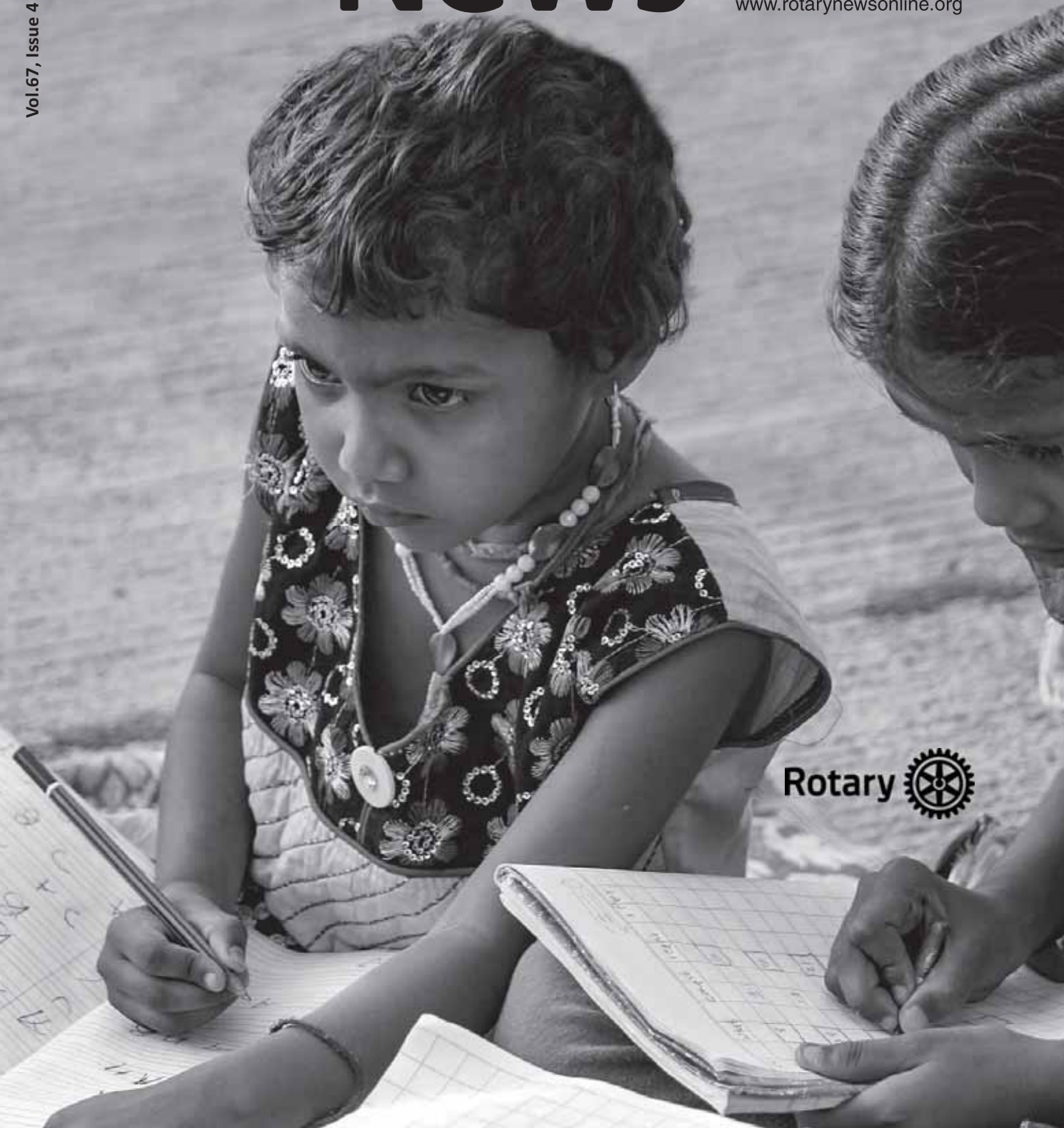



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Exceptional project, coverage

We are elated and filled with pride reading about the extraordinary humanitarian efforts of RC Nilgiris. The club's initiative to rejuvenate the school and its surrounding areas is praiseworthy. The project's detailed description coupled with lovely photographs, is exceptional. Such projects stand as a beacon of inspiration for Rotary clubs, urging them to take up similar initiatives. It is worth noting that the land on which the school was established in 1967 was donated by a Rotarian. The uniforms with the Rotary Wheel, and shoes for the children have further lifted the image of Rotary.

Congratulations for the outstanding article; we commend the initiative of Air Commodore Sanjay Khanna and the dedicated club team.

Col Vijayakumar, RC Alleppey Greater — D 3211

RC Nilgiris has done a wonderful project at the Bettati school, helping rural students. But the strength of the school is very low, and our Rotary friends must try to enrol more students. An apt article published during literacy month!

S Mohan, RC Madurai West — D 3000

Showcasing the Rotary spirit

The late Binota Banerjee's dream of creating a museum to display artefacts, books, sculptures, etc of Rotary in their house in Vapi was made real by PRIP Kalyan Banerjee. We request PRIP Banerjee to set up a gallery in literacy. In 1993–94, I met this soft-spoken gentleman from RC Vapi when I was the Awards Committee chairman of RID 3000. He gave away the awards and addressed the audience, and became RI president later.

VRT Dorairaja
RC Tiruchirapalli — D 3000

The efforts of the Bengaluru club to renovate 214 anganwadis at a



I was delighted to see the happy faces of students with their headmistress as the cover photo in the September issue. Congrats to RC Nilgiris for creating a model school. RI President Gordon McNally has written about peacebuilding with examples of Rotarians of India and Pakistan. The Editor's note is impressive and motivating, apt for the Literacy month.

RID Anirudha Roychowdhury's message signals the importance of education in ushering in change; TRF trustee chair Barry Rassin narrates story of Daniel in connection with TRF; and vice-chair Bharat Pandya urges Rotarians to experience the joy of giving to TRF.

Other articles including *RC Bilaspur brings joy to women prisoners*, *A journey in philanthropy*, *An avid collector of Rotary stamps*, *Rotarians must have humanitarian spirit*, *Mammography bus flagged off*, *A tribute to the Rotary spirit*, and *A Mumbai Rotaract club dreams big*, *Club Hop* and the health column, are all interesting. This issue is superb as usual.

Philip Mulappone MT,
RC Trivandrum Suburban — D 3211

cost of ₹4 crore is a shining example of Rotary's work and shows their commitment and the impact a group of dedicated individuals can make in their community. The provision of clean and hygienic environment, complete with toilets, is commendable.

Ajay Jain
RC Ahmedgarh — D 3090

In the August issue, PRIP Banerjee urged Rotarians to engage with the youth, and RID A S Venkatesh said that "Silence and Smile" are required for a successful term as governor. This advice is also applicable to club presidents who face many challenges.

Muniyappa DP
RC KGF Prime — D 3191

It is unusual to see *Rotary News* full of mega service projects, as in the August issue, where 80 per cent of the pages were devoted to service projects. Usually, 50 per cent pages carry mega events of RI or Rotary in India. "The MLA who advised Rotarians to keep politicians out" in the anganwadi article is right.

Gopalakrishnan Natarajan
DRFC — D 3212

I am an avid reader of *Rotary News*, as it covers in detail projects of different nature/causes to support our communities. The RI president's message on mental health is meaningful. Kudos to RC Bangalore Indiranagar for renovating over 200 anganwadis.

Also *Winning a mini marathon* by PRIP Shekhar Mehta and *Detoxifying the brain* were quite motivating.

Jacob Mathew Kavalam
RC Erumely — D 3211

PRIP Banerjee's call to engage with youth to secure their future is not just an abstract idea but a tangible mission. Through its community projects, Rotary is shaping the future by empowering young leaders. His insight provides a valuable framework for the clubs to excel.

Dr Ravi Sharma
RC Ahmedgarh — D 3090

A thought-provoking edit

Editor Rasheeda's note (August) conveys the pleasant news of seven women governors taking office this year in our zones. Women in the US had to fight a hard battle to get into Rotary; only in 1986 the RI Board allowed women's entry and since then many clubs have taken a keen interest to have women members. My best wishes to the seven women governors.

R Srinivasan
RC Bangalore JP Nagar — D 3191

Your articulation of the cyclical relationship between rivers and their territories in the editorial, *Reclaiming its space*, strikes a chord, as it reflects the intricate balance between nature's resilience and mankind's greed. Your comments on the recent flooding of the Yamuna River underscore the importance of Rotary's seventh area of focus — environment.

Your reference to Simone de Beauvoir's perspective on women as the 'second sex' resonates deeply, highlighting the prevailing societal imbalances that continue to challenge our progress. I believe, rather than

classifying individuals as the 'first' or 'second' sex, let's foster unity by ensuring gender equality.

Sunil Kumar Arora
RC Shillong — D 3240

Iam an ardent reader of *Rotary News* and wait for the day it reaches my hands. The August cover page has a lovely picture, and the editor in her note rightly says, "A river never forgets. Even after decades and centuries pass, the river comes back to recapture borders." All 140 crore Indians bow their heads in shame at the obnoxious incident of parading two women naked in Manipur.

Providing a library in a Jaisalmer school for students from lower strata by RCs Hyderabad Smart City and Jaisalmer Swarna Nagari is great as the reading habit has nearly vanished.

Raj Kumar Kapoor
RC Roopnagar — D 3080

The edit titled *Reclaiming their space* was superb. Again, Rasheeda's article *Giving hope through Jaipur limbs* was excellent. Kudos to RI Great Britain and Ireland. The write-up *Rotary sets up a mega hospital in Tirupur* was fantastic.

Daniel Chittilappilly
RC Kaloor — D 3201

Iam an ardent reader of *Rotary News*. Hats-off to SR Madhu for *Susheela, the nightingale of South*. With the

veteran singer's entry into the Guinness Book of World Records, she should have been honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award either by a Rotary club or an RI district. If anybody knows that this was done, please write in.

Shanker Mangadu
RC Madras — D 3232

The feature on P Susheela is interesting. Music critic Sriram Lakshman says the entire musical oeuvre of the singer comprised over 40,000 songs. And even her most ardent fan would not have listened more than 35 per cent of her songs. Quite true.

S Muniandi
RC Dindigul Fort — D 3000

Iwas impressed by the noble work of IRC Haridwar Central (*Rotary News Plus*) to donate clothes and other items to orphaned girls at Jagjeetpur village. Other clubs should follow this example.

T D Bhatia
RC Delhi Mayur Vihar — D 3012

Creating hope

Rotary's theme for this year, *Create hope in the world*, inspires us to do something positive for the community. You not only feel proud and happy to serve through Rotary, but also influence the people around you with this experience.

Atmaram Gupta
RC Maharajanjan — D 3120

On the cover: A child studying at the 'open-sky school' run by Lalita Sharma Anant, president, RC Indore Adarsh, RID 3040.

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

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

Dear fellow Rotary members,

The World Health Organisation designates October 10 as World Mental Health Day, and with Rotary placing a special focus on mental health this year, I would like to help answer the question posed to me most often when I travel to meet members: How can my club get started?

There are some wonderful examples of Rotary members taking action already. In the Philippines, the Rotary Club of Tiaong-Hiyas held a 12-week health challenge for mothers in the community to promote some baseline health screenings and coaching on a healthier lifestyle.

By the end of the challenge, the mothers had a special bond and decided to form a Rotary Community Corps called Ilaw ng Tahanan (“one who lights up the home”) with the goal of involving more mothers in health education and wellness support — and later youth services, teen pregnancy prevention, and help with unhealthy substance use. Almost a year later, the RCC is preparing to open its own health centre where mothers can come for peer-to-peer support.

Another strong example is in Colorado. In the fall of 2021, a small group of stakeholders from the Rotary Club of Highlands Ranch formed the Rotary Clubs of Colorado Endowed Fellowship for Pediatric Mental Health, which enhances the ability of Children’s Hospital Colorado to recruit and train paediatric psychiatry

providers and allows the hospital network to make additional appointments. This increases access to mental healthcare for children and decreases provider shortages.

Since then, the project has brought on new supporters and is now fully funded with a \$500,000 endowment. Investment income from this endowment will support

a fellow — a psychologist or psychiatrist — at Children’s Hospital. A new fellow will be named every one to two years, beginning spring of 2024. Over time this will create a cohort to bolster the mental health workforce, treating kids from all 64 Colorado counties and neighbouring states.

There are many more great mental health project stories on *Rotary Showcase*, and I invite you to share your experiences as you begin your own projects. Also, please reach out to mindhealth@rotary.org with any thoughts or ideas you would like to share about mental health in the Rotary world.

On October 10, I will host a Facebook Live event when we will recognise World Mental Health Day and further explore how Rotary members can begin this journey. But I would like to leave you with one way every Rotary member can make a difference.

Right now, there is someone you know in the Rotary world — in your club, from a project you’ve worked on, in a Rotary Fellowship or Rotary Action Group — who could use a little more of your time and attention. Rotary has this great gift of global friendship, and that also means being there for each other.

Discovering the human connections that bind us is what we do through our membership every day. It’s what Rotary has always been about, and we can build on it by helping each other find peace at home.

We need to learn how to ask not just “How are you?” but also “How are you really?” By doing so, Rotary can continue to *Create Hope in the World*.

Gordon McNally

President, Rotary International



Under the open sky...

This year's presidential theme is creating hope in the world; and I have loved it from the outset, because without hope, and dreams, what life is worth living? And it fits so perfectly with all the focus areas of Rotary; be it improving health and sanitation, promoting peace, enhancing livelihoods, protecting Mother Earth, or giving education to children.

I am sure each of you has his/her most favourite Rotary focus area; mine is literacy and education. Education — meaningful one — has the magical power to lift millions out of poverty. The power of the human mind is phenomenal, and the spirit, limitless. But the cherry on the cake is education. Most of us can look back to our school and college days... to that favourite teacher, who saw some spark/potential in us, and encouraged us to fine-tune or enhance that particular area that kindled our enthusiasm, excitement and interest. And that gentle push brought us to where we are today.

Last month we saw the transformation of an ordinary, decrepit panchayat middle school in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu by a bunch of passionate Rotarians from RC Nilgiris into a model school complete with computer training, science lab and library. This time, our cover story focuses on a single Rotarian, Lalita Sharma Anant, supported by her husband, also a Rotarian, both from RC Indore Adarsh, District 3040, who has no school or structure, and yet is successfully touching and transforming the lives of hundreds of poor children. She runs classes under the open sky, in a park opposite her house for 250-odd underprivileged children at any given time, and then links them to mainstream education — either

private or government schools, and in many cases, colleges — paying their fees herself, where necessary. Adolescent girls who were, or would have been, pulled out of school to clean vessels and work as domestic help, along with their mothers, have become nurses, or found jobs with iconic companies such as Cipla and Flipkart. Her most successful student yet is Mayank Katara, who has graduated from IIT Palakkad, and has got a job in Bengaluru at an annual **₹18 lakh package**. About 35 such successful alumni of hers now volunteer as *Bhaiya* and *Didi* teachers, whenever they can find the time, to teach other children in her open sky school.

Even though not a Rotary project, the success of this project, which has sustained for 14 long years, shows how just a single individual's passion and persistence give hope... and a future... to so many youngsters. The toughest part was convincing the parents to keep their children in school. Unfortunately, many parents battling poverty don't see any value in education. Hunger and poverty kill dreams.

Elsewhere too, Rotarians are giving people a reason for hope... through better education. In Chennai, RC Madras South has done a wonderful project by creating space for special children in mainstream schools. In Dharamshala, Rotarians of RC Dharamshala have improved adolescent girls' education, by gifting them good quality reusable sanitary napkins. They found that in rural areas, many girls were missing classes for several days as they couldn't manage their menstrual periods due to non-availability of sanitary napkins.

If a spark of hope can be ignited in the hopeless and the downtrodden... the sky is the limit.

Rasheeda Bhagat

A stress-free getaway

Eva Remijan-Toba



It's easy to turn your Rotary International Convention trip to Singapore into a no-hassle vacation. The two convention sites give you ready access to much of the island's most loved gardens, recreation, food and sightseeing spots. And travelling between venues and nearby sites is simple on the MRT rail system.

Between breakout sessions in the Marina Bay Sands complex, a vast vacationland in itself, enjoy being a tourist next door. A short walk brings you to Gardens by the Bay with its towering steel "supertree" art garden and mega greenhouse of the world's flowers.

Cross the twisted-steel Helix Bridge for a 20-minute walk to the Singapore Flyer Ferris wheel for skyline views or to one of the city's hawker centres. The usually inexpensive and open-air food courts are cultural touchstones. Stalls at Makansutra Gluttons Bay sell local

culinary delights including meat satay skewers, char kway teow noodles stir-fried in lard, and fried carrot cake that's no dessert — savoury cubes are made with daikon radish (white "carrot") and rice flour.

General sessions at National Stadium put you in the middle of the Singapore Sports Hub. You or your guests could surf a simulated wave, rent a kayak, or visit Shimano Cycling World for bicycle history exhibits, to name a few activities.

Malls are a big deal in Singapore. The convention grounds have two: Marina Bay Sands' luxe shops and the Sports Hub's Kallang Wave Mall, including sporty stores, golfing simulators, a virtual reality arcade, and a rock climbing wall that cuts through the mall's levels.

Join us on May 25–29 in *Sharing Hope With the World*.

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Printed and published by **PT Prabhakar**, 15 Sivaswamy Street, Mylapore, Chennai 600004, on behalf of Rotary News Trust and printed at Rasi Graphics Pvt Ltd, 40, Peters Road, Royapettah, Chennai - 600 014, India, and published at Rotary News Trust, Dugar Towers, 3rd Floor, 34, Marshalls Road, Egmore, Chennai 600 008. Editor: **Rasheeda Bhagat**.

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Magazine

Director speak



Dear Fellow Rotarians,
As October unfolds our thoughts turn to a significant focus area of Rotary — Economic and Community Development. It's in this journey that we delve into the profound ways through which we can transform lives, not only in India but across the globe.

India, a land of vibrant cultures and boundless diversity, is a canvas painted with dreams. However, beneath this colourful façade, stark realities beckon us to respond with compassion and purpose. It's a fact etched in our hearts that a significant portion of our fellow citizens lives on less than \$3 a day. This stark statistic calls for a response that transcends words. Yet, within these challenges, a beacon of hope shines brightly — the resilience of our people. Millions confront adversity daily, yet their spirits remain unbroken. This unwavering determination speaks of the inherent strength of our communities, where Rotary's service finds its true calling.

In this vast sea of humanity, another compelling fact stands tall — 600 million individuals, half of our population, are under the age of 25. They are the torchbearers of our nation's future, the custodians of dreams yet to unfold. As Rotarians, we hold the power to shape these dreams, to provide pathways leading not only

Shaping dreams through Rotary

to economic growth but also to the nurturing of the human potential within each young heart.

Our projects are like threads in a tapestry of impact. Vocational training centres in India have equipped young people with skills in electronics, sewing, carpentry, and more, empowering them to find employment or start their businesses and contribute to economic development. Clean water and sanitation projects in Ghana have not only improved health but also stimulated economic growth. Microfinance partnerships in Guatemala provide loans that fuel entrepreneurship. Medical clinics in rural Kenya enhance health services, indirectly boosting economic development. Investments in education in Nepal empower individuals to pursue better economic opportunities.

