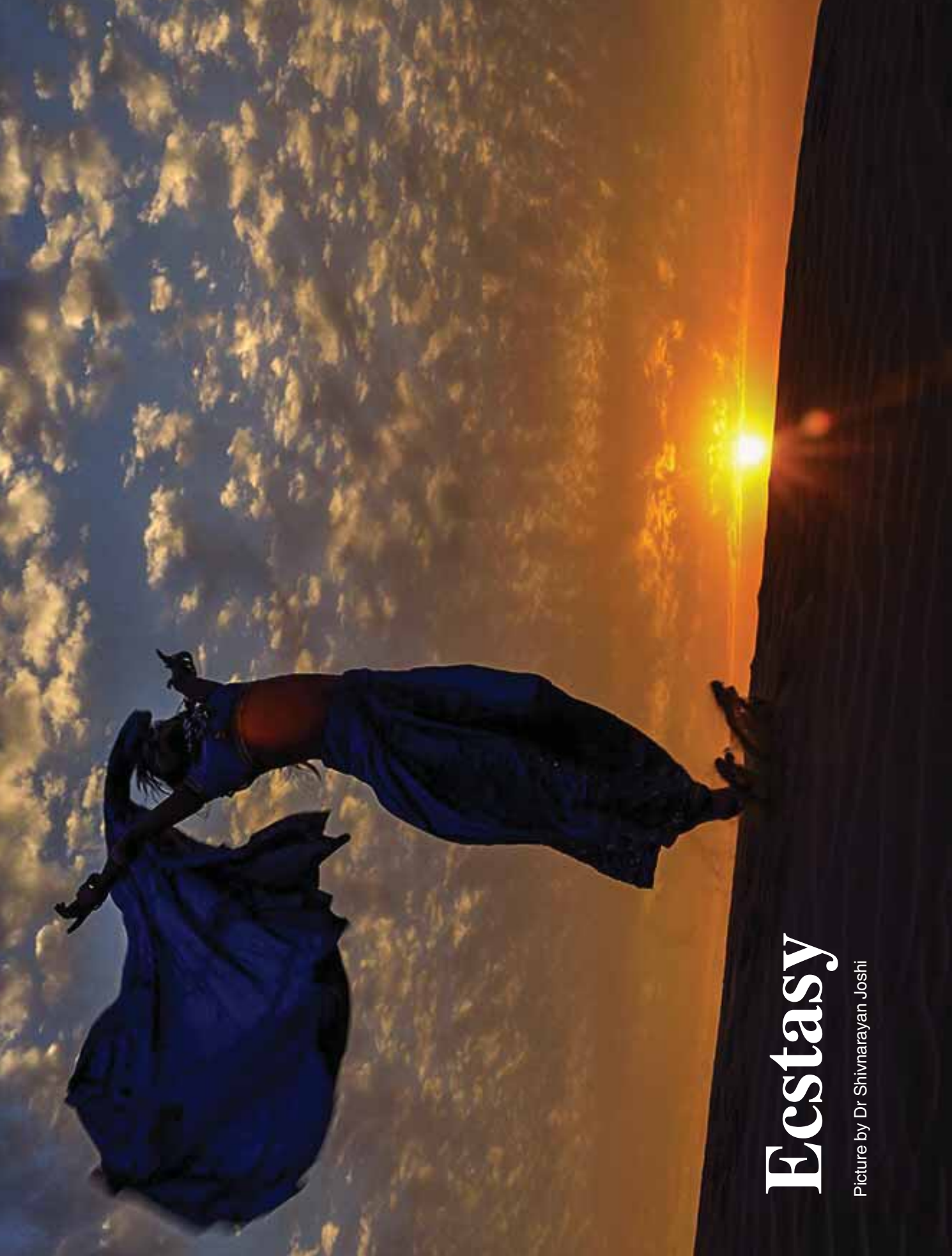


Rotary NEWS

INDIA
www.rotarynewsonline.org





Ecstasy

Picture by Dr Shivnarayan Joshi

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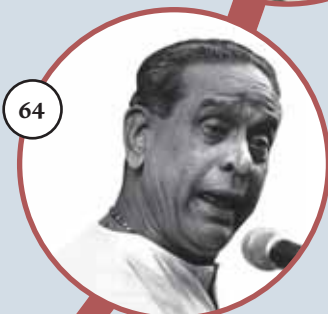
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This month we feature the legendary Hindustani musician in our Music & Melody column.



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On the cover: Students, sponsored by RID 3232 under its *Project Sundari*, undergo training in beauty care in Chennai.

Photo: Jaishree



A remarkable issue

A cute little girl, Rukhsar Khatoon, with innocence written all over her face on a bicycle is so pleasing to see on the March issue cover. A pat to the person who chose this picture.

RI President Holger Knaack has highlighted the relationship between Rotarians and Rotaractors. I would vouch for his statement, as I have been associated with RYLA in our club since 1979–80 until last year without a break. I, at 80-plus, became young and energetic, on all three days at the RYLA venue.

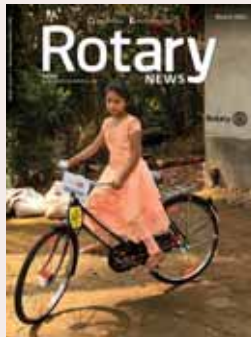
Your editorial justifiably touches World Women’s Day and the reference to Angela Merkel, a leader with a difference, is appropriate. We hope to have a lot of new things in Rotary under the leadership of Jennifer Jones in 2022–23. In our club, we have had only one woman president so far in Khursheed Majeed, and we have as an incoming president, Rajee Dhanasekaran.

Looking at the picture of Pakistan PM Imran Khan I am prompted to share with you that we had a joint meeting with RC Lahore Garrison, Pakistan, which was very lively. Your box item — *How polio funds are spent* — makes us feel satisfied that we are doing god’s work.

RIPE Shekhar Mehta’s call to his governors to “serve to change lives,” giving a roadmap for the year ahead with special focus on empowering girls is remarkable.

Other articles including those on Zambia Malaria, donation of books to Goa library, Karur War Memorial, Coimbatore Gear Man, opportunities for Indian pharma and sustainable global peace and contributions from Team Rotary News make the content interesting for many hours of reading at home.

Nan Narayenen, RC Madurai West — D 3000



Glad to see that Rukhsar, who is 11 years now, was presented with a bicycle by RC Howrah. Rotary has made commendable progress in almost eradicating polio from the world. The Gates Foundation’s assistance is praiseworthy in this respect. Thanks to the editor for the full polio report which is very informative.

RI President Holger Knaack has explained the necessity for Rotarians to join hands with Rotaractors to open endless opportunities. The editorial describes different styles of leadership qualities in Angela Merkel of Germany and Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand.

Both RI directors, in the Directors message, stress the importance of water and proper sanitation. The article on Coimbatore’s gear man by Jaishree is interesting. The feature on Afghanistan and India’s help in rebuilding it is praiseworthy. The story of *Asha, the queen of bold, brassy, peppy melodies* of olden times is riveting.

Philip Mulapone M T
RC Trivandrum Suburban — D 3211

I am pleased to see Rukhsar Khatoon riding a bicycle on the cover of the March issue. God bless her with a bright future. My heartfelt greetings to RC Howrah for gifting her a bicycle.

