is needed most. Indeed, the potential to help through the Foundation is limitless.

So, if you are looking for a great charity to support or a way to do all the good you can, look no further than The Rotary Foundation. It is truly one of the greatest charities in the world, and it belongs to you.

Ian H S Riseley
Foundation Trustee Chair

Contribute generously to our Foundation

As we enter the final lap of the Rotary year, it is time to rededicate and redouble our efforts for TRF. We all want to keep doing good in our world. That is possible in large measure through the Foundation's district and global grants. To do more of these we need more DDF. Hence, support to Annual Fund becomes very important. It is our Annual Fund contributions today which help us do grants tomorrow. I request every Rotarian to invest in the Annual Fund today. It empowers Rotarians to help where it is needed most. These life-changing service efforts have improved the lives of countless people.



We are very close to a polio-free world. As we move forward positively and work to end polio, supporting the Polio Fund is more critical than ever. Without Rotarians' contributions we cannot achieve our dream of a polio-free world. So do contribute to the Polio Fund. Endowment Fund is the future of our Foundation. Our investment in this Fund will ensure that future generations of Rotarians carry on the good work of Rotary.

There are three kinds of givers — those like the flint that gives only when hammered and then it yields only a small spark; those like a sponge that gives when squeezed but soon runs dry; and those like a honeycomb that gives to others freely and keeps giving. Rotarians are like the honeycomb. They give freely, again and again.

Celebrated poet RW Emerson has said: To know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived, this is to have succeeded. The Rotary Foundation is that Power of One — one Rotarian, one club and one district — multiplied many times. We Rotarians can help rebuild, reshape and restore our communities. And a good way to do that is through TRF. As we connect with one another and as new opportunities open up before us, let's continue to support the Foundation. Together we can and we will change the world.

Your generosity and dedication to helping others is truly inspiring. Thank you for your commitment to doing good in the world.

Bharat Pandya
TRF Trustee, 2022–26

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Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 37,005

Rotaract clubs : 11,210

Interact clubs : 19,266

RCCs : 12,796

Rotary members : 1,197,735

Rotaract members: 174,355

Interact members : 443,118

As on April 17, 2023

Membership Summary

As on April 1, 2023

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	136	6,413	7.48	71	462	55	255
2982	82	3,736	6.96	30	719	126	76
3000	132	5,519	10.24	103	1,624	327	215
3011	123	4,735	28.43	82	2,662	145	37
3012	151	3,757	23.10	73	1,275	95	61
3020	86	4,981	7.29	41	1,180	168	350
3030	101	5,494	14.98	122	2,171	381	383
3040	115	2,613	15.77	59	800	95	190
3053	67	2,885	16.36	35	569	55	128
3054	172	7,060	19.79	107	1,498	209	577
3060	102	5,034	14.90	67	2,415	81	144
3070	127	3,479	16.53	47	556	64	59
3080	108	4,360	12.82	120	2,211	215	116
3090	104	2,450	5.22	46	615	151	164
3100	107	2,281	13.55	15	137	39	151
3110	143	3,951	12.33	16	126	33	106
3120	89	3,709	15.77	35	398	36	55
3131	142	5,759	24.83	140	3,116	266	145
3132	91	3,682	12.95	37	514	127	168
3141	111	6,234	26.84	149	6,297	239	170
3142	103	3,913	21.21	90	3,006	149	88
3150	112	4,408	13.18	151	2,023	163	128
3160	78	2,747	9.17	32	233	26	82
3170	149	6,837	15.85	105	1,846	275	178
3181	87	3,666	10.23	37	442	224	117
3182	88	3,656	10.12	44	194	132	107
3190	169	7,079	20.36	222	5,282	294	74
3201	169	6,636	9.92	133	2,001	118	91
3203	94	4,958	7.83	76	1,003	244	39
3204	75	2,560	7.23	23	206	33	13
3211	157	5,184	8.47	9	132	37	133
3212	127	4,791	11.46	85	3,527	303	153
3231	97	3,502	8.31	37	411	99	417
3232	172	6,909	20.29	132	7,159	246	101
3240	109	3,678	16.86	71	1,433	206	226
3250	103	3,923	21.18	68	1,035	85	188
3261	91	3,302	19.93	17	61	27	45
3262	125	3,866	14.64	75	742	662	277
3291	153	4,037	25.07	135	2,045	111	706
India Total	4,547	173,784		2,937	62,126	6,341	6,713
3220	72	2,151	16.09	98	5,096	145	77
3271	171	3,426	18.68	168	2,595	304	28
3272	162	2,237	15.33	70	947	22	48
3281	312	7,372	18.08	280	2,230	157	207
3282	183	3,667	10.23	203	1,735	50	47
3292	156	5,899	18.82	184	4,951	149	135
S Asia Total	5,603	198,536		3,940	79,680	7,168	7,255

Source: RI South Asia Office

A transformational watershed project in Krishnagiri

Jaishree

Rotary, along with NABARD and NAF, has helped transform the Kuppachiparai panchayat in Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu, from a desolate wasteland to a thriving community. Prior to the partnership, villagers were grappling with poverty and had limited access to water which resulted in poor agricultural yields, forcing many families to migrate in search of work.


Driving through the lush green fields in these villages in Krishnagiri, about 270km from Chennai, it is difficult to imagine that only a few years ago, these were barren patches, where the farmers were struggling with insufficient water to raise their crops.

But today, thanks to a global grant partnership between RC Madras Coromandel, RID 3232, RC Stavanger International, Norway, and TRF, this is a verdant oasis with lush paddy fields nourished by abundant water resources. This partnership has resulted in a watershed and integrated rural development project in these villages with help from NABARD and NAF. It has benefitted 15,000 villagers in about 2,800 households, says project chairman G Balasubrahmaniam (Bala).

This area has now become a symbol of hope, overflowing with life and vitality. It is a testament to what can be achieved when people come together and work towards a common goal.

Genesis

In 2011, RC Madras Coromandel participated in a UNICEF initiative to build 150 home toilets in Kuppachiparai, one of the larger villages in this group, along with two other neighbouring villages, with each toilet costing ₹10,000. UNICEF's share was 50 per cent of the cost. Krishnan, the panchayat chief, along with few other villagers, pitched in with 40 per cent of the cost, and "our club agreed to sponsor the remaining 10 per cent," says Bala who was then the president-elect of the club. "We had just then raised ₹15 lakh from a World Music



RC Madras Coromandel president Ramesh Ananth examining a sluice gate, along with a villager, near the lake desilted and restored by the club with NABARD's support.



Clockwise:

- A woman with a milch cow given by the club.
- Panchayat leader Rtn Krishnan hands over a loan cheque to a woman to help her buy a milch cow. RC Maa-Nagar Krishnagiri president V Karthik Raja, Ramesh Ananth, project chairman G Balasubrahmaniam, RC Maa-Nagar Krishnagiri secretary G Anand are also in the picture.
- RID 3232 DG N Nandakumar, club president Ramesh Ananth, project chairman Balasubrahmaniam, RID 2982 DG P Saravanan and PDG N Asoka at an event marking the completion of the project in Kuppachiparai.
- Club president Ramesh Ananth examines the water in a pond as Pramila, a resident of Kuppachiparai village, and Rtn R Sridhar look on.



show in Chennai. Our club member Jeeva R suggested supporting this project. We contributed the money and the toilets came up.”

After a year, when Bala visited Kuppachiparai to see how this project was benefitting the villagers, he was shocked to see that the toilets were being used as storerooms. The reason was that there was no water to maintain the toilets, and the villagers were not able to find water even at 800–900 ft. Thus, Bala began his “quest to find water in the dry village” and got connected with the National Agro Foundation (NAF) in Chennai, headed by S Rajasekhar, a member of RC Madras East. NAF was founded by his father, former cabinet minister C Subramaniam. A survey was done by NAF in 2013 in Kuppachiparai. “They reported that the villages were getting occasional rainfall but due to the hilly terrain





The three villages expanded to eight during the implementation phase.

The total grant value was \$189,142 (₹1.25 crore) and NABARD's contribution was ₹1.15 crore.

and hard soil, rainwater could not be saved. NAF advised a watershed project which could be carried out by the National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)."

The club contacted NABARD which accepted it as a CSR partner, with NAF as the project facilitating agency. However, NABARD advised the club to obtain a no objection certificate from the state agriculture department. "It took us over a year to get the NOC and that too, with the

help of Sankarasubramanian, past president of RC Vellore Golden City, who then was personal assistant to the district collector of Dharmapuri," recalls Bala.

With all the paperwork through, the club found an international partner in RC Stavanger International, Norway, which wanted to expand the work to more than just a watershed project. But since NABARD is only into watershed projects, "we added another ₹30 lakh for other developmental projects such as dairy farming and tailoring directed at women," says club president Ramesh Ananth. The three villages expanded to eight during the implementation phase. The total grant value was \$189,142 (₹1.25 crore) and NABARD's contribution was ₹1.15 crore.

Water for the villages

In the first phase, a 1,600-hectare lake located atop a hillock was desilted with expertise from NABARD. The fertile silt was spread across the field opposite the lake that eventually resulted in acres with a rich crop of paddy. The pathways were lined with fruit-bearing trees.

The watershed work included two masonry check dams, 21 loose boulder check dams, 6,000 sunken and percolation ponds, 4,300 farm ponds and 1,000 water absorption trenches. Over 10,000 trees were planted to prevent soil erosion. Chisel ploughing over 110 hectares and bunding over 5,800 cubic metres were also done, says Bala. "All these facilities now provide adequate water for drinking and cultivation, and has improved the groundwater table in the villages." NABARD trained the farmers in scientific agricultural practices at NAF which had a project office at the site. "We taught them crop protection and rotation

techniques, and to make organic fertilisers,” says NAF executive Mahesh.

Panchayat leader Krishnan is delighted with the transformation. “The project has lifted 90 per cent of the villagers from poverty and has tremendously improved their standard of living,” he smiles.

Women’s empowerment

“The women in the villages today will remember the project more for the cows they now own. Dairy farming has put money into their hands,” beams Bala. Around 300 milch cows have been given to them. “I have three cows now, two of which are pregnant. Each cow gives 20 litres of milk a day,” says Pramila, a villager who is part of an SHG in the Kuppachiparai village. Dairy corporates such as Aavin, Arogya, Nandhini and Dodla are their regular customers.

Pramila’s elder son is preparing to write the NEET exam to do postgraduation in medicine, having completed MBBS from the

Today with sufficient income
from the cows and rich
yields from the fields we are
in a far better position.

Pramila

a resident of Kuppachiparai

Chidambaram Medical College. Her younger son is a graduate in agriculture and is preparing for government exams. The family now owns a small piece of land in the village. Profusely thanking Bala, she says, “We had seen hard days when my husband and I used to go to bed with just a glass of water, after feeding our sons whatever little porridge we could manage. Today with sufficient income from the cows and rich yields from the fields we are in a far better position.” Having grown up in the village, she recalls the parched, water-starved



lands, and endless acres of dry earth. “We had just resigned ourselves to a bleak future when things shone up through Bala sir,” she says with folded hands and wet eyes.

NAF groomed the women to be tech-savvy. They use their mobile phones with ease to check their bank accounts. The dairy companies update them on their mobile phones on the milk supplied that day — percentage





**Rotarians and villagers
in the fertile paddy fields
of Kuppachiparai.**

of fat, so many litres of milk, and the amount gets credited directly into their account.

The women were taught to make vermicompost, fodder and silage, the summer feed for cattle when there is no scope for natural grazing. They are encouraged to form self-help groups. A Rotary Training Centre for garment-making has been established in Kuppachiparai with



industry grade sewing machines. Over 100 women have completed their training, says Krishnan. Many of them are employed in garment factories on the Krishnagiri-Hosur belt. The women recently delivered 700 school uniforms under the Tamil Nadu Integrated Child Development Scheme.

Some women have purchased sewing machines with the loans extended by SHGs and are undertaking job work at their homes. “I earn at least ₹600–700 a week and it makes me feel good that I am able to contribute to my family in some way,” smiles Moufaza, mother of two boys. Twenty solar street lights have been installed in the villages.

To monitor the project’s progress, RC Maa-Nagar Krishnagiri, RID 2982, was roped in, owing to its proximity to the project venue. “For the last 8–9 years, our past presidents have been acting as a bridge between RCMC and the villagers,” says V Karthik Raja, president of the Krishnagiri club, of which Krishnan is also a member.

The decade-old project was officially handed over to the panchayat committee in March

in the presence of RID 3232 DG N Nandakumar, RID 2982 DG P Saravanan and other dignitaries.

“We completed the project with the initial 60 per cent funds released by TRF and I am surrendering the balance 40 per cent to the Foundation. We owe the project’s success to NAF and NABARD. Otherwise, I know next to nothing about agriculture and I have only heard of watershed as an idiom,” smiles Bala, whose expertise lies in oil and petroleum products.

The project has won RI’s Significant Achievement Award and NABARD has recognised it as the Best Watershed Project and “gave us a new assignment with ₹60 lakh funding. NAF will do it with assistance from KFW Germany. It is a climatic adaptation programme involving soil health improvement, organic agriculture and lean farming technology, that can reduce the costing for some activities and thus improve farmers’ income,” says Bala.

Pictures by Jaishree

Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S

District Wise TRF Contribution as on February 2023

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution
India					
2981	33,399	566	0	1,184	35,149
2982	32,307	5,562	5,561	75,739	119,168
3000	52,509	4,844	0	100	57,454
3011	64,628	13,847	27,127	483,527	589,129
3012	16,424	752	75,335	309,160	401,671
3020	124,862	14,204	45,000	2,155	186,220
3030	98,520	5,132	10,000	2,791	116,444
3040	23,729	2,046	0	91,297	117,072
3053	58,970	136	0	40,757	99,862
3054	20,430	850	8,434	35,114	64,829
3060	110,985	5,013	1,000	160,906	277,904
3070	80,011	2,625	51,495	11,296	145,427
3080	36,940	9,558	0	80,262	126,761
3090	13,157	0	6,253	0	19,410
3100	65,740	500	25,012	0	91,252
3110	56,516	454	24,304	790,970	872,244
3120	33,076	411	0	0	33,488
3131	434,886	12,260	118,436	1,107,070	1,672,652
3132	46,739	7,693	50,000	5,602	110,034
3141	851,255	40,859	138,499	2,504,831	3,535,444
3142	257,370	4,430	28,669	250,407	540,876
3150	97,857	34,757	160,077	66,102	358,793
3160	13,823	3,453	0	3,675	20,951
3170	213,888	39,384	21,006	32,474	306,753
3181	112,219	1,205	25	4,096	117,546
3182	76,489	4,423	0	0	80,912
3190	175,935	14,187	108,411	381,511	680,044
3201	186,595	33,843	65,792	808,538	1,094,767
3203	31,797	14,508	7,049	76,209	129,563
3204	11,764	818	0	15,142	27,725
3211	168,748	6,065	20,000	2,399	197,212
3212	257,994	96,215	305	81,306	435,820
3231	62,227	23,506	32,278	11,569	129,579
3232	109,387	72,749	92,257	626,177	900,570
3240	111,221	19,080	1,000	3,850	135,151
3250	20,183	290	0	34,179	54,652
3261	21,330	917	0	5,277	27,523
3262	49,491	463	700	34,165	84,819
3291	80,083	1,986	64,981	11,346	158,395
India Total	4,313,484	499,590	1,189,006	8,151,184	14,153,263
3220 Sri Lanka	51,922	10,843	4,000	226	66,992
3271 Pakistan	127	25,715	0	250	26,092
3272 Pakistan	6,555	12,687	0	6,000	25,242
3281 Bangladesh	63,036	5,814	23,125	184,245	276,220
3282 Bangladesh	48,866	6,701	2,000	10,320	67,887
3292 Nepal	188,534	20,311	94,167	61,773	364,784
South Asia Total	4,672,524	581,660	1,312,298	8,413,998	14,980,480

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

Source: RI South Asia Office



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From L: Shamsul Huda, PRID Kamal Sanghvi, Rizwana Zamindar, Subhash Prasad (on wheelchair), Talkin Zamindar, and Subhash's parents Sunita and Laxman Prasad.

A real-life Bajrangi Bhaijaan story

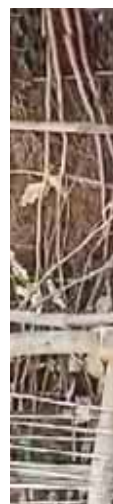
Rasheeda Bhagat



A few years ago, Salman Khan's *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* smashed records at the box office. The story was a heartrending one. A sweet and innocent little girl, who cannot speak, lands up accidentally in India from across the Kashmir border in Pakistan. The hero risks everything to reach her back to her parents. And in this task, he is aided by a journalist.

Well, that was in the realm of fiction; thanks to the close involvement and arduous follow up by some Rotarians in India and Bangladesh, we had a real life replica of the popular film, with Pakistan being replaced by Bangladesh.

It all began in June 2021, when an auto rickshaw driver in a locality in the Nilphamari district in North Bangladesh, about 400km from Dhaka, found a mentally and physically-challenged person in his mid-20s on the roadside. The man was sick, wounded and unable to speak or walk, and was obviously abandoned by somebody. The good Samaritan put him in his vehicle and took him to the Dimla police station. As he was sick and wounded, the police admitted him to the Neurosurgery department of the Rangpur Medical College on June 13, 2021.





From Top Right clockwise: Subhash Prasad at the care home; Subhash's mother, father and two sisters; Mother Sunita breaks down on seeing her son at the Indo-Bangladesh border; (From R) PRID Kamal Sanghvi, father Laxman Prasad, Subhash, Talkin Zamindar, mother Sunita and Rizwana Zamindar; Subhash being rescued from the street by an auto rickshaw driver.

He was kept here for general medical treatment for nearly three months. The youth required a hip joint replacement surgery, but as he had neither the money nor anybody to take care of him, no surgery was done. He gave his name as Subhash Prasad.

Thereafter, Subhash spent nearly a month surviving in one of the hospital corridors, after which the chief metropolitan magistrate of Rangpur gave permission to the *Glory Shomaj Unnayon Shongstha*, a shelter home for the handicapped, to take care of him.