These successes, inspired by Rotary's commitment, are stories of transformation. They remind us that our actions, though uncelebrated in headlines, etch indelible marks upon the lives we touch. Standing at the intersection of compassion and action, let us carry forth Rotary's spirit, nurturing change in ways as unique as the communities we serve.

This October, let us celebrate the resilience of our global community, recognising that within every challenge lies an opportunity for transformation. As we venture out to serve, let our hearts be open and our hands extended, for it's in these gestures that we genuinely *create hope in the world*.

Raju Subramanian
RI Director, 2023–25

Our goal is in sight



On 24 October, we renew our commitment to our top humanitarian goal for World Polio Day.

This year, let's remember a young health worker in Pakistan known as Bibi Marjana (Miss Marjana). She braves the snow and cold in the mountains to vaccinate 84 children in rural areas, visiting each home, often miles apart.

Marjana is one of the thousands of frontline workers in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and outbreak areas I consider heroes in the final push to end polio. The work they do, coupled with the vision of our partners and the support you give, is moving mountains.

With Rotary's partnership, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative is aggressively pursuing two key goals from its 2022–26 strategy. First, we aim to halt wild poliovirus type 1 transmission. This year, only six cases have been documented as of this writing. Could this be the year we see the last of these poliovirus cases? We're cautiously optimistic that it might.

Second, we aim to report the final case of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2, or cVDPV2, in outbreak countries. About 80 per cent of cVDPV2 cases last year occurred in subnational areas of the Democratic Republic

of Congo, Nigeria and Yemen. We must implement tailored strategies to stop the virus in these areas.

Other challenges persist, including political tensions, security risks and access issues, and the lasting effect of the pandemic in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Despite these challenges, we are making progress. Poliovirus strains are diminishing, as is the number of affected regions where polio once prevailed. A new vaccine we have introduced reduces the incidence of the circulating vaccine-derived virus type 2.

Rotary is the organisation that had the audacity to take on a global effort to protect children everywhere from disability or even death due to polio. We must have the tenacity to see it to the finish line. What can you do to help us get there, you ask? Join or initiate a PolioPlus Society in your club or district and engage all members in this historic moment. And don't forget that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation continues to amplify Rotary's donations to polio eradication with a 2-to-1 match for every dollar.

You can also advocate the cause of polio eradication with governments to secure political and financial support and promote Rotary's leadership role in all media. Like Marjana marching up the mountain, we have our goal in sight, and we will keep going until we get there.

Barry Rassin

TRF Trustee Chair

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Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 37,010

Rotaract clubs : 11,205

Interact clubs : 14,282

RCCs : 13,117

Rotary members : 1,181,334

Rotaract members: 166,236

Interact members : 328,486

As on September 14, 2023

Membership Summary

As on September 1, 2023

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	138	6,070	6.29	73	492	33	254
2982	84	3,750	6.40	35	839	87	149
3000	136	5,940	11.78	104	1,601	186	215
3011	135	5,010	28.86	84	2,401	128	37
3012	152	3,784	23.15	75	792	91	61
3020	86	5,038	7.60	45	984	117	351
3030	101	5,672	15.74	126	1,947	475	384
3040	112	2,474	14.71	63	863	77	213
3053	74	2,934	16.16	36	593	42	129
3055	80	2,930	11.98	67	1,095	69	376
3056	89	3,869	25.79	48	535	100	202
3060	105	4,993	15.92	68	2,213	57	142
3070	125	3,338	16.21	49	536	51	62
3080	108	4,180	12.49	124	1,610	155	122
3090	110	2,421	5.87	48	609	191	164
3100	114	2,292	12.17	15	137	33	151
3110	146	3,901	11.18	17	110	38	106
3120	88	3,643	16.00	42	473	27	55
3131	142	5,735	26.31	145	2,599	217	145
3132	87	3,626	13.76	39	552	109	176
3141	112	5,990	27.05	153	5,052	164	214
3142	107	3,979	21.44	95	2,048	90	91
3150	110	4,323	12.79	154	1,815	104	130
3160	84	2,738	8.77	32	228	95	82
3170	148	6,585	15.35	118	1,751	169	179
3181	87	3,586	10.65	39	462	81	118
3182	87	3,612	10.27	46	241	104	103
3191	90	3,510	18.40	107	2,753	121	35
3192	81	3,518	20.98	119	2,450	91	40
3201	173	6,709	9.76	134	2,037	91	93
3203	95	4,988	7.60	87	1,147	133	39
3204	75	2,478	7.26	24	226	17	13
3211	159	5,091	7.99	10	152	19	133
3212	127	4,676	11.14	90	3,604	143	153
3231	96	3,438	7.30	39	436	39	417
3232	186	6,556	19.78	127	7,279	144	100
3240	105	3,574	16.62	71	1,107	64	227
3250	108	4,142	21.49	68	956	64	191
3261	105	3,505	22.62	23	242	21	45
3262	113	3,798	15.88	76	716	642	284
3291	143	3,793	25.65			60	729
India Total	4,603	172,189		2,915	55,683	4,739	6,910
3220	70	2,013	16.44	98	4,417	84	77
3271	177	3,083	17.97	192	3,340	332	28
3272	161	2,277	14.67	90	1,273	25	49
3281	328	8,162	18.15	281	1,983	144	211
3282	182	3,614	9.85	203	1,389	30	47
3292	154	5,624	18.46	181	5,236	90	134
S Asia Total	5,675	196,962	15.47	3,960	73,321	5,444	7,456

Source: RI South Asia Office

Where magic happens with open sky education

Rasheeda Bhagat

When Mayank Katara, the son of a small-time plumber, was struggling with his studies, he was referred to Lalita Sharma Anant, president of Rotary Club of Indore Adarsh, RI District 3040, and an experienced

professor with a doctorate in public administration and international studies, who had given up a well-paying job to hold classes for less privileged children in Indore.

“He used to come to our classes, but was not regular. As he was a very bright boy, I shifted him to a small private school near his home. I knew

the owner/principal and managed to get his fees waived,” recalls Lalita.

He did extremely well and qualified for admission into IIT, Palakkad. Once again, his mentor guided him on the intricate process to secure a bank loan to pay his fees. It is eight months since Mayank has graduated from IIT and has secured a job with an annual package of ₹18 lakh in Bengaluru, where he is working now. “Whenever he is in Indore, he comes to me and helps out with taking classes for other children.”

This amazing educationist, with 18 years of experience in teaching public administration and international relations to the students of law at the DAVV HRDC University in Indore and also the Paul Institute of Professional Studies, can reel out many such success stories (see box). But let’s go to the beginning and see what made her give up a secure teaching job



and start teaching underprivileged children... the number hovers above 200 at any given time!

Reverting to 2008 when Lalita, who hails from Sikkim and is married to a fellow Rotarian and businessman Hatim Anant, says that it all began when the couple's new home was under construction in Indore. Says Lalita: "When I used to

visit my house under construction, I saw a lot of children and youth, some gambling and others smoking. As an educationist I just could not look away. They were not only wasting their time but their entire life. It was like watching a very serious wound being inflicted on the soul of India."

She felt she had to do something about it. She consulted her husband, and reached a decision. After they shifted, she started a small tutorial inside her house with just eight children. In just a month the number

I saw a lot of children and youth, some gambling and others smoking. They were not only wasting their time but their entire life.

Lalita Sharma Anant
president, RC Indore Adarsh

grew to over 100. So she shifted the classes outside the house on the road.

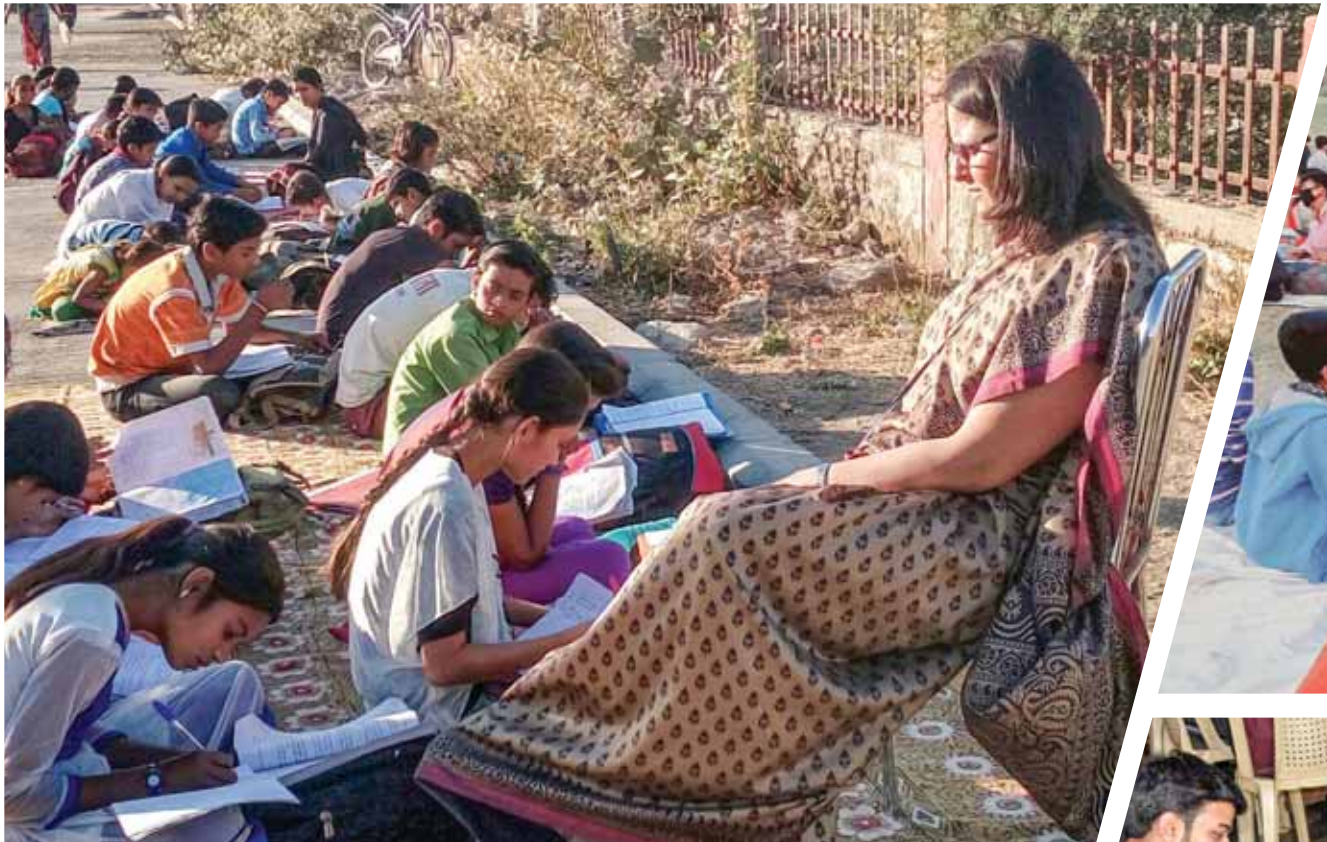
There was no police or any other harassment because the house was in a little isolated area which did not disturb anybody. But since she felt it would not be safe to keep small children on the road, she identified a huge park in front of her house which was unkempt and filthy and used for anti-social activities. She and her husband, whom she describes "as my strong backbone and greatest supporter," got it cleaned and shifted the classes there. Many of the youngsters, who gradually came into this open class stream of education, were dropouts, some of them who would rip off parts of the fencing of the public garden, sell it and use the money for gambling, smoking and substance abuse. There were children who had never seen the inside of a school, and were doing part time jobs for paltry money.

What had begun with just eight children from her neighbourhood, identified with the help of a vegetable vendor and a laundry man, grew speedily and the number ultimately swelled to 280!

As more and more children started coming to her classes, an astonishing number of 15 senior teachers, all women, joined her to teach these children. To add to that, the senior students who passed high

Lalita Sharma Anant, president, RC Indore Adarsh, teaching children at a park.







school and had then graduated after getting extra coaching/learning from her open-to-sky classes, started volunteering to teach the younger children.

As she reels off a number of heartwarming success stories, I ask her about her Rotary journey (see box), how she raises the funds to sustain her teaching endeavour and whether other Rotarians or her club members help with the funds. She explains that the funding comes in various ways, making it clear at the outset that “actually, not too much of money is really required, because we have no physical structure, no designated space, and yet the classes have sustained now for 14 years!”

Lalita explains that more than money, there are bigger challenges. It is often difficult to convince the parents to allow their children, especially girls, to continue their education in schools. The parents want their children to work and bring some money home; the girls being encouraged to work as domestic help along with their mothers, and the boys as daily labourers. Typically, a girl’s education is seen as of little value, the argument being that after all ‘she will get married and go to another home’. The other problem was that as many girls had to walk a long

Quite often, Rotarians and others donate something for their birthdays, anniversaries etc, and we direct them to particular students and the institutions where they can directly pay the fees.

Success stories

Lalita Anant relates the interesting story of Pooja who used to attend her classes and dropped out from Class 9; “I knew that she had a spark in her and wanted to do something. We track every child, so when she stopped coming for a few days, along with one of her teachers, I visited the girl’s home one evening. I had learnt that the family is in a very severe financial crisis. The parents had four daughters and Pooja was required to accompany her mother to work which involved cleaning utensils in various homes. I counselled the mother and said: ‘Your life is over but you can give your children much better opportunities. If she is not educated, she will find a partner from the same background and her life thereafter will be as difficult as yours.’”

The Rotarian found from the mother that the girl was earning ₹1,200 a month and she asked the mother to send the girl to “us to help out as several youngsters do. They help us out in different ways and we help them in return by sponsoring their education. And we pay such volunteers some money every month because they also need their pocket money. Pooja completed her Class 10 in a private school where I paid the

fees. She opted for science and went on to Class 12.”

After that she went to a government college and completed her BSc. The bright and hard-working girl wanted to study further but said her family was opposing this. Once again it was time for a home visit; “we went and counselled the parents and she completed her MSc in pharmaceutical chemistry from the Indore university and emerged a gold medalist.



distance “to reach our classes, they faced eve-teasing and the parents wanted them to stop coming. But we worked out solutions by counselling the parents about the value of

education and its long-term benefits. We also got in touch with the police station and sorted out numerous problems including eve-teasing, and some deserving girls were given bicycles for the long commute to school,” says Lalita.

direct them to particular students and the institutions where they can directly pay the fees. Also, since I’ve worked for 18 years, I have my personal savings; PF and FDs, and I often use my personal or my husband’s money to pay for some students’ fees, or we find sponsors for them. The other thing is that since many of our volunteers come from a low-income background, we have to give them an honorarium, so that they can support themselves and their higher education, as many of them are in college. In an emergency of course Hatim helps,” she smiles.

It is often difficult to convince the parents to allow their children, especially girls, to continue their education in schools.

As for the money to pay the fees of the promising students who are put in private schools, Lalita says, “Quite often, Rotarians and others donate something for their birthdays, anniversaries etc, and we

After that she came to me and said now I need a job.”

Lalita helped her with her applications to pharma companies and coached her through several sessions on how to handle interviews and the related paraphernalia. “I have several volunteers who come to me; they helped her, coached her, polished up her speech and she has now got a job as an analyst in the pharma major Cipla. Today she earns around ₹25,000 a month and enjoys so many benefits and welfare measures given by the company.”

Now she is supporting the education of her younger sisters... they have also finished their education and one of them is pursuing a B Ed course.

Then there is the heartening story of Sadhana Yadav who was very weak in her studies; even till Class 5 she was not able to construct sentences. Lalita first thought she might be dyslexic and was planning to consult a doctor. “Then again we thought we’ll work with her, and while doing so found that her concepts from the junior classes were not clear and we

I’d like to share that
our children who are in
Class 4 and 5, know their
tables till 40 and 45!

guided her. I myself sat with her for months and today she is a trainer at Flipkart and is going to take her MBA exam. She is supporting her younger brother and sister’s education. I have paid her fees from Class 8 to high school; then we sent her to a government college where we didn’t need to pay any fees.”

Then there is the story of a girl who will be graduating as a nurse this year. She was going to a government school and almost dropped out of school. Lalita tried getting her enrolled in a private school “but she was not confident of being able to cope with the pressure so I found her a few mentors.” She was given personal/individual mentoring; finally she

got back her confidence and managed to get into a very good nursing college (The Aurobindo Institute of Medical Sciences). The father did not have a job but was very sincere. “We know a doctor couple who own a pathology lab; they have hired her for part-time work from 6 to 10am. With the money she earns there, she pays her fees, and is doing well.”

Another girl who was doing a pharma course, lost her father to cancer midway through the course. Her mother said she could not continue and “she was on the verge of leaving. So I told Hatim to create a vacancy in his shop and he gave her a job to make some entries... this is to ensure that they understand the importance of work, and it also gives her dignity. She paid her fees with this money, has completed her pharmacy course and will be doing masters very soon,” says a beaming Lalita.

She adds demurely: “Like these, we have so many other stories. I’d like to share that our children who are in Class 4 and 5, know their tables till 40 and 45!”



There are various kinds of courses in this open-to-sky school; the classes are held for students from Class 1 to 12; “for graduation and PG courses, we have a mentorship programme, and get mentors to coach the students. We also have a bridge education programme for dropouts and even those who have never been to school. We prepare them thoroughly; for eg, those who have

Volunteers teach children to use the computer.



Open-to-sky classes being conducted by volunteers.



never been to a school are enrolled as private candidates in Class 5 exam in a government school. Once they get through — and we make sure they get through by preparing them well — for Class 6, we enrol them in the regular stream.”

This way, the child enters into mainstream education, and a path is created for her to go for higher education and achieve her dream. But many youngsters do not want to go in for higher education for various reasons. So when they are a little older and have passed seventh

35 Didi and Bhaiya teachers, who were students once, but have now graduated, now volunteer to take some of the classes.

or eighth grade, “we have certain skill development programmes or vocational training for them and after completing that they are employed in different places,” she adds.

The special and most heartwarming feature of Lalita’s

home university is a group of 35 Didi and Bhaiya teachers, who were students once, but have now graduated, in law, business administration, nursing and so on and now volunteer to take some of the classes.

The class timings are according to the convenience of the mentors and the volunteers who come for six hours a day, two batches — 1 to 6pm and 3 to 7pm — are held.

So how did she find the teachers?

As a winner of many awards — Global Women Influencer Award at New York in 2019 for her selfless

Her Rotary journey



Lalita and her husband Hatim Anant.

Lalita Anant and her husband Hatim joined Rotary six years ago; “a couple of our friends were Rotarians and they said it’s a good organisation to

join. We are Bahais and felt a natural fit because we found our values and principles are the core values of Rotary, be it promoting peace, equity and inclusiveness. We

found the Rotarians to be a good group of people. So we joined a Rotary club,” she says.

But unfortunately, after they joined, they “found not much was happening so we left, and the club closed too.” But after six months, there was an orientation programme to join Rotary, “which we attended as we had always wanted to join Rotary, because it has beautiful people and the right kind of diversity and inclusiveness, which we value.” Now, she adds, the couple is very happy with their club.

So does she try to get help from her club, where she is president this year, to help these children from disadvantaged families?

Lalita demurs and says: “Actually, it’s just a four-year-old club and we collect only a

We had always wanted to join Rotary, because it has beautiful people and the right kind of diversity and inclusiveness, which we value.

minimum amount of club fees. No, I haven’t spoken about this in our club. One of my drawbacks is that I cannot ask.”