Ramakrishna, RC Puttur — D 3181

The article *Afghanistan where India is loved and respected* is interesting. Your observation that the Afghan woman is most persecuted in her own home and her father, brother and husband are the people who torture her the most was very disturbing. I appreciate your writing which makes *Rotary News* eminently readable.

Abhijit Joag, RC Pune South — D 3131

Inspirational interview

The interview with RIPE Shekhar Mehta titled *Living the dreams* was inspiring. He was humble to say that he never sought anything in Rotary and at the same time, he never said ‘no’ to anything. He made it clear

that an RI President, in a short duration of one year, can’t be expected to make drastic changes in the organisation but can definitely motivate the 1.2 million members to serve the community better. I like his thought that the position of club president is the best job he

or she can have in a Rotary year. There were many more impressive answers in the interview that made us to infer that leaders in an organisation have to empower themselves with clear-cut ideas while accepting responsibilities and motivate people with a sense of

LETTERS

purpose, knowledge and righteousness of heart.

We are proud that in our RIPE, we have that sort of leadership. There is no doubt that all his dreams, including membership increase to 1.3 million at the world-level will become a reality.

*R Srinivasan, RC Madurai
Midtown — D 3000*

A great literacy project

The article about Ravishankar Dakoju, past president of RC Bangalore Orchards, donating books to the Central Library in Panaji was worth reading. We appreciate club president Carlito Martins who quickly arranged to distribute the books to the Central Library in Panaji. Hats off to Dakoju for his noble gesture, this is really one of the best literacy projects.

*N Jagatheesan
RC Eluru — D 3020*

The article *Coimbatore's 'gear man' who did selfless service* is interesting. It would be apt if a local Rotary club gets involved to add value to the public and support the needy. This would not only enhance Rotary's public image, but also attract new members. A photo of Subramanian, the brain behind SSS, should have been a part of the article.

*Dr M V Ravikumar, RC Bangalore
Koramangala — D 3190*

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan in his LBW column (*of Editors... and their whims*) has rightly highlighted the thoughts of young journalists who step into the profession. The articles and features are always edited either in line with the mindset of the editor or to fit into the publisher's scheme of things, else there may be loss of the advertisement revenue.

*Koka Dayanand
RC Nellore — D 3160*



Excellent magazine

Thank you for sharing your excellent magazine for March 2021. It has some excellent articles which I hope to share with members of my Rotary club.

PRIP Wilf Wilkinson

In the Feb issue the article *Make Every drop count* is meant for everyone in India. Rotary clubs should create awareness on water conservation by distributing pamphlets of this article. People can pitch in with their tips and solutions on social media, which can also do much for the environment.

*Dr Anil P Sohni, RC Dondaicha
Seniors — D 3060*

Gearing up for digital age

RI President Holger Knaack has rightly asked us to 'embrace the digital age' in his address at the zone institute (Feb issue). Trustee Chair K R Ravindran assures us that the pandemic will open up new

opportunities for Rotary to grow. The article 'Make every drop count' highlights tips on water conservation which is the need of the hour. The write-up on the need for clubs to have PAN cards and become KYC compliant is timely.

The article about organ donation by Srikanth's parents and *A simple but meaningful project for tribal girls in Maharashtra* are commendable.

*Dr Pon Muthaiyan
RC Aduthurai — D 2981*

Rotary Plus: Keep going

Congratulate you for bringing out a fabulous edition of *Rotary Plus* every month. One comes to know about different projects that clubs do across India and it helps in planning some of our club projects.

V G Deodhar, RC Nasik — D 3030

Rotary Plus gives great ideas and motivation to Rotarians to do social and noble work in their districts.

*T D Bhatia, RC Delhi
Mayur Vihar — RID 3012*

Correction

The last names of DGE Rajesh Subash (RID 3204) and his wife Deeshma were wrongly mentioned in the Mar'21 issue (page 31). The error is regretted.

We welcome your feedback. Write to the Editor:
rotarynews@rosaonline.org; rushbhagat@gmail.com.

Mail your project details, along with hi-res photos,
to rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com

Messages on your club/district projects, information and links on zoom meetings/webinar should be sent only by e-mail to the Editor at rushbhagat@gmail.com or rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com WHATSAPP MESSAGES WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED.

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



Let's expand our services to preserve Earth

This year, we celebrate Earth Day on April 22 with a new sense of purpose. The environment is now an area of focus for Rotary. Solutions for all great tasks always start with you and me, and there is much we as individuals can do simply by changing our behaviour: Cutting down on our use of plastic and using energy wisely are just two examples. But now we have the opportunity to do more together.

Supporting the environment is not new to Rotary; clubs have long worked on environmental issues based on local needs. Now climate change — a problem that affects us all, rich and poor — requires us to work together more closely than ever. Alberto Palombo, a Venezuelan engineer living in Brazil and a member of TRF Cadre of Technical Advisers, shares his view.

For 30 years, my work has been to connect with communities and policy officials to take care of the environment. Today, I am excited about Rotary's opportunities to help reduce environmental degradation and make communities more environmentally sustainable.

In every community where we have a Rotary, Rotaract, or Interact club or a Rotary Community Corps, there are environmental challenges. As Rotary members, we can become stewards of environmental sustainability and adopt the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in our daily lives at home and in our clubs. Then we can incorporate them into our Rotary projects.

My club has been involved with water and environment projects since day one. We seek opportunities to empower Rotarians and foster partnerships in our region and beyond, working with groups such as the Inter-American Water Resources

Network and the World Water Council. Local clubs worked with the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Rotary Action Group (wasrag.org) to help Rotary get a seat at the table during the 2018 World Water Forum in Brasilia, where we discussed how communities can recover from environmental disasters like the one caused by the failure of a mining dam on Brazil's Rio Doce in 2015.

Taking care of the earth is an effort that never stops. To make an impact, we must align our knowledge, abilities and enthusiasm — and Rotary is already great at doing this. As a volunteer with the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (esrag.org), I have seen how our work for the environment dovetails with much of what we are already doing in water and in our other areas of focus. Rotary members are not passive spectators; we take action. Let's work together and make a positive impact.

Support from The Rotary Foundation will define this new chapter in our service. Through district and global grant projects, we will build upon our previous projects that help the environment. We will look for ways to collaborate more closely and make a greater impact on global environmental issues. And we will incorporate environmental concerns into all of our programmes, projects and events.

Rotaractors and participants in our youth programmes expect Rotary to take a clear position and provide leadership with vision. We will work with them, seeking intelligent solutions to the problems they will inherit. Our incredible members, networks, and Foundation give us the capacity to make an important and lasting contribution. Now, we will discover together how *Rotary Opens Opportunities* to help us expand our service to preserve the home we all share.



Alberto Palombo
RC of
Brasilia-
International
Brazil



Holger Knaack
President, Rotary International



The young who're making a difference

In December 2019, at 34, Sanna Marin from Finland became the youngest prime minister in the world. Isn't it marvellous that so many young leaders, many of them women, are taking up global leadership positions? Jacinda Ardern, 41, who became New Zealand's PM at 37, is my role model. A progressive leader, who is combating social inequity, her response to the Christchurch mosque shootings, reaching out to the Muslim community, and rapidly introducing strict gun laws, was exemplary. Her handling of the Covid pandemic got her international acclamation. Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, only 49, has also shown both leadership and humane qualities.