Now comes into the picture a journalist, Shamsul Huda, a senior cameraman of *Ekattor Television 71*, and a member of Rotary Club of Banani Dhaka, RID 3281, and organising secretary of the Amateur Radio Society Bangladesh. While inquiring about the overall status of homeless handicapped person kept in this shelter house, he noticed Subhash, particularly because he could not speak Bangla, and was unable

to give much information about himself and his origin. “He could give only his name and converse only in Hindi. He could not give me his home address, but only say he was from Ramnagakanda,” recalls Huda.

This was in August 2022. Taking a clue from this, the Rotarians used Google search engine and Google Maps and found this village was located in the Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh, and was some 200km from Lucknow. He immediately contacted the Bahraich district police superintendent Keshab Kumar Chowdhury on Aug 2 and even sent him a picture of Subhash through Whatsapp on the cop’s mobile phone.

But not making much of a headway from this source, Huda, who refused to give up, next turned to his amateur radio network in Lucknow. This time he had dialled the right number. An amateur radio operator in Lucknow, Dinesh Chandra Sharma, was able to get for him the contact number of Subhash’s village panchayat leader Subedar, who immediately confirmed on seeing Subhash’s picture that he knew the youngster personally, as also the fact that he had been missing for quite some time.

At long last, the wheel started turning! Within a few minutes panchayat leader Subedar organised a Whatsapp video call between Huda and Subhash’s

father Laxman Prasad, mother Sunita, two sisters Anjani and Shanjibhan. “I confirmed their residential address in Nidhipurwa, Bahraich district. What followed was a very emotional family reunion, on the video call, after almost a year and a half and his family members broke into tears. Sunita, his mother, asked detailed questions about whether Subhash was being taken care of properly as he could not look after himself. She also sent the medical prescriptions for his treatment which was being given to him when he was back home,” says Huda.

The parents are daily wage labourers and they live in a jungle area and hence had thought Subhash had been dragged away by a wild animal.

Now the focus shifted to reuniting Subhash with his family; not an easy matter as it involved two countries — India and Bangladesh — and Subhash had no papers or identity proof of any kind. Even today those involved in his return back home are not sure how he landed up in Bangladesh in the first place. Perhaps, it is surmised, he was trafficked, but being both mentally and physically-challenged, he could not be used in any way, and hence was mercilessly discarded on the streets.

To bring the young man home, so much of paperwork was needed to be completed on both sides, beginning with establishing his identity. After several

Huda and Rizwana have worked relentlessly for seven months to unite a young and mentally-challenged youngster with his parents. This is the unique international character of Rotary.

PRID Kamal Sanghvi



failed attempts to get Rotarians in eastern India take up this cause of reuniting the physically and mentally-challenged young man with his family, Huda finally struck chord with a Rotarian in Western India, Gujarat. Rizwana Zamindar, a member of RC Bharuch, RID 3060, who had joined WIRI (Women in Rotary International) network during the Covid pandemic. A past president of her club, Rizwana joined Rotary in 2015, and her husband Talkin is also an older member of the Bharuch club.

It took another woman Rotarian from the same Dhaka club, Shahida Naz Huda, to take the initiative on social media to create a dedicated team to organise Subhash's return to India and reunion with his family. Finally,



in November 2022, through the WIRI group, she got Rizwana interested in this cause, and she was fully supported by her husband Talkin. Rizwana was formerly an Inner Wheel member, and also president of an Inner Wheel club, “but since I wanted a deeper engagement in social service, I joined Rotary. I have been actively engaged through my Rotary club in several social initiatives in Bharuch, and am a committee member in the *My Livable Bharuch* initiative launched by the district collector. In this, local citizens are actively involved in improving the living conditions in Bharuch, including sanitation, health delivery, cleanliness, and several community initiatives such as helping widows, and other underprivileged citizens.”

She is also an active member of her club, one of the older clubs in India formed in 1944, and before the Independence. It has over 150 members and she was the first woman to become its president. “During Covid, I was the club secretary and that time we had a lot of online meetings and made connections not only across India but also internationally. These online meetings made it so easy to meet people across the world and form contacts. So when Julia Gangwani started WIRI, I joined it and she made me membership coordinator. That’s how Shahida Naaz from RC Banani Dhaka reached me. She contacted Payal Biswas from a Bengaluru Rotary club; the latter knows me and asked me if I could help. They had contacted many Rotarians but were not getting any volunteers. I said I would do it.”

Interestingly, Rizwana’s own friends asked her “to be careful. They said this is between India and Bangladesh; your phone could be tapped, the circumstances of this case seem to be a little mysterious and so on. Even PRID Kamal Sanghvi, who has helped us so much, advised me that just confine the conversation on phone calls to this case and nothing else.”

He could give his name and converse only in Hindi, and say he was from Ramnagakanda. As he could not speak Bangla I guessed he was a foreigner.

Shamsul Huda

This was in October 2022. Rizwana next touched base with Shamsul Huda and they started working together. Asked how Subhash ended up in Bangladesh, she says, “No one really knows. We had decided we would not get into the how and why of the case; the police were already investigating and that was their job. We concentrated on moving the paperwork. I would regularly call the Indian High Commission in Dhaka and simply say: “I’m calling from Gujarat, India, and would like to discuss about my Indian citizen Subhash Prasad’s return process! And Shamsul would work with his government. Our objective was to get Subhash back to his home and family in India.”

What strengthened Rizwana’s resolve to help was the fact that once “we had lost our passports in Malaysia and thanks to Rotary and Rotarians, we were able to get the necessary documents to get back to India within 24 hours. Both my husband and I felt now it was our turn to help somebody else.”

She was regularly in touch with the police officer crucial to this project — DSP Sparsha Nilangi in West Bengal who works closely with those at the Bangladesh border. She really helped in smoothening the immigration process. The Bahraich DSP Rajiv Sisodia also helped with the paperwork from his side.



Sparsha Nilangi, SDPO Bagdah, West Bengal, being felicitated by PRID Sanghvi in the presence of Talkin and Rizwana Zamindar.

Finally the documents were in place; Huda worked on the foreign ministry and the police authorities in Bangladesh to get Subhash's return to India okayed; Rizwana worked to get his emergency travel document/passport from the Indian High Commission, and finally, Rizwana and Talkin reached Kolkata "where we were so kindly put up in PRID Kamal Sanghvi's beautiful home in the city."

On March 20, a car was arranged for Subhash's parents and one more

villager from Nidhipurwa village to the Bahraich railway station for the journey to Kolkata. But since their train tickets weren't getting confirmed, flight tickets (from Lucknow to Kolkata) were booked for them on the spot. And they were also put up in Lucknow overnight at a hotel. All this meant extra expenses, but the Zamindar couple stepped in to help. "Yes, we had to spend money from our pockets but my husband said *acchha kaam hei*, let's do it!"

By now Sanghvi was also on board and when the day dawned to take Subhash's parents to Petrapole, the Indo-Bangladesh border, about 90km from Kolkata, he also joined the Zamindars to make the three-hour car journey; on the other side accompanying Subhash was Shamsul Huda.

Subhash recognised his parents and the reunion of the son with his parents was emotional. An emotional Sanghvi said, "This proves how much value a Rotarian has for an individual human life... Huda and Rizwana have worked relentlessly for seven months to unite a young and mentally-challenged youngster with his parents. This is the unique international character of Rotary, and

proves that countries may be different and divided by borders but the hearts that beat within people are kind and compassionate. This is an outstanding example of the international character of Rotary and its human side."

Rizwana also acknowledged the help of DG Anil Agarwal, RID 3120, for his "helpful primary coordination" for the verification of Subhash and his family members in Bahraich, UP. "PRID Sanghvi has given us positive encouragement through the entire process, which was pursued under his constant guidance and support."

At zero point in Petrapole, a huge contingent of the Bangladesh media was present to report this heartwarming story. That evening, in Kolkata, RIDE Anirudha Roychowdhury hosted a dinner to celebrate this "international peace programme". But the real celebrations were held in the jungle area of Nidhipurwa, with the entire village celebrating Subhash's return... the reunion of a disabled son with his parents after three long years was a bright moment indeed in their tough lives.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

We decided not to get into the how and why of the case; the police were already investigating. We concentrated on moving the paperwork. I regularly called the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

Rizwana Zamindar



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Create hope in the world

V Muthukumaran

I am acutely conscious that the work of Rotary is not done on the 18th floor of the One Rotary Centre at Evanston, Chicago, but at each and every one of the over 37,000 clubs with the participation of every single Rotarian in over 200 countries to create hope in the world,” said RIPE Gordon McNally. Speaking at a *Meet and Greet* event hosted jointly by RIDs 3232 and 3231 in Chennai, he said he is a big fan of Scotland rugby team which ‘worked as one better together’ and all its 15 players, each one highly talented, “but they all pulled along as a single team to succeed.” Likewise, the uniqueness of every Rotarian must be leveraged when they come together to do good in the world.

Rotary has brought hope to countless individuals who were at the rock bottom of their lives, he said, and recalled two incidents where Rotary had instilled hope in young girls who were at the edge of their lives. In mid-2006, he and Heather were on a visit to Rwanda in East Africa when they were struck by the plight of Mary, a young girl who was orphaned at 12. Her father was killed during the genocide of 1994, and mother was sexually assaulted by militia gangs, infected with HIV and died. “At a very young age, Mary had to take care of her two



younger brothers and run the family.” But she was sent back to school, with free education and secure accommodation, thanks to the sponsor in the form of an NGO, Hope and Home for Children, with which Rotary clubs in the UK had partnered with.

While Rotary sponsored her education only till high school, Mary aspired to study further. At this juncture, a Scottish lawyer intervened and funded her education at the University of Kigali. She has graduated and is now an entrepreneur.

In August last year, he was witness to a heart surgery done on a four-year-old girl as part of a larger paediatric cardiac programme of Rotary clubs in Manila. “While I was amazed by the skilful work of the surgeon, just then I got a WhatsApp picture of my granddaughter in school uniform. Now here we have another girl in Manila who will get a new hope of life after the surgery.” Time and time again, Rotary has given hope to suffering people across the world, he noted.

Priority for mental wellness

For long mental health issues have been a taboo subject due to the social

stigma attached to it, and “this attitude has got to change. People, especially the children and young adults, are suffering more in the aftermath of Covid. I wish the clubs extend a support system for mental health problems of their communities,” McNally said. He urged clubs to do a ‘need assessment’ to find the requirements of their community, before chartering a plan of action to tackle mental illness. “We are all at a level-playing field and have to work together. We need to eradicate polio once and for all, continue the good work of past governors and Rotary leaders, empower women with initiatives, and take more steps to make Rotaract an integral part of Rotary. I will work with each one of you to create hope in the world.”

The incoming year would be the ‘last show’ of RID 3232 before it gets bifurcated and “are you all ready for the challenge of the final year to make it the best one,” asked RI Director A S Venkatesh to the incoming presidents-elect. “While there are many issues and matters of importance, we need to know that confrontation won’t get us anywhere, cooperation is the only way forward,” he said.



RIPE Gordon McInally and Heather with (from L) RID 3232 secretary-elect Rajagopal, PDG J Sridhar, RID AS Venkatesh, PDG Krishnan V Chari, PRID PT Prabhakar, Shobana and DGE Ravi Raman, PDGs S Krishnaswami, JB Kamdar, DG N Nandakumar, RID 3234 DGN NS Saravanan, PDG Natarajan Nagoji, RID 3234 DGND Vinod Saraogi RID 3203 PDGs PM Sivashankaran and EK Sagadhevan at Chennai.

He was district governor when McInally was RI director in 2007–09, recalled Venkatesh as he introduced the incoming RI president to the delegates. At 26, McInally had joined RC South Queensferry in 1984 after establishing himself as a successful dental surgeon in Edinburgh. A Bequest Society member, he “has a wry sense of Scottish humour, is extremely friendly and an affable leader.” A big rugby fan, he loves good food and music, while his partner Heather is a music teacher and a great singer, added Venkatesh. McInally

For long, mental health issues have been a taboo subject due to social stigma and this attitude has got to change.

Gordon McInally
RI President Elect

has a vision that “Rotary should exist everywhere in a style to suit everyone who has the desire to be part of us and to help us do good in the world.”

RID 3232 has added 890 new members and five new clubs, and “we will exceed the target of \$2.15 million in TRF giving by June-end,” said DG N Nandakumar. In all, Chennai clubs have done 4,755 service projects worth ₹53.76 crore and *Project Shakti* is an ambitious project to screen women for early detection and treatment of breast cancer.

Under *Project Velicham* (brightness) 45 vocational centres with five sewing machines each have trained 20,000 women in tailoring so far, said RID 3231 DG JKN Palani. “A mammography bus, done with a global grant of \$175,000, will be flagged off while six ambulances are in service, thanks to generous donors like PDG Abirami Ramanathan,” he said. Over 2.5 lakh palm seeds were distributed as part of the greening mission; around 2,600 units of blood were

collected in various camps; and more than 1,000 people have benefitted in medical and eye-screening camps. “I led a 43-member team to Sri Lanka and we donated medical equipment to government hospitals in Jaffna, Killinochi and Mullaitivu, and took care of the school needs of students under *Project Dhanvantri*,” he added.

Earlier DGE Ravi Raman said joint club meetings and collaborative projects would be encouraged during his tenure. “For the upcoming year, I have a target of adding 23 new clubs (to the existing 172 clubs), 1,200 new members (5,873), and 500 new Rotaractors (7,155).” He aims to collect \$2.6 million for TRF giving with an Annual Fund of \$400,000. Every club will have a holistic wellness chair to look into the mental health issues of Rotarians and Anns for timely intervention, he said.

AKS members S V Veeramani, PDGs Ramanathan, J B Kamdar, past presidents Ranjit Pratap and Vijaya Bharathi (RC Madras), DGND Vinod Saraogi, and Dev Damodaran were



DG Nandakumar presents a plaque to RIPE McNally and Heather in the presence of (from L) Rtn Dr Ramkumar, Lakshmi, Vinita, RID Venkatesh, Sumedha and RID 3231 DG J K N Palani.

felicitated by McNally. PDG J Sridhar was presented a Foundation citation for mobilising over \$155,000 for the Polio Fund as part of \$2.5 million for TRF giving. P N Mohan, past president, RC

Madras, who got the Green Crusader of the Year Award from the International Advertising Agency's Olive Crowd Awards, for restoring seven lakes around Chennai, was honoured by the RIPE. He

had led a team of Rotarians to reclaim ruined lakes across 600 acres that benefitted eight lakh people and over 1,000 acres of farm land.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran

International Polio award for PDG Sagadhevan

Team Rotary News



Rasheeda Bhagat

RIPE Gordon McNally presents the award to PDG E K Sagadhevan in the presence of Heather and RIDE Anirudha Roy Chowdhury.

RID 3203 PDG E K Sagadhevan's long years of work in polio eradication and collecting funds for the Polio Fund was recognised at the

Lakshya meet in Kolkata where he was bestowed the International Polio Award and certificate by incoming RI President Gordon McNally. It was

stated that his service for polio eradication began right from his induction into Rotary in 1992. A surgeon himself, he is a true polio eradication "champion and a polio warrior" who kept his focus on several polio eradication-related activities. He was member of the End Polio Now for four years, and he instituted the first-of-its-kind End Polio pin with a certificate as also a PolioPlus Society pin in zones 4,5,6 and 7, to motivate and get the involvement of both Rotarians and the general public in polio eradication.

PDG Sagadhevan was a member of the India National PolioPlus Society and a regular contributor to the Polio Fund, where too he motivated others to contribute. His contribution in monitoring the steps taken by various clubs to give polio drops is outstanding. ■

See you in Melbourne

From big-name speakers and breakout sessions to the flag ceremony and the House of Friendship, the 2023 Rotary International Convention in Melbourne will be full of pageantry and inspiration.

In Melbourne this month, listen to Nobel Peace laureate Leymah Gbowee of Liberia tell her story from the convention mainstage about empowering girls. And for ideas you can take back to your club, choose from dozens of breakout sessions. 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.

Then, check out the House of Friendship to learn about projects by clubs, fellowships, action groups, and partners that will energise you to expand your club's impact. For example, step inside a sample emergency shelter from project partner ShelterBox.

Rebecca Fry, charter president of the Rotary Club of Social Impact Network, Australia, says the House of Friendship is "a true festival of Rotary" and one of the best ways to get a sense of Rotary's global reach.



The virtual reality experience at the 2022 convention's House of Friendship.

The exhibition floor is a prime spot to meet up with friends, bump into new people to add to your Rotary network, and seek out leaders of projects that spark your interest. Plus, it's a lot of fun. Past highlights include Chinese lion dancers and a virtual reality experience about a coral reef restoration project. The expo is at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre every day of the convention May 27–31.

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org.

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your junk folder?



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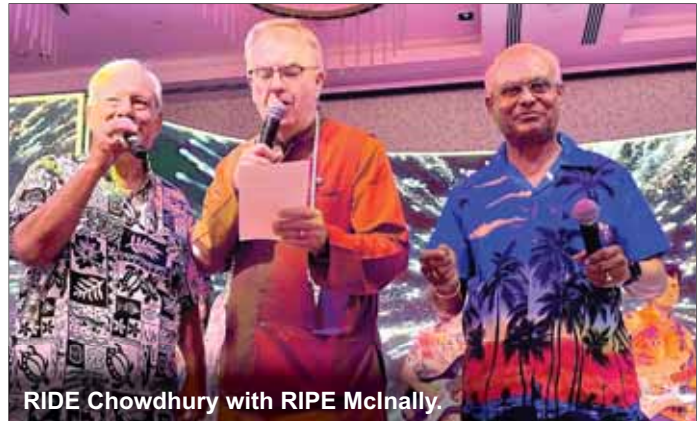
Lakshya moments



TRF Trustee Aziz Memon presents a plaque to RIPE Gordon McNally and Heather in the presence of (from L) RIDE T N Subramanian, PRIP Shekhar Mehta, Rashi, RID Mahesh Kotbagi, RIDE Anirudha Roy Chowdhury, Shipra, PRID Kamal Sanghvi and PDG E K Sagadhevan.



Shipra and RIDE Chowdhury with their grandson.



RIDE Chowdhury with RIPE McNally.