Well, she is known only to give, I comment. She laughs and says, “I find it very difficult to ask for money but so many people in my club, and outside, know about our work. We also do awareness programmes for adolescent girls. Recently, we had a session on MHM, and then a workshop on making *rakhis* and other activities.”





As she soldiers on, the challenges continue, a real one being the monsoon rain when classes can't be held in the open. And there continues to be an army of youngsters and parents who continue to see zero value in any education. But her efforts to promote awareness on the real value of education continue.

Lalita is proud of the socio-economic transformation that has come into the lives of the students who have graduated. "Many have entered multinational companies, reputed pharma companies, nursing and we also have an IITian," she says with pride, adding, "at the end of the day, the outcome has been beyond expectation and highly satisfactory for both the students and teachers."

She feels there is a lot of scope for the expansion of this concept of open education "where lakhs of students throughout the country can be streamlined into mainstream education. In 2017 our open sky learning classes were registered into an organisation called Abhakunj Welfare Society."

Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S

service to education at the grassroots, and recognition as one of the 100 Most Impactful Women of India by the then President of India Pranab Mukherjee for "her selfless service to society" in 2016 — she was once on the *Dr Subhash Chandra Show* on Zee TV, speaking on the purpose of life. It was being watched by a very bored and sleepy teacher, who suddenly

woke up, was inspired by her talk and came the very next day to join the group as a volunteer teacher.

What is touching is her humility; in 14 years, year after year, she has touched the lives of 580 students every year on an average. And yet she dismisses her efforts saying: "We are really nobody; we are only instruments of a higher power."





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Eyecare for tea pluckers in Assam

Jaishree



Rotary Club of Gauhati South, RID 3240, along with VisionSpring, a social enterprise, and B&A group of companies, organised an eye checkup camp for tea pluckers working in the tea gardens at Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar districts. The club had set a target of screening 6,000 labourers and wrapped up the camp screening 6,700 people by June. “We dedicate the success of the project to late past president Dhiraj Kakati who had launched the initiative in 2021 during his presidentship. We ran it for two years,” says Rajesh Bhatra, the club’s IPP.

Tea plucking is a demanding job that relies heavily on good vision. It requires a good hand-and-eye coordination, dexterity and speed. “For fine black or green tea, pluckers must carefully select the first two leaves and one new bud from the tea bush. However, for many tea pluckers in Assam, good vision is not a given. Being cash-strapped, they lack access to eyeglasses, which makes it difficult for them to perform their job to the optimal level,” explains Bhatra.

Eyeglasses can greatly improve the productivity of a tea plucker by enhancing the visual acuity and reducing eyestrain. The club provided spectacles to the tea pluckers with defective vision.

Being cash-strapped, tea workers lack access to eyeglasses, which makes it difficult for them to perform their job to the optimum level.



Fishlings being released into the Deepor Beel, a freshwater lake in Guwahati.

The club is honouring visually-challenged youngsters with the annual ‘Archana and Atul Chandra Goswami Memorial Award’ since 2014. The award constitutes a prize of ₹10,000 and a citation. Last year the award was presented to Shahid Afridi, a 14-year-old blind student of the Guwahati Blind High School for his proficiency in music. Former AGM of State Bank of India Bikash Das, who is also visually-challenged, was the chief guest at the event.

Addressing thalassaemia

At the start of this year, the club, led by its president Nawajyoti Sharma, signed an MoU with the Marwari Hospitals in Guwahati for treating people with thalassaemia. The hospital will perform blood transfusions and provide medicines free of cost to

patients, and the club will pay a discounted price to the hospital for the services. A fundraiser cultural programme helped the club raise ₹8 lakh through sale of tickets and a painting auctioned for ₹50,000; of this ₹4.8 lakh was earmarked for the project through the club’s Trust.

In another initiative, the Rotarians released 50,000 fishlings into Deepor Beel, a freshwater lake located southwest of Guwahati with an aim to boost fish diversity and also safeguard the lake’s fragile ecosystem. This project, Bhatra says, was built upon the success of a previous project “where we introduced fish farming as a sustainable livelihood opportunity in Kalitapara village with the help of our RCC Chakradeo. The villagers have since improved economically and are pursuing the vocation with zeal.” ■

Helping special children in inclusive schools

Rasheeda Bhagat

When he became president-elect of his club, RC Madras South, RID 3232, two years ago, Jawahar Nichani knew what the flagship project of his club would be during his year as the club leader in 2022–23 — giving a future to children by giving them access to quality education.

“We all know that every child has to discover the wonders of this vast universe, the basic and fundamental right to receive an education without discrimination. It is education that will give these citizens of tomorrow equal opportunities to compete and excel at the workplace,” he says.

But while giving access to quality education, “it is important to be inclusive and provide equal opportunities even to children who are different... autistic, dyslexic or with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) as also children with Down’s syndrome.

While he was putting together the fundamentals of this project, including plans to apply for a global grant for around ₹30 lakh, he met Kalpana Kumar, a speech pathologist, who has been working in the field of inclusive education for over 10 years. She runs the Kare Therapy Centre for children with special needs; “he said you have so much experience in the field of caring for special

children and our Rotary club wants to do a comprehensive project on inclusive education for government-aided schools, which lack the infrastructure and skilled teachers to provide equal learning to children with special needs. So why don’t you join Rotary by joining our club,” recalls Kalpana.

When she heard about this project, she immediately agreed and joined RC Madras South. The club did some background research on inclusive schools where lower middle class and middle class children study, and which are open to children with special needs. “My club member Mukund Vedabudi and I have travelled over 1,000km to identify schools that are far away from the city for this project, which we have named *Freedom through Education*,” says Nichani, whose year as club president has just ended.

To identify the eight schools that would benefit through this

My club member Mukund Vedabudi and I have travelled over 1,000km to identify schools that are far away from the city for this project, which we have named Freedom through Education.

Jawahar Nichani
IPP, RC Madras South



A teacher helps a child with special needs to climb a ladder.



project many parameters had to be ticked off. These included good school management and faculty, a hygienic environment and the eagerness and willingness of the stakeholders to improve the school's facilities. Finally, the schools were identified, with six of the eight schools being inclusive schools open to taking in and providing special facilities to educate children with special needs. They are Bala Mandir, Maduram Narayan Centre, Padma

Subramanian Bala Bhavan, Saraswathy Vidhyalaya, Sir M Venkatasubba Rao and Sir and Lady Venkatasubba Rao institutions.

"Once we had identified the schools and completed our research, we set about the task of equipping the schools with the special equipment and services required by special children. For such children speech therapy and occupational therapy are very important and have to start with immediate effect once a child is diagnosed or detected with any disorder

that will affect her learning abilities," says Kalpana.

Nichani says he has done many school projects "when I was a Round Tabler and I firmly believe that for poverty alleviation, education is essential. To do this flagship project, it came as a shot in the arm to get an experienced person like Kalpana in our team. She is extremely qualified in this field, and has worked with experts from Singapore, Australia etc and has helped many

children with multiple disabilities. She works with 130-odd children and does interviews and assessment of special needs children... their IQ levels, to what extent their brain can process and accept learning. Thanks to her efforts many more people have come to know about this field, and the need to be inclusive; now schools are offering more seats to such children," he says.

Underlining the extent to which such schools and children need support he adds, "Sometimes a single child requires three teachers. I have



Often a child can't even stand properly.
But our aim is to make them independent
so that they can do simple things like
handling door latches, opening doors.

gone to these schools and seen the children who need special help... often a child can't even stand properly, and doesn't easily accept anything new. But our aim is to make them independent... so that they can do simple things like handling door latches, opening doors. And we have done more than that. Through the use of touch

screens and smart TVs we have helped children to express their thoughts and ideas. In the process the child learns."

Using Kalpana's experience and expertise special teachers were chosen for the schools.



Above: IPP Jawahar Nichani and his wife Akshaya being felicitated by a child.

Below: Children learn various activities in a special classroom set up by RC Madras South in one of the schools.





The next important step was to acquire the right tools and equipment for the schools to help children with multiple disabilities. These include the T swing, shooter and balance boards “to improve the vestibular activities of the children, a digital board to improve the cognitive abilities of the children, puzzles and other supporting teaching material. “I helped them hire the right people and furnish the schools with such equipment that are required when working with children with multiple disabilities.”

“All this costs money and these schools don’t charge fees apart from the minimum stipulated by the government. Actually the kind of equipment we gave these schools is not even available in elite schools,” she adds.

Club president Nichani and his team swung into action to collect funds. Initially he applied for a global grant for around ₹30 lakh “but it didn’t go through, they asked so many questions and expressed so many doubts, and

I wanted to finish the project during my year, so we decided to raise funds ourselves.”

In all around ₹85 lakh have been spent on the eight schools; “we spent nearly ₹14 lakh on employing new and special teachers and academic training, ₹20 lakh on buying computers, touch screen TVs and other equipment for children with special needs. While Chemfab Alkalies gave ₹2 lakh from their CSR funds,

one of their members who runs two trusts gave ₹60 lakh. Other club members donated ₹13 lakh. He adds that schools a little away from the city were chosen as “in these places it is very difficult for parents with disabled children to find the

The parents of the children in the beneficiary schools are very happy, because they are finally getting their children integrated in mainstream schooling.





right kind of educational support for them.”

The parents of the children in the beneficiary schools are “very happy, because they are finally getting their children integrated in mainstream schooling. Frankly speaking they are

overwhelmed because it costs a lot of money to get such special services for children with disabilities. I believe this is one-of-a-kind project that Rotary has done, and it is very important to remember that for such special children, academic and

medical rehabilitation go hand-in-hand, that is why occupation therapy is very important,” says Kalpana.

Nichani explains that during the research phase and after implementation of this project the students’ and parents’ views were also taken into consideration to understand if they were happy or had any concerns. In all the Rotarians have employed six teachers in two schools; “such children need shadow teachers or para-educators who monitor and assist with the child’s progress, speech pathologists to help the children with speech difficulty or impediment, behavioural therapists to help train and modify the child’s behaviour and habits, occupational therapists to guide and teach through a scientific basis, providing a holistic perspective, special educators who initiate individual educational planning and a psychologist.”

He is grateful to his club members for enthusiastically supporting this project.



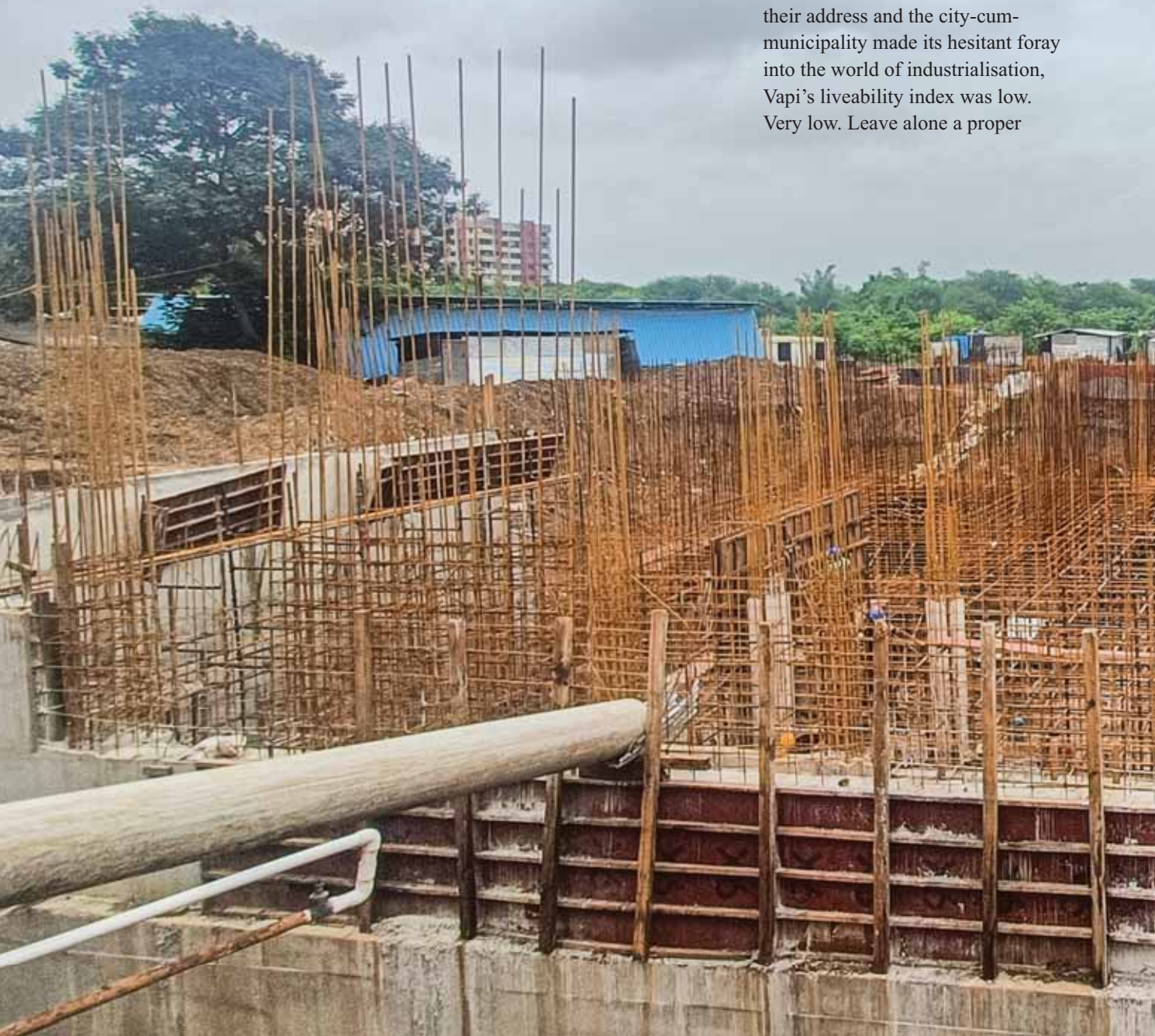
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When Rotary transformed a city

Vidyottama Sharma

Rotary not only uplifts the lives of people but can also transform an entire city with its philanthropic work. This is the story of the Haria LG Rotary Hospital in Vapi, the first hospital of the city, that has changed the DNA of Gujarat's most famous industrial town. A look at one of the longest running sustainable Rotary projects in the world.

In the 1960s and 1970s when factories began making Vapi their address and the city-cum-municipality made its hesitant foray into the world of industrialisation, Vapi's liveability index was low. Very low. Leave alone a proper



hospital, it did not even have a decent enough clinic where a patient could be rushed in an emergency.

“Only one doctor served the entire city and dogs and snakes roamed everywhere freely,” reminisces Kalyan Banerjee, past president of Rotary International and a well-known name in Vapi because of his social work through Rotary and UPL, the company he

Only one doctor served the entire city and dogs and snakes roamed everywhere freely.

Kalyan Banerjee
PRIP and chairman
Rotary Charitable Trust

has been associated with for the last five decades. “The city had a severe mosquito problem and it used to face torrential rains. People depended on major cities for all their important needs.” Banerjee had moved to Vapi in the late ’60s to help set up United Phosphorous with Rajnikant Shroff (popularly known as Rajju Shroff), the owner and chairman of the company.

Cancer centre under construction on the hospital campus.



“A friend passed away due to heart attack one day. The doctor could not diagnose the medical problem. So, he was not given the right and immediate treatment,” Banerjee recalls. “We couldn’t do a thing. We thought if we had to survive in the city, we needed a hospital.”

A small clinic

So, while United Phosphorous was being launched, Banerjee and Sandra Shroff, wife of the chairman, also began creating on a parallel scale the basic infrastructure that the city direly needed. Shroff began focusing on Gnyan Dham School and Banerjee spent his energy towards creating a clinic to meet the medical needs of the city. The idea for the clinic came

A friend passed away due to heart attack one day. We could not do a thing. We thought if we had to survive in the city, we needed a hospital.

from RC Vapi, of which he is a member. With him being involved, United Phosphorous (it hadn’t become UPL then) couldn’t be far behind. The company seemed to wear the CSR badge on its sleeve even in its formative years, when CSR was not even a properly understood term.

An infant being treated in the neonatal ICU at the hospital.



It wasn’t easy. A new company required time, energy and massive efforts. A new clinic needed the same. Both at the same time. “Initially we didn’t know where to begin. We started small,” Banerjee says. That was in 1978, when a few Rotarians from RC Vapi, some staff members of United Phosphorous and a few members of the Engineers’ Association came together to create a 10-bed OP clinic. “We installed an x-ray machine and began cardiac tests — basically primary care for heart attacks. We also began an ambulance service. We still didn’t have the advanced medical care facilities. But at least it was a beginning,” he recalls. For enabling partnerships and donations, the club formed a trust, the Rotary Charitable Trust.

A small hospital

But Vapi grew. And grew fast. More and more people began making it their home. A clinic couldn’t meet the need of a burgeoning city. Vapi that had “the best water supply in the world” but sporadic electricity supply, offered the opportunity to build whatever anyone wanted to build. It was in need of everything. Ten beds led to 24 beds in 1982 and then to the formation of the Rotary Niramaya Hospital.

How the Rotarians got the land for the hospital too is an interesting story. The Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) was established in Vapi in 1967–68. Rajju Shroff became its Board member in the early days itself. That Rotary and UPL were building a hospital was big news in the city and when GIDC was approached for land for education and medical services, GIDC offered free land to the established Gnyan Dham Trust for the school and through it, to Rotary Trust too, for the hospital.



Donor couple PM Desai and Rekha hands over cheque for construction of cancer centre to PRIP and chairman of Rotary Charitable Trust Kalyan Banerjee (R) and Dr SS Singh, chief physician and director, Medical Services, Haria LG Rotary Hospital.

“In the initial stages, we had absolutely no resources — financial or otherwise,” says Praful Dewani, the chief engineer of United Phosphorous, and a Rotarian. “So, the hospital used to depend on corporate help for everything. For example, if a tubelight or electric bulb had to be repaired or replaced, the electrician from the company would come and do it. Similarly, if a toilet got blocked or a bathroom had problems, the company would send its plumber to rectify the problem. For the ambulance, the Rotarians gave personal guarantee as

The Rotarians would go to the hospital in the morning, then to their office, then again to the hospital in breaks and sometimes even in the evenings.

loans couldn’t be disbursed in the absence of personal guarantees.” Those were the initial days but news of the service spirit of Rotary spread throughout Vapi and even beyond it.

Help from Rotarians

The Rotarians devoted much time and energy in shaping this dream of Rotary. They would go to the hospital in the morning, then to their office, then again to the hospital in breaks and sometimes even in the evenings. Vapi had many pharmaceutical companies and many owners of these companies were Rotarians too. So, the companies that couldn’t help with money, helped by giving medicines at the best possible rates.

The hospital now had to expand further. Seeing the good work of Rotary, Haria Group came forward to join hands with the Rotary Charitable Trust and Lakhamshi Govind Haria came forward to extend support in meeting the cost to build the hospital. The hospital was now named Haria LG Rotary Hospital.

Two Haria Group representatives and five Rotarians became the trustees. Banerjee was one among them. He is the third chairman of the Trust now. The hospital later advanced to a 32-bed-facility. From one doctor, it moved to having its own orthopaedic doctor, and then a surgeon and as goes the Urdu couplet, *log saath aate gaye aur caravan banta gaya* (people joined and the procession grew). The Rotary dream had now got its solid foundation.