But not only young politicians deserve our respect and adulation. We know and talk about them because of their high-profile positions. But let's take a look at a March issue of *Time* magazine that features the next 100 most influential people in the world. Oh yes, Sanna Marin has been profiled there by Erna Solberg, Norway's prime minister, who tells us how within weeks of Finland reporting the first corona infection, its PM quickly implemented a lockdown and banned travel in parts of the country. The result — Corona infections were kept at one-fifth of the European Union average. "She has proved that good leadership does not depend on age."

The list features artists, pop stars, sportspersons, innovators, techies and actors. Sydney McLaughlin, 21, who has the potential to become the most outstanding 400m hurdler of all time is featured. She has the courage and passion to speak up against negative issues such as bullying. Says the writer, "the potential to impact lives is her greatest strength, and opportunity...

and I know the mark she will leave on this world will be so much bigger than records and medals."

In Matamoros, Mexico, thousands of asylum seekers to the US are crowded in a squalid encampment. Even before the Covid pandemic, living conditions in the overcrowded tent city, where cartels operate with impunity, were dangerous. "The lack of sanitation and exposure to the elements spread illness. Families have grown desperate and drowned trying to swim to Texas." But in this sea of despair, a Cuban doctor, Dairon Elisondo Rojas, 29, himself an asylum seeker, is a ray of hope. He provides lifesaving care, and as an American judge decides his own fate, "he now helps mothers hear their baby's heartbeat for the first time and treats up to 50 patients every day, mostly children." Says the Democratic congressman Joaquin Castro, who has profiled him: "Rojas aspires to practise medicine in the US and to contribute his skills to our nation like generations of immigrants before him — but he can only help if we let him."

Salman Toor, 37, a painter, born in Lahore and now living in New York, openly features queer men of South Asian descent in his paintings in defiance of societal norms. Then there are innovators like Telfar Clemens, 36, who has redefined fashion by creating "a new language of truth, through design"; or Rohan Pavuluri, 25, founder of Upsolve, a nonprofit that offers a free online tool to help users to file for bankruptcy without paying huge fees, and there are thousands in this pandemic. Davido, 28, one of the biggest voices in Afrobeats, has created an album which had the youth rallying to demand that the Nigerian government take action against police brutality.

During gloomy times like these, such people fill our hearts with hope and optimism.

Rasheeda Bhagat

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Message from

One-to-One



As a second wave of the Covid pandemic threatens to sweep our zones, I recall Paul Harris's words: "Rotary must continue to pioneer or be left in the rear of progress." These words are as true as first spoken. Rotarians around the world have risen

to the occasion and adopted, adapted and implemented new ideas, a new vision and a new Rotary. While negotiating these tough times, Rotarians have proved that 'tough times bring out the best in Rotarians'. The many stories of hope, help and humanity of Rotarians mitigating suffering, bringing succour, meeting needs have inspired all. 'Oh man!' says Emerson, 'there is no planet, sun or star which could hold you back if you know your potential.' When faced with a challenge you discover hidden strengths you never knew existed. And Rotarians have found it. Franklin D Roosevelt said it best, 'I see Rotary International as a generating force of incalculable value.'

This pandemic has brought forth some unintended pluses: better environment, more scientific collaborations, quicker breakthroughs, and dramatic improvements in human life thanks to new biotechnologies and better digital connectivity.

April is Maternal and Child Health (MCH) month. Maternal health refers to the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period. Each stage should be a positive experience, ensuring women and their babies reach their full potential in good health, as healthy children are more likely to become healthy adults. Child health has improved tremendously in recent decades. India's national under-five mortality rate declined from 111 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 39 per 1,000 live births in 2018. India continues a steady march towards achieving UN's Sustainable Development Goals related to maternal and child mortality. And yet challenges abound. Many children die from preventable diseases/conditions like malnutrition, impure water, disease and infection. Ending preventable maternal death must remain our focus.

Through Rotary we can provide critical vaccines that protect against childhood illnesses; combat malnutrition and ensure access to quality healthcare for mothers. Through VTTs for maternal health in developing countries, we've managed to reduce maternal mortality.

MCH requires a multipronged approach including education, nutrition, access to affordable healthcare, safe water, proper sanitation and hygiene and timely treatment. Rotary opens the opportunity to fulfill our MCH mission.

Every mother is important, every child counts.

Dr Bharat Pandya
RI Director, 2019-21

RI Directors

Maternal and child care must for healthy communities



Dear Rotary leaders,

When the going gets tough, the tough get going.

It's a time of great stress and uncertainty. It's also a moment in time when the work we're doing is most critical. We Rotarians have played a great role in the global crisis of Covid-19; both during the crisis and after it.

Do your bit by ensuring and advocating vaccination and maintaining social distancing, the only known way to control Covid. Our job will be extremely important to serve the community which has been battered mentally, physically and financially. I would urge the clubs and Rotarians to help in any which way they can.

Maternal and child health

Children's access to healthcare is important to children themselves, to their families, as well as to society at large. Healthcare can influence children's physical and emotional health, growth and development and their capacity to reach their full potential as adults.

An estimated 5.9 million children under the age of five die each year because of malnutrition, inadequate healthcare and poor sanitation — all of which can be prevented by providing immunisation and antibiotics to newborns, access to essential medical services, and supporting trained healthcare providers for mothers and their children.

So please make high-quality healthcare available to vulnerable mothers and children so that they can live longer and grow stronger. It bears repeating that women are central to healthy families, and ultimately healthy communities... and that children are the future of any nation.

Annappurna Project of RILM

RILM recognised the need for providing nutritious meals to underprivileged children and under the Annapurna project, in partnership with Indian Food Banking Network and KFC, has provided 10,35,700 meals to schoolchildren in seven schools in Bengal in the last three years. It's a project worth ₹60 lakh which continues to provide these meals on a daily basis.

Children are our future, I would urge all clubs to take up child health and nutrition projects for disadvantaged children. It is projects like these which strengthen my belief in the capabilities of Rotarians for doing good in the world. God bless... God speed.

Kamal Sanghvi
RI Director, 2019-21

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The power of partnership

“Make no little plans,” American architect Daniel Burnham said. “They have no magic to stir our blood and probably themselves will not be realised.”

When Rotary heeds Burnham’s advice and follows through with action, we shine. We made big plans when we spearheaded a global initiative to eradicate polio; last year the World Health Organisation’s African region was certified polio-free.

When the coronavirus hit about a year ago, The Rotary Foundation quickly mobilised and awarded 319 Covid specific disaster response grants for \$7.9 million. To date, we have further awarded 317 Covid global grants for about \$24.1 million, which, combined with previously approved global grants that grant sponsors repurposed to support coronavirus response, has made for a total outflow of more than \$32.7 million.

We are now thinking big again, through our programmes of scale grants. We will award a \$2 million grant annually to one project that aligns with one or more of Rotary’s areas of focus. The grant should solve problems for many people in a large geographic area through a measurable and sustainable approach within a three-to five-year period. It also requires like-minded partners who are committed and resourceful. The idea is also to replicate these programmes in different communities around the world, applying the lessons learned.

