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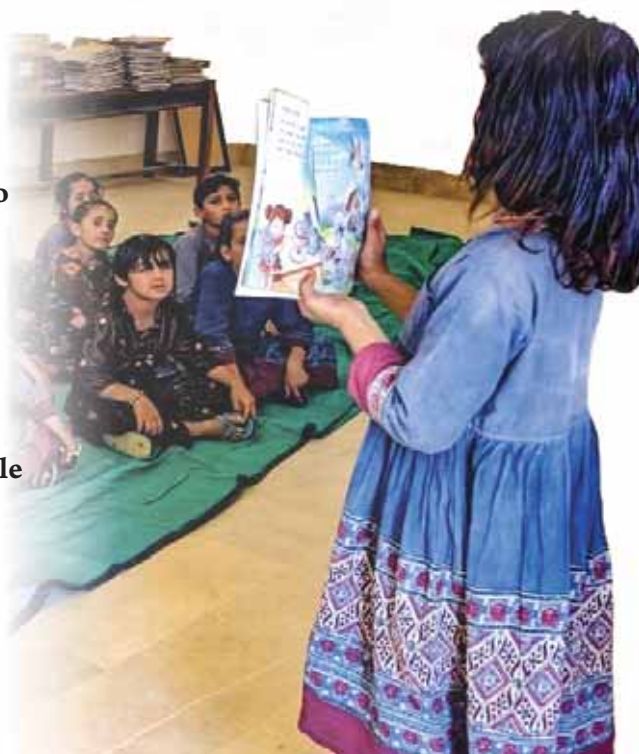
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A no-nonsense interview

I always look forward to reading the July issue; what makes this one special is to find my club members representing Rotary at the highest level. I've worked closely under the leadership of both RI Director Raju and Vidhya. I was a GSE aspirant during the tenure of Raju as DG. Having seen him over the years, I feel that a leader like him is a blessing for India. This issue also has interesting profiles of RI President Gordon McNally and Heather, RID Anirudha Roychowdhury, and Shipra. Their individual stories with anecdotes and the work that they have done over the years leave us inspired. RIPE Stephanie Urchick talking of 'change champions' and the cycle project done by RC Panaji Midtown are inspiring.

Vivek Khandelwal
RC Deonar — D 3141

The article A 'hyper', outspoken and no-nonsense RI Director on Raju Subramanian is a very



good one. I've not met him personally, but his views are absolutely spot on and the need of the hour. Thank you Rasheeda Bhagat for this interesting article.

Sameer Thakkar
RC Bhavnagar Round
Town — D 3060

Raju is the best Rotarian, best human being and the best leader. Rotary India needs to have such a visionary leader to boost its public image.

Jyoti Date
RC Dombivli West — D 3141

RI president calls for action

The July edition is superb. The RI president's message emphasises on building peace within and spreading it freely and the Editor's note gives a toast to new beginnings. RID Roychowdhury calls for changes to face future challenges. Glad to hear from Trustee chair Barry Rassin about \$500 million being the TRF goal for this year, and vice-chair Bharat Pandya explains well about the joy of giving.

The articles *Ethos into action*, *Full potential of Rotary's talent pool in India...* and *A 'hyper', outspoken and no-nonsense RI director*, based

on interviews with the two RI directors are facts-packed and informative.

Other articles are also interesting and the photo feature, *South Asia Dazzlers*, is colourful. Paying homage to PRIP Jonathan Babatunde Majiyagbe, PRIP Kalyan Banerjee has described his noble work and the Rotary world will remember his service forever. In *Music and Melody* the life story of OP Nayyar was interesting.

Philip Mulappone MT
RC Trivandrum Suburban — D 3211

In his maiden message, RI President McNally's call to *create hope in the world* has delivered the right impact.

He urges club leaders "to offer an excellent club experience to retain and attract more members and create a sense of belonging. I'm sure if club leaders take his words seriously and work on them, maybe in the next few years we may erase the tag that Rotary is a leaking bucket.

R Murali Krishna
RC Berhampur — D 3262

A toast for achievement

The Editor's note was interesting. A change in leadership at all levels every year is the uniqueness of Rotary. Your advice at the beginning of the Rotary year will kindle the spark within and motivate new leaders in their quest to *create hope in the world*.

The incoming leaders participate in GETS, PETS and SETS, where they learn to serve. By identifying leaders, who even after their tenure evolve, impress and create an impact, and assisting them while serving to bring smiles on the faces of the less privileged, is an opportunity of a lifetime.

VRT Dorairaja
RC Tiruchirappalli — D 3000

The Editor's note has enthusiastic words for the incoming Rotary leaders at all levels. Enthusiasm is the source of all prosperity. RI President McNally in his message, *My call to action*, asks everyone to give priority to mental health projects. When we treat everyone as our near and dear ones, we always enjoy good health. Thus by building peace within, we become capable of bringing peace in the world.

KMK Murthy
RC Secunderabad — D 3150

Propos to the LBW column *It so happened...* by TCA Srinivasa Raghavan. I'd like to share that I too

went through the same predicament as a young post-graduate in Economics in the late 1970s. Like him, I too did not know what to do after completing my university education. As was the order of the day for thousands of young graduates at that time, I too appeared for civil services which was considered the next best thing to do and the best national pass time for unemployed graduates. The standard joke of that time was that the graders of the Economics paper of civil services were very economical with marks, forcing people like me to opt for other subjects.

Having flunked the exam, like the writer, I too tried my hand at Law but without success.

N Anthri Vedi
RC Hyderabad Mega City — D 3150

In her last message to Rotarians, outgoing President Jennifer Jones recalled the warm reception and greetings she had received from countless people across the world. She shared the impactful work being done by clubs in various parts of the globe, and the diverse countries she had visited.

S Muniandi
RC Dindigul Fort — D 3000

In his June message, outgoing TRF trustee chair Ian Riseley says it is in our hands to make our world a better one for all, especially the poor, vulnerable and marginalised. He says, “Helping those in need is what defines Rotary and its Foundation.”

I wish the new trustee chair Barry Rassin success in making a difference through TRF. The message by RI President McNally and the Editor’s note were very interesting too.

Abhay Kishore Sandwar
RC Dhanbad Midtown — D 3250

The June cover story by the editor, *For McNally, Rotary is about continuity*, with beautiful pictures is interesting to read with great information about the new RI president. Also, another article *Don’t shy away from big dreams* by Rasheeda Bhagat inspires us to aim big and do impactful projects. McNally has rightly said that only acts of kindness can change the world in the article *Only love can instil hope in the world*. The feature on SD Burman, the magical, magnificent musician, is packed with information about this great music composer. Kudos to the editorial team.

S N Shanmugam
RC Panruti — D 2981

On the cover: A student of Rajkumari Ratnavati Girls’ School, Kanoi village, Rajasthan, where RC Hyderabad Smart City, RID 3150, and RC Jaisalmer Swarna Nagari, RID 3055, have installed a new library.

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.

WHATSAPP MESSAGES WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED.

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

A thought-provoking editorial

Your editorial in the June issue highlighting a new club in New York, “A club for the cancelled,” is impressive. There is an invariable dissent in the thoughts of different people and everyone has a right to put forward what one thinks about various social, economic and political issues.

This freedom to ‘stand up, speak out’ is also seen in Hyde Park, London, where one can express his/her opinions freely without any fear. Keep updating us with new ideas. Thanks.

Radheshyam Modi
RC Akola — D 3030

Conveying a strong message, the June editorial, *Be different... stand up, speak out*, calls upon us all not to accept things as they are without going deep into the issues or questioning them. It is no wisdom to follow everything without applying one’s mind. Hats off to RC Calcutta Presidency for taking up a unique project of changing the lives of transgenders through reforms in their lifestyle so that they can live with dignity and earn a sustainable livelihood.

The article *Facelift for a mental healthcare facility under Project Hope* by RC Chennai Industrial City deserves appreciation. It is a project of a different kind as it reaches out to psychopaths, alcoholics etc to revive their health and status in the community.

Raj Kumar Kapoor
RC Roopnagar — D 3080



Monika Lozinska

In the spirit of caring

At the 2023 Rotary International Convention in Melbourne, I asked all Rotary members to become champions in our effort to illuminate mental health needs near and far. This includes helping one another feel more supported, advocating for mental health services, and building bridges with experts in the field to expand access to treatment.

It's an important task and a big ask. But it's also something that should feel familiar to every Rotary member — because everything we do is in the spirit of caring, giving, friendship and compassion, and has been from the beginning of our organisation.

We've grown into an amazing global network of 1.4 million interconnected community leaders — leaders who share a deep commitment to doing good in the world. But what makes Rotary powerful isn't just what we do for the communities we serve. We also support and empower each other, by creating a safe space for our members to bring their whole, authentic selves. We show each other comfort and care.

These connections are deeply meaningful. The US surgeon general recently declared loneliness a public health epidemic. Dr Vivek Murthy said, "We must prioritise building social connection the same way we have prioritised other critical public health issues such as tobacco, obesity and substance use disorders." I am proud of what Rotary has done across generations to build those kinds of social connections.

Our worldwide community and our foundational value prioritising *Service Above Self* makes Rotary

a powerful global advocate for mental health. A recently published study by Ohio State University found performing acts of kindness was the only one of three mental health interventions tested that helped people feel more connected to others. Study co-author David Cregg said, "Performing acts of kindness seems to be one of the best ways to promote those connections."

This research suggests what we've known all along — that doing good helps transform not just the communities we serve, but it also transforms us. As we put a greater focus on mental health, let's not think of this effort as something new to Rotary, but rather as something we can do better and as a result have a greater impact on ourselves and the people we serve.

We are not starting this effort from scratch. The Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives has been focused on these kinds of issues for several years, and we will be looking to members of that group for leadership as we continue to build awareness.

Mental healthcare fits comfortably within several of our areas of focus. As of May, there are 41 global grant-supported projects with a mental health focus. Many of them have tremendous promise, and we will be highlighting them in the months ahead.

So let's work together to erase the stigma associated with emotional well-being, raise awareness of mental health needs, and improve access to preventive and interventional mental health services.

Together, we will *Create Hope in the World*.

R Gordon R McNally
President, Rotary International



Reclaiming their space...

Most of us on Whatsapp would have got a message, if not several, on how a river ultimately reclaims what rightfully belonged to it once upon a time. One on my feed had this chilling message: “A river never forgets. Even after decades and centuries pass, the river comes back to recapture its borders.” The river here is of course the Yamuna, and the accompanying pictures and video depict the angry, swollen Yamuna inundating so many parts of Delhi that were once its territory. As Delhi’s roads turned into rivers and inflatable boats appeared on the streets to ferry the stranded people to safety, water entered homes, offices, medical facilities and even the Delhi secretariat, of course the blame game started. Those politically opposed to the Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had a field day letting loose a meme festival. Most of the memes pulled out an earlier speech of his promising how he would turn Delhi into a lake city. The ministers blamed the bureaucrats, the bureaucrats brushed off the complaint of non-action or late action and so it continued. Water body experts attributed the excessive flooding of the various areas in Delhi to the encroachment of floodplains, extreme rainfall in a short duration and the accumulation of silt, which had elevated the riverbed.

Once again, amidst the trading of charges between politicians, the National Disaster Response Force had to be summoned to rescue the trapped citizens of Delhi. As the rain and flood fury continued unabated, Rotary defining environmental protection as its 7th area of

focus was justified yet again. Of course there was also heavy flooding in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana caused by rivers in spate, but as usual the media highlighted only the mayhem in high-profile Delhi! No surprise there.

The glaring message from recurring floods all over India is relentless and greedy encroachment by the Homo sapiens on the planet’s resources. Invariably payback time kicks in, but are lessons learnt? The answer is obvious.

Moving on to more cheerful news, July is the installation month for all new leaders. This time around, it was gratifying to see as many as seven women governors being installed as their district’s leaders in our zone. We’ve never seen this number in a single year, and if the next couple of years are any indication, won’t do so for a little while. But for the moment at least, let us celebrate the “second sex,” as the great champion of women’s rights Simone de Beauvoir called women. The chilling video of two Kuki-Zo women being paraded naked in Manipur, proves that brutality against helpless women continues.

And yet women are breaking barriers, and proving that like wronged rivers, they will eventually reclaim what is rightfully due to them. Good luck, and godspeed to these women governors, and their male counterparts... to do good, fight injustice, and create hope for the unfortunate, weak and oppressed in their communities.

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

Rasheeda Bhagat

Green inspiration



In Singapore, you'll discover lots of ideas on how your club can protect the environment — not just in convention breakout sessions but all around the city. The small island nation wants to inspire the world with its innovations to address climate change and displays its green creativity at almost every turn: Plants cover building faces and rooftops to cool the structures, and parks are abundant, with a goal that every resident can walk to one within 10 minutes.

Officials from the city-state hosting the Rotary International Convention 2024 call it a living laboratory aimed at reducing its carbon emissions to net zero by 2050. Key milestones by 2030 are to plant one million trees, increase solar energy deployments 400 per cent, cut about a third of waste to landfills, and freeze growth of internal combustion vehicles.

Here are a few more environmental programmes and plans in Singapore that might energise you: “closed-loop” water recycling to reuse every drop, conversion of incinerated waste into sand for construction, car-free town centres for walkers and cyclists with underground roads, vertical farming indoors to increase local food production, microclimate modelling for development to strengthen wind corridors, position buildings for natural ventilation, and identify hotspots for greenery.

Singapore sees its green economy as an advantage that drives growth and new jobs. Commit to *Sharing Hope With the World* as a friend of the environment when you visit the “city in a garden” May 25–29.

**Learn more and register at
convention.rotary.org.**

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Magazine

Director speak



Dear Rotarians,

I express my deepest gratitude for your unwavering dedication and commitment to making a positive impact in our communities. Your tireless efforts in service, both locally and globally, have been nothing short of inspirational. As Rotarians, you have continuously exemplified the true spirit of selflessness, embodying the ideals of Rotary in every project, event and initiative you undertake. Your passion for making the world a better place and your genuine care for others have touched countless lives and left a lasting legacy of kindness and compassion.

Through your various programmes, such as clean water projects, youth development and disaster relief efforts, you have demonstrated the power of collective action in bringing about meaningful change. Your ability to unite people from different backgrounds and cultures under a common mission is a testament to the strength of Rotary's core values.

Your commitment to fostering peace, promoting education and eradicating polio, have had a profound impact on countless individuals and communities worldwide. Your dedication to TRF and its noble causes has helped create opportunities and hope for those who need it most.

Let's boost our membership

In times of crisis and uncertainty, our organisation has been a beacon of hope, offering support and assistance to those affected by natural disasters, conflicts and humanitarian crises. Your readiness to step forward and lend a helping hand in the face of adversity is truly commendable.

In this membership month, we must bring in more individuals to share the joy of being a Rotarian. Let's put the spotlight on our good practices as we invite good citizens to our fold, and together build and strengthen our clubs, and our organisation, by instilling the values and ethos of Rotary in our new members. We need to put Rotary in them and ensure that we induct Rotarians and not mere members. Retention is the key to sustained growth. Engagement and involvement are factors that will assist in this process. I'm certain we'll be ethical in all our actions including increasing membership either in our club or by forming a new club in a virgin area. The opportunities are many — it is up to us to tap the resources and ensure a steady growth.

As we move forward, I have no doubt that the Rotary spirit will continue to shine brightly, illuminating the path towards a better, more compassionate world. Your service, generosity and commitment to 'Service Above Self' serve as a guiding light for all of us, reminding us of the profound impact each individual can make when driven by a shared vision of a better future.

Your actions inspire us all to be better and do better. Together, let us continue to make a difference, and *create hope in the world.*

TN Subramanian

RI Director, 2023–25

Reaching into the future



This year, I urge all of you to think big about The Rotary Foundation. To reach our goals and make the impact we know we can make, we must think outside the box and embrace innovation. We must make bold plans to expand our reach today, tomorrow, and in the future.

Start by thinking big about Foundation-supported projects. If your club hasn't engaged in a Rotary Foundation district grant or global grant, make this the year you do. Collaborating with your Rotary counterparts in another district on one of Rotary's seven areas of focus can make a lasting impact beyond your wildest dreams. Explore 'Rotary Showcase' at rotary.org/showcase or arrange a meeting between your club and your district Rotary Foundation chair to start a conversation.

Let's also think big about our polio fundraising this year. Begin planning your World Polio Day fundraiser now for October 24 if you haven't already. Let's see how Rotaract and Rotary clubs can make this year's fundraisers our best ever.

Thinking big about the Foundation also means remembering that through it, our impact goes beyond the current Rotary year. We see this through not only the emphasis on sustainability in our grant projects but also in initiatives

such as Programs of Scale. The third Programs of Scale recipient will take on a big challenge: combating cervical cancer and enhancing women's health in Egypt through awareness-raising and improved access to preventive care.

The success of the Programs of Scale grant model lies in our approach of closely collaborating with partners to amplify proven methods. Each year, The Rotary Foundation awards \$2 million to a member-led programme that has demonstrated success and has the potential to reach more people through scaling up over a three to five-year period.

Our Programs of Scale are the epitome of thinking big: Through them, we aim to establish sustainable partnerships and cost-effective programmes that deliver tangible benefits beyond the funding period. This way, Rotary and its Foundation can reach and assist more people in more places.

Lastly, let's remember that our efforts to make the world a better place should extend beyond our time on earth. As we strive to reach \$2.025 billion by 2025 for Rotary's Endowment, consider how you can leave a legacy by making a gift or a commitment to a Rotary endowment. This will ensure that Rotary's future generations will have greater financial resources to create positive change, just as so many are doing now, in so many ways.

Barry Rassin

TRF Trustee Chair

2024 Rotary Convention @ Singapore



A new beginning

Here is a note Jennifer Jones had posted on Facebook on July 1, as she stepped down as RI president, giving way to Gordon McInally:

And just like that, my year as RI President is over. Thank you for trusting me to lead the 2022–23 Rotary year. I couldn't imagine passing the torch to anyone but Gordon McInally.

Many would say this moment is bittersweet, but it isn't bitter at all, only sweet. I'm proud of

what we've accomplished this year. Together, we imagined a caring, compassionate, and more

equitable world. I'm optimistic we've achieved all we set out to do. Thank you from the bottom of

my heart for your efforts to *Imagine Rotary*.

Here's to creating hope in the world! ■



IPRIP Jennifer Jones raises a toast to RI President Gordon McInally at the RI headquarters in Evanston, USA.

Rotary India sets up an ICU at a Colombo hospital

Team Rotary News

Rotary Club of Karamadai, RID 3203, and RC Wattala, RID 3220, Sri Lanka, sponsored the setting up of a high dependency ICU at the Colombo North Teaching Hospital in Ragama in the Gampaha district, 18km from Colombo, Sri Lanka. Rotary clubs of Kunnathur, Avinashi and Tirupur North, RID 3203, also

participated in this project which RC Karamadai president and project chairman Magesh says, “is the first international service project of RID 3203 executed without a global grant.”

The ICU is installed at the maternal ward of the hospital and is estimated to save at least 2,000 mothers and newborns from critical situations annually.



RC Karamadai president Magesh, IPDG B Elangkumaran and his spouse Prema, RC Kunnathur president Parthiban, RC Avinashi president Boopathi, PDG A Karthikeyan and RC Wattala president Jeyabalan with a woman and her newborn at the ICU in the Colombo hospital.

