

Rotary News

India

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ROTARY KARMAVEERAR KAMARAJAR HEART CARE BUS



Rotary International District 3212 shares the vision of 'Karmaveerar Bharat Ratna K.Kamarajar' in up-lifting the quality of life in rural Tamilnadu. Rotary Heart Care bus takes the privilege to serve the under-privileged in villages and towns to take Heart Check-ups and save their lives by availing due medical treatment for heart problems.

Heart care bus is a Clinic on wheels. It goes to multiple locations throughout the Rotary International District 3212.

HEART CARE BUS FEATURES

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Vital Screening



Electro
Cardiogram (ECG)



Echo
Cardiogram



Defibrillator



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Consultation



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Consultation



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the body, soul
and planet

Rotary News gets a new look

Your August issue comes with a few changes in design. We have changed the fonts for headlines and pull-out quotes. Some layouts have undergone change to make the pages look brighter. We plan to keep innovating to give *Rotary News* a new look. We'd love feedback at rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com

Rotary 

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The magic of Rotary

It was good to see the colourful photo of RI President Stephanie on the July cover. Her message — *The magic of Rotary* — is a vision statement which can be fulfilled with cooperation of Rotarians across the world. The Editor’s note explains nicely the harmful effects of climate change and how RC Delhi Premier has carried out sustainable farming in deserts.

RID Anirudha Roychowdhury has called for engaging new members. While TRF chair Mark Maloney has set a goal of \$500 million for TRF-giving this year. TRF trustee Bharat Pandya explained well how this target can be achieved.

The picture pages, *South Asia at Singapore*, are beautiful and colourful. All other articles and columns are interesting to read. Good work by the editorial team.

*Philip Mulappone MT
RC Trivandrum Suburban — D 3211*

The remarks by RI President Stephanie that Indians take Rotary seriously and it is a revered organisation are fascinating. However, the contentious issues of elections mar the goodwill enjoyed by Indian Rotary. Both she and PRIP Gordon McNally expressed concern over these disputes which could



have been avoided. It is music to the ears to hear from her that Rotary’s CSR projects have been working well and many fabulous things are happening through this alliance.

The advice by RI Director Raju Subramanian not to hanker after awards at the cost of ethics and integrity is timely and his statement that it is not joy that makes us grateful but that it is gratitude that makes us joyful is worth following by all Rotarians.

*Nekkanti Anthri Vedi
RC Hyderabad Mega City — D 3150*

Rotarians are most effective when united for a common purpose and focused on our goals. We can assess our club’s strength and weakness with Rotary’s Action Plan. In a changing world we have to fall in line and march towards a greater vision committing ourselves to each other’s well-being.

As President Stephanie says, “every club should create the magic, with every project completed, every dollar donated and every new member inducted.” Let us all embrace the magic of Rotary and make her vision a reality.

*VRT Dorairaja
RC Tiruchirappalli — D 3000*

Preeti Mehra’s article *Slow down on fast fashion* is an eye-opener for today’s children and their doting parents as well. Our elders passed on the clothes used by elder siblings to the younger ones or their cousins. They were not stingy; but this was the norm.

I still remember getting clothes from my elder cousin. He also happened to be one year senior to me in the school, hence I got his used textbooks as well, complete with pencil and pen markings on the margins. Once the academic year was over, my books would go to a student who

couldn’t afford to buy books, obviating the need for new books.

Compare this with the present day schools which insist on new books, new notebooks, new uniform, new shoes every year. It’s high time that we return to some of the good old practices that are environment-friendly.

*K Ravindrakumar
RC Karur — D 3000*

Timely editorial on global warming

The July editorial is a powerful wake-up call, highlighting the

devastating effects of human greed, selfishness and thoughtlessness about the environment. The heat-wave that has ravaged India and other parts of the world is a stark reminder of the urgent need for collective action.

The statistics paints a sharp picture of the crisis, making it impossible to ignore it. However, amidst the gloom, there is a beacon of hope. The addition of environmental protection as Rotary’s seventh area of focus is an embodiment to Rotary’s commitment to make a positive impact. The various

LETTERS

projects such as water conservation, afforestation and eco-park creation are examples of collective action.

Rotary News also highlights the need for climate action in preventing emissions and protecting public health. The innovative solutions proposed such as promoting e-autorickshaws and urban tree cover demonstrate the potential for positive change.

I commend the magazine for its timely initiative in shedding light on the adverse impact of climate change and the crucial role Rotarians can play to mitigate its adverse effect. This editorial will inspire Rotary clubs to develop projects and programmes focused on reducing global warming and sustainability, sparking a positive change in our communities and beyond. Let us unite in our collective efforts to protect our planet and ensure a healthier future.

*Subier Shams
RC Sherthallai — D 3211*

The July editorial on the heat-waves and climate change is interesting to read. Also, the work done by RC Delhi Premier such as building check dams to preserve the water bodies in the desert regions of Rajasthan made me proud as a Rotarian. The 4th Programs of Scale being dedicated to Indian farmers is a happy moment for all of us.

*V Raman
RC Mayiladuthurai — D 2981*

The July editorial on climate change and its harmful effects on planet earth is really touching and inspires young Rotarians like me to further take active interest in service projects.

*S Ragavendran
RC Athur — D 2982*

The editorial on climate change is read-worthy and that India got the fourth Programs of Scale grant for farmers makes us all proud. The picture pages on the RI Convention in Singapore have brought out vividly the Magic of Rotary for readers, thanks to the painstaking efforts of your editorial team.

*S N Shanmugam
RC Panruti — D 2981*

The article *Transforming the lives of marginal farmers* by Kiran Zehra suggests a practical and workable project model to Rotary clubs. Free renting out of a tractor to small farmers will be a morale booster. As Nikunj Patel points out in the article, the amount of ₹4,200 saved will help them to procure seeds and fertilisers. Farmers need help more than any other segment of Indian population as they grow food for us. The project model is easy to replicate by any Rotary clubs. Congrats to RC Chikhli River Front.

*M Palaniappan, RC Madurai
West — D 3000*

As rightly said by RI director ARoychowdhury (July issue), I feel the time has come not just to

experience the magic, but to create the magic, show, implement and finally, to achieve the magic.

*Piyush Doshi
RC Belur — D 3291*

With reference to the letter by Nanubhai Mehta a senior Rotarian from RC Thane on the subject of minimum attendance (July issue), here are my views: I am in Rotary since 2004. Rotary clubs are always under pressure to meet targets in membership growth, starting new clubs, execution of projects and TRF-giving. Also, the district governors are all target-oriented.

Now, almost all district governors say that the clubs need not increase members; rather they should focus on inducting those with a Rotary spirit. It is the duty of the club presidents to ensure minimum attendance in regular meetings. But how to inculcate the spirit of Rotary? Attending the orientation programme for new members is the only way out. A policy decision is needed to ensure qualitative Rotarians rather than achieving mere numbers in membership growth.

*S Mohan
RC Madurai West — D 3000*

From July 1, 2024, our E-version subscription has been revised from ₹420 to ₹320

On the cover: An illustration depicting farming sessions for children, an initiative of RC Gandhinagar, RID 3055.

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

Messages on your club/district projects, information and links on zoom meetings/webinar should be sent only by e-mail to the

Editor at rushbhagat@gmail.com or rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com.

WHATSAPP MESSAGES WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED.

Stephanie Urchick (rear right) listens as a member of her club in McMurray, Pennsylvania, speaks at their weekly meeting.



From challenge to opportunity

If we are to truly change the world with *The Magic of Rotary*, it's up to all of us to foster a sense of belonging in our clubs. But every club should take its own path to get there, and the Action Plan can help you find your way. What does that look like?

Take for instance the Rotary Club of Beveren-Waas in Belgium. It was chartered in 1974 but has evolved with the times, developing both a strategic plan and a membership plan. To find new members, the club analyses the city's professions to help focus its search, and all new members are quickly assigned tasks and roles.

The club also mixes up meeting times, alternating between evening and afternoon sessions, making them accessible for all members.

Sometimes, circumstances force clubs to make changes. But as people of action, we know that behind every obstacle is an opportunity.

The Rotary Club of Holyoke in Massachusetts was forced from its meeting place because of rising costs after the Covid pandemic, but members took this setback and turned it into a strength. The club started meeting in a library community room that was available for no charge and catering lunch from a nearby deli. Lunch costs \$10 per person but it's optional, so no one has to spend money to attend a

meeting. What a great way to work toward being "fair to all concerned."

Since making this change, the Holyoke club has gained 13 members. I suspect part of its membership growth is due to the club's sense of inclusivity — the first step toward belonging.

If you ask members what they expect from the club experience, you might find that your club doesn't meet expectations. Think of this as an opportunity to reshape your club in exciting ways, as alternative club models are making a positive impact.

For example, a Rotary Fellowship called Beers Rotarians Enjoy Worldwide, or BREW, has worked closely with the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Rotary Action Group for the past eight years to assist with clean water projects. In that time, BREW has funnelled 25 per cent of its dues to those initiatives.

BREW is one of many examples of members pursuing belonging to improve the world.

I can't stress enough the importance of belonging. Clubs become simply irresistible when all members feel that they are exactly where they need to be. To me, belonging is the spark that ignites *The Magic of Rotary*.

As you receive feedback from club members and the community you serve, I urge you to pursue that spark. The Action Plan can help you find the path to success, and if you light your way with the spirit of belonging, that path will lead to a bright future for your club, your community and the world.

Stephanie A Urchick
President, Rotary International



The language of grief... and hope

Most of the times WhatsApp is a huge pain in the neck, and even more so, when people think it is okay to spam your WhatsApp with 20 or 30 messages late in the night, sending your phone buzzing relentlessly. But recently a forward from a friend on this medium made my day, and the content was so gripping and deeply moving, carrying such an invaluable life lesson, that I'd like to share it here. The delightful German writer Frank Kafka, who never married and had no children, once met a girl in a Berlin park; she was crying because she had lost her favourite doll. He helped her search for it, but unsuccessfully. He suggested they return the next day and search again; when they didn't find it, he gave her a letter saying it was from the doll. It asked her not to cry, as she had gone on a trip to see the world. "I will write to you about my adventures," she promised in the letter.

Thus began an endearing story; during their subsequent meetings in the park Kafka would read the little girl delightful letters from the doll describing all the wonderful adventures she was having and the girl found these stories adorable. One day Kafka bought a doll and gave it to the girl saying her doll had returned to Berlin. "It doesn't look like my doll at all," said the girl. Kafka handed her another letter in which the doll wrote: "My travels have changed me." The little girl happily hugged the new doll and took her home.

A year later Kafka died. Many years later, the girl, now a woman, found a letter inside the doll. The tiny letter, signed by Kafka, had this mind-blowing note. "Everything you love will probably be lost, but in the end, love will return in another way."

This story, and this month's edit, is dedicated to all those Rotarians and their families, who have lost loved ones, either after battling long illnesses, due to tragic accidents, or sudden cardiac failure. The Covid pandemic has left a huge hole in our hearts... our families... by stealing one or more loved ones from us. Sometimes people had to cope with long-distance grief as the lockdown made travel to attend funeral impossible.

One of the most poetic expressions of long-distance grieving was penned down by the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie, who was in the US when her father died due to a kidney disease in Africa in 2020, as the pandemic raged, and no flights were operating anywhere. We all know how special father-daughter relationships are, and unable to attend her father's last rites, Adichie wrote a heartrending piece in the *New Yorker* magazine, giving this poignant and heart-wrenching expression to her pain. Just to quote a few lines... "Grief is a cruel kind of education. You learn how ungentle mourning can be, how full of anger. You learn how glib condolences can feel. You learn how much grief is about language, the failure of language and the grasping for language."

Oh yes, even for the best of us, words fail at the most crucial time. But when a Kafka finds his words... as he did when he wrote for the little girl, "...but in the end, love will return in another way," it becomes a bouquet of hope and comfort, like no other.

Rasheeda Bhagat

Do you know **Someone**
who is **advancing women**
in **Rotary?**

**NOMINATIONS
DUE 31 AUGUST**

for the

**SYLVIA
WHITLOCK
LEADERSHIP
AWARD**



Dr. Sylvia Whitlock is a Rotary pioneer, an educator, a humanitarian, and a longtime advocate for women in Rotary.



Any Rotarian or Rotaractor can nominate one member for consideration from 1 to 31 August.
<https://bit.ly/SWL-Award>





Director speak

Let's continue to create magic

As we step into a new Rotary year, a world of possibilities unfolds before us. July marks the beginning of this exciting journey, filled with opportunities to make a positive impact on our communities. As we embark on this new chapter, let us celebrate the spirit of Rotary and the power of service that unite us all. Welcome to the new Rotary year, 2024–25.

We're all looking forward to new activities to serve our communities, build new collaborations, and enjoy fun and fellowship with our club members and their families. As Rotarians step into the new year to weave their magic in their clubs and communities, I am reminded of the lines from a popular song:

We can't go on pretending day-by-day that someone, somewhere will soon make a change. We're all a part of God's great big family, and the truth, you know, love is all we need. We are the world. We are the children. We are the ones who make a brighter day, so let's start giving. There's a choice we're making. We're saving our own lives. It's true we'll make a better day, just you and me.

Our theme this year, *The Magic of Rotary*, is both a reminder and a challenge. Rotarians have been creating magic for more than a hundred years around the world. From the eradication of polio to touching

countless lives in communities worldwide, the challenge now is to evolve our capacity to create magic at a level where we impact sizable populations with their larger issues.

As we move forward, take the opportunity to deepen your understanding of Rotary. Familiarise yourselves with the rich history and culture of our beloved organisation. Educate your clubs about Rotary International, your district, club history, and the invaluable work we do. We must continue to focus on retaining our members through active engagement. When inviting new individuals, let us seek those who will become dedicated Rotarians, not just mere members.

Engage with our communities and do what we do best — serve! While serving, let us share all our good work, as Public Image is a powerful tool for inviting like-minded individuals who can contribute to our cause. Let's make this Rotary year a transformative journey of service, fellowship and positive change.

While we must continue to create hope in our communities, it's now time to create magic in our clubs and in the lives of the deprived. Have a great Rotary year.

Raju Subramanian
RI Director, 2023–25

Canada's country capital

Shouts of “Yaahooo!” echoed across the House of Friendship in Singapore as members snapped pictures in cowboy hats at the Calgary convention booth and lined up to register for their trip to Canada’s West.

You’re sure to hear that cowboy call of enthusiasm at the Rotary International Convention June 21–25 in Calgary, a city with country flair that’s famous for its summer rodeo blowout. Affectionately called Cowtown for its cattle industry history, Calgary even has a link to Beyoncé, whose latest album has country music influences. One of her co-writers of the song “Texas Hold ’Em” grew up in Calgary and calls it Canada’s country capital.

Don’t miss the National Music Centre in town that includes the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame. A wide-ranging music museum has displays on country star Shania Twain and a mobile recording studio used by the Rolling Stones.

The timing of the convention, on the grounds of the Calgary Stampede, is perfect. You’ll have time afterward to visit another part of North America



for a vacation then return to the city to catch the rodeo July 4–13. One suggestion: Take a train to the neighbouring Rocky Mountains to see Banff National Park’s breathtaking scenery. And Calgary invites you to celebrate Canada Day, July 1, with an Indigenous showcase, a street fair, and fireworks show.

Perhaps you’ll leave town with a cowboy hat or boots. But outside of all the fun, you have a serious job: help local members make noise about Rotary to boost public engagement, while supercharging your excitement about all you can accomplish through this great global network.

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org

Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs	: 36,526	Rotary members:	1,144,423
Rotaract clubs	: 8,673	Rotaract members	: 114,625
Interact clubs	: 14,781	Interact members	: 340,455
RCCs	: 13,502		

As on July 16, 2024

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Magazine

Message from TRF Trustee Chair

Members are the magic



I love our many Rotary traditions, especially our emblem: the wheel. Whenever I put on my Rotary pin, admire a new club's logo, or spot the emblem on a volunteer's t-shirt, I am inspired by the possibilities that wheel represents.

Early in Rotary, our predecessors envisioned it as a gear, part of a sturdy machine making great things happen. It remains that, and much more. To me, it also symbolises cycles and movement on our journey of doing good in the world. August is Rotary's Membership and New Club Development Month, and I encourage you to think about the cyclical connection between membership and The Rotary Foundation.

When we have engaged members in dynamic clubs, *The Magic of Rotary* happens. Members — both new and experienced — deepen their commitment to each other and their communities. And that local engagement attracts attention and more members.

Gradually, the new members realise their club is part of a powerful organisation that is making lasting change in the world. They learn about the Foundation, support it, and perhaps apply for a grant. They see themselves as part of the

movement that will eradicate polio. As our members' experience deepens, so does their commitment to Rotary at all levels. The public sees our impact, making Rotary irresistible. New members join, new clubs are formed, and the cycle continues. With each turn of the wheel, we grow Rotary and our Foundation.

There are countless ways this magical connection between clubs and our Foundation can unfold. For instance, 100% Paul Harris Fellow clubs, where every member is a Paul Harris Fellow, showcase how engaged clubs are directly connected to the Foundation. Some clubs even up the ante, like the Rotary Club of Crescent (Greensboro), North Carolina, whose 125 members are all Paul Harris Fellows, Benefactors and Sustaining Members simultaneously.

But you do not need to be in such a "triple crown" club to make a difference. I am asking all Rotary members to remember this month's goal for what I'm calling Mark's Magical Markers: Please make the personal commitment to contribute what you can to the Annual Fund by August 31. Do it right now, before you forget, at rotary.org/give. While you are there, set up a recurring direct donation. With your help, we can keep that great wheel of Rotary and its Foundation rolling in the right direction, moving toward something greater tomorrow than we can even imagine today.

Mark Daniel Maloney
TRF Trustee Chair



Children playing with sand in a farm.

‘Child farmers’ of Gandhinagar

Rasheeda Bhagat

For the batch of 30 schoolchildren who participate in a session of fun-filled farming initiative of RC Gandhinagar, RID 3055, titled *Kids’ Farm School*, it is an exciting day, connecting with nature and the farmers who work hard to put food on our table.

Designed to provide children in the age group 7–14, “an enriching hands-on farming experience to foster a deeper connection with nature, sustainable agriculture and the environment, our club has been organising this programme to give children an opportunity to engage firsthand with farming practices,” says Amit Gohel, secretary of the club.

But the real brain behind this exercise, he adds, is past president of the club Nitin Padariya, who has “collaborated with a couple of educated local farmers to allow us to use their land for a worthy cause such as exposing children of the present era, most of whom are detached from mainstream agriculture, to learn all about field crops, the importance of nutrients that need to go into farm produce, role of domestic animals in agriculture, contemporary equipment and technology that goes into farming

and importance of group effort necessary for sustainable agriculture.”

The club has been working towards this lofty objective for nearly five years, says Padariya, who is personally involved in the picnic-like, fun-filled but rewardingly educative experience nearly 60,000 children in and around Gandhinagar have had thanks to this project.