The Rotary Club of Federal Way, Washington, has made no little plans. As sponsor of the first programmes of scale grant, the club is leading, in partnership with Zambian Rotary clubs and Malaria Partners Zambia, an effort to help end a disease that is widespread in that country. Through the programme, called Partners for a Malaria-Free Zambia, Rotary will help train 60 Zambian district health officials, 382 health facility staff, and 2,500 community health workers to save lives; it will also equip them with the necessary supplies and gear to get the job done. Their aim is no less than reducing malaria by 90 per cent in 10 target districts in two of Zambia’s provinces.

Rotary members are also applying the power of partnering by teaming with several organisations. They include Zambia’s Ministry of Health through its National Malaria Elimination Centre — which will ensure that the programme contributes to the national strategy — as well as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and World Vision, which are also investing substantial resources in co-funding and implementing this \$6 million programme.

This first programmes of scale grant will inspire others and make a great impact in the years ahead. It is just the latest chapter in the story of Rotary, one that recounts how ordinary citizens unite to not only plan big but also take bold action to help others in need. It is a stirring story that you, the dedicated members of Rotary who support The Rotary Foundation, are helping to write.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K R Ravindran', with a horizontal line underneath.

K R Ravindran
Foundation Trustee Chair

Contribute generously to our Annual and Polio Funds



Anthropologist Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

So it is in the Rotary world. Who would have ever thought that Arch Klumph’s idea to set up a Foundation, with a contribution of just \$26.5, would do so much good in the world!

Since 1947, the programme awards have totalled \$4.9 billion (about ₹36,000 crore). Wherever Rotarians identify a need, TRF is ready and willing to assist. Since the Future Vision brought in the new grants structure, our major concentration has been in the six areas of focus, under which the environment was also covered. But after advocacy by several groups, including the Rotary Action Group on Environment Sustainability, TRF made protecting the environment our seventh area of focus.

Like music and art, the love of nature transcends

barriers, geographical or social. As we have no Planet B, we need to do all we can to preserve the environment for future generations. But for this, Rotarians worldwide will have to contribute to TRF for this initiative.

Giving is part of the Indian DNA, but a historic change in polio eradication occurred thanks to giving from every corner of the globe. Today, polio exists in only two countries and we are on the path to a polio-free world. So do give generously to our Annual and Polio Funds. As we observed Women’s Day, I recalled Margaret Thatcher’s words: “If you want something said, ask a man. If you want something done, ask a woman.”

I completely support Rotary’s strong advocacy of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. While this goes far beyond gender equity, let’s begin by giving more women the opportunity to take up leadership roles in Rotary. As Jonathan Schiller said: “Honour women! They entwine and weave heavenly roses in our earthly life.”

Gulam A Vahanvaty
Trustee
The Rotary Foundation

Lemons into lemonade



Rotary held its first virtual convention, which met with great success. For seven days, more than 60,000 attendees listened to a variety of keynote speakers, and at least 75,000 visitors watched one or more of the general sessions that were broadcast live on YouTube in eight languages. The roster of breakout sessions was dramatically expanded, with events held into July. And in the second half of June, when the convention took place, nearly \$1 million was donated to TRF. Rotary adapted and, by doing so, found a way to engage more members than ever.

In January, the RI board of directors made the difficult but prudent decision to convert the 2021 RI Convention to a virtual event. “As an organisation that is at the forefront of eradicating polio and other preventable diseases, we have clear responsibilities in mitigating the threat of Covid-19,” said RI general secretary John Hewko.

This decision was reached in response to the ongoing crisis, but Rotary is committed to using this change as an opportunity. The 2021 Virtual RI Convention, scheduled for June 12–16, will open opportunities for Rotary members who might not have been able to attend an in-person event. The virtual experience is being crafted to offer new ways for participants to engage with Rotary members from around the world. Wherever you are, in June you can be a part of the Virtual RI Convention.

Learn more about the virtual convention
at convention.rotary.org

RID 3232 trains

100 young beauticians & changes their lives

Jaishree



A lesson in waxing.

One hundred young girls will be ready to be inducted as beauticians this June-end, thanks to the women's empowerment committee, *Dhriti*, of RI District 3232. Of these, 20, all of them hearing-and-speech-impaired, received their course completion certificate recently. This is the third of five batches to be trained under the committee's *Project Sundari*. "We wanted to skill them to enhance their earning potential," says its chairperson Sharada Sundaram, adding, "we also facilitate self-employment and job placement for them."

The team has tied up with the Naturals Training Academy which has a chain of beauty salons across Tamil Nadu. "Veena Kumaravel, its founder, is offering the course at a highly subsidised fee — ₹10,000 a student against the regular fee of ₹50,000 — and has promised them jobs in Naturals salons," she adds. District Rotarians from 40 clubs are sponsoring the fees for these trainees from underprivileged families. The first batch of 20 was sponsored by RC Madras West through their trust in memory of PDG Boja Shetty, PDG Rekha Shetty's father. RC Madras sponsored five girls and RC Ambattur eight in the later batches.

"My dream is to introduce the Sundari project to every district on the subcontinent," says Rekha who is the WE team's mentor. She recalls her first brush with the project when her club RC Madras Temple City trained women prisoners in beauty care five years ago.

"When I was appointed Dhriti chair I planned to skill just 20 girls, but DG Muthupalaniappan and PDG Rekha

motivated me and increased the number to 100. It has been a wonderful journey so far and by the year-end, 100 girls will be employed,” smiles Sharada. Of course, she is happiest about the last batch.

The idea to train differently-abled girls came to her several years ago when she went to a beauty parlour, “whose owner Yamuna had employed two such girls, Preeti and Thangam. They would do facials, pedicure and head massage with so much care. She even helped them get married. What she told stayed with me for a long time: it was easier finding them grooms as they were employed. Men were ready to marry them because they were not a burden. So now when I got the opportunity to empower young

girls and women, I grabbed it,” says Sharada.

Most of the girls are from the MGR Janaki College of Arts and Science and its school for special children run by Lata Rajendran, the committee’s vice chairperson. The college’s Rotaractors helped in screening the students for the course based on their aptitude and the family’s economic condition. Basic English knowledge is mandatory to be able to read and decipher instructions given in the cosmetic packages. The package includes skin and hair care, beauty maintenance and bridal basics, with 30 days of intensive classroom sessions, 15 days on-the-job training and an exam to qualify.

Lavanya, a final year BCom graduate from the present batch



Vijayalakshmi interacting with the speech-and-hearing-impaired students.

conveys, in sign language, her excitement as she will be interning at the parlour soon. “Almost all the girls are applying for the internship. Some of them will join after finishing college,” says the trainer Vimala S. Vijayalakshmi, the college PT teacher, accompanies this batch of students to help them coordinate with the trainers at the academy. A basic stipend of ₹7,000 is given to interns. Internship is for two months and there are three levels with a hike

in the stipend as they pass each level, says course coordinator Rajini Bala. “A few months from now, they will be financially strong to pursue advanced course and then there is no stopping them. Eventually, the girls move out to freelance or even set up their own parlours,” she adds. Bridal makeup is the most sought after service which helps them to pocket a handsome sum.

The relaxing of the Covid-induced lockdown has been a godsend for the first batch of 20 girls.