IPDG B Elangkumaran, PDG A Karthikeyan and DGN Dhanasekar participated in the inauguration of the facility. RID 3220 IPDG Pubudu de Zoysa and DG

Jerome Rajendram thanked the Indian Rotarians for the generous gesture. Magesh and RC Wattala president Jeyabalan signed the sister club agreement. ■

A single Bengaluru club renovates 214 anganwadis @ ₹4 crore

Rasheeda Bhagat

These days the one buzz in Rotary is about the need to do “large, sustainable” projects that create a mega impact and enhance the public image of Rotary. Well, a single club in Bengaluru, RC Bangalore Indiranagar, RI District 3192, has done a project to renovate and bring back to life over 200 anganwadis in the three taluks of Karnataka — Hoskote, Kolar and Anekal — all of which come under Bengaluru rural district, and are within a radius of 30–80km from the metro.

The project began in 2017–18, with the club first taking up the task of renovating 10 anganwadis. Then the target shifted to 200, and before July 2023, as many as 214 anganwadis had been renovated at a whopping cost of ₹4 crore. When I express surprise over the club’s successive presidents and other leaders focusing on a project some other set of leaders had started, for six long years, PDG Suresh Hari, a member of this club with 151 Rotarians, says, “That is because we have a vision plan, and a Strategic Planning Committee which deliberates on projects and we accept long term and sustainable projects only on the recommendation of this committee. Without such a plan, the projects can only be short-lived, without the ability

to create a long-term impact on the community, which is after all our objective.”

The moving spirit behind this project is past president of the club Fazal ur Rahaman, who was secretary of the club when it first began work

in Sonnahallipura, a village in Hoskote taluk, where RC Bangalore Indiranagar has carried out numerous projects pertaining to general healthcare, dental camps, weekly clinics, animal health camps, gifting cows to needy women, installation of solar street lights, construction of bus shelters, etc under its Rural Development Project.

It all began in this village in 2016–17, when he was club secretary,





and the club took up the task of renovating a government school under its rural development project. “As the club’s community service director, I’d visit that school that was under renovation. In one corner of that village school building, there was a dilapidated structure with a very dull and dreary interior.” He asked questions and was told that it was an anganwadi; “there was no paint on the

walls, the roof was leaking, and it had a cracked cement flooring with potholes,” he recalls.

The Rotarians found that the children in 3–6 age group spent the entire day in dull, dark and dreary conditions. The toilet in the anganwadi had no plumbing or water connection and hence was not in use. “To give these children a clean, bright and cheerful environment

with a hygienic toilet, we decided to renovate it too, along with the school.”

At the inaugural event, the enthusiastic response they got from the parents of the children attending the anganwadi, as well as the other villagers, surprised them. It had created even more ripples and joy than the renovation of the school; “and it had been so much easier to do it than the school. So we said let’s do a hundred anganwadis.”

And thus began the anganwadi restoration project, which has now become a passion with this club’s Rotarians.

At this point let’s understand the concept of the anganwadi and what it means to the village where it is located. Club’s former community service director Narsimhan Kannan explains that an anganwadi is a mother and child care centre, and this concept was set up by the GoI in the 1970s under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme “to combat child hunger and malnutrition. The anganwadis in Karnataka provide several facilities for children between the ages of 3 and 6, and also take care of pregnant women and nursing mothers.”

Rahaman adds that of the 214 anganwadis their club has renovated so far, 25 to 26 are within urban

Over 50 per cent of the
₹4 crore we’ve spent on
this project alone has come
from our club members.

localities in Bengaluru that have slums and need these services, and 175 are in villages of the three taluks mentioned. The general rule is that there should be one anganwadi for a population of 1,500, so in bigger villages, which can have as many as 5,000 people, there can be three anganwadis.

“For example, one small town, about 40km from Bengaluru, Sulibele, has nine anganwadis, and we have renovated six of these,” says Rahaman. On an average, the Rotarians spend about ₹2 lakh to renovate each anganwadi, and “the money is mainly spent on painting the walls, giving piped water supply in the toilets, providing two water tanks, and an electric motor.”

While doing this project, the Rotarians found that in many anganwadis, the government had provided

a toilet, but as it had no water in rural areas, the children would relieve themselves in the open, and the toilet would be used for dumping/storing unwanted material. Now that the toilets have been spruced up and given a water connection — some even have health faucets — the children are using them. The Rotarians have also ensured that the sink in the kitchen, where the food is prepared, also has piped water supply, which helps to keep it clean.

An anganwadi basically caters to malnourished children in the 3 to 6 years age group; they come in regularly, get some basic education such as learning the alphabets and numbers, colours, names of birds and





animals, etc. These children are given a snack when they come in, such as a glass of milk with a *chikki*, and a mid-day cooked meal. Rahaman explains that the anganwadi has two workers; one is a teacher and the other is the helper, who prepares the meals. Then

Left: (From L) IPP AK Sugunan; past presidents Harish Kumar Anand; Karthikeya Reddy; PDG Suresh Hari and his spouse Anita Hari; Supriya Kandhari; Sindhoo Anand; project chair Fazal Ur Rahaman; Nitesh Shah; Kumara Shivanna, director, Citrix R&D India; J Vishwanath; Hoskote Child Development project officer Somasundar; past presidents RV Subramaniam and Jagadeesh; and anganwadi staff Gayathri with children at an anganwadi in Pillagumpe village, Hoskote.

The MLA who advised Rotarians to keep politicians out!

Fazal ur Rahaman has an interesting anecdote to share. When the Rotarians started working on this project in 2018–19, and had renovated about 10 anganwadis in Hoskote taluk, this work created a lot of buzz in the whole taluk. “So when we visited these anganwadis, several anganwadi workers from surrounding areas would be waiting and ask us: ‘When will you please do such renovation in our village too’.” Soon this information reached the MLA, and one morning we got a call from the department of women and child welfare, saying the MLA had asked them to stop work, and questioned the department for allowing this work without

telling him. “He wanted to meet us so an appointment was fixed. I was the secretary in 2018–19, and the club president was M Jagadeesh. We met the MLA, taking with us all background details about Rotary and photos of what we had done in the anganwadis. Within two minutes his whole demeanour changed and he said: Please go ahead, all the government agencies concerned will support you.”

An interesting end to this story was that when the Rotarians offered to invite the MLA for the inaugural of the next anganwadi they renovated, “he said, ‘no, please don’t do that. You are doing great work, so please don’t involve us politicians!’ After that, we had no problem and got full support from the government machinery.”



A renovated kitchen.

once in a month, younger children in the age group six months-three years come in; their height, weight and general health status are evaluated, and records kept to ensure there is no malnourishment as they grow older. Their mothers are given ration to prepare the lunch at home for these children.

Apart from this, pregnant women and nursing mothers can also come to the anganwadi and get the midday meal. “Or they can send a tiffin and a hot meal to these women,” he explains. When I express surprise at such service being given in a government-run anganwadi, Rahaman says, “I have been told that this service is available to pregnant women or lactating mothers only in Karnataka. Having been closely involved with this project, I have visited so many anganwadis in the last six years, and can tell you from personal observation that this is one scheme of the government which works like a clockwork, at least in this state; 90 per cent of the funds to run the anganwadis come from the GoI and the remaining 10 per cent from the state government. On the 1st of every month, all the provisions reach the anganwadis.”

He also swears by the quality of the food. “I have eaten several times there; the children get for lunch rice and sambar with vegetables, and the meal is delicious. One day in the week, pulao is served, and on festivals and other special days, *kesari*



The actual renovation work

During renovation, the anganwadi gets a spanking new floor, with good quality vitrified tiles. The kitchen gets a working platform and washing sink, shelves are put up in the storeroom for storing provisions; a ground-level water tank and an overhead water tank with a water pump are provided; the toilet is redone with ceramic

floor tiles and glazed wall tiles; required plumbing is provided in the kitchen and toilet to ensure running water. Waterproofing of the roof is done, a steel mesh is fixed on the windows to keep the monkeys out; electrical wiring is redone and light points in rooms and power socket in the kitchen are provided. External and internal painting of the walls, doors and windows is done.

When the Rotarians offered to invite the MLA for the inaugural of the next anganwadi they renovated, “he said, ‘no, please don’t do that. You are doing great work, so please don’t involve us politicians!’”





or some other sweet dish is served. The anganwadis work from Monday through Saturday.”

A core team from the club is involved in the anganwadi restoration project; “six of us are regularly engaged,” says the past president who has been chair of the club’s mother and child committee which oversees this project.

This committee is also responsible for raising funds for the project and has struck gold... literally... with corporates. While the club members themselves have been generous, with at least 20 members contributing wholly for the restoration of one or two anganwadi — which means ₹2–4 lakh — one member in particular, the CEO and promoter of the listed company Suprajit Industries, Ajith Rai, a past president of the club, has already given money, through his foundation — the Suprajit

Foundation — for the restoration of 69 anganwadis. And funds for 20 more from his company’s CSR funds are forthcoming through a global grant. “So you can say over 50 per cent of the ₹4 crore we’ve spent on this project alone has come from our club members,” he adds.

“We’ve also got a lot of support from Canfin Homes, which till now has sponsored the renovation of 31 anganwadis (₹62 lakh). IT corporate Citrix R&D India has also given around ₹60 lakh for 31 anganwadis.”

On the future of this project, club leaders are certain that it will continue. Club president N Balakrishnan has already shown both interest and commitment; and shortly the next few presidents in the pipeline will meet and decide whether they will continue with this project. “We are optimistic they will; and once they are on board, we will increase our target to the magical number of 500 anganwadis by 2027–28,” beams Rahaman. ■

A memorable day in Evanston

Kishore Rathi

I was lucky enough to be at the One Rotary Center, the RI headquarters in Evanston, US, on June 30 with a bunch of Rotarians from countries such as Poland, UK, US and India.

One of the highlights of our visit was experiencing the changing over ceremony between the then president Jennifer Jones and the incoming president Gordon McInally. The ceremony comprised Jones walking alongside McInally from his office to the President's office, after reaching which he shared his theme for 2023–2024: *Create Hope in the World*. After the photo frame of his theme had been put in place, a toast of champagne was raised to the completion of a successful term by Jones.

It was inspiring to witness the dedication and passion with which

Rotary International approaches several humanitarian endeavour.

The tour started with paying respect to the Paul Harris statue and an insightful speech by Gina Clark, our tour programme specialist, who eloquently outlined Rotary's mission and commitment to making a positive impact on communities worldwide. We then saw the actual replica of the room where the first meeting of Rotary's founders was held.

We then proceeded to the 15th floor where we saw the Arch Klumph's Wall of Rotarians who have supported various causes with their generous donations.

Later we proceeded to the 16th floor which has flags of over 200 countries and the RI boardroom where the board meetings are conducted.

During the tour, we met general secretary John Hewko, who explained

the great humanitarian projects done by Rotary in war-torn Ukraine. Until today, Rotary has collectively donated \$15 million for relief in Ukraine and Turkey. He urged all of us to attend the Singapore Convention in 2024.

The meeting provided a platform for open dialogue and exchange of ideas. It was a privilege to engage in conversations with fellow attendees, including Rotarians and other individuals who share a common goal of serving humanity. The diversity of perspectives and experiences shared during the event enriched my understanding of the global impact Rotary makes.

The insight gained from these interactions will undoubtedly shape my own contribution to the community.

*The writer is a member of
RC Nagpur South East, RID 3030*

Kishore Rathi (third from L) with his wife Kajal at the Rotary headquarters, after witnessing the change-over ceremony between PRIP Jennifer Jones and RI President Gordon McInally.



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Rotary sets up a library in a tribal school in Jaisalmer

Kiran Zehra

A group of young girls at the Rajkumari Ratnavati Girls' School in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, "eagerly approached a table stacked with books. Their eyes sparkled with excitement as they picked up one book after another. Our hearts melted when we saw them excitedly going through the kaleidoscope of colourful books, picking out one for themselves, sharing their discoveries and laughter," smiles Dr Chitra C Iravatham, president of RC Hyderabad Smart City, RID 3150, reflecting on the joyful scene.

Supported by the royal family of Jaisalmer and run by CITTA

Education Foundation India, Jaisalmer, this school, inaugurated in 2021 in Kanoi village 40km from Jaisalmer, aims to tackle the issue of female illiteracy in the region. RCs Hyderabad Smart City and Jaisalmer Swarna Nagari, RID 3055, have donated a library to the school to further this mission.

Named 'The Sacred Niche,' the newly installed library has an impressive collection of over 150 books. Ranging from storybooks to interactive workbooks and encyclopaedias, "this literary treasure offers opportunities to girls to expand their horizons. The library features books in both English and





Children in the uniform designed by Sabya Sachi.

The current strength of the school is over 100 girls who “hail from families of weavers, craftsmen, and nomads living in the Thar desert. Education, and all other facilities, including transportation, meals and uniforms, are provided to them free of cost,” says the club president and shares an interesting bit of information. “Sabya Sachi, the renowned designer, worked on the girls’ uniform using the fabric *ajrakh* produced by craftsmen from the region. This integration of the local cultural heritage into their daily lives enriches their educational experience, ensuring a strong connection to their roots.”

RC Hyderabad Smart City also donated mechanic tool kits, storage cabinets and two desktop



Students listen to a child reading a book at the newly installed library in the Rajkumari Ratnavati Girls’ School, Jaisalmer.

Hindi, allowing the girls to explore worlds beyond their own while also nurturing the regional language,” she says.

The journey to bring this library to life was a collaborative effort that spanned six months. Chitra explains that her club “meticulously organised and procured the books, ensuring a diverse and engaging collection for the young girls. The total cost of the project is ₹2 lakh.”

The girls are keen on learning new skills, and the new library has become their go-to place in the school.

Lalit Purohit

headmaster

Rajkumari Ratnavati Girls’ School



Girls playing Ludo in the school.

The School

The Rajkumari Ratnavati Girls' School, located in the rural Thar desert of Jaisalmer, is a unique oval-shaped building designed to withstand extreme temperatures. The school can accommodate 400 girls from kindergarten to Class 10. Constructed with local sandstone and designed by New York-based Diana Kellogg Architects, the school symbolises feminine strength. The courtyard features a rainwater harvesting facility, emphasising the importance of responsible water management in the arid desert environment. The complex includes the Medha Hall for craft exhibitions and is also used as a space to provide education and training in traditional skills like artistry, weaving and embroidery for rural women.



computers, enabling the girls to develop essential computer skills. Chitra hopes that “other Rotary clubs come forward to help this school as it lacks educational equipment and resources. The support from our clubs will create a better learning environment for the girls.”

Looking ahead, both the Rotary clubs envision a future “where these empowered girls become agents of change in our communities. The plan is to encourage them to teach their mothers how to write their names and gradually introduce them to the joy of reading,” says Pratish

Chandak, president of RC Jaisalmer Swarna Nagari. He recently met Chaitanya Raj Singh, the king of Jaisalmer and the administrative head of the school. “He intends to send a few senior students on an international educational tour and has approached our club for sponsorship. We are delighted to provide assistance,” says Chandak.

Lalit Purohit, the school headmaster, witnessed first-hand the transformation sparked by the new library. “The girls are keen on learning new skills, and the new library has become their go-to place in the school,” he says. Group and individual reading sessions are conducted and “the girls eagerly wait for their turn to dive into the captivating world of books. You will be surprised at how well the girls in Classes 3 and 4 not just read, but communicate in English,” he brims with pride.



A group reading session in progress at the library.

Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S

A fundraising art exhibition for the empowerment of girls was recently held at the Embassy of Chile in Delhi. Inaugurated by the Ambassador of Chile Juan Angulo, the paintings had diverse images... butterflies, mermaids, and a rainbow of colour... all pointing towards to the potential and power of the female child. Supported by *The Blue Moon*, and curated by Meenu Kumar, the paintings were auctioned, and part of the proceeds went for the education of girls through the Asha Kiran programme of the Rotary India Literacy Mission (RILM).

During the auction, the first painting was bought by a counselor from Mexico who paid ₹18,000 for a painting with a reserve price tag of ₹10,000. Paintings worth ₹2.15 lakh were sold and several more — worth ₹30 lakh — were reserved for later sale, said Jjulia Gangwani from The Blue Moon, who is also a Rotarian. Of the total



From R: Ambassador of Chile to India Juan Angulo, PRID Kamal Sanghvi, Jjulia Gangwani, past president, Rotary E-club of Progressive Thinkers, and curator Meenu Kumar at the art exhibition.

sales, one-fourth will go to educating girls, another 25 per cent for skilling girls and the remaining to the artists.

RILM chair and PRID Kamal Sanghvi attended the show and thanked the Chile Ambassador for his help in holding the art exhibition. ■

A bus for a blind school



Members of RC Solapur North at the inaugural of the new bus at the school.

The Bhairuratan Damani Blind School is a residential school for visually-impaired students established in 1987 by late Shamsundar Toshniwal, a member of RC Solapur North, RID 3132. The club has equipped

the school with all basic facilities including a braille library, gender-specific toilets, bedrooms, kitchen and dining hall, need-based classrooms, trained teachers and caretakers for the students. Vocational training such as making candles, handloom products, bags and artificial flowers are also imparted here for them.

Although the school has residential facility, there are some day scholars for whom regular commute was a challenge. The parents were hesitant to send their children to school by public transport because of their handicap. So last year, the club under the leadership of Nihar Burte, facilitated a 30-seater bus costing ₹27 lakh, gifted by Shriram Reddy, an entrepreneur, to the school.

The club is planning to set up a computer lab with braille-supporting hardware and software at the school and also help in marketing the handmade products made by the students. ■

Giving hope... through Jaipur limbs

Rasheeda Bhagat

Rotary Jaipur Limb, UK, a preferred charity of RIBI (Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland), has worked for long years to fund and support artificial limb camps in Asia and Africa. In its 32-year history successful projects have been carried out in Benin, Ghana, Haiti, India, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and Tanzania.

PDG Richard Green, one of the charity's trustees and director in

charge of India, says in a zoom interview with *Rotary News* that "in India, since 1990, we have established nine centres and funded a large number of mega limb camps in support of a number of Rotary clubs. In Africa, we've started 24 centres, 18 are still active, some having been lost to local disturbances and rebel activity; four new ones are planned for 2023."

He begins the interview with the "delightful news" of a successful \$34,000 global grant application to

provide 600 limbs in Kerala. "I was in India in February, and PDG Scaria Jose Kattoor, RID 3211, our chief ambassador for India, was of tremendous help in doing the spadework." The camps will be held in all the five revenue districts of RID 3211.

In the developing world, it is estimated, one in every 1,000 of the population has lost a limb. That equates to over a million in India alone.

RJL chairman Brian Stoyel, past RI director and president of RIBI,



PDG Richard Green (centre), director, Rotary Jaipur Limb (India chapter), with Lavanya Prasanna, a recipient of an LN-4 hand.

and PDG Green estimate that in India this British charity has provided over 50,000 limbs, a large number of crutches, wheelchairs and tricycles, and received 18 TRF global and matching grants. The number for Africa is over 30,000 limbs and 28 TRF global and matching grants.

The beginning

RJL was started after a Rotarian from UK, Peter Bettridge, visited limb-making workshops of the BMVSS (Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti), one of the largest organisations working to help the disabled in Jaipur. “This was in 1985 and he was on a holiday. He was so excited by what he saw that he decided to start the project as a charity in UK. It was simply the result of a single Rotarian from the UK visiting India that started the whole process.”