Explaining this initiative for children, he says that he has chosen a suitable farm in Gandhinagar, where the children can enjoy a first-hand experience with fruit trees such as guava, mangoes, apples, growing of herbs such as coriander and mint leaves, learn about medicinal plants, and enjoy healthy and tasty farm fresh vegetables served to them as a tasty snack. “In the morning, when the children come in, they are served a snack made with healthy ingredients such as sprouted channa, moong, etc, and it is compulsory that all children eat this, and they do.”

There is a spot, where on a raised round platform a lot of mud



and sand are kept for the children to play and build objects of their choice. “What they can’t do at home... that is, get their hands and clothes dirty in mud and sand, they are able to do here, and they enjoy this activity immensely,” he laughs.

After indulging in this group activity for about an hour or so, the children are allowed to use a freshwater pond on the farm to clean themselves and their clothes. A hose is kept handy and the fun they have while splashing water on each other while they wash off the mud from their hands and feet can well be imagined.

Next comes the part when they are introduced to the farm animals, mostly cows, and they are given the task of feeding grass to the animals. After this, either an agri expert or an experienced farmer explains to them the intricacies of irrigating a field, the various crop patterns, and some facets of sustainable agriculture, and its importance for a well-balanced ecosystem.

“We then serve them a banana, which they have to eat and then they open their tiffin

boxes for lunch. By this time, they are so hungry that they polish off everything they have brought from home; those who haven’t brought something from home are served from what we have made at the farm. They are also given a salad made of vegetables and fruits such as cucumber, mangoes, tomato etc, and this too is compulsory for them to eat, as it is filled with healthy nutrients,” says Padariya.

At the end of the day, the children return home with a gift bag, and the goodies include not only seeds and seedlings of interesting herbs, vegetables and fruits, that can be planted and nurtured in their own kitchen gardens, so that the child remains engaged with this green initiative, but also interesting aids for their creative learning.

Gohel adds that at a time a batch of 30 children are brought to this ‘farm school’ sessions that are held once or twice a month on Sundays and a few members from their club also attend it. Of course

“What they can’t do at home... that is, get their hands and clothes dirty in mud and sand, they are able to do here, and they enjoy this activity immensely.

Nitin Padariya

past president, RC Gandhinagar







project chair Padariya attends all the sessions as he is deeply involved in this project. “We charge a nominal sum of ₹50 to ₹100 per child for this visit, not to get funds, but because if the registration is free, both the school authorities and the parents may take it lightly and not actually send the children after registering. The money collected is given to the farmers who give us their land for this initiative,” he says.

While this year, this project goes by the name ‘Kids Farming School’, the club has been organising

such an initiative for the last five years. In its earlier avatar, this was known as *Chhote Kisan*. Padariya estimates that over 50,000 children have participated in RC Gandhinagar’s initiative during the last five years to connect children with farming and give them a sense of how important it is to be in physical touch with our roots... and Planet Earth.

Gohel adds that he is happy that this project is “instilling in our children a positive connect to the soil and the environment, and we hope that through this the children will develop a heightened environmental awareness and a



“More than anything else, it teaches the children the deep relationship between agriculture and environment, and how responsible use of what Mother Earth has given us results in sustainable farming.



deeper understanding of agricultural processes. In the process we are also instilling in them healthy eating habits through the organically grown and nutritious farm fresh produce that we serve them.”

This is also an opportunity for the young ones to venture beyond their classrooms, and enjoy nature while getting a hands-on experience in modern-day farming and a real look at the immense hard work our

farmers are putting into growing food for us, adds Padariya.

Gohel says that gradually more schools are showing interest in participating in this initiative which is really a valuable educational experience for their students to learn all about the “appropriate use of farm machinery, sowing seeds, cultivation, harvesting, identification of different trees and plants, medicinal use of various plants, cattle management etc



from experienced mentors/farmers. More than anything else, it teaches them the deep relationship between agriculture and environment, and how responsible use of what Mother Earth has given us results in sustainable farming.”

Both Gohel and Padariya are engineers, with the latter’s larger family being still engaged in agriculture. “For Rotarians like me this project gives an opportunity to take our families out for a weekend activity which

is close to nature,” says the club secretary.

One of the biggest positive fallouts of this project is the direct connect between parents of the children who attend this project and the local farmers. The parents who come to drop their children are now in direct touch with the farmers, and make use of this opportunity to buy farm produce directly from them. While the consumers get farm fresh, organic products — gradually the farmers have stopped using pesticides in their farms — the farmers get a better return for their hard work as in this transaction the middlemen are eliminated.

“While the consumers get farm fresh, organic products the farmers get a better return for their hard work as in this transaction the middlemen are eliminated.

Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S



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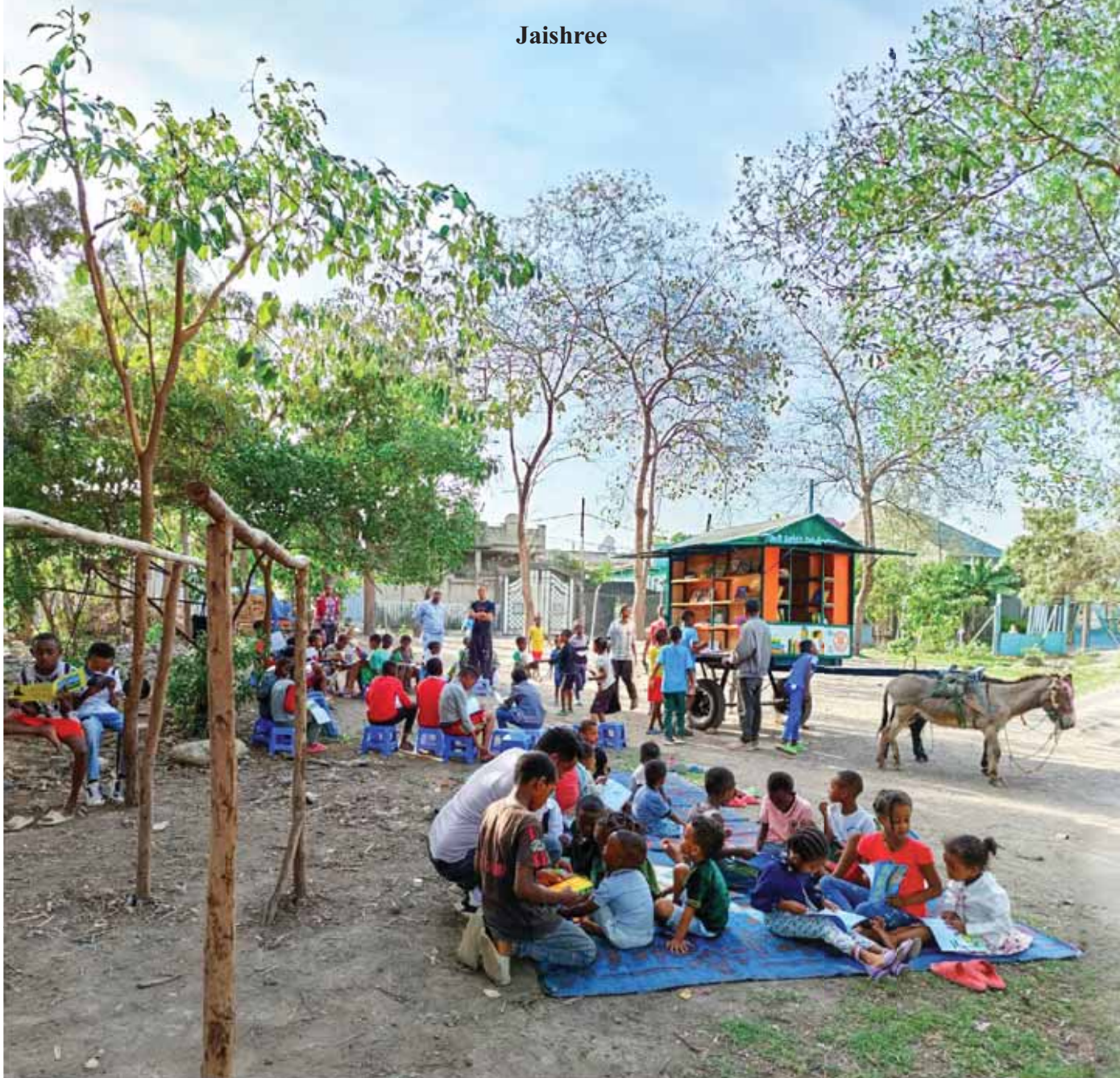
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Donkey Libraries in Ethiopia

Jaishree



Right: Children selecting books from the library.

Left: Children enjoying a reading session with books borrowed from the Donkey Mobile Library in a village in Ethiopia.

In the villages surrounding Hawassa City, Ethiopia, an unconventional yet heart-warming sight catches the eye: a small caravan of donkeys laden not with burdens of trade, but with books. This is the Donkey Mobile Library, an ingenious initiative aimed at nurturing a love for reading and education among children in the semi-urban areas which otherwise have limited access to educational resources.

Rotary Clubs of Addis Ababa Central Mella, RID 9212, and NC Hickory, RID 7660, USA, support this programme that is being run by Ethiopia Reads, an NGO founded by Yohannes Gebregeorgis. He was the brain behind the ‘donkey library’, says Yemisrach Worku, the NGO’s country director. “He designed the mobile library to reach out to children who do not have access to books or education, especially in the southern part of Ethiopia which is densely populated. The idea was to introduce books to children and adults in these areas, and lure them into the world of knowledge and discovery. We are pleased that some parents, enthused by the transformation, have enrolled their children in schools.”

Ethiopia Reads has set up 70 children’s libraries across the country, including Addis Ababa



and Hawassa City, and prints and distributes storybooks for children in different local languages. ‘Horse powered literacy’ projects are run to include children in remote areas of Ethiopia. Books are carried on horse-driven carriages which are stationed in various hamlets for a few days as facilitators introduce the joy of reading to the villagers.

Last Rotary year the two Rotary clubs collaborated to sponsor the donkey mobile library programme in some of the villages. “We take care of the operating expenses such as wages for the men accompanying the cart and their food. The US club has also donated several foreign

books for the NGO’s library,” says Ephrem Berhanu, past president of the Ethiopian Rotary club.

These books are translated in African languages; “there are 18 dialects spoken across various regions here,” smiles Yemisrach who is also a member of the Ethiopian Rotary club.

The donkeys are not just a gimmick — in rural Ethiopia and towns like Hawassa, horse-drawn buggies and donkey carts are a normal form of transport, she says. The project also attempts to teach children to respect animals. “Donkeys here are generally despised and often ill-treated, but these working donkeys



A teacher and older students read aloud to children.

are received with love and excitement among children.”

The mobile library comprises a brightly coloured wooden cart, pulled by two donkeys. The sides of the cart, when folded down, displays shelves of books. The facility visits primary schools bordering the Ethiopian cities for two days every week. “Children are so excited that they run out to receive the donkey cart that trundles down

into the village school.” It is parked in each school for two hours and the animals are unhooked from their shafts and allowed to rest. The cart has stools for the children to sit comfortably and immerse themselves in the books. School teachers and volunteers read aloud to them, engage them in roleplays, and even teach math through games. The library is stocked with foreign books and several native

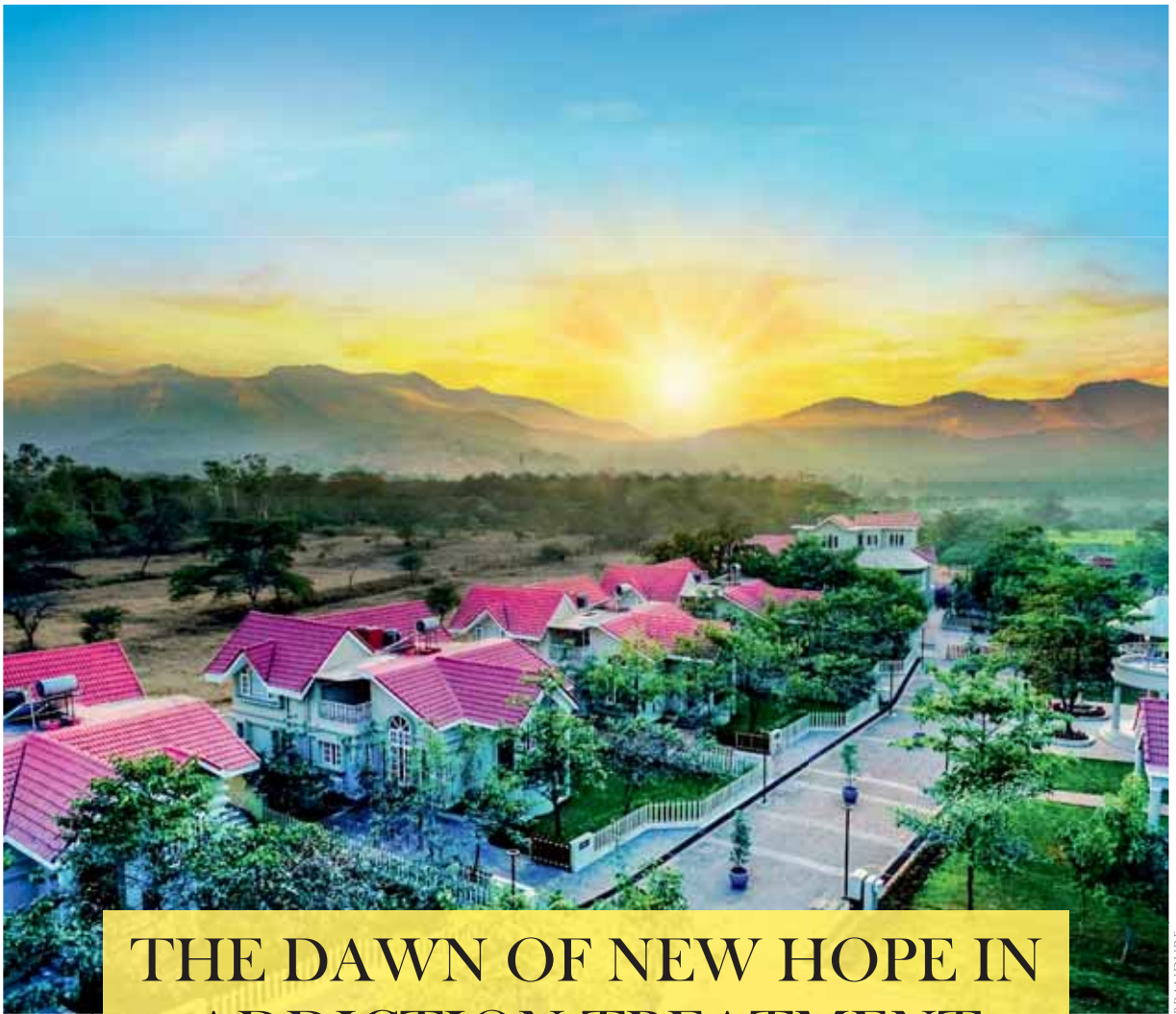
ones sourced from the local market. Reading in mother tongue is encouraged in the early grades.

When it is time for the mobile library to pack up and move on to its next destination, children neatly pile their stools into the cart and arrange the books on the shelves, and the donkeys are harnessed to go to the next place.

These donkey libraries are more than just mobile book collections; they are beacons of hope, nurturing a love for reading and learning in places where access to educational resources is limited. “The children have made great strides in their learning and behaviour after getting regular access to books. Many of them have developed critical thinking skills and their parents are happy to see this positive transformation,” she says.

Five donkey libraries are operating in semi-urban and rural areas around Hawassa, serving about 3,000 children. Yemisrach wants to scale up the services to more regions and is looking for support from Rotary clubs in India. ■





BRANDURE

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The staid-looking Chennai Convention Centre sported a vibrant look with 100 pink autorickshaws parked on its grounds, with 100 women, all dressed in khaki overcoats, with pink collars on which the Rotary Wheel was embroidered, all excited and ready to drive the vehicles home. *Project Pink Auto* is an endeavour of RID 3233 (bifurcated from RID 3232) to mark the installation of its charter governor Mahaveer Bothra. PRIP Kalyan Banerjee adorned the collar on the new governor and handed over the vehicles to the assembled women. The project which was launched in 2020 by RID 3232 aimed to empower less privileged women by giving them financial freedom.

Accompanying one of the women beneficiaries was Vaishnavi, a trans-woman who is successfully earning a livelihood from the earlier project. She said, “We came to Rotary broken and battered, and it provided us with autorickshaws, helping us rebuild our lives and regain confidence. When I met Shanti Selvam, chair of the *Pink Auto* initiative, she and her team treated me with respect and dignity. I am grateful to Rotarians for making me who I am today. Many women here are survivors of domestic abuse, abandonment and poverty, and they have all turned to Rotary for support.”

Lakshmi, another beneficiary, learned about the initiative through a WhatsApp group. “I registered and received my auto within a month, and it helped me to earn a living and enhance my income,” she said. Beyond the financial benefit, club members frequently called her for their commutes, “paying me well for the service. Shanthi Ma’am has also informed us about various Rotary programmes for women which we could benefit from.”

At the installation event, two vans were donated to Ramachandra Hospital, Chennai — one for cervical cancer screening and another to be used as a mobile hospital for rural medical camps around Chennai.

Delighted at seeing over 1,500 people attending the event, Banerjee remarked, “This looks like one of our global conferences. The Rotary service done in this district (3232) is remarkable and among the best I have seen in India.” Extending his best wishes to Bothra on his leadership journey, he urged him to initiate collaboration with the government to address environmental issues, as this was the need of the hour, he said.

PDG Muthu Palaniappan highlighted Bothra’s leadership in impactful projects such as COWIN. During the Covid lockdown, Bothra planned and executed the distribution of 36,000 grocery kits, costing ₹3.6 crore, involving 96 clubs from RID 3232 and the Guinness World Record-setting *Rotary My Flag My India* campaign in 2014. Bothra, a diamond merchant and member of RC Madras T Nagar, thanked his family and Rotary, saying, “I am nothing without my family and friends and together we can take RID 3233 to greater heights.”

Ramamurthy Natarajan from RC Madras Mount became an AKS member by handing over a cheque for ₹2.1 crore to PRIP Banerjee as his contribution to TRF.

A peace pole was handed over to DG Bothra by AKS member Ambalavanan M, who explained that “there are around two lakh peace poles worldwide. This pole will be installed in Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu, serving as a reminder of the goodwill and peace that Rotary is promoting.”

An Annette Council was installed at the event. Event chair Vinod Nair delivered a vote of thanks.

Pictures by Kiran Zehra



Pink autos to empower women

Kiran Zehra





From Top: PRIP Kalyan Banerjee interacting with beneficiaries; PRIP Banerjee and DG Mahaveer Bothra greet each other in the presence of (from left) PDGs CR Raju, Raja Seenivasan, S Muthupalaniappan, Ravi Raman, Babu Peram and DG Bothra's wife Chand. PDG I S A K Nazar is on the right; PRIP Banerjee receives cheque from Ramamurthy Natarajan. Also seen (from L): PDGs Muthupalaniappan and Ravi Raman, Chand and DG Bothra, PDG Nazar, event chair Vinod Nair, DGN Sriram Duvvuri and district secretary S Ramkumar.