Lakshya chair Sagadhevan lights the lamp as PDG Ravi Vadlamani, RID Kotbagi, Rashi, PRIP Mehta, RIDE Chowdhury, Shipra and PRID Sanghvi look on.



PDG Sagadhevan and RIDE Chowdhury present a plaque to RIDE Subramanian.



RIDE Subramanian with Heather and Shipra.



From L: PRID Kamal Sanghvi, Rtn Ravishankar Dakoju and PDG Suresh Hari.



PRIP Mehta and Rashi with DGEs Ritu Grover (seated), and (from L) DGEs Jayashree Mohanty, Asha Venugopal, Manjoo Phadke and B C Geetha.



Trustee Memon and Rashi.

Chennai Rotaractors surprise RIPE McNally

Kiran Zehra

Two young students training at the Tamil Nadu Rubik's Cube Association in Chennai created a memorable surprise for RI President Elect Gordon McNally during his visit to the city where he addressed Rotaractors from RID 3232. Likhitesh (7), and Jivithesh (8), spent two hours solving 567 Rubik's Cubes to craft a special gift for him. "We wanted to give him something he could never forget," said DRR Gowtham Raj. McNally met the Rotaractors at Ethiraj College and was amazed when he unveiled the 5 by 4 ft frame displaying his 2023–24 presidential theme, *Create Hope in the World*.

"I am overwhelmed," he said, expressing his gratitude to the two

boys and the Chennai Rotaractors for "creating such a beautiful memory. This heart-warming gesture is a reminder of the impact that young people can have on anybody. You give open-heartedly with energy and enthusiasm." Talking about his theme he said "the goal of the theme is to inspire people to restore hope in the world and help it heal from conflicts. Our world needs hope more than it ever did before."

The Rotaractors greeted McNally and his wife Heather with a traditional folk dance and a Bharatanatyam performance by the Rotaractors of RAC Ethiraj College. McNally joined the fun, dancing with the Rotaractors, and

appreciated their efforts to add a cultural touch to his visit.

The surprises continued when the incoming RI president was gifted a picture that he had taken with the incoming Rotaract presidents and secretaries just moments before he took the stage to address the gathering. "You are fantastic. This is getting very interesting," he exclaimed.

The Rotaractors highlighted their year's achievements. McNally said he was "thoroughly impressed by your work and efforts to make a positive impact in the community. You are one of the biggest Rotaract districts in the world in terms of size

Rotaract is not just the future of Rotary, it's the now and here of Rotary. With Rotaract, we will be able to complete another 118 years. Our hope is on you.

Gordon McNally
RI President Elect



From L: Sumedha Nandakumar, DRR Gowtham Raj, District Rotaract Secretary Kesikka Kumaraguru, RIPE Gordon McNally, his wife Heather, Likhitesh, Jivithesh, DG N Nandakumar along with Rotarians and Rotaractors after unveiling the frame.



RIPE McNally shows the audience a framed photo that he took with the incoming Rotaract presidents and secretaries. (From L) DG Nandakumar, DRR Gowtham Raj, Heather and RID AS Venkatesh are also in the picture.

and action. As I stand here and look at you and the achievements you have made, I know that hope will be created.”

When asked about the sustainability of Rotary as an organisation, he responded that “Rotaract is not just the future of Rotary, it’s the now and here of Rotary. It is our present without a doubt. With Rotaract, we will be able to complete another 118 years. Our hope is on you.”

The event concluded with various Rotaract clubs from the district felicitating RIPE McNally and Heather. RID AS Venkatesh and DG N Nandakumar were also present at the event.

Pictures by Kiran Zehra



Waterwheels for a tribal community in Maharashtra

Team Rotary News

Rotary Club of Dombivli Midtown, RID 3142, distributed waterwheels to 52 families in Mokhada district located 150 km from Mumbai. The families reside in two tribal villages — Dongarwadi and Kurlod where there is no proper water supply scheme. “They trudge a long distance to fetch water from wells and ponds located in a



Villagers with the water wheels given to them by RC Dombivli Midtown.

forest closeby. Women carry 10–15 litres of water daily in pots poised on their heads and hips, making them weak and tired,” said club president Ajay Kulkarni.

The club, with CSR funds from Innovinc Aspire and Schiller Healthcare, and its own contribution of ₹50,000, procured waterwheels made of food-grade, high density polyethylene. Guided by

the village sarpanch, Kulkarni, along with few other members, distributed the waterwheels to the households. Each container can hold 45 litres of water and can be pulled with the help of a handle fitted on its neck. “This device will significantly lessen the burden of transporting water and ease the job for the village women,” said the club president. ■

Medical missions to Baripada in 2007 & 2023

Rajendra Saboo



Mayurbhanj Collector & District magistrate Vineet Bhardwaj inaugurating the medical mission in Baripada as PRIP Rajendra Saboo looks on.

After three years of the Covid pandemic, this time we had a medical mission to Baripada, Odisha, in March 2023. Here's a flash back to Baripada from 16 years ago. We had started medical missions in Rotary after Usha asked me to do hands-on service beyond borders and the first mission was in 1998 to Uganda. We decided to have medical missions in India, and in 2006, we selected the poorest of the poor area of Kalahandi, Orissa. Baripada was next in 2007.

The support of PDG DN Padhi opened all doors for us. DG Dhian Chand requested PDG Subhash Garg as project director for the mission, which was held from March 6-14, 2007. With the spirit of *Service Above Self*, our

motto, we had a team of 27 dedicated doctors and volunteers. With DG Dhian Chand and PDG Subhash with his wife Praveen, my wife Usha and me, we took the flight from Delhi to Bhubaneswar.

Driving from Bhubaneswar, we halted at Bhadrak for lunch at the Hotel Orion, which was arranged by RC Mid-Town Bhadrak president Ajay Agarwal. After a vegetarian lunch, we started for our destination, Baripada. RC Baripada was led by DG Pramod Rath and his team of Rotarians.

Reaching Baripada, our doctors were disappointed when they went around the district hospital. However, we are thankful to the district administrator and hospital functionaries under the guidance of the district collector VK Pandian, who helped us. There was no

modern equipment in the hospital, especially in the dental department which didn't even have a dental chair. The dynamic young district collector ordered the health authorities to get whatever possible locally and assured us he would provide all possible help and meet the requirement for smooth working in the hospital. He directed those in charge to get the necessary instruments and equipment from Kolkata. We were impressed that he got all this done within 48 hours. When we left the hospital, the facilities were much improved, and the entire hospital staff was happy and thankful to our team.

Thousands of patients were examined. Some of the surgeries by speciality surgeons were very complicated. The following surgeries and procedures were successfully provided: Ophthalmic: 106 cataract, plus 108 OPD; Skin: 1,431 OPD; Plastic: 32+50 additional procedures; Gynae: 25 major surgeries; Ortho: 62 patients, 132 procedures+85 OPD; Dental: 405 patients, 2 major surgeries and 446 procedures, ENT: 12 surgeries+85 OPD. Medicines were provided for OPD patients as well.

There was a critical case which was finally saved with divine blessings and doctors. A two-year old child had cleft-lip. The surgery was done by specialist plastic surgeon Dr PS Chari, supported by anaesthesiologist Dr Pramila Chari. But the parents of the child, out of compassion, gave food to the child within one hour of surgery and asphyxiation occurred. It was difficult to save the child since it was an emergency. Dr Pramila kept attending to the child, giving the protocols and we all prayed during the night for the life of the child. At 4am, she phoned to say the child is now safe.

There were specialist doctors from all major fields: Shobhit Ghai, GS Brar, SK Saini, Vijay Sehgal, Jayant Navani, Raman Abrol, PS Chari, Pramila Chari, Vijay Pal, Vanita

Gupta, GK Bedi, Taposhi Patnaik, Gulshan Thakral, Rashmi Thakral and assistant doctors Arpeta Gupta, Malini Sehgal, Rawat and Rajiv Kumar. We all volunteers were fully involved in distributing to OTs and departments.

On the last day, we organised *bhandara* (feast) and served thousands of people. The night before our departure, the district authorities organised a local cultural programme, dinner and presented mementos to us all. On our return, Yashveer Singla arranged darshan at the Shree Jagannatha Temple, Puri. We stayed there overnight and the next morning we went to Bhubaneswar to catch our flight.

Fast forward to the medical mission in February 2023 in Baripada. Our team of doctors and volunteers took the flights and were received by DG Pravudutta Subudhi and other leaders of the district. At the hotel, our team was received by the seniormost PDG DN Padhi and his wife Deepa. Past governors of the district met for reception and dinner. Next morning we took the Innovas for Baripada and after a wholesome vegetarian lunch we reached our destination.

PDG Subhash Garg has been the aviator of mission. PDG Dr RS Parmar was the mentor. All doctors and volunteers stayed at the Hotel AVA Guest House, which was comfortable. The doctors were Shankar Gosavi, Surinder Sodhi, Bhushan Kumar, Krishna Sasanka, Anil Kumar, R S Parmar, Girish Gune, R Bharat, Sarla Malhotra, Vineet Nagpal, Anil Verma, Pragya Saini, Nivedita Singh, Sushil Saini, Ravjit Singh, Devendra Paliwal, Surinder Makkar and Man Singh. Praveen Garg linked to all members, DG Ved Kalta, DGE Arun Mongia, Brij Parmar, Guneet Anand, Charu Mongia, Sunita Saini, Usha and myself.

On Feb 13, the mission was inaugurated by deputy commissioner, Baripada. Thereafter, our doctors along with local doctors started performing surgeries in different OTs and in all the specialties. We found that all the instruments were at the Civil Hospital along with updated equipment and para staff.

We met at the meeting led by the project chairman, PP Birendra Sahu and club president Rakesh Singh and local club volunteers.

We had breakfast and dinner together and the atmosphere was one of camaraderie. It was spirited in the evenings and in the morning we were ready to work at the hospital. Praveen Garg was coordinating the tea/coffee and lunch with volunteers Guneet and Charu. DGE Arun Mongia was around, serving where he was required.

Usha and Arun Mongia went to the senior citizens, who were all very old and lonely women, some of whom had lost all memory and prepared a special lunch for them. The next day, Usha and Arun went to the home of leprosy-negative patients and served them food. They had tears of gratitude. Another day, Usha, Praveen Garg and Brij Parmar went to meet mentally challenged girls, gave them snacks and ice-cream. They sang and danced.

In the morning, some of us went walking and jogging, guided by our host Rajkumar Khandelia, in different areas including his farm. He brought everyday dinners without onion and garlic for Usha and me.

Balasore Rotarians wanted to visit Rotary Eye Hospital on Mahashivratri day, and we went. Accompanied by Dr Parmar, I saw the hospital and was impressed that it had been established and was being run by Rotarians without grants. The chief host was IPDG Santanu Pani, with Rajkumar Khandelia leading Rotarians and others. After the meeting and lunch, we returned to Baripada.

During the mission these surgeries were performed: Plastic 31, Eye 120, ENT 13, Ortho 32, General 91, Gynae 58, Dermatology 462, making a total of 810. OPD was about 4,000 patients at Baripada, who were given free treatment and free medicines. A satisfactory mission completed, we bid farewell on Feb 20 to our hosts in Baripada and returned home.



PRIP Saboo and his wife Usha with the medical mission team in Baripada, Odisha.

The writer is a past RI president



Rotarians transform a village near Bokaro

Rasheeda Bhagat

At a village called Algora, about 30 km away from the steel city Bokaro, in Jharkhand State, Rotary is a household name, all thanks to RC Bokaro Steel City, RID 3250. Club members are regular visitors here right from 2017, when the club decided to adopt this village with some 2,500 people. Many Sundays dawn in the village with Rotarians from this club bringing small treats for the children!

Thanks to the dedication efforts, hard work, focus and a clutch of welfare activities, Algora today has a well-equipped play school with smiling faces, five classrooms and another room where the club runs a homeopathy clinic. Apart from the elementary health care services provided by this clinic, where the club has employed a doctor for treating simple ailments such as fever, stomach pain, and other aches and disorders, regular medical

camps are also organised to screen the villagers for other ailments and serious medical problems are referred to the Bokaro city. The homeo clinic itself provides medical service to some 500-600 patients every month.

When asked why the club, which has 78 members, decided to adopt this particular village, club secretary Ghanshyam Dass said that in 2017, when the club's leadership decided to do some welfare projects in a village, one of the members, who knew the sarpanch of Algora, suggested the club adopt this village as the members could plan the community welfare activities in consultation with the panchayat leaders and members.

"First of all, we wanted to build a school, and the panchayat members gave us the go ahead and also a plot of land, where we built six rooms. Five of these rooms we use for the play school where we have employed seven teachers with B Ed degrees, whose salaries we pay. Earlier about 150 children used to attend classes here where basic education and elementary behaviour such as good manners, the way to speak politely, etc, are taught. But after Covid, only 130 children have returned," he says.

In this play school, which the Rotarians have named Asha ki Kiran, alphabets in English and Hindi, numbers and basic arithmetic such as counting, are taught, adds club president Nirupama Singh. The children



Homeopathy clinic run by the club in the village.

Facing Page: An art class in progress in the play school built by RC Bokaro Steel City in Algora village.

are gifted uniforms, stationery, books, water bottles, shoes and socks.

Dass adds that the school also runs a three-month course in drawing and art for batches of 30-35 students. "A retired and renowned art teacher Mohan Azad gives us free service and trains the students. Our students participate in inter-city and inter-state level competitions, and every year they win prizes and make our club proud."

On special occasions such as birthdays, marriage anniversaries, festivals, etc, club members donate money and on Sundays, this money is used to give a treat to the children, with the Rotarians bringing for them snacks, juices, stationery etc.

The play school premises are also used to run adult literacy classes in the evenings for batches of 15 adults,

First of all, we wanted to build a school, and the panchayat members gave us the go ahead and also a plot of land, where we built six rooms.

Ghanshyam Dass
club secretary

"where we give them basic education so that they can sign their names, open their account in a bank and operate it themselves," adds Nirupama.

The club organises regular health care and screening camps for the 2,500-odd villagers. These camps are

planned and executed by club member Dr S C Munshi, who is a paediatrician. About 10 specialists known to him from different specialties such as cardiology, ophthalmology, dentistry, gynaecology, dermatology etc check the villagers and give medicines for about one month to those with problems. Those with serious ailments or requiring surgery are referred to bigger centres.

While some villagers have left for towns in search of employment, most villagers, with small landholding of one or two acres are engaged in farming, and grow cereals as well as sugarcane. Asked about the Rotarians helping them with water resources for agriculture, Dass said the village has a pond which has enough water. "And the government has put hand pumps



DG Sanjeev Kumar Thakur (seated, centre), his wife Poonam (on his right) and club president Nirupama Singh at the play school.



Women attend an adult literacy class in the village.

in several areas, so the villagers don't face a water problem for their daily needs. In our school, of course, we have given a piped water connection and also built separate toilets for boys and girls."

For the success of this project and the development of the village through "activities that are running continuously and smoothly since 2017 when we adopted this village, I would give credit to the four pillars of the Algora project — past presidents of our club Ashok Taneja, Jaywant Sheth, Ashok Jain and PA Zachariah," says Dass. In the last six years the club has raised and spent

The play school premises are used to run adult literacy classes where basic education is given so that villagers can sign their names, open their account in a bank and operate it themselves.

about ₹10 lakh on the transformation of this village. Union Bank also occasionally helps fund welfare activities in this village through its CSR funds.

On future plans, he says the club members want to extend their footprint in Algora. "Now what we have is only a play school; slowly we want to add Classes 1 and 2. Right now the children go to a school in a nearby village. Recently, when our DG Sanjeev Kumar Thakur visited this village, we distributed uniforms and planted fruit trees such as guava and mango. Greening the region with regular tree planting is another regular activity we have." ■

Prachi & Pawan Agarwal
District Governor, RID 3110



District 3110

Global Grant Projects

It's a matter of great pride for our District that our clubs have got approval for 6 Global Grants this year so far, worth Rs 2 Crores. The list of approved Global Grant Projects is as under:"

Details of Approved Global Grants			
Srl.	Host Club	Project Title	Project Cost (\$)
01	RC Nainital	Provide & upgrade Medical Equipment at Indersheel Charitable Hospital for Communities of Mehraagon & Bhimtal	38,131
02	RC Mathura Central, Aligarh Central, Bareilly Heights, Kanpur & Kashipur	Cervical Cancer Awareness, Screening and Pre-Cervical Cancer Lesion Treatment Camps.	30,038
03	RC Rudrapur	Establishing a center for the affordable treatment of Varicose Veins & Diabetic Foot Ulcer disease	38,500
04	RC Kanpur Metro	Providing advanced ophthalmic equipment for eyecare services at Dr. JLRM Eye Hospital, Kanpur	30,000
05	RC Bareilly South	Promoting education by facilitating multi-purpose activities area at Rotary Public School, Bareilly	35,500
06	RC Agra Sapphire	Providing advanced medical equipment at SSB Trauma Centre, Firozabad, UP, India	76,829
TOTAL			2,48,998

CSR Projects

Our District has done 12 CSR projects in the current year with a total investment of more than Rs 5.5 Crores. The list of CSR projects done so far is as below :

Srl	PROJECT TITLE	Total Cost (INR)	Total Cost (USD)
1	Donation of E-Tablets to meritorious Class 9th girl student of Govt. School	79,79,000	1,01,000
2	Complete modernization of three Govt. schools under CSR	79,79,000	1,01,000
3	Complete transformation of Govt. Primary School, Harinagar, Kashipur under CSR by "Andritz"	31,60,000	40,000
4	Upgradation of existing NBSU to SNCU at L.D. Bhatt Sub district Hospital, Kashipur by KVS	26,07,000	33,000
5	Providing medical equipments for diagnosis of Cancer at SSB Trauma Center, Firozabad	1,05,26,320	1,31,579
6	Providing advance Eye care, ENT and ICU equipments at L.D. Bhatt Sub Distt. Hospital, Kashipur, Uttarakhand	26,50,000	33,125
7	Establishment of Computer Labs in 8 Schools of Kashipur	25,01,000	30,500
8	*Supporting Free of Cost Pediatric Cardiac Procedures of 31 needy children at Palwal, Haryana	47,89,474	58,408
9	Sponsoring Free of Cost Pediatric Cardiac Procedures of 15 needy children at SSS Sanjeevani Hospital, Palwal, Haryana	20,52,632	24,731
10	Providing quality open care incubators to ensure better new born child healthcare at various hospitals	82,33,227	1,00,405
11	Establishment of Computer Labs in six schools by Valmet Technologies Private Ltd.	26,52,631	32,349
12	Establishment of Computer Labs in Four Schools by Sidharth Papers Private Ltd.	17,47,369	21,052
TOTAL		5,68,77,653	7,07,149

District 3110 in ACTION



Distribution Nutrition Kits to TB Patients



Wheel Chairs Distribution



Dental Check-up Camp



Food Items Distribution



Cemented Seats Installation at TB Hospital



School Furniture Distribution



Installation of Water Tanks



Awareness regarding Distribution of Artificial Limbs



Rtn. Raj Mehlotra
CDS (Admin)



PDG Devender Kr. Agarwal
ARRFC

Congratulations

Major Donors



PDG Sharat Chandra
DRFC



Congratulations
**Rtn Umesh Gupta
& Rtn Meera Gupta**

RC Agra & RC Agra Royal



Congratulations
**Rtn Ram
Sharan Mittal**

RC Agra

Rekha Shetty

leaves behind a legacy of service

Shekhar Mehta



PDG Rekha Shetty at the Indore Zone Institute when the then RI President Mark Maloney inaugurated a special booth for medical tests for Rotarians under *Project Positive Health*, executed in collaboration with Apollo Hospitals. PRIP Shekhar Mehta, TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya and PRID Kamal Sanghvi are also in the picture.