The charity was set up in 1988 and registered in 1995, and since then the team involved in this project has been collecting funds to help this cause. Green says that the demand for the Jaipur limbs — both the foot and the LN-4 hand — is huge. “I was recently told by Mohankumar, the Rotarian in India who runs an LN-4 hand project, that there are **5 million amputees in India**. It is surprising that 80 per cent of the amputations in India seem to be caused by electric shock. And most of these people are fitted with the LN-4 hand.” Other causes are road and rail accidents, mishaps on farms etc. The outreach camps and permanent limb centres established by the UK charity, most of them in hospitals, see people from both the genders and all age groups. “Young children often need artificial limbs due to congenital defects, and before India managed to wipe out polio, many were polio victims too,” says Green. Stoyel adds, “Our centres and camps do not refuse anyone due to age; the most important

A life-changing experience



PDG Scaria Jose (second from L) assisting a technician in moulding an artificial limb. Also seen PDG John Wilton, RID 1120, and Tomy Kanayamplakal.

I have worked with this UK charity for over 30 years; I started working with the RJL in 1992 and found it being supported by a set of highly compassionate Rotarians in the UK. When I did the first artificial limb camp, I was only 21 and my knowledge about a TRF grant was zero,” recalls PDG Scaria Jose Kattoor.

Commenting on the slow communication channels in the 1990s, he recalls that “one of the trustees of RJL would send letters to India, which arrived after 40 days! Next came the fax at ₹250 and even that was very expensive for a 21-year-old!”

Over the years the trustees of the UK charity guided him; “now I am a senior Rotarian but still love working with them because what we give people are not just limbs but life and hope. After all, £70 is just the cost of a good dinner in the UK.”

Maintaining that “I have become a better Rotarian thanks to this project,” Kattoor says Green and his team “give so much support and guidance to the clubs doing this work, and I help the clubs in India to answer all the TRF queries related to GGs.”

His first matching grant was “a project for 1,000 limbs back in 1995. It was a life-changing project for me. The real magic of Rotary is that it helps ordinary people like me to do extraordinary projects,” Kattoor adds, urging Indian clubs to grab the opportunity. “RJL, UK, which has highly committed RI officers, wants to organise more outreach camps; they motivate Rotary clubs/districts in the UK to join with Indian clubs/districts to go for global grants. They periodically visit clubs/districts in India/UK to create awareness about limb projects.”

thing is that with a working limb the person can get an income.”

Green’s involvement with fitment of the Jaipur limbs in India began after he had hosted a group study exchange team leader from Bengaluru in 2008. “He invited me to stay with him, and took me to the JLC at the Ramaiah hospital in Bangalore. While driving down the road we saw a man in his early 40s, limping while walking by the side of the road and as my host talked to him, I heard the word polio. We got him into the limb camp and within two hours he had been measured for calipers, and told he could come and get the free limb fitted the next day.”

As they walked back to the car park, “this man came limping back, threw his arms around me and said: Thank you Rotary, I can get back to work now and support my family.”

On the time it takes to fit these limbs, and if prototypes are already available, Stoyel explains that speed is of the essence when these camps are held, “because for these camps, people travel over long distances. We feed and accommodate them for a day, but actually the limb-fitting using the traditional method takes about six hours. But because a large number of people attend these camps, the measurements are done on Day 1, and next day the limb is fitted.”

He adds that importance is given to training the technicians; “sustainability is the key word, because it’s no good if the work is done only when we or our trainers are there.”

The average cost of a limb in India is £70 (₹6,000). Explaining the process, Green says, “The amputee sits in front of our technician, who wraps the amputation stump with Plaster of Paris, that sets very quickly. The mould is made according to these measurements; what we get is a length of pipe similar to a drainpipe made of PVC, which is sturdy and durable.

At the bottom of it is the Jaipur foot, which is a remarkable product made of a compound of very hard, durable, long-lasting rubber.”

Some of the recipients do come for refitment, particularly children because they are growing.

PDG Kattoor says the Jaipur foot “is the most cost-effective artificial limb in the world. If you go to a private party, a Jaipur foot in India will cost ₹30,000 but we spend only around ₹6,000 for a limb and give it free to the recipients.”

The Africa scene

Coming to Africa, Don Short, RJL trustee and Africa director of the charity, says that while “26 workshops have been already equipped and operating in Africa, four more are currently coming up in the Congo, Rwanda, Gambia





Above: PDG Peter Swinscoe, project manager for India, at an artificial limb fitment camp organised by RC Muvattupuzha in 2002.

Left: A woman is all smiles after getting a brand new limb.



and Ethiopia. All of these were delayed due to Covid and local reasons. The Gambia and Ethiopia workshops will have a capacity to make 1,000 limbs each, and the other two 500 limbs.”

The orthopaedic hospital network in Africa is not as vast as India, Short says, adding, “we usually establish a workshop within an existing hospital, equip it with the required material and equipment and train local technicians to manufacture these limbs. So when we go away they can continue without us, as opposed to a camp.” Unlike in India, in Africa the patients pay for the limb and the subsequent material is bought with these funds. RJL recommends the cost be pegged at \$250 and \$150 for above the knee and below the knee prosthetics. Adds PRID Stoyel, “If they have no money, they can return to us again for funds, so we can raise funds and keep that workshop going.”

Unlike in India, where the main reason for amputation is electric shock, in Africa there is a wider range, the most common being an accident, either on the road or at the workplace. When asked about limbs being lost to landmines, Stoyel responds: “Land mines are indeed a factor in Rwanda, or used to be. I had visited a workshop in Rwanda eight years ago and at that point there were seven amputees there; all of them landmine victims.”

So how much of this problem has the RJL managed to address in Africa? Short’s response: “We know we are only scratching the surface. There are many people who don’t have access to a prosthesis so they walk on crutches. Or are using a pole or just not getting off the ground. There is so much of ethnic conflict, violence in Africa, and there is a lot of scope for Rotary to do more work. In the remote areas, when there are such accidents, only a small room with inadequate medical facilities is available. By the time the injured

person gets to a hospital, amputation is the only way to save life. So there are unnecessary amputations.”

Kattoor adds that while electric shock, sometimes due to illegal tapping in the electricity grid, is a vital factor in amputation in India, “I believe this is more common in North India. In the south, it is more due to road accidents and in Kerala, it is also due to diabetes.”

While on India Green’s experience is that the young girls who get an artificial limb adapt very easily “to their new limbs. I’ve even seen some of them dancing with these limbs. As they wear long skirts, often you can’t even tell that a girl has an artificial limb!”

He adds that the US charity which makes the LN-4 hand, first provided those hands for an RJL- supported project in Bengaluru in 2012. “The hand enables its wearers to grip a cup, work a hoe or tool and ride a bicycle. An early user was soon able to grip a pen in the hand and begin writing again. Using a computer keyboard or holding a crutch becomes normal. For so many amputees around the world the provision of a Jaipur limb not only gives mobility, but provides independence and a new life.”

While the system of setting up ambassadors has taken off in India, it



hasn’t worked in Africa. The job of the local ambassador is to keep a watchful eye to facilitate and support this work.

Apart from its work in India and Africa, RJL has established permanent centres in Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Following the earthquake in 2010, a major project established a workshop, patient hostel, training centre and 4x4 ambulance in Haiti.

Crucial role of TRF

Green explains that there are a set of Rotarians in the UK committed to raising funds to help amputees get artificial limbs in India and Africa, and the UK charity finds Rotary clubs in the UK and other countries to work with clubs in India and apply for global grants. “We’ve had help and support from TRF through so many GGs; without TRF we couldn’t have done this work!”

But, post-Covid, “we are finding fundraising very difficult and find the mentality of Rotarians has changed. We know there is a need out there and our Rotarians are trying to support us, but our income in the last few years is considerably reduced,” says Stoyel.

To reduce both cost and their carbon footprint, “we’re trying to adapt

to distance training by using new technology through smart classes where we can sit in our homes but help train technicians in the outskirts of India or Africa.”

On the money RJL raises in the UK, the trustees estimate it is around £50,000–60,000 a year at the moment. “It used to be a lot more, but Covid has had a detrimental effect on raising funds in the UK not only for this cause but everything else, including malaria that I also work on,” Stoyel says.

But determined to continue this work, all the seven trustees of RJL are looking at ways to raise enough funds to continue their work. “We need a little more input from Rotarians across the globe. We have a very good relationship with TRF, we fully catalogue our projects and don’t have any rejects from the Foundation. We do hope your article will help raise funds by telling people of the need, our work and what we are trying to do to help.”

Kattoor urges Indian clubs to seize the opportunity provided by “RJL, UK, which is ready to provide international partners for GGs. Also, anything that we can get from the DDFs would be a huge help... there are many districts sitting on large amounts in their DDFs.” ■

**If you go to a private party,
a Jaipur foot in India will
cost ₹30,000 but we spend
only around ₹6,000
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the recipients.**

PDG Scaria Jose Kattoor



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M.Des. Graphics & Animation

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M.Sc. (2 years)

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RID 3212 gives the gift of spoken English to 5,500 rural girls

Jaishree



IPDG VR Muthu with participants of the *Project Punch* workshop at Virudhunagar.

It was remarkable to watch Deepa, a student from Sri Vidya College of Arts in Sivakasi, captivating the audience by her fluent talk in English for a full minute. From the stage, as she spoke in a new language she had only recently learnt, she radiated poise and confidence. Appreciating the value she got from *Project Punch*, a signature initiative of RID 3212, she said, “Until two months ago, I would not have even dreamt of going up on stage and facing a hall

full of people. I couldn’t even speak a simple sentence in English that was grammatically correct.”

Project Punch has played a pivotal role in this amazing transformation in Deepa and over 5,500 other students through workshops in spoken English and public speaking, which have given these young individuals a vital skill that can unlock opportunities and empower them to pursue their dreams.

Says IPDG VR Muthu: “We worked out this programme in response

to suggestions from parents and heads of educational institutions for a spoken English course that would help students speak the language fluently. We understand the aspirations of parents who desire that their children excel in English, and the invaluable advantages it brings in today’s competitive world, particularly in employment.”

RID 3212 comprises the southernmost districts — Kanyakumari, Ramnathapuram, Virudhunagar, Thoothukudi and Tirunelveli; regions where English is generally not a preferred language for communication. “Even in the English medium schools here the teachers interact with students in Tamil, the local language. I understood the importance of English when I had to stay in Mumbai on work for four years. As I did not know Hindi or Marathi, I could manage with my limited knowledge of English, and in due course, became fairly fluent in it,” says Muthu.

Recognising the power of communication skills as a gateway to broader horizons, he initiated this project to train school/college students, and teachers as well. “We included B Ed trainees too so that as future teachers they will be competent in the language.”

Skilled instructors from Beehive Communications Club, a training organisation headed by A Shyamraj, a member of RC Virudhunagar, did the training. Fifty workshops were completed by June-end, enabling participants to shed their shyness and face an audience. Each batch had 100 students

undergoing 15 hours of training. The cost, ₹1,000 a student, was borne by the Rotary clubs sponsoring them.

“The programme is not just about mastering words and grammar; it is about empowering students to confidently express themselves and connect with the world through interactive sessions, group discussions and role plays,” says Shyamraj. “The curriculum is similar to the Toastmasters’ programme. Each student is trained to go up on stage, hold a mike and deliver a speech,” says Preetha, one of the instructors.

“I can now confidently step out of my comfort zone and survive anywhere. Communication is no longer a barrier. Since we have been trained in public speaking, none of us are crowd-shy and we can put our thoughts across effectively,” says Deepa.

Shyamraj says that at the VOC B Ed College, Thoothukudi, where

Project Punch was conducted for the students a month before their interviews, “everyone got placement this year in various schools. The principal said that the recruiters were happy with their presentation skills and thanked us for the workshop.”

The project is now gearing up for Level-II where five students will be shortlisted for an advanced workshop comprising a two-day session on delivering an extempore speech and hosting an event as an emcee.

Project Punch and the 55 sessions of the *Yadhumanaval* programme were among the signature projects that were largely appreciated by DG Muthiah Pillai and past governors Sathappa Periannan, K Vijayakumar, H Shajahan and S Sheik Saleem at a felicitation event hosted by IPDG Muthu’s home club, RC Virudhunagar.

Laying down office as DG on June 30, Muthu is happy that

Yadhumanaval (April 23 *Rotary News*) has reached out to over 70,000 youngsters, the *Kalam* project has helped over 10,000 individuals with career guidance, *Vignyana Ratham* has spread love for science in one lakh school students and *Iraivi* has addressed various forms of teenage challenges in 33,000 adolescent girls including distribution of undergarments to 5,000 marginalised girls.

“It was like a slap on my face when I first heard a girl say with much hesitation: ‘many of us do not have the underwear to place the sanitary pad that you have so kindly given.’ That woke us all up and since then we have been including a pack of three underwear for each girl, while distributing sanitary napkins to underprivileged girls,” says Gayathri Mariraj, project coordinator of *Iraivi*.

Picture by Jaishree

Rotary sets up a mega hospital in Tirupur

Team Rotary News



PRID C Basker inaugurating a centre at the hospital in the presence of IPDG B Elangkumaran (second from R) and PDG Muruganathan (third from L).

Rotary Club of Tirupur West, RID 3203, has completed the construction of the Rotary Tirupur West Public Hospital in the city. The ₹6.5 crore (\$800,000) building was completed with three global grants and will provide general medicine, dialysis, diabetes and paediatric care, and will also treat eye and dental disorders. It is equipped with digital x-ray, diagnostic lab and ambulances.

State minister for information and publicity MP Swaminathan inaugurated the hospital in June in the presence of PRID C Basker, IPDG B Elangkumaran, club president P Shanmugasundaram, Palladam MLA Anandhan and past governors of the district. ■

Winning a mini marathon after a complicated heart surgery

Shekhar Mehta

Unbelievable; amazing; what? In this condition? Superhuman; hats off to him for his determination!

These are some of the reactions to what can only be described as an incredible feat... of determination, will power and physical endurance.

Naresh Kumar Jalan, a member of my club RC Calcutta Mahanagar, RID

3291, discovered his passion for running in 2016, at the young age of 57. Every journey begins with a single step, and Naresh started his with a run of 500 metres, pushing himself to run further each day and on Jan 29, just a few months after he began his journey, he not only participated in but miraculously won his first ever mini marathon (5km).

The die was cast and the bug had bitten. The BRC mini marathons in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, the CSC mini marathon in 2018. He not just ran these, winning each one he entered, but also bettered his time, every time. In the Tata Structura in 2019 he was 25th among 5,000 participants from all categories, earning the moniker of Naresh Milkha Singh in our club.

He was enjoying his new found passion. But life has strange plans and tragedy struck. Just when the world was battling the second wave of the Covid pandemic in 2021, Naresh was diagnosed with a rare heart ailment and was recommended immediate surgery. His world came crashing down. He was wheeled into surgery with the doctors warning his wife and daughter Dr Karishma, an intensivist, not to be too hopeful of the outcome. They prepared themselves for the worst, but had faith in Naresh's determination

and the will to overcome. He underwent the replacement of the aortic valve and ascending aorta with a metal conduit, a rare and complicated operation.

The post-operative recovery was especially difficult with Covid raging all around, with restrictions and lockdowns.

It is only when the darkness deepens that one truly recognises the power of family. In Naresh's case, the power of the Rotary family and the selflessness of our fellow Rotarians quickly came to the fore for everything that his family members needed emotionally and logistically, including the blood required through the donors. His wife Neelam and daughter Karishma will forever be grateful to Rotarians for the unstinting support that they received during this very dark phase.

Slowly the clouds dissipated, and Naresh began his long road to recovery, hoping to lead a normal life once again. But what is "normal" to us mere mortals, was not so for him. He is made of a different steel. He wanted to not just get back on his feet, but to run again.

Known for his passion, he never does anything half-heartedly, being both determined and disciplined. A passionate follower of Rotary, he is known as the encyclopaedia of Rotary in our district; even I think twice before questioning his knowledge.

A few months after his ordeal, he took his first tentative walk. One laborious step led to another. Slowly, over days and weeks, he increased his pace, then a jog of 100 metres, 200, 500, 1km... each day he climbed a mountain... all with an eye on his Everest.



Exactly 21 months later, on Jan 28, 2023, Naresh entered the BRC mini marathon once again. His wife and daughter had prayers on their lips; in trepidation they held each other's hands and their breaths, when the whistle blew for the start of the race. We all wanted Naresh to summit his Everest but were terrified. The minutes passed agonisingly slowly, their hearts beating faster and faster, it seemed like a lifetime until they saw him cross the finish line. They were ecstatic and ran to hug him with tears in their eyes. Tears of relief, joy, triumph.

Naresh had won... he had beaten everything that life had thrown at him. And for the record, he won in his category and came in top five amongst about 500 participants across all categories.

"We don't know internationally, but yes in India we have not heard of

anyone running a marathon a year and a half after this heart procedure, and winning it too," is what his doctors have said. The doctors are super proud

of him, friends are proud of him... and to Karishma and Neelam, well he is simply, a super hero.

The writer is a past RI president.



Naresh Kumar Jalan, member of RC Calcutta Mahanagar, running the marathon.



Teaching self-defence to girls

Team Rotary News

Around 2,500 girls from across various schools and colleges have been trained in self-defence techniques by Sensei P Vasu, a fifth-degree Black Belt expert in Japanese martial arts. Vasu, a past president of RC Chennai East R A Puram, RID 3232, collaborated with four other Rotary clubs in the district — RCs Chennai Mitra, Gold Coast, Metrozone and Alandur — to identify the students. Inner Wheel Club of Madras Bay City



P Vasu(L), past president, RC Chennai East R A Puram, training girls in self-defence.

recommended 150 children in the age group 6–14 from 20 charity homes to be trained in self-defence.

"All the sessions were completed in 10 months. We had also organised a special seminar during each

session that focused on boosting self-confidence and building courage in the young girls," said Vasu. ■

Rotary gifts a bamboo bus stop in Thane

Rasheeda Bhagat

A beautiful luxury villa or resort may not make heads turn as they have sprung up in many parts of India and come to be associated with the uber rich. But a swanky-looking spanking new bamboo bus stop in Thane, put up by RC Thane Imperial, RID 3142, is certainly making heads turn in the city of dreams.

With a grass lawn (artificial), and neatly arranged bamboo sheets and poles, including beautiful bamboo benches for the commuters travelling by public buses, the first-of-its-kind bus shelter in Thane has definitely created a wow factor.

This unique and innovative project is the brainchild of the club's IPP Reet Kumar, and her two in-house interior designers Jiiya Lad (also the club secretary) and project chairman Parikshit Lad. Giving details of this innovative project Reet says, "For this year, our

team wanted to do an eco-friendly and sustainable project, which would also come under our district theme of FAB (fabulous) projects. Near our housing society there was this decrepit place which was dark, dreary and downright filthy... it had been encroached upon by hawkers, alcoholics and was being used as a urinal. The local residents were facing a serious hygiene and cleanliness as well as safety issue. Mosquitoes were proliferating in the place, and ownerless vehicles were being parked. Pedestrians and passersby had begun using that dark spot for smoking, consuming alcohol."

The space was begging to be rescued and the club members decided to put up a bus shelter there. The choice was between a conventional steel and concrete bus shelter, which would have cost much less, or something unique that would make heads turn and also



Commuters at the bamboo bus shelter installed by RC Thane Imperial.

Organic bamboo is cent per cent biodegradable, prevents soil erosion and minimise the demand on timber.

make a statement for environmental protection, Rotary's seventh focus area, enhancing, in the process, the organisation's public image.

With the club president herself having studied interior design, and two club members being accomplished and skilled interior designers, it was decided to put up a bus shelter made of specially treated bamboo shipped in from Assam.

Now came the more difficult part; since the project involved putting up a bus shelter for the Thane Municipal Corporation, a plethora of clearances was required. "We all know how difficult it is to get the required authorisation and signature from one government organisation; in this case we had to deal with five different government bodies and get five signatures," laughs Reet.