Course coordinator Rajini Bala (L) and trainer Vimala S (R) with their students.



Trainees practise threading.

They all are now offering doorstep services as people are hesitant to visit salons. Meera, a trainee, says she earns ₹20,000 a month and an average of ₹3,000 from each house visit.

“In Rotary, I believe, we should always think of large impactful and scalable projects. The cosmetic industry is a one-billion-dollar industry in India, growing exponentially. This is a vocational training that would help them become entrepreneurs or enable them get a strong foothold in gaining employment,” says DG S Muthupalaniappan.

Enterprising WhatsApp group

Sharada has formed *WE-Jiti* (meaning success), a WhatsApp group of 200 women Rotarians, Anns and Rotaractors to

promote their business or share ideas. It was created in September and has seen roaring business ever since, she says. “From pickles and snacks to jewellery, accessories, apparel and even *bindis*, you have it all here. Vidya, a Rotarian’s wife, markets her home-made organic *kajal*, lipstick, lip balm and lip scrub and they sell like hot cakes. Counselling services are offered for mental health and POCSO Act awareness.” This group has sponsored two girls through crowdfunding.

So far this innovative and energetic team has helped raise funds for 80 students and “for the last batch of 20 girls, we are trying to rope in Nissan and Carborundum Universal to sponsor from their CSR funds. If not, our Plan B will be a district grant,” says the women’s empowerment committee chair. ■

Grow more to do impactful projects: RIPE Shekhar Mehta

V Muthukumaran

Grow Rotary to do more by increasing membership and taking up impactful projects with 4–5 clubs joining together, said RIPE Shekhar Mehta at the Valentine’s Day virtual event hosted by RC Banguio Summer Capital, RID 3790, the Philippines, in partnership with the Synergy Rotary Friendship Alliance.

Addressing a gathering of around 400 Rotary leaders from Asian countries, Mehta said, “dreams are made of crazy thoughts and ideas. What we couldn’t achieve in 17 years, we can do it in the next 17 months, that is, raising the membership to 1.3 million. Get back to your clubs with the message — ‘Each one, get one’; the target is really achievable.” Rotarians look for opportunities even during challenging times and in a way, “this pandemic is a gift to us to grow membership,” he said. While it took decades for developing vaccines for polio and Ebola, “we are able to come out with a Covid vaccine in just nine months.” In the pandemic times, clubs must engage their members through virtual meetings and we can even have hybrid clubs that hold both in-person and virtual meetings for their members, he said.

Impactful projects

Having joined Rotary at 25, “I am really blessed to have been directly involved in 2,500 paediatric heart surgeries, while across India, Rotary clubs would have done around 20,000 surgeries for poor children.” he said, and highlighted his home club, RC Calcutta Mahanagar’s endeavour to take heart surgeries of three

Afghan children, while another child in Africa is waiting for the same.

Global grants for providing artificial limbs, building gender-segregated toilets, literacy programmes, water and sanitation facilities in remote villages have brought dignity and self-respect to thousands of beneficiaries, he said. Through the Rotary India Literacy Mission, over 115 million children have now got daily access to Rotary’s audio-visual programme. “Talks are on with the Nepal government to replicate a similar e-learning programme there,” Mehta said, and urged Rotarians take up such initiatives in South Asia. “An African country will be adopting our e-learning programme with a pilot project soon for which I am in talks with their education minister,” he informed.

Empowering girl children

While the (net adjusted) enrolment ratio is 96 per cent at primary schools in India, by the time they reach Class 10, dropout rate touches 50 per cent, with girls being a majority. Replying to a delegate’s

question on other ways to empower girls, Mehta said, “Rotary clubs can take up bridge courses, free tuitions to bring back girls who had dropped out of schools, donate bicycles, solar lanterns to facilitate their studies and even teach self-defence techniques.” Eco-friendly reusable sanitary napkins can be distributed to girls and a counselling helpline can be arranged for them, he suggested. With age relaxation for Rotaractors, “we may look at combined membership of both Rotary and Rotaract clubs in future,” he said.

While there will be no funding for Covid vaccination as decided by the RI board, “Rotary clubs can take up Covid advocacy and carry out support work by joining hands with local governments.” TRF Trustee Sang Koo Yun from Korea, RIDEs Mahesh Kotbagi, A S Venkatesh, DG Jesus Sama, RID 3790, PDG Rolando Villanueva, Philippines and PDGs from ASEAN districts were present at the meet. ■



Covid-19 has inflicted all kinds of horrors on our world. But one of the most horrendous blows this tiny virus will inflict on us is the terrifying prospect of a world where “11 million girls may not return to school this year due to the unprecedented disruption in schooling,” said Yasmin Ali Haque, UNICEF, country head, India, addressing Rotary zone Institute *The Odyssey*. This estimate was made by UNESCO.

Speaking on ‘Girl child education—the only solution’, she said the education of girls goes “beyond getting girls into schools. It is also about creating an environment where girls learn and feel safe. An environment that provides an opportunity to access and complete education and at the same time inculcate the socio-economic and life skills necessary to navigate and adapt to a changing world.” It is also about enabling girls/young women to make decisions about their own life and to contribute to communities and the wider world.

Stressing the need to ensure that every girl, and boy as well, gets quality education, she said, “this is even more critical in a world ravaged by Covid. Even before the Covid pandemic, 30 million children were out of schools in India, of whom 40 per cent are estimated to be adolescent girls.”



11 million girls might never return to schools post-Covid

Rasheeda Bhagat



Yasmin Ali Haque, UNICEF, country head, India

With lower access to technology, digital schooling will further disengage girls from education and widen education inequality and existing learning barriers, and increase the gender gap in education.

Also, Yasmin added, median data indicates that the years a girl spends in school is only 4.4 compared to seven years for boys. “This indicates the threat to decades of work in gender equality and also puts girls around the world to the risk of adolescent pregnancy, early and forced marriage and violence.”

India, as we all know, has one of the largest shares of child brides and this is predicted to rise because of the pandemic. “Childline India (Foundation) has reported a 17 per cent increase in distress calls related

to early marriage of girls in June and July 2020. This, compared to 2019. For many girls, school is more than a key to a better future. It is a lifeline, although a fragile one.”

Digital gender divide

Another concern UNICEF’s India head raised pertains to the disturbing “digital gender divide” which this pandemic had unveiled. “The move to remote learning during the pandemic puts more barriers in the learning for girls. There exists a huge gender gap

in the use of mobile phones in India, where only 21 per cent of women are mobile phone users compared to 42 per cent men.”

With a lower access to technology, digital schooling will further disengage girls from education and further widen education inequality and existing learning barriers, and increase the gender gap in education. “Girls will be discriminated much more than boys in access to technology, and will be burdened with even more household chores and early marriage. Girls from marginalised groups face even more discrimination in their access to education.” There was evidence that girls who receive education are less likely to marry young, contribute to the economy and communities and share livelihood responsibilities with men, she added.

Thriving and resilient societies can only become a reality where both the genders get equal opportunities

For many girls, school is more than a key to a better future. It is a lifeline, although a fragile one.

to fulfil their potential. Education remains a key in preparing children to face this challenging world.