On the morning of March 28, the Rotary world rose shocked to hear that one of its shining stars PDG Rekha Shetty was no more. Unbelievable was the news but unfortunately it was true. The social media was overflowing with messages about Rekha, the ever-smiling, gracious, caring and thinking Rotarian. It was a big loss to Rotary in general and Rotary in India.

Rashi and I were heartbroken when we heard of Rekha's passing. We knew Rekha and her husband Jai for the last 25 years when both of us were governors-elect in the same year. I vividly remember our first meeting in Calcutta when she had come to attend the GETS and the Rotary Institute in my own city and

district. We became good friends and the bond strengthened over the years.

She was one of the stars of the "Two ow ow ow" crew of Capt Carlo Ravizza, the then RI President. She was brimming with ideas on how to make a difference in the world. She seemed to be a born leader taking up leadership positions very easily and doing full justice to them. It was very evident in the India batch of governors of 1999–2000 that Rekha was destined to travel far in the journey of service in Rotary.

Post her governorship, Rekha spread her wings in Rotary not just in the region but around the world, taking part in fellowships, Rotary Action

Groups, regional leadership positions and membership on international committees. She was an extremely popular Rotarian nationally and internationally.

My own experience of working with her on the Asha Kiran programme of the Rotary India Literacy Mission was outstanding. As chairman, it was a programme very close to her heart and she left no stone unturned to ensure that thousands of children went back to school under the Asha Kiran programme. She went on to create the mascots for the Asha Kiran programme and launched them at the Chennai summit. Her leadership helped motivate Rotarians across India to ensure that more than 50,000

Jaishree

children have been sent back to school under this programme.

Similarly she was instrumental in implementing various projects that impacted the lives of many people in the community. Her efforts towards eradicating polio and promoting literacy were commendable.

Personally, Rashi and I had a great relationship with Rekha and I found Rekha to be a very caring person. She was always coming up with great ideas on how to help people. She always wanted to do more. We had the pleasure of hosting her at our home during one of her visits and we were surprised to see how friendly she became with my mother who instantly took a liking for her. Rekha truly was a charmer. The tributes pouring in social media are a proof of the love Rotarians have for her.

In addition to her contributions to Rotary, Rekha was also an accomplished author. She wrote several books on leadership, management and personal effectiveness. Her books, including *The Ultimate Competitive*



PDG Rekha with PRIP Mehta and Rashi.

Advantage and *The Happiness Quotient*, were well-received by readers and helped many people lead a more fulfilling life.

Rekha was a dedicated Rotarian who embodied the ideals of Rotary in her personal and professional life. She leaves behind a legacy of service that will continue to inspire future generations. Her kindness, wisdom, and

passion for making a difference will never be forgotten.

She will be dearly missed by her family, friends, colleagues, and the entire Rotary community. We extend our deepest condolences to her loved ones during this difficult time. May her soul rest in peace.

The writer is a past president of Rotary International

From RI South Asia office desk

Guidelines for Rotary Foundation (India) contribution via Rotary.org

- Use *My Rotary* login to avoid duplicate ID generation and receive timely credit for your contributions under your club
- In the absence of *My Rotary* login, create one or use your registered email address while making online contributions
- In case of contributions from family trust/company, send cheque/bank draft to RISAO. Do not make contributions through *My Rotary*
- Re-check your PAN before clicking on submit to ensure right PAN on your 80G receipt
- For all online contributions, 80G receipt will only be generated in the name of remitter whose *My Rotary* login has been used for making the contributions.

Every Rotarian, Every Year

Every Rotarian is encouraged to make a personal gift to the Annual Fund every year and participate in a Foundation grant or programme every year. The Annual Fund is the primary source of funds for TRF's activities. Contributions help Rotarians to carry out a broad range of local and international projects to make their communities better.

Use this link to download EREY brochure: <https://my.rotary.org/en/document/every-rotarian-every-year-brochure>. Every year, clubs that achieve outstanding giving in EREY, ie, a minimum Annual Fund contribution of \$100 per capita, with every member giving at least \$25 to the Annual Fund are awarded with *100% Every Rotarian, Every Year Club Banner*. Help your club achieve this banner in the current Rotary year. ■

A cinema treat for the blind in Mumbai

Rasheeda Bhagat

Thanks to persistent efforts by those working for the disabled, reading and audio treats have been made accessible to the visually challenged, but visual treats are at best limited for them. “Watching movies is basic entertainment for the masses in our country, including those who belong to the lower socio-economic strata. But this simple pleasure is normally denied to the blind. The very act of going to a theatre is also an integral part of our community, as this provides an opportunity to socialise with friends and family while having a fun group activity,” says Sanjay Panigrahi, president-elect of RC Navi Mumbai Sunrise, RID 3142.

Two years ago, past president of the club M Prakash Kakade, during his presidential

year, thought of giving some visually-challenged youngsters a cinema experience by organising a visit for them to a theatre in Mumbai, thus kicking off a project the club has titled ‘whispering cinema’. It is named so because two or three of the blind persons going for a cinema experience are seated between a whisperer, who, as the movie unfolds, whispers the details of the visuals on the screen to his companions.

But that experience, though limited to only about 60-odd persons, was thoroughly enjoyed by those chosen for this exercise. So a few months ago, under the guidance of Kakade and the present club president Manoj Nayak, the club decided to enlarge it and booked an entire movie hall in Navi Mumbai — in the Balaji Multiplex — where the movie *Uunchai*, in which



Children all set to watch the movie.





Visually-challenged people with their 'whisperers' inside the theatre.

Amitabh Bachchan plays the lead role was being screened. A total number of 167 blind persons, along with their volunteers, from leading educational institutions for the visually-challenged, like the National Association for the Blind, Helen Keller and six other Foundations and NGOs were taken by the Rotarians for the “whispering cinema” experience.

Panigrahi adds that this particular theatre complex was chosen “because the owner is known to us and he was gracious enough to give it to us free of cost, as we were using it for a charitable event. We spent around ₹60,000 in giving the blind persons and their volunteers, provided by their institutions, and including some of their own teachers, a sumptuous breakfast, and snacks such as popcorn and cool drinks during the show.”

He says Rotarians, including RID 3142 DG Kailash Jethani, who briefed the audience about the various welfare projects of the club and the district,

watched the movie along with the visually-challenged persons and were gratified to see for themselves how much the youngsters, in the age group 11–35 years, enjoyed the movie, particularly because it had Bollywood’s leading icon Amitabh Bachchan as the hero. Surely Bachchan’s baritone and booming voice would have compensated at least a little for absence of the visual delight of watching a movie.

Each person in the audience was given a packed lunch packet after the event. Continuing their project for the visually-challenged, two months after the “whispering cinema” event, the club, which has 80 members, raised some more money from its members, to gift 25 Alexa devices, each costing ₹3,500, to 25 blind persons.

After the movie, Santosh Prajapati, a visually-challenged third year BA student, who also teaches computer science to others, said he loved the entire experience. “Frankly, when they

told me that I was being taken with other blind persons for a ‘whispering cinema’ treat, I didn’t know what exactly it was. So I researched it and was excited to go for the movie. Fortunately, the person who was explaining the visuals to me was a good friend of mine, and knew exactly what kind of commentary he needs to give me... like when something was written on the screen, or where the visual elements are dominant. Hence I got exactly what I needed to enjoy the movie thoroughly. I thank Prakash Sir, for giving us this experience.”

The ‘whispering cinema’ project was coordinated and arranged by the Sunrisers of Rotary, led by its past president Kakade and its president Nayak.

DG Jethani complimented RC Navi Mumbai Sunrise for its innovative initiative, which is bound to go a long way in creating inclusiveness in the community, and is an essential element of RI’s DEI mantra. ■

From Kerala to Ladakh on a Rotary Peace mission

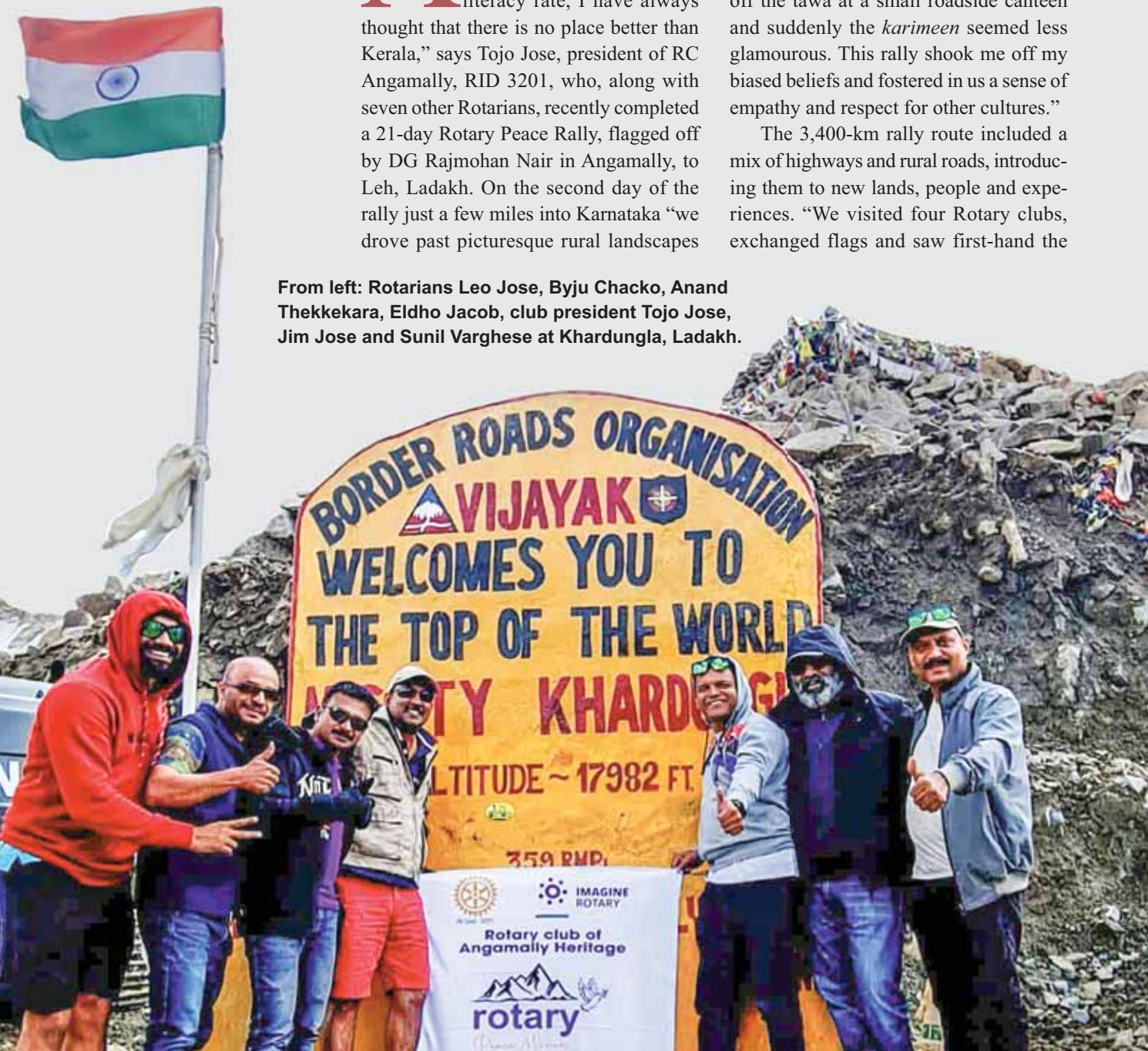
Kiran Zehra

As a Malayali from “the land of *Kathakali*, flavourful *karimeen* and an impressive literacy rate, I have always thought that there is no place better than Kerala,” says Tojo Jose, president of RC Angamally, RID 3201, who, along with seven other Rotarians, recently completed a 21-day Rotary Peace Rally, flagged off by DG Rajmohan Nair in Angamally, to Leh, Ladakh. On the second day of the rally just a few miles into Karnataka “we drove past picturesque rural landscapes

with vast fields, coconut groves and charming villages, all as beautiful as my hometown. We ate *ghee masala dosa* right off the tawa at a small roadside canteen and suddenly the *karimeen* seemed less glamorous. This rally shook me off my biased beliefs and fostered in us a sense of empathy and respect for other cultures.”

The 3,400-km rally route included a mix of highways and rural roads, introducing them to new lands, people and experiences. “We visited four Rotary clubs, exchanged flags and saw first-hand the

From left: Rotarians Leo Jose, Byju Chacko, Anand Thekkekara, Eldho Jacob, club president Tojo Jose, Jim Jose and Sunil Varghese at Khardungla, Ladakh.



wonderful work Rotary is doing across the country. We were impressed by the projects and felt inspired to do more to help our community back home,” says Jose.

The rallyists visited a gurudwara and were impressed by how “everyone was welcome to break bread at the *langar*, promoting inclusivity, diversity and humility, similar to our vision in Rotary to embrace diversity and serve those in need with humility.” The meal itself was “simple and wholesome consisting of basic items like *dal*, *roti*, *sabzi* and *kheer*. It was not fancy, yet it was one of the best meals of my life.”

Their biggest disappointment was during their visit to the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel statue in Gujarat. “We were awed by the grandeur of the statue, built with crores of rupees. However, the sanitation and hygiene standards in the toilets here were extremely poor. We couldn’t help but wonder why such an iconic tourist spot lacked proper facilities for its visitors,” says Jose. He also recalls the time their car broke down because of overheating and a truck driver offered to drive two of them to find water.



In Gorakhpur, Maharashtra.

When the Rotarians felt a yearning for the Malabar-spiced *Suleimani chai*, they stopped by a local Punjabi *dhaba* on the outskirts of Amritsar. Not only did the *dhaba* owner allow them to make the tea in his kitchen but he was “so impressed by its taste that he added the flavourful tea to his *dhaba* menu,” Jose smiles.

At a village near Turtuk, close to the Line of Control between India and Pakistan in Ladakh, they were struck

by the humble lifestyle of the people there. Despite not having access to the luxuries of big comfortable homes, cars and fancy gadgets, the villagers seemed content, living off a small kitchen garden and few farm animals. It was an eye-opening experience for Jose, who reflected on the stark contrast between his own life and theirs.

One of the biggest challenges in the village, he says was, “the lack of access to education for the children. Here is an opportunity for Rotary to make a difference. By starting a literacy project, we could change the lives of these children, and in the long run, the future of the village.” To support the rural community, they purchased a few souvenirs for friends and family.

He notes that the Rotary Peace Rally was an opportunity for his club members to step out of their comfort zone, build new connections and learn to trust strangers. “This experience brought us closer and helped create enthusiasm within the club. It gave us a clear understanding of how Rotarians can work together and with other organisations to create peace in their communities.” ■



The team outside a gurudwara in Kurukshetra, Haryana.

RC SPIC Nagar celebrates golden jubilee

V Muthukumaran

Artificial limbs, callipers and crutches were given to 110 amputees, mostly diabetic patients and accident victims, by PRIP Shekhar Mehta, in the presence of DG VR Muthu and past district governors, as part of the events to mark the golden jubilee year of RC SPIC Nagar, RID 3212. During his interaction with the beneficiaries, Mehta was saddened to learn that polio survivors are eking out a tough life in villages around Thoothukudi, a southern coastal district of Tamil Nadu.

He advised the club to start its own limb manufacturing and distribution centre, instead of having tie-ups with partner clubs for this legacy project “which we have been doing since 2015. All those who got artificial



PRIP Shekhar Mehta gives an artificial limb to a woman. (From L) PDGs S Sheik Saleem and B Arumugapandian, SR Ramakrishnan, director, SPIC Group, and RC SPIC Nagar president Arun Jeyakumar are also in the picture.



(From L) RC SPIC Nagar secretary A Saravanakumar, DG VR Muthu, PRIP Mehta, club president Jeyakumar and AG R Rathakrishnan with student beneficiaries at the golden jubilee event.

limbs were given either callipers or crutches,” says Arun Jeyakumar, club president. The club has been regularly distributing callipers since 1990, he adds. “Till date, we would have given around 250 prosthetic limbs at special camps held in partnership with RC Coimbatore Midtown. This year, we have tied up with RC Tirupur East for limb distribution.” After talking with 25 polio survivors, Mehta urged the club “to identify such patients across villages, so that custom designed callipers can be distributed to them.”

Following a suggestion from Mehta to take up a survey on adult literacy in Thoothukudi, “we have contacted the district education officials, who have assured to support our efforts to create a database on adult illiterates.”

Landmark projects

In 2012, the club adopted 30 rural students from three government schools and is meeting their monthly needs, including food, clothing, toiletries and school-related essentials such as books, stationery and uniforms. “During festivals like Diwali and Pongal,

we give them new clothes and sweets, and engage them in fun activities.”