But their persistence paid off and the requisite authorisation was acquired. Next came the question of choosing the bamboo; local or ordinary bamboo would not do as one Mumbai monsoon would be sufficient to make a severe dent on such a structure. So it was decided to get special or premium quality bamboo... the type that is used for upmarket villas and resorts, and is approved by the Indian Green Council Building norms, from Assam.

She points out that two other purposes served by this project were that it was not only a contribution to the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, but also another government scheme — the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bamboo Scheme and National Bamboo Mission.

Why bamboo is special



Reeling off the special qualities of bamboo, RC Thane Imperial past president Reet Kumar says that first of all it is an eco-friendly and sustainable solution; bamboo can be cut like grass rather than uprooted and it helps to rejuvenate poor quality soil. It grows quickly and densely so that less space is required, needs less water to grow, doesn't require pesticides or fertilisers. "Organic bamboo is cent per cent biodegradable, prevents soil erosion and if ethically grown can help local economies and minimise the demand on timber."

Other advantages of bamboo are that it is soft, anti-bacterial, water

resistant and has eco-friendly properties; it has no sharp or rough elements and provides excellent ventilation because of microscopic holes in the fibre.

"Our research has shown that the thermoregulatory properties of bamboo help keep you cool when the weather gets hot. The breathable and moisture-wicking nature of the material allows for ultimate comfort on hot days. Bamboo also offers UV protection from the sun's harmful rays, filtering up to 97.5 of UV radiation. Natural bamboo is hypoallergenic; it is perfect for sensitive skin as it does not cause allergic reactions," says club secretary Jiiya Lad. ■



The structure will last for 10–12 years as the bamboo has been specially treated as done for villas and resorts.

villas or resorts. The club has also undertaken the responsibility to maintain it for the first three years. The roof has been protected against water leakage during the rains, as it has been covered by polycarbonate sheets. Trash cans, also made of bamboo and so beautiful that they can be easily pilfered, have also been kept here. To the question on the temptation they present to light fingered persons, Jiya smiles and says: “Not possible as they have been embedded with cement!” Cameras have also been installed by the Rotarians to add to the spot’s security. TMC has been given the assurance that for three years the club will maintain this bus shelter.

At the inaugural ceremony IPDG Kailash Jethani and TMC commissioner Abhijit Bangar complimented the club members for their service to the local community. Bangar said proposals for such innovative projects in partnership with Rotary will be considered and welcomed.

On the response of local community and other clubs to this unconventional bus stop, Reet says, “Certainly, there is a sense of wonder, because this shelter is indeed unique. A couple of other clubs are interested and have approached us, and the TMC commissioner himself has expressed interest too. We will happily help as we know the process and have the skilled designers in our club.” ■

“The objective of this scheme is to prevent or minimise the use of plastic in India and through the extensive use of bamboo, generate income and support the livelihood of farmers; all objectives aligned to those identified by Rotary.”

Reet adds that the normal cost of such a shelter, including the fees of specialised interior designers who work with bamboo, would be about

₹6 to 7 lakh, but the club managed to keep the cost low at around ₹3 lakh as the designers worked as volunteers. A conventional cement/steel bus shelter would cost around ₹2 lakh when made by the TMC as it gets the advantage of bulk rates.

On the longevity of this bamboo structure, she says that it will last from 10–12 years as the bamboo has been specially treated as done for

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Engage with youth to secure their future: **Banerjee**

Rasheeda Bhagat

Today, the fears of Covid may have receded to the background, but people, specially the younger ones, students of IITs and the like, seem more bothered, more concerned about what their future is going to be, how are they going to live their lives.

I am not a medical man but perhaps the solution to this issue might be to engage more with our students in schools and colleges,” said PRIP Kalyan Banerjee.

He was addressing an event in Chennai to felicitate DGN Mahaveer Bothra who will take over as the leader of the new district 3233 in 2024–25 and DGND D Devendran the following year.

Banerjee said in the last issue of *Rotary News* he had read about the recent visit of RI President Gordon McNally to Chennai, and “one of the more

unusual topics that the then president-elect touched on was about mental health issues. It’s a subject which perhaps the Rotarians in our country, busy with our myriad community service projects and raising funds to carry them out, are not too much engaged in.”

But in Vapi, Gujarat, where he lives, his club, RC Vapi, had formed a Trust which ran colleges in management studies. “I tell you, doing this has brought a lot of success to our young generation and happiness to our Rotarians and satisfaction to the community as a whole.”

McNally had also spoken on Rotary’s continuing battle to eradicate polio. “Unfortunately, most of the Rotary world thinks that polio is done with, almost gone, and we need to look at other problems. But polio is not ‘all gone’ and polio anywhere, carries the threat of the germs being

carried elsewhere. From time to time, over the years, we have found polio in the sewages in many places from Mumbai to Madagascar to New York. And as people travel, so do diseases.”

So the job of vaccination and precautions, and their increased support for the PolioPlus fund, till the last cases of polio have gone from Pakistan and Afghanistan, has to continue, he added.

Describing Chennai as one of his “favourite Rotary brotherhood areas in the country” Banerjee grew nostalgic as he recalled his frequent visits here from the 1990s. “Coming here is always a bit of a nostalgic event for me because in the 1990s I remember frequently interacting with Krish



Chitale (from RC Madras) who was among the first Rotary leaders in India to work on eradicating measles, which then led to our subsequent battles and victory against polio. I remember the many nights I spent with the late PDG Ramkrishna Raja at his home in Poes Garden and relishing his wife Rajalaxmi's dosas; of being present at so many district conferences over the year, including the one when director Venky served as your DG. And meeting late PDG Rekha Shetty who would happily give me her latest books and visiting past director PT Prabhakar at his home to talk about Rotary and cricket which we both enjoyed."

PRIP Kalyan Banerjee and PRID C Basker being felicitated, along with DGN Mahaveer Bothra (third from R), his wife Jayashree, DGND D Devendran (fourth from R), his wife Archana and PDG R Srinivasan. Also in the picture: PDGs ISAK Nazar, S Muthupalaniappan, IPDG N Nandakumar, his wife Sumedha and Mala Basker.

Just as he was beginning to think "maybe you have had enough of me because, I talk about these things time and again, I received my friend PDG ISAK Nazar's invite for this event and was glad to accept it before he had a chance to change his mind!"

The other reason for his eagerness to attend the event was to join in the felicitation of "two outstanding Rotary leaders". He was happy to learn that both Bothra and Devendran were 'Light up Presidents' during the Light Up year in 2014-15, when Gary Huang was RI president and his theme was *Light up Rotary*.

Banerjee congratulated RID 3232 DG Nandakumar (2022-23) for his leadership of the district, which had over 7,400 members and was scheduled to split. This meant that after one year, each of the two new districts would commence with over 3,700 members each. "This reflects the amazing growth of Rotary in Chennai." He remembered that over a decade back "District 3230, the original district you had started out with, got bifurcated into districts 3231 and 3232. And here we are, just about a

decade and a little more, that you are almost doubling again."

This made him wonder "what is it that makes Rotary blossom and keep doubling itself, again and again in India while it keeps shrinking and growing smaller in the countries where Rotary had started in the first place. And so, to my heroes of today, I ask, how do you hope to light up your year?"

Addressing the meet RI director AS Venkatesh had a few words of advice for the future governors Bothra and Devendran. The first was not to neglect their health; as they will need to work very hard for not only their year but the years leading up to their term as governors.

Next was what he called the SS formula, which every district governor needs to adopt. "The first part of this formula is maintain silence; don't talk unnecessarily or else you'll get into trouble. But despite doing that, if you still end up in trouble, smile; they'll wonder

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16 MAY'23 @ HOTEL GREEN PARK, CHENNAI.





PRID AS Venkatesh (R) and PDG Nazar.

what you are up to. Silence and smile are both required for a successful term as governor.”

Based on his own and several other governors’ experience “I can tell you it’s going to be a stressful year in terms of different demands on your time and challenges to your decision-making capacity. There will be different pulls and pressures, but the fact that the district has chosen you to lead it, means that they have confidence that you’ll deliver.”

Venkatesh advised them to use the time available till their year begins to get to know every club, its strengths and weaknesses... what kind of projects or any other task it will be able to do. “Also, use this time to know about Rotary. There is so much well-researched, well-documented, well-presented and easy to understand information out there online about Rotary. Update your knowledge and skills, so that you are better equipped to handle your responsibility. With knowledge of Rotary and intimate understanding of the clubs, nothing in the world can stop you being successful governors,” he concluded.

Congratulating both Bothra and Devendran, PRID C Basker complimented the organising committee led by Nazar for putting together the grand event. “I have been to so many felicitation functions, but here, with so many zonal RI officers from so many RI districts being present, this appears like a mini zone institute.”

They were also lucky to get the Bhishma of Rotary, PRIP Banerjee himself, to felicitate them.

He asked them to always remember that when “you become a district governor in Rotary, your role goes beyond your club and district and you become the ambassador of the community you live in.” In Rotary, people strive for a position to do something good. “But not everybody gets a chance to become a DG. It is the rarest of rare opportunities; this is my experience. Your exposure was till now only with your club and district. But as a Rotary governor, wherever you go in the globe, they look at you with respect. Always remember that as governor you are representing one of the biggest service organisations

in the world. God has given you this opportunity to do good.”

Basker underlined the difference between the era when he became governor and the current situation. “When I was a DG, the situation of India was completely different; we used to go after Rotarians from other countries asking for global grants. Today, thanks to the progress of India, we are the second largest donors to TRF. The tables have turned dramatically in the last eight years.”

Asking them to chart a new course and not look back at what their predecessors did, the past director said. “Today’s Rotarians want more fun, give it to them. We want people to come in, have fun and at the same time work for the community.” Quoting Steve Jobs, he said the governors would need passion, focus and the energy and commitment to transform ordinary clubs into active and vibrant clubs. “Have exceptional imagination to do things differently; develop excellent communication skills. You will be rated by your communication skills... before the mike and also on email. That is why Rotary chooses you in advance, to improve your communication skills.”

PRIP Gary Huang congratulated his “light-up presidents” through a video message.

DG Nandakumar and PDG Nazar complimented the two incoming governors and said their district had great expectations from them, which they should strive to fulfil.

Along with Bothra and Devendran, PDG Chandramohan, who has been selected as the district’s representative to the CoL, and PDG R Srinivasan who will be in the RI Directors’ nominating committee were also honoured at the event, attended by RID 3231 DG JKN Palani, DGE NS Saravanan and DGN Vinod Saraogi, both from RID 3234, and several PDGs from other districts of Tamil Nadu.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat

Electronic hands for amputees

Team Rotary News

At a two-day prosthetic limb distribution camp in April, 65 amputees were fitted with battery-operated, electronic 'Inali' hands by RC Hiranandani Estate, RID 3142, in a joint project with RC Poona Downtown, RID 3131, the Inali Foundation and New Era Informatique.

The camp was held at the Hiranandani Foundation School, Thane, being run by the club. While the club got 175 fitments under a CSR grant from the Inali Foundation, "we had a total registration of 1,895 people from across Maharashtra for

the camp. With the help of RC Poona Downtown and Inali volunteers, we completed the evaluation of prosthetic requirement for beneficiaries three weeks prior to the camp," said project chair Dr Namrataa Srivastav. James Dyson from Infosys Social Innovation and Nasscom awardee Prashant Gade, founder, Inali Foundation, assisted the club in the evaluation of the beneficiaries. After the pre-camp screening, the shortlisted amputees were called for fitment at the camp.

The beneficiaries were trained and counselled on how to use the prosthetic

hand for their daily chores and activities. "We played a recorded video that showed how to make efficient use of the Inali hand," said Namrataa. The remaining 91 shortlisted people will be fitted with the prosthetic limb at the Inali Foundation Centre, Pune.

RID 3142 IPDG Kailash Jethani complimented club president Amit Raje, Dr Namrataa, co-chairs Arunima Singh and Anubha Kharabe for making this inter-district limb fitment camp a huge success.

One of the beneficiaries, Dhanashri Sambhaji Bhosale turned emotional after she got the electronic hand. Her husband said, "my wife was born with this deformity. But she is educated and performs all the household chores with just one hand. Now with this new hand her dream of riding a bike like a professional will be fulfilled."

Vaibhav Vitthal Galande and Madhukar Wadkar, who lost both their upper limbs in an accident, were jubilant as they have got a new lease of life. "I will be able to accomplish big goals in life now that I have got both my hands," said Wadkar.

PRID Ashok Mahajan, DG Milind Kulkarni and DGN Harsh Makol visited the camp to witness the enthusiasm and joy of the beneficiaries who walked out with a new hope. The battery-operated, switch-based electronic Inali hand comes with a two-year warranty, and the Inali Foundation has distributed 7,000 such limbs to beneficiaries over the last five years. ■

PRID Ashok Mahajan shakes hand with a beneficiary at the Inali hand fitment camp. Project chair Dr Namrataa Srivastav is seen third from right.





Bridging Gaps, Empowering Dreams

A University in Aruba makes it possible for students from India to become a physician or a veterinarian in the USA, with a unique intake mechanism that is as credible as it is cost-effective. Xavier University School of Medicine's Doctor of Medicine (MD) and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) Program in association with KLE Belagavi.

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) puts the global healthcare provider shortage at 4.3 million – this comprises physicians, nurses and healthcare support staff.

This is as per the WHO recommended ratio of 1:1100 doctors to individuals.

That North America is a dream destination for aspiring healthcare providers is an acknowledged fact. However, it is equally well known that international students face a number of barriers and challenges in getting admission to medical schools in the United States of America and Canada. Stringent Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) requirements raise the competition bar at the entrance level and the issue of very limited seats for international students remains a perennial problem.

The Xavier University School of Medicine Aruba has conceptualized and implemented a

unique intake mechanism that makes it possible for students from India to live their dreams of graduating with a North American medical degree not only at a significantly reduced cost but also with global exposure to the world's brightest. Ravishankar Bhooplapur, President, XUSOM, says, "After extensive and intensive research into the credentials, capabilities and collaborative mindsets of medical schools in India, we identified a few institutions and after talks, finalised our partnership with KLE Academy of Higher Education, Belagavi, an established institution with impeccable education delivery credentials in order to implement our initiative".

Dreaming different: The aim is simple-to provide Indian students the opportunity to achieve their dream at a fully accredited medical school at affordable tuition fees. Students begin their journey in India at KLE



Academy of Higher Education and Research, continue their pre-clinical studies at Xavier University School of Medicine in Aruba, and then complete their clinical training in the USA at Xavier's affiliated and accredited teaching hospitals and clinics.

Once they complete their MD programme at Xavier University, students are eligible to apply for PG training/residency in USA and Canada. With its decades of experience guiding its students into competitive residency positions, Xavier University provides XUSOM the accomplishment of its graduates matching for residency training across disciplines such as Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Family Medicine, Psychiatry, and Surgery, including plastic surgery, neurology, and other fields.

The process remains the same for those wishing to be veterinarians – after completing their DVM degree, students can appear for the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE) and immediately accept jobs without residency training.

The modern and innovative curriculum and resources such as NBME and Kaplan review programmes ensure that Xavier Students are well-prepared for the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) and North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE).

The Programming Paradigm: The intake mechanism has been designed and fine-tuned with great attention to not just compliance requirements, but recommendations as well. **Doctor of Medicine:** Students will complete their first two years of pre-medical training at KLE's campus in Belagavi. Students then automatically progress to study preclinical sciences (Basic Sciences) at Xavier University Aruba. The final two years of hands-on clinical training will be completed in USA and Canada at Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) approved hospitals.

Doctor of Veterinary Medicine: After two years of pre-med training at KLE, students will automatically progress to complete three years of the DVM programme in Aruba. This will be followed by one year of clinical experience in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other countries. Xavier's veterinary programme has already applied for accreditation with CAAM-HP and other agencies.

Excellence at Xavier: XUSOM has paid due attention, performed due diligence and acquired the requisite compliances for

DOCTOR OF MEDICINE 6-YEAR PROGRAMME

Pre-Med

2 years - India



Basic Science

2 years - Aruba



Clinical Rotations

2 years - US/Canada



DOCTOR OF VETERINARY MEDICINE 6-YEAR PROGRAMME

Pre-Med

2 years - India



Basic Science

2 years - Aruba



Clinical Traning

2 years - US/Canada/New
Zealand/Australia/UK



Affiliated Clinical Teaching Hospitals

Pennsylvania

- ▶ Baruch S. Blumberg Institute

New York

- ▶ Long Island Community Hospital
- ▶ St. Joseph's Medical Center
- ▶ Mercy Medical Center
- ▶ Wyckoff Heights Medical Center

Maryland

- ▶ St. Agnes Hospital
- ▶ Sinai Hospital
- ▶ Northwest Hospital
- ▶ Willoughby Beach Pediatrics

Illinois

- ▶ Jackson Park Hospital
- ▶ Rush Copley Medical Center
- ▶ Saint Anthony Medical Center

offering medical education.

Accreditations – or valid external quality assurance conducted by recognised agencies in medical education – have been sought committedly and received by Xavier. Unwavering in its dedication to uphold the highest academic standards in medical education, XUSOM constantly seeks validation of its excellence from international accrediting bodies.

These recognitions are vital and have enabled Xavier graduates to secure exceptional residencies and become licensed physicians throughout the North America for one and a half decades now.

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) fully approves Xavier University School of Medicine. Xavier is also fully accredited by the Accreditation Commission on Colleges of Medicine (ACCM). ACCM standards are comparable with the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) standards- the accreditor of US and Canadian medical schools. ACCM is also closely aligned with the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA). The US Department of

Education empowers the NCFMEA to review written and applied accreditation standards for medical schools outside North America. ACCM is approved by NCFMEA and is recognized as having standards comparable to those utilised in the US. The institute has also featured in 10 Caribbean medical school lists in 2019. The Government of Aruba granted Xavier a charter in 2004 – this permits Xavier to grant MD, DVM, and other healthcare science degrees.

On the curriculum: The MD curriculum at XUSOM is recognised as modern, innovative and providing its students a distinct edge.

The MD curriculum in the Basic Science Programme is an integrated organ-based curriculum with both vertical and horizontal integration. Students are exposed to clinical skills training and hospital postings from the first semester in Aruba. Courses such as medical humanities, professionalism, ethics, and behavioural sciences are integrated with the core biomedical preclinical sciences. The final examination for all the courses includes questions from the National Board of Medical Examination (NBME) – the body that conducts the USMLE. Students get exposed to NBME examinations for all the basic science courses, thus enhancing their preparation for USMLE Step 1. During the last semester of the basic sciences (MD6), students are offered Kaplan Live USMLE preparation with access to multiple question banks and resources in conjunction with a faculty-run comprehensive review of basic sciences. All students must pass USMLE Step 1 before proceeding to the clinical training (Years 3 and 4) in the USA.

The Clinical Sciences curriculum, designed by the Xavier faculty, focuses on USMLE step 2 requirements and standards set by various national associations in respective clinical courses. Clinical training is conducted at ACGME-approved teaching hospitals and includes a total of 84 weeks of training (core rotations and elective rotations). NBME shelf examinations are required to complete each rotation. Students are provided with multiple library resources, support, and guidance to perform well in USMLE Step 2 CK.