Today this 250-bed-strong hospital is a super speciality hospital with its own trauma care centre. The hospital’s main ICU (Intensive Care Unit) itself has 54 beds. There are various ICUs in different sections too and the total number of beds in all the ICUs together has risen to about 75 now, a substantial progress from one ICU when it had started.

The hospital now has 70 full-time doctors (including the medical officers) and about 80 visiting doctors in various fields (including radiology, cardiology, surgery, gynaecology, trauma care and emergency services,

orthopaedics, dermatology, dentistry, ophthalmology and neurosurgery). It has four operation theatres, one ophthalmology operation theatre and a blood bank.

Cancer care

A Cancer Centre is now coming up replete with a radiation wing. When it is ready, cancer patients will not have to travel to Mumbai for treatment. “This is the only thing we didn’t have,” says Dr S S Singh, chief physician and director, Medical Services and a Rotarian too. “Magnitude-wise, it may not be like Mumbai’s Tata Cancer Hospital but we will provide all services they provide. We have a team of oncologist, onco surgeon and radio therapist in place. And we will bring the latest radiation machine soon. Our aim is that every poor patient who is dependent on government schemes like ESIS or *Ayushman Yojana* is able to get treatment at our hospital”.

One of the very few longest running permanent projects of Rotary in the world, the importance of this hospital can be gauged from the fact that 15 Rotary International presidents have visited it on their India visit.

Built on an approximately 1.25 lakh sqft area of a total Trust land of 30,000 sq metres, the built-up area will have 40,000 sqft more added to it once the cancer ward, with its radiation wing, comes up by June next year. It will have four floors, with each floor measuring up to 10,000 sqft.

Nursing college

The hospital also adjoins the Sandra Shroff ROFEL (Rotary Foundation for Education and Learning) College of Nursing, that was started about 20 years ago.



Left: Foundation stone laying ceremony of the Rotary hospital.



PRIP Frank Devlyn laid the foundation stone for the Silver Jubilee Block on Feb 19, 2003.



PRIP Glen Estess at the inauguration of the Silver Jubilee Ward on Dec 8, 2004.



Above: The first operation theatre was inaugurated on March 21, 1981, by RI President (1982–83) Stanley McCaffrey. PRIP Banerjee is seen on the left.

Inauguration of the Nukem Blood Bank by PRIP Rajendra Saboo in Feb 1994.



PRIP Luis Vicente Gay (centre) with his wife Elena Cruz, PRIP Banerjee (R) and Binota (second from L) after inaugurating the ophthalmic wing at the hospital.

The Nursing College, affiliated to South Gujarat University, has been training over 100 nurses a year with diploma, BSc and MSc courses. “Since the last year, the college has introduced a very good simulation lab that teaches the nurses everything on high fidelity manikins, so they do not have to learn directly on the patients,” says Dr Singh.

While some nurses go abroad, few return to their home towns and about 20 to 30 per cent get absorbed in the hospital, says Somesh Dayal, chief administrative officer.

No one is denied entry at the Rotary hospital. “We do not wait for any deposit nor do we care if a patient is accompanied by a relative or not. The hospital begins treatment immediately once a patient is wheeled in,” says Dr Singh.

Dayal adds, “Accident victims are brought here from as far as Kasa or Manor in Maharashtra, places that are at a distance of 70 to 80km from the hospital.” Sometimes some patients receive treatment and do not pay, and sometimes, if a patient passes away in the hospital despite proper treatment and the family is unable to pay, the Trust bears the cost.

We do not wait for any deposit nor do we care if a patient is accompanied by a relative or not. The hospital begins treatment immediately once a patient is wheeled in.

Dr S S Singh
director, Medical Services

One of the most impressive aspects of this hospital is that dialysis is free for all the patients here since 2011. Any patient can walk in and get dialysis done. For this, the hospital has charted a system. A Rotarian or an employee, on his/her birthday or wedding anniversary, can come forward voluntarily and donate ₹7,500 for the cause. In case of a deficit, the Trust steps in. “Since kidney patients require proper nutrition, the hospital gives one ration kit to each patient every month that includes rice, dal, oil, multivitamins and other important dietary requirements,” says Dayal. Thalassaemia patients too are treated free of cost. So are the patients who require cleft lip and palate surgery. “Our health workers go to anganwadis and remote places and bring any patient who requires such surgeries to the hospital. Their transport, treatment and food cost is all borne by the hospital,” says Dr Singh. In its full-fledged cardiac surgery department, open heart surgeries are performed on adults as well as children since the last five to six years.

The hospital, that has a 550-strong-staff, is self-sufficient



A view of the cath lab.

now. “We know that if we ever have a need, UPL and other industries will be there to help us but we have resources now and can manage on our own,” he adds. At present, the biggest monetary requirement is for the Cancer Centre and a generous

We do not compromise on the doctors’ salaries. It is necessary to pay them at par with other hospitals in order to encourage them to stay in Vapi.

donor, PM Desai, has come forward to help.

“Patients come here from as far as Bihar, UP and Karnataka. When the workers from here go back home on holidays, they bring back ill relatives for second opinion and treatment,” he says.

“My policy has been to meet requirements from time to time. I don’t think we can have the quality of an Ambani hospital but our aim has always been to see how close to it can we provide the facilities with less investment,” says Banerjee. “Rotarians do not take a penny for their efforts here; they pay even for a cup of tea. We do not compromise on the doctors’ salaries. It is necessary to pay them at par with other hospitals in order

to encourage them to stay in Vapi. We have got something good going. We can certainly better it.”

Does the hospital lack anything? “Once we develop our own transplant and cancer centre, we will have everything here. I have floated an idea of beginning something like medical tourism here through Rotary. We can publicise our hospital along those lines and treat patients from third world countries including Bangladesh, Pakistan and Africa at a very subsidised rate,” says Dr Singh, on future plans.

From a city that had only one doctor for its entire populace Vapi, within 45 years, now welcomes patients from all over India for specialised treatment. ■



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Love, letters and resilience

Kiran Zehra

Marriage ceremony of Reena and Gilbert Ravichandran.



The cheerful laughter of the girls in the orphanage has made it easier for Reena Ravichandran to leave behind memories of the silent and suffocating stillness of the hospital corridors where she had waited and watched her husband fight life-threatening injuries after a tragic accident. “In the hushed halls of the hospital, I spent sleepless nights, consumed by worry and fear of what lay ahead. But at the orphanage, in the company of these abandoned children, the emotional turmoil that once threatened to engulf my life is replaced by a sense of purpose and healing,” she says.

In 1984, in Calcutta, Reena, a young Bengali, met the love of her life, Gilbert Ravichandran, a Tamil Christian from Chennai. They married in 1988, despite initial resistance from Ravichandran’s family. Within a month, she won their hearts, and with the birth of their son in 1990, their bond grew stronger.

In 2003, Ravichandran met with a life-altering motor bike accident in Bhubaneswar. Although he received treatment for his physical injuries, unnoticed blood clots formed in his brain. A year later, Reena found him paralysed in bed; she swiftly rushed him to the hospital where the medical team successfully removed one of the three clots.

After three months of recovery, he returned to work and was transferred to Chennai. Ravichandran suffered a severe convulsion while at work, and his colleagues rushed him to the nearest hospital. Reena boarded a flight to Chennai, pleading with doctors there for his admission, accepting full responsibility for the outcome as he had a mere five per cent chance of survival. By the time she landed in Chennai, he had slipped

into coma. Despite advice from friends and family to pick up the threads of her life, she remained by his side, helping him recover.

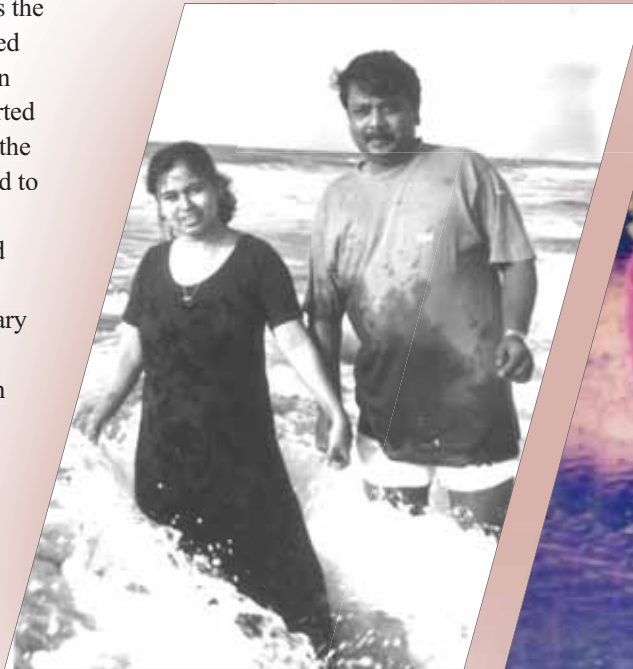
Two months later, they were returning home on a train when just one station away from Bhubaneswar, he was struck by another convulsion. Reena, trembling with fear, acted swiftly, placing a spoon between his teeth to prevent him from biting his tongue. She was supposed to administer a critical injection, but her trembling hands refused to cooperate. "I fell on my knees, holding my husband, and began to pray. Miraculously, the convulsion subsided, but there was no time to process the emotional whirlwind. I wiped my tears, removed the spoon from his mouth, and comforted him. He had no memory of the convulsion when he returned to his senses."

A series of surgeries and hospitalisation ensued soon after. On their 25th anniversary in 2013, Ravichandran couldn't recognise her when she wished him a Happy Anniversary. "He thought I was joking and I was worried that he would be furious with my behaviour. He had lost his memory," she says. In her role as the primary caregiver, she witnessed firsthand the suffering and immense pain her husband endured, "which took a heavy emotional toll on me and tore me apart." Despite the heartbreak, she decided to stay dedicated to his recovery and visited him

every single day "as a friend," she says with a crack in her voice.

Reena engaged him in heartfelt conversations, sharing stories of their past, their favourite food, their workplace... He recognised her place of work and said that 'his wife' worked there too and asked Reena if she could give his wife a letter. She agreed.

"It was as though we were back in 1984, an echo of our early romance when we exchanged love letters," she says. Although life had become a tightrope walk between taking care of their son, office hours, and



It was as though we were
back in 1984, an echo of our
early romance when we
exchanged love letters.

Reena Ravichandran

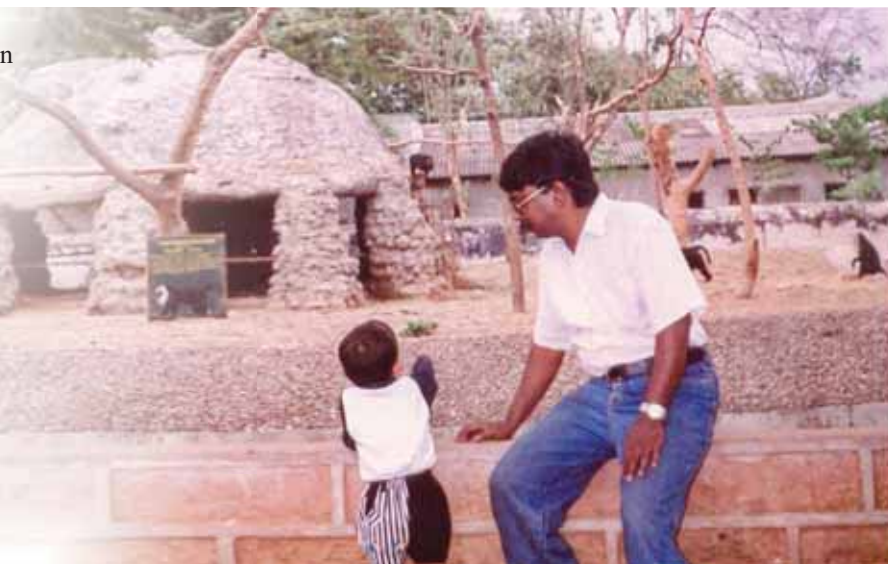


Happy moments.

hospital visits at night, she had these letters to look forward to. “In between the constant worry, anxiety and fear for the well-being of my family, these letters were a reminder that he remembered me and loved me and that there was hope,” she says.

In total, they exchanged an astonishing 400 letters, each containing intimate notes and the everyday details of their lives. In some of these letters, he shared heartfelt requests, such as ensuring that funds raised for the underprivileged by his company reached their destination without a hitch. In others, he simply asked for pens and a notebook to continue writing to her.

In February 2014, a ray of hope emerged when he recognised Reena and spoke to her and said that he was sorry to have put her through so much. But the very next month, Ravichandran passed away in the hospital. When Reena returned



Ravichandran with his son.

home after completing the hospital formalities she realised with a broken heart that, “I didn’t have to administer any injection or give him any pills. I didn’t have to check on him. I had nothing to do! That was the first time I broke down when I came to terms with the fact that he would never come home,” she says in a heavy voice.

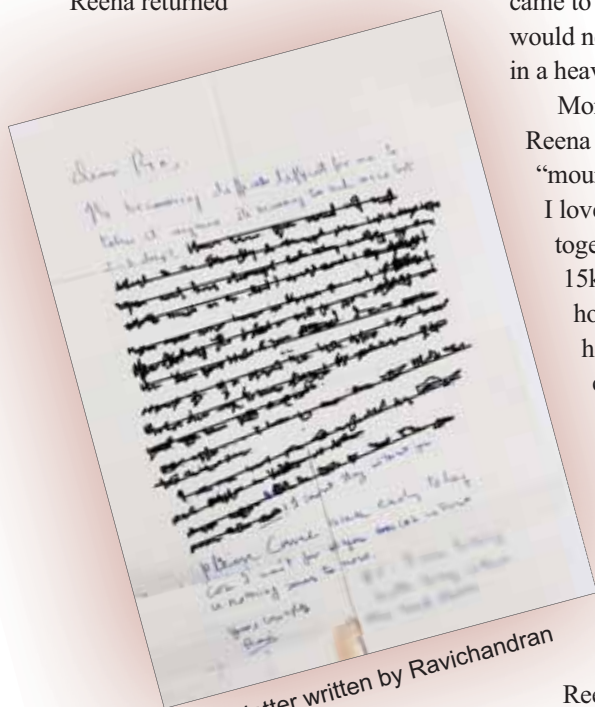
Months of grief followed as Reena grappled with depression, “mourning the loss of the person I loved and the life we once had together.” She walked nearly 15km back home from work, hoping exhaustion would help her sleep. Her eating habits had changed and she felt “sad and helpless, and at times, was frustrated and angry and wanted to remain alone,” she adds. Witnessing her anguish, her 18-year-old son expressed his fear of becoming an orphan.

It was a wake-up call for Reena, “a powerful motivator to combat my depression.”

With the support of friends who were doctors, Reena began

her journey of healing. Books on positivity became her companions, and spending time at the orphanage in Bhubaneswar brought her a newfound perspective. She transformed her painful memories into happier ones, remembering the love and joy she and Ravichandran had shared. “There is no shame in asking for help. Life is a beautiful journey with its ups and downs. I can never forget my husband, and to honour his life and the love he brought to me, I will lead a healthy, happy life until we reunite on the other side,” she says.

Through her membership with RC Bhubaneswar Friends, RID 3262, she continues her journey of healing, dedicating herself to social service. One club project that is particularly close to her heart is *Aso Gopiba*, which translates from Odia to *Come, let’s chat*. Tables and chairs are set up in selected parks in the city on Sunday mornings. Reena and other members invite people to chat, reach out to senior citizens, create awareness about mental health, and discuss the work of Rotary. ■



A letter written by Ravichandran to his wife.

District Wise TRF Contribution as on August 2023

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution
India					
2981	10,601	405	0	0	11,006
2982	10,431	0	7,085	4,488	22,005
3000	39,236	0	0	1,339	40,575
3011	53,414	5,745	18,000	98,195	175,354
3012	1,574	0	0	1,720	3,294
3020	16,439	699	0	20,000	37,138
3030	7,618	86	0	138,163	145,866
3040	1,034	49	0	0	1,083
3053	4,698	0	0	12,439	17,137
3055	9,808	33	0	0	9,841
3056	2,793	0	0	0	2,793
3060	41,701	9,276	0	75,268	126,246
3070	111	0	0	0	111
3080	13,057	3,943	0	1,500	18,500
3090	21,064	713	0	5,121	26,898
3100	23,033	0	0	0	23,033
3110	24	0	0	0	24
3120	3,632	34	0	0	3,666
3131	139,111	151	6,098	17,224	162,583
3132	35,942	2,183	0	293	38,418
3141	125,148	1,654	32,000	204,998	363,800
3142	196,139	2,137	5,500	0	203,776
3150	7,985	296	50	45,976	54,307
3160	6,174	0	0	0	6,174
3170	19,076	18,089	0	47,288	84,453
3181	10,840	152	0	24	11,017
3182	1,620	0	0	0	1,620
3191	17,988	2,561	60,976	0	81,524
3192	13,062	1,312	0	2,100	16,475
3201	12,536	21,756	3,940	18,348	56,580
3203	1,925	321	1,220	7,470	10,936
3204	2,535	500	0	2,962	5,997
3211	1,795	1,000	0	40,222	43,017
3212	14,204	1,826	0	1,050	17,080
3231	1,417	386	0	0	1,803
3232	16,359	2,138	8,300	203,738	230,535
3240	17,728	3,414	0	30	21,172
3250	5,261	1,148	26	2,974	9,410
3261	9,037	0	0	0	9,037
3262	3,750	49	0	0	3,799
3291	31,014	0	24,390	0	55,404
3220 Sri Lanka	16,717	630	0	0	17,347
3271 Pakistan	5	0	0	6,825	6,830
3272 Pakistan	0	60	0	25	85
3281 Bangladesh	5,476	1,728	2,000	14,423	23,626
3282 Bangladesh	15,213	100	0	0	15,313
3292 Nepal	8,293	805	0	34,710	43,808

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

Source: RI South Asia Office



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Aiding the education of rural adolescent girls

Rasheeda Bhagat





Students of the Bhitlu village school.

The Rotary Club of Dharamshala (RID 3070) has transformed the manner in which a few hundred adolescent girls in the villages around this hill town attend school. All by the simple act of gifting them good quality washable and reusable sanitary napkins.

“A big problem in our villages is that many adolescent girls miss their classes for several days as they cannot manage their periods due to non-availability of sanitary napkins. So during my tenure as club president in 2020–21, when Kris Olson, a member of the WCS (World Community Service) Committee of RC Los Altos, California (RID 5170), approached me with the opportunity to run a project named “Save-A-Girl” in some surrounding villages of Dharamshala, I was very excited and eagerly accepted it,” says Milap Nehria, past president, RC Dharamshala.

It was after all an ideal opportunity to prevent adolescent girls from either dropping out of school or missing school for almost a week every month.

His immediate job was to identify some village schools in remote corners of Dharamshala. It helped that in some of these villages, the village head was a woman, so it was easy to get them on board to support this crucial project for their village girls. A few villages were selected, and the list was given to Olson, the American Rotarian. He then set about the task of raising the required funds — some \$3,000 — after getting the okay from his club members to do this project.