So far, 89 free paediatric cardiac surgeries have been done under *Project Golden Heart Camp* for which they have tied up with Apollo Children’s Hospital, Chennai. “Till now, seven cardiac camps have screened 450 children. This year, 23 children had undergone surgery and five more are awaiting their turn.” Around 600 college students have benefitted from 10 residential RYLAs and around 140 college students from each of the 80 RYLAs held in colleges. Two Interact clubs — at Sri Kamakshi Vidyalaya Matric HS School and SPIC Nagar HS School — and a Rotaract Club of SPIC Nagar were sponsored by the club. Celebrating its silver jubilee year, the Interactors at Sri Kamakshi Vidyalaya are active with a number of initiatives. “Our Interactors have taken up WinS projects, installed a smart class, mini libraries in classes and provide support to Rotary projects,” says G Meenakumari, school principal and Interact coordinator.

The club’s participation in district projects such as *Vignana Ratham*, a science expo van, benefitted 5,000

students; *Project Punch* had held seven workshops on spoken English for 740 B Ed trainees; and *Project Kalam* has given career counselling to 1,400-plus students of Classes 10–12 so far. “We will have the first session of *Project Yadhumanaval* (she is all) shortly,” says Jeyakumar.

Mehta and Muthu distributed sewing machines and a tricycle to various beneficiaries, and computers were given to the Government HS School in Aathoor village. Furniture and cooking utensils were donated to five anganwadis in nearby villages; and grocery items were given to five orphanages as part of golden jubilee events. PDGs V Shanmugam, Arumugapandian, Chinnadurai Abdullah, Sheik Saleem, PNB Murugadoss, K Vijayakumar, DGE Muthiah Pillai, and DGND Dhinesh Babu were present. SPIC group director SR Ramakrishnan was the guest of honour.

The 28-member club was chartered on Jan 21, 1974. SPIC Group and AM Foundation led by their chairman Ashwin C Muthiah are liberal in their CSR grants and donations in funding the club projects, adds Jeyakumar. ■



Egypt, the land of pharaohs and pyramids

Rasheeda Bhagat





Egypt as a travel destination was on our bucket list for a long, long time, and that we waited so long to visit that beautiful, historic country was because we tried to club it with Israel, or Iraq, where we have been going every decade — from 2002 — for the pilgrimage to Karbala and Najaf. Of course, for the first two visits, the journalist in me took the opportunity to make it a working trip, to give the readers of the *Hindu Businessline*, where I was working then, a first-hand account of what was happening in that unfortunate and beleaguered country, after Saddam Hussein's rule was dismantled by the Americans. Anyway, we'll reserve my adventures in Iraq for another time.

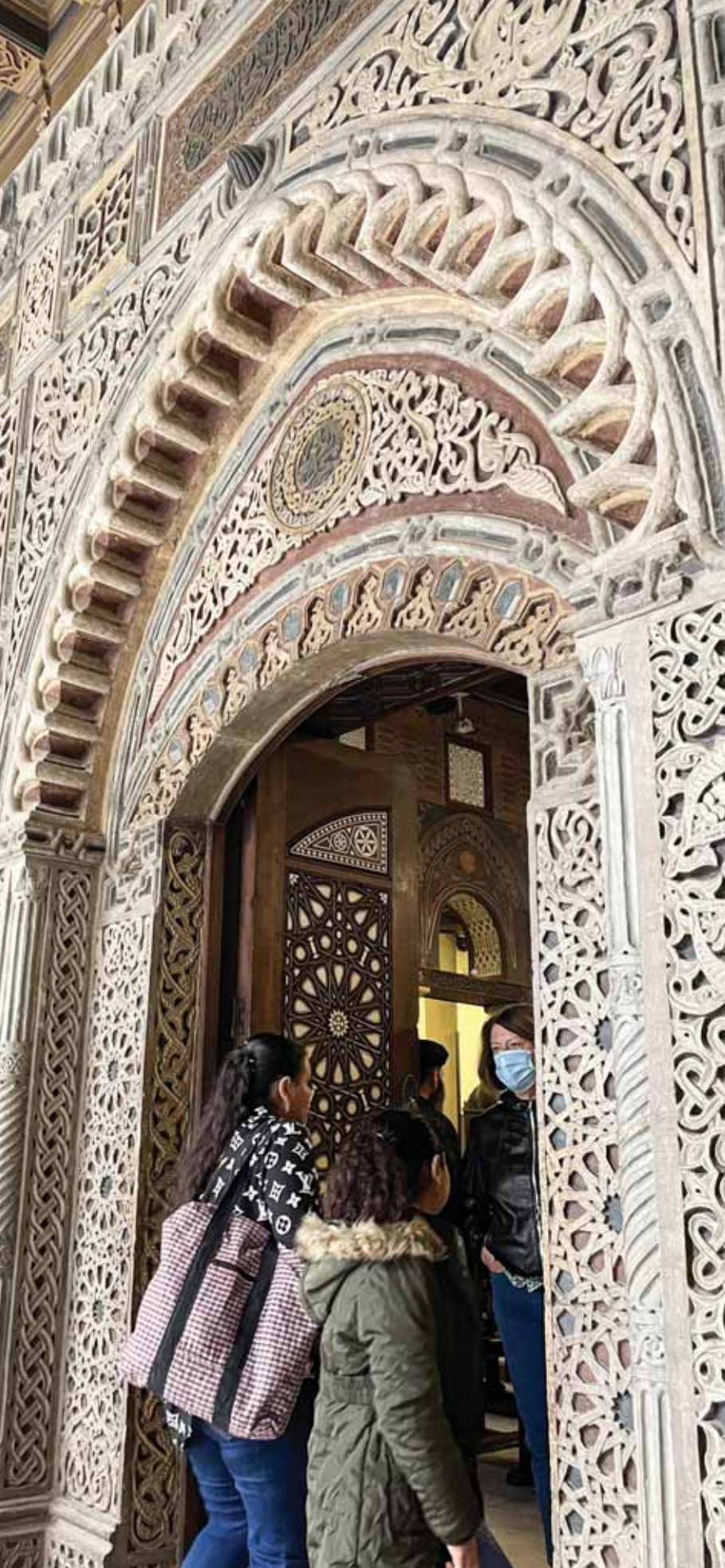
After a few attempts to club Egypt with either Iraq or Israel had failed because of visa blues in the first case — the easiest way to enter Iraq for Shia Muslims is through group visas, but

the group has to be a minimum of 10 in number. In the second case, it was both a tiresome flight schedule with a 12-hour layover in Addis Ababa, and long drives at inconvenient hours. For international travel, Chennai is still back of beyond, even Bengaluru has much better flight connections.

So this January, Egypt it was! We started planning as a group of eight, but the very minute the magic destination 'Egypt' was mentioned, friends wanted to join! Soon the group swelled to 14, and we had to put a firm stop to more numbers. Small is beautiful they say, but we were no longer a 'small group'.

But it was a fun group alright; a very interesting mix of North Indians and South Indians; curiously enough, the most significant memory I have brought back from our 10-day trip is of a bunch of women — a mix of senior citizens and those pushing at that boundary — dancing to both Hindi and Tamil songs as our van cruised at a speed of 60, 70 and even 80 kmph! In an Islamic country, the interest this

The majestic
Pyramids of Giza.



phenomenon generated on the roads can well be imagined. The dancing continued even on our ride to the airport to take the flight back home, with appreciative men passing us by, or driving in other lanes, smiling, clapping and giving thumbs up signals!

Coming to the country itself, the very name conjures up images of the pyramids of Giza. Once designated one of the seven wonders of the world, the three pyramids were built for the three kings; the oldest and largest for King Khufu, with the length at the base an average of a mammoth 230 metres; the second one's length is 216 metres; and



the smallest one is 109 metres. These were burial chambers and in keeping with the belief of ancient kings about after life and next birth, these were originally stacked with treasures such as gold and other valuables, and all else the pharaohs would need in their after-life. But all the three pyramids were plundered several times in both ancient and medieval times, and their original height has been eroded as they were stripped of their outer cover of white limestone.

The core of the largest or the Great Pyramid is built of yellow limestone and the construction of these pyramids is an engineering marvel of the times in which they were built — 2550 to 2490 BC. There are all kinds of theories about how exactly the pyramids were built, how many people worked on them and how long they took to complete. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus estimates that the Great Pyramid took 20 years to build, and 100,000 men, who were agricultural labourers who only worked on the pyramids when their lands were flooded by the Nile, and they had no work in their fields.

But, according to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “by the late 20th century, archaeologists found evidence that a more limited workforce — around 20,000 — may have occupied the site on a permanent rather than a seasonal basis.”

The next obvious question is the methodology used to build these huge structures in an era sans mechanisation. The *Britannica* says the Egyptians “employed a sloping and encircling



From top (clockwise): The library in Alexandria; a *Koran* bound in leather with the calligraphy done in gold leaf; a church in Cairo.

embankment of brick, earth and sand, which was increased in height and length as the pyramid rose; stone blocks, of around 2.5 tons each, were hauled up the ramp by sledges, rollers and levers.” Just close your eyes and imagine the gigantic quantum of physical labour involved in this... the very thought makes you dizzy!

On the materials used for this massive structure, arguably the biggest ever built on this planet, it says: “Approximately 2.3 million blocks of stone were cut, transported, and assembled to create the 5.75-million-ton structure, which is a masterpiece of technical skill and engineering ability. The internal walls as well as those few outer-casing stones that still remain in place show joints finer than any other masonry constructed in ancient Egypt.”

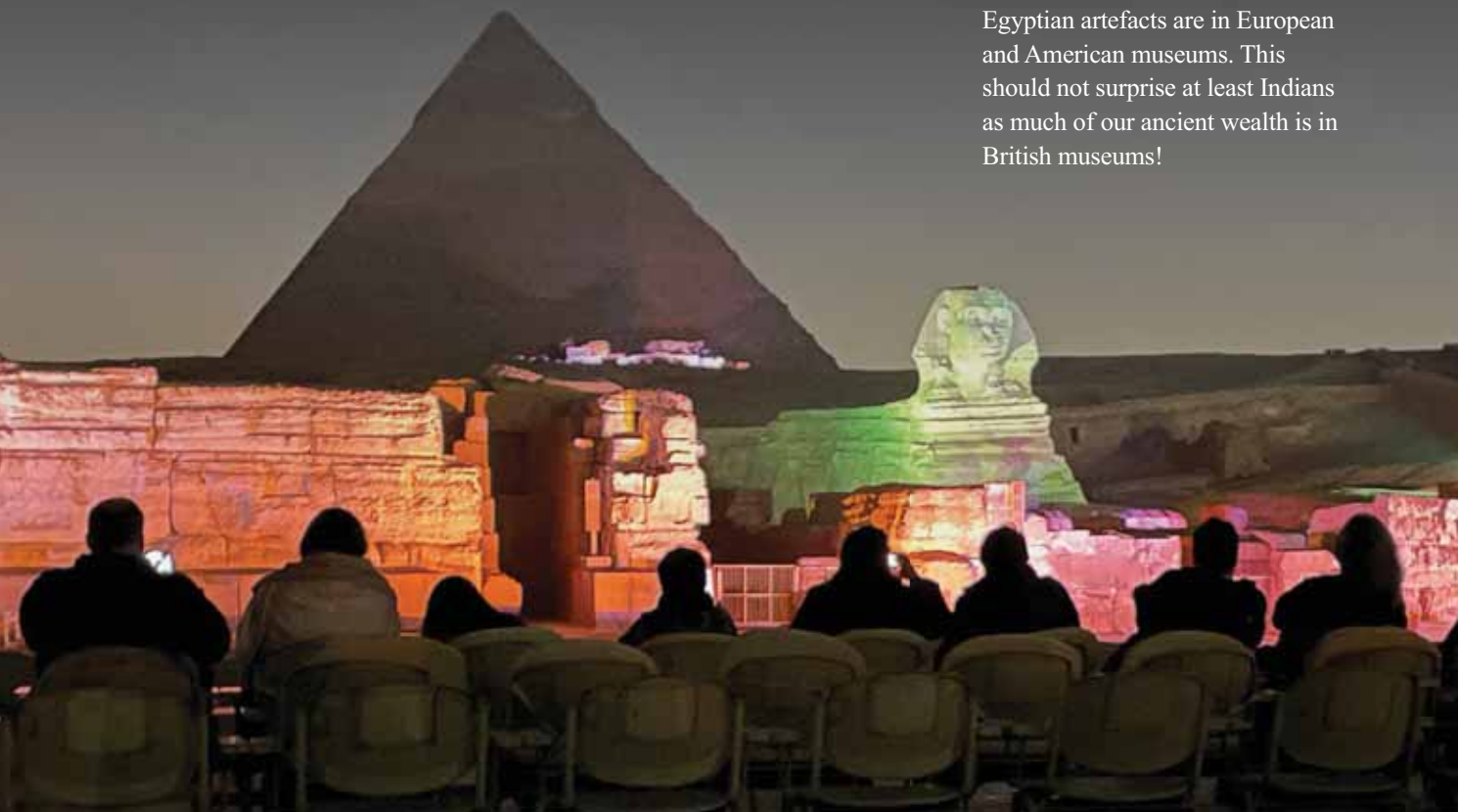
Once designated one of the seven wonders of the world, the three pyramids were built for the three kings; the oldest and largest is for King Khufu.

But at some level, in the dusty terrain where the gigantic pyramids stand shorn of their earlier glory and magnificent treasures within, the smooth and glimmering white limestone outer covering, I for one was left a little disappointed. Maybe it was the exhaustion caused by the harsh desert sun, the wind blowing the dust on our faces, the long walk involved, and the stark brown you

saw everywhere, the legendary pyramids of Egypt left my long-cherished desire to visit the land a little unsatiated.

But bless one of our team members, who had thought it fit to book the sound and light show at the pyramids on one of the evenings. Under the dark of the night, and with adequate lighting and commentary — which certainly could have been better — much of the aura of ancient Egypt, the magnificence of the pyramids, and the mindblowing history of this wonderful land was recreated for us.

The next major stop in Cairo is naturally the Egyptian Museum in Al Tahreer Square. But before talking about the treasures of the pharaohs and queens of Egypt, do note that an estimated 42,000 Egyptian artefacts are in European and American museums. This should not surprise at least Indians as much of our ancient wealth is in British museums!



This Cairo museum has a rich treasure trove of over 120,000 artefacts, including the content from Ramesses I's son Tutankhamen's tomb and most of the mummies that have been discovered since the 19th century. The exhibits range from the beginning of the Old Kingdom of Ancient Egypt (approximately 2700 BC) through the Greco-Roman period. An interesting panel here shows King Narmer in the symbolic act of unifying Upper and Lower Egypt... which was not a single event but a series of events... the unification of the two lands is very important in Egyptian history.

As is well-known, Egyptian pharaohs and other royalty strongly believed in afterlife and planned their final resting or burial place with great care and detail. They took along with them a bulk of

Egyptian pharaohs and kings strongly believed in afterlife and planned their burial in detail., taking along with them expensive jewellery, priceless artefacts and even food!

their wealth in terms of expensive jewellery and other priceless artefacts. Naturally enough, the earlier burial places were often raided by thieves and stripped bare of their wealth. Hence, the later rulers became much more guarded about protecting their tombs.

November 2022 marked exactly 100 years since the discovery of the

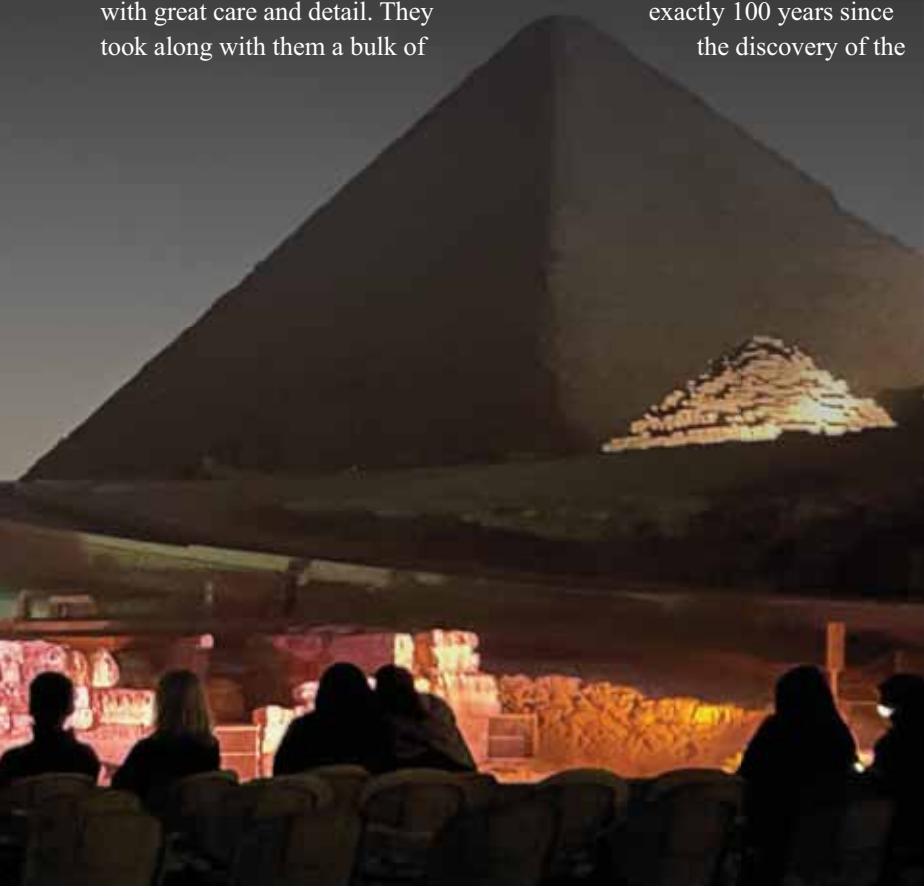
boy king Tutankhamen's tomb. He was laid to rest in the Valley of the Kings on the west bank of the Nile. This tomb is the most intact of the Pharaoh's tombs ever found, despite two attempted robberies, and its outstanding discovery was led by Howard Carter in 1922.