She added that as schools closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic, UNICEF provided financial and technical support at national and state levels to strengthen capacity for the continuity of learning and to plan for the reopening of schools. “This has resulted in 59 million children, 49 per cent being girls, across 17 states to access remote learning opportunities which are no-tech, low-tech and also high-tech.” UNICEF is also working to support teacher education.

Apart from a life skills measurement tool that has been rolled out for five states, a career guidance portal has also been launched by several state governments, enabling more than 17 million girls and boys to access higher education, scholarships, skill development programmes, internship and apprenticeship opportunities.

In conclusion, Yasmin said that sustained effort is required to ensure that girls continue to be engaged in learning when schools remain closed, by providing them access to technology. We also have to ensure that girls are given the opportunity to learn “at their convenience”.

While advocating a reduction in the school fees for girls, she said that “all plans to reopen schools should be gender responsive and ensure a safe and supportive environment for girls to return to schools. We should educate both teachers and parents to end discrimination and early marriage of girls.” ■



Covid protection toolkits for Delhi autorickshaws

Team Rotary News

Covid protection kits were presented to autorickshaw drivers to protect commuters from coronavirus while travelling in the three-wheelers in Delhi. Titled *Rickshaw mein suraksha*, the mega campaign by RC Delhi Restoring Smiles, RID 3011, was launched by Delhi health minister

Satyendra Jain. The project was executed with CSR support from SBI Life Insurance Company, Delhi Region.

Speaking on the occasion, DG Sanjiv Rai Mehra said the project would install the recommended Covid sanitisation tools in autos across Delhi to ensure the safety of people. “We are giving pedal



Delhi Minister of Health Satyendra Jain and SBI Life Insurance regional director Rajeev Srivastava give a certificate to an autorickshaw driver. DG Sanjiv Rai Mehra is also seen.

stands, masks, sanitisers, gloves, and other necessary safety tools to the drivers,” he said. The project will enhance Rotary’s public

image as the vehicles will carry the Rotary logo and the toolkits will create a sense of safety among commuters. ■

District Wise TRF Contributions as on February 2021

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contributions
India					
2981	65,822	4,740	12,128	0	82,690
2982	28,217	16,283	20,770	46,513	111,783
3000	55,163	24,146	20	14,912	94,241
3011	57,555	10,571	40,653	187,479	296,258
3012	12,600	2,480	0	8,532	23,612
3020	156,098	57,171	32,000	2,726	247,994
3030	42,397	2,284	25,743	143,546	213,971
3040	4,087	240	0	35,137	39,463
3053	10,083	3,370	0	101,412	114,865
3054	73,826	3,476	0	367,580	444,882
3060	53,816	91	75,405	139,546	268,858
3070	32,884	897	0	43,938	77,719
3080	50,550	12,886	0	(20,261)	43,175
3090	32,899	500	0	(736)	32,663
3100	56,195	252	0	14,667	71,114
3110	27,685	200	0	0	27,885
3120	6,588	1,769	0	8,913	17,270
3131	116,667	41,214	109,000	585,354	852,235
3132	19,133	2,615	5,000	6,451	33,198
3141	384,611	43,158	95,568	1,037,496	1,560,832
3142	194,364	22,968	101	3,001	220,435
3150	101,346	9,820	147,720	34,357	293,243
3160	20,779	8,367	16	0	29,162
3170	33,479	23,421	1,240	168,514	226,654
3181	47,967	4,331	0	7,050	59,348
3182	65,325	4,312	0	16,207	85,844
3190	129,944	65,779	25,000	145,853	366,576
3201	95,196	29,862	0	237,336	362,394
3202	43,832	23,148	8,468	21,623	97,072
3211	13,171	3,441	0	135,841	152,453
3212	16,300	45,644	14	108,733	170,691
3231	443	437	0	20,685	21,565
3232	28,454	35,805	2,000	744,390	810,649
3240	96,810	24,375	0	49,328	170,513
3250	37,358	4,414	0	3,773	45,546
3261	85,109	1,108	0	7,360	93,577
3262	26,712	2,699	0	0	29,411
3291	42,121	7,561	14,258	57,536	121,476
India Total	2,365,587	545,833	615,106	4,484,792	8,011,318
3220 Sri Lanka	142,353	19,792	26,000	15,435	203,581
3271 Pakistan	8,626	97,291	0	208,347	314,264
3272 Pakistan	64,551	15,281	0	1,168	80,999
3281 Bangladesh	167,534	9,326	29,000	208,964	414,825
3282 Bangladesh	60,144	5,707	0	8,270	74,122
3292 Nepal	253,654	9,317	0	212,393	475,364
South Asia Total	3,062,449	702,548	670,106	5,139,369	9,574,472

Source: RI South Asia Office

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RC Pune Metro sets up a smart class for blind students

Kiran Zehra

What began as a one-time project of setting up a smart class in a school for the visually impaired in March last year turned out to become a passion for the members of RC Pune Metro, RID 3131. “We are looking for more such schools to transform their classrooms into smart class with the device called Annie — an innovative technology-based solution for helping visually challenged students to learn reading and typing in Braille,” says club president Makarand Phadke.

Last year just before the lockdown was imposed the club set up this innovative facility for teaching Braille to 135 students at the Jagriti Blind Girls School at Alandi near Pune. Phadke recalls the expression of joy overflowing from the faces of the students. “The experience was both successful and rewarding and our club decided to look for opportunities to set up similar facilities in other schools.”

About the device Annie he says that it is the world’s first digital Braille teaching device named after Helen Keller’s teacher Ann Sullivan. “As many of us know, Braille is the universally accepted script with letters made up of raised dots, which blind people can feel with their fingers and read.” Developed by Thinkerbell Labs, Bengaluru, these devices have been installed in learning centres and schools for the blind in partnership with the government, voluntary organisations and progressive schools.

“When we found out about a school at Bhosari, near Pune run by



A little boy shares his experiences about Annie device with help from Project Convenor Shobhana Paranjpye and Thinkerbell engineer Saif Sheikh. Seated on the dais (R to L) DGE Pankaj Shah, club president Makarand Phadke, Trust chairman Shantilal Lunkad and vice chairman Pushpa Lunkad.

Patashibai Ratanchand Manav Kalyan Trust for visually-impaired boys we visited the school and discovered that the trust not only provides education for the boys but also boarding, lodging, uniforms, games and sports facilities, computer training and laundry facilities.” What was more heartening, says Phadke, was the warm welcome by the school’s principal Pandurang Salunkhe. “Sightless himself, he was happy about the idea of the smart class. He said that it would help the 100 students enrolled in their school.”

Many of the school’s alumni have earned graduation degrees and were working in government offices, banks and other organisations.

The club set up a smart class with 10 devices at the school. “Each device

costs ₹64,000 and with the efforts of project convenor Shobhana Paranjpye, Rtn Varsha Dawle and the Annie Smart Class team, who worked tirelessly for nearly six-months during the lockdown to plan and complete the project, we could raise the funds for the devices,” beams the president.

While the school agreed to fund for two devices, RC Shivajinagar sponsored one. The smart class was inaugurated by DGE Pankaj Shah, along with Shantilal Lunkad, chairman of the school’s trust and a charter member of RC Pooana. At the inauguration Saif Sheikh, one of the creators of the Annie devices at Thinkerbell Labs, encouraged the students to talk about their experience of using the device. ■

A fun way to learn about River Ganga

Rasheeda Bhagat

To give the slum children of their city an exposure to a slice of Indian culture, members of the Rotary Club of Allahabad Midtown, RID 3120, conceived of a special project — take about 100 of these children, in small batches to the country's

first state-of-the-art Ganga Gallery.