Guiding the way: Students at XUSOM are assured of all guidance in making choices. Especially in the crucial 4th year, medical students are supported through the residency application. Clinical deans hold multiple

Fee structure

MD Programme

USD 15,000

for the Pre-Med studies at KLE

(Note: Students can pay in Indian rupees. All students from the KLE programme receive a USD 55,000 scholarship to the MD programme. Students will pay only USD 135,000 for the four-year MD. Programme instead of the standard tuition fee of USD 190,000)



Vet Programme

USD 15,000

for the Pre Vet studies at KLE

(Note: All students from the KLE programme receive a 50 per cent scholarship (equivalent to USD 57,000) to the Vet Programme. Students will pay only USD 57,000 for the four-year VET program instead of the standard tuition fee of USD 114,000).

Admission Indian students are required to pass NEET Examination. A faculty admission committee will interview every student before acceptance. Percentage of Indian Students and the rest of the world - More than 90% of XUSOM students are from North America. The remaining students represent more than 26 countries worldwide. Indian students represent only 1-2 % of the total student body.

For More Information Please Contact:

infoindia@xusom.com
+91 91 0083 0083
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orientation sessions and provide students with MSPE (Medical Student Performance Evaluation) letters.

Xavier Clinical Chairs and Deans individually mentor students interested in applying for residency in their respective specialties. Xavier registrars and clinical coordinators guide the students with the residency match cycle, deadline dates, and the application process. Xavier regularly invites residency programme directors and hospital executives to guide students through the match process.

The Dean and Assistant Deans of the Students Affairs and department personnel offer a structured support system for international students to facilitate a smooth transition into the MD programme. Each student is paired with a faculty mentor to monitor their academic progress.

Small class sizes allow individualized mentorship from highly-qualified faculty from the first day. No wonder that Xavier has had a more than 95 per cent first-time pass rate for the USMLE every year for many years.

Student organisations play an important role in routinely conducting social activities and engaging with new students to help them acclimatise to the new environment. Xavier Immigration staff provide counseling and extensive support to the students on the Visa process to enter Aruba and USA. **Xavier students are eligible for H1/J1 visa programme.**

The campus quotient: XUSOM's all-inclusive campus is a space that enables and empowers students to achieve their full potential and more. Beautiful outdoor spaces, sporting amenities, an outdoor gym, and other conveniences make this a haven of serenity. Though crime is practically non-existent on Aruba, all measures have been taken to secure the safety of students.

With the \$70 million campus transformation underway, students are assured of a safe yet exciting and dynamic space to call their own. This new academic campus will include a theater-style auditorium, state-of-the-art classrooms, labs, research facilities, seminar rooms, a new library, study areas for individuals and small and large groups, student lounges, and a walk-in clinic.

Diversity at work: Xavier University's student body is represented by more than 20

Xavier University Campus



countries worldwide. Students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds learn from each other and learn with each other. This is extremely significant as it provides the cultural foundation, awareness and sensitivity required by future physicians to care for the healthcare needs of increasingly culturally diverse populations in most developed countries.

Cost cutting: Xavier's partnerships in India have agreed to offer the MD/ DVM training at a very affordable cost without compromising on the quality and opportunities for the training of Indian students. This enables a larger percentage of the talent pool to aspire

Students are exposed to clinical skills training at teaching hospital from the first semester in Aruba

to learn and practice medicine globally.

Aiding the scholar: Xavier University has designed multiple opportunities to financially support its students as they embark on their medical school journey. Several scholarships – Shaping Xavier Scholarship, Presidential Excellence Scholarship, Chancellor's Scholarship, Congressman John Lewis Memorial Scholarship, Pramukh Swami Maharaj Scholarship, MCAT and Medical Field Experience Scholarships are awarded to deserving students every year. The Guru Nanak Scholarship was set up to commemorate Guru Nanak's 600th birthday.

Not just that, all students who join the September 2023 cohort are entitled to a \$55,000 tuition scholarship over the course of the entire programme.

Advantage Aruba: Aruba is a beautiful island in the Dutch Caribbean, constantly ranked as one of the safest islands by tourists. Aruba is also one of the most developed islands in the Caribbean. It is the only island with highest connections to the USA, Europe, and Central America with multiple daily flights.

The X factor: From a unique intake system, to world-class education delivery, a beautiful space to live and grow in, and the full support of a committed system and stakeholders all at high cost-benefit ratio, XUSOM has everything that the today's medical student may aspire to. ■

XUSOM: Forging new paths

Ravi Bhooplapur, President of Xavier University School of Medicine, has roots in India but has spent his professional life in the US.



THE World Health Organization estimates a global shortage of 4.3 million physicians over the next 10 years.

Understanding that there is a massive demand for well-trained physicians and veterinarians, particularly in the Western world, and wanting to give back based on his great successes so far, Ravi wanted to fulfill this need and provide opportunities for students who want to become doctors or veterinarians in North America and India.

After careful research and consideration, and many interactions with KLE, Ravi and **Xavier launched and new integrated 2+2+2 model for students in India to begin their pre-medical studies in India at KLE**, then complete the basic sciences in Aruba at Xavier's brand new campus, and finish clinical rotations at accredited teaching hospitals in the US.

Xavier is unwavering in its dedication to upholding the highest academic standards in medical education, and many international accrediting bodies continually validate its commitment to excellence. Ravi has led Xavier's accreditation, which is the highest attainable possible. Xavier has full accreditation from the Accreditation Commission on Colleges of Medicine (ACCM). The National Committee on Foreign Medical Education

and Accreditation (NCFMEA), under the U.S. Department of Education, recognises ACCM to have similar standards as its medical school accreditation body.

In addition, Xavier has been approved by the New York State Department of Education and the Medical Board of California, two states that need additional approvals. In fact, Xavier is just one of just 8 international medical schools that has full accreditation and approval by New York State. Xavier plans to have all 50 states in the US for licensure by 2026, and the veterinary program will receive accreditation in the US and other international bodies in the coming years.

The school follows an innovative curriculum that trains students for USA and Canadian licensing exams. Ravi has ensured that the most qualified faculty are there to teach and mentor the students. Xavier's curriculum is taught at the highest level and is similar to that

of US medical schools. All the US Medical Licensing Examinations (USMLE) are part of the curriculum and the graduation requirements of the program. The last 2 years of our program provides students with hands-on medical experience as they perform clinical rotations at accredited teaching hospitals (ACGME approved) in the USA and Canada. Xavier students can apply for Postgraduate (residency training) to any hospital in the 50 states in the US as

well as in the provinces and territories of Canada. Continuous guidance, mentoring, and assistance prepare students for residency interviews.

Students from countries other than the USA are eligible for H1/J1 visas.

In addition, Ravi has spearheaded and overseen the transformation of Xavier's campus in Aruba. Xavier has built a new all-inclusive residential campus with all food, transportation, housing, and 24/7 security included. In addition, Xavier is in the midst of building a new \$70 million dollar academic campus that will be opening in Fall 2024. Aruba is a very safe and secure place, and sits below the hurricane belt, so the island does not receive any of the extreme weather most other Caribbean islands experience.

Xavier students have been very successful, with more than 1,100 alumni working as doctors around the world over the past 20 years. Xavier's success is defined by student success. Student first-time passing rate in the USMLE Step 1 and Step 2, as well as the number of residency matches, are very high. XUSOM has more than 90 percent first-time USMLE pass rate and successful residency matches.

Ravi has built Xavier into one of the top 10 medical schools in the Caribbean, as named by Money Inc. Magazine. He has ensured that the school is able to offer a high quality medical education at an affordable tuition, and that Xavier students and alumni continue to achieve a high level of success in the medical field. ■

For more information, visit XUSOM.com or email InfoIndia@xusom.com. +91 91 0083 0083, +91 98 8528 2712

XUSOM Snapshot

Year of inception: 2004

Courses offered: MD Program, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), Doctor of Physiotherapy

Student intake in the first year: 150

Total alumni strength: 1100 approximately.

Placement record: Approximately 81% for Residency Match
18 % for other gainful employment in the healthcare sector



Club experience matters most

Tom Gump

Rotary International's surveys show that the primary reason members love their Rotary club is a great club experience. The question is how do we intentionally create a great club experience? Below is a step-by-step easy way to do it.

- Conduct an assessment/survey. Rotary is like any business. We are selling a product, which is the club experience. If we offer a great club experience, our members stay and bring in others. If we offer a poor club experience, our members leave. Either way, they tell others about their experience. Give your members the value they want. To know what they want, conduct a survey. You can refer *MyRotary* for various assessment tools that are already available or you can make your own.
- Make a change. Surveys by themselves are good, as they make your members feel they belong because you give them an opportunity to be heard. However, if you do not act on some of the suggested changes, it has the opposite effect. At a club presidents-elect training (PETS), I once asked all the PEs to tell us the one change they were going to make to create a great club experience. PE Troy said he was "going to have pie for dessert!" The room burst into laughter. I ran into "Troy 'the Pie Guy'" a few years later and asked him if he "got his pie." He did; but a strange thing happened. Club members, happy with that change, started suggesting other changes. His club slowly transformed from a

club resistant to change to one that sought change. It is now the second largest club in its district. Rotary has a *Change Model* that can tell you how to make changes while nurturing those members resistant to change.

- Stay positive, smile and say "thank you". It is the little things we do that mean the most. Standing at the front door and greeting participants (members and guests alike) with a smile and kind words attracts them and makes them feel like they belong. Saying "thank you" converts potential members into members and volunteers into long-term Rotarians. Recognising contributions does the same, no matter how you do it.
- Have an external focus. As a group, we Rotarians tend to talk to ourselves more than we talk to others. I love participating in the PETS, district conferences, institutes, international conventions, etc. However, I inevitably find myself thinking, I wish we could have invited our friends to join us. The world needs not only to hear about Rotary, but also, it needs to experience Rotary. Bring a friend with you to your next service project or social — they will love it (even if they don't like attending business meetings)!

Together, let's grow Rotary by creating great club experiences!

*The writer is a member of
RI's Membership Growth Committee*

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Gifting joy of reading to schoolchildren

Rasheeda Bhagat

To make a sizeable dent on children's growing addiction to video games, television and surfing the Internet for long hours, and kindle an interest in them in reading books, RID 3132 DG Swati Herkal has been engaged for several years in starting libraries in government and government aided schools in Maharashtra.

The literacy chair of her district under RILM (Rotary India Literacy Mission) for seven years, she has been greatly involved in many education and basic literacy projects implemented by Rotary in RID 3132. "We all know that reading is not just a basic skill; it is the foundation of students' success in all aspects of life. Beyond

being a critical professional skill, reading opens doors to captivating, informative and inspiring literature that enriches our experience and view of life," she says.

She explains that as her district's literacy chair for several years, she had worked also on adult literacy, and has written a book also on adult literacy. The book was written in Marathi but it has been translated into several languages.

To open the magic world of books to the children in government schools with limited access to general interest books, way back in 2017-18 she initiated a school library project titled *Gyan Key Library*.



Book reading sessions in progress in various schools where children discuss the books that they read.

Under this initiative, her club RC Wai initially donated a box of 200 books to each library in the zilla parishad schools of RID 3132. The cost of each library comes to ₹5,000 and Rotarians have come forward to donate money and books for this cause. To get some feedback from the schoolchildren





Books gifted by Rotarians neatly stacked in a school library.

on what kind of books they enjoy the most, in the box containing the books, a postcard with the address for communication is placed, urging the students to write back with their views.

Under this project 1,500 libraries have already been set up, and on the day she was installed as the district's first woman DG, 50 more libraries were gifted to schools. Now that she is heading her district, Swati is confident that "we will set up 1,000 school libraries this year."

Most of the books given to these libraries are in Marathi, though some



English books are there too. On the kind of books given and how a budget of only ₹5,000 was able to fetch around 200 books, the DG says, “Many of these are story books, real life stories, inspirational tales, biographies and autobiographies, magic books, and also comics... we give out *Amar Chitra Katha* comics which the

children simply love.” She is delighted at the response received from students.

As for a small budget fetching so many books she smiles and says, “well, we’ve tied up with publishers who give 20 to 50 per cent discount, especially for old books which have not been sold. Also, some of the books are very slim volumes, they cost ₹10–15, and can be read in a single sitting.” The project has also tied up with the Ratna Nidhi Foundation, a charitable organisation which gives out books as well as cupboards to store the books. Rotary’s efforts have also been complemented by the contributions from other publications in Maharashtra, she adds. Different sets of books have been identified for the very young and older students.

To ensure that the libraries are not set up just in name and the books do get transferred from the cupboards or boxes into the children’s hands, a certain structure has been given to this scheme. For instance, on one

designated day every month, the class teacher has to spend 1–2 hours in the library. A book is chosen and each student has to say something about that book. “They sit in a circle and there is a discussion on the book, and to participate in it, every child has to read the book. Our aim is to develop a strong reading habit in the student, which will not only benefit her academically but also equip her with a lifelong tool for success,” adds Swati.

Summing up the gratification of parents and teachers, she adds, “Parents and teachers are both deeply concerned about the declining interest in reading among children, who prefer to either watch TV or play video games, so they are very happy with this initiative. Our primary task is not only to encourage students to start reading but also to help them find joy in the process. Reading enhances one’s attention span, fosters analytical thinking, and expands vocabulary.” ■

Our primary task is not only to encourage students to start reading but also to help them find joy in the process.

Swati Herkal
District Governor
RID 3132



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Endpoint, Middle East, UAE



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Chartered Accountant



Shweta Sirohi Gupta
Careflight, Sydney, Australia



Beenu Dewal
8th Rank, RAS 2018



Manvi Soni
International Shooter



Priyanka Raghuvanshi
RPS



Fg. Lieutenant Swati Rathore
Indian Air Force



Vasundhara Singh
Dietician, AIIMS, New Delhi



Fg. Off. Shivanshi Pathak
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Woman power in 7 Rotary districts in India

For the first time in the history of Rotary in India, seven Rotary districts — 3000, 3030, 3040, 3131, 3132, 3182 and 3262 — will have women governors during 2023–24. Most of these districts, except RIDs 3040, 3131 and 3182, are having a woman leader at the helm for the first time.



Clockwise from above: RID 3131 DG Manjoo Phadke (L) with spouse Vishwas, grand daughter Antara, daughter Isha and RID TN Subramanian; DG Swati Herkal with PRIP Shekhar Mehta and PRID Mahesh Kotbagi; RID 3262 DG Jayashree Mohanty with her spouse Tanmay (R) and PDG Dhirendra Nath Padhi; RID 3030 DG Asha Venugopal with PDG Anand Jhunjunuwala; RID 3182 DG B C Geetha (R) with PDG Abhinandan Shetty; RID 3040 DG Ritu Grover with PRID Kamal Sanghvi (L) and DGE Anish Malik; RID 3000 DG Anandtha Jothi with her spouse C Raajkumar (L) and PDG M Muruganandam.





Saplings being planted at the park.

Left: Heather McNally planting a flowerbed at the park. RI President Gordon McNally and RC Deonar IPP Vidhya Subramanian are also in the picture.

Due deliberation and brain storming resulted in the evolution of an overall development plan to transform the entire area. The result is dramatic; an entire dumpyard has been converted into a walkway of parks. “The two-acre land has been divided into multiple segments, each one giving a sense of environmental protection. This Biodiversity Park, which was inaugurated by the then incoming RI President Gordon McNally, is now open to students of other educational institutions for field trips, who will be educated by experts on the importance of preservation and supporting the environment.”

Under the able guidance of a horticulturist, multiple local fruit-bearing trees were planted and in barely six months, at the inaugural, the colourful fruits caught all eyes. A kitchen garden has also been put up and the vegetables grown here will be used for the meals of the children living on the campus.

Vidhya explains that the children will be encouraged “to learn



A biodiversity park

Team Rotary News

Rotary Club of Deonar (RCD), RID 3141, has been associated with the Chembur Children’s Home (CCH), the biggest and oldest orphanage set up almost 100 years ago in Mumbai, for various initiatives over the last few years. Fortunately, and unusually for a city like Mumbai, CCH had

a lot of unused space and last Rotary year, the club put together a project to “invigorate and rejuvenate the environment for the inmates. We wanted to give a sustainable model for their growth and well-being, rather than providing basic facilities to them,” says Vidhya Subramanian, immediate past president of the club.



agro-techniques and gain an understanding of intensive farming. They will be trained in producing organic vegetables and fruits, branding the produce and ultimately marketing it. Certain sacred areas in the Sahyadri forest in Maharashtra are known as Devrai (God's forest), so we have named this the Devrai project."

A part of the area has been earmarked for vermicomposting to sustain the entire park.

Help from Diwaker Thombre, an expert in the field, was taken to set up a butterfly garden, which is attracting different varieties of colourful butterflies. A colourful 9-ft butterfly structure has been put up right in the middle of the park, where a resting area — a gazebo — has also been set up. The bird feeders hanging on the edges keep the place alive with the constant chirping of the winged visitors, she adds.

Under the huge rain tree here, designated as a meditation area, the seven focus areas of RI are displayed prominently. A viewing gallery provides a bird's eye view of the entire garden. As CCH children didn't have an area to showcase their talent, a 200-seater open air semicircular area for performing arts has been created.



Above: RI President Gordon and Heather McNally, RI Director TN Subramanian and PRID Ashok Mahajan (L).



Vidhya thanked members of her club for contributing their professional expertise in executing the entire project; past president Liladhar Parab, an architect, formulated the layout of Devrai; another past president Rajendra Datye, a civil engineer, offered his team to give shape to this project, with past president Jhankar Gadkari adding the much-required aesthetic touch to the entire project.

"Attractive paintings, colourful pathways and signages have transformed this space from a bedraggled and grubby area to its present state of

serenity. We were lucky to have the then president-elect McNally to inaugurate the park. His spouse Heather planted a flowerbed around the idol of the meditating Buddha."

The then incoming RI director TN Subramanian, PRID Ashok Mahajan and then DGE Arun Bhargava were present at the inaugural; 450 pairs of shoes, sponsored by RC Mumbai Lakers, were presented to the children.

To ensure sustainability and proper maintenance of the beautiful park, RC Deonar has undertaken the responsibility to maintain it for the next 10 years. ■

American Rotarians on a global flight to end polio

V Muthukumaran

Flying around the world in 90 days to end polio. That was the mission of two passionate Rotarians — PDG John Ockenfels (71) and Peter Teahen (70), both from Iowa, US — who took off from Cedar Rapids airport in a small single-engine plane (Cessna T210M) on May 5. They plan to complete their global flight on July 30.

As members of the Fellowship of Flying Rotarians, the cousins were “always wanting to do crazy stuff and being professional pilots, we thought of doing something big for a noble cause such as polio, which Rotary has been fighting

for over 35 years,” says Teahen. Only 700 pilots have flown around the world in light aircraft so far, and among them less than 270 are alive today. “Our primary aim is to create awareness about End Polio Now, and raise funds for TRF’s PolioPlus initiatives. Even before we began our journey, we crossed \$1 million in donation, and I have scaled up our target to \$3 million now,” he says. He was speaking at the reception hosted by the Change Makers President Alumni Association (CMPAA), RID 3232, during their stopover in Chennai. The total amount raised by the duo will be





From L: DGE Saravanan, Bharati, Sumedha, IPDG N Nandakumar, past district secretary C Krishnachander, PDGs Ockenfels, Sridhar, RC Madras past president Vijaya Bharathi, DRFC B Dakshayani, DGN Vinod Saraogi, Dinesh Sethi, past president, RC Chennai Akshaya, and Meenakshi Periakaruppan, immediate past president, RC Madras T Nagar, at a polio fundraiser event in Chennai.

matched by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in the ratio of 2:1.