This initiative from RC Los Altos is linked to the partnership the Rotary clubs in RID 5170 in the San Francisco Bay Area, US, have with The Global Uplift Project (TGUP), which is working to help around 11,000 adolescent girls in Africa and Asia stay in school. Both the partners agree that girls dropping out of school is “the greatest preventable human tragedy in the world,” as without adequate education,

many of these girls are vulnerable to tragedies such as becoming child brides, or even worse, getting sucked into the human trafficking trade. RID 5170 comprises 63 clubs and has more than 3,800 members.

The collaboration provides adolescent girls in developing countries washable, reusable sanitary pads in a kit called *Save a Girl* (SaG), to help the girls manage their period in a safe and hygienic manner, so that they have no problem attending school during their menstrual cycle.

To get an understanding of how big a problem this is in the developing world, let's look at UNICEF numbers, which indicate that over 20 million adolescent girls drop out of school every year because they cannot manage their monthly period. More shocking, this



Sanitary pad packets distributed to students after lessons in menstruation. Volunteer doctor Dr Histry, club members Ajay Sharma and Ashwani Sharma are present in the picture.



Members of RC Dharamshala (from L) Hari Singh, Milap Nehria, Sangram Guleria, Dr Harmeet Kaur and Y K Dogra with students after distributing reusable sanitary pads to them.

number might be as high as 50 million! Here TGUP comes into the picture; it has created a washable, reusable sanitary pad that costs \$6 to make and lasts three years. More than 49,000 SaG kits have been distributed so far, in nine developing countries through this project, which is part of the initiative of Rotary's 'Empowering girls' programme.

Returning to Dharamshala in India, RC Los Altos provided a cash grant of \$3,000 for the purchase of 400 sanitary kits from TGUP's production centre in Dang, Nepal. The kits, with three reusable pads and two panties, were transported through Kathmandu to Dharamshala. "We had some difficulties getting these shipped; they had to be packed and repacked a few

times while in transit but finally we managed to get these sanitary kits to Dharamshala," says Nehria.

This project was very dear to his heart, he explains, because "adolescent girls miss an average of four days of school every month — about 20 per cent of school time; thus they fall behind in their school work, many drop out and never finish their high school. This education gap puts women to a great disadvantage in the developing world, making it possible for them to earn only 40 per cent of what men earn," he says.

It also makes women economically dependent on men, and the less educated girls end up with early marriage and early motherhood, and in low paying jobs, and working in the fields for daily wages or as domestic servants.

The sanitary kits reached Dharamshala by 2021-end, while



Covid was still a threat. As soon as the Covid restriction were lifted, the Rotarians began their first distribution of the pads. “As per our agreement with RC Los Altos, we had to also educate the girls on menstrual hygiene and the importance of remaining in school and attending classes regularly. Dr Harmeet Kaur, our club member who is a gynaecologist, agreed to visit all these villages to talk to the girls on the issue. She walked with us to all these remote villages to educate the girls on MHM.”

They first went to the Satya Sai School in Salet Godam village of Dharamshala, which supports poor students from surrounding villages. Around 45 adolescent girls were given the pads along with MHM education. Next was Kareri and surrounding villages; the female head of the panchayat helped to get all the girls in one place. “It took us two hours from Dharamshala to drive to Kareri. The 150-odd girls waiting there were so happy to receive the kits and it was really a very satisfying experience to see the smiles on their faces as they received the kits,” says Nehria. The next distribution was at the multiskill development centre in Khaniyara village, which is supported by RC Dharamshala, and boys

and girls are benefitting from the short-term courses run by the centre. There are around 40 village girls who come to study in the centre, and they were all given the sanitary kits.

After waiting for the monsoon rains to abate, the Rotarians organised a free medical camp in the remote village of Bhitlu. Around 40 girls from surrounding villages came to listen to Dr Harmeet, and were given the sanitary kits. The last distribution was done at the Ghaniyara Senior Secondary School where nearly 90 girls received the kits.

A club member, Aruna Prashar, provided written education material in Hindi to the girls.

Nehria adds that both RC Los Altos and TGUP, which has sewing centres in Africa and Nepal, are now looking at opportunities to set up sanitary napkin production centres to help more women in the Himalayan region and other remote areas of India. “Looking at our project, another local NGO has showed interest and wants to take it forward.”

Tree plantation

Giving details of another club project—Green Himalayan Plantation Drive—Nehria said for a few years now RC Dharamshala has been doing a

Members of RC Dharamshala plant saplings as part of the Green Himalayan Plantation Drive.





plantation drive to preserve the green forest cover in this Himalayan region. “Himachal Pradesh is one of the richest states in terms of forest cover, with almost 66 per cent of the total land area having a green cover. While very old or fallen trees are cut by the state authorities and used as timber, the forest department of Himachal Pradesh is committed to keep the forest cover and plant thousands of new trees everywhere in the state. Rotarians of our club contribute every year towards this objective.”

This year too, the club has carried out three plantation drives, in collaboration with the Forest department, where the area is first fenced from all sides in order to protect the saplings from animals and other intruders. Proper pits are dug to plant the saplings of native trees such as deodar (cedar family coniferous tree) and oak trees on the higher reaches and wild fruit-bearing trees such as wild cherry, Kainth, etc in low elevation areas. One plantation drive was done in a school to make the younger

generation aware about the need for green initiatives.

He explains that the deodar trees are high growing trees and mainly used as timber, but right now there is a moratorium placed by the government on the cutting of these trees. In every plantation drive only 55–60 saplings are planted; “more than the number, our aim is to raise awareness on the need to protect our environment. As we live in this beautiful region, most of us are very passionate about the environment and realise the need to protect the hills as the ecology here is very fragile,” he adds.

The club members are happy that the trees they had planted many years ago are now fully grown “and we are proud that we have set up a small garden of guava, silver oak and some other trees.”

The club is also raising funds for relief work in Manali, Mandi and Shimla, where there were a number of flash floods due to heavy rains. Dharamshala was not affected.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Model township for Irula families

V Muthukumaran

It was manna from heaven for the 63 Irula families leading a harsh life at a scrub jungle, 100km south of Chennai, off the scenic ECR Highway at Thiruporur taluk in Chengalpattu district. The scheduled tribes who are traditional snake catchers are now the proud owners of 63 spanking new 2 BHK houses, 650 sqft each, with domestic appliances and other facilities.

Now with the curtains going up at the Nallammai Ramanathan Kuyilkuppam Nagar, it is not surprising that Irulas worship PDG Abirami Ramanathan, the chief donor, and his wife Nallammai as demigods. They have hung up a framed picture of the Rotarian couple in their living rooms to mark their gratitude.

“For a very long time, I nurtured a big dream to create a new village or township from scratch. My long-felt wish is now fulfilled. We will continue to engage with the Irulas through vocational training to enhance their skills and educate their children, so that there is a complete transformation of their social and economic status,” said PDG Ramanathan, who has donated ₹4 crore as Directed Gift out of ₹8.5 crore of the project cost. The lead club, RC Madras Central, has put in ₹1.8

crore through three global grants, and the balance amount was a mix of contributions from Rotary clubs, Rotarians from RID 3232 and 3231, and private donors.

After each Irula family got a non-transferrable 3.5 cents of *patta* (title deed) land allotted to it, house construction began in mid-2018. But due to Covid pandemic, “our work was disrupted for two years. All the beneficiaries were roped in for creating this new village, thereby helping them to develop their skills in masonry, carpentry, plumbing and household electrical wiring. This will enable them to secure a livelihood,” recalled PB Ravikumar, project secretary, RC Madras Central.

“We have donated 25 milch cows and a cooperative society was formed with Irulas as members. Four Rotarians will advise the cooperative.”

Add-on facilities

All the four parallel roads made of paver blocks have solar lighting and a sewage network links all the houses ensuring hygiene. Running water is ensured through a giant 5,000-litre overhead tank in the common area, thanks to a CSR grant of ₹10 lakh from Amphenol. Each house has three fans, lights, a fridge, TV, mixie, grinder, gas stove, pressure cooker, a set of cooking vessels, two beds with pillows, and a steel cupboard. The walls have tile

From L: RID 3231 DG P Bharanidharan, RID 3234 DGN Vinod Saraogi, Nallammai, PDG Abirami Ramanathan, VIT founder-chancellor G Viswanathan, PRID AS Venkatesh, Thiruporur MLA SS Balaji and RID 3232 DG Ravi Raman, along with Irula beneficiaries.



guard up to five feet to protect them from stain and defacement.

To maintain the houses and the entire township spread over two sqkm, six Rotary clubs have adopted the 63 families; a Rotary team will visit Kuyilkuppam regularly and will help the Irula children in education, and find gainful work for the beneficiaries, said Ramanathan. Addressing a gathering of Irulas, PDGs and Rotarians, after distributing grocery kits to the new owners of Kuyilkuppam, the chief donor said, “during my early days of giving, I learnt quickly that only through unfettered giving and service one can really make a difference.” Quoting Tamil lyricist Kannadasan, he said, “we are not going to take anything when we leave this world.”

Citing the words of the 16th century French astrologer Nostradamus that ‘only a country surrounded by seas on all its three sides will rule the world’ in the coming decades, Ramanathan exuded confidence that “India will

become a superpower soon by overcoming its growth challenges like housing, education and healthcare for all.” He urged the male Irulas to shun liquor and focus on their livelihood issues.

In this Rotary year with ‘create hope in the world’ as its theme, “we have created a new hope in the lives of Irulas who should work hard with intelligence to shape their future,” said Nallammai. She asked them to keep their houses and surroundings clean and hygienic. “The best maintained house will be awarded ₹5,000 by a Rotary team after regular inspections,” she said. “A community hall will be built at this village to train women in vocational skills like tailoring, computer data entry etc.”

PRID AS Venkatesh said that “while Ramanathan has done hundreds of service projects, this Kuyilkuppam project is special to him as he has created this through a joint effort with other Rotarians, for he wanted to share this good deed with others.” What is

All the beneficiaries were roped in for creating this new village, thereby helping them to develop their skills in masonry, carpentry, plumbing and household electrical wiring.

PB Ravikumar
project secretary
RC Madras Central

noteworthy is that the model village has got all the basic amenities like sewage lines and social infrastructure to support the community living of Irulas, he said.

Higher education is the key

There are 3.5 crore homeless citizens in the country, and around 10 lakh are in Tamil Nadu, said VIT University founder-chancellor G Viswanathan. “Every Indian aspires to own a house. To realise their dreams, we need to improve the per capita income of the country which is \$2,600 at present and to do this, our economy has to progress which is possible only through higher education,” he said. But in India only 25 per cent of the youth (18–23 years) pursue higher education. the good news is that Tamil Nadu has crossed 50 per cent, “but we still have a long way to go in providing houses to all.”

As against the global benchmark of six per cent of GDP, India is allotting just three per cent of its national wealth for educational growth, he noted. In Vellore, Viswanathan has formed the Universal Higher



Education Trust which is sponsoring higher education of poor students over the last 10 years. “So far, 7,000 educational grants were given to students, 50 per cent of them are girls.” Only 10 per cent of 1.45 billion are graduates, “but to remove poverty and ignorance, emphasis must be on higher education,” he added.

Expressing her gratitude to PDG Ramanathan, Latha, an Irula woman, took a pledge that “we will lead a responsible life, educate our children and keep our houses and village clean.” She looked back at her harsh life four years ago when they did menial jobs, “and now we have had a drastic makeover after the intervention of Rotary.”

In 2017, AGD Durairaj from RC Chengalpet took Ramanathan to the project site, then a barren scrub land with scattered mud, palmyra-roofed houses, to fulfil his dream. He had adopted Pulaankurichi village with 950 families in Sivaganga district where he spends ₹50 lakh each year. He has built four Nallammai Ramanathan Hospitals at Thirukazhukundram, Maraimalainagar, Vandavasi and



Tamil Nadu sports minister Udhayanidhi Stalin presenting the house key to an Irula woman in the presence of (from L) PDG Ramanathan, Nallammai, VIT chancellor Viswanathan, RC Madras Central president Prakash Vaidyanathan, DG Bharanidharan, MLA Balaji and rural industries minister T M Anbarasan.

Gudiyatham, besides opening a paediatric ward at the Government Hospital, Chengalpattu.

DGs Ravi Raman (RID 3232) and P Bharanidharan (RID 3231), Thirporur MLA SS Balaji, rural industries minister TM Anbarasan, sports

development minister Udhayanidhi Stalin and Chengalpattu district collector Rahul Nath felicitated Ramanathan and RC Madras Central for the Kuyilkuppam project.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran

Irula families who were given the homes at the model township.



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Mumbai Rotaractors put spotlight on women's trafficking

Rasheeda Bhagat

It has become a tradition for the Rotaract Club of Jai Hind College, RID 3141, to celebrate women and raise questions on gender equity and the trampling of women's rights by awareness drives for an entire week around International Women's Day every March. This year too, under the presidency of Khushi Shetty, the women's week (March 1–8) was marked by the project titled *Cheekh*. "The basic idea of *Cheekh* (scream) was to perform flash mobs



Rotaractors holding banners to sensitise the public about trafficking of women.

across Mumbai in which we highlight the grievous issue of women's trafficking. But this year this wasn't possible because of permission issues. So instead of this hurdle stopping us from observing the week, we came out with alternative ideas and our team took a different approach by engaging in a series of activities to make a powerful statement and introduced new features," says Khushi.

The major objective was to draw attention to the huge problem of

Four powerful pictures were created, capturing the essence of silenced voices and the plight of those affected by trafficking.

women's trafficking and the sucking of innocent young girls into Mumbai's flesh trade. To raise awareness on this problem and urge citizens to take a stand against this heinous practice, the Rotaractors decided to put up wall paintings in the Grant Road region near the railway station. Grant Road has "a huge red light area of Mumbai. We sought, and thankfully received, permission from the Mumbai Municipal Corporation to put up wall paintings in this area."

We marched carrying these banners and chanting slogans against female trafficking, and wherever there was a big crowd, we stopped and recited a poem.

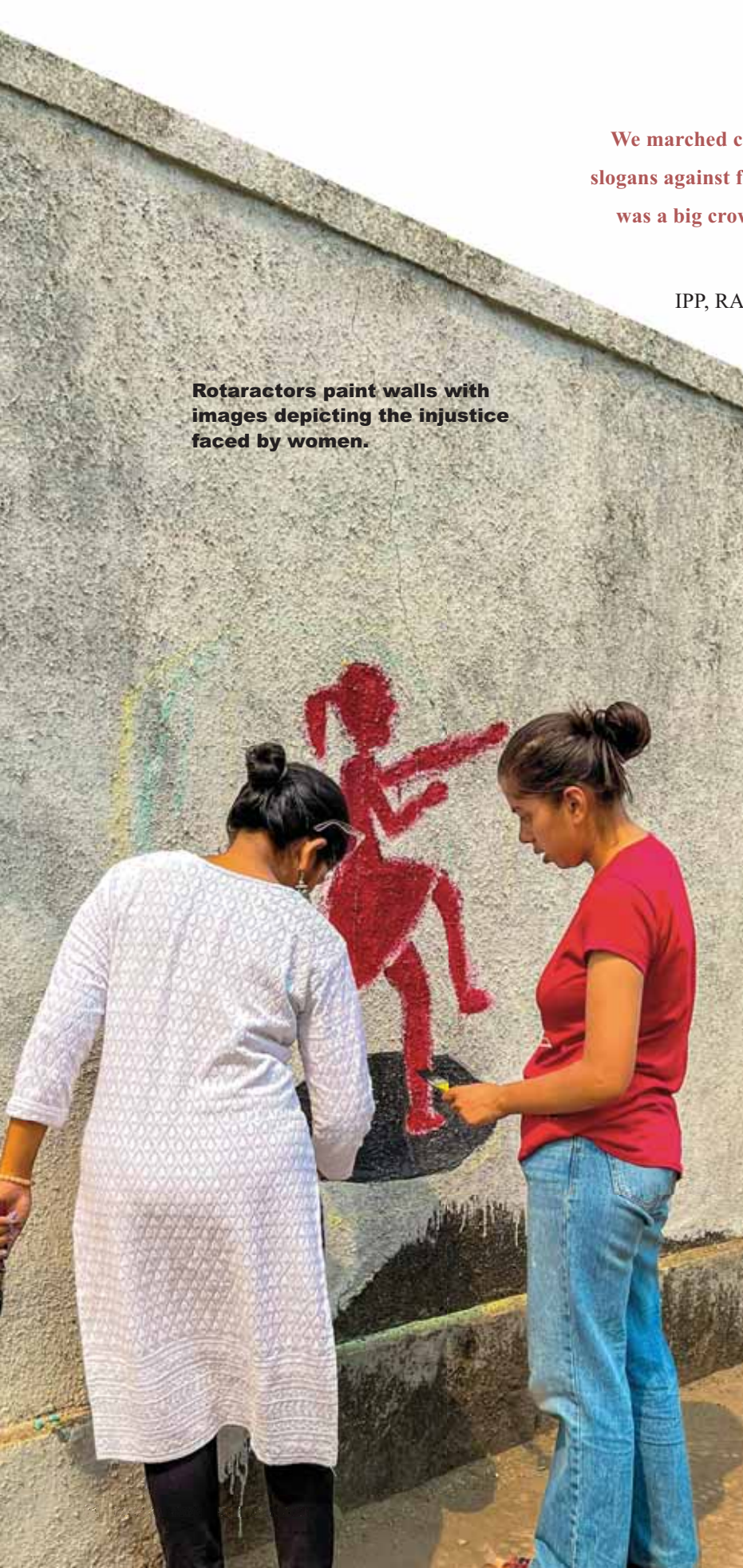
Khushi Shetty

IPP, RAC Jai Hind College, RID 3141

Rotaractors paint walls with images depicting the injustice faced by women.

A wall was utilised as a canvas to depict the oppression and abuse faced by women around the world. “Four powerful pictures were created, capturing the essence of silenced voices and the plight of those affected by trafficking. The artwork aimed to evoke emotions and stimulate conversations, encouraging society to confront a vice like the trafficking of women.”

The week was kickstarted with the club’s Rotaractors organising a parade at one of the Sunday Street spots at Marine Drive. Sunday Street is an initiative of the Mumbai police wherein some stretches of streets in central parts of Mumbai such as Marine Drive, Mulund, Vikroli etc are thrown open to the public for a few hours each Sunday for recreational activities such as yoga, jogging, skating, singing, dancing etc. “The idea is for people of Mumbai to relax and enjoy themselves doing



fun activities and people with musical and other talent perform at these spots. These get a huge audience, so we thought why not do a parade at this spot,” she says.

So the Rotaractors prepared huge banners with slogans against women’s trafficking, such as ‘women are not commodities to be sold,’ or ‘real men do not buy women’ and so on. “We marched carrying these banners and chanting slogans against female trafficking, and wherever there was a big crowd, we stopped and recited a poem. The parade aimed to draw attention to this issue, encouraging passersby to reflect on the gravity of the situation and take action.”

The youngsters ran a parallel drive on social media too. The club released a short film on Instagram that drew a parallel between the treatment of girls and that of dolls, “emphasising the objectification and dehumanisation experienced by women in our community. The thought-provoking narrative resonated with viewers, resulting in an overwhelming response. Within a short span, the film reached over 12,000 people, amplifying the message against women’s trafficking and sparking further discussion.”