This gallery was inaugurated in 2011 in Prayagraj at the National Academy of Sciences India (NASI). This unique museum houses an interesting range of exhibits that offer the viewer a 360 degree explanation of all aspects of River Ganga.

Says Dr Divya Bartaria, president of the club, “Our main aim was to sensitise these children about a wonderful heritage they had inherited, but which, over the years, had been allowed to rot away for so many different reasons, the main one being that we are yet to inculcate pride in our national treasures.”

In a discussion with the club members, the executive secretary, NASI, Dr Neeraj, explained to them that though “the holy Ganga occupies a unique position due to its socio-economic, cultural, scientific and ecological significance, the very existence of this river is under threat due to the



Children enjoy sumptuous lunch at a club member's house.

enormously increasing loads of pollutants that are dumped in it year after year.” Hence the council of NASI decided to make the people aware of the need for conservation and restoration of the Ganga by establishing a Ganga gallery, using a scientific approach in order to highlight the religious, cultural, socio-economic and scientific aspects of the river.

Move over to the Rotary club; the members had to find transport to pick up the children from their homes and take them to the Ganga Gallery and then drop them back home. In came a good Samaritan in the form of club member Arun Bagga, who



Children learn about the various facets of River Ganga at the Ganga Gallery.

offered his Maruti cab, aptly titled 'Blessings', for the ferrying of these children free of cost. "It was a privilege for me to offer my free cab services



towards this endeavour,” he says. Seeing its success, and the interest and joy of the children, both Divya, he and other club members have decided to continue this project, extending its reach to more children.

As batches of children were taken to this museum, and were explained the need to be conscious of and treasure and cherish their heritage, Priti, a student of Class 12 and living at the Gau Ghat slum, expressed her happiness on two counts; first to get an outing such as this during the pandemic, and secondly, to learn something new about the river that they all had taken for granted. After the visit to the museum, each batch of children was taken to a Rotarian’s house and given a sumptuous lunch, and a return gift too.



Added Bharati, one of the children: “It was really fun being a part of this project. We enjoyed the winter outing and also got an overwhelming experience with Rotarians’ families.” All the children cherished the moment by playing games, exploring nature, having refreshments, sharing

experiences, and generally having a good time, added Divya. “And in the process, we all learnt something so valuable too.”

Coordinator and guide at NASI, Meera Shukla, was honest when she said that “although the children were not really capable to grasp all the scientific aspects of this museum, it

was good to see that their curiosity has been roused. They were asking questions and trying to understand the various facets about the river, something they had not been exposed to earlier.”

But as with all practical experiences, the children were fascinated with the cultural, religious, economic, socio-scientific and related aspects of the river Ganga that are explained graphically here. As the gallery is equipped with landscapes and sculptures, animated models, multimedia graphics and designs, the myths and legends connected to the origin and voyage of the holy river, it gripped their interest. Keeping in mind social distancing norms, in each trip only 6–7 children, in the age group 8–18 were taken. Started in November, this project has already covered 100 children. ■



New Rotary models being worked out: **Barry Rassin**

V Muthukumaran

Rotary will have a robust structure 10 years down the line with 45 regional boards managing its global affairs, while district governors will be playing an advocacy role to motivate clubs for membership growth and engagement, said PRIP Barry Rassin, chairman, Shaping Rotary's Future Committee. This panel has recommended certain "far-reaching changes to restructure the organisation but we are open to suggestions and inputs to accomplish these changes to sustain growth," he said.

Addressing the monthly virtual meet hosted by the Synergy Rotary Friendship Alliance jointly with one of its partner clubs, this time with RC Dhulikhel, RID 3292, Rassin said Rotary's core values will remain the same, "but we will create a structure that will enable us to do even more than what we have done so far in a much better manner." In the coming years, diversity, equity and inclusion will drive Rotary's expansion, he noted, and "at the same time there is a growing desire for regionalisation among the 34 zones." His team is working on an action plan that nurtures leadership qualities among aspiring Rotarians; with each zone having an average membership of 35,000 there is a need to differentiate them on the basis of culture,

demography and other unique features without compromising on Rotary values, he explained.

New structure

Rotary clubs at the bottom of the pyramid need a flexible structure that enables them to engage with their members, act on their aspirations and manage retention. The new governance model is being worked out with emphasis on clubs. "At present there is a disconnect between clubs and RI as most of them don't know our strategic goals and priorities. Long-term changes are being studied for district governors," Rassin said. In the next six years or so, some of the models will be "plugged in to see how it works across regions, say from Australia to Britain and the US. After measuring their outcomes, we will tweak it further to suit our needs."

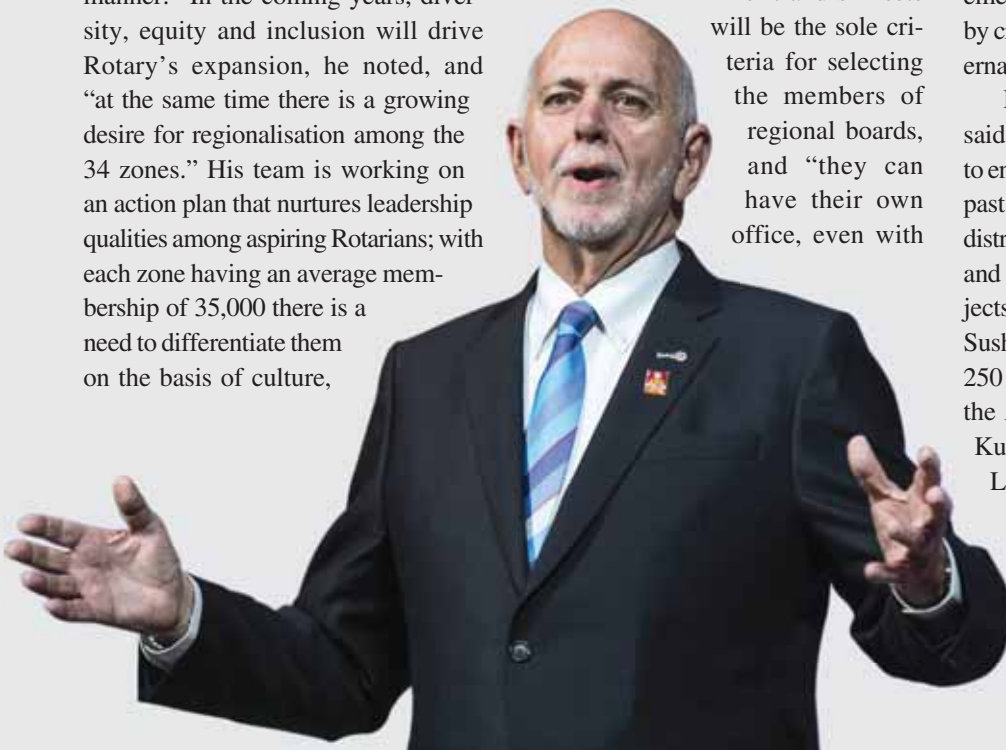
Merit and skillsets will be the sole criteria for selecting the members of regional boards, and "they can have their own office, even with

paid staff, but without burdening the clubs with additional dues." In another 10 years time, the members at the RI board and TRF trustees must reflect the diversity and equity that are being envisioned, he said.