While the two Rotarian pilots are bearing the full expense of the air travel in Cessna, a single engine, small-bodied plane owned by them, “all the donations from the clubs, Rotarians and the public will go to TRF,” says PDG Ockenfels. “We are overwhelmed by the outpouring of generosity by the air traffic controllers and airport officials who at some places have come forward to waive off the gasoline

charges,” he says. In all, they will have 39 stopovers (landings) in 21 countries covering over 25,300 miles with 165-plus hours of flying across different time zones in three months. “We will have 24 fundraisers at stopovers, where the host clubs take care of our stay and related expenses in their cities,” says Teahen.

Are you serious?

When Peter Teahen, member of RC Cedar Rapids West, RID 5970, broached the subject of flying around the world ‘just for fun’ to his wife Janet, she shot back, “Are you serious?” That was in 2018. “At that time, I wanted to do it alone.” Later on, he teamed up with her brother, PDG Ockenfels, who announced their plan of flying around the globe at Rotary’s Hamburg Convention in 2019. Janet relented then as her husband was in the company of her brother, Ockenfels, a former US Air Force pilot (1972–76), who was

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in a combat mission to Thailand, and has operated and maintained World War II training planes. Adds Teahen, “this is our fourth attempt to fly around the world. The first two (2020, 2021) could not take off due to Covid; and the third one was aborted after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.”

At the end of their three-day stay in Karachi where “we went around the ghettos and shanties accompanied by the polio front-line workers,” a press meet was arranged in which Rotary clubs, WHO and UNICEF officials took

PDG John Ockenfels gives polio drops to a child in the presence of (from R) PDG J Sridhar; IPDG N Nandakumar; R Rajasekaran from RC Chennai Port City; RID 3234 DGN Vinod Saraogi and DGE NS Saravanan. Dr S Banumathy (centre), city medical officer, Greater Chennai Corporation, helping with the oral inoculation.



Co-pilot Peter Teahen (R) celebrates his 70th birthday in the presence of PDGs J Sridhar, John Ockenfels and RID 3232 Rotarians in Chennai.

part. A journalist asked the pilots, “now that you have seen our places, and what is happening here, are you hopeful of eradicating polio from the world?” To this pointed question, Teahen replied, “No, I don’t have ‘hope’; we ‘believe’ that polio can be ended in this world. Belief is the right word, rather than hope, for in the context of polio such positive messages are important to create awareness.”

Our primary aim is to raise funds for TRF’s PolioPlus initiatives. Even before we began our journey, we crossed **\$1 million** in donation, and I have scaled up our target to **\$3 million** now.

Pilot Peter Teahen
RC Cedar Rapids West, RID 5970

An Indian doctor treating Teahen who was hospitalised briefly, as he fell sick, after they landed in Nagpur wondered, “why do you need to travel around the world for creating awareness on polio when it is not in existence anymore.” This statement, “got it confirmed for me that we have to scale up our awareness drive to finish off polio which is not over yet; 99.98 per cent is done, but still a minuscule part is yet to be covered.”

Nagpur glitch

Taking off from Karachi, the Cessna plane landed in Nagpur where it developed a snag and ran out of gasoline. They had to take commercial flights to Belgaum, Goa and from there, flew to Chennai. After their stopover in Sri Lanka, they flew to Thailand, Kuala Lumpur, Bali, Australia, and then followed the Pacific group of islands. “Our longest, and most challenging journey will be from Hawaii to California, before we return to our base at Cedar Rapids,” says Teahen. From Sri Lanka, they returned to Nagpur to retrieve the plane.

Ockenfels, a member of RC Iowa City AM and district governor of RID 6000 in 2014–15, is a recipient of the International Service Award for a Polio-free World and has retired as founder-CEO of City Carton Recycling, Iowa. His cousin Teahen is a writer, mental health expert, and has served in leadership roles at rescue missions in 67 major disasters across the US, Puerto Rico, Guam, Sri Lanka, Haiti and the Darfur region of Sudan. He is a faculty at the University of Iowa and founder of Cedar Rapids Freedom Festival.

Rotary’s polio war in India was started in Chennai, with RC Madras buying polio vaccines (oral doses) and setting up cold chain facilities through a 3-H grant of \$2.5 million, thanks to then RI President Carlos Canseco, in 1985, recalled PDG J Sridhar, RID 3232. A Polio Task Force led by Dr Jacob John from the Christian Medical College, Vellore, was formed later to have a “three-layered approach to fight the disease.” All this was preceded by the Red Measles Programme in 1979–80 initiated by the club with the help of Canadian delegates led by Dr Kenneth Hobbs from RC Whitby and architect Kris Chitale from RC Madras, said Sridhar who coordinated the event. Chennai’s Rotarians celebrated Teahen’s 70th birthday by cutting a cake. In an earlier meet, RID 3232 members led by IPDG N Nandakumar donated \$10,000 for the two pilots’ fundraising mission to end polio.

Around 60 members from CMPAA attended the quarterly meet with DGN Vinod Saraogi and Ganesh Gopalan from RC Chennai Hallmark contributing \$1,000 each to Flight to End Polio mission. For more details of the global flight, log on to: www.flighttoendpolio.com. ■

Project Vignettes

Team Rotary News

Rotary park in Patna



Club members, along with IPDG Sanjeev Kumar Thakur (centre) at the park.

A once-unsightly garbage dumping ground on the Main Boring Canal Road in Patna has been transformed into a vibrant public park by RC Patna, RID 3250. The park, established in memory of the club's late past president Manoj Kumar, will be maintained by the club. ■

Madurai club renovates old age home



IPDG I Jerald and DGE R Raja Govindasamy, along with club members, at the Angel Devaki Home.

RC Madurai Star, RID 3000, has constructed Angel Devaki Home, an old age home in Mukkampatti village, near Madurai. The facility, which currently accommodates 75 residents, was inaugurated by IPDG I Jerald and DGE R Raja Govindasamy. The club raised ₹15 lakh through its Foundation and crowdfunding. ■

A mobile clinic in Mumbai



TRF trustee vice-chair Bharat Pandya and IPDG Sandeep Agarwalla at the inaugural of the medical van.

In partnership with the Bhakti Vedanta Hospital, RC Mumbai Kandivli West, RID 3141, donated a fully-equipped medical van for healthcare services. The van will help conduct 225 screening camps annually, focusing on cancer, cardiac and ophthalmic diseases. The club raised ₹59 lakh through CSR and member contributions. The vehicle was inaugurated by TRF trustee vice-chair Bharat Pandya and IPDG Sandeep Agarwalla. ■

Greening Jalna



Club members at the plantation site.

In an effort to make Jalna greener and more biodiverse, RC Jalna Midtown, RID 3132, planted 7,000 trees in a 2.5-acre land under *Project Shantivan* (peaceful forest). This initiative aims to foster the growth and conservation of native forest species. ■

Board of Directors 2023–24

The RI Board of Directors are nominated by their zones and elected to two-year terms.

Nine new directors and the president-elect join the Board on July 1.



Gordon McNally
President, RC South Queensferry,
West Lothian, Scotland

McNally joined Rotary in 1984 at 26. He has served as president and vice president of RI in Great Britain and Ireland. He has also served RI as a director and on several committees, most recently as an adviser to the 2022 Houston Convention Committee and chair of the Operations Review Committee.

He and his spouse, Heather, also a Rotarian, are Paul Harris Fellows, Major Donors, Benefactors of The Rotary Foundation, and members of the Bequest Society.



Stephanie A Urchick
President-elect, RC McMurray,
Pennsylvania, USA

A Rotarian since 1991, Urchick first joined the home club of PRIP Chuck Keller, who served as her mentor. Urchick has served as a TRF trustee and RI director, and as training leader, RRFC and RIPR. She was a representative and member-at-large to three sessions of the CoL. She has also served as a member of various RI committees, including the Election Review Committee and Operations Review Committee, and as chair of the Rotary Strategic Planning Committee and TRF's Centennial Celebration Committee. She is a Major Donor and a member of the Bequest Society of TRF.



Pat Merryweather-Arges
Vice President, RC Naperville,
Illinois, USA

Pat joined Rotary in 2002. She has served on Rotary's Covid-19 task force, as a representative for the CoL and Council on Resolutions, and as RRFC, RIPR and chair of the 2018 presidential peace conference in Chicago. She is on the board of the WASRAG and chairs the health outcomes and patient safety committee of the International Fellowship of Healthcare Professionals.

Pat has received the Service Above Self Award, the Avenues of Service Award, and The Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service. She and her spouse, George, who is also a Rotarian, are members of the Paul Harris Society and are Benefactors and Major Donors.



Drew Kessler
Treasurer, RC North Rockland
(Haverstraw), New York, USA

Drew joined Rotary in 2001 at age 20. He served as club president at 25 and at 32, as district governor.

He has served RI on the Young Past Governors Committee, as a representative to the CoL and Council on Resolutions, and as an RIPR. He is a member of the District 7210 executive board, a committee he helped establish that is made up of past and current district leaders who work together to lead the district. His spouse, Vicki, is also a Rotarian.



Alberto Cecchini
Director 2022–24, RC Roma
Nord-Est, Italy

Alberto was a Rotaractor in 1988, and joined his first Rotary club in 1994. He has served RI as a committee member, RPIC, training leader, regional coordinator and adviser, GETS facilitator and International Assembly speaker. He served as chair and vice chair of the Rotaract-Interact Committee and chaired the Rotaract preconvention meeting in Sydney in 2014. In addition, he has served as the primary RI representative to numerous Rome-based organisations, including the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme. He is also the RI representative to the Holy See in Vatican City.

Alberto has received the Service Above Self Award and The Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service. He supports the Foundation as a multiple Paul Harris Fellow and Benefactor.



Ghim Bok Chew
Director 2023–25, RC Bugis Junction, Singapore

Chew joined Rotary in 1996 and was DG in 2013. He has served as ARRFC, RPIC, RC and chair of the zone institute committee. He is the Host Organisation Committee chair for the RI Convention in Singapore in 2024. Chew is a recipient of the Service Above Self Award. With his wife, Phyllis, he is an AKS Chair's Circle member.



Patrick Daniel Chisanga
Director 2022–24, RC Nkwazi, Zambia

After being an Interactor, Patrick joined Rotary in 1986 and became DG in 1988. He has served RI on several committees, including the Membership Committee and the Reach Out to Africa Committee, and as a training leader and Rotary Institute chair. He has also chaired regional Rotary organisations, including the Governors' Council of Southern and Eastern Africa. He has received the Service Above Service Award and TRF Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his partner, Petronella, are Major Donors.



Antonio Henrique Barbosa de Vasconcelos
Director 2023–25, RC Fortaleza, Brazil

Vasconcelos grew up surrounded by Rotary, inspired by his father who served twice as DG. He joined Rotary in 1996, and served as DG at age 38. He has served RI as training leader, RC, RRFRC, CoL delegate, Rotary zone institute chair, RIPR and member of the 2020 RI Convention Promotion Committee. He has supported TRF as Endowment/Major Gifts Adviser. In Brazil, he has served as a board member of the Brazilian Association of TRF since 2009 and was a columnist for *Rotary Brasil* magazine for six years. A Paul Harris Fellow, he supports TRF with his wife, Renata Macedo, as Benefactor, Bequest Society member and Major Donor. Vasconcelos is a recipient of the RI Service Above Self Award.



Eve Conway-Ghazi
Director 2023–25, RC Redbridge, England

Conway-Ghazi joined Rotary in 2000. In 2012, she became the first female DG in London. She served as president of Rotary

International in Great Britain and Ireland in 2016–17. She and her husband, Robert Ghazi, support TRF as Major Donors and members of the Bequest Society.



Daniel C Himelspace
Director 2023–25, RC Denver Mile High Colorado, USA

Himelspace joined Rotary in 1993 and has served in multiple district and zone leadership positions after serving as DG, including End Polio Now coordinator, RRFRC, and zone institute education week trainer. He was instrumental in proposing club flexibility provisions that became Enactment 16–21, adopted at the 2016 CoL. He also served as a CoL representative from 2017 to 2020. He and his wife, Leslie, are Paul Harris Society and the Bequest Society members and are Major Donors. Himelspace is a recipient of TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service.



TN "Raju" Subramanian
Director 2023–25, RC Deonar, India

Subramanian joined Rotary in 1987 as a charter member of his club. He has served RI as a member of the Election Review Committee, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, and the CoL Organizing Committee. Subramanian also served as Rotary institute chair, training leader and support training leader, RRFRC and director of the Rotary Fellowship for PDGs. His two most challenging Rotary roles have been serving as training leader and as vice chair of the 2022 CoL, when he had to lead the meeting after the chair fell ill with Covid-19.

Subramanian and his wife, Vidhya, support TRF as Paul Harris Society members, AKS members and Benefactors. He is a recipient of the Service Above Self Award and TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service.



Hans-Hermann Kasten
Director 2023–25, RC Aachen-Frankenburg, Germany

Kasten joined Rotary in 2003, and became DG in 2016-17. He has served RI as training leader and twice as representative to the CoL, coordinating the training and proposals of German-speaking districts in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. He authored the 2022 proposal to allow Rotaractors to attend Rotary club meetings, which was successfully adopted. Kasten is a Paul Harris Fellow, and with his partner, Nadja Picard, a Major Donor.



Jeremy Hurst
Director 2022–24
RC Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands

Hurst joined Rotary in 1988 and has served RI as a member of the RI Membership Development Committee and of the Joint Committee on Partnerships, and has been an RIPR multiple times. He and his wife, Michelle, are Rotary Foundation Major Donors and members of the Bequest Society, Paul Harris Society and PolioPlus Society, and he is a recipient of TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service.



Muhammad Faiz Kidwai
Director 2022–24
RC Karachi Karsaz, Pakistan

Muhammad, who joined Rotaract in 1980, is the first Rotary director from Pakistan. He joined Rotary in 1987 and became a charter member of RC Karachi Karsaz in 1993. He is the founder and chair of the Rotary Pakistan Literacy Mission.

Muhammad has received the Service Above Self Award, TRF Distinguished Service Award and TRF Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his wife, Uzma, are Major Donors.



Anirudha Roy Chowdhury
Director 2023–25, RC Calcutta Mega City, India

Roy Chowdhury joined Rotary as a charter member in 1995. He has since served RI as RPIC, ARC, ARFC, RIPR for five times and a member of TRF's Cadre of Technical Advisers. He is serving as a member of the executive body of RILM. Roy Chowdhury is a recipient of the Service Above Self Award and TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service and the Distinguished Service Award. He and his spouse, Shipra, support the Foundation as Level 3 Major Donors and Bequest Society members.



Yoshio Sato
Director 2022–24
RC Okayama-South, Japan

A Rotarian since 1989, Yoshio has served Rotary as chair of the District 2690 Rotary Foundation audit committee and as a member of the Rotary Japan Centennial Executive Committee and the RI Japan Youth Exchange Multidistrict. At the zone level, he has served as convener of the nominating committee for RI director

and as a training leader and RIPR. Yoshio supports TRF as an AKS member, Paul Harris Society member, Benefactor and Bequest Society member.



Lena J Mjerskaug
Director 2022–24, RC Enebakk, Norway

Lena joined Rotary in 1997 as the first woman in her club and, at the time, its youngest member. She has served Rotary as an End Polio Now zone coordinator, an RC, CoL representative and an RIPR. She supports TRF as a Benefactor and a Major Donor.



Beth Stubbs
Director 2023–25, RC Maryville, USA

Stubbs joined her home club in 1991. She served her district as chair of its finance, Foundation, and leadership development and education committees. She has attended 21 international conventions, travelled to New York City for Rotary Day at the United Nations, served in an NID in India, travelled to Mexico for club partnership projects, and attended various zone meetings around the country. She and her husband, Tony, support TRF as AKS members.



Yeong Ho Yun
Director 2023–25, RC Masan South, Korea

Yun joined Rotary in 1983 and became DG in 2013–14. During his three-year term as endowment/major gifts adviser, he helped find 51 additional AKS members in his zone. In addition, he served RI as ARPIC and twice as training leader. Yun is a recipient of the Service Above Self Award and TRF's Distinguished Service Award. He and his wife, Hae Suk Lee, are AKS Trustees Circle members.



John Hewko
General Secretary and CEO
RC Kyiv, Ukraine

John Hewko is the general secretary and chief executive officer of Rotary International and TRF. As general secretary, Hewko leads a diverse staff of 800 at RI's World Headquarters in Evanston, Illinois, and six international offices. He and his partner, Marga, are Major Donors.

TRF Trustees in the next issue

From RI South Asia Office desk

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Tej Brothers	4806/24, Bharat Ram Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi 110002.	tejbrothers@gmail.com www.tejbrothers.com
Sacheti & Company	Shivaji Nagar, Opposite Jain Temple, Kishangarh 305801, Rajasthan	sacheti_co@usa.net www.sacheti.org
Naveen Enterprises	11, Naveen Mansion, 1st Main Road, 4th 'T' Block, Jaya Nagar, Bangalore- 560041	naveen@naveenenterprises.net www.naveenenterprises.in
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- *Contribution form/covering note* mentioning all the donor details (name, membership ID, fund designation and PAN) for contributions made via cheque/DD
- *PAN* is mandatory for all contributions irrespective of amount

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How to say **no to plastic**

Preeti Mehra

Some workable suggestions that could help you reduce plastic dependency.

Despite all the bans and spirited campaigns by environment activists and governments, plastic is still ubiquitous. From the humble vegetable vendor to upscale stores, eateries and airlines, plastic marks its presence everywhere in the form of carry bags, disposable cutlery, bottles, coffee cup lids and wrappers. In fact, according to estimates, 90 per cent of the plastic that we use and throw away in our daily lives end up in landfills or clog our rivers and pollute our oceans.

As citizens, we can certainly do our bit to lessen the plastic load on Mother Nature. Let me start with the plastic shopping bag. According to

the United Nations Environment Programme, the world consumes about one million plastic bags a minute! A shocking statistic when you think that the polyethylene shopping bag was patented by the Swedish company, Celloplast, only in 1965. This means in 58 years it has grown from being a novelty to a humongous problem that the world is still trying to solve.

Perhaps we can begin our efforts for a plastic-free world by saying no to plastic bags when we go shopping. An ample supply of cloth bags can be kept at home to be used by family members for buying groceries from the local market. A bag or two can also be placed in the family car for use when

the occasion arises. Many malls these days provide cloth or jute bags if you pay a little extra. Choose the greener alternative.

It is not just shopping bags. Think of the number of times in the course of the day that you can replace plastic with an alternative. A coffee mug taken to the cafe saves you from consuming your brew from a disposable cup with a plastic cap. When you order food at home or pick it up from a takeaway you can insist that no plastic cutlery be packed along with the food. Interventions like this, however small or insignificant they may seem, help in weaning you away from plastic dependency.



Bottled water, which comes in plastic containers of varying sizes, is something that most of us may find difficult to avoid. Given the lack of trust in the quality of municipal water, this is understandable, especially when travelling. In fact, the lack of safe public water is such that the bottled variety has become a huge and growing industry in India with a market size of \$22.72 billion in 2022, and is expected to touch \$32.61 billion by 2030. While established brands say they are shifting to recyclable options, we can see single use plastic bottles and even recyclable PET bottles wantonly dumped at camping sites and popular tourist destinations.

One green action you can take is to collect rather than indiscriminately discard recyclable bottles and packaging and give it to registered recyclers who have opened shop in the larger metros. The next best option is to give them to a kabadiwala who is networked with the recyclers. But more often than not people are guilty of throwing away these bottles on the beach or in the garbage dump close to their home. It must be noted that plastic trash, since it is non-biodegradable, remains in the soil for more than 1,000 years.