The Rotaractors have gone further than raising awareness on this issue. “In order to make a tangible difference,





IPP of RAC Jai Hind College Khushi Shetty (third from L), former secretary Zainab Jetpurwala (L) and Team Cheekh with Triveni Acharya, founder of the Rescue Foundation.

our club has joined hands with Rescue Foundation, an organisation dedicated to rescuing girls trapped in the web of trafficking and helping them return to their homes. Recognising the crucial work undertaken by the Foundation, the team organised fundraisers and successfully collected ₹10,100 to support this cause.”

Khushi adds that the funds raised played a vital role in facilitating the rescue and rehabilitation of five girls, providing them with a chance to rebuild their lives. She explains that an NGO in Kandivali called Huge has been started by a crime beat journalist, who wanted to rescue girls from red light areas. The volunteers do sting operations and identify the women/girls who want to get out of the deep hole they have got into. The NGO often has to pay some money to rescue

these girls and then they bring them to a rehabilitation centre.

The families are then approached and the situation of the girls is explained to them; “if the family understands, and agrees to take back the girls, it is a happy ending. But unfortunately, many families reject

The funds raised played a vital role in facilitating the rescue and rehabilitation of five girls, providing them with a chance to rebuild their lives.

them and these girls are kept in the rehabilitation centre, trained for some skill such as tailoring or starting a small business. The objective is to make them independent.”

The immediate past president of the club is happy that through “*Cheekh*, our club, where 70 per cent of the members are women, demonstrated the power of collective action and creative expression in combating women’s trafficking. By diversifying their activities, the team engaged with different audiences and fostered a broader understanding of the issue. Their efforts in raising awareness, sparking conversations, and actively contributing to the rescue of victims exemplify the club’s commitment to social change.”

(Concluded)

Annettes support 100 cleft lip surgeries

Team Rotary News



DG Ravi Raman (fifth from L) and DGE NS Saravanan (fourth from R) with District Annettes Representative Aathira Nair (second from R) and Vinod Nair (third from R) after signing the MoU.

An MoU was signed on August 1 among Rotary District Annettes Council represented by District Annettes Representative Aathira Nair and project chairman Dr Lokesh; RC Chennai Royals (RCCR), RID 3232; and Kings Vidya Trust to perform 100 cleft

lip correction surgeries for children at the Ramachandra Medical College Hospital, Chennai. RCCR will monitor and coordinate the project. Kings Vidya Trust will be sponsoring the surgeries, said its managing trustee Vinod Nair who is a member of RCCR.

DG Ravi Raman and DGE NS Saravanan were present during the signing of the MoU.

With 10 corrective surgeries completed until August-end, the project will touch its magic number by the end of this Rotary year. ■

From RI South Asia

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2022–23 Trustee chair Ian Riseley. Since 2019–20, Rotaractors have contributed more than \$438,500 through the certificate programme to our Foundation.

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Interact Clubs expand in **RID 3090**

Kiran Zehra

In RID 3090, students have plenty of reasons to join an Interact club. “Apart from the clubs making a positive impact in their schools, the students are thrilled to have an opportunity to showcase their talent without the burden of registration fees,” says Manik Raj Singla, the District Interact Chair. He attributes this to “careful planning and the district’s commitment to understanding the students’ needs.”

In just four years, Interact clubs in this district have seen incredible growth, going from just five clubs in 2019 to a whopping

200 in 2023. One of the standout strategies that Singla calls a “game changer”, is organising school-level events. These events not only sparked interest but also created valuable community connections while showcasing the benefits that Interact clubs could bring to everyone involved. “Interact clubs have become a platform for students to flourish in our district,” he says.

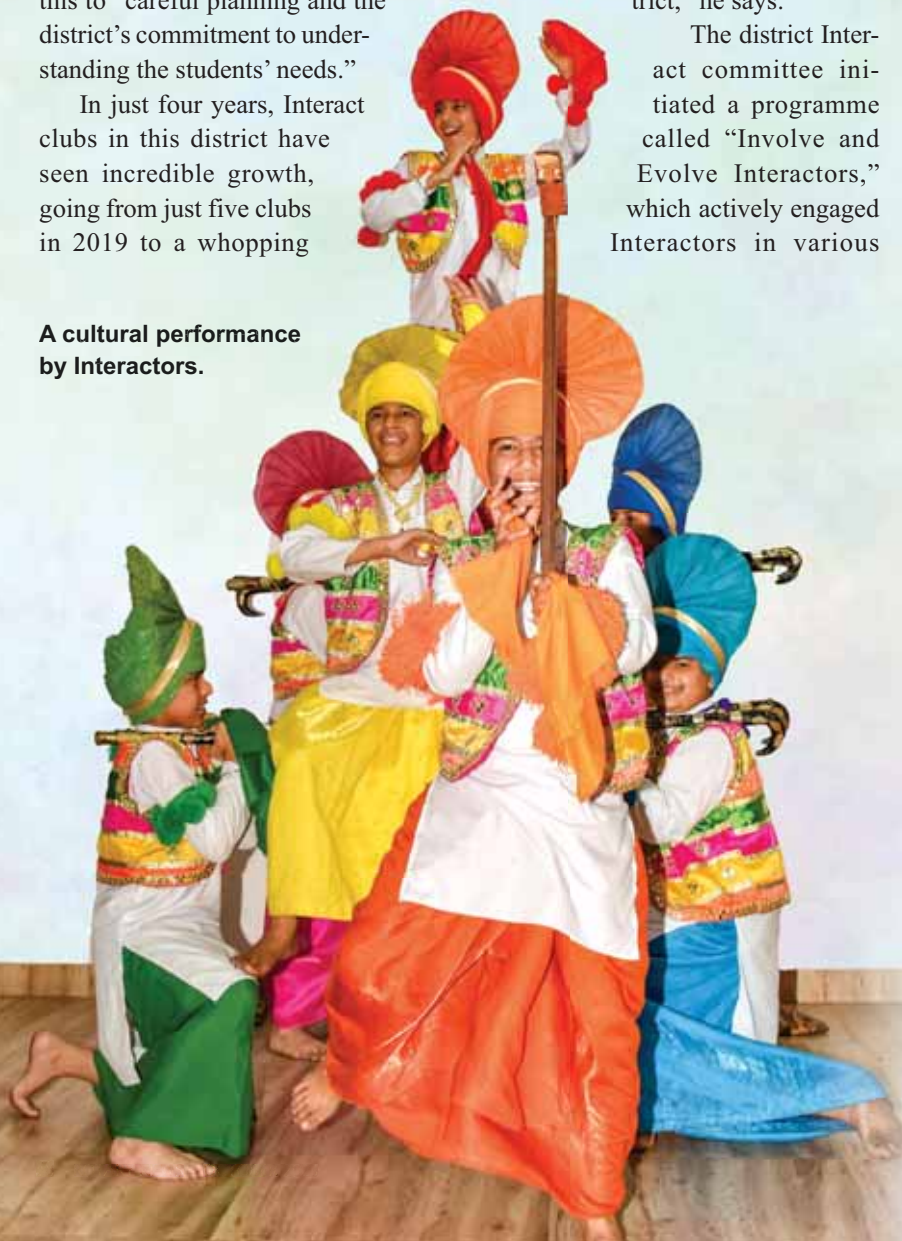
The district Interact committee initiated a programme called “Involve and Evolve Interactors,” which actively engaged Interactors in various

Rotary events, transforming them into Rotary brand ambassadors. Recently 300 Interactors took part in an organ donation drive. “The number of participants outnumbered the Rotarians who organised the event,” smiles Singla. To further boost visibility and attract more students, the district invested significantly in Interact branding across electronic and print media. This increased awareness and encouraged more students to get involved, he says.

While expanding Interact clubs, the district encountered a challenge. “New club presidents often prioritised creating new Interact clubs over supporting existing ones.” To address this, Singla conducted an orientation meet to “guide them to make Interact clubs in their areas vibrant, and set specific goals for their growth, measuring progress by the number of new clubs sponsored and the number of events organised with maximum Interactor participation.” Another significant step was to work closely with Interact club committees at the Rotary club level. He says this facilitated Rotary clubs with vital training and information to improve the performance of their sponsored Interact club.

To attract new members and clubs, the district utilised social media platforms, engaged district education officers, and hosted exclusive Rotary-Interact events. These events ranged from career counselling seminars to public speaking competitions, painting and sports tournaments, RYLAs, and an Interact Spelling Bee competition that saw the participation of 1,000 students. “We focused on the government schools and encouraged the students to

A cultural performance by Interactors.





District Interact chair Manik Raj Singla (third from R) and PDG Gulbahar Singh Retole with Interactors.

participate. To keep things easy and simple, we charged no registration fee. Over 50 government schools now have Interact clubs,” beams Singla.

The district Interact committee mentored school principals and teachers, who guided students at the local level. While no financial incentives were offered, the

district boosted Interactors’ morale by providing participation certificates and trophies to competition winners, and certificates to coordinating teachers. ■

DGNs meet @ Lonavala

Team Rotary News



DGNs with their spouse at the retreat in Lonavala.

The 31 district governors-nominee of zones 4, 5, 6 and 7 enjoyed an informal get together for three days on the picturesque hills of Lonavala, Maharashtra. The event was spearheaded by RID 3141 DGN Manish Motwani and RID 3142 DGN Harsh Makol. RI director Raju

Subramanian, RID 3141 PDG Sunil Mehra and RID 3142 PDG Kailash Jethani also were present.

The sojourn helped foster camaraderie among the district leaders and served as a platform for knowledge sharing and meaningful interactions. ■

From Kuttanad to Ladakh for a ‘Fit India’

V Muthukumaran

Ultrarunner Ashish Kasodekar (51) from Pune, a wellness influencer on social media, wanted to inspire people to be fit and agile; his achievement of running a full marathon — 42km every day for 61 consecutive days last year brought the ‘Eureka moment’ in him.

He realised that he had run a distance of approximately 2,560km, from Pune to Ladakh, while running the full marathons for two months to enter the Guinness Book of Records which was previously held by a European who had run for 58 days.

From June 1, Kasodekar ran from Kuttanad, the lowest point in mainland India at 4–10 feet below sea level, for 76 consecutive days to reach Umling La, Ladakh, at 19,300 feet, on August 15 covering a distance of 4,000km, to mark the 76th Independence Day. “Ashish travelled across 10 states and

spread the message of fitness among people he met. He was given a warm send-off from Kuttanad by locals and when he arrived in Pune during his run, all of us gathered to give him a rousing welcome,” says Shailesh Sirsikar, joint secretary and director, Public Image Committee, RC Pune Pride, RID 3131.

The *Low2High* campaign by Kasodekar got a thumbs-up from soldiers, Army commanders, Rotarians, NGOs and fitness buffs in the course of his cross-country run. The club members through a fitness app, Pacer, also recorded their steps (walking, running, trekking) each day in the course of his 76-day mission. “In fact, more than 50,000 people including Rotarians, children and people of all age groups across the country used this app during this time, so that Kasodekar can see the cumulative steps taken by citizens,” he explains. The solo marathon campaign has

Ashish Kasodekar at the finish line, Umling La.





With club members at Umling La, Ladakh, on Independence Day.

created a new sense of fitness awareness among Rotary clubs in Pune and beyond, he smiles.

As one of the brand ambassadors of Fit India movement, Kasodekar inspired people along the way with a simple tagline, *Hum fit, toh Bharat fit* (If we are fit, India is fit), thus spreading awareness about fitness and encouraging them “to embark on their paths of healthy life and well-being.” When he reached Umling La, his finish line, five members from RC Pune Pride were there to greet him and they

spread aloft the national flag to celebrate the Independence Day.

Punishing schedule

Recalling his feat, Kasodekar says, “I would run from 6am to 4.30pm, after which my three-member physiotherapy team would take care of me. My interaction was restricted to locals and I didn’t encourage people running with me on the highways.” He donated sports kits to 76 zilla parishads schools to inculcate fitness regimen among students on the way.

While a lot of positivity was generated in the fitness movement out of *Low2High* campaign, he says, “I am looking forward to do something similar in the coming days with the help of Rotary clubs.” Recently, his organisation, Simple Steps Fitness joined hands with RC Pune Pride, in which he is an honorary member, to hold a mini marathon (3/5km) for over 600 senior citizens. They were all given medals and certificates. For details of his mission, log on to: www.low2high.in ■



Litter-free adventures

Preeti Mehra

It is trekking season, and time to put your best green foot forward.

Lately I have been green with envy. Both my neighbours are going on a trekking trip to Kashmir this month. So, every morning and evening I am witness to their brisk walking, toning up, and hectic planning for their adventure in the mountains. There is a lot to discuss: The various dos and don'ts. What are the best practices to follow to make

theirs a sustainable, green expedition? The right things they should carry which are nature-friendly, how best to nourish themselves while ensuring that they do not litter the trail. How best to ensure their health, comfort and safety even as they ensure that they respect the terrain they will be trekking through.

To help them out, I decided to do some research on the topic and ended

up with some wonderful information and tips that we can all use when we go trekking. I found several websites from India and overseas offering suggestions and advice for potential 'go green' trekkers. Among them I found indiahikes.com to be rather resourceful. The website and the company that runs it (Indiahikes) not only list several treks one can choose from in



the country, it also organises tours for enthusiasts as well. And the icing on the cake is that it has a 'Green Trails Initiative' for environment enthusiasts.

I loved their motto — “leave the mountains better than you found them.” And in video after video, Indiahikes co-founder Arjun Majumdar urges people to go on treks and discover the core of co-existence in the raw. Also, Lakshmi Selvakumaran, head of the Green Trails Initiative, has some insightful blogs on what should be done and what should be avoided on a truly sustainable hike.

But before I detail what she recommends, I must point out that the Green Trail Initiative is not just about messaging. The team, along with the trekkers, also clean up trails they venture on by picking up the litter left by other hikers. They carry eco bags in which they store the waste to later segregate it for disposal. The Indiahikes

website claims that it has managed to remove over 100 tonnes of litter from trekking trails across the country. That is commendable work. Apart from cleaning up, the team says they keep sustainability in mind in everything they do, including how they source their equipment, buy provisions, or manage human waste at high altitudes.

So, what are the “Golden Practices” that Lakshmi recommends in her blogs? Here are some dos, followed by the don'ts:

Carry your own backpack as it is part of the hiking experience. Do not offload it on porters or mules which leads to crowding the track. By ensuring that you pack cautiously, you can stick to the ideal weight limit of 9kg per person.

Use only reusable bottles, glasses and plates. Single use water bottles or styrofoam plates is a big no. They take decades to decompose if they are discarded on the trail.

Carry only chemical-free toiletries. Notes Lakshmi: “Toiletries and cosmetics are often laden with harmful chemicals. Oxybenzone in sunscreen has been attributed towards declining coral reefs by various studies and sodium laureth sulfate in toothpaste is harmful. These are damaging to the body of the user as well as to the environment.”

Participate in collecting and segregating waste so that you can leave the environment in a pristine state.

Take back your waste with you and dispose it correctly. Lakshmi gives the example of used sanitary napkins and how they do not decompose at high altitudes. She suggests it is best to carry a zip-lock bag in which you could store the used napkins and dispose them when you are back home.

Now for the don'ts:

Don't take packaged food on a trek. But if you must, put it in a reusable box, paper bag or zip-lock bag so that

you do not generate packaging waste such as biscuit or sweet wrappers.

Don't consume carelessly. Though Maggi and instant food is available in the dhabas in the mountains, and may serve as comfort food, it is refined flour and can cause indigestion. In a trek you need adequate nutrition which is provided by wholesome, time-tested local cuisine. So, opt for local food which gets you closer to the local culture, helps the farmer community and provides a sustainable livelihood.

Do not pollute the water when you are crossing streams and rivers as it is the direct drinking water source for the local population. So, never wash or relieve yourself in a water source. Also, don't waste resources you come across, someone else needs them too.

Avoid disturbing the peace of other creatures that inhabit the mountain trails. Lowering your voice and being non-intrusive is the key. In fact, you would be the loser if you frighten away birds and other animals. Sitting and observing wildlife in quietude is part of experiencing nature at close quarters.

All trekkers must take the trouble of following a few dos and don'ts. Perhaps the importance of preserving and respecting nature is best illustrated by the damage done to the Mount Everest trail by seasoned mountaineers and enthusiasts. With climate change causing snow and ice to melt, garbage from over the decades is suddenly surfacing. Today, the Everest is often referred to as the “world's highest garbage dump.”

Author Aliyyah Eniath's words should serve as sound advice for all those who go trekking: “Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, kill nothing but time.”

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues

A multidistrict leadership training programme in Mysuru

Team Rotary News



RI Directors Anirudha Roychowdhury (R) and Raju Subramanian inaugurate the RLI event in the presence of (from L) PDG Rajendra Rai, district secretary (training) HM Harish, PDG Nagendra Prasad, RID 3181 DG HR Kesav, RID 3170 DG Nasir Borsadwala, club president M S Harish, Mahesh S and club secretary MR Raghavendra.

RC Vijayanagara Mysore, RID 3181, hosted a multidistrict Rotary Leadership Institute (RLI). RI Directors Raju Subramanian and Anirudha Roychowdhury inaugurated the programme and addressed the 50 delegates from across the country.

RID Subramanian emphasised the importance of Rotarians attending leadership institutes, and said that many of them were not well-informed about Rotary and its global activities. He highlighted the recommendations of the RI Board and CoL which underlined the importance of the programme, and added that “excellent club leadership is vital for Rotary’s future in an ever-changing world.”

RID Roychowdhury shed light on the origin of RLI, describing it as a dedicated programme to develop potential leaders within a club. Established in 1992, RLI has grown into a worldwide programme with presence in every continent. “RLI stands apart from other RI training programmes as it offers a general education about Rotary and leadership skills, rather than position-specific training,” he said.

HM Harish, district secretary, Training, and the programme’s organiser, said that this three-day comprehensive course is “beyond a basic course and offers in-depth seminars on vital Rotary subjects. Any Rotarian

may attend these courses, or if a club identifies its members as potential leaders, it can sponsor them for the programme.” RLI’s mission is to empower Rotarians with understanding of Rotary’s global reach and to nurture the leadership skills required to drive Rotary’s mission forward.

RID 3181 DG HR Keshav, DGN PK Ramakrishna, RID 3170 DG Nasir Borsadwala, RID 3191 DG Udaykumar Bhaskara, RID 3192 DG Srinivas Murthy, PDGs Rajendra Rai and Nagendra Prasad, and RID 3203 DG Sunder Rajan attended the event. The training was led by Mohan Kumar, Guru Nagesh, Prasad and RLI coordinator Prakash Belavadi. ■

Project Vignettes

Team Rotary News

Rotary leaders meet Rajashree Birla



From L: TRF trustee Bharat Pandya, PRID Ashok Mahajan, Aditya Birla Foundation chairperson Rajashree Birla and TRF trustee chair Barry Rassin.

TRF trustee chair Barry Rassin, trustee Bharat Pandya and PRID Ashok Mahajan met Rajashree Birla, chairperson, Aditya Birla Foundation for Community Initiatives and Rural Development, at her office in Mumbai. The Rotary leaders thanked her for her Foundation's generous donation to Rotary and she assured them of her continuous support. ■

Delhi Rotarian-teacher feted



Ritika Anand, RC Delhi City, RID 3012, receiving the Award from President of India Droupadi Murmu.