But, sadly enough, legend has it that Tutankhamen's tomb is a cursed one, and whoever touches it is doomed. Howard Carter's death after eight years is also linked to this.

Anyway, moving from conjecture to facts, Tutankhamen is one of the most important pharaohs of Egypt. He became a king while still a child after the demise of his father Ramesses I. As a plaque in this museum points out, "Tutankhamen quickly became a symbol of Egyptian identity, influencing culture, style and wonder throughout the world. The tomb contained more than 5,000 artefacts all of which will be displayed in the centrepiece New Grand Egyptian Museum coming up in Giza. He died after an accident and was buried with a lot of precious treasures."

In this museum you will learn all about how the internal organs were removed from the abdomen and preserved in containers and then buried with the dead. The heart was left in the body. Later the organs were put in four canopic vases which were placed in a wooden box.

You can't visit Cairo and not go to Alexandria, a couple of hours drive from Egypt's capital. When Alexander the great invaded Egypt in 332 BC, Egypt became a part of the Hellenistic civilisation and then came under the rule of Ptolemy I,



The sound and light show at the pyramids.

a prominent leader of Alexander. He declared the city an independent Ptolemaic kingdom in 305 BC and it remained so till the Roman invasion in 30 BC. This period witnessed many cultural changes as Alexandria was then made the capital of Egypt. Through its library and museum, it soon became the universal centre of science, culture and arts in the Mediterranean region. Both architecture and agriculture flourished and modern methods of irrigation were discovered, such as water wheels and water drums and Egypt became the food basket of the Mediterranean countries. Alexandria was also famous for its theatres, gymnasiums and public baths.

Our first stop in the day trip was at Pompey's Pillar, the name given to a Roman triumphal column in Alexandria. Set up in honour of the Roman emperor Diocletian between 298–302 AD, the giant Corinthian column originally supported a colossal statue of the emperor in armour. Made from sandstone, this is a celebrated landmark and though it wears a deserted look today, let's not forget that it was an outstanding observation point for more than 11,000 years of human occupation.

But the one edifice that comes to mind when anybody mentions Alexandria is its famous library. The Great Library of Alexandria was one

of the largest and most iconic libraries in the ancient world. It was part of a larger research institution called the Mouseion, which was dedicated to the Muses or the nine goddesses of the arts.

Demetrius was a Greek politician. After his fall from power in Athens, he sought refuge at the court of King Ptolemy I (297 BC) and became the king's adviser. Ptolemy, aware of Demetrius's immense knowledge, gave him the task of setting up the library and the Mouseion. A bulk of Greek literature was kept here. There are various accounts of Aristotle's collection of books being kept in this library, and juicy stories on the lengths to which the Ptolemies went in their avid hunt for books, including searching every ship that sailed into Alexandria. If a worthy book was found, it was acquired by hook or crook! One account says there were 500,000 books in this library at one time. While the bulk of the books comprised Greek writing and literature, and Egyptian records of their history, the Ptolemies also acquired books from all over the world.



There are juicy stories on the lengths to which the Ptolemies went in their avid hunt for books for the Great Library, including searching every ship that sailed into Alexandria.



Delicacies: (From top left clockwise): Egyptian version of the biryani; rice with chicken; hummus, baba ganoush, salads; women making pita bread; dance in a van; Kunafa.

Controversies abound on how the Great Library — actually there were two, as the constantly growing number of books had to be accommodated in an additional place later — of Alexandria was destroyed. While one account says that after 642 AD, when the Arab general Amr ibn al-As conquered Egypt and occupied Alexandria, he ordered the books in the library to be burnt. But the *Britannica* points out that for over five centuries after the conquest, there was not a single reference to the Arabs burning the Alexandrian library. But suddenly, in early 13th century reports

appeared about how Amr had burned the books of the ancient Library of Alexandria. “The story has a fictitious flavour,” it concludes.

Guides in Egypt will of course tell you that the Muslims did not destroy the library, and it was “an unfortunate casualty of war”. In 48 BC, when Julius Caesar was involved in a civil war in Egypt between Cleopatra and her brother Ptolemy XIII, Caesar sided with Cleopatra

and when besieged by the Ptolemaic forces by land and sea, ordered the burning of the enemy fleet, and as the fire raged and spread, it destroyed much in the city, including the world famous library.

But whatever the truth, it is gratifying to note that today Alexandria boasts of a breathtakingly beautiful and magnificent library in the form of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, built near the harbour in city centre. We were told the 11-storey edifice can store up to 8 million books. We walked around the sprawling place in absolute awe and wonder, taking in the unique design and architecture of the huge building which allows the maximum of natural light. The main reading hall extends to a mammoth 220,000 sqft.

In 1974, the Alexandria University decided to revive the library, construction began in 1995, and the complex was inaugurated in Oct 2002; the cost



\$220 million. In 2009, France donated some 500,000 books.

But along with pharaohs and museums, the Nile cruise and the Abu Simbel temple (details in the next issue), Egypt is also known for its food. On our first night in Cairo, thanks to our guides Manal and Ramadan, we landed up for dinner at the restaurant Sobhy Kaber, which was so crowded, and with hordes of people waiting outside for a table, that it appeared as though they were

giving away food for free! But finally, with Ramadan's influence with the owners, we did get a table — a table for 15 is not easy in any restaurant!

The delicacies that followed that evening, and the rest of our stay, were to die for. *Koftas*, kebabs and *shawarma* were there in plenty, but surprise of surprise, the two vegetarians in our group, always had enough and interesting vegetarian food. The pita breads, hummus, falafel, *baba ganoush*, and salads were all delicious. One of the most fragrant rice dishes was rice and vegetables wrapped and steamed in grape leaves (called *Dolma* in Greek cuisine).

Another delicacy was the *Koshary*, a traditional Egyptian staple, made of pasta, Egyptian fried rice, vermicelli and brown lentils, and topped with a zesty tomato sauce, garlic vinegar and garnished with chickpeas and crispy fried onions. Liquor is not freely available in Egypt, but do try the most refreshing hibiscus drink to wash down your food, and of course fresh fruit juice!

For dessert, we tried different kinds of *Kunafa*, and found it delicious. The best part was that the food is perfectly suited for the Indian palate, being both spicy and flavourful, and is rather inexpensive. With the recent devaluations in the Egyptian Pound, the INR goes a long way there, be it in food or shopping!

But more of that in the next issue; watch out for the Nile cruise and the breathtakingly beautiful Abu Simbel temple, the balloon ride from Luxor and the awesome Valley of the Kings.

(To be continued)

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat

Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S



A shop in Cairo.

Project Vignettes

Team Rotary News

Mumbai hospital gets sonography machine



MD of IPCA Laboratories AK Jain inaugurates the sonography machine as IPDG Rajendra Agarwal looks on.

RC Mumbai Kandivli West, RID 3141, with CSR support from IPCA Laboratories, donated an ultrasound sonography machine worth ₹29.5 lakh to the KHM Multispeciality Hospital in the city. The machine will cater to over 1,500 underprivileged patients each month.

Jamnagar club addresses cervical cancer



RC Senoras Jamnagar, RID 3060, launched a vaccination drive to protect girls and women from cervical cancer. The project, headed by DGN Nihir Dave, has helped vaccinate 1,500 adolescent girls until March this year.

RI Director Kotbagi honoured



RID Mahesh Kotbagi receives the D Litt degree from Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla (second from L) at the IIS University, Jaipur, in the presence of its chancellor Ashok Gupta (R).

RI Director Mahesh Kotbagi was conferred the D Litt (Doctor of Letters) – Honoris Causa degree by the IIS University, Jaipur, for his contribution in healthcare and community service to society. In his acceptance speech, he credited his family, particularly his mother who became a Ph D graduate at 75, for his achievements in life.

In his three-decade long Rotary journey, Kotbagi was involved in several projects including provision of clean drinking water, sanitation facilities and education, for the underprivileged. As a physician, his contribution to make healthcare services accessible to all was significant. He has been part of the Rotary medical missions to Africa, and has organised medical camps in rural India. During Covid, he was instrumental in providing oxygen concentrators to rural hospitals, even as he rendered valuable medical service in his own hospital.

Breakfast for government school students in Chennai



Students enjoying their breakfast.

RC Chennai Mogappair, RID 3232, is providing breakfast to 400 students from five government schools. Club member Ashok Kumar is contributing ₹10,000 for the meals every month which is delivered to the schools by the club's RCC president Palani in his auto rickshaw.

DG K Babumon, his wife Beena and *Project Parinayam* coordinator Col KG Pillai with a newly-wed blind couple.



In a touching gesture, RID 3211, under its *Project Parinayam* (evolution), sponsored the marriage of 30 disabled couples at the Camelot Convention Centre, Alleppey, in a mega community wedding.

Each couple got a gold mangalsutra, cash award of ₹30,000 and travel allowance of ₹5,000 from the sponsors. “Rotary clubs and individuals gifted household articles and appliances worth ₹30,000 as well as grocery items to each couple,” says DG K Babumon. MP A M Ariff, MLA PP Chitharajan, and municipal officials attended. “While some sat on the wheelchairs, others were supported by walkers, crutches to exchange garlands and tie the sacred



A community marriage for disabled couples

V Muthukumaran



From L: Alappuzha district collector Krishna Teja, MLA PP Chitharanjan, Beena, MP AM Ariff, PDG Rajasekhar Srinivasan, PDG Thomas Vavanikunnel, PDG E K Luke, DG Babumon, *Parinayam* chairman PS Sreedharan, project advisor PDG KP Ramachandran Nair, KG Pillai, district secretary general Vijayalakshmi Nair, PDG Scaria Jose, RRFC John Daniel, Kerala State Handicapped Persons' Welfare Corporation head MV Jayadaly and municipality chairperson Sowmya Raj at the wedding.

thaali. Two blind couples were supported by Rotarians for tying the nuptial knot.”

MV Jayadaly, chairperson, Kerala State Handicapped Persons' Welfare Corporation, herself a victim of polio, said, “Never have I attended a community marriage for the physically-challenged held on such a grand scale.”

Some of the district's Rotarians have promised to give jobs to some of the handicapped persons. Event chairman PS Sreedharan, district trainer PDG KP Ramachandran Nair and past governors attended the mass wedding.

Project Amritam

In another initiative, *Project Amritam*, a medical camp for school students for eye-screening, ear-testing and dental check-up, has already screened five lakh students from 1,200 private and government schools across the five revenue districts of southern Kerala, said the DG.

So far, 156 clubs had executed *Amritam* camps with tagline ‘Healthy and happy children’. As the district clubs have “already crossed our initial targets, we will now cover 50,000 more students through these medical camps. As on March, we have distributed 50,000

spectacles to those with vision defects; and 100 hearing aids to students with ear problems.

Amritam has conducted workshops/counselling sessions against drug abuse and on career guidance. Till March, the clubs have done such awareness sessions in 700 government schools, benefitting over one lakh students. So far, 250 RO water units were installed at government schools.

Another flagship initiative is *Project Valsalyam* (compassion) in which 50 meritorious girl students from underprivileged families are pursuing MBBS with the entire fees and

other expenses being sponsored by the clubs. “Free coaching is being given to 100 students for competitive exams like IPS, IAS and IRS; in all 75 clubs are doing *Project Valsalyam* that enables youth to achieve their academic goals for a bright career,” says Babumon.

Reaching out to disabled children, *Project Amritahastham* (helping hand) has distributed hearing aids, wheelchairs, walking sticks and mobile phones, all worth ₹1 crore, to 1,500 beneficiaries in a joint project with the National Career Service Centre (NCSC) of the Union government. ■

Meet your Governors



N Nandakumar
Maxillofacial surgeon, RC Madras
Vadapalani, RID 3232

“After bifurcation, we will grow big”

RID 3232 is slated for bifurcation in 2024 for easier administration. “Chennai district has grown big with over 170 clubs and 7,000-plus members. But each time the district was divided, there was a surge in new clubs and membership growth. We can see similar growth happening again,” says N Nandakumar.

Though he joined Rotary in 2000, it was not until 2011 when he visited Jaffna, Sri Lanka, to take part in a mega medical rehabilitation camp “that I underwent a big transformation, hugely impressed by the reach of Rotary impacting thousands of lives.” His flagship *Project Shakti* (GG: \$600,000) has donated mammogram machines to 10 government and charity hospitals. “The aim is to strengthen infrastructure for early screening and detection of breast cancer,” he says.

Nineteen GG projects worth \$1 million are being implemented across the district. RC Madras Central Adithya, along with the Chennai Corporation and Sri Ramachandra College, recently flagged off a cardiac care bus (GG: ₹1 crore) that screens patients at PHCs under *Project Nalam*. Another bus for cancer screening is ready (₹1.4 crore) in a project done by RCs Madras Vadapalani and Madras West. “We are doing 40 kidney transplants through a GG, ₹6.5 lakh per surgery, in a tie-up with Manipal Hospital.”

He aims to collect \$2.2 million for TRF. With support from wife, Dr Sumedha, a Rotarian for 15 years, “Rotary helps me to expand my medical reach to the underprivileged.” The process-oriented organisation has shaped “my outlook as a model global citizen,” adds Nandakumar.

V Muthukumaran



B Elangkumaran
Education, RC Tirupur South, RID 3203

₹90 crore-Cancer Care Centre in Tirupur

During school days, whenever he passed by a Rotary club “I nurtured a burning desire to join this club which was always thriving with activities and attracted all the big people in the town,” recalls Elangkumaran. And he did join his home club in 2008, “thus fulfilling a long-nurtured desire.”

Now as secretary of the Rotary Tirupur and Public Welfare Trust created to raise funds for the ₹90 crore-Cancer Care Centre, he is focused on this hospital project, a joint initiative with the Tamil Nadu Government under its *Namaku Naame Thittam* (self-sufficiency scheme). PDG BA Muruganathan is the Trust’s chairman and PDG EK Sagadhevan is the project chair. “It will take two years to finish the construction. The fully equipped, four-storey, 75,000 sqft cancer centre will be handed over to the Tirupur Government Medical College and Hospital,” he explains. While ₹30 crore will be mobilised by Rotary, the government will pitch in with ₹60 crore for this project.

A fundraiser marathon for the hospital saw the participation of 18,000 people and “we raised ₹85 lakh from this one-day event.” Over the last two years, RC Mettupalayam Prime has distributed 500 motorised artificial limbs with the help of CSR funds. A school building with eight classrooms (5,000 sqft) is under construction with RC Tirupur Bharati raising ₹80 lakh. In all, 12 GG projects are in the pipeline, around \$50,000 each, across Rotary’s focus areas, says Elangkumaran. “We are setting up 100 mini libraries in government middle schools.” His target for TRF giving is \$1 million. ■

RID 3120 Rotarians bond over DisCon

Team Rotary News

Keynote speakers and lively breakout sessions made the three-day (Feb 3–5) RID 3120's district conference titled *Samagam* (conclave) a fruitful event for over 1,000 Rotarians.

The host club, RC Allahabad Royals, an all-women's club, was praised by DG Anil Agarwal for its meticulous planning and arrangements at the Allahabad Medical Association Auditorium. Padma Shri awardee Anand Kumar, founder, Super 30 that coaches IIT aspirants, narrated his rollercoaster journey to success and complimented Rotary for its range of service in education, peacebuilding and spreading brotherhood and harmony in the world. While conference chair Poonam Gulati welcomed the delegates, host club president Vinita Agarwal listed out the project activities of her club.



DG Anil Agarwal, Kavita, PDG Sameer Hariani and Roopa, among others, at the inaugural.

RIPR PDG Sameer Hariani complimented DG Agarwal and the conference team for a well-organised event. Rtn Roopa Hariani gave a talk on RI's new mantra — Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Deepak Vohra, IFS officer and advisor to PM Narendra Modi, delivered a talk on India's

achievements in various fields over the last 75 years.

Entrepreneur Prafull Billore shared his rags to riches story from selling tea on Ahmedabad streets to building a big business empire; Rtn Ashustosh Agarwal who was elected as DGND thanked everyone for their support. ■

RNT's Executive Committee members – 2023–24



From L: RID 3212 DGE Muthiah Pillai (treasurer), RID 3132 DGE Swati Herkal (chairman), RID 3291 DGE Hiralal Yadav (secretary) and RID 3142 DGE Milind Kulkarni (advisor).



Cool ways to beat the heat

Preeti Mehra

Sustainable options to save energy this summer.

As summer sets in, staying cool becomes a priority for everyone living in the tropics. There are projections of exceptionally hot weather for the next few months. Besides, it is predicted that in the years ahead, extreme weather events will impact several parts of India with summertime temperatures soaring beyond tolerable limits.

Installing a powerful air conditioning unit is the obvious response of those who can afford it. However, air conditioners let out toxic emissions into the atmosphere, consume power and warm the environment even further, thus creating a vicious cycle. In today's world when saving energy and being committed to protecting the environment is an urgent responsibility, each one of us must do our bit to ensure that we minimise the load we impose on our planet. Here are a few simple steps we can take to keep us in the comfort zone while reducing the impact on nature.

It is predicted that in the years ahead, extreme weather events will impact several parts of India with summertime temperatures soaring beyond tolerable limits.

For a start, we could think of hybrid solutions to bring down the temperature inside our homes and ease the load we put on air conditioners. The cooler your home, the lesser the load on electricity, and the lesser your carbon footprint. You will be amazed at what a difference growing plants — inside the home and outside — can make.

According to environment experts, greenery when planted

strategically can bring a significant reduction in the inside temperature of a home. Trees grown on the east and west side of a house help to block the sun and keep the indoors relatively cooler. So, if you live in an urban environment that is hot for most of the year, it is advisable to choose big and leafy trees to plant so that in the years to come they provide the much-desired shade.



Small plants too have a cooling effect. Some of the coolest houses are those that grow climbers on their outer walls. Apart from looking green and colourful, especially in the flowering season, they bring down temperatures inside. Creepers can also line railings, hedges and balcony grills to great effect. If they yield a fruit or vegetable, all the better. Growing plants vertically on walls also has a similar effect.

Roofs can also be made to play a key role in keeping out heat. Many people use reflective white paint that reduces the amount of heat absorbed by concrete roofs. Some of my friends have rooftop gardens. Though it takes away roof space, it does help a great deal in reducing the heat.



Dressing up windows is another solution that can add to the cooling. You could make use of reflective window tinting or fix awnings on the outside to save the home from direct sunlight. Or simply use dark curtains with a white reflective lining. This keeps out a lot of the heat.

Then there are other obvious green solutions. You can invest in eco-friendly and power saving fans. There are high speed, dust-free fans that are certified for their energy efficiency. From January this year there is mandatory Bureau of Energy Efficiency ratings for fans that manufacturers have to comply with. The rating is supposed to indicate the amount of air delivered per wattage of energy consumed. Simply put, it shows you how much air would the fan deliver for every watt consumed. Higher service value means more energy efficiency of the fan without compromising on the air circulation.

Buying a dehumidifier is also an idea worth considering, especially if you live in a coastal town or city. Here it is the humidity as much as the heat that makes you extremely uncomfortable. A dehumidifier sucks excess water from the air, making you feel cooler by several notches. As an additional benefit it helps to keep the home free of mould.

If you feel the need for air conditioners, it would be wise to identify a unit that is eco-friendly and energy efficient. Here are a few tips on how to save energy on your air conditioner:

Your best bet would be to invest in a unit with the highest star rating provided by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency, even though the initial cost may be higher than the less efficient models. The star rating of an AC indicates its cooling efficiency. The highest rating is 5-stars and indicates that the particular model cools faster while consuming less power. This efficiency

Small plants too have a cooling effect. Some of the coolest houses are those with climbers on their outer walls. While looking green and colourful, they also bring down temperatures inside.

level goes down with units certified as one, two, three or four stars.

Once you have zeroed in on your AC, you must be careful about its installation. It is wiser to employ the services of qualified technicians recommended or provided by the manufacturers rather than local electricians. You must also ensure that the outdoor unit of the AC is not installed in a direction where it is exposed to too much direct sunlight. A room with doors and windows that can be secured firmly also helps decrease the load on your AC.

It may not be a bad idea to rest your AC and not run it 24/7. And set your thermostat at a comfortable temperature between 20–25 degrees Celsius. Some experts are of the view that 24 degrees is the ideal temperature when the AC is energy efficient and keeps your room at an ambient and reasonably cool temperature.

More than anything, as you brace yourself for the summer, spare a thought for the environment and for nature that sustains us. We are living through difficult times when every unit of energy saved helps. You can do your bit by being cool and responsible.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues



Shankar-Jaikishan

Trailblazers in Bollywood music

SR Madhu

When did Hindi film music become a national mania? It was after the incomparable 1949 *Barsaat*, for which Shankar-Jaikishan (SJ) gave the world 11 delectable songs including seven Lata Mangeskar solos. It is after *Barsaat* that Hindi film music started accounting for 70 per cent of the sales of all music in India.

“They are not musicians, they are magicians,” remarked maestro Naushad once about SJ. In the 1950s and 60s, this “Ram-Lakshman jodi” was the apogee of commercial success.

Composer OP Nayyar described Shankar as “the most complete music maestro in films”. Composer Pyarelal said that though he and Laxmikant won the 1964 Filmfare best music award for *Dosti*, he himself regarded SJ’s *Sangam* made the same year as musically superior to *Dosti*.

SJ were the first composers to begin their career with a phenomenal blockbuster like *Barsaat*. Other greats like Naushad, SD Burman and OP Nayyar had to endure a few flops before delivering a hit film. SJ also recorded some other firsts through *Barsaat*.

It gave Bollywood its first famous rain song (*Barsaat mein humse mile*), its first famous cabaret song (*Patli kamar hai*) and its first-ever title song.

SJ also gave Bollywood its first famous dream sequence through *Awara* (*Tere bina aag yeh chandni*), and its first song that was internationally famous — *Awara hoon*. SJ were the first composers to be regularly paid ₹5 lakhs for a single film.

Javed Akhtar has remarked that they stood out for both quality and quantity. While their music took mass entertainment to a new giddy high, they turned out blockbusters in relentless



profusion, with each blockbuster having not one but several hit songs, a distinct feature of their career. The range and variety of their music — every genre, every mood, every inspiration — was remarkable.

The duo composed music for some 170 films; with 75 per cent being resounding hits, many of them celebrating golden/silver jubilees.

Their success engulfed many directors, stars and singers and the entire music industry of arrangers, instrumentalists, percussionists. No wonder this jodi was regarded as a shining talisman of success. Finance for a film was assured if

One of SJ's achievements was an LP record titled *Raga Jazz Style* in which they presented 11 ragas in a jazz format.

they did the music, irrespective of the actors.

The pair won nine Filmfare Awards — *Chori Chori* (1956), *Anari* (1959), *Dil Apna Aur Preet Parai* (1960), *Professor* (1962), *Suraj* (1966), *Brahmachari* (1968), *Pehchaan* (1970), *Mera Naam Joker* (1971) and *Beimaan* (1972). They were conferred the Padma Shree in 1968.

One of SJ's achievements was an LP record titled *Raga Jazz Style* in which they presented 11 ragas in a jazz format.

Shankar versus Jaikishan

Shankar and Jaikishan had contrasting personalities and styles. Shankar, nearly 10 years older than Jaikishan, was staid and conservative, a non-drinker. He usually came to work early and stayed till the evening, sometimes going to the Cricket Club of India for tea. Jaikishan was the flamboyant man-about-town who lived life king-size

and became a fashion icon. He loved scotch and fancy cars and upmarket restaurants and was the life of any party. On one occasion, a lavish Bollywood party was on at Gaylords. Indian cinema's top triumvirate—Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand – were present, and mobbed by fans and gate-crashers. There was a sudden commotion – Jaikishan had come in. The fan crowd left the big three and gravitated toward the debonair composer for autographs. “The big three were taken aback, but smiled,” says actor Annu Kapoor.

Shankar was the more versatile of the two, with mastery over dozens of instruments, Indian classical music and dance forms. Jaikishan was a genius with background score and romantic numbers. Shankar was fond of raag Bhairavi, Jaikishan of raag Shivranjini. Shankar tuned the piano with his right hand, Jaikishan with his left. Shankar usually composed songs written by Shailendra, Jaikishan worked with Hasrat- Jaipuri.

In 1963, Jaikishan married Pallavi, daughter of a businessman. Her parents were

The duo's individual talent strengthened and supplemented each other. Their jumbo orchestra of 60 singers, technicians and accompanists imparted a new verve and zing to music. The public loved the end result.



Shankar Singh Raghuwanshi (L) and Jaikishan Dayabhai Panchal.







SJ were the first composers
to begin their career
with a phenomenal
blockbuster like *Barsaat*.

in *Awara*, a song that made waves internationally); *Mera joota hai japani* (Mukesh in *Shree 420*); *Pyar hua ikrar hua* (Lata and Manna Dey in *Shree 420*); *Rasik balma* (Lata in *Chori Chori*).

The second phase showcased their talent with classical music. It began in 1956 with *Seema*. Lata's intoxicating *Man mohana* for SJ is considered the most difficult classical music composition in Hindi cinema. The film including Manna Dey's immortal gem *Tu pyar ka sagar hai*.

Basant Bahar followed, with solo stunners by both Manna Dey (*Sur na saje*) and Mohammad Rafi (*Duniya na bhaye*). But the landmark song was the duet *Ketaki gulab juhi*, shown in the movie as a contest between Manna Dey and the towering genius of Hindustani music, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi. Manna Dey was about to quit Bombay to avoid facing Bhimsen Joshi, but was dissuaded by his wife. The song was hailed as a triumph of classical music in cinema.

Let's fast forward to the 1960s, Bollywood's most bountiful decade, one of swinging, sizzling, scintillating songs — folk, classical, rock and roll, bhajans and qawwalis. Producers made romantic entertainers in hill

team included lyricists Shailendra and Hasrat-Jaipuri, and the songs were a runaway success.

SJ's incredibly prolific career can best be sketched through three phases; the young Raj Kapoor era, including films that redefined Bollywood music: *Barsaat*,

Awara, *Aah*, *Shri 420*, *Boot Polish*, *Chori Chori*. These six films gave Bollywood some 50 melodies, most of them sublime delights.

Young or old, all of India was captivated by songs like *Mujhe kisise pyar ho gaya* (Lata in *Barsaat*); *Awara hoon* (Mukesh





Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor, music duo Shankar Jaikishan at a party.

stations, with songs in world's glamour capitals — Paris, Tokyo, London, Rome.

SJ's third phase began in this decade, when the duo reigned supreme commercially with films such as *Suraj*, *Asli Naqli*, *Jhuk Gaya Aasman*, *Prince*, *Hariyali Aur Rasta*, *An Evening in Paris*, *Sangam*, *Love in Tokyo*, *Professor*, *Zindagi*, *Ayee Milan Ki Bela*, *Duniya*, *Dil Ek Mandir*, *Rajkumar*, *Tumse Achcha Kaun Hai*, *Dil Apna Aur Preet Parai*, *Brahmachari*, *Gumrah*, *Teesri Kasam*.

Remember *Ajeeb dastan hai yeh* (Lata, *Dil Apna aur Preet Parai*, 1960); *Tera mera pyar amar* (Lata, *Asli Naqli*, 1962); *Yaad na jaaye beete dinon ki* (Rafi, *Dil Ek Mandir*, 1963); *Dost dost na raha* (Mukesh, *Sangam*, 1964); *Baharon phool barsao* (Rafi, *Suraj*, 1966); *Paan khaye saiyan hamaro* (Asha Bhosle, *Teesri Kasam*, 1966); *Badan pe sitare* (Rafi, *Prince*, 1969)?

SJ's methodology

What accounts for the SJ mania that gripped the public for two decades? The duo's individual talent strengthened and supplemented each other. Their hypnotic melodies were rendered by exceptional singers. Another factor: their jumbo orchestra of 60 singers, technicians and accompanists imparted a new verve and zing to music. The public loved the end result.

Cracks in the relationship

Unfortunately, strains crept into the SJ relationship during the 1960s. It is said that Shankar was envious of Jaikishan's popularity in the industry and the public. They started composing separately



From L : Manoj Kumar, Shankar, Rajendra Kumar, Raj Kapoor, Jaikishan and Dilip Kumar.

Jaikishan passed away due to cirrhosis of the liver. He was only 42. Shankar was devastated, but continued to work under the SJ banner.

in the 1960s (though always under the SJ banner) and this gradually affected the quality of the music. Jaikishan's article in *Filmfare* where he revealed that he had composed music for the *Sangam* song *Yeh mera prem patra padhkar* upset Shankar. This violated their confidentiality code of never disclosing which of the two had composed a particular song. Further, Binaca Geet Mala (considered the litmus test of music popularity) gave *Yeh mera prem patra padkar* composed by Jaikishan the top spot over *Dost dost na raha* composed for the same film by Shankar. The Shankar camp alleged manipulation.



From L: Hasrat Jaipuri, Jaikishan, Raj Kapoor, Shankar and Shailendra.

Shankar's promotion of Sharada and his insistence on using her voice worsened the estrangement. (Lata's barb "Love makes people blind, but I didn't know it makes them deaf" went round the industry, much to Shankar's discomfiture.) Pallavi Jaikishan said her husband's liquor addiction got worse because of his rift with Shankar.

Death and decline

On September 12, 1971, Jaikishan passed away due to cirrhosis of the

liver. He was only 42. Shankar was devastated, but continued to work under the SJ banner. However, RK and other big film-makers opted for other composers. They also made Shankar use a smaller orchestra. He suffered a body blow when Raj engaged Laxmikant-Pyarelal for *Bobby* in 1973. Shankar continued to toil, and did create some good tunes. But without Jaikishan, without lyricist Shailendra who had also passed away, without Lata's support, he was a shadow of his former self. A broken Shankar passed away on April 26, 1987.

However, Shankar and Jaikishan are rightly remembered as giants of Bollywood music. They blazed a new trail with innovations in melody, background music and instrumentation. Their impact on film-makers, music composers and technicians was profound. Their songs have never ceased to electrify and entertain the public.

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



Our happiness lies in our gut

Bharat and Shalan Savur

The most common form of despair is not being who you are,” said Danish theologian Soren Kierkegaard. And at some deep level, we all know it, don’t we? I remember a friend going through a divorce crying, “This is not me! I can’t be going through this. I’m not a depressive!” Indeed, we are not, because we have two powerful allies in us — our mind and our gut. These two can pull us out of an abyss and help us stand straight and serene on firm ground once again.

Work gives wings

Medicine numbs and time heals. Meanwhile, it’s wise to steer our attention to work or any activity, not only to distract our mind but to re-track it on the healing path. This de-links it from despair, from the what-will-happen-to-me

fear. It’s easy to curl up and sleep all day long, and it does help as we get a quiet space-time matrix to slip into, insulated from the pain. After that, it’s good to get back on track with work. Here, there’s satisfaction, a ‘medicine’ that’s not often recognised.

When you get into any activity, it enables the mind to live extensively on a plane that is free of personal storms. It helps us forget things that pull us down so that we may fly. It is like being enveloped in white, fluffy clouds and when we return to land, the mind has changed. There’s confidence where there was fear, there’s lightness where there was a shroud of heaviness. The trick is to keep it there.

What are we?

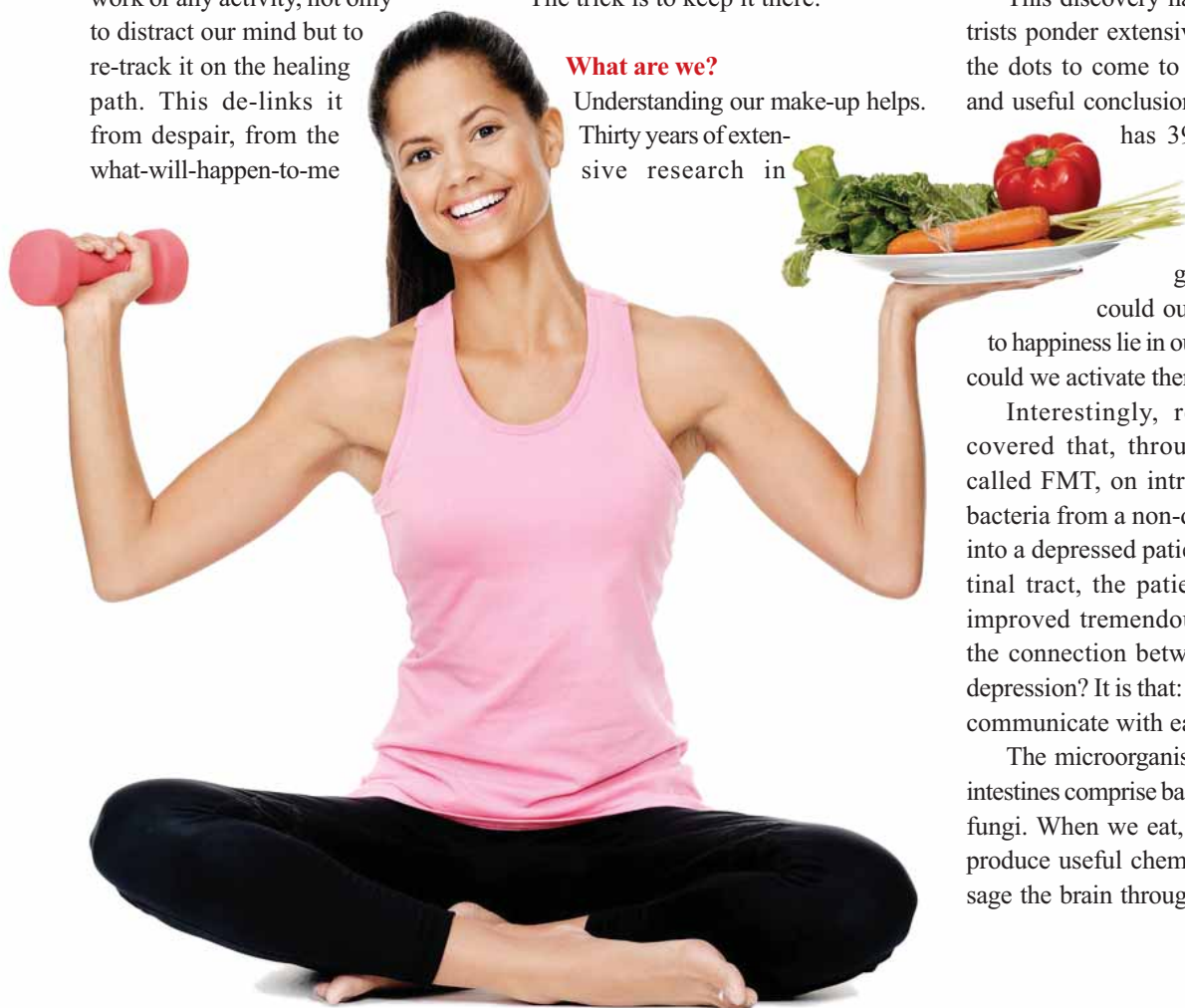
Understanding our make-up helps. Thirty years of extensive research in

70 countries has shown an interesting break-up: Apparently, only 15 per cent of our satisfaction with life is influenced by external circumstances such as financial and social status, education, hobbies, ethnicity and age; 25 per cent appears to be determined by genes; and 60 per cent is subject to how we think and operate, how we react, our lifestyle and so on. It is also very important to know that our genes are only a blueprint. They get triggered by our ‘thinkstyle’ and lifestyle. This is fascinating. It means, with the right-for-me lifestyle, we can let the negative genes lie in a passive mode in the blueprint and activate the positive genes to play out happy tunes.

This discovery has made psychiatrists ponder extensively and connect the dots to come to some intelligent and useful conclusions. Since our gut has 39 trillion micro-organisms that contain a certain amount of genetic material, could our pre-disposition to happiness lie in our intestines? And could we activate them? If so, how?

Interestingly, researchers discovered that, through a procedure called FMT, on introducing healthy bacteria from a non-depressed person into a depressed patient’s gastrointestinal tract, the patient’s disposition improved tremendously! So, what’s the connection between our gut and depression? It is that: our gut and brain communicate with each other.

The microorganisms in our gut or intestines comprise bacteria, viruses and fungi. When we eat, these organisms produce useful chemicals. They message the brain through the network of



the vagus nerve. This nerve starts in the brain stem, travels down the neck alongside the carotid arteries to the chest, then branches out to our organs including our intestines. This nerve, thus, controls the contraction or peristalsis of the gut during digestion and it also controls our heart rate.

The gut-brain buzz

The communication is a two-way street. An uncomfortable intestine that is troubled by the food we eat can send distress signals to the brain. And a brain pressured by anxiety, worry or sadness can send distress signals to the intestines. These two-way signals, when negative, increase or stimulate the bad bacteria in the gut. The bad bacteria produces inflammatory chemicals and sends them to the brain. So, you see the connection? In sum: gut distress can cause or be a result of anxiety and depression. We all know and have experienced this connection at some time or the other: butterflies in the stomach from nervousness, feeling nauseous on hearing some bad news... Mental health specialists say that the ideal scenario is to have a diverse population of bacteria strains in the gut and a relaxed brain. This is good physical and mental health.

Good bacteria, bad bacteria

We do well for ourselves when the good and bad bacteria are balanced. The good bacteria is so named because it not only helps digestion, it also keeps the bad bacteria in check. So, to keep a high level of good bacteria, we need to look at our diet and medication. Many medication, including antibiotics, can change the bacteria population in our gut for the worse. Some bacteria disappear, some increase beyond healthy parameters and in the new balance, we get bacteria that are able to resist medicines. Age is another factor — as we grow older, the bacteria diversity decreases, so we have to look even

more closely at our medication. Anyway, whatever our age, we need to lead a happier, healthier life that keeps both gut and brain at their optimum. Here are some useful and practical suggestions:

- Adopt a friendly diet. Rid yourself of processed foods, sugar and red meat. It gives the gut a fair chance to heal as quickly as it can. Studies show that post-antibiotics, healthy individuals take two months to return to baseline; non-healthy individuals take anywhere between 1–2 years.
- Go for prebiotics. These contain fibre, inulin, fruit sugars that nourish the gut and keep the good bacteria active. Nutritionists advise onions, garlic, bananas, walnuts, raisins, oily fish and oats.
- Eat probiotics too. These contain actual bacteria that the gut absorbs and they boost the good bacteria population. These include curd, idli, paneer, green peas and apples. You also get probiotic supplements which work best on an empty stomach and should be had well before a meal. The reason: they protect good bacteria better and help it to survive the stomach acid. If had just before or after a meal, the food dilutes their effect. I got this wonderful idea to combine prebiotic and probiotic food from the celebrated dietitian Rujuta Diwekar. Sprinkle the bottom of the bowl with black raisins (prebiotics). Pour lukewarm milk in it. Stir 32 times. Now, add a bit of curd to set it. It's ready to eat in a few hours in summer and next morning in the cold season. I feel better and stronger since I started it a week ago. No digestive problems, no weakness, no rise in blood pressure despite being on a course of antibiotics recently for tooth extraction. Rujuta says this combination is good for teeth and gums, bones

An uncomfortable intestine troubled by the food we eat, can send distress signals to the brain. A brain pressured by worry or sadness can send distress signals to the intestines.

and joints, eases constipation, regulates cholesterol levels, brings down blood pressure and promotes weight loss. If you want a variation, you can replace raisins with dates. Caution: Don't overdose on raisins or dates, especially if you have diabetes or are diagnosed as 'pre-diabetic'.

- Walk off blues. Walking in nature is always a beautiful experience. You come away feeling calm and relaxed. These tranquil feelings are heightened after a bath. The good news here is that any aerobic activity improves the diversity of your gut population. Experts suggest a 30-minute brisk walk or a 15-minute run, five days a week.
- Regularise habits. Today, there are specialists in 'functional lifestyle medicine' like Dr Ryan Barish who say, "Our bodies like consistency and predictability, meaning we should go to sleep and wake up around the same time every day. We should eat at the same times and be consistent even on weekends." This regularisation decreases stress, reduces inflammation and keeps the gut easy and relaxed.

Take care of your gut population and the gut population takes care of you.

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



Wordsworld

War time tales



Sandhya Rao

An intercontinental flight, a casual conversation, the Holocaust, and a book... all this and more.

You never know what will come your way, when and where. That certainly goes for information, possibly the most searched 'item' going, which is possibly the reason why the world is enmeshed in a web of agents and double agents. This brings to mind the American MAD magazine which ran a comic strip called 'Spy vs Spy,' a very cloak-and-dagger stuff, featuring one character dressed all in black and one all in white. Wikipedia says it was created by a Cuban expatriate cartoonist called Antonio Prohias to parody Cold War ideologies. First published as a comic book in 1952, it metamorphised into a widely circulated and influential magazine that freely lampooned

politics and culture. As college-goers in the 1970s, we were total fans!

But, to return to our flight path, words scratched on a piece of paper that fell out of a handbag I was clearing out recently reminded me of a conversation with a fellow passenger as we flew over the Atlantic a few years ago. He was associated with a big hotel in London; his family had moved from Israel; he had three children; and his wife was a writer. One of her books, in particular, had made waves. That's what was on the piece of paper: *Two Prayers Before Bedtime*... Nadine Wojakowski. Of course the book was ordered, but once it arrived, it went straight to the bookshelf, unread, until now.

The back cover of *Two Prayers Before Bedtime* suggests that it is intended for readers 11+ and that's exactly what this 'memoir and tale of love and loss in war-time Amsterdam' is: a book for 11 and all ages plus. We all know what 'war-time Amsterdam' implies and many of us have read several books that have been written around the subject of the Holocaust. Among the most popular, perhaps, or well-known, is *The Diary of Anne Frank*, published posthumously by the author's father, Otto Frank. Anne Frank, along with her mother and sister, died in a concentration camp in 1945; she was barely 16. The book is a diary she kept during their time of hiding in Amsterdam during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands.

Another best-selling novel is *The Last Train to London* by

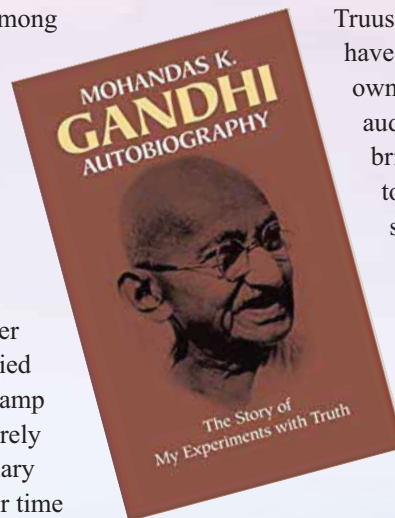
Two Prayers Before Bedtime is a testament to the human spirit which is continuously called upon to reveal itself by rising above acts of inhumanity. It reiterates the faith that the human spirit will always prevail.

Meg Waite Clayton, again based on the story of how thousands of Jewish children were smuggled out of Europe and relocated to safer countries, thanks to the courage of one Dutch woman, Truus Wijsmuller or Taante Truus, as she was called. The operation got more and more dangerous as countries closed their borders — in the way countries in recent times closed their borders to Syrian refugees or refused help to the earthquake-affected in Syria, or how nations across the world have made a policy of refusing asylum to people fleeing homelands in the wake of

civil war and persecution. Truus Wijsmuller didn't have children of her own, but she went to audacious lengths to bring Jewish children to safety. At one point, she even approached Adolf Eichmann, architect of the infamous 'Final Solution' plan for the genocide of Jews during the Second World War, for

assistance. You can read more about this book in *Wordsworld* January 2021.

Two Prayers Before Bedtime does not possess anywhere near



Clayton's power or literary finesse; you might even say that other Holocaust writings record even more tragic stories. Even so, it's told from the heart and, as one young reviewer said, it certainly teaches a lot about war. The author tells us that the 'tale/memoir is based on the true story of my grandmother, Cilla Bitterman, and how she and my grandfather Edmund, had to send their daughter (my mother) Renata and son Anton into hiding during World War Two. It also tells of the heroic efforts of Vie and Aart Versnel, who risked their lives to hide a Jewish child in Nazi-occupied Holland.' Photographs at the end of the book bring the experience closer. Importantly, the book is yet another reminder of the mindlessness of war and the consequences of hatred and discrimination. It is also a testament to the human spirit which is continuously called upon to reveal itself by rising above acts of inhumanity, whether perpetrated by individuals or prompted by the state. It reiterates the faith that the human spirit will always prevail.

The book fictionalises the lived experiences through the characters of Cilla, the protagonist, and her husband, Edmund, who are forced to send away their children, a boy of nearly six and a girl of nearly two, to safe homes far away arranged by Resistance forces. They themselves have to move, in hiding and to hide, to and in different places, in different cities/towns, to escape the gestapo, the Nazi police. They somehow survive despite having to live in dark, cramped accommodation, extremely limited access to toilet facilities, little food, and hardly any fresh air. Days, weeks, months drag along with seemingly no end to the war in sight. The worst punishment is having to be separated from their

little children; they yearn for news of them.

Very occasionally, they catch a reprieve, as when they hide in the attic in the home of Hans and Ella Bok: 'The attic was a large space that had been used as storage by the family. It was concealed in the ceiling of the second floor and could be accessed by a ladder. ... the Boks had worked tirelessly to make the attic more comfortable.

They sectioned off an area to serve as a changing room, laid down old carpets, hung curtains on the small attic windows, and brought in a table, chairs and many books.'

'Many books'! In those most trying times, through periods of loneliness and fear of persecution, reading and writing helped get them past the tape. They read or they wrote; sometimes they read and wrote. Anne Frank kept a diary, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote some of his best-known books while in prison, Jeffrey Archer wrote a three-volume memoir, *A Prison Diary* (which I have just embarked on reading)... books were a powerful, positive

antidote during the coronavirus-induced lockdown.

It seems prisoners in Bolivia can get their jail time reduced if they read books! This

programme, 'Books Behind Bars,' is modelled after a similar effort in

Brazil! It appears that Mahatma Gandhi's

The Story of My Experiments with Truth

is the most sought-after book in Tihar jail, Delhi: '...every week at least 10 inmates borrow the book,' says a newspaper report.

The fact 'that it was written when Gandhi was a prisoner himself — in Yerwada jail — adds to its popularity.'

For Cilla, not all the hiding places were well-appointed, and by the end of the war, Cilla and Edmund had spent over 900 days in hiding; they had been separated from their children for nearly a 1,000! They were lucky because the family was eventually reunited, although they lost many relatives. They, like everyone else, had to deal with the after-effects of the trauma. Nadine writes: 'The reminders were always there — a man without his wife, a wife without her husband, parents without children, children without parents, a child without anyone. Empty seats, empty homes, empty souls. The signs were always there — especially in the summer when the dark inky blue death numbers were exposed on the arms of the Auschwitz survivors...'

Hypothetically speaking, we are reminded that the world can do without more numbers being inked.

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist



It appears that Mahatma Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* is the most sought-after book in Tihar jail, Delhi: '...every week at least 10 inmates borrow the book,' says a newspaper report.

RC Pondicherry Legacy — RID 2981



The club donated three CPAP and four BiPAP machines worth ₹4.5 lakh to the Indira Gandhi Medical College and Research Institute, Puducherry.

RC Ghaziabad North — RID 3012



A damaged compound wall at the Government Girls Inter College, Vijay Nagar, was rebuilt and restored at a cost of ₹2 lakh.

RC Salem Phoenix — RID 2982



A newly-formed RAC Phoenix Vizhigal for the visually-impaired with 23 new members donated a tricycle to a disabled.

RC Vizag Couples — RID 3020



Eight deserving, but underprivileged students from Classes 2–8 at BVK High School, Durganagar, are being sponsored by the club.

RC Tiruchirappalli Midtown — RID 3000



The club, in partnership with Sankara Health Foundation, gave artificial legs to the physically-challenged at the Hindu Mission Hospital, Trichy.

RC Milk City Sangam Chalisgaon — RID 3030



Over 1,000 trees and seed balls were planted at Junone village, Kannad Ghat, with the help of students from the Government ZP Upper Primary School.

RC Burhanpur — RID 3040



New track suits, shoes and cricket kits were distributed to 65 students at the Subhash Chandra Bose Tribal Boys Hostel in the presence of district collector Bhavya Mittal.

RC Chikhli Riverfront — RID 3060



Around 500 patients were screened at the two eye camps in Chikhli Kanya Shala and Gorgam village with the help of Rotary Eye Institute, Navsari. Seventy patients chosen for cataract surgery.

RC Jodhpur Padmini — RID 3053



Under *Project Ek Bench Badle Kisi Ka Bachpan*, 595 desk-benches (₹15.5 lakh) were donated to government schools. Another batch of 150 benches is on the way.

RC Patiala Mid Town — RID 3090



To mark World Health Day, 12 wheel-chairs and walking sticks sponsored by Helping Hands India were given to the inmates at the Bird Ashram, Raungla.

RC Shri Madhopur Sunrise — RID 3054



40 patients, out of 90 screened, were chosen for surgery at the cataract screening camp held with the support of Sankara Eye Hospital, Jaipur. So far, 947 patients had undergone surgery.

RC Allahabad Midtown — RID 3120



Around 360 amputees benefitted from an artificial limb fitment camp held with the support of Narayan Sewa Sansthan, Udaipur, and 39 were referred for corrective surgery.

RC Karad — RID 3132



An eye camp was held at Patharwadi village under its Blind-Free Village programme with the support of Sanskar Netra Rugnalay. Eight were chosen for cataract surgery.

RC Sawantwadi — RID 3170



300 Rotaractors attended the RYLA hosted jointly with RC Thane Imperial. Satish Dhamankar from RC Belgaum was the chief guest. Quiz, dance, entertainment and motivational sessions were held.

RC Mira Road — RID 3141



A library was set up at the Gramin Vidyalaya, Mira Gaon. While Anand Bhatkal donated the cupboard, the books were sponsored by Uday Kulkarni.

RC Neelamangala — RID 3190



Wheelchairs were donated to three disabled children from a family hailing from Nagenahalli. Their hands and legs were not developed and were diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy.

RC Mangalagiri — RID 3150



Around 200 pushcarts were distributed to hawkers in a joint initiative with RCs Hyderabad Deccan and Lake District Moinabad. RID Mahesh Kotbagi and DG Talla Rajasekhar Reddy were present.

RC Perumbavoor Central — RID 3201



DG Rajmohan Nair handed over the keys of a new house to a beneficiary under *Project Parpidam* in the presence of club members. The project enhanced the public image of the club.

RC Erode North — RID 3203



DG B Elangkumaran honoured doctors and volunteers after the World TB rally taken by the staff of the Erode Medical College and Hospital. Dr Mohan Kameswaran, chairman, Madras ENT Research Foundation spoke.

RC Tuticorin Trailblazers — RID 3212



Around 40 students of Extension Middle School, Thoothukudi, were screened at a dental check-up camp. Indian Dental Association vice-president Dr Sree Devi distributed dental kits to the children.

RC Pilathara — RID 3204



Club president K Raveendran donated bicycles to girl students at the Government High School, Cheruthazham, in the presence of DG Pramod Nayanar.

RC Madras South — RID 3232



In a joint initiative with Ford company, the club donated 17,000 laptops and computers to schools and institutions under a Digital Literacy drive.

RC Alleppey Greater — RID 3211



Clothes were donated to the Government Women's and Children's Hospital, Alleppey, in the presence of club president Vijayakumar.

RC Bhubaneswar Meadows — RID 3262



A medical check-up camp was organised in which medicines and vitamin supplements were distributed to the people.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran

Summer blues

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan



It was a wonderful spring in North India this year. The temperature stayed between 15 and 30 degrees Celsius throughout March. Usually, it goes up to 33–35. There was periodic rain as well. And there were occasional strong winds. Together they blew away the pollution. The birds sensed the good times and sang late into the evening. The flowers were a bit late off the mark but when they finally bloomed, around the second week of March, it was a sight to behold. Verily, as the poet said the lark was on the wing and the snail was on the thorn and all was right with the world.

The good times carried on into the first week of April and, as I write this, we are well into the second week. The weather is still very balmy. But, as surely as day follows night, I can sense summer approaching, nostrils flaring ever so slightly now, but eventually fire will be blowing through them.

One afternoon in early April, a friend and I went for lunch. The first hint of the heat to come could be sensed and seen through the tiny whirls of dust on the road. My friend, who was brought up in the hills of the western ghats in Kerala, started talking about her first month in a college in Chennai. The heat shock was intense. She said she could not believe that such heat was possible.

At night she used to pour water on her mattress to keep cool.

But, I said, Chennai cools down after 4 pm when the sea breeze starts coming in. She said the hostel rooms had west facing windows and no fans. So the rooms became like the inside of ovens after a cake had been baked. Fragrant, because of all the perfume that the girls used but hot as hell as well. So when her father came to visit after a month she wept copiously. He promptly went to the principal and offered to install fans for the whole wing!

I had no such luck, I told her. My father never once visited when I was in the hostel in Delhi University. We didn't have fans either and had

In Delhi University hostel we didn't have fans and had to rent table fans at ₹10 per month.

The problem was that there was only one power socket in the room and we could either turn on the fan or the lamp on the desk. The fan won.

to rent table fans at ₹10 per month. The problem was that there was only one power socket in the room and we could either turn on the fan or the lamp on the desk. The fan won. For those unfamiliar with Delhi, I should add that it gets extremely hot, upward of 42 deg Celsius. My friends and I would throw water on the beds and the curtains to cool the rooms. But unlike in Chennai, it's very dry heat in Delhi and the moisture would evaporate in an hour.

On occasion my friends and I have even slept on the grass in the lawns. Delhi in those days didn't have mosquitoes because there was so little vegetation. Now we have both mosquitoes and air conditioners, which is nice except when the mosquitoes also like the air conditioning. That happens in the monsoon months. So we plug in those toxic mosquito repellents. Fifteen years ago we used to burn those coils that filled the room with smoke. So we'd open the windows — only to let in more mosquitoes. And of course, we had to turn off the ACs because warm moist air was blowing in. I told my friend that these were not winnable battles. We are now bracing ourselves for five months of extreme discomfort. The blue skies and cool breeze that we have now will be a distant memory garnished with the fine dust of the vast North Indian plain. ■



Rtn. Jennifer E. Jones
R.I. President



Rtn. A.K.S. V.R. Muthu
District Governor



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