Rotaractors bring in a different set of dynamics and enthusiasm to Rotary and "now they are being treated as equals with Rotarians. While Rotaract and Rotary clubs need to work together, it is important that Rotaractors do not lose their identity. Of course with age relaxation, they can join Rotary clubs whenever they feel like doing so."

TRF Trustee Dean Rohrs from Canada said, "we are just stepping out of an elementary plan which needs to be adjusted with changes based on suggestions and inputs from Rotarians." With the virtual platforms sweeping the world, Rotary needs to adapt to the emerging new opportunities for growth by creating a new flexible model of governance, she said.

DG Rajiv Pokharel, RID 3292, said clubs must do impactful projects to enhance their public image and induct past Rotaractors in large numbers. His district is doing 103 global grant projects and has got approval for 27 such projects this year. RC Dhulikhel president Sushil Bhanju Shrestha welcomed the 250 virtual delegates from Europe and the ASEAN countries. PDGs Keshav Kunwar (Nepal), Gowri Rajan (Sri Lanka) and Sunil K Zachariah (India) spoke. RAC Kathmandu University of Medical Science president Roshni Prajapati compered the event. ■



Preparing district leaders to lead

Jaishree

At Lakshya — the annual training workshop for the DGEs, DGNs and incoming district chairs for different Rotary verticals, convenor and RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi said, “This is the first phase and the second one will include orientation and goal-setting sessions in membership, TRF and public image.”

Senior Rotary leaders such as RIPE Shekhar Mehta, PRIPs Rajendra Saboo, Kalyan Banerjee, PRIDs Ashok Mahajan, Panduranga Setty, C Basker, PT Prabhakar and Manoj Desai, RIDs Bharat Pandya, Kamal Sanghvi, TRF Trustee Gulam Vahanvaty, and RIDEs Mahesh Kotbagi and A S Venkatesh briefed the DGEs.

Saboo urged the delegates to have a “single-minded focus on making your year a grand success and transform people’s lives in all ways possible.” He recalled the 1978 Rotary convention

when Clem Renouf was RIPE and Jim Bomar was formally nominated as RI president. “When I congratulated Bomar, he said, “Raja, my first responsibility is to make Clem’s year successful. That will be the foundation for my year.” Addressing the DGNs, he added, “Likewise, you have to consider your year as a preparatory and support your predecessors.”

“I am delighted to be with the Rotary leadership of my country. Your only *lakshya* will be to provide an outstanding, innovative year of service in Rotary. Make it unforgettable,” said Banerjee, and remembered PRID Sushil Gupta’s immense contribution to water and sanitation programmes. He recommended that the leaders give extra attention to environmental solutions and urged them to read Bill Gates’ book *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster*.

The seed for the training seminar was sowed during Basker’s tenure as *Disha*, recalled Kotbagi. Basker appreciated the curriculum of the training seminars as “meaningful and effective for the incoming leaders. In 2017, we felt the need for training to motivate the district chairs for the various Rotary verticals through a series of training seminars with the idea that they will train the club officers for best results.”

Dream big

“As you set your goals, remember they should be stretch goals,” said RIPE Mehta. He has

always been urging Rotary leaders to dream big and set bigger goals. “Do not fear failure. I would rather you make goals that you cannot complete at the end of your year than make smaller targets which are easily doable. Ships may be safe in the harbour but that’s not what they are meant for; they are meant to be on the high seas,” he added. He encouraged the district leaders to plan their goals big enough “to contribute in nation-building.” Citing the success of literacy projects, he said, “this shows how much we can achieve if we put our hearts and minds into the work we do.”

Children at an Asha Kiran centre in Rajasthan.



Have a single-minded focus on making your year a grand success and transform people's lives in all ways possible.

Rajendra Saboo
Past RI President

Rotary should strive to do projects which are 10 per cent of what the government can do, he said. "So if the GoI is putting up one crore toilets, then we should do 10 lakh, and that is possible. If the GoI has a target of creating 100,000 check dams, let's do 10,000. If the number is broken down to all districts, it is doable.

How many organisations have the courage to say we will do 10 per cent of your job?" Apart from the government, Rotarians should also start looking at other partners. "We have the power and the magic to change lives. The magic will happen when the wheel begins to roll and let's together drive the wheel so that humanity thrives," said Mehta.

Empowering girls

Stressing on his presidential emphasis — empowering girls — he

**Lakshya Convenor
and RIDE Mahesh
Kotbagi**



pointed out that there is a huge gender disparity and discrimination in our part of the world and it is our responsibility to sow the seeds so that the future generation will reap the fruits just as it happened in polio eradication when it began in 1985. Little did they expect the scale it has achieved. "We will do service projects for all children, but our focus will be on girls. We have a responsibility to invest in initiatives that advance education and skill development in girls and young women. It drives sustainable growth, elevates innovation through diverse thinking and deepens understanding of communities."

There is no specific goal-setting in this area as it encompasses all areas of focus. "But I urge you to appoint a chair exclusively for this programme," he said to the DGEs. The DGNs should also be involved in projects related to girl

child empowerment as "RIPN Jennifer Jones has expressed interest in continuing the programme during her year."

The RI board has approved the recommendation by Mehta for a special task force for empowering women; RIDE Venkatesh is one of its three members. The other two are from the US and Switzerland.

"It is important that we Rotarians create a path for the development of girl children and women," said Sanghvi, as they form 48 per cent of the nation's population.

Gender discrimination is not something only the developing nations face; it is a universal issue existing in various forms, and includes poor menstrual hygiene management too, said Venkatesh. He urged the leaders to look at options to empower girls through better hygiene management and availability of enough water in homes, so that girls need not be sent to fetch



water and waste precious time they could spend in school; empower women with vocational training; and promote skill development. “Understand the need of the community and extend support accordingly. Add the dimension of empowering girls when you implement any of the Rotary focus areas.”

Supporting environment

The district leaders were given orientation in implementing this new area of Rotary focus. Vahanvaty, moderating the session, pointed out the four areas that Rotary would initially focus on — Solid waste management, Tree planting, Awareness campaigns and Renewable (solar) energy — “STAR for short. We must act now; it is urgent, as the future of our children and grandchildren is at stake,” he said and quoted

Your only *lakshya* will be to provide an outstanding, innovative year of service in Rotary.

Kalyan Banerjee
Past RI President

UN General Secretary Ban ki Moon: Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth... these are one and the same fight. We must connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health, food security and women's empowerment. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all.

TRF will open global grants for environment-related projects from July 1, said Vahanvaty.

PDG Ajay Gupta, national chair for this area of focus, shared project ideas on the different elements of STAR with the district leaders. It was an interactive session where best practices were shared. Developing mangroves in coastal areas, solutions for reducing crop burning that is prevalent in north India, encouraging industries to install solar panels, solar and biogas crematoriums were some of the ideas exchanged at the session. Mehta invited Rotarians with expertise in the field to be part of the national team and contribute ideas.

Goals were set for