Ritika Anand, joint secretary of RC Delhi City, RID 3012, and vice-principal of St Mark's Senior Secondary Public School, Meera Bagh, Delhi, was honoured by President of India Droupadi Murmu with the National Teacher Award on Teachers' Day (Sept 5). She has also received the CBSE Award for Excellence in teaching and the Delhi State Teachers' Award in the last two years. ■

Organ donation campaign



DG Ashok Gupta (right) flagging off the rally at Muzaffarnagar.

Fifteen Rotary clubs from Muzaffarnagar and Khatauli, RID 3100, participated in an organ donation rally led by RC Delhi Manthan, RID 3011. The rally was flagged off at the Begrajpur Medical College, Muzaffarnagar, and culminated in Delhi. RID 3100 DG Ashok Gupta emphasised the importance of organ donation. ■

School kits for children



Students display their new school bags.

RC Rajkot, RID 3060, is running a school kit distribution project to help underprivileged students in 93 municipal schools in Rajkot. This project, which began on July 1, 2023, aims to provide essential school supplies to more than 4,000 students at an estimated cost of ₹20 lakh. ■

Meet your



Nihir Dave

Civil engineer

RC Anand Round Town, RID 3060

Cervical cancer screening a key priority

Motivated by his uncle Ramesh Dave, he “joined Rotary in 1996 as I also wanted to serve the community like him.” Service, service, service — this three-word mantra aptly defines the core values of Rotarians, he says. He is confident of adding 10 new clubs and 500 new members taking their respective counts to 115 and over 5,500 by July next year.

One of his priorities is the elimination of breast and cervical cancer through an awareness, screening and vaccination campaign that will reach out to over 10 lakh women. “We have procured seven colposcopy machines for cancer detection through a CSR grant of ₹5 lakh.” Protein-rich food including a specially made protein powder will be distributed to 3,000 TB patients, adopted by the clubs. They will continue to receive “these nutritional kits for six months to abate the TB symptoms.”

Another pet project is the distribution of 700 sewing machines (district grant: ₹70 lakh) to women trained at vocational centres. He is going to tie-up with RSETI, a government body, to train rural women in tailoring. Around five GG projects are in the pipeline including a modern crematorium (\$50,000) in Saurashtra; neonatal ICU (\$75,000) at a government hospital, Vadodara; and vocational centre (₹1.5 crore) at Muni Seva Ashram, Vadodara. His TRF-giving target is \$1.5 million.

His district’s clubs will hold around 100 medical camps to screen over 20,000 rural and urban patients. For this government-certified valuer, his wife Vaishali, a Rotarian, is “my pillar of strength,” he smiles.



Sunil Bansal

Stock broker/analyst, RC Varanasi Greater, RID 3120

Rotary lacks branding in UP

Rotary needs a good branding with public image boosting projects in eastern Uttar Pradesh to draw young professionals and others below 40, says Sunil Bansal. “Now, being a Rotarian is a costly affair here. While the annual membership fee is ₹15,000, of which ₹8,000 goes to RI, little money is left for taking up projects. Young people don’t want to join Rotary as it is not attractive to them. So, Rotary is not in good shape in UP,” he explains.

He aims to start six new clubs — one already chartered — to take the tally to 92; and targets a net membership growth of over 10 per cent, to cross the 4,000 figure. Among the GG projects, a new blood bank (₹1 crore) will be opened in Varanasi; a Rotary Dialysis Centre with five machines (₹45 lakh) at the Government Hospital, Lucknow; and 20 mortuary freezer boxes (₹25 lakh) will be pressed into service. “The five existing Happy Schools will be further upgraded at a cost of ₹10 lakh.”

More than 500 medical camps will be conducted to screen one lakh patients. He aims to collect \$200,000 for TRF. When he was 18, Bansal joined Rotaract at college in 1978 and was mentored by his Rotaract guide Nishikant Bhatnagar.

Before joining Rotary in 2003 at 41, he was in Jaycees, and thanks to the influence of Bhatnagar, who had helped over 50 Rotaractors turn Rotarians, “I have found a new calling in this organisation,” he says.

Governors

V Muthukumaran



Manik S Pawar

Civil engineer, RC Gulbarga North, RID 3160

10 mega GG projects in the pipeline

Giving back to society through humanitarian projects, networking to widen professional contacts and the motto *Service Above Self* are the Rotary features that pushed him towards a leadership role in his district. He wants to start 10 new clubs taking the total to 93 by July next year, and aims at a net membership growth of 10 per cent. At present, there are 2,700-plus Rotarians in this districts

He has lined up 10 GG projects — among them, a mammography bus (\$60,000, sanctioned) which will screen over 60,000 rural women; a mobile dental clinic (\$20,000) to examine 80,000 patients; a cardiac care van (\$40,000) to diagnose 60,000 people; and 10 mega RO units (\$40,000) at villages hit by severe water contamination, resulting in acute water-borne diseases. Through a CSR grant and club contributions, “we are distributing 1,000 computers (₹10 lakh) to government colleges in Karnataka,” says Manik Pawar. In a mega afforestation project (₹34 crore), 1,500 acres of barren land at Challakere, Chitradurga district, is being converted into a green paradise. He aims to collect \$300,000 for TRF.

Pawar is distributing 2,000 bicycles to rural school girls; through a district fund, he will provide 10 sewing machines to each club; and hold 100 de-addiction camps for mentally-ill people. He joined Rotary in 2004 influenced by Basawaraj Khanderao, an architect.



Hira Lal Yadav

Plywood manufacturer, RC Hooghly, RID 3291

Rotary is a unique, global family

A specialist in setting up Rotary eye hospitals, Hira Lal Yadav is the point man behind the construction of 18 such hospitals in India and two in Bangladesh. “Soon the 12th Rotary Eye Hospital (GG: ₹1.2 crore) at RID 3291 will come up in North 24 Parganas district,” he beams.

Last year, 32,000 cataract surgeries were done at the 11 Rotary hospitals, and “this year, we will do 55,000 procedures; and eye check-up for seven lakh patients.” He wants to form 12 new clubs, taking the number of “active clubs to 156 and induct 500 new members; (200 have already joined), to take the total to over 4,000. He is applying for GG for a blood bank (₹55 lakh) in Howrah; and a GG is under process for five dialysis centres (₹35 lakh each) — three at government and two at Rotary hospitals. He runs a Rotary Hooghly Eye Hospital since 2000 and is well-trained in its technical-admin aspects. Around 250 medical camps will be held reaching out to thousands of patients.

The ongoing vaccination drive against cervical cancer will be expanded, for which he is in discussion with the vaccine supplier. His target for TRF-giving is \$500,000. His stint as Rotaractor from 1982 to '93 compelled him to join Rotary in 1995. He says, “Rotary is a unique global family where Rotarians join hands to do bigger, bolder projects like polio eradication, manage natural disasters, build schools and sanitation facilities, and set up hospitals for the poor, thus creating hope in the world.”

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Laxmikant-Pyarelal

Dream Composers

SR Madhu

Their music is a supermarket, a joyride,” says singer Shreya Ghoshal, about Laxmikant-Pyarelal (LP). When I sing LP songs, I often can’t control myself and start crying. When this happened once on the TV show *Indian Idol*, everyone asked me why I was crying. I said I could not say why.”

She adds: “LP were a singer’s dream composers. So many singers have done their best work for them. Because they always found the right words for a singer to do trouble-free enunciation. That was a key magic in their songs.”

There was a time when the audience threw coins at the screen for songs they enjoyed. Songs of the 1979 LP film *Sargam* — particularly *Daftiwale dafti baja* — collected a whopping ₹1 crore from movie halls screening *Sargam*.

Film star Jeetendra once remarked that he owed at least two floors of his four-storeyed house in Juhu, Mumbai, to LP, because of what they had done for his career.

LP inspired many such encomiums. They were active in Bollywood for over three decades

(1963–1993), composing over 2,900 songs for an incredible 500 films. As you could play LP’s songs 24x7 without repeating any song, LP was also known as ‘long playing’! Their career spelled longevity, quality and mass appeal. They composed music for every top filmmaker and enriched the careers of many singers.

Filmfare and Binaca Geetmala

LP won Filmfare’s best composer award seven times — for *Dosti*, 1964; *Milan*, 1967; *Jeene Ki Raah*, 1969; *Amar Akbar Anthony*, 1977; *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, 1978; *Sargam*, 1979 and *Karz*, 1980.



Laxmikant (R) and Pyarelal.

The duo were dominant in Binaca Geetmala (1953–1994), the legendary Radio Ceylon programme compered by Amin Sayani, which ranked Hindi film songs by popularity, sale of records and listeners’ requests.

LP first figured in the programme with *Hansta hua noorani chehra* from the 1963 *Parasmani*. During the peak of LP’s career, from the mid-’60s to the mid-’80s, more than half the songs in this programme were LP numbers.

Evolution of LP’s career

LP exemplified the rags-to riches story. Laxmikant was born in 1937 in



Laxmikant with Asha Bhosle.

the slums of Vile Parle, Bombay, son of a mill worker and a nurse. Keenly interested in music even as a kid, he learnt the mandolin from Hussain Ali, and the violin from Husnlal (of the Husnlal-Bhagatram duo.)

Pyarelal was born in 1940. His father Pandit Ramprasad Sharma, a trumpeter, taught him the basics of music. He started learning violin at the age of 8 and practised it 8–10 hours daily. He also learnt to play violin from the Goan musician Anthony Gonsalves — Pyarelal immortalised him with the song *My name is Anthony Gonsalves* in the movie *Amar Akbar Anthony*.

Laxmikant and Pyarelal met at a cricket pitch when they were 15 and 12 respectively. They became great pals, struggled together and did wonderful music together for 35 years.

Laxmikant and Pyarelal met at a cricket pitch when they were 15 and 12 respectively. They became great pals, struggled together and did wonderful music together for 35 years.

The Lata factor

A big factor behind the eventual LP success story was the queen of melody Lata Mangeshkar. She sang a staggering 712 songs for the duo. In 1967, Lata named LP’s song *Jeevan dor tumhi sang baandhi* in *Sati Savitri* as one of her favourites.

Lata sang cabaret songs for LP, a feat no other composer dared to attempt. Her famous song filmed on Helen in the 1969 *Intaqam — Aa jaane ja* — was a superhit. It’s because of LP that Lata sang for Raj Kapoor’s 1973 *Bobby* (Lata and Raj Kapoor were not on talking terms over a rift in royalty payment for the 1964 *Sangam*). When a critic once said that Lata made even ordinary songs of LP extraordinary, LP responded “Just as cooks keep



sprinkling coconut in their food to make it tastier, we keep using Lata's voice in our songs to make them better."

Lata first heard 12-year-old Laxmikant playing the mandolin at a concert in Bombay. She was charmed and sought him out. Both he and Pyarelal later joined the Sureel Bal Kala Kendra, an academy run by Lata Mangeshkar for children. She urged top composers to engage the two kids in their orchestra, and they did. But L and P were not satisfied with the low wages. Pyarelal thought of migrating to Vienna and emulating his friend Zubin Mehta who had become a celebrity in the West. But Laxmikant dissuaded him, saying they could together make a name in Bollywood.

LP's first break as independent composers came in the 1963 costume drama *Parasmani*. The movie was a musical triumph. Several of its songs are hummed even today — such as the effervescent, infectious, fast-moving *Hansta hua noorani chehra* (Lata and Kamal Barot) and the romantic charmer *Woh jab yaad aye* (Rafi and Lata). Lata and Rafi sang free of charge, but Lata

Pyarelal learnt to play violin from the Goan musician Anthony Gonsalves. He immortalised him with the song *My name is Anthony Gonsalves* in the movie *Amar Akbar Anthony*.

accepted a cheque for ₹1,001 — it was *gurudakshina* rather than a fee. In some subsequent small budget movies, LP paid Lata at least a part of her fee from their own pockets.

Parasmani was followed the very next year by the even more successful *Dosti*. LP bagged the Filmfare award for best composers, despite the high-profile *Sangam* of Shankar-Jaikishan and Madan Mohan's *Woh Kaun Thi* in the same year.

The LP era began in Bollywood, and their reputation and success

kept growing. *Aaye Din Bahar Ke* (1966) was LP's first musical hit with a big star cast. 1967 belonged to Laxmikant-Pyarelal, with a series of hits — *Farz* (golden jubilee), *Anita*, *Shagird*, *Patthar Ke Sanam*, *Night In London*, *Jaal* — and *Milan* which won LP their second Filmfare award.

From 1969, LP were widely recognised as Bollywood's No 1 composers, displacing Shankar-Jaikishan. Major film houses vied with one another in replacing scheduled music directors with LP. The duo were accused of price-cutting, a charge they didn't deny. Said Laxmikant "If we can offer in two rupees what another does only for 10 rupees, what's wrong? We lower only the cost, not the quality." Several filmmakers were put off by SJ's habit of hiking their rate with every hit film, and found LP to be an attractive alternative.

The LP juggernaut continued on its relentless march during the

Pyarelal playing the violin.





Laxmikant

1970s and 80s, but slackened in the 1990s. Just a few of the dozens of major films for which LP provided music: *Do Raaste*, *Jeevan Mrityu*, *Hathi Mere Saathi*, *Humjoli*, *Mera Gaon Mera Desh*, *Jigri Dost*, *Shor*, *Roti Kapda Aur Makaan*, *Aan Milo Sajna*, *Daag*, *Bobby*, *Loafer*, *Khilona*, *Roti*, *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, *Amar Akbar Anthony*, *Suhaag*, *Karz*, *Kranti*, *Prem Rog*, *Ek Duje Ke Liye*, *Utsav*, *Aakhri Raasta*, *Nagina*, *Tezaab*, *Ram Lakhan*, *Chalbaaz*, *Mr India*, *Saudagar* and *Khalnayak*.

LP had an intuitive understanding of what would appeal to the common man. They were skilled at a variety of Indian and western instruments — the dholak and tabla, besides the violin, guitar, bongo, piano, santoor, sitar and mandolin. They were masters of folk and proficient in Hindustani classical. Their pre-composer experience of 10 years as instrumentalists, arrangers and assistants for many top composers

was unequalled. And then, they were powerfully backed by the peerless Lata. No wonder they composed hundreds of melodious songs in every genre — classical, folk, qawwali, mujra, lori, bhajan, ghazal, western music.

Recalling some famous LP songs

- *Chahunga main tuje sanjh savere* — Rafi, *Dosti*, 1964. Composer Roshan said no

to this film, LP said yes with alacrity. Its music won laurels, particularly this moving song filmed on a blind youngster.

- *Mere mehboob qayamat hogi* — Kishore, *Mr X in Bombay*, 1964. A masterpiece of melancholy, the song shows why old is gold.
- *Dil vil pyar vyar* — Lata, *Shagird*, 1967. LP often gave Lata naughty romantic songs, which she rendered with gusto! This Saira Banu-Joy Mukherjee caper is an example.
- *Achcha to hum chalte hain* — Lata and Kishore, *Aan milo sajna*, 1970. An entire song that is a romantic dialogue between hero and heroine — one of LP's innovations.
- *Hum tum ek kamre mein bandh ho* — Lata and Shailendra Singh, *Bobby*, 1973. Hugs and embraces behind locked doors, a rollicking LP tune, and teenage lovers Rishi Kapoor and Dimple Kapadia. Together, they make this an iconic love song.
- *My name is Antony Gonsalves* — *Amar Akbar Antony*, 1977. "He could think of the whackiest



Laxmikant (L) and Pyarelal (R) with Raj Kapoor.





With Majrooh Sultanpuri.

thing in the world and make it work,” said Amitabh Bachchan of Manmohan Desai. Certainly true of this hilarious party song, where Amitabh steps out of a huge Easter egg in an old Goan costume, and sings in Kishore’s voice.

- *Kate nahi katate* — Kishore and Alisha Chenoy, *Mr India*, 1987. It has been described as Bollywood’s sexiest song. True! What can be sexier than a damsel romancing with a ghost? “The song appealed not just to *Mr India* but to every Mister in India,” it was said. Voice, visuals and Sridevi enhanced the magic!
- *Man kyon behka* — Lata and Asha, *Utsav*, 1984. Exquisitely photographed and sung, this stunner shows two bedecked and bejeweled beauties, Rekha and Anuradha Patel, who obviously delight in each other’s company. The voices

of Lata and Asha are sheer perfection.

- *Main teri dushman* — Lata, *Nagina*, 1986. Snakewoman Sridevi performs a hypnotic snake dance to outwit Amrish Puri and his gang of goons. LP sizzles as composer, Lata is mesmerizing as singer. This song is always associated with Sridevi.
- *Choli ke peeche kya hai* — Alka Yagnik and Ila Arun, *Khalnayak*, 1993.

This high-voltage LP song filmed on Madhuri Dixit and Neena Gupta sparked a national controversy for its first line! But it made Alka Yagnik and Ila Arun famous. The song’s cassettes sold in millions.

Pyarelal, Laxmikant, Lata Mangeshkar, Mohammed Rafi and J Omprakash.

AR Rahman described *Choli ke peeche kya hai* as “the most important anthem of the 1990s.” It influenced his choice of a song for his Oscar-winning film *Slumdog Millionaire*. “I took the same singers for my song, Alka Yagnik and Ila Arun. The song was my ode to Laxmikant-Pyarelal.”

LP quotes and anecdotes

Stories abound in Bollywood and the music industry about LP — Laxmikant’s intrinsic goodness and his talent as a tunesmith; and Pyarelal’s wizardry with instruments and western music.

Nitin Mukesh has said that when his father died, Laxmikant visited him and handed over ₹20,000. “I said no, I wanted songs, not money.” But Laxmikant asserted: “I swear on my son Tikku that I owed your father the



Lata Mangeshkar had once said that in an orchestra of 100, Pyarelal could make out immediately if a single instrument or player was off-key.

money I'm giving you." Nitin said of Pyarelal "He is nothing less than a computer, a living Beethoven."

Playback singer Kavitha Subramaniam reveals that her husband, the accomplished violinist Dr L Subramaniam, once discussed the intricacies of western classical music with Pyarelal for hours. Dr Subramaniam told Kavitha "What's this genius doing here? He should be in the West. No one there can compose such symphonies."



Laxmikant with RD Burman, Anandji and Pyarelal.

She revealed that the Laxmi-Pyare bonding was incredible — sometimes their thoughts were identical. While she was recording a song for *Khuda Gawah*, Laxmikant told her 'After this *antara*, you should sing an *alaap*,

I will tell Pyare.' That very moment, Pyarelal walked in and said 'I have thought of an *alaap* that Kavita can sing.' It was uncanny."

Lata herself had said that in an orchestra of 100, Pyarelal could make out immediately if a single instrument or player was off-key.

Manna Dey remarked: "Pyarelal is young enough to be my son, but there's much I can learn from him. He knows every single instrument in and out. He knows so much about music.

I think he can open a school of music for today's composers."

Laxmikant passed away in 1998 because of a kidney ailment. Pyarelal, now 82, appears now and then in the odd TV show, reminding viewers of Bollywood's most prolific and successful music duo.

Note: The author thanks Rajiv Vijayakar, author of a biography of Laxmikant-Pyarelal.

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





Wordsworld

The reality of being Indian



Sandhya Rao

If only all teachers were like the character Sidney Poitier played: shining a light, showing the way.