Since plastic is inexpensive and readily available, it is a popular packaging material. Most foodstuff you buy come in plastic containers and packets. Please see the marking on the packaging to ascertain whether it is made of recyclable material. If it is, then don't forget to send it to recyclers. It won't do to dispose it into the garbage dump from where it will most likely end up in a landfill outside the city. Also, whenever possible, opt for non-plastic or biodegradable packaging options even if they cost a little more.

Some of us may remember the sachet revolution that gripped the country in the early 1980s. Tapping the rural markets by selling reasonably

priced cosmetics and wellness products in small plastic sachets was the name of the game. The marketing revolution that started in Cuddalore, a small town in Tamil Nadu, soon caught the fancy of FMCG manufacturers. Today shampoos, toothpaste, talcum powder and a host of other products including tomato sauce and water are available in sachets.

But it is now revealed that the marketing revolution had a serious environmental downside since it resulted in the proliferation of plastic sachets across the country. In rural India plastic clogging the streams and rivers include plastic bottles, water sachets, and single use cosmetic pouches. Committed environment activists will advise you to avoid using products in sachets even when they are provided free as part of the toilet kit in hotels. Indeed, it is wise in today's world to buy products in bulk in bigger containers which last longer rather than buy smaller packets over time.

While avoiding plastic may initially seem difficult one can

cultivate the habit and also spread the good word around. You could make a start at your home. Remember, according to the Union environment ministry, India generates 3.5 million tonnes of plastic waste annually and much of it is neither treated or recycled. It ends up polluting the air and water and contributes significantly to environmental degradation.

It's time we did our bit to save the planet.

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

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Meet your



Mehul Rathod

Lawyer, RC Ahmedabad Metro, RID 3055

Water-related projects, his priority

Among the hallmarks of Rotary, it is diversity that attracted Mehul Rathod to this service organisation. "I watched my late father HV Rathod, a doctor, reaching out to communities as founder-president of RC Deesa. As a child, I was impressed by his service. My brother PDG Shashank Rathod also inspired me with his work," recalls DG Rathod.

He wants to start 10 new clubs and add 450 new Rotarians. There are 82 clubs with 3,000-plus members in the district. "The focus is on water-related projects like rainwater harvesting, recharging borewells and better water management as 80 per cent of our district suffers from scarcity of drinking water. *Project Jal Saskrata* (water literacy) will reach out to schools and institutions." Through a mix of CSR grants, club donation, global grants and sponsorship, "we will be doing at least ₹1.5 crore worth of water-related projects."

Medical equipment will be donated to hospitals at Kadi, Kalol; and a Rotary Blood Bank on Abu Road, Rajasthan, will be upgraded. At least 20 schools and 20 old age homes will be renovated. "I want to collect \$26.5 from each Rotarian — this has sentimental value as the first Endowment Fund was created with this amount in 1917 — for contributing \$300,000 to the Annual Fund; and my TRF target is \$800,000." Though a non-Rotarian, "my wife Bhavana is a keen follower of Rotary events and encourages me to take leadership roles." His younger son Abhijit is a Rotaractor just like Rathod who was a Rotaractor for six years till 1985.



Swati Herkal

Infotech consultant, RC Wai, RID 3132

100 'transformation' villages planned

Having seen the efforts of Rotarians "working tirelessly to change lives, I was drawn to Rotary in 1999," says Swati Herkal. Her top priority is transforming 100 villages which the clubs have already adopted with their RCCs doing a plethora of community projects there.

Project Parivartan aims to develop villages through a 10-point agenda for inclusive growth — *Drushti* (vision), *Srushti* (nature), *Swachh* (WASH in schools), *Aastha* (menstrual hygiene), *Saksham* (employability), *Swayam* (self-dependent), *Bhoomi* (earth), *Jal Dhara* (riverside plantations), *Vidya* (knowledge) and *Aai* (mother). "All the Rotary *Parivartan* grams will be transformed through CSR grants, club donation and GG projects," she says. One of her favourite initiatives is the soil regeneration technique (SRT), a pilot project being done in three villages in Wai taluk, Satara district, with all the 70 farmers "reporting good harvest with improvement in soil quality." With inputs from expert Rotarians, the farmers adopted the SRT "which improved soil productivity, reduced labour cost, usage of chemicals and increased the use of biofertilisers." Now, the SRT will be taken to over 1,000 farmers.

Around one lakh saplings will be planted with the help of NGOs. Rotary clubs will hold 10 surgical camps this year. "My target is to do 100-plus Happy Schools. Under *Project E-Teacher*, over 1,000 rural schools with just a teacher or two will be converted into digital schools with installation of digital classrooms," she explains. Her TRF target is \$500,000.

Governors

V Muthukumaran



P Bharanidharan

Builder, RC Kanchipuram Temple City, RID 3231

Focus on literacy, health & environment

Starting the new Rotary year with a bang, the district clubs have planted one lakh saplings across 245 villages in one hour on July 1. "With this greening mission, we have entered the World Records Union. We will take up diverse projects in literacy, health and environment, worth ₹1 crore this year," says Bharanidharan.

On the Chennai-Bengaluru highway, seven Paul Harris community toilets will be set up at ₹40 lakh, sourced from club donations and district grants. "A Rotary dialysis centre with seven machines will be installed at the Janus Global Hospital, Kancheepuram, through a GG of \$70,000. Around 50 medical camps will be held for Rotarians, Anns and Annets," he says.

To facilitate e-learning, Byju's app will be introduced in over 1,000 government schools for students from Classes 9–11. "Around 300 wheelchairs will be distributed."

He wants to add 1,000 new members and 10 new clubs; his target for TRF-giving is \$200,000. When his son Jishnu was born in 2001, "he was overweight (4.5kg) and could not breathe or cry. The newborn was shifted to the ICU at the CMC, Vellore, and was urgently in need of five units of blood." His Rotary friends "instantly responded by giving blood and my son was saved." Amazed by the selfless attitude of Rotarians, he joined his club in 2001 as a charter member.



G Senguttuvan

Manufacturing, RC Thanjavur Mid Town, RID 2981

"I am alive because of Rotary"

A couple of life-threatening diseases almost took DG Senguttuvan to the brink of death, "but thanks to my Rotary friends I am alive today, hale and healthy," he smiles. In 2009, he was admitted to the KDR Hospital, Thanjavur, run by a Rotarian, as both his kidneys had failed due to acute infection. Based on his recommendation, "I was rushed to the Sri Ramachandra Hospital, near Chennai, and I recovered fully." Again in 2020, he was infected with Covid while supplying food to 400 migrant families and was in the ICU for a month. "Rotarians gave me confidence and hope during those traumatic days."

He plans to install 40 analog clock towers (₹25 lakh) at roundtanas, and distribute 3,000 helmets with Rotary logo to two-wheeler riders. Three dialysis centres (GG: ₹27 lakh each) and two neonatal wards (GG: ₹28 lakh each) will be set up at private hospitals. For the government schools, five toilet blocks (GG: ₹40 lakh) and 100 handwash stations (₹25 lakh) through club donations and district funds will be constructed. One lakh mangrove saplings will be planted at the coastal villages. A mega sanitation block will be built (CSR: ₹40 lakh) near the famous Brihadeeswara temple, Thanjavur. His TRF-giving target is \$1 million. "I joined Rotary in 2006 to enjoy fellowship," he adds.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Susheela

the nightingale of the South

SR Madhu

Her voice is bewitching,” said melody queen Lata Mangeshkar about P Susheela in 1969. The occasion: An event in Madras hosted by AVM chief Saravanan Chettiar to honour P Susheela on her winning the first-ever national award for best female playback singer. (The song: *Paal polave* in the film *Uyarndha Manidhan*.) Lata presented Susheela with a miniature veena on behalf of AVM and later visited her at her home.

Lata took to Bombay a collection of Tamil songs, and showered praise on the compositions and the songs, particularly those in *Pasamalar* and *Pava Mannippu*.

When Susheela visited Lata in Bombay, she was welcomed with so much warmth and affection that she said: “There are actually five Mangeshkar sisters including one in the South.” Asha Bhosle took to addressing Susheela as *Didi*. She once sang three Susheela songs at an event in Chennai.

If Lata was Bollywood’s greatest music legend, Susheela is the No 1 female playback singer of the South, who enjoyed a scintillating 60-year musical career that began in 1952 and encompassed 11 languages. Her peak period was the 1960s and 1970s, when there was hardly a film that didn’t feature her. She won the national award for best playback singer five times — in 1969, 1971, 1977, 1982 and 1983 (twice for Tamil songs,

P Susheela



thrice for Telugu) — and numerous state government and lifetime achievement awards. She got the Padma Bhushan in 2008.

In 1970, Susheela and TMS (TM Soundararajan) were asked to record the official Tamil Nadu state song *Neerarum Kadaludutha*. It has been played at all official events ever since.

In 2016, at the age of 80, Susheela made an entry into the Guinness World Records for having sung 17,695 solo, duet and chorus-backed numbers in 12 Indian languages, including Tamil and Telugu, since 1960. The record was made possible by her fans and aficionados who organised the onerous documentation necessary. (Guinness recognises a song only if it has sold at least 100,000 records, as confirmed and authenticated by recording companies.)

Susheela's entire musical oeuvre comprises over 40,000 songs. "Even her most ardent fan would not have listened to more than 35 per cent of her songs," says IT expert and music critic Sriram Lakshman, who belongs to Susheela's inner circle of friends and volunteer helpers.



With LR Eswari and Vani Jayaram who was conferred the P Susheela Award in 2013.

Her songs bring to mind some of the most memorable sequences and performances of Tamil cinema on which this article is focusing.

"If there is a singer I adore, it is Susheela," said AR Rahman who invited her to inaugurate a division of his KM Music Conservatory. Tamil poet and lyricist S Vairamuthu says if he

In 2016, at the age of 80,
Susheela made an entry into the
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in 12 languages since 1960.



With AR Rahman.

is given a last wish before death, it would be to listen to a Susheela song in solitude with doors closed.

He says four factors make her a great singer. Her "grasping power" (grasping what the composer wants, a situation requires and how an actor performs); a voice that is sweet and unique; clear and flawless pronunciation despite her mother tongue being Telugu; and her expressiveness and ability to emote with her voice. It can give eloquent expression to any emotion or feeling — be it love, joy, ecstasy, grief, melancholy, devotion,





In 2004, for receiving an Anna Award, when Susheela approached the dais, Jayalalithaa got up, hugged and kissed her on both cheeks.

exuberance, serenity, introspection, or family affection.

Vairamuthu says when he wrote the lyric for the song *Kannukku mai azhagu* for *Pudhiya Mugam* (1993), he told AR Rahman that only Susheela should sing the song. Why, asked Rahman. “The word *azhagu* occurs often in the song. Only Susheela can pronounce it right.” Rahman consented.

Susheela sang over 300 songs in 100 films in five languages for former CM Jayalalithaa. In 2004, for receiving an Anna award, when she approached the dais, Jayalalithaa got up, hugged and kissed her on both cheeks. Susheela was invited to each of the three oath-taking ceremonies of Jayalalithaa as CM.

Some great Susheela songs

Here’s a short selective list of personal favourites:

- *Brindavanam nandakumaaranum* — 1955. (AM Rajah and P Susheela in *Missiamma*. Composer: S Rajeswara Rao) A gently melodious romantic duet which has captivated listeners ever since. AM Rajah’s silky soft voice (often compared to Talat’s) matched Susheela’s honeyed charm to create magic.
- *Vinnodum mugilodum* — 1957. (with CS Jayaraman in *Pudhayal*. Composers: Viswanathan-Ramamoorthy) A great music duo presents a hypnotic melody as the



Clockwise from above

- P Susheela with Bollywood playback singer Mohammed Rafi (centre).
- With Lata Mangeskar.
- With PB Sreenivas.
- With former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
- With Lata and Usha Mangeskar.
- Susheela with lyricist Kannadasan.
- Former Tamil Nadu CM J Jayalalithaa felicitates Susheela.
- With music composer Naushad.





- Sivaji-Padmini duo romances on the Elliott's beach in Chennai.
- *Ennaipol pennallavo* — 1957. (*Vanangamudi*. Composer: G Ramanathan) "Aren't you a woman like me?" Savitri beseeches a temple deity in Susheela's vocals. If her voice didn't melt the deity, nothing else could have.
 - *Amudhai pozhiyum nilave* — 1957. (*Thangamalai Rahasyam*. Composer: TG Lingappa)
 - *Mullai malar mele* — 1958. (with TMS in *Uthama Puthran*. Composer: G Ramanathan) A scenic musical masterpiece where Sivaji and Padmini go lyrical.
 - *Unnai kandu naanada* — 1959. (*Kalyana Parisu*. Composer: AM Rajah) Diwali sparklers light up the screen, so does Susheela's effervescence. This Gemini Ganesh-Saroja Devi song is a must in every Diwali TV special.
 - *Kaathalile tholviyutraal* — 1959. (*Kalyana Parisu*. Composer: AM Rajah) Poignantly conveys the angst of failure in love. Singer Rajah's debut as composer in this film was a stunning success.
 - *Athaan ennathan* — 1961. (*Paava Mannippu*. Composer: MS Viswanathan)
 - *Maalai pozhudhin mayakkathile* — 1961.

"If there is a singer I adore, it is Susheela," said AR Rahman who invited her to inaugurate a division of his KM Music Conservatory.





(*Bhagyalakshmi*. Composers: Viswanathan-Ramamoorthy). The song's first line is about the intoxication of the evening. But it's Susheela's voice and Viswanathan-Ramamoorthy's genius that intoxicate listeners.

- *Rajavin paarvai raniyin pakkam* — 1966. (with TMS in *Anbe Vaa*. MS Viswanathan). MGR and Saroja Devi ride a chariot, little angels shower confetti. The song and the film were superhits.
- *Mannavan Vandhanadi* — 1967. (*Thiruvartulselvar*. Composer: K V Mahadevan) This visually spectacular song, with Padmini dancing in royal court in front of a 20 ft-high Nataraja statue, is a *tour de force* of music, dance, choreography and direction.

Lata Mangeshkar took to Bombay a collection of Tamil songs sung by Susheela, and showered praise on the compositions.



From L: SP Balasubrahmanyam, SP Sailaja, Susheela and S Janaki.

- *Nalandhaana* — 1968. (*Thillana Mohanambal*. Composer: K V Mahadevan). This is a legendary movie, a music-dance-romance epic. The song has melody, drama and fast-paced action.

Evolution of her career

Susheela was born in Vizianagaram to a musically inclined family. Her father was a lawyer, also a veena player. He organised systematic training for Susheela in Carnatic music, often inviting musicians and critics home, and asking her to sing. His ambition was to see his daughter blossom into another

MS Subbulakshmi. But she found herself drawn to film music, took part in a number of contests during schooldays, filling cupboards at home with prizes. She obtained a diploma in music from the Maharajah's Government College of Music and Dance, Vizianagaram.

Susheela's first public performances were for "Pappa Malar," a children's radio programme on All India Radio. In 1951, producer P Nageswar Rao asked AIR to recommend a female singer for a children's film. Susheela was one of five girls suggested by AIR. At the audition, she sang *Mohe bhool gaye sawariya*, Lata's emotional scorcher from *Baiju Bawra*. The producer was a Naushad fan, and he wept. He gave Susheela her first film assignment — a duet with AM Rajah in *Petra Thai*.

She joined the staff of AVM Productions as a playback singer on their invitation, and was with them for three years. AV Meiyappan organised a special coaching for her in Tamil which was a godsend, and stood her in good stead in her career.

The game-changing year for her was 1955, like 1949 was for Lata.



With MS Viswanathan and TM Soundararajan (R).

The films *Kanavane Kankanda Deivam* and *Missiamma* were released; both were thumping hits, and Susheela's many songs in the films rocketed her to fame.

When she entered the world of playback singing, it was crowded with singers such as P Leela, Jikki, ML Vasanthakumari and Jamuna Rani. But Susheela raced to the top pretty quickly. The Sivaji-Padmini starrers *Pudhaya!*, *Mallika* and *Uthama Puthran* contained several chartbusters ranging from the romantic to the joyous to the melancholic. Examples: *Thanga mohana thamaraiye* (*Pudhaya!*), *Neela vanna kannane* (*Mallika*), *Mullai malar mele* (*Uthama Puthran*). The film *Thangamalai rahasyam* featured several singers, but the most popular and melodious song was Susheela's *Amudhai pozhaiyum nilave*. The kind of song that stops you anywhere.

The 1959 *Kalyana Parisu* (wedding gift) was a career

gift for Susheela. She sang two solos and three duets in the film, all of which were evergreen hits. Singer AM Rajah turned composer with this film, and his music was a sensation.

In the 1960s, Susheela was the uncrowned but undisputed queen of playback singing. Almost every film in the decade had a song by her. "Her voice is more fragrant with every song," said Vaamanan, film music historian. Films like *Karpagam*, *Mannaadhi Mannan*, *Kalathur Kannamma*, *Pudhiya Paravai*, *Kaadhalikka Neramillai*, *Karnan*, *Vennira Aadai*, *Aayirathil Oruvan*, *Pattanathil Bootham*, *Anbe Vaa*, *Vaanambadi*, *Saraswathi Sabadham*, *Nenjil Oor Aalayam*, *Thiruvartuselvam* and *Thillana Mohanambal* made Susheela the *numero uno* of Tamil playback singing.

She was the favourite of master composers Viswanathan-Ramamoorthy, K V Mahadevan

and G Ramanathan. Top actresses like Padmini, Savitri, KR Vijaya, Devika, Kanchana, Sowcar Janaki and Jayalalithaa recognised that Susheela's songs built their image and imparted depth, glitter and charisma to their acting performances. She sang many memorable duets with AM Rajah, TMS and SPB.

Her form continued during the 1970s when she won several national and state awards and sang in Hindi films too. She remained the first-choice singer of many composers. But Susheela gradually cut down on film assignments and shifted focus to devotionals, recording over 1,000 devotional songs, and live shows in India and overseas. She drew huge audiences in the US and Canada, Europe and the Middle East. In many cities, the Indian community insisted on providing home hospitality to Susheela and her team.

In 2008, the P Susheela Trust came into being. It offers monthly pension to musicians in need. Every November, a fundraising musical concert is held and a lifetime achievement award conferred. Awards have been presented to TMS, PB Sreenivas, S Janaki, Vani Jairam, LR Eswari, P Jayachandran, SP Balasubramanyam and KJ Yesudas.

"I was born to sing," says Susheela of her illustrious and fulfilling career which has inspired the entire music world and entertained millions of fans and music lovers. She has also been a role model as a celebrity with her humility and simplicity.

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

Susheela with (from L) film artistes Rajasree, Kanchana and Sachu.





Wordsworld

It's the journey



Sandhya Rao

Ruminating on food, faith, and what makes us who we are.

It's the journey that matters, not the destination, and reading books is a constant reminder of this, especially if you are enjoying the read and are eager to figure out how it all ends. But you stop your impatience and savour every word, sentence, idea... For many, the lockdown following the spread of the Covid-19 virus was a time to revisit and re-hone their culinary skills. To savour the time alone and, for some, it was a time to start looking inward. It's possible all of this was in the subconscious when I saw *Food & Faith: A Pilgrim's Journey Through India* by Shoba Narayan at the bookstore; it was impossible not to flip through the pages which then revealed clear thoughts, clean writing, even reflecting something of myself. But I started reading it only after stumbling upon *Digesting India*:

A Travel Writer's Sub-continental Adventures with the Tummy by Zac O'Yeah. Oh, I thought, Zac! I know him! And who doesn't love travel and food!