RID 3250 on a giving high

Jaishree

This is their maiden contribution to TRF for 1,150 Rotarians across 56 Rotary clubs in our district,” says Sushil Poddar, past president of RC Patna Samrat, RID 3250, as he relates how the feat was achieved.

During his installation event, DG Bipin Chachan expressed a desire to make the district a ‘100 per cent Giving’ district; DRFC Rajan Gandotra encouraged all Rotarians to contribute a minimum \$25 to the Foundation. To set the tone, he motivated club presidents to start by transferring “just \$1 initially to experience the wonderful feeling of contributing to our Foundation.” This small step also helped them overcome their fear of online transactions. “Most of us are not tech-savvy or confident about online transactions. Not many clubs are even registered on

My Rotary,” says Poddar. With newfound confidence and enthusiasm, the new presidents set the ball rolling on July 1 by transferring \$25 to TRF, and motivating their teams to follow suit.

By July 26, the district Rotarians had made an Annual Fund contribution of over \$85,000 to the Foundation.

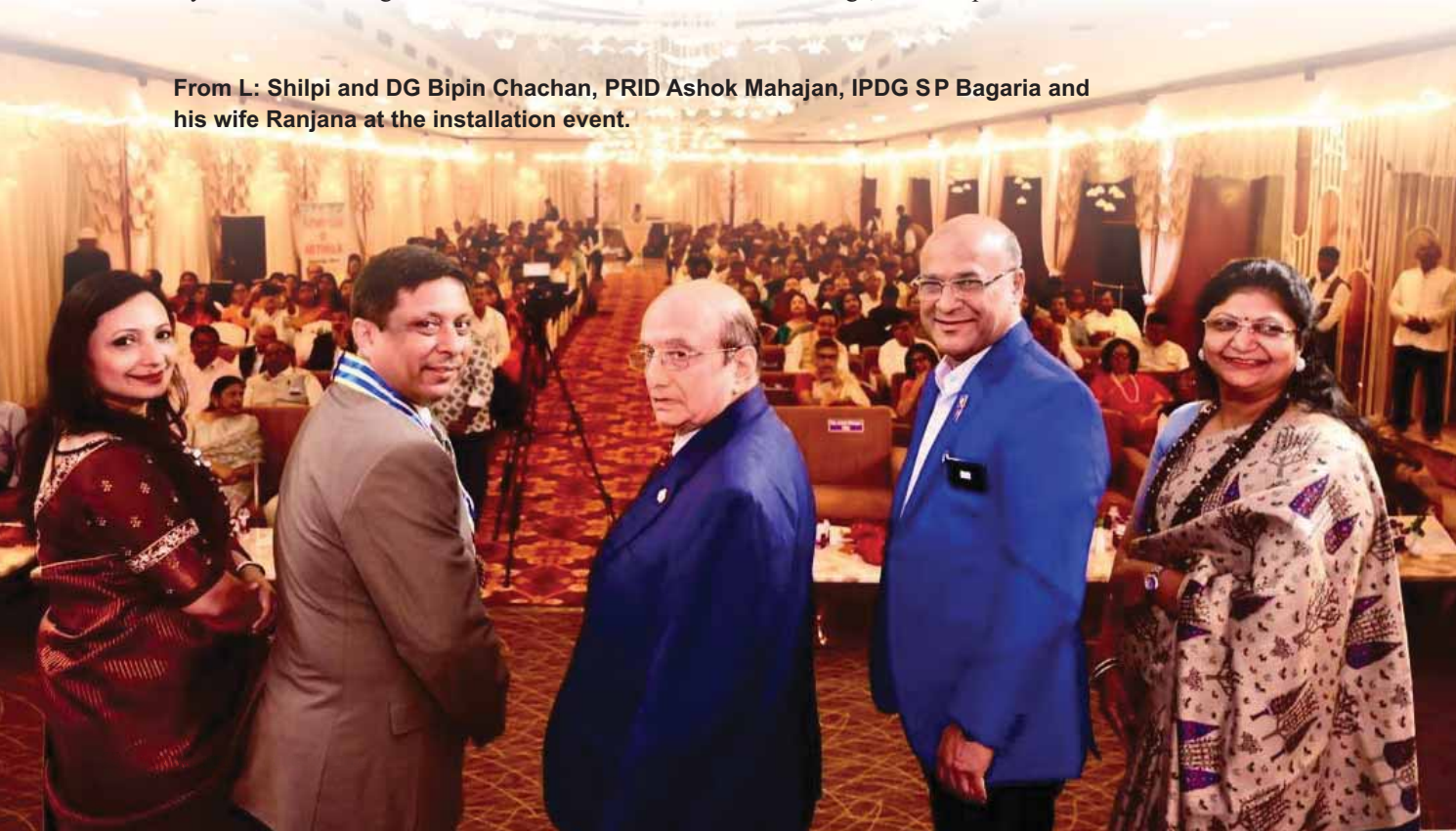
RC Patna Samrat hosted the installation event, presided over by PRID Ashok Mahajan, with PRID Kamal Sanghvi serving as the installation officer. To mark the programme, the club assisted five marginalised women procure electric autorickshaws, providing them income-earning opportunities. The women got the vehicles, each costing ₹1.5 lakh, through bank loans. “Our club provided the seed money of ₹2.5 lakh for the five vehicles. The women will repay the balance of the loan in instalments from their earnings, and

the club will monitor this,” says club president Devraj Ballabh.

DG Chachan also announced five district projects — sponsoring paediatric heart surgeries; 1,000 cataract surgeries and corrective spectacles for 500 people; prosthetic limbs; and free cancer treatment for people under 18. Various vocational training programmes will be provided to women throughout the year.

The event also saw 54 Rotarians contributing a total of ₹2.7 lakh to ‘Rotary Grant’, a scheme introduced by Chachan to support small clubs that lack the financial strength to do global grant projects. Rotarians were requested to contribute a minimum ₹50,000 to the grant to help smaller clubs participate in the district projects. The giving Rotarians will be recognised as ‘district patrons’ at a special event. ■

From L: Shilpi and DG Bipin Chachan, PRID Ashok Mahajan, IPDG SP Bagaria and his wife Ranjana at the installation event.



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Sustainable livelihood project for **mentally disturbed women**

Rasheeda Bhagat



W

hen Madhura Zaware, president of the Rotary Club of Ahmednagar Mid Town, RID 3132, read a book titled *America*, written by the Marathi writer Anil Avchat, about a unique project done in the US to facilitate the rehabilitation of Vietnam Veterans, it left a deep impression on her mind. It described how the war veterans were kept in close proximity to horses for mental stability. The honest, genuine and unpretentious love of animals gave them mental healing.

This information has provided the background for the setting up of the Rotary Swayampoorna Dairy at an NGO near Ahmednagar for mentally disturbed and destitute women through a \$48,000 global grant done by this club. The partner club is RC Miami Airport, RID 6990, US.

This NGO, Mauli Seva Pratishtan, located about 20km from Ahmednagar city, provides shelter and treatment to mentally deranged and disturbed women who are rejected by their own families and left to mend for themselves, invariably falling prey to all kinds of unsavoury elements. At this centre, “they get their home, food and warmth. The couple, Dr Rajendra and Dr Sucheta Dhamane, are caring for more than 500 such women and their 50 children with great care and affection,” says Madhura.

A few years ago, she became aware of the wonderful work being done by this NGO, and her club started helping out its inmates in various ways. Sharing a few heart-breaking, and yet heartening stories of hope, Madhura told *Rotary News* about Anuja, who is actually from Goa. She was born to her parents in their late age, and so her siblings were 15 years older than her. By the time she reached puberty, her parents died and her elder siblings refused to take responsibility for her.

She somehow managed to find some work, and completed her education in law, and started internship under a famous lawyer in Goa.

But she was exploited by the much older male lawyer, and ended up pregnant. When this was known to the local community, she was taunted and asked to leave the locality. The torture put tremendous stress on her mind, and she became mentally deranged. When a good Samaritan found her wandering on the streets in a disturbed state, he organised her transport all the way to Ahmednagar and the NGO Mauli. Here she found a home, care and some peace at last.

The plight of Pooja and Suman was similar. Pooja was raised in an orphanage for children which she had to leave after she completed 18. But with no job or a home, she ended up on the streets, was abused by some men and ended up at Mauli in a psychotic state.

Suman lived in a nearby village and used to walk to the taluk school every day in pursuit of an education. Somehow, she managed to reach Class 10, but one evening, while returning home alone, she was raped by some young men. Her family blamed her and stopped her from attending school. After a couple of months, when they found she was pregnant, Suman, who was barely 15, was thrown out. “Forced into unwanted motherhood at such a tender age, she lost her mental balance. Luckily, one day, while wandering on the road, she caught the eye of a good man, who directed her to Mauli,” says Madhura.

The admirable and humanitarian work done by this NGO has



TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya at the Rotary Swayampoorna Dairy in Ahmednagar. DG Suresh Saboo (third from R) and RC Ahmednagar Mid Town president Madhura Zaware (L) are also seen.



A mentally-challenged woman being treated at the Mauli Seva Pratishthan.

been recognised by many organisations, including RC Hong Kong, which has honoured it with The One Rotary Humanitarian Award. “Many members of our club, which has a membership of 100, regularly donate money to the NGO and we have also been doing some projects with them; in 2020–21, we donated about 40 beds for the children living here.”

Next in partnership with RID 6690, US, the club carried out the *Healthy Tiny Feet* project, in which shoes were given to the children living here. “Gradually, over a period of time, women such as Anuja, Pooja, Suman and all the kids in Mauli have become an integral part of my life and heart. And there was a deep desire in my heart that our club should do something to make this donation dependent





Milk being collected from cows at the dairy.

organisation become self-sufficient and self-sustaining,” says Madhura.

She thought if the club could do some kind of self-sustaining project that would give the women a purpose in life, and generate a decent income for the NGO, it would be a win-win for everybody. “We already knew that these women can do goat and cow rearing and some agricultural activities very well. Once somebody had donated three cows to the NGO, and we found that not only did these women take good care of the bovines, they also talked to them regularly, like they would to close friends and even shared their grievances with them. And it was then that I suddenly remembered the Vietnam Veterans story I had read.”

The club president thought that if a similar situation was created here, replacing the horses with cows, “it could be used as a psychological treatment for the women inmates, while creating financial self-reliance for the institution. And then the idea of setting up a dairy with good quality cows at the Mauli Seva Pratishtan took root.”

The idea was discussed with the “veterans” at the club, and the founders of Mauli



“ The women at the NGO were so attached to the three cows donated earlier, that when one of these cows became pregnant, they took such good care of it, as they would of their own pregnant daughters. ”

too. The members learnt that the women were so attached to the three cows donated earlier, that when one of these cows became pregnant, the women took such good care of it, as they would of their own pregnant daughters.

But the amount required to buy 15 good quality cows and set up other facilities such as a vermiculture unit, growing fodder for the cows and generating fuel from cow dung etc was rather huge, and it was here that the project team got encouragement and guidance from the then DG Swati Herkel and DRFC of RID 6990, US, Manohar Mahajan (whose son-in-law

lives in Ahmednagar) to do a global grant for \$48,000 with the US club. With some other local clubs — RCs Beed, Beed Mid Town and Ahmednagar — joining in, the project was further strengthened.

When the GG funds came through, 15 cows were purchased from the Godrej Centre near Nashik which breeds quality cows capable of giving up to 35–40 litres of milk a day. It was decided to set up a complete system including sensors (monitoring system), a milking parlour, a dung gas plant and a vermiculture plant. Cow fodder will be grown by the women

here in the three acres of land belonging to the Mauli Pratishtan. For this, the vermiculture prepared using cow dung will be used as organic fertiliser. The milk collected will be taken to the regional milk collection centre located 2km from Mauli. The dung gas produced will help reduce the expenditure on LPG in the kitchen. “We’ve tried to make this project as self-sustaining as we possibly can,” smiles Madhura.

The project was recently inaugurated by TRF trustee Bharat Pandya, who praised the club members for the meticulous manner in which they



Inmates at the Mauli Seva Pratishtan with the NGO founders Sucheta and Rajendra Dhamane.



Club president Madhura, club's International Service director Kshitij Zaware and Madhav Deshmukh (left), past president, RC Ahmednagar, with inmates of the Mauli Pratishtan after inauguration of the Rotary dairy.

had planned the entire infrastructure to make it a totally self-sustaining project. "This is yet another example of how TRF helps Rotarians do good in the world," he said. IPDG Swati Herkel too congratulated the club members for their steadfastness and pursuing their dream.

Recently RI Director Raju Subramanian visited the project and interacted with the women and children. "It was mind blowing to see the

noble work that is being done at this centre. Talking to the women and listening to their stories brought tears to my eyes. While the courage these women have displayed is tremendous, it is difficult to digest the fact that there is such a cruel world out there. I congratulate the couple who is doing this fantastic work and members of RC Ahmednagar Mid Town, who are collaborating with this NGO to provide these women a sustainable livelihood," he said.

"Do allow me to add that the guiding principle behind this entire project is the then RI President Gordon McNally's constant appeal to Rotarians to take care of the mentally disturbed and mentally-challenged people in our communities," she says. She also thanked PDG Pramod Parikh, her club's International Service director Kshitij Zaware, PDG Rukmesh Jakhotia, DRFC Suhas Vaidya and club trainer Vijay Ingale.

But the last word has to go to the couple who have so lovingly nurtured Mauli. "Many a times, when we see women wandering on the roads, we call the NGO, and in 30 minutes a van comes and the expert manner in which their staff talk to these mentally disturbed women, who are very prone to violence and agitation and refuse to allow anyone to come near them obviously because of the physical abuse they have experienced, has to be seen to be believed. The women are quietly picked up, taken to Mauli, cleaned, fed and looked after with the utmost care. We hope to continue to work with them in the future too," adds Madhura. ■



Women rolling agarbathis at the NGO.

Embrace change to be relevant

V Muthukumaran



DG NS Saravanan and Bharati being felicitated by members of his home club, RC Chennai Mitra, and other Rotarians from RID 3234.

Rotarians must be flexible to change with the evolving times to stay relevant and sustain growth, said TRF trustee Bharat Pandya at the installation of NS Saravanan as the DG of the new district 3234 in Chennai.

“All the 525 RI districts and 37,000 Rotary clubs in the world have a leadership change on July 1 every year to keep up with the times. The charter governor has a big responsibility to set up new goal posts and benchmarks for this new district,” he added.

Urging the new DG to focus on making the clubs vibrant through member engagement, DEI (diversity, equity and inclusivity) policies, and projects empowering women, Pandya noted that 30 per cent of the district team is women, and “Saravanan must follow the 3Cs — commitment, competence and courage — to steer his district on the right path.” Instead of resting on the glorious past of RID 3232, “you should work as if the best work is yet to be done.” Clearer minds and dirtier fingernails are needed

DG Saravanan and Bharati were greeted by (from L) trustee Bharat Pandya, PDG J Sridhar, PRID AS Venkatesh, PDGs Abirami Ramanathan, I S A K Nazar, Krishnan V Chari, CR Raju, JB Kamdar, DGE Vinod Saraogi and PDG S Krishnaswami.



to achieve big in Rotary, he said. “It is not enough to just give money, please also put in time and effort to participate in Rotary activities,” he advised.

Each club should take up at least one impactful project. “TRF is our window to the outside world,” said Pandya, requesting Rotarians to donate liberally to the Foundation.

When Barry Rassin as TRF chair visited the SRCC Children’s Hospital, Mumbai, to see paediatric heart surgery patients, “we saw their parents whose eyes were filled with anxiety and hope. Out of 4,500 paediatric heart surgeries done at this hospital over the last seven years, 4,200 of them were through TRF’s global grants,” Pandya said.

PRID AS Venkatesh, district mentor, advised the new DG thus: “Rotary is very addictive, hence don’t neglect your health which is your first priority. Also, don’t lose your composure if somebody does not match up to your expectations, for we are a voluntary body.” He recalled his long friendship with Saravanan who has “a good sense of humour, and is an effective planner with innovative ideas.”

100 bio-toilets

Following a lead from the district WASH team, RID 3234 clubs will be

“

It is not enough to just give money, please also put in time and effort to participate in Rotary activities.

Bharat Pandya

TRF Trustee

installing 100 bio-toilets at a cost of ₹2.3 crore at traffic signals and busy junctions across Chennai for the traffic personnel who work more than 10 hours a day in harsh conditions. ACP (traffic) R Sudhakar launched the pilot project and said he wanted Rotary to partner with the Greater Chennai Traffic Police in projects aimed to prevent road fatalities in the city.

The joy of being a Rotarian is amazing as “we are loved and welcomed by all,” said DG Saravanan, recalling the day in July 2000 when he was inducted into Rotary, thanks to a business customer Ramdas Iyer (past president). Over the years, the DG became a good friend of PDG J Sridhar, and climbed up the learning curve when JB Kamdar was governor.

The DG said one of his focus areas is “holding screening camps and awareness events to put the spotlight on cervical and breast cancer in women.” Stressing on the need to involve and engage every single Rotarian, Saravanan noted only 20 per cent of Rotarians contribute to TRF. “We are starting a piggy bank so that each Rotarian donates ₹30 a day, to make the total \$100 a year for TRF under the *Magic 30* initiative. Similarly, piggy boxes (*hundis*) will be put up at Interact schools to encourage students to save in multiples of ₹100 for the Polio Fund under *Magic 100*,” he said.

Saravanan called upon members to celebrate being in Rotary through fellowship and service. He was presented with Avenues of Service Award by RI on the occasion. PDGs Sridhar, Kamdar, DGE Vinod Saraogi and DGN Suresh Jain felicitated the DG. District counsellor PDG Abirami Ramanathan has committed to give an additional \$150,000 for TRF. Till now, he has given over \$570,000, and in the next 3–4 years, “my total contribution will touch \$1 million,” he said.

The DG and his wife Bharati are Major Donors, Level-2. There are 3,700 Rotarians across 102 clubs in RID 3234, and “I will add at least 500 new members to the existing clubs during my term,” he told *Rotary News*.



Pictures by V Muthukumaran



From L: PDG Rekha Shetty's spouse Jai Shetty, Premsekar (club president - 2023–24), PRIP K R Ravindran, Rekha and Jai Shetty's sons Adil and Arjun Shetty, with recipients of the PDG Rekha Shetty Memorial Award, Saraniya Periaswamy and Umamaheswari K.

An awards night in memory of PDG Rekha Shetty

Rasheeda Bhagat

The first death anniversary of its club member and past district governor (RID 3232) Rekha Shetty was commemorated by the Rotary Club of Madras Temple City through a fitting Awards Night. At this dignified and well-conducted event, the PDG Rekha Shetty Memorial Award was presented to two young women achievers — Umamaheswari K and Saraniya Periaswamy of Agnikul Cosmos, who were instrumental in helping the first private sector company in India to successfully launch a rocket.

Giving details of the club's background and this award, past president of the club and Awards chair Chandu Nair said, "this award has been constituted to recognise women who have shown commendable progress in their field so as to inspire more young women and girls." Incidentally, he added, this club, chartered in 1989, was the first club with a woman president (Rekha Shetty) outside North America and Canada, and one of the first in the world to open up membership for women. "Since then, it has

had several women presidents and continues to maintain a 50:50 ratio of men to women members,” he added.

President of RC Madras Temple City Premsekar announced that the For the Sake of Honour Award was being presented to the legal luminary Arvind P Datar, “who is a senior advocate, a noted jurist and author who has been a mentor to so many lawyers over the years.”

Both the awards were presented by past RI president K R Ravindran.

Recalling his long association and friendship with the late PDG Rekha Shetty, Ravindran described her as a “complete human being. Rekha was very special, she brought cheer into every room she entered, had an infectious smile and brought a smile on every face she greeted.”

They were in college in Chennai around the same time, even though he did not know her then. “I was in Loyola and she was in Stella Maris, where Vanathy (his wife) also studied around the same time. She had an illustrious educational background, got university

Rekha had contested along with me for the post of RI director; I won, not because I was better, but because I was luckier and also happened to be a man. At that particular time, it was difficult for a woman to win the directorship of Rotary.

K R Ravindran
Past RI President

ranks, and did a doctorate in business administration. But most important... she had practical knowledge of how a business works.”

Ravindran disclosed that he himself had invited her to come down to Colombo and speak to his company employees, “not on academic matters but very practical stuff. She has written many books which are lined up on my bookshelf.” He admitted that he hadn’t read all of them, but the one

book he had read and enjoyed was the one written by her husband Jai Shetty, also a member of the same club, titled *Laughing Gas*, and had teased Rekha on how she would turn the mirror in the car to “make up her face,” as stated in that book.

He added: “Rekha was competitive but caring, learned but child-like and helpful to the extreme.” Ravindran recalled that a short while before she passed away so suddenly, he had sought her help in getting some medical treatment from a competent neurologist and physiotherapist for the chairman of his company and chief of Dilmah tea, who was 93 years old. “I asked her if such experts could come to Sri Lanka and look at him. I spoke to her and forgot about it, but two days later she called and said that in two days the head of Neurology and head of Physiotherapy from Apollo Hospitals would come down. Just like that, she had fixed it.”

There was no talk of fee, etc; he organised the flights and later settled the fees; “one of them referred to her affectionately as ‘Rekha aunty’! Once I sent her as



For the sake of Honour recipient Arvind P Datar, Prema and Premsekar, PRIP Ravindran, Shobhana and PDG Ravi Raman, former cricketer Sudha Shah, DGN Suresh Jain and Jai Shetty with award recipients Nithruv Rajagopal, MR Balamurugan, Umamaheswari and Saraniya.



Nithruv's mother Sai Swapna, club member Dr Prithika Chary, Premsekar and DGN Jain with recipient of Guts and Grit Award Nithruv Rajagopal.

an RI President's Representative to Africa and till years later a senior leader there would ask me about her welfare."

Ravindran added that though they were friends; "we had our differences, make no mistakes about it. She had contested along with me for the post of RI director; I won, not because I was better, but because I was luckier and also happened to be a man and

RC Madras Temple City, chartered in 1989, was the first club with a woman president (Rekha Shetty) outside North America and Canada, and one of the first in the world to open up membership for women.

she was a woman, and in this set up at that particular time, it was difficult for a woman to win the directorship of Rotary. But we stayed friends for a long time. She was blessed to have a devoted spouse like Jai who was so supportive, and had no ego. This year would have been their 50th anniversary," he said, striking a poignant note.

A female leader, who encouraged other women, "a cherished friend, loyal wife and devoted mother, Rekha has left behind a legacy of love and devotion, which can inspire others to live with the same grace and excel," Ravindran added.

Addressing the meet RID 3232 DG Ravi Raman paid a tribute to Rekha Shetty and recalling their friendship, said that recently "when I was facing some issues, she was very supportive, encouraging me on how to go forward." He congratulated the club for choosing "an excellent group of people to honour."

Club president Premsekar said the awardees had been chosen in accordance with the club's tradition, from among

both the "upcoming and seasoned achievers in different walks of life. The Lifetime Achievement Award goes to Kamakshi Subramaniyan, a 96-year-old civic activist, who has been fighting for over 40 years to preserve the Besant Nagar neighbourhood and the beach in Chennai."

The Youth Merit Award was given to MR Balamurugan, currently ranked as India's No 1 in the under-17 category in table tennis.

The Guts and Grit Award, constituted by club member Dr Prithika Chary, was given to the paralympic swimming champion Nithruv Rajagopal, for his "fortitude in overcoming disabilities and becoming a national-level paralympic swimming champion." Nithruv was diagnosed with ADHD and DCD (Developmental Coordination Disorder) when he was only four.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat



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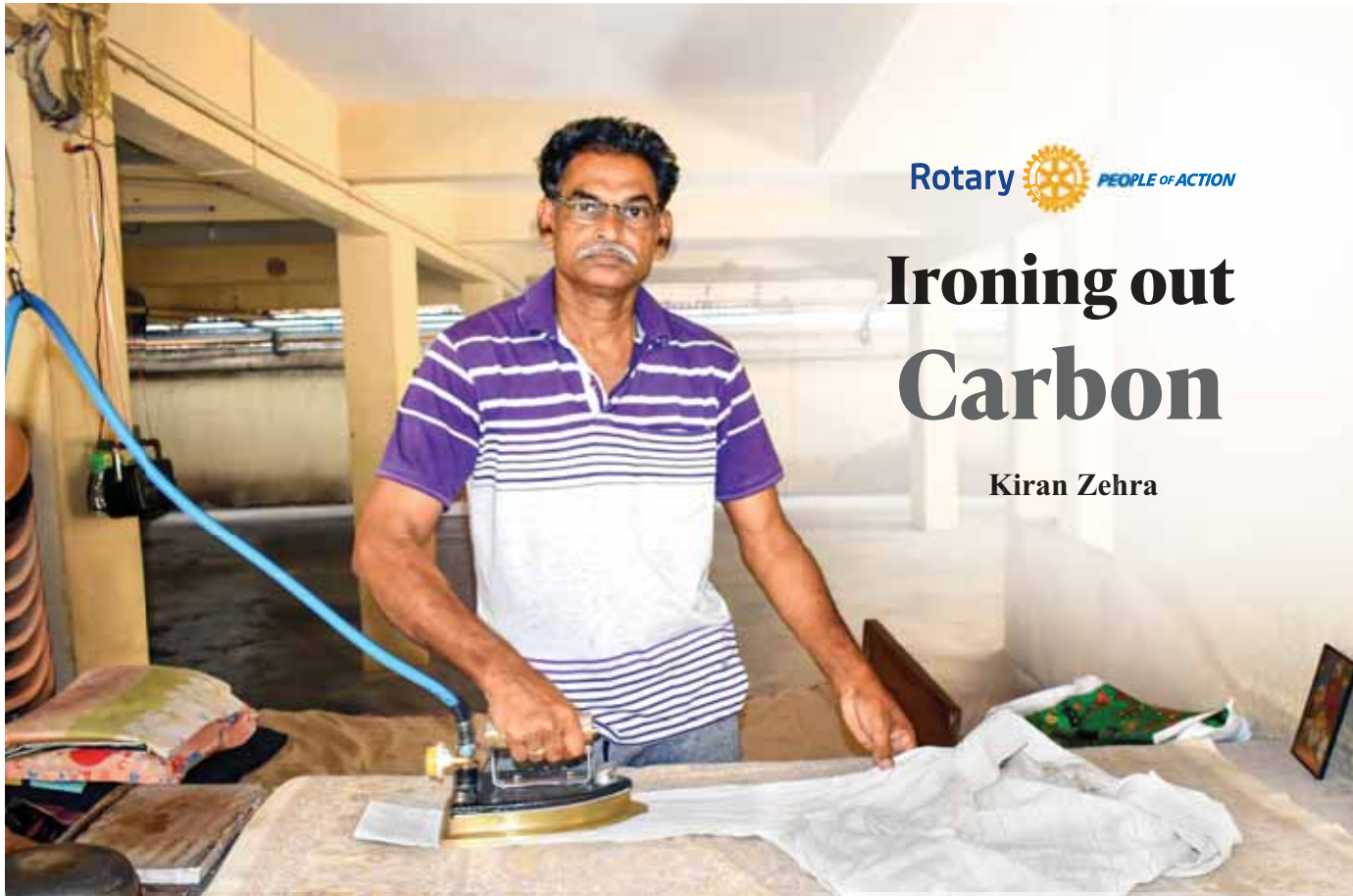
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Rotary  PEOPLE OF ACTION

Ironing out Carbon

Kiran Zehra

Narasimha first heard the term “carbon footprint” while watching a street play performed by students from the Interact Club of Samskar School. The play, part of an initiative by RC Hyderabad Legends, RID 3150, raised awareness about the benefits of LPG iron boxes over traditional coal irons.

Narasimha lives in a makeshift tent inside an apartment complex in Hyderabad. He irons clothes for the residents during the day and works as watchman at night. For years, he had been using a traditional coal iron box, which took one and a half hours to heat up. This meant he had to iron clothes in large batches without breaks, leading to late lunches and skipping dinner. “I spent ₹4,000 every month to buy charcoal and could barely make ends meet,” he says.

The street play explained that “a carbon footprint is the amount of pollution we

Below: DG Sharath Choudary (centre), along with project chair Mohana Vamsi (R), Chitra Chandrasekhar from RC Smart Hyderabad, and S Ravi and NK Gopinath (L), past presidents of RC Madras, RID 3234, hand over the gas iron boxes to beneficiaries.



make from using electricity excessively, driving cars and other vehicles, or burning coal. It showed how 5,000 iron *vyaparis* in Hyderabad burned 300 metric tonnes of coal monthly, leading to severe environmental impact and health problems. The play got me thinking about the time it takes to heat the coal and the smoke I inhale,” Narasimha recalls.

When he heard about RC Hyderabad Legends offering LPG iron boxes that originally cost ₹4,500 each for ₹2,500, he decided to make the switch. Led by charter president Mohana Vamsi, the initiative distributed 200 LPG iron boxes to ironers in Hyderabad, with 60 sponsored by RID 3234 (Chennai). RCs Hyderabad Global Wizards and Smart Hyderabad helped identify beneficiaries and find sponsors for the project.

“The LPG iron box heats up much faster, saving me time,” says Narasimha. This allows him to start work early and serve more customers, increasing his daily output from 20 clothes to 50. “This additional productivity resulted in extra earnings of ₹200–250 per day, totalling about ₹5,000 a month,” he smiles.



Sambamurthy Sivasubramaniam, president, RC Bangalore Brigades, along with Akshay Mallappa and Ashwani Kinger, giving a gas iron box to a woman.

The transition to LPG “eliminated coal smoke, reducing health risks, and allows me to eat meals on time and take breaks when I want to. It is also lighter compared to the traditional iron box.”

“Apart from the environmental benefit, the cost efficiency of LPG was significant. The fuel cost per cloth dropped from ₹1.35 to 55 paise with LPG, reducing the beneficiaries’ monthly fuel expense

to ₹1,650 and saving them ₹2,350 per month. We kept a tab on the earnings of the 200 iron *vyaparis* and were happy to see a 27 per cent rise in their monthly income,” says Vamsi.

Narasimha’s customers also noticed the improvement. “The LPG iron box has a temperature control knob, ensuring clothes do not overheat or get burned, a common issue with coal irons. The absence of coal sparks meant no more accidental holes in delicate fabrics. The quick heating feature of the LPG iron box allows me to handle last-minute emergency requests, making customers happy and earning their trust,” he says.

In a similar effort RC **Bangalore Brigades, RID 3192**, kicked off the new Rotary year with an identical initiative. They distributed two gas iron boxes to women who earn their livelihood as laundry ironers with roadside carts. This effort aims to ease their daily labour and reduce environmental impact by decreasing reliance on traditional charcoal irons. ■



Saying *dhanyavad* with saplings of gratitude

Rasheeda Bhagat



When the man in Indian Rotary who is always known for his *hatke* thinking, district governor nominee (RID 3192) Ravishankar Dakoju, who shook the Rotary world a few years ago by pledging to donate ₹100 crore to The Rotary Foundation, wanted to make a distinct contribution to the environment, he thought big. He told his close friend in Rotary, who shares his passion for greening the earth, Neil Joseph, co-trustee of the Rotary Environment Foundation, set up by Dakoju, where he himself, RI director-elect KP Nagesh and PDG Suresh Hari are fellow trustees, that he wanted to plant

1,00,000 trees through a project named *Dakoju Dhanyavad*. To be executed by the Paola and Ravishankar Dakoju Foundation, the objective of this project is to “thank Mother Nature for all her benevolence towards me,” he says.

But to plan and execute such a mega project, which will cost at least ₹1 crore, takes time, “but I didn’t want to miss the monsoon which was fast approaching. The places we had decided on were Goa and Sindhudurg, and almost in desperation both of us went to consult a man who I admire so much in Rotary, former president of RC Kudal Gajanan Kandelgaonkar. He is a man of

Above: RID 3192 DGN Ravishankar Dakoju and Neil Joseph at Sindhudurg in an endeavour to plant 1 lakh saplings through a project, *Dakoju Dhanyavad*.

Right: Members of RC Agra, RID 3110, on a greening drive in Agra.

few words, but a great organiser and in no time he had planned a wonderful project to plant 11,000 trees in the first phase in three places in Sindhudurg district, a part of the Western Ghats and where RC Kudal is located.”

On July 3, the first event, where fruit-bearing and other trees which will be useful to the local



community... such as kokum, cashewnut, mango, neem, jackfruit and coconut... were planted, was held at a school in Madgaon, and the second at another school in Pandur, both in Sindhudurg district. Here schoolchildren, teachers and the local people, along with PDG Gaurish Dhond, RC Kudal president Sanjay Kesare, Kandelgaonkar and past assistant governor Rajan Bhabate participated.

“The arrangements, done in such a short time by RC Kudal, were perfect and the atmosphere was festive with enthusiastic schoolchildren’s excited chatter filling the air,” recalls Dakoju. PDG Dhond complimented

RC Kudal's initiative and hard work. Dakoju adds, "At this event, I was very impressed to note the concern and worry expressed by people of all ages — from the schoolchildren to the elderly in the community — about the ill-effects of global warming, which we call 'Polio of the planet'. As a symbolic gesture, some kokum trees were planted at the Shivaji English School premises at Pandur and other saplings were distributed."

Next, the Rotarians moved to a totally rural setting in Kerawade, "which is an interior rural area with predominantly mud roads and lush greenery. This area is a part of the famed Sahyadri range of the Western Ghats, and the people who participated were poor and marginalised farmers. The simple, but piping hot, delicious meal that was prepared and served to us will be remembered by all of us for a long time."

The objective of this project is to thank Mother Nature for all her benevolence towards me.

Ravishankar Dakoju

DGN, RID 3192

On July 19, once again 5,000 more trees were planted in this region, as part of the project and on July 28, an additional 25,000 trees will be planted. This time, the tree planting will coincide with the 'Goa Rain Run,' organised by RC Goa Porvorim.

Dakoju says he hopes that this mega tree-planting initiative to green Mother Earth will have a spin-off effect and many other Rotary clubs will take up this project in a big way. "I am happy to say that recently, when along with RI director Raju Subramanian, I attended the installation of RID 3170 DG Sharad Pai, the president of RC Belgaum, Suhas Chandak (owner of Vega Helmets) took an oath to plant one lakh trees during his tenure as club president. Incidentally, he is also becoming an AKS member."

RC Agra plants 150 saplings

In another initiative, RC Agra, RID 3110, kicked off its annual monsoon plantation drive by planting 150 saplings of neem, guava, jamun, champa and gulmohar trees. Reiterating the club's commitment to community service and environmental conservation, club president Namrata Panicker said this plantation programme was a significant step towards its work for a greener Agra, and ultimately a greener planet. ■



Project vignettes

Team Rotary News

Toilet block for girls

RC Madurai Sangamam, RID 3000, inaugurated a girls' toilet block worth ₹5.5 lakh at the Government HS School, Avaniyapuram. The project, funded by both a global grant and a CSR grant from Nataraj Oil Mills, was inaugurated by Tamilnadu Education Minister Mahesh Poyyamozhi and RIDE M Muruganandam through a video link.

A cataract surgery camp

Twelve people were treated for cataract, following a diagnosis at a



Toilet block
Rotarians and students outside the newly inaugurated toilet block.

Cataract surgery

Beneficiaries after the cataract surgery.



Hearing aid

Club members handing over a hearing aid to a beneficiary child.

cataract screening camp organised by RC Bisauli, RID 3110. Medicines, along with instructions on post-surgery care, were provided to them. The club organised lunch for the patients and their caregivers.

Hearing aids donated

RC Pune Kothrud, RID 3131, provided state-of-the-art hearing aids to 35 children at the CR Ranganathan School for the Deaf and YMCA School for the Deaf. The project, costing ₹25 lakh, was funded by Elkay Chemicals (₹18.64 lakh), Intracloud Technologies (₹5.2 lakh) and a district grant (₹1.25 lakh).

Cancer detection

A woman being screened inside the cancer detection van.



Cancer detection van donated

RC Hubli, RID 3170, under a global grant, donated the Rotary Arogya Vahini, a medical testing and cancer detection van, to the Karnataka Cancer Therapy and Research Institute, Hubli. ■

Shops on Wheels

Jaishree

The ‘tricycle shop’ project of RC Poona Downtown is empowering the disabled with economic independence and self-esteem.



In Aurangabad, Nanda Hiware’s days are now filled with hope and promise. A physically-challenged mother of two, she brings home ₹300–400 daily, thanks to her ‘tricycle shop’ — a lifeline provided by RC Poona Downtown, RID 3131. Three years ago, an accident cost Nanda a limb, and since then, she relied on crutches for mobility. Her husband, a construction worker, has been the family’s primary breadwinner.

“The club has given me a tricycle with hand-operated pedals as I cannot use my feet. Every morning I start by 10 after completing the

daily chores at home, ride through the neighbourhood and park my shop near apartment complexes. There is a good demand for bangles, bracelets, and other artificial jewellery among women and children,” she smiles.

The tricycle shop project of the club has transformed the lives of 34 people with physical disabilities last year. Each shop includes a shelf for displaying merchandise, a cash box and a rain cover. “We customise the tricycles to meet the specific needs of the recipients, offering either hand or foot-operated pedals based on their disability,” explains Shikha Mitra, past secretary of the club. The cost of a tricycle shop is about ₹35,000.

A physically-challenged youngster selling tea and snacks from his tricycle shop.

The initiative draws inspiration from the club's flagship project — 'Gift of Mobility' — which over the past 20 years has provided prosthetic arms to more than 10,000 people across the country. "We, with the support of the Inali Foundation and Ellen Meadows Foundation, work with Rotary clubs to provide LN-4 arms and train beneficiaries in their use. It gives us so much joy to see people drive bikes, farmers engaging in farm activities and children doing their homework using their prosthetic arms. This success inspired us to help people with disabilities achieve self-employment, enhancing their self-esteem and sense of worth," says Aruna Rathi, club president (2023–24).

The tricycle shops are versatile; some sell snacks, mobile phone accessories or stationery. Rajiv, another beneficiary, is vending coffee, tea and biscuits from his tricycle shop, strategically parking it near offices and construction sites. Aasha Aaglawe, paralysed waist down, sells readymade garments from her tricycle shop, earning a decent income.



Past president Yezdi Batliwala and his wife Pooroochi sponsor a tricycle shop to Gitanjali Salunkhe in memory of their daughter Sharmin.

The club provides initial funding to help these entrepreneurs launch their business. Nine tricycle shops were given to RC Satara, RID 3132, to support the physically-challenged in and around the Maharashtra district.

Considering the economic and psychic transformation it brings in the recipients, the project is attracting a good number of corporate sponsorships, she says. In June, spice manufacturers Pravin Masalewale has sponsored 91

tricycle shops in memory of its founder Hukamichand Chordia "who began his door-to-door business on a bicycle." Fifteen of these tricycle shops have already been distributed, with more beneficiaries being identified.

Club president Nanu Iyer is enthusiastic about continuing this impactful project this year, ensuring that many more lives will be transformed through the power of mobility and entrepreneurship. ■

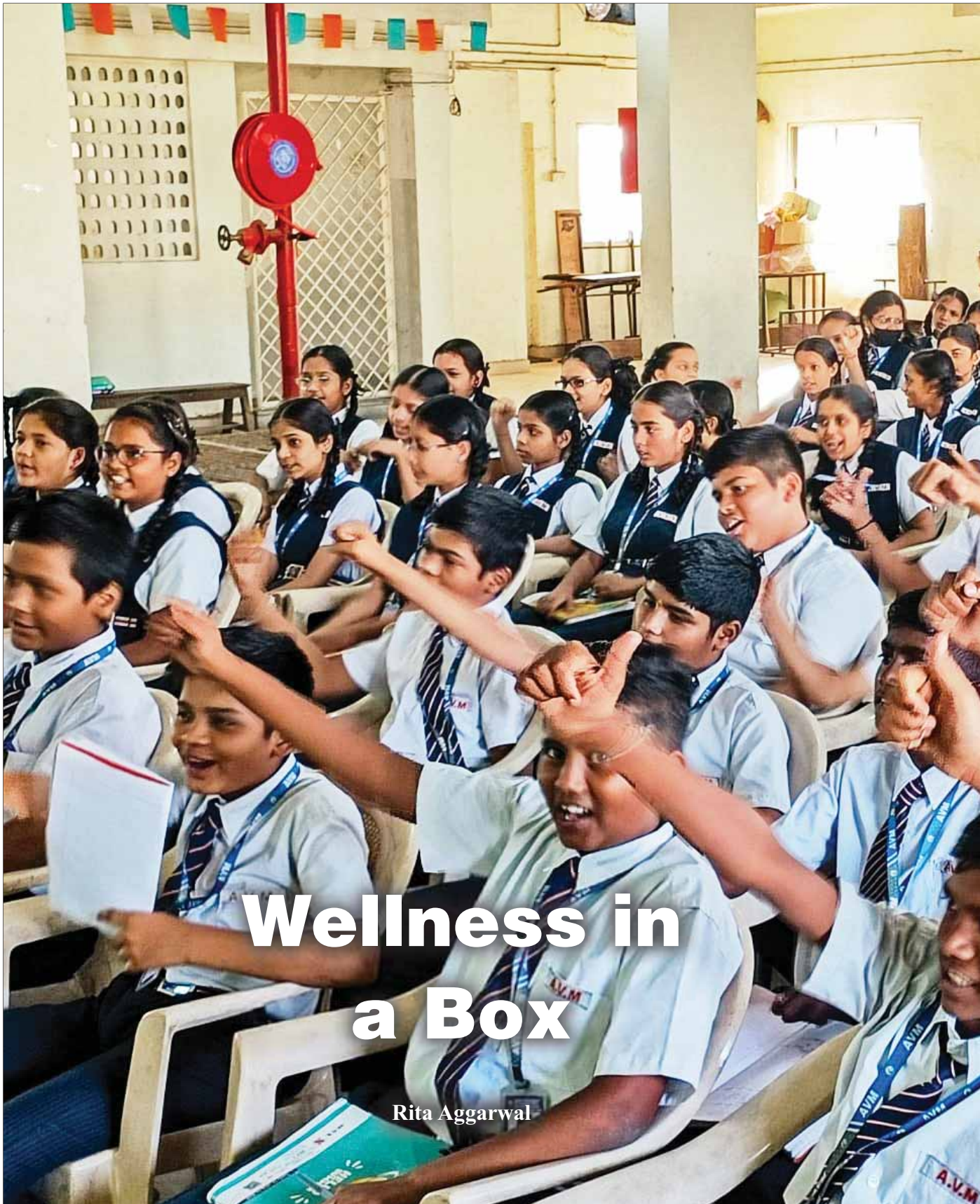
Boosting patient care with new infrastructure

Team Rotary News



Rotary Club of Coimbatore Texcity, RID 3201, provided the Spine Academy in the city with a new block and equipped it with 20 beds and wheelchairs. The project, costing ₹30 lakh, received generous sponsorship from club members and founders of The Eye Foundation Dr Chitra and Dr Ramamurthy. The club's Anns wing led by Ann Pavithra Aravind provided the motorised beds. Aravind Kumaran was the project chairman. The additions will help the Academy extend its care to 25 more people from the present 50 people bedridden with spine disorders and abandoned by families. ■

IPDG TR Vijayakumar (centre), club president (2023–24) Vijayakumar Sivanesan and secretary Devi Maruti with club members and volunteers of the Spine Academy.



Wellness in a Box

Rita Aggarwal



silent crisis affecting young people — a rise in anxiety, depression, and even suicide. It is a national reality and as a mental health professional for 35 years, I've

been seeing the warning signs. There was a 20 per cent increase in anxiety and depression during the Covid pandemic. Deaths by suicide were also going up, especially among high school students. Due to the stigma surrounding mental health, awareness about it was low. Young people suffered in silence and took recourse to the last option. In India, where over 50 per cent of the population is below 25 years of age and one-third is under the age of 18, this is a critical issue.

A community assessment found that most schools did not employ a school counsellor/psychologist and were not even contemplating doing so. Teachers and doctors in the community felt the need to tackle the growing depression, anxiety and stress among teenagers.

Wellness in a Box is a well-structured programme of the Rotary Action Group for Mental Health Initiatives (RAGMHI). It uses a curriculum developed by Boston Children's Hospital in Harvard Medical School that shows parents, teachers and students how to prevent depression, anxiety and suicide. It not only raises awareness but also helps build coping strategies and resilience among students and breaks the stigma by initiating conversations.

Rotary Club of Nagpur, RID 3030, launched this programme, partnering with RC Naples, Florida, USA on a global grant in 2022, when schools reopened after the pandemic lockdown.

A team of Rotarians from the club volunteered their full support and services for the two-year-long projects, with Namita Sharma coordinating the programme along with club members Neerja Shukul, Ragini Sahu, and Anns Mamta Kahai, Shefali Shah and Madhu Mrig.



Students attending a session on mental wellness.

The project also curated a year-long part-time diploma in school counselling with the help of a college in social work. So far, 20 teachers of the schools have earned the diploma. By building teachers' competencies in school counselling, we hope to make the transition from the psychologist

provided by the GG to teachers taking over the counselling services.

RI President Gordon McNally visited Nagpur in April 2023 and was very impressed by the programme.

A second step was creating peer leaders among school students to identify and help those in distress. They would assist

the students in need by referring them to the counselling psychologist.

To date, 2,300 students and 2,000 parents and teachers have participated in the training programme and many have been helped with counselling and therapy.

An NGO, Yashodhara Bahu Updeshiye Sanstha, helped us in measuring the outcomes with a pre- and post-survey of students and teachers and we saw the graph going up on the scale for knowledge about depression, confidence in seeking help from the counsellor, and a scale down in negative attitudes toward depression.

The response has been heartwarming. We have parents and students wiping their tears, crying openly, and sharing their secrets, perhaps for the first time in their lives. Teachers realised that they need to know more about children's mental health and that teaching subject matter is not enough. It's a humbling experience for them. Students realise that mental health is more important than grades!

The impact is seen in the entire city, with many schools approaching us for this programme, and more teachers enrolling and sponsoring



PRIP Gordon McNally with Rita Agarwal, founder director, RAG for Mental Health Initiatives, during his visit to Nagpur. PDG Asha Venugopal is seen at the centre.

themselves for the diploma certification. The certified teachers conducted full-day seminars with 400 school principals, headmasters, headmistresses and senior teachers on the importance of counselling in schools, mental health problems in students, and the role of teachers.

Many other Rotary clubs and district chapters of the RAG for on Mental Health Initiatives have begun implementing the *Wellness in a Box* programme.

We had good press coverage in the local media and would be happy if the four-hour curriculum on the



A session on mental health for teachers.

prevention of depression continues to be taught each year to students and parents by the certified teacher-counsellors. Our dream is to get the State Department of Education to institutionalise this programme in all schools: it would be the best long-term impact we could dream of.

The RAGMHI has made the “Wellness in a Box” toolkit freely available online. This equips you with everything you need to implement the programme in your local schools. You can also connect with the Rotary Action Group to learn more about the programme (www.ragonmentalhealth.org).

I urge you to spread awareness and share the *Wellness in a Box* initiative with your network, and contact your local Rotary/Rotaract club to bring it to your community. Together, we can create a world where mental health is a priority, not a silent threat.

The project got international recognition when project director Rita Aggarwal received the Rotary People of Action Award at the RI Convention in Singapore.

The writer is a member of RC Nagpur, and Founder Director of the Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives.

The delights of Indore street food

Text: Team UpperCrust
Photographs: Farzana Contractor

Kulhad pizza



Beyond what the name suggests, you have more than 56 food shops neatly lined up on both sides of the street. The array of food is mind-boggling and the people never tire.

When you think of food streets, you think of busy and crowded lanes, with calls from servers beckoning you to their stalls, steam wafting off pans and aromas that draw you in. You think them as not very organised, clean or relaxed. With this one in the upscale New Palasia area of Indore, most of these notions are dispelled and you have a well-planned food scheme with something for every foodie, all vegetarian, affordable and in keeping

with food safety and hygiene standards. *Chappan Dukan* is a certified Clean Street Food Hub which even won Indore an award in the Built Environment category at the Smart Cities Conference held in 2022.

It started off with 56 stores, back in the 1970s, with space designated to mobile vendors with just about enough space for a handcart. This allowed the sale of vegetables, and more, over some time. Its popularity grew, and by the '80s and '90s, the street began



to settle into its moniker, *Chappan Dukan*, translated as ‘56 shops’.

But where does the food come in, you might well ask. By 2020, the Indore Smart City Development Limited (ISCDL) redeveloped the area into an open-air smart food street with only food stalls — with wide space in between to walk, or sit and eat or take selfies as today’s youth are hard-pressed to — and a no-vehicle policy. You have areas around the street to park and you will find loads of bikes just before you begin your journey into the wonderful world of 56+ food stalls. That’s right, *Chappan* is more than 56 now, as food is a major success point in a city like Indore, leaving room for this *khau galli* to grow and entertain more hungry souls, from 6am in the morning till 10pm at night.

We made two trips to *Chappan Dukan* — in the morning, before the multitude swarmed in and in the evening, when it was a sea of foodies — though less than on the weekend, when seating space would be insufficient! The scene that unfolded for us in the morning was such a pleasant one, with a group of youngsters playing the guitar, singing

and dancing at Chai Sutta Bar, as we entered Chappan. This chain of polished *tapris* is spread across the country, from north to south and east to west, with one even in Port Blair and another in the UAE. It’s a success story to take note of, much like the development of Chappan Dukan. Where else would you find a food street with handwash stations, garbage bins spread out, and every food item Indore is famous for, or not so, under one roof?

And a local live radio station known as *Radio 2 PIR Chappan*, exclusively for visitors with options to listen to a song of their choice, dedicate a song to someone and get updates on Chappan Dukan through public announcements.

And then you have the grub at Chappan! What an array, a vast spread with everything from hot dogs to kachoris, dosas to vadas, rabdi jalebi to kulfi, barfi to halwa, pizza to sandwiches, sugarcane juice to golas, dried berries to paan, chaat and the famed *Indori poha*; and *shikanji* like you would never have expected !

Meandering through the myriad stalls, it is safe to say, will take you a



Matka kulfi
and poha



while but is worth every bite, especially if you're writing a food story or creating a blog. It is easier to navigate at relative leisure in comparison to Sarafa Bazaar and Meghdoot Gardens, not to say it does not get packed with foodies feasting on what they fancy. And most stalls do not have seating within their compact spaces.

For us, the journey had to begin with the poha whose reputation precedes it, all over the country. Vijay Chaat House is undoubtedly a crowd-puller for this, and more. This is how you should eat it... Take a spoonful of poha with a dash of lime and bite off a piece of crispy, juicy jalebi, and let the flavours burst on your palate. It's a revelation much like Remy's in *Ratatouille*, when the chef mouse bites into strawberry and cheese at the same time. There's a special *jeeravan* masala that goes into the poha here, and we must tell you, poha in Indore is soft and done just right, with *anardana* in some places and sev at most, giving it the credit it deserves and has earned. Khopra pattice is another one-of-a-kind in Indore, and delicious — another speciality at Vijay, along with *sabudana vada*.



Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra being bordering states bring a lot of similarities to the table, which you will find scattered across Indore's food space, but done in their own inimitable styles. The hot dog at the renowned, award-winning Johny Hot Dog, likened itself to vada pav in our mind, but the buck stops there. Johny has earned much fame for itself, for serving up the most ordered street

food item in Asia-Pacific, declared so by Uber Eats at its summit held in Hong Kong in 2019. Ok, so his name is Vijay Singh Rathore, fondly known as Dadu at Chappan, and the famed hot dog is a vegetarian delight of thick, soft, fluffy bread with a potato tikki inside. The other two items on the menu are a mutton hot dog and a runny egg sandwich known as *benjo* — the only non-veg foods



Clockwise from above: Berries; Shyam Sharma, owner, Madhuram Sweets; Dryfruit roll; Malai and mango kulfi; Mango cups; Indori poha and jalebi; Khopra kachori; Badam roll.

at Chappan. Non-processed, non-fried and scrumptious, the 45-year-old establishment continues to rage on, with Dadu smilingly behind the stove.

A third shop at Chappan that caught our fancy was a sweet and namkeen store which had a specialty served to you in a shot glass, priced at ₹100. The owner of Madhuram Sweets, Shyam Sharma, was more than happy to keep feeding us his famed *shikanji* and watch us grow in girth and mirth. Much like *rabdi*, the *shikanji* is a heavy-ish drink that works to cool the system in the sweltering heat and is basically dessert made of milk, dry fruits, saffron and nutmeg. The *rasmalai*, we discovered, is made with sugarcane and the names of the jalebis can go beyond the basics! ‘Eat one or two pieces a day,’ Shyam Sharma advises us, for a long and healthy life!

The assortment of sweets at Madhuram is vast, some of which include the badam caramel, dryfruit roll, badam halwa, sohan halwa... as

also the namkeens and snack items like poha, dosa and chaat. What is famous here, as well, is the humongous Baahubali Sandwich, which we had no space to try! It is made for a party of 35, FYI, assembled to look like a palace straight out of the SS Rajamouli epic, with three layers, loaded with veggies, topped with corn, mayo, cheese and what not.

When you’re in the mood for South Indian, there are options like the 50-year-old Café Udipi with its variety of dosas. Spiral potato skins is a visually appealing treat that’s equally munch-worthy, and dried berries, starfruit and tamarind bring back such fond childhood memories.

A fan of paan, especially after the taste of all those snacks and namkeen? There is a selection that ranges from the Calcutta Meetha to the Royal Maghai and the unusual Smoke Paan and Fire Paan. Freshly squeezed *ganna* (sugarcane) juice is delicious — can fill you up in its wholesome quantity, though — and kulfi is smooth and creamy, best in its original malai flavour, which we lapped up at Mahu, on the top level of this food street. They are also well-known for their pav bhaji, with a generous dollop of butter, to goad you on through your *khau* time at Chappan.

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Mapping Goa's biodiversity

V Muthukumaran

Once a pristine oasis of greenery, scenic waterfalls and exquisite, bluish coral beaches, “Goa is being swamped by unbridled tourism which is badly affecting our ecosystem, and so we thought of a unique project that will create awareness among the public and visitors about our diverse flora and

fauna, and the dire need to save them from extinction,” said Brett Sequeira, past president, Rotaract Club of Panjim, RID 3170.

A brainchild of Rtr Rohitesh Sutar, *Project Regenerative Tourism* was aimed to promote eco-friendly and sustainable tourism in Goa's hinterland. “We see tourists litter around the place with liquor bottles, cigarette butts, plastic warts and

tetra packs which affects our environment. While efforts are on to protect our beaches, not much is being done to protect our soil and air in the interior villages of Goa bearing the brunt of crass tourism,” he said.

A team of Rotaractors met Goa Tourism director Suneel Anchipaka and its deputy GM Deepak Narvekar to brief them about their plan to go on a nature trail from Tamdi Surla, a scenic hamlet 50km east of Panaji and perched on the Western Ghats. With the aim to document the flora and fauna in the dense forest on the ridges which nestles several tribal hamlets, a group of 20 trekkers consisting of 13 Rotaractors, six photographers and a mapping specialist went on a long and exciting, but arduous journey by walk so “that we could literally feel and enjoy the wide biodiversity of this ecosystem,” recalled Sequeira. “We trekked on steep hills, waded through streams and engaged at least three tribal communities who depend on virgin forests for their living.”

After completing their one-day field mapping work on the mountains, that ended at the cave

While efforts are on to protect our beaches, not much is being done to protect our soil and air in the interior villages of Goa bearing the brunt of crass tourism.

Brett Sequeira
past president
Rotaract Club of Panjim





RAC Panjim past president Brett Sequeira, along with Rotaractors, during the nature trail on the Western Ghats.

temple in Khandepar village on the banks of Mandovi river in the middle of thick forest, “we returned to Panaji and ran a social media campaign through Instagram from June 5, World Environment Day, through which we reached to over 30,000 people and explained to them about our mapping survey to protect our biodiversity. We also wrote to UNEP about our work to preserve the ecosystem and got the certificate of appreciation from the UN body.”

Left: Rotaractors spotting a rare flora during forest trek.

Right: Rotaractors and specialists at the Cave Temple, Khandepar.

More than 100 Rotaractors from South East Asia attended a training session on community assessment and project planning hosted by the club in partnership with RSAMDIO. “We had ESRAG directors Meenakshi Venkataraman, Christopher Puttock from the US and its secretary Denize Vural from Turkey interacting with the participants, in a half-day Zoom session. They educated us on how to identify a community project, set goals and achieve them,” said Sequeira.

New Interact club

An Interact club was chartered at the Fairyland High School, Velha, an institute with a mix of normal children and those with learning disabilities. Called the Interact Club of Infinity, “we are holding one-on-one workshops,

RYLAs, special trainings and group sessions with the students.” With 62 members from the community made up of college students, doctors, engineers and businessmen, the Panjim club is one of the oldest and prestigious Rotaract clubs in Goa. “Though the club was formed in 1971, we lost our charter after some years, but restarted it in November 1998. Quite a few Rotarians in Goa were Rotaractors from our club,” explained Sequeira (23), who takes care of his family’s real estate business.

The Rotaract club partners with the organisers of the Purple Fest, an annual six-day event for people with disabilities, in Goa. “We helped organise a blind car rally this year where visually-impaired participants guide sighted drivers through the route assigned to them with the help of an instruction sheet in Braille.”

Shortly, the club will be chartering a new satellite Rotary club where “our senior Rotaractors and others will find a right place to carry on their journey in community service, along with fellowship,” he smiles. ■



Pedal Power

Kiran Zehra

On a Sunday morning, three students — Vedant and Mayank Desale, and Chinmay Ratnakar — from the Zilla Parishad School in Sogay village near Mumbai, made their way through the empty playground and

silent classrooms to a room filled with bicycle parts. They joined two workers, Suleman and Anis, to assemble 60 new bicycles. Known for their interest in mechanics, the three quickly learned the job. “I couldn’t believe we did it! These cycles were ready for

our friends, and we could not wait to see their reaction,” says Vedant.

In April 2024, members of RC Thane Hills, RID 3141, visited this school to understand the students’ needs. They learned that many students from economically weaker families travelled long distances, making regular attendance difficult. “When asked what they needed most, the students unanimously requested bicycles,” recalls club president Govind Khetan. The club has adopted this village and has built toilet blocks, conducted medical camps, and recently refurbished the primary school and anganwadi there.

A student with his new bicycle gifted to him by RC Thane Hills.





Students Vedant and Mayank Dasale, and Chinmay Ratnakar, assembling the bicycles.

Initially, the club considered repairing old bicycles but soon realised the logistical challenges involved. “Instead, we decided to raise funds and purchase new ones. Under *Project Udaan*, we collected ₹2.5 lakh and bought new bicycles. The cycle parts were delivered from Ludhiana but needed to be assembled before the bikes could be distributed,” says Khetan.

The task of assembling the bicycles was given to Suleman and Anis. “The three students eagerly joined the workers and helped assemble the cycles over the weekend. Their involvement not only sped up the process but also gave them hands-on experience and joy in doing what they loved most,” says Khetan.

By the month-end, 57 students received their new bicycles. “Their faces lit up with joy as they received their cycles. They embraced Vedant, Chinmay and Mayank, calling them ‘engineers!’ It was such a wonderful sight,” recalls Khetan.

Fighting cervical cancer

Through *Project EmpowHer — Because She Matters*, conceptualised by club secretary Dr Anagha Karkhanis and club president Khetan, the club aims to prevent cervical cancer through HPV vaccination for girls

aged 9–14, aligning with the WHO’s goal of vaccinating 90 per cent of girls by age 15. “This project is about empowering young girls with the knowledge and tools to safeguard their health,” says Anagha.

PRID Ashok Mahajan helped the club get ₹1.7 crore from the Aditya Birla group. The funds were used to procure the HPV vaccine, conduct awareness sessions, organise vaccination camps and perform medical screenings. Collaborating with local healthcare authorities, schools and community leaders, the club identified beneficiaries and conducted outreach programmes to

raise awareness about cervical cancer and vaccination benefits.

The vaccine was administered with parental consent to 5,800 girls. Certificates were given to beneficiaries, and records were kept for follow-up doses. ■



A doctor administers cervical cancer vaccination as 2023–24 club secretary Dr Anagha Karkhanis, PRID Ashok Mahajan and club president Govind Khetan look on.

club matters

RID 2981



RID 3020



RID 3000



RID 3012

RC Nagapattinam – RID 2981

A vocational centre was upgraded (₹6 lakh) and inaugurated in the presence of PDG N Govindaraj and then DGE S Baskaran.

RC Trichy Diamond City Queens – RID 3000

Project 365 Days Tree Festival was held at the National College, Trichy, with DGN R Subramani giving a talk. Rotarians, Rotaractors and students planted saplings.



RID 3011

RC Delhi Safdarjung – RID 3011

Umbrellas were donated to street vendors in the national capital region to shield them from summer sun. The beneficiaries thanked the club for the gesture.

RC Delhi Mayur Vihar – RID 3012

Over 55 units of blood was collected at a blood donation camp at the Northern India Regional Council of ICAI to mark 75th year of Chartered Accountant Day.

RC Visakhapatnam – RID 3020

Scholarships were given to meritorious students at governments schools, thanks to K S Gupta Memorial Trust, at the installation of club president Vinay Gandhi.

club matters



RID 3056



RID 3120



RID 3060



RID 3100

RC Jaipur Gurukul— RID 3056

Water bowls and micro storage tanks were donated to families in Sanganer area for providing water to street animals and pets during summer.

RC Surat Tapi — RID 3060

A tailoring centre with 10 machines, sponsored by Meenaben Upadhyay, was inaugurated with the support of Lajpore Muslim Welfare Trust, UK.



RID 3090

RC Patiala Mid Town — RID 3090

Sewing machines (₹55,000) were distributed to 17 girls after they completed their training at the Rotary Bhawan, thanks to support from Rajiv Goyal.

RC Moradabad Bright — RID 3100

DG Deepa Khanna was the chief guest at a medical camp at Daswa Ghat in which over 300 patients were diagnosed. Sanitary pads were distributed to women.

RC Kushinagar — RID 3120

Around 600 patients were examined at a health camp at Nirankari Inter College, Kasia, held jointly with Synergy Specialty Hospital and Cancer Care Hospital.



Wordsworld

Can writers be apolitical?



Sandhya Rao

Tamil writer Imayam's rhetorical question informs his stories that scratch our minds where it doesn't itch.

It's been a season of elections all round — with interesting results — in India, the UK, France, and Iran, for instance, and the season is upcoming in the US. It was serendipitous that I had occasion to read the Tamil writer Imayam, translated by Prabha Sridevan. While the latter is a former judge of the Madras High Court, Imayam is known for incisive writing that is inspired by the socio-political environment. In fact, he says, literary texts cannot escape their political reality, and this premise underlines *Vazhga Vazhga*, a compilation of one novella and two short stories.

The title means 'long live, long live,' and in itself points to a likely political scenario, which is exactly what the novella is about. Venkatesa Perumal, a party worker, is tasked

with rounding up crowds for a political rally to be addressed by the party leader, whose posters are displayed everywhere. As one individual says to Perumal, 'You put up posters and cut-outs depicting her as Kanchi Kamakshi, Madurai Meenakshi, Samayapuram Mariamman, Velankanni Matha and even Mother Tamil, *thamizhthai*. Isn't it too much?' It is this 'too much' of politics, in this case, Dravidian politics, that features in the novella that makes no effort to camouflage either its references or its intention. This, along with a narrative that carries the reader along almost in real time, gives the story a distinctive Tamil flavour that is effective and affecting. 'Your *thalaivi*, your leader, she treats everyone in her party worse than a dog. How can you be in that party?' someone asks.

Perumal knows he is being deliberately provoked, so he responds, 'Even if she treated them like that, she gives them posts like MLA, MP and minister.' Quid pro quo?!

No matter how popular a leader, it's an open secret that much of the crowds at political rallies, especially during elections, are forcibly transported

to rally venues through the exercise of 'bribery and corruption' as some old-timers are wont to say. Meaning, for a few rupees with packed lunch of a mixed rice and a bottle of water thrown in. Sometimes, if they are very fortunate, non-veg too. *Vazhga Vazhga* looks at the story of a political rally from the point of view of the patient denizens who wait and wait and wait in unforgiving weather for the arrival of the leader, who often is not even *their* leader. Imayam describes the scenes vividly. For instance, 'Every woman there, without exception, was fanning

herself with either the cap or her sari. Being in the crowd made them all feel the heat more, but there was nowhere they could go from the crowd or stand for shade. To accommodate the crowd, all the trees in the 400–500 acres of land expanse had been cut. There was not a tree, plant or creeper as far as the eye could see. All that could be seen were the party flags, festoons, cut-outs and digital banners.' Perfect.

While we are aware of how long the wait could be, it is possible we don't know or have not thought about what the wait entails. Imayam tells us, in great and exacting detail. The sun is burning down on them, they are thirsty,



they need to relieve themselves, they have concerns at home... How Imayam pulls off a story that seems not to move while it actually ploughs relentlessly forward is a tribute to his gift of storytelling.

The two short stories in this collection are completely different from the novella and from each other. 'Tiruneeru Sami' pits against each other a woman from North India married to a South Indian in what appears to be a classic cliché. But it is not. Again, it is the keen observance of life and relationships by the author that transforms the story from the obvious to make it resonate. It exemplifies the local-global binary at a personal level while at the same time positing universal truths. The narrative style, too, is subtly different from the novella in that the telling is more smooth, almost seamless. What is the couple locking horns about? Where to get the tonsure ceremony of their two small children done. Annamalai wants to get it done at his family's place of worship dedicated to a saint, Tiruneeru Sami, in Tamil Nadu. Wife Varsha strenuously objects to this. Imayam chooses not to provide a resolution to this 'dilemma'; he offers a study in which, once again, we can find ourselves reflected.

At one point in the story, Varsha's brother Alok enters the fray. He sits down to listen to what Annamalai has to say and appears to be getting convinced gradually. When he tries to advocate for his brother-in-law, Varsha responds that it is 'A story without a head or tail.'

'I really believe Annamalai will not lie to us,' Alok says. To which Varsha replies, 'He will not tell lies, but he will tell us stories.' Not lies but stories! The sentence lands like a punch in the solar plexus. Think about it: this column, this magazine, we human beings... It is all about stories, we are all about stories, our lives are stories. Anything we might say to each other could

be seen as stories, anecdotes, short stories, novellas, novels, epics...

The other story is completely different. It's a mythological tale, 'Samban, Son of Krishna — An Untold Tale'. I did not know this story prior to reading Imayam, and am in no position to comment on perspective, let alone details. Imayam's version speaks of Samban, Krishna's son by Jambavati, who is cursed by the sage Durvasa for having been rude to him. Samban loses the pleasure-filled life of an indolent



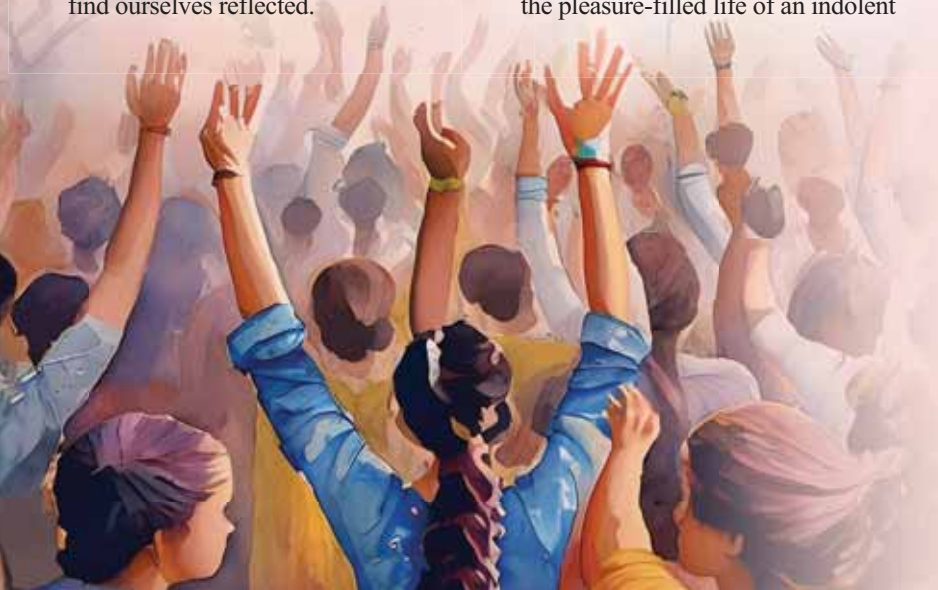
Tamil writer Imayam

prince and has to leave the palace. He goes through trials and tribulations, has encounters, and eventually is afflicted with leprosy. He is cured, and helps cure others, by worshipping the sun. Imayam narrates how he deals with his curse and what he learns along the way, about himself and his life. With great profundity, he tells Narada, '...I realized that this life is as transient as a lamp in a hurricane. Human life is the smallest of trifles. I had a father and a mother. I had elephants, armies, troops, palaces and boundless wealth. But when I came here, I came alone, the solitary me. The disease alone accompanied me.' Yet, despite the heavily loaded cast of characters comprising Narada, Durvasa, Krishna, Suryadeva, the story is replete with socio-political messages, in keeping with Imayam's belief that writers can never be apolitical.

And in the Indian context, if politics comes, can religion be far behind? The short stories showcase in their own way the place of ritual, faith, belief and the relationship between religion and science in our minds. Was this deliberate? Or is it intrinsic? That's for the reader to decide. For now, I have launched into another collection of short stories, this time by well-known writers in Hindi, translated by the well-established Jai Ratan. What kind of experiences will these stories offer? What kind of worlds will these stories showcase?

A word about the translation of *Vazhga Vazhga* would be relevant here: while the short stories work well, the novella occasionally seems to sound literal, sometimes forced. But on the whole, it evokes the Tamil world without pretensions, and that's a feat alright. The stage is set to engage with the 'Hindi' worldview.

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist



Meet your



Deepa Khanna

Education

RC Moradabad Bright, RID 3100

From an Ann to district leader

Deepa Khanna began her Rotary journey as a Rotary Ann, helping with the polio National Immunisation Days (NIDs) in Moradabad. She joined her husband in convincing mothers to bring their children for polio drops. “Only Rotary has the skill to convince people in these vaccine-resistant places. I was truly impressed by Rotary’s power,” she says.

Encouraged by her husband, Anil Khanna, Deepa joined Rotary and took on higher roles in the district. As DG she has set a Foundation-giving goal of \$1.5 million and introduced the ‘Sunshine Box’ for each club “to encourage non-giving members to donate at least \$1 per meeting.”

To address the issue of members leaving at the end of the Rotary year, Deepa has asked clubs to make meetings more interactive and understand members’ interests. She has also made it mandatory for new members to attend the district conference this year.

Deepa is focused on aligning with Rotary’s diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policy and diversify club membership, include more women members, and create awareness on LGBTQIA.



Akhil Mishra

Education

RC Jabalpur South, RID 3261

Mentorship for new members

Akhil Mishra began his Rotary journey in 2016. During the Covid lockdown “I saw the true power of Rotary. We were not just donating food, and other necessary items. We were alleviating people’s suffering in many ways,” he says.

On the day of his installation the district donated a bus worth ₹21 lakh to a blind school. The district is also donating dialysis equipment to hospitals and starting a rehabilitation centre for children with mental disabilities. A project to conduct paediatric heart surgeries is in the pipeline.

Mishra focuses on membership engagement and retention, implementing a mentorship programme pairing new members with senior Rotarians to help them understand Rotary better. After getting a list of members who have left Rotary in his district, he plans to reconnect with them. “I want to find out the reason they left and encourage them to come back.”

Committed to DEI, Mishra is urging his clubs to conduct awareness seminars and explore initiatives such as chartering a transgender club.

Governors

Kiran Zehra



Sukhminder Singh
Auto parts distributor

RC Amenity Bardhaman, RID 3240

Ensuring continuity

He joined Rotary in 1998 on one condition: Never ask me to get on the dais and address a gathering. “But my fear of public speaking vanished, all thanks to Rotary.”

This year, Sukhminder aims to introduce 250 new members, “focusing on young members, Rotaractors, Interactors, and women. The contributions of women Rotarians and their innovative ideas in our district are remarkable.” To retain members, the district is implementing orientation programmes and aligning service projects with members’ skills, while promoting district projects on social media to enhance Rotary’s public image. Clubs must now have a three-year strategic plan to effectively promote Rotary, is his edict.

His target for TRF-giving is \$700,000.

Building on IPDG Nilesh Agarwal initiatives, Sukhminder is committed to completing CSR projects related to the environment, providing machinery to hospitals and constructing a crematorium.



N S Saravanan
Software

RC Chennai Mitra, RID 3234

Focus on cancer screening, fellowship

Saravanan encourages members to explore *rotary.org* and read *Rotary News* to enhance their understanding of Rotary. He emphasises “informed inductment”, advising potential members to learn about Rotary, attend a minimum of three club meetings, involve their spouses, and engage in club projects before induction.

He urges club presidents to highlight Rotary’s global impact and introduce fellowship groups to new members. With 30 per cent of the district leadership held by women, his focus is on women’s health and empowerment, initiating breast cancer screening drives for women Rotarians, Anns, Annets and Rotaractors. A Rotary Community Corps for transgenders has also been started.

Saravanan has introduced the *Magic 30* piggy banks, encouraging club members to donate ₹30 daily “so they can each contribute at least \$100 to TRF at the end of the year.” A major project under his leadership is providing 100 bio-toilets to the Chennai traffic police.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



The Rotary medical mission team along with project chair Ranjit Bhatia (standing, centre), team leader Arun Mongia (behind Bhatia) and project coordinator Raman Aneja (sitting, 3rd from R).



Healing people in Mozambique

V Muthukumaran



Fernanda after being treated for Parkinson's disease at the medical camp.

Medical miracles do happen at Rotary's medical missions to Africa. One such is the "complete recovery of 59-year-old Fernanda who was suffering from bilateral resting tremors for the last 10 years, and could not get up from the chair or walk without support. She was totally dependent for everything in the last five years due to Parkinson's disease," said PDG Ranjit Bhatia, project chair of Rotary Medical Mission to Mozambique, Africa.

Fernanda was brought to the neurology OPD at the Provincial Government Hospital, Chimoio in Mozambique, where the 26-member Rotary Vocational Technical Training Mission (RVTTM) was camping to treat African patients and train local doctors in critical surgical procedures

in April 2024. "She was administered a strong dosage of Levodopa and the doctors observed her clinical response... to our amazement, she had a dramatic recovery the next day as she could walk into our OPD tent, sit and even smiled giving us a thumbs up. It will take some time for her to speak. Is this not a miracle," said Bhatia.

The Rotary team consisting of 18 doctors across specialties and eight Rotarian volunteers, left Haryana with 1,000kg of surgical equipment and medicines and returned with a sense of accomplishment. "We not only treated patients, but also trained local doctors in doing some intricate surgeries. We also gave the medical equipment and supplies to that government hospital," said team leader IPDG Arun Mongia (RID 3080). "It was a very satisfying mission. Both the local government and the

people were very helpful, for they lack medical facilities and don't have specialist doctors to handle critically ill patients."

Led by RC Panipat Royale, RID 3080, which got a \$90,000 GG sanctioned for the medical mission, the project was also sponsored by RC Chimoio Planalto, RID 9210; and RIDs 3080-India (\$15,000), 3552-Florida, US (\$20,000), 3650-South Korea (\$10,000) and 9210-Mozambique (\$5,000) through their district funds. The Rotarian doctors examined over 3,700 OPD patients, and performed 827 surgeries across eye, general, plastic, orthopaedic, gynaecology, ENT and dental specialties.

Project coordinator PDG Raman Aneja, medical director Dr Karan Singh, Mozambique PDG Nela Bettencourt and past president Gisela Mirclo worked for several months to tie up the logistic knots for the mission. "So far, RID 3080 has done 44 medical missions — 27 of them to 16 African countries, and 17 to various states in India. The concept of RVTTM was the brainchild of PRIP Rajendra Saboo, who flagged off the first mission in 1998," explained Mongia.

In August, DG Rajpal Singh will lead a two-week medical mission to Ethiopia. Rotarians from RIDs 3141, 3131 (Maharashtra), 3056, 3060 (Gujarat) and 3070 (Punjab) were also part of the mission which received great hospitality from Dr Marilia De Morai Pugas, director, Provincial Hospital, and her support staff. Indian High Commissioner to Mozambique Robert Shetkintong flew down from capital Maputa to interact with the Rotary team which later took time off to visit the Gorongosa National Park. ■

Teaching baking to HIV positive children

Team Rotary News



Club members with children at the Arunima Hospice.

RC Calcutta Presidency, RID 3291, conducted a baking workshop for HIV-infected children at the Arunima Hospice to give them skills in whipping up cookies in various flavours and selling the bakery products, which will fetch them regular income.

The club equipped the hospice with two ovens, a mixer and other essential baking tools for the workshop. In no time, "the children mastered the baking skills and started

making cookies on their own which were sold from a display table during church hours. All the cookies were sold out in no time," said Sangita Jain, club president.

After seeing the children earning an income from their newly acquired skills with joy and pride on their faces, "we are inspired to plan more workshops at the hospice, thus continuing our efforts to bring smiles and joy in the lives of the inmates," she said. ■



A garden for the body, soul and planet

Preeti Mehra

Your patch of green could be a source of
comfort and joy.

If someone has summed up the meaning of what it feels to keep a garden, it is Victorian poet Alfred Austin. He said, “The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul.” And to his poetic words, allow me to add, a ‘green’ soul that has taken saving nature to heart.

So, if you are building your house or trying to grow a garden, it is only natural that you try to keep it as eco-friendly as possible — a garden that will clean the air around it, give shade to humans and animals alike and attract all kinds of birds, butterflies, insects, and friendly crawlies that pollinate and regenerate the soil.

Austin also had a philosophy about gardening that he put into words that are the most needed in today’s fast paced, self-centric, materialistic world. To quote, “There is no gardening without humility. Nature is constantly sending even its oldest scholars to the bottom of the class for some egregious blunder.”

Following his sentiment, I have researched what would be the best plants to put in the sustainable garden that will maintain the delicate balance of nature.

I looked up the low maintenance plants that will be easy to look after. Among the tall ones I would bet on the typical tropical Areca palm which

grows up to 15–20ft, has long feathery fronds, and looks great in the corners. Though it needs to be watered regularly, it can be grown both in the sun and the shade. It goes with the botanical name *Dypsis lutescens*. The other tall plant with spiky large leaves that could dominate the garden is Agave (botanical name: *Agave Americana*). It requires hardly any maintenance and very little water and can grow in the ground and in a pot.

Let’s shift to a choice of hedges, and I would vote for the most popular — the bougainvillea, which spreads itself elegantly on any fence and comes in a riot of colours. It grows in any soil and requires very little watering and pruning. It can be combined well with the low maintenance spider plant (botanical name: *Chlorophytum comosum*), which hangs in a graceful manner and again is tolerant of all kinds of soil and light. Add to it the snake plant (botanical name: *Sansevieria trifasciata*) with its long yellow and green stiped leaves and you have an interesting low maintenance combination that can dress up the borders of your garden.

Now for the smaller low maintenance plants that can take centre stage — the succulent Jade and the fleshy aloe vera. Jade (botanical name: *Crassula ovata*) has fleshy bright green leaves and requires very little watering. The same goes for aloe vera (botanical name *Aloe barbadensis*)

that is used for its healing properties and often used to moisturise the skin.

Talking about healing, it would be a great idea to have a small herbal patch on one corner along with some leafy vegetables that could be plucked straight off the soil and cooked. Garden experts suggest a host of such plants, but I found the best were tulsi, aloe vera, ajwain (*ajowam caraway*), basil, mint,



spinach, and lemongrass. They are useful in every kind of cooking.

But where are the flowers? And how can we have a garden without the most beautiful blooms. Roses do well in colder climates, but they require tending to and good sunshine to thrive. The Peace Lily (botanical name: *Spathiphyllum spp*) with its white flowers and long, green leaves is a great choice as it requires less maintenance and can thrive in all light conditions. Of course, if you choose to grow the most attractive flower of all, aptly called Bird of Paradise (botanical name: *Strelitzia reginae*) your garden may well become the envy of all neighbours as this beautiful flower is immensely attractive and resembles the head of a bird. However, it requires regular watering but can withstand different light conditions.

Don't forget to plant a few of the most fragrant of flowers — jasmine

(botanical name: *Jasminum spp*), which can also be worn in the hair or used for religious ceremonies. Though it requires watering it is a hardy plant once it takes root or is potted. The hibiscus (botanical name: *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) is another good choice, though regular watering is a must. It's used in ceremonies and its colourful large flowers attract butterflies and bees.

And now that your garden is ready, what about the periphery? In fact, the periphery is sometimes all that some houses have. And these need the best trees possible. Though this depends on the part of the country that you live in, there is a variety here that you can choose from. Let's start with the good old neem tree (botanical name: *Azadirachta indica*). Tall, shady and full of medicinal properties, it is rightly called the 'all-rounder'. Matched with the Ashoka evergreen tree (botanical name:

Saraca asoca) that has orange-yellow blooms, they make a pretty picture. And if you add to it the fire red and orange of the riotous flowers of the Gulmohar tree (botanical name: *Delonix regia*) your house would have shade and a colourful disposition. In my opinion every house or colony is incomplete without a magnificent tree — the parijat (botanical name: *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*). In winter its fragrance and its delicate flowers that fall to the ground are heavenly.

Many people prefer to have useful fruit trees in their front yard or backyard and that's not a bad idea at all. For most the mango tree (botanical name: *Mangifera indica*) that has fruits of hundreds of varieties is a favourite and can be chosen according to the variety that thrives in your part of the country. The jamun tree (botanical name: *Syzygium cumini*) is a wonderful choice as it grows tall, gives shade, and gets profusely full of the jamun fruit that is very good for diabetics. The guava tree (botanical name: *Psidium guajava*) too grows amazingly well, even in the hot summer months. It gives fruits in abundance that are packed with nutrients.

Apart from these trees, there are many others that could be chosen but do insist that they are native to the region. It would be prudent to adopt a drip irrigation system instead of sprinklers or a watering can to save water and keep the soil moist. Most of all avoid all chemical fertilisers and pesticides. It would be better to use organic pest control like neem or garlic spray or plants that deter pests. If you read up on organic farming techniques and make use of kitchen waste and vermicomposting, you would have achieved eco-friendly green space in your home. And here I'd like to quote the poet Minnie Aumonier: "When the world wearies and society fails to satisfy, there is always the garden."

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues



West Bengal villages get sanitation facilities

Jaishree



TRF's technical cadre member PDG Ganesh Bhat (second from right) and his wife Vidya (R) with beneficiaries at one of the villages.

Over 500 households in villages across West Bengal are now complete with toilets, thanks to a global grant project of RC Calcutta Chowrenghree, RID 3291,

along with international partner RC New York Metro City, USA, and TRF. “Open defecation was rampant in the villages, and women and girls particularly were at danger, as this made

them vulnerable to health risks and gender-based violence, and affected their dignity and self-respect,” says Vikram Tantia, Foundation Committee chair of the host club. Hence the club decided to install toilets in individual houses in these villages.

Many hamlets are situated 100–200km from Kolkata, in the Sundarbans, Kultali, Magrahat, Bishnupur, Rajpur and Howrah. “When we performed the ‘needs assessment’ as per TRF norms, we realised that there was a pressing need for bathrooms too. Women and girls were bathing in the open pond. So we added community bath facilities and tube wells to our projects in those villages,” he says. The bath stations, each with two bathrooms, will safeguard the dignity of women, and water will be sourced from the tube wells. The total project cost was \$212,000 which was released by the Foundation in two phases. It helped provide 500 toilets, 19 community bath stations and 28 tube wells. Begun in 2019, and overcoming various challenges during Covid, the project was completed in July 2024. “This work now benefits around 20,000 people across 17 villages”.

RID 3170 PDG Ganesh Bhat, during one of his visits to the project

site as TRF's technical cadre member, suggested each village build a corpus for the maintenance of public facilities such as the bath stations and tube wells. At a meeting in one of the villages, he asked the women if they can afford to contribute ₹1 every day, and "they readily agreed." Thus was born the *Har Ghar Har Din Ek Rupai* scheme where every household contributes ₹1 daily to build a corpus of at least ₹25,000 a year. On an average each village has around 80 houses. "This fund can make the project self-sustaining, taking care of minor repairs and regular upkeep of the common facilities," says Bhat. Bank accounts were opened in the villages to deposit the corpus funds.

To discourage manual scavenging, Bhat, a civil engineer himself, suggested twin pits to be constructed to hold the human waste from the toilets in the households. PVC valves were fitted between the two pits to transfer sewage from one pit to another when it fills up. The villagers were taught to keep the toilets in their households clean.

RC Calcutta Chowrenghee outsourced training and supervision of the projects to Green EDP Promotion and Services, an organisation expert in WASH. Rotary Community Corps and Rotakids, a Rotary club for the village children, were installed in the villages and the members were assigned the task of supervising the facilities. The RCC members were taught to operate bank accounts, repair pumps and fix taps, and other maintenance work, says Tantia. The club organised awareness sessions on environment, hygiene and sanitation for the villagers during the project tenure. ■

A Rotary nursing institute in Goa

Team Rotary News



RID 3170 IPDG Nasir Borsadwala inaugurating the nursing institute in Goa.

RC Panaji, RID 3170, in collaboration with Montfort Academy and Veejay Facility, Panjim, has established the Institute of Nursing at the Montfort Academy in Corlim, Goa.

This initiative aims to provide rural and underprivileged youth with vocational training in nursing, offering them promising career prospects. The institute features a state-of-the-art lab and classroom. The one-year

course includes theory, practical classes and clinical training at a hospital, preparing students for employment in various healthcare settings.

The course is certified by the Human Resource Development Foundation and the director of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of Goa, ensuring recognition across the health sector, thus opening career opportunities for students. Financial assistance will be provided to deserving candidates. ■

STAY FIT AND FLEXIBLE

Bharat & Shalan Savur

Preservation begins with proper preparation. The principle is to live young as long as possible. Internally, there can be a 20-year difference between our chronological age and our chromosomes. For example, a 40-year-old could be 60 or 20 within himself or herself. Inherited genes and a gainful lifestyle make the vital all-important difference.

Aerobics, stretch and resistance (strength training) form a biological bilateral triangle. Look and work on these angles. And the curves should follow suit. The base of this triangle is aerobics, of course. Flexibility and strength training are the vertical lines that meet at the apex of the triangle. Maintain the bilateral triangle as long as you possibly can.

The West largely continues its calorie-binges that carry the individual to obesity — their dried-up fountain of youth is buried under a load of fat. There is not even a semblance of ‘under a fat man, there lies a thin man struggling to get out.’ Yet, there is a way out. The bilateral triangle will shrink as we approach old age. But by constantly balancing the bilateral triangle, we can make this stage of our journey more comfortable. And hopefully, painless.

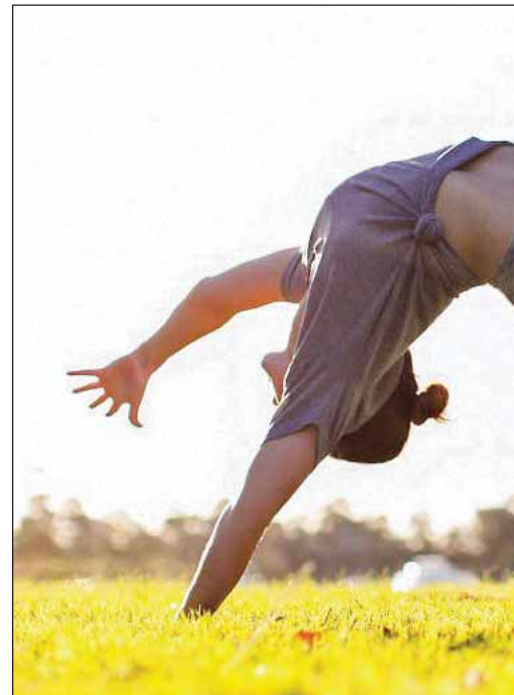
No suryanamaskars

If you have never exercised before, you can begin with free-hand movements that follow our instructions. And employ your body weight to develop and strengthen your muscles. Push-ups and pull-ups are a great way to begin. Warning: No suryanamaskars, though. They work out well for those that began in their childhood and continue the practice up to now. Suryanamaskars stretch and strain the spine and could seriously injure it. Vertical push-ups are better. Place yourself vertically against a door frame — feet apart and aligned to your shoulders. Stretch your arms. Place your hands at shoulder-level. Now, inhale as you push into the empty door space. Exhale as you revert to the vertical position. Vertical or horizontal, do five push-ups daily. They are a complete torso (upper body) exercise and you can continue with them even after you begin to exercise with dumbbells.

Here are some simple exercises that you can practice daily to keep you fit

Stand erect and rotate your head from left to right. Repeat 10 times. Likewise rotate from right to left. Move your head left in line with your left shoulder. Then turn head to align with right shoulder. Repeat both 10 times.

Benefit: Strengthening the neck’s spinal cord connection to your



head. You may hear the snap while in action.

- One: Raise your head and look at the ceiling. Stretch your mouth wide open and then shut 10 times.

Benefit: Strengthens and flexes mouth and neck. The single best way to prevent or attack the double chin.

- Suck in your stomach to prevent a protruding abdomen.

Sit-ups

- 1) Lie on your back, knees bent, feet and knees parallel to the floor 12 inches apart. Place hands behind your head, elbows to the sides. Lift your head and upper back as high as you can. Lift your body with your stomach muscles.
- 2) Lower your upper body without touching the floor. Repeat (rep) 20 times.
- 3) While on the floor, raise both legs at a 10 degree-position from floor. Hold for 30 seconds. Work towards a one-minute hold. Rep: one





Weight training with these light weights will not make your muscles bulge. They will enhance the definition (cuts) of the muscle while strengthening it.

start. Do 20 reps. Repeat exercise with right hand. Do 20 reps.

Benefit: Improved posture and ‘body language’ to go with enhanced muscles in the upper torso — chest, shoulders, upper back.

4. Use lighter weights. Extend arms forward to chest-level. Keeping arms outstretched, rotate dumbbells in small circles right over left 50 times. Then, left over right 50 times.

This exercise originates from boxing, like punching the speed bag.

Benefit: Strengthens the arms and wrists, in particular.

Weight training with these light weights will not make your muscles bulge. They will enhance the definition (cuts) of the muscle while strengthening it.

Optional add-on: Music adds rhythm to your exercise programme.

Maintain your life through exercise. It is a ‘heritage’ for yourself.

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

4) Now, raise both legs at 45 degrees. Work from 30 seconds towards a one-minute freeze. Rep: one

Benefit: Sit-ups (or crunches) work out muscles of the upper abdomen. While the timed ones exercise the lower abdomen.

Now, one last exercise to strengthen the lower spine and back muscles:

5) Lie down on the floor and lift your right leg to around 60–75 degrees. Your lower back should feel the stretch. Lower. Now, lift the left leg. Lower. Hold each leg up for 30 seconds to a minute.

Benefit: This helps prevent lower back pain. You can do it even with a slight back pain — for relief.

Fine-tune before weight training

Breathing is tuned and timed by effort/exercise. Flow with nature. Inhale before and during the exercise itself. And exhale after you finish. This start-to-finish cycle counts as

one repetition (rep). Target for each exercise: 20 reps.

The measure of weights that you could use are relative to your fitness level, age and gender. In general, we’d say, two 10-pound dumbbells for men. And 5-pound dumbbells for women.

Stand with feet at shoulder-width. Hold position briefly after each rep to ensure you’re moving on muscle strength, not momentum.

1. Chest and shoulders: a) Place dumbbells by your side, palms facing sides. b) Then raise them to shoulder height, arms stretched in front. c) Stretch arms outwards to hold them at shoulder level parallel to floor. Come back to b position. Slowly return to start — Do 20 reps.
2. Raise dumbbells sideways vertically over your head. Slowly, return to start. Pause briefly before the next rep. Do 20 reps.
3. From the start position of dumbbell facing thigh, lift left dumbbell forward overhead. Slowly return to



The Rotary Foundation Trustees 2024–25

The trustees of The Rotary Foundation manage the business of the Foundation, the charitable arm of Rotary that funds service activities. The RI president-elect nominates the trustees, who are elected by the RI Board to four-year terms.

Four new trustees have taken office on July 1.



Mark Daniel Maloney
Chair 2024–25, Trustee 2021–25
RC Decatur, Alabama

Mark Maloney is a principal in the law firm of Blackburn, Maloney and Schuppert LLC, with a focus on taxation, estate planning and agricultural law.

He served as RI president in 2019–20, and presided over the first virtual RI Convention during the Covid-19 pandemic. A Rotarian since 1980, he has served as an RI director, TRF trustee and vice-chair, and aide to 2003–04 RI President Jonathan Majiyagbe. He has participated in the Council on Legislation (CoL) as chair, vice-chair parliamentarian and trainer.

Maloney’s wife, Gay, is an attorney in the same law firm and a member and past president of the RC Decatur Daybreak. Both support the Foundation as Paul Harris Fellows, Major Donors and Bequest Society members.



Holger Knaack
Chair-elect 2024–25, Trustee 2022–26
RC Herzogtum Lauenburg-Mölln
Germany

Holger Knaack is owner of Knaack KG, a real estate company, and Knaack Bakery Enterprises, a family business founded in 1868. A Rotary member since 1993, he has served Rotary as RI president, treasurer, director, moderator, member and chair of several committees, CoL representative, endowment/major gifts adviser and learning facilitator. Knaack and his wife, Susanne, have hosted more than 40 Rotary Youth Exchange students and are Major Donors to TRF. They are also members of the Paul Harris Society and the Bequest Society.



Larry A Lunsford
Vice Chair 2024–25, Trustee 2021–25
RC Kansas City-Plaza, Missouri

Larry Lunsford, a certified public accountant, is executive vice-president and chief financial officer of Bernstein-Rein Advertising Inc. His passion for Rotary and his invitation into the family of Rotary began during his college

years, when in 1982, he was selected as a Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholar to Australia. Lunsford joined Rotary in 1991. He has served RI as a director and aide to RI President Mark Maloney. He was vice-chair of the trustees in 2022–23 also, and he served on the Shaping Rotary’s Future Committee for RI for four years.

For the past 22 years, Lunsford has served as the “shoes cheerleader” for District 6040’s service project *Shoes for Orphan Souls*, which has donated nearly 4,00,000 pairs of shoes in partnership with Buckner International. Lunsford and his wife, Jill, are Major Donors, Benefactors and Bequest Society members. He is a charter member of his district’s Paul Harris Society and PolioPlus Society. He has been awarded TRF’s Citation for Meritorious Service and the Service Above Self Award.



Ann-Britt Åsebol
Trustee 2024–28
RC Falun Koppurvågen, Sweden

Ann-Britt Åsebol retired as a member of the Riksdag, Sweden’s parliament, in 2022 after several terms as county councillor for Dalarna County. She joined Rotary in 1993 as the first female member of her club. She has served Rotary as learning facilitator, RIPR and regional membership coordinator. Åsebol also served as RI director and as vice-chair or chair of several RI committees, including the Rotary Peace Centers Committee, 2021 RI Virtual Convention Committee, Constitution and Bylaws Committee and Joint Young Leaders and Alumni Engagement Committee.

Åsebol is a Rotary Foundation Benefactor, Major Donor, a multiple Paul Harris Fellow and a Paul Harris Society member. She has received the Citation for Meritorious Service.



Martha Peak Helman
Trustee 2022–26
RC Boothbay Harbor, Maine

Marty Helman spent her career as a writer for business executives and as a magazine editor at McGraw-Hill and the American Management Association. Later, she

served as president of the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation, a nonprofit that has helped build schools in developing nations, provided scholarships for young people, and supplied humanitarian aid to Holocaust survivors, among other initiatives. The Walter Foundation partnered with TRF to fund the new Rotary Peace Center at the Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul.

Helman and her late spouse, Frank, joined RC Boothbay Harbor in 2003. She has served Rotary as chair of the Peace Major Gifts Initiative and on the working group to select a site for the new peace centre. She initiated an effort to support the Sakuji Tanaka Rotary Peace Fellowship, which raised \$1 million for the Rotary Peace Centers.

Helman is an AKS member, and a member of the Paul Harris Society and PolioPlus Society. She and Frank were charter members of TRF's Legacy Society.



Ching-Huei 'Frank' Horng

Trustee 2024–28
RC Panchiao West, Taiwan

Frank Horng heads the Trojan Orthodontic Clinic, which he founded in 1988. He joined Rotary in 1993 as a charter member of his club.

He has served as a Peace Major Gifts Initiative adviser, Water and Sanitation Major Gifts Initiative Committee member and RIPR.

As a member of TRF Cadre of Technical Advisers, he connected craniofacial surgeons in Bali and Taiwan and led a vocational training team in Mongolia. That project eventually became a Rotary Foundation global grant initiative to promote oral health that helped train 360 Mongolian health workers. Horng's district received a Presidential Citation in 2014–15 in recognition of this project.

His partner, Shu-Yann Chuang, is a member of RC Panchiao West. Horng and Chuang are AKS members. He has received the Service Above Self Award and TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service.



Chun-Wook Hyun

Trustee 2023–27
RC Seoul-Hansoo, Korea

Chun-Wook Hyun is senior partner at Seoul-based Kim & Chang, one of the largest law firms in Asia.

He joined Rotary as his club's charter member in 1991.

Hyun has served RI as training leader, RIPR and legal adviser to the RI Convention in Seoul in 2016. He

serves as director of Rotary Foundation Korea, and is an AKS member.



Jennifer Jones

Trustee 2023–27
RC Windsor-Roseland, Ontario

Jennifer Jones is the founder of a media company located in Ontario that has helped countless corporations and not-for-profit organisations lead with conviction and credibility.

She served as RI president in 2022–23, making her the first woman in Rotary's history to serve in this role.

She is the recipient of Rotary's Service Above Self Award and TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service.

Jones is married to Nick Krayacich, a family physician. They support TRF as members of the AKS, Paul Harris Society and Bequest Society.



Gordon McNally

Trustee 2024–28
RC South Queensferry, Scotland

Gordon McNally joined Rotary in 1984 at age 26. He served as RI president in 2023–24 and as president and vice-president of RI in Great Britain and Ireland. He has also served RI as a director and on several committees, including as chair of the 2018 Toronto Convention Committee and the Operations Review Committee.

He and his partner, Heather, a member of RC Borderlands (Passport Group), are Paul Harris Fellows, Major Donors, Benefactors of TRF and members of the Bequest Society.



Akira Miki

Trustee 2021–25
RC Himeji, Japan

Akira Miki, a dentist with his own practice, dedicated himself to disaster recovery projects after the January 1995 Hanshin-Awaji earthquake, one of the worst to hit Japan in the 20th century.

Miki joined Rotary in 1981. He served on the RI Board of Directors from 2018 to 2020 and was a special adviser for the Foundation trustees in 2020–21.

Miki is a former Interactor and a recipient of TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his wife, Chiharu, are members of the AKS, Benefactors and Major Donors to TRF.



Ijeoma Pearl Okoro
Trustee 2024–28
RC Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Ijeoma Pearl Okoro has 30 years of experience leading transformation, market development and management efforts in the insurance industry.

Okoro joined Rotary in 1999. She has served as RI learning facilitator, assistant regional Rotary Foundation coordinator, endowment/major gifts adviser and regional vice-chair of the End Polio Now: Countdown to History Campaign Committee. She has received Rotary’s Distinguished Service Award and the Regional Service Award for a Polio-Free World.

Okoro and her husband, Kingsley, are both Major Donors, Bequest Society members and Benefactors.



Bharat S Pandya
Trustee 2022–26
RC Borivli, India

Bharat Pandya is a practising general and laparoscopic surgeon. He and his wife, Madhavi, a gynecologist, own a private hospital in Mumbai.

Pandya joined Rotary in 1989 as a charter member of his club. During his year as DG, District 3140 contributed more than \$2 million to TRF, making it the top contributor worldwide for 2006–07.

Pandya has been an RI director, treasurer, regional membership coordinator and learning facilitator. He has served on Rotary’s Membership, Strategic Planning, Leadership Development and Convention Promotion committees and on the India PolioPlus Committee. He was trustee vice-chair in 2023–24. He is also a charter member of his district’s Paul Harris Society.

He has received the Service Above Self Award, TRF’s Citation for Meritorious Service and the Distinguished Service Award. He and Madhavi are Rotary Foundation Major Donors.



Greg E Podd
Trustee 2022–26
RC Evergreen, Colorado

Greg Podd is a retired certified public accountant and personal financial specialist who opened his own firm in 1979. He joined Rotary in 1982. He

has served RI as vice-president and director. During his time on the Board of Directors, he chaired committees including the Audit Committee and the Board Council

on Legislation Advisory Committee. He also served on the Operations Review Committee and TRF’s Investment Committee.

Podd has received the Service Above Self Award and TRF’s Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his spouse, Pam, are Major Donors and members of the AKS, Bequest Society and Paul Harris Society.



Carlos Sandoval
Trustee 2023–27
RC San Nicolás de los Garza, Mexico

Carlos Sandoval is chair of Orsan Corp, a leading company in the energy sector and the main distributor of Exxon Mobil in Mexico. He joined Rotary in 1975

and has served RI and TRF as regional Rotary Foundation coordinator, member of the Fund Development and Peace Centers committees and extraordinary donations endowment/major gifts adviser. He is also a Community Economic Development Major Gifts Initiative adviser through 2025.

In honour of his late son Carlos, he established a directed gift to TRF that supports community and economic development projects focused on women entrepreneurs in Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Colombia.

Sandoval is a recipient of TRF’s Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his spouse, Martha, support the Foundation as Platinum Trustees Circle members of the AKS. His late parents, Eufrasio and Aurelia, are also AKS members and he designated his late son Carlos, as an AKS Circle of Honor member.



Dennis J Shore
Trustee 2023–27
RC Hawthorn, Australia

Dennis Shore who joined Rotary in 1980 has served as endowment/major gifts adviser and is vice-chair of Rotary Foundation Australia. He has

served several times as RIPR and twice as district CoL representative.

Shore and his wife, Lynda, are Major Donors and Bequest Society members. He is a member of Paul Harris Society and PolioPlus Society, and a recipient of the Royce Abbey Award, The Rotary Foundation Distinguished Service Award and the Citation for Meritorious Service.

John Hewko
General Secretary, RC Kyiv, Ukraine

See Board of Directors – *Rotary News*, July ’24.

From RI South Asia

TRF-Area of Focus: Major Gift Initiative Committee members from South Asia for RY 2024–25

Name	Area of Focus	E-mail ID
PDG Deepak Gupta	Environment	<i>deepak_gupta41@hotmail.com</i>
PDG Suresh Hari	Community Economic Development	<i>3190dgoffice2018@gmail.com</i>
PDG Parag Sheth	Health	<i>info@ambicasalt.com</i>
PDG Maullin Patel	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	<i>maullin63@yahoo.com</i>

In the July issue of *Rotary News*, an incomplete list was inadvertently provided by RISAO.

RI licensed vendors

There are several ways one can help strengthen RI's public image and its humanitarian efforts. One important way is to help limit the production and sale of unauthorised or pirated Rotary merchandise. Rotary has licensed over 130 vendors worldwide that are permitted to manufacture and

sell merchandise with Rotary marks and logos. A portion of all sales from licensed vendors is paid to Rotary, which benefits the operational services provided to clubs and districts everywhere.

By using our licensed vendors, you are supporting Rotary and can be assured of quality branded merchandise. Pirated merchandise can hurt Rotary's brand or image. You can see a list of our vendors online. Unlicensed vendors may be reported to *RI Licensing*.

Details of licensed vendors from India are given below:

Licensed Vendors	Address	E-mail ID	Website
Better Services	Office #350, A To Z Industrial Estate, Ganpatrao, Kadam Marg, Lower Parel (W), Mumbai	<i>better@betterservices.org</i>	<i>www.better.in</i>
Mohan Plastics Limited	63, Roshanara Plaza Complex, Roshanara Road, New Delhi	<i>mohanplastic@yahoo.com/ info@mohanindustries.org</i>	<i>www.mohanindustries.org</i>
Tej Brothers	4806/24, Bharat Ram Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi	<i>tejbrothers@gmail.com</i>	<i>www.tejbrothers.com</i>
Sacheti & Company	Shiwaji Nagar, Opposite Jain Temple, Kishangarh, Rajasthan	<i>sacheti_co@usa.net</i>	<i>www.sacheti.org</i>
Naveen Enterprises	No 11, Naveen Mansion, 11 th Main Road, Aurobindo Marg, 5 th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore	<i>naveen@naveenenterprises.net</i>	N/A
BK AD Gifts	130 C, Kottur Road, Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu	<i>netparkkannan@gmail.com</i>	N/A

Contact the RI Licensing team at rilicensingservices@rotary.org or 847–866–4463, or Rajesh Anand, manager, Legal and Stewardship at rajesh.anand@rotary.org for more details.

club matters



RID 3131



RID 3160



RID 3132



RID 3150

RC Panvel Central – RID 3131

Rotarian doctors who were part of three Kashmir surgical camps led by PDG Girish Gune were felicitated by then DG Manjoo Phadke at an event.

RC Shirdi Saibaba – RID 3132

Two dental surgical chairs were donated to Shri Saibaba Super Specialty Hospital, Shirdi, with sponsorship from Om Sai Sadhana Sansthan, Delhi.



RID 3141

RC Bombay Kandivli – RID 3141

Fifty-five fruit-bearing trees were planted at the Manav Seva Vriddhashram, an old age home, under *Project My Club Green Club*.

RC Kokapet Ekam – RID 3150

Then DGE Sharath Choudary inaugurated *Project Ekam Maithili* that aims to empower 20 women through a four-month tailoring course; and karate training to 1,000 girls in a year.

RC Vijayanagar Heritage – RID 3160

School bags were distributed to government school students in Hospet. The beneficiaries thanked the club for the gesture.

club matters



RID 3182



RID 3261



RID 3231



RID 3250

RC Tirthahalli – RID 3182

IPDG BC Geetha inaugurated a renovated Rotary Bhavan, along with its nursery school, in the presence of the club president Bharat Kodlu and others.

RC Vellore Angels – RID 3231

Books worth ₹9,000 were donated to Bharathi Nagar Public Library, Katpadi, as hundreds of people visit this reading centre every day.



RID 3234

RC Chennai Mugappair – RID 3234

Safety kits consisting of hand towel, soap and bedsheet were given to 60 conservancy workers at Nolambur ward of the city corporation.

RC Patna Kankarbagh – RID 3250

Project Piyao offered clean, cold drinking water, along with Bengal gram and jaggery, to over 1,000 beneficiaries daily as relief from scorching summer.

RC Raipur – RID 3261

Around 40 women donated blood at a blood donation camp held jointly with Equitas Trust and Digiperform HT Media. A road safety awareness drive was also held.

Compiled by V Muthukumar

The **ROTARY ACTION PLAN**

INCREASE OUR IMPACT

A CONVERSATION WITH
TUSU TUSUBIRA

"A good project
is a catalyst
for sustainable
change."



Learn what your club can do at rotary.org/actionplan



MEET FRANCIS “TUSU” TUSBIRA.

A founding partner of an information and communications technology consulting firm, Tusubira is a member of the Rotary Club of Kampala-North, Uganda, and served on Rotary’s Strategic Planning Committee when our Action Plan was developed. He’s also a member of The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers.



Q. The Action Plan asks us to increase our impact. How should we think about doing that?

TUSU: Here’s an analogy: When your children are in school, it’s easy to get excited about a great grade or test result — the success of that immediate moment. But as parents, we know we also need to take the long view. What kind of people are our children becoming? What will they do for the world after we’re gone?

Real impact is something that resonates well beyond the work we do on a project. It’s sustainable long after we have left the scene.

This definition of impact requires us to think about service in a different way. It is not what we give to communities that creates sustainability. It’s whether the project enables communities to take ownership and drive the transformation on their own after we are gone. A good project is a catalyst for sustainable change.

Q. Why is it important to measure our impact?

TUSU: So we can be smarter about what we need to start doing, what we need to continue doing, and what we need to stop doing. It’s essential to the future of our organization. Major funding agencies demand evidence of impact. Young people — the future of Rotary — have grown up asking institutions and organizations for greater accountability and transparency.

Q. What changes are you already seeing in Rotary?

TUSU: I’m heartened that Rotary is identifying consistent ways to assess and measure results. This way, we’ll all be on the same page when it comes to planning projects and identifying impact.

I’m also seeing a greater appetite for risk. Less proscriptive funding will promote smart risk-taking and will encourage people to learn from — rather than fear — setbacks.

There’s greater support for clubs to focus their efforts on a few key areas, rather than trying to do too many projects. Instead of starting by asking “What are the deficits here?” clubs are learning how to build on a community’s strengths and seeking out what I call the “pressure points” — areas where targeted, concentrated work can set in motion a cascade of change.

I’m also excited by the new Programs of Scale initiative. These projects have the longer time frame necessary to make a sustainable difference. Most important, Programs of Scale incentivize clubs to work together and recognize them for doing that. If you want to provide clean water sources, why would you want 50 clubs doing 50 different projects? We united against polio. Let’s unite to solve other challenges facing our world.

Q. What makes you feel optimistic?

TUSU: Our work eradicating polio proves we are an organization capable of genuine and lasting impact. And I’m excited about the rising generation of Rotarians and Rotaractors who are bringing their commitment to sustainable solutions. We can do this.

Besides that, my name, Tusubira, literally means “we hope”!





Fascinating coincidences

LBW



TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

Coincidences have always fascinated me. These are events or occurrences, the probability of which happening is close to zero. In mathematics, the fifth letter in the Greek alphabet, *e*, denotes this. It means infinitesimal. These have happened to me twice in the last 30 years, one of which happened last month on a flight. But let me start with the oldest one, which was in 1993.

My wife and I were going to Helsinki. Our two boys, aged 9 and 6, were with us. How they came to accompany me is a long story. Suffice it to say it was pure chance once again. But not a coincidence. Our connecting flight was from Frankfurt. We had two hours to kill and were sitting on some sofas and wondering how to kill time when a large white man came and sat down on an adjacent sofa. After a while, he started chatting with the boys and from his accent I could tell he was American. After a while he turned to my wife and started talking to her. She asked him where he was from. He said America. She asked him where in America. He said Tulsa, Oklahoma.

This hugely perked up my wife's interest and she told him her brother also lived there. He said where exactly in Tulsa. So she took out her diary and read out the address. The man asked her the brother's name. She told him. That's when he nearly jumped out of his seat and started babbling. We were totally mystified. When we could eventually make out what he was saying it turned out that he was my brother-in-law's next-door neighbour, living in the adjacent house! We have never stopped wondering about the probability of meeting him. Just think about it. What are the chances? That's what a coincidence is.

It was another 31 years almost to the date that the second coincidence happened. By now

our older son was living in Switzerland and we were going to visit on my grandson's birthday. On the flight I watched two famous movies — *The Last Rifleman* and *The Great Escape*. And guess what? They turned out to be almost identical. The lead actors were different, of course, but superstars. The stories, however, were nearly exactly the same. It was extraordinary how they matched each other. Now what are the chances of being on a flight on which you watch two near identical films with a superstar in each? If you can calculate the odds, please do let me know.

Obviously, there are many other and much bigger coincidences. I googled to check and came across dozens. My favourite is about a woman called Violet Jessop. She was an employee on three ships that not only sank when she was on board but survived each time. Not just that: all three ships were owned by the same company. And one of them was the Titanic!

Another bizarre coincidence is that three of the first five American presidents died in July, and two of them on the same July 4, which also happens to be the American Independence Day. And so on. There are many coincidences in history that are simply inexplicable. In the end, it all boils down to chance. How would you react if you were told that you and your fiancé had been born on the same bed? Impossible? Not really. It has happened once.

But the one that wins hands down is the man who survived two atomic bombs. By an extraordinary chance he happened to be in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki when the bombs fell. The Japanese government has authenticated this, says a post on Google. He lived to the ripe old age of 93 and died in 2010. Clearly, as the couplet by Sant Kabir says, *Jako rakhe saiyyan, maar sake na koi*. He who has God's protection can't be killed by anyone. Just like the lady who survived three ships which sank! ■



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