Sidney Poitier famously starred in a 1967 film called *To Sir With Love* in which he plays a teacher dealing with rowdy students in an East End of London school. It was based on an autobiographical novel of the same name by ER Braithwaite published in 1959. That teacher was something of an ideal and rising to the challenge. An ideal teacher is a window to the world no matter who the students, at any time, at any age. People usually remember teachers with nostalgia, although many may not have such pleasant memories.

Still, September 5 is routinely celebrated as Teacher's Day in India after the birthday of former President and eminent scholar, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.

Barely ten days before Teacher's Day, a seven-year-old Muslim boy in a school in Muzaffarnagar, UP, who apparently had not learnt his multiplication tables, was given a bizarre punishment by his teacher, Tripta Tyagi. She got all the children in his class — 6–8 year-olds — to line up and slap him hard, one by one. This is not the first nor last instance of teacher misdemeanour, it's just that few such incidents are reported in the media.

We know that corporal punishment is illegal. We know that discrimination is unacceptable. Still, these things happen, to our shame. More shameful is this teacher's behaviour. Ordering her little wards to engage in violence against a class fellow? Teachers lead by example. This teacher only feels and teaches hatred. I guess she's not much of a reader. Education is in large part about books and reading, just what Wordsworld tries to bring to his readers. Further, this would be of interest to Rotarians given their commitment to making education available to the less privileged.

What has this to do with books? A lot. Reading about different people can go a long way in giving us truer understanding of the world and its inhabitants. One such book is *Baluta*, written originally in

Marathi by Daya Pawar. Translated into English by Jerry Pinto, it caused a sensation when first published in 1978 'not just with its unvarnished depiction of the pervasive cruelty of the caste system, but also the extraordinary candour with which Daya Pawar wrote about himself and his family, his community, and

Dalit politics of his time,' to quote from the back cover of the book.

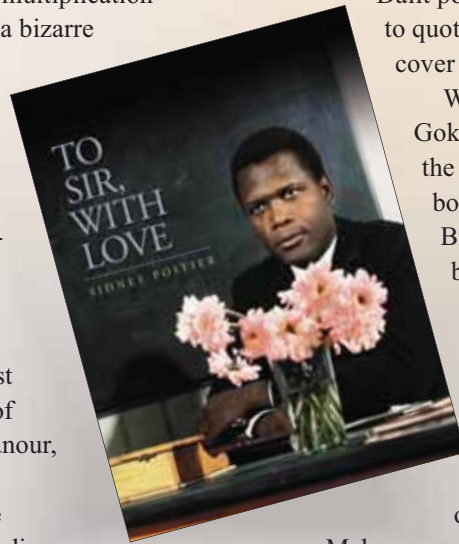
Writer Shanta Gokhale writes in the preface to the book, that as 'liberal Brahmins,' she was brought up to deny caste. Daya Pawar was a Mahar.

She says: 'I was ignorant of all the humiliating specificities of what being a

Mahar meant. I didn't know

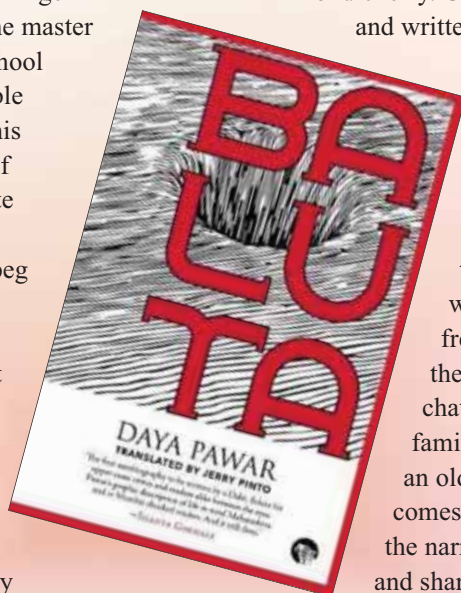
that Mahars skinned dead cattle and ate their flesh. I didn't know that Mahar children were made to sit apart from the upper classes in village schools. I didn't know that their touch was supposed to pollute water, rendering it undrinkable for the upper castes. *Baluta* opened this other world to me without mincing words, in direct, simple language, making escape impossible. I had to look at Daya Pawar's world as part of the reality of being Indian. It filled me with shame.'

'The reality of being Indian...' is the phrase that must awaken our conscience and consciousness. In all the narratives of India-that-is-Bharat rising and shining, and the spring-cleaning of the capital city during the G20 meet, we need to remember the 'reality of being Indian'. The word, *baluta*, derives from a practice that kept the Mahars bonded in the village.



They got a share of the produce in return for services to the village at all times, such as making funeral announcements in villages, dragging away the carcasses of animals, tending to animals, playing music day and night at festivals and weddings, and so on.

Here's a short excerpt from *Baluta*, pertaining to school: 'We were not allowed to sit with the Maratha children from the village. They faced the teacher and we sat at right angles to them, facing in a different direction. If we were thirsty, there was no water for us at school; we had to go back to the Maharwada to drink.' And something about the teacher: 'When he was in school, we did not get the feeling that he discriminated on the basis of caste. But when we went to his house, he underwent a radical transformation. He became "pure", in the ritual sense of the word. ... we could not cross the threshold; we had to stand on the steps. The goods would be given in such a way that not even a finger touched us. The master we knew at school did not resemble the master in his lair. It was as if he had his caste consciousness hanging on a peg near the door and he could slip into or out of it, at will.' The writing is lucid and eminently accessible, even amusingly ironic at times. Yet, as you read, you see how so much has remain unchanged, despite the passage of time.



As happens occasionally, more books came my way, one by chance and the other, the choice of my book club read for the month. The first is a light, engaging detective novel set in Bengaluru by Harini Nagendra, called *The Bangalore Detective Club*. Set in pre-Independence times and featuring a traditional young woman with out-of-the-box ideas, it's a breezy read, good to take along on a trip or to get a break from meetings. An added attraction is the way chapters have been titled: Swimming in a Sari, Men Can Make Coffee, Disappearing Lathis, Conversations Around the Pool!

The other evokes Frenchified Pondicherry. Called *The Thinnai* and written by Ari Gautier,

it's been Englished by Blake Smith. *The Thinnai*, or veranda in Tamil, is where, typically, residents would sit in their free time and watch the world go by, chat with friends and family. In the novel, an old Frenchman comes to the *thinnai* of the narrator of the novel and shares a story that covers a host of curious

characters and the history of France's colonial connections with India. The nicknames given

to various characters — Joseph One-and-a-Half-Eyes, Emile Kozhukattai-Head, Jean-Claude Cow Shit — remind you of Raja Rao's seminal work, *Kanthapura*, published in 1938 — Pockmarked Siddamma, Post-office-house Suryanarayana, Four-beamed-house Chandrashekarayya. *Kanthapura* looks at the impact of Gandhiji on a small south Indian village, with a focus on the prevailing caste system.

A short excerpt in the narrator's voice should provide a feel of *The Thinnai*, a slim novel: 'Life in Kurusukuppam condensed around our house. Pattakka had her idli stand across the way, the fountain was just a few metres away and the only shop in the neighbourhood was on the main street by the playground. Karika Bhai, who ran the shop, was the only foreigner in the neighbourhood. His real name was Amanullah, and he was a Malaysian-Indian. But he couldn't avoid getting a nickname anymore than anyone else in the neighbourhood could.'

I cannot help but think that it's no coincidence that the Muzaffarnagar incident and these random titles all tie in one way or the other with issues of social status, caste, the past, the present and our place in history. Even *The Bangalore Detective Club*, you will discover.

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist



Figuring Fitness

Bharat & Shalan Savur

Last month, we spoke about good health being your fundamental right. That it is inherent in your very constitution. Now, our national Constitution gives us the right to choose. Unfortunately, nature and our bodies are not fully free. So, our choice of stretching our body's constitution beyond a point is dicey. Hence, this right comes with an attached self-responsibility. To yourself, your family, your employer, etc. — to exercise restraint on the one hand. And, vote with your feet, on the other. For your fitness — immunity, stamina, strength, every physical activity — is the foundation of your life. It is the core of your life's course and circumstances.

Eat right, eat light

Begin with a balanced diet. Your stomach is about the size of your fist. It

processes a lot more than it holds. And in turn passes on the excess to the rest of your body. So mainly, waste goes to waist.

Do not rush for a second (or more) helping. It takes around 20 minutes for the stomach to signal "I'm full" to the brain. In this context, let us differentiate between hunger and appetite. The first is a need, the latter a want, even a physical luxury.

Drink at least two litres of water/fluids every day. They constitute 70–80 per cent of your body and hence require reciprocal replacement. Every physical effort, besides exercising of course, consumes fluid, not fat. The fact is, body fat is as old as human evolution. Nature trained it to be a physical godown while man lived off the prey that he hunted. The means of our meals have changed. Not our natural process. Which includes dieting.

We ourselves have experienced the ups and downs of dieting. Until we evolved our own. Today, as we have for the last three decades, we eat the normal, natural food items that we were brought up on. With one major difference — our meals are made without oil. Indeed, hair-oil is the only lubricant you would find at our home.

We have focused on food because it's all important in every sphere of our lives. Fat and fit are not just a change of alphabet but much more: a change of our consumption attitude.

Fitness flexibility

Keep in mind that after age 30, one loses about three to eight per cent of one's muscle mass every 10 years. And that muscle mass decay further accelerates after age 60. This in turn can set the ground for fractures and osteoporosis. Also, the lungs' and brain's



ability to take in oxygen and convert it into energy diminishes. So the time for you to undertake some aerobic activity (walking, jogging, cycling, swimming) and scientific, select weight-training is near. Says Grayson Wickham, a physical therapist in New

York: 'The human body is extremely resilient. But the double-edged sword there is: that it is so resilient that we can get away with a lot — until we can't.'

Hence, scientific exercise involving muscles and the cardiovascular system, is some insurance from future risks in these areas. Likewise, if your stability is shaky, go in for balance-boosting exercises like single-leg stands (remember the *langdi* races you did as a kid!?) If you are wanting in flexibility, try yoga or tai chi (with a qualified/certified expert). We use the word scientific for exactly this context. Simply imitating an exercise without proper guidance does more harm than good. We remember a whole lot of Chinese simultaneously suffered back pain because they got into yoga uninstructed.

Weight chart for Indian men

Wrist circumference		Below 13.5 cm (6.5 inches)	16.6–17.7 cm (6.5 – 7 inches)	17.8+ cm (7+ inches)
Height		Small frame	Medium frame	Large frame
Ft	in	Kg	Kg	Kg
5	5	51	57	63
5	6	52	59	65
5	7	54	61	67
5	8	56	62	69
5	9	57	64	71
5	10	59	66	73
5	11	61	68	75
6	0	63	70	77

Shipshape

Frankly, weight is not the be-all and end-all of health. All the same, it punches above its weight as its indicator. When we first began to study, pursue and then publish our fitness columns, we discovered to our dismay that weight standards were set to western parameters. Literally, a one-size-fits-all situation. The fiscal equivalent would be one US dollar equals one Indian rupee! Our deep dive into the subject led us to the Indian Institute of Sports, Patiala. It was and remains our 'gold

standard' for physical health and fitness. And is the bottom-line of both our book and programme, *Fitness for Life*. The vital stats are published alongside.

We are not professional athletes. And we guess, nor are most of you. With your consent, let's set the fitness bar higher. And then make sensible concessions and compromises. An extra five kilos or so could be allowed for us, non-athletes and those over age 30. Anything more would be below the physical plimsoll line of your ship of good health.

A survey reveals that 42 per cent Americans are obese and 30.7 per cent of them overweight. Back home, a study reveals 135 million of us, Indians, are overweight. A scary thought for a nation already in the top five world economies and counting... though unfortunately not its calories.

Hence, aspirations should be accompanied by healthy perspiration. As you look up, do look down. At your weighing machine. Let it decide. Truly, your life is in the balance. Set it right.

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

Weight chart for Indian Women

Wrist circumference		Below 13.9 cm (5.5 inches)	14 –16.4 cm (5.5 – 6.5 inches)	16.5+ cm (6.5+ inches)
Height		Small frame	Medium frame	Large frame
Ft	in	Kg	Kg	Kg
5		43	48	53
5	1	44	49	54
5	2	45	50	56
5	3	47	52	58
5	4	48	54	60
5	5	50	56	62
5	6	51	58	63
5	7	53	60	65
5	8	55	62	67

RC Manora Pattukkottai — RID 2981



Nutritious groceries were distributed to 40 TB patients at the Government Hospital, Pattukkottai. Club member Shankar donated ₹25,000 for the project.

RC Nagpur Vision — RID 3030



Ten toilets were installed at Wateghat village near Butibori with the help of CSR fund from RC Plasto. MLA Sameer Meghe's donated a submersible pump for the village.

RC Thalaivasal — RID 2982



An RO water purifier plant was installed at the primary health centre, Thalaivasal, at a cost of ₹96,000.

RC Barwani City — RID 3040



More than 30 women donated blood at a blood donation camp led by club president Arpit Lad. The blood bank officials at the district hospital were honoured.

RC Pilkhuwa City — RID 3012



Iron supplements were distributed to pregnant women to protect them against anaemia which is common among them during child birth.

RC Cosmopolitan Ahmedabad — RID 3055



Seventy-five smart TVs were donated to anganwadis. In one such event, school bags and water bottles were distributed to 150 children.

RC Surat Hazira Bay — RID 3060



Notebooks and stationery were distributed to over 100 children at Abhya Prathmik Shala for their educational needs.

RC Baghapurana — RID 3090



An ambulance (₹4.05 lakh) was donated to the Gau Sewa Hospital for transporting injured and sick cattle for treatment.

RC Hoshiarpur Mid Town — RID 3070



Over 100 saplings were planted at the Government Middle School, Chaunni Kalan, and notebooks and pens were distributed to students. A wall clock with Rotary emblem was donated to the school.

RC Moradabad — RID 3100



Over 200 girls and women were screened for cancer and other related ailments at an exclusive health camp for women. Sanitary pads were distributed to all visitors.

RC Saharanpur — RID 3080



Twenty-five desk-benches were donated to a government primary school to provide comfortable seating for students.

RC Bisauli — RID 3110



A tree plantation drive was held at the Rotary Club Dinesh Madhu Hospital in the presence of Bisauli Municipality chairman Avrar Ahmad.

RC Jaunpur — RID 3120



Saplings were planted at the Government Composite School, Ibrahimabad. An environment care lecture was conducted.

RC Gulbarga Suncity — RID 3160



Fifty-three students of Shantiniketan School, Kudi village, were taken to watch a circus. They were given stationery kits and refreshments.

RC Ahmednagar Priyadarshini — RID 3132



Books on achievers like Ratan Tata, Narayana Murthy, were donated to Sneha Sparsh, a hostel for orphans and children of former sex workers.

RC Karwar — RID 3170



PRID Ashok Mahajan distributed computers to 20 government primary schools for e-learning in a joint project with Infosys.

RC Kalyan — RID 3142



Stationery, school bags and water bottles were distributed to 90 students; and 35 were feted for excelling in the board exams at the New High School, Kalyan.

RC Mysore South East — RID 3181



DG HR Keshav flagged off a three-day motorcycle rally taken out by Rotarians to create awareness on road safety from Mysuru to Kannur.

RC Shoranur — RID 3201



Palakkad district collector S Chithra unveiled the statue of Mahatma Gandhi installed by the club at St Therese Girls HS School.

RC Mooncicy Thiruvannamalai — RID 3231



Free treatment is given to 20 patients daily at the dialysis centre with 11 machines (₹1 crore), a GG project, with the help of CM's medical insurance scheme.

RC Trikarpur — RID 3204



IPDG Pramod Nayanar inaugurated a two-storey Rotary Community Centre with a clinic for senior citizens and a space for skill training.

RC Burdwan South — RID 3240



During Vanamahotsav, members, led by president Saborna Kumar Dey, planted saplings with the help of students in a school.

RC Kollam Royal City — RID 3211



Sewing machines were donated to two indigent women at the installation of club president Alexander Sebastian in the presence of PDG John Daniel.

RC Patna City Samrat — RID 3250



During a three-month anti-dengue campaign, 12 pesticide sprayers were launched. Pamphlets were distributed.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran



**TCA Srinivasa
Raghavan**



Unfinished stories

With Diwali round the corner I was ordered to start clearing up “your things”. I hardly have any clothes or shoes or other such things. But I do have a lot of books and they clutter up the flat space. So I invited neighbours to come and help themselves to whatever I thought I could discard. Only two came. One is a genuine collector and the other was a 12-year-old child. Around 500-odd people live in our housing society. That tells you something.

Actually, the cleaning started five or six years ago. I had found that I was running out of shelf space for books. So I started giving them away. I used a simple criterion: am I likely to read these books again? I retained the ones I thought I would read. The rest I distributed to friends. I got rid of around 150 books, mostly fiction, this way. But even that proved inadequate because I kept acquiring new ones. Eventually, I decided to be utterly ruthless and took out nearly 300 non-fiction and reference books and donated them to my old college, the venerable Hindu College of Delhi University. It is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year. But more about that next month.

Meanwhile, there is another question, namely, what is harder than giving away your books? Put differently, at which point in life does one stop buying books? If, like me, you

tend to read a lot, you will see how tiresome this problem can be. My wife and sons have been telling me to switch to electronic text. My wife even bought me a Kindle. But despite trying quite earnestly, I haven’t been able to make the switch. And the travails don’t end there.

When I was sorting out the books to discard I found many that I had read only half or less. When I asked my friends, they also said they rarely managed to complete a non-fiction book. Later, when I thought about it, I found this to be an interesting economics problem, namely, if only half the book was likely to be read, had I been paying double all my life? When I asked an economist friend about this he said this is known as the problem of indivisibility. For example, you

People will happily give away the books that gave them pleasure but not the half-read or totally unread ones that obviously didn’t give much pleasure.

can’t pay for just half a container. You pay for the whole thing. That’s why importers share containers. The same is true of food, too. You pay for a full plate and it’s up to you how much you eat from it. Just because it’s too much for you, the seller won’t give you a discount. Ditto for books. You can’t buy a part of them.

A related problem is size. If fatter books mean higher cost and therefore higher price, why publish fat books that people can’t or won’t buy? I asked a publisher friend. He said a higher price means a higher commission to the wholesalers and retailers.

Then there’s the waste aspect. People complain a lot about waste but never complain where unread books are concerned. Try eating only half a pizza and someone will scold you immediately. But half-read books? Not a chance. Why, no one will even know. A related paradox is that people will happily give away the books that gave them pleasure but not the half-read or totally unread ones that obviously didn’t give much pleasure.

When I asked my wife about this she said there are some follies, like husbands, that one grows fond of. Much as you might want, you can’t give them away. That was a clever answer, but I reminded her that old books, unlike old wives, don’t nag all the time. And started reading my new book. ■



Family First

“Family comes first –
everything else is secondary”

Family First is a bimonthly event that focuses on all the aspects of a healthy life. Rtn. Sivakumar and Rtn. Savithri, the exemplary couple who are the facilitators of these sessions to educate Rotarians on how to sustain a healthy life style, the nuances of parenting, effective time management and maintaining fulfilling interpersonal relationships.

The Family First initiative, with its two fold approach, has not only helped 2000 plus Rotarians to lead a healthy life but also helped bring about familial harmony.

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