Bengaluru-based Shoba Narayan is an internationally published columnist and author who writes about art, culture, food, travel and fashion. Incidentally, she obligingly signed copies of her book at my request. Zac O'Yeah is Swedish; I had met him several years ago. He has written in English and Swedish and is the author of the Majestic trilogy of detective novels set in Bengaluru, where he now lives.

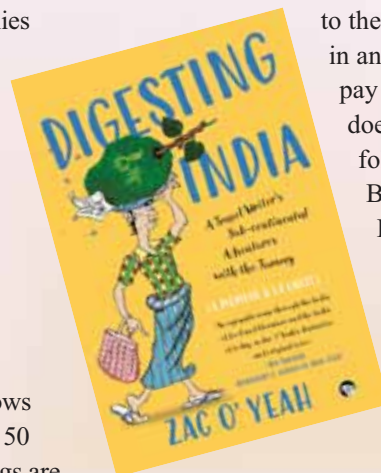
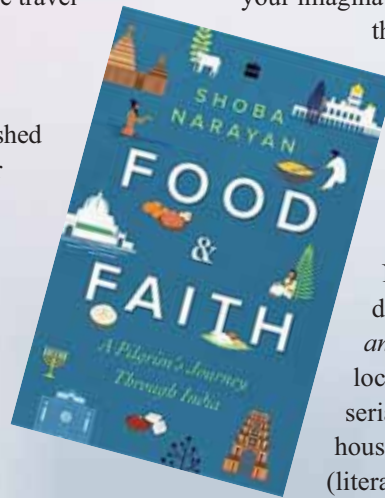
Digesting India tickles the palate and produces giggles, and occasionally causes the reader to gag as O'Yeah recounts his 'memoirs a la carte' of dining here, there, and everywhere. As he says, 'I've had thousands of astonishing meals ranging from fried silkworms in Shanghai to the national dish of boiled super-hot chillies in Bhutan, from the weird rotten shark delicacy so treasured on Iceland to curried goat intestines in Zimbabwe, from the primeval pizzas of Naples to the raw meat sandwiches of Denmark...' He follows this up with '...since 50 per cent of my writings are about local delicacies, I've naturally suffered as many forms of tourist diarrhoea as there are dishes in the average cookbook...'

Imagine the rest. Better still, read the book.

However, here's one to pique your imagination: O'Yeah visits the location site in Agumbe of the wonderful television series 'Malgudi Days' made by Shankar Nag, based on R K Narayan's age-defying novel *Swami and Friends*. The key location used in the serial, he discovers, is a house called Doddamane (literally, big house), erected in 1900. An

elderly, graceful woman called Kasturiakka now heads the family there. She sits, alongside two other elderly women, when O'Yeah visits: 'Before I quite know how it happened, I have a steaming tumbler of *kashayam* in my hand: A milky, lightly spiced (with basil leaves, I think, and something else I can't quite put my finger on) health beverage trusted in these hills. Kasturiakka's hospitality is the stuff of legend. Visitors to the village can stay in an upstairs room and pay as they like, but she doesn't allow filmy folks anymore.' Goa, Bombay, Ujjain, Kolkata, Delhi... you can travel these and more places following the food that ZO'Y ate, and chuckle as you turn the pages.

Food & Faith is a different kind of journey. What started out as literally following the *prasad/prasadam* in various places of worship — think *panchamritham*,



laddoo, dosai, peda, boondi — turns into a discovery of history, geography, culture, mythology, and introspection into one's own understanding of belief systems, spirituality and faith; there's also the business of eating seasonal fruits and vegetables.

The author takes you to many temples in the course of her quest, to places such as Udupi, Kashi, Palani, Madurai, Jaipur, Thiruvananthapuram, Amritsar, Puri, Mathura. You visit Ajmer Sharif, churches in Goa, and celebrate Rosh Hashanah with a Jewish family in Mumbai. As you journey on, you see how the author slowly grows further in her understanding of herself as she recounts and recalls the syncretic nature of India's multicultural, multireligious and inclusive landscape.

Goans, she points out, have always embodied the good life. 'Combined with this love of the good life,' she writes, 'is a commitment to the past. Many aristocratic Goan families including the late great cartoonist Mario Miranda honour their Hindu roots. When I interviewed him before



his death, Miranda told me that his ancestors promised to deliver a sack of rice and a hundred coconuts to the local Durga temple at the start of each harvest. He kept this promise till his death, even though all the family lands had been disposed of, and Portuguese was his mother tongue.'

Many of us worship at the Ajmer Sharif. As a devotee puts it: 'It is a Ganga Jamuna *sanskriti* here.' Faith, in whomever, whatever, gives succour. This is best described by the author's friend whose parents were devout Sikhs. 'They lost their only son to a road accident when the boy was but twenty years old,' she writes, and quotes her friend as saying "Instead of questioning their religion or feeling betrayed by the God that they had worshipped for so long, my parents gained all their strength from Sikhism. ... 'It was their life raft during the time of extraordinary hardship... It kept them sane. It allowed them to survive, to live.'"

Faith is all about how to live, then. In which case, food adds spice. Like, for instance, the *paal payasam* or *kheer* which is the *prasadam* at the Krishna temple in Ambalapuzha, Kerala, according to Shoba, the best-ever. 'It is not thick but has girth, if that makes sense,' she writes. 'It is rich but not gooey. It is condensed milk, but made the old-fashioned way, not by adding a tin of condensed milk, which is my shortcut for rich *payasam*. This milk is condensed through fire and evaporation. The proportion of rice to milk is perfect. There is

enough rice for body, but it doesn't overpower the milk. And it has that implacable aura — difficult to articulate — that makes a dish sing.'

Nilanjana Sengupta's *Chickpeas to Cook & other Stories* sings in a different way, in different tunes and tones, about the melding of myriad women's voices into the small but delicious salad bowl called Singapore. This book by the critically acclaimed writer, based in Singapore, defies categorisation: it is nonfiction, yet not entirely that; it is information, yet not only that; it is about people's lives yet it is more than that. The author herself explains that she's looking at 'the multireligious, multicultural patina of Singapore, intentionally choosing the smallest of communities.... It is a look at the collective subtext of the grand, graceful, wise tide of timeless religious humanism that flows at the heart of a city, hidden away by its cosmopolitan urbanism and a people known to possess a pragmatic, if politically accommodating nature...'

She does this by exploring the world of Dawoodi Bohras, Jews, Nattukottai Chettiars, Eurasians, Sikhs, Theravada Buddhist-Burmese, Chinese-Taoists and Parsis through the real stories of women retold against a backdrop of the wider socio-religious context of Singapore and her personal connections through interviews. Confused? Don't be. As you read, you will slowly be caught up in the little sparks that come together to light up the Singaporean way of life. Indeed, each of these books offers us ways of securing our place under the sun while recognising the right of every living thing to their own space. Truly, food for thought.

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist

Many of us worship at the Ajmer Sharif. It is a Ganga Jamuna *sanskriti* here. Faith, in whomever, whatever, gives succour.

Detoxifying the brain

Bharat & Shalan Savur

We often forget that we are amazing beings loaded with incredible energy, intelligence and healing powers. We are gifted with a brain that is nothing short of a miracle. If something potentially harmful happens, it springs swiftly into action. Say, you slip on wet tiles, it immediately directs you to regain your balance, and if you keep falling, it signals your arms to break the fall. If you hit the ground, it sends pain to inform you that you're injured. And it memorises this event to remind you to walk gingerly on wet, slippery tiles the next time.

Experts are concerned that we may be overloading this priceless organ with unnecessary information, stress and toxic substances. We could be beset with moodiness, weakness, tingling or numbness in limbs, headaches, vision loss, memory and cognitive dysfunction, depression, flu-like symptoms, imbalance or chronic fatigue. It is essential not to ignore and neglect our body's SOS, but to tend to its natural need for good health.

Sleep like a baby

The most effective way to optimise detoxification and lighten the brain is to get a good night's sleep. To ensure deep sleep, on waking allow the morning sun to bathe the body. It sets the body clock by lowering the sleep hormone melatonin and making the brain awake, alert and clear. It ensures you fall asleep naturally at night as the melatonin rises in the dark. And you sleep like a baby for the optimum six to eight hours. Sleep on your left side

as it helps the glymphatic system work better, say experts.

Eat anti-inflammatory foods

- Berries top the list — blackberries, blueberries, strawberries, amla, bel and karonda contain antioxidants that cross the blood-brain barrier successfully and nourish the brain. The blood-brain barrier is a network of blood vessels and tissue cells that prevent harmful substances from reaching the brain. It however allows water, oxygen, carbon dioxide, general

anaesthetics and glucose to penetrate its protective shield. Leafy greens, beetroot, broccoli, bell peppers and carrots fight free radical damage. Free radicals are generated by our body when exposed to harmful chemicals that stress the brain.

- A ginger-garlic combination lowers levels of pro-inflammatory proteins and keeps the brain clear and healthy.
- Nuts and seeds generally improve memory and prevent inflammation. Studies show that the brain



exhibits positive changes in certain areas dealing with emotion, after eating yogurt.

- Beans, being rich in fibre, B vitamins, omega fatty acids regulate blood-sugar release, help concentration and memory that helps us work steadily in a flow through the day without any lapses. Oats and brown rice are anti-inflammatory, increase our serotonin and melatonin levels that promote calmness and sleep respectively.
- Boiled or filtered water hydrates the brain and helps its cognitive and motor skills. Avoid processed meats, transfats and white sugar.

Exercise away dullness

What's good for your heart is good for your brain. Physical activities like



walking, cycling and yoga promote healthy synapses — the small pockets of space between the neurons that allow them to communicate. “They are where the magic happens when it comes to cognition,” says Kaitlin Casaletto, a neuropsychologist. Also, these exercises, by boosting oxygen-rich blood flow to the brain, increase the size of the hippocampus which is involved in verbal memory and learning.

Daily exercise lightens the brain — you can actually experience the clouds disperse, the wooziness vanish and an all's-well-with-the-world luminosity sets in. Yoga teachers recommend the plough pose and *kapalbhaati* to detoxify the brain.

Plough pose: Lie on your back, palms down. Raise legs 90 degrees from floor. Lift hips with your hands and slowly move both legs up and over your head until your toes touch the floor. Hold for 30 seconds.

Kapalbhaati: Sit with spine erect. Breathe in deeply. As you exhale forcefully, pull navel back towards spine. Relax navel and abdomen and allow breath to flow into your lungs naturally. One round is 20 such breaths.

Don't think unnecessarily

You will know when you are indulging in overthinking when your thoughts begin on the lines of ‘What if...’ It comes from a constant inner tension. Apart from physical exercises discussed above, it's important to disperse tension with non-physical techniques to relax the mind. It needs an inner environment of recreation, restfulness and well-being.

Ask, ‘How do I invite joy into my life?’ Hobbies such as singing, gardening, sports, dancing, writing positive stuff, meditation, cooking, hiking, etc are great tension dispensers.

There have been some interesting experiments that could resonate with you and keep your brain relaxed and quietly joyous as it engages in certain activities.

The Mozart effect: In 1993, Professor Francis Rauscher felt his memory and smartness improve by listening to Mozart. He gathered together 36 college students and played them a Mozart Piano Sonata for 10 minutes. The students felt relaxed and restful. However, the peaceful effects did not last! Where the effect was found lasting was in what has been termed as the **Sanskrit effect** by Dr James Hartzell who writes in *Scientific American*. His research shows that memorising Vedic mantras increases the size of brain regions associated with cognitive functions such as short-term memory. Apparently, 21 chanters had denser grey matter and a thicker cortex than 21 non-chanters. These changes — better memory, decision-making, sensory perception — stay. When there is clarity, there is less vulnerability to stress. I prefer to chant silently in the mind and find it dispels moodiness. Gregorian chants and rhythmic poetry are effective too.

Finally, keep track of things. Have a handy calendar. Keep a written schedule. Jot things down so you don't forget. Unfollow anyone who doesn't add positivity to your life. Unsubscribe from websites that waste brain time. Spend time outdoors. These little practices keep the brain free and clear. ‘Relate to your brain in a new way by understanding that positive inputs evolve, negative inputs destroy.’ In sum: re-enchante the mind and nourish the brain.

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

RC Chidambaram Mid Town — RID 2981



Oratory and chess competitions were held for Inner Wheel club members, Interactors and Rotaractors. Prizes were given at the club's silver jubilee celebrations.

RC Visakhapatnam — RID 3020



A drinking water plant was inaugurated by IPDG Bhaskar Ram at the Government Junior and Degree College. VRK Prasad, Madhu Burra, Jagapathi Raju and Vamsi Mohan sponsored the project.

RC Pudukkottai City — RID 3000



Around 230 people were examined at the cardiac camp held jointly with the Chettinad Super Specialty Hospital. Another 118 people availed the child fertility test.

RC Bhusawal Railcity — RID 3030



IPDG Anand Jhunjhunwala laid the foundation for a Rotary Garden in the presence of MLA Sanjay Sawkare and IPP Makarand Chandwadkar.

RC Delhi Mayur Vihar — RID 3012



A tree plantation drive was held at the Shreeji Go Sadan Gaushala and funds were donated for the purchase of fodder and other cow feeds.

RC Gandevi — RID 3060



DGE Tushar Shah handed over 15 computers, three laptops, five projectors and two printers to The Ambica High School, Gadat. Paritosh Naik's efforts brought CSR funding.

RC Kharar — RID 3080



Four toilet blocks and a drinking water station were inaugurated by DSP Rupinder Kaur Sohi at the Government Senior Secondary School, Radiala.

RC Varanasi Central — RID 3120



Bicycles were given to 111 girl students from government high schools and inter colleges by IPDG Anil Agarwal.

RC Samana — RID 3090



Around 290 patients were screened at the eye check-up and cataract camp at the Rotary Bhawan. Of them, 64 underwent surgery at the Kakkar Eye Hospital.

RC Pune Heritage — RID 3131



Artificial limbs were fitted for 80 amputees at Ahmednagar with the help of Bharat Vikas Parishad at a cost of ₹7 lakh in a special prosthetic camp.

RC Pilibhit — RID 3110



Rotary reflector tapes were pasted on tractor trailers and other vehicles carrying farm produce to the market to prevent accidents on highways.

RC Solapur Pride — RID 3132



A free dialysis centre was set up at the Yugandhar Multispecialty Hospital, Solapur. Over 150 patients are benefitting from the project.

RC Mira Road — RID 3141



Raincoats with club logo were distributed to children of a municipal school to help them brave the rain and attend school during the monsoon.

RC Honavar — RID 3170



A smart class was installed at a government primary school, with donations from Dr Vasanth Prabhu from RC Central Chester, US; Mohan Hegde, CEO, Selco Foundation; and the Menda Foundation, Bengaluru.

RC Guntur Vikas — RID 3150



A tea stall with accessories worth ₹50,000 was donated to a disabled person, who had lost his legs in an accident, at Matur village in Guntur.

RC Coimbatore Monarks — RID 3201



An oxygen concentrator and furniture were donated to the Coimbatore Cancer Foundation, thanks to Impel Ferrocast.

RC Bhalki Fort — RID 3160



Blankets, dress material, gloves, caps and quilts were distributed to families at the Dombari slum. Toys were given to their children.

RC Trikarpur — RID 3204



A two-storey Rotary Community Centre housing a clinic was inaugurated by IPDG Pramod Nayanar. It will soon have a vocational centre.

RC Alleppey East — RID 3211



Eye screening was done on 10,000 students and oral hygiene sessions were held for 1,500 students till May. Over 100 spectacles were given.

RC Guindy — RID 3232



During the installation of new office-bearers, \$63,000 and ₹23.5 lakh were received as CSR and individual contributions to TRF.

RC Sivakasi — RID 3212



At a *Golden Heart* camp, 135 children were examined at the Rotary School with the support of Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, and 22 of them were referred for surgery.

RC Bokaro Steel City — RID 3250



A water storage tank, fridge and air conditioner were donated to Shri Sharda Vidyalaya, Mamarkudur. Students are trained in beekeeping and other skills.

RC Vellore North — RID 3231



A sewing machine (₹11,600) was donated to a woman during the installation of new club president D Sivakumar in the presence of PDG CR Chandrabob and club members.

RC Salt Lake Metropolitan — RID 3291



Over 150 women were screened at the anaemia camp, held jointly with RC Sreerampore. They were given iron, deworming and calcium tablets.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran

An elegy for printed books

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan



Ten years ago, not knowing what to do with myself after retirement, I took the advice of a former colleague who is very good at dispensing advice. Write a novel, she had been saying. So I started writing one and finished it in four years, five years ago. It took some time to find a publisher and it was eventually published four years ago.

It was a resounding failure, commercially. But the reviews were good, because, even though I say so myself, it is a good, well-structured and well written book. That's what the reviews said, anyway. It tells the story of an irresponsible but clever young man in the publishing industry. Some very honest friends, who are not given to politeness, also told me it was a good book.

But that was very small consolation. Very few people bought it. Less than 500. So I swore not to ever write another novel. It is hard work and, if the book turns out to be a failure like most such books do, it's hard to muster up the courage and the energy to try once more.

But last year while visiting my son and his family I was once again bored stiff. I was the old man around the house whose only duty was to push the stroller on which my grandson rode grandly to his crèche in the morning and back in the evening. So one day

while sitting on a bench in a park, I took out my iPhone and started typing out a new novel. It had been germinating in my mind for about a year.

It is about six men in their mid-60s who rent the same sprawling cottage every year in the hills of north India for six months. They leave their wives behind, with both sides promising that contact between them will be restricted to one call a week of not more than three minutes. The wives too are free to do whatever they want, including taking on boyfriends if they can find any at their advanced age. The arrangement has worked perfectly for eight years but problems begin to emerge.

That's what the novel was to be about. I managed to write 15,000 words which is roughly a quarter of such books. So upon my return

Writing a novel is hard work and, if the book turns out to be a failure like most such books do, it's hard to muster up the courage and the energy to try once more.

to India, I called up some friends in publishing and asked if they would consider the thing for publication. All said no before I could blink. "No one reads anything these days, least of all novels and even less by Indian writers writing in English — and not at all by unknown wannabe novelists like you." My fame as a third class novelist had spread. So that was that. I stopped writing the novel.

The world has thereby been deprived of a masterpiece. But while I am sure it can cope with this disaster, I can't help wondering about the long term future of books. My advice-dispensing machine thinks books will survive because she is an optimist who loves to ignore reality. But I disagree. At least books printed on paper won't survive except as high priced luxuries like mink coats. I also think that the trend towards self-publishing will gather steam where intermediation by publishers is eliminated. Books will become available for free via the Internet. That means writing books for making a living will become impossible. Like thousands of other novelists, I got zero royalties from my first novel. But you know what? I had insisted on an advance. Small but satisfying. But in the years to come even that will vanish. As the supply of online novels becomes infinite, the price will become zero. ■



CREATE HOPE
in the WORLD



PROJECT PUNCH

A Project by
Rotary Club of Virudhunagar Dist-3212



A 3-Day Spoken English Programme

A Spoken
English
Programme
for
Student Teachers

Rotary 

What is Project Punch?

Project Punch is a 3-day Spoken English training programme by Rotary Club of Virudhunagar for student teachers (B.Ed. students) to improve their Communicative English and Public Speaking skills.

The programme has been designed in such a way that the participants get the fundamentals to start their journey of communication skills development and that the top performers receive special attention and booster sessions for further improvements.

Contact: Project Chairman - Rtn.A.Shyamraj - 97502 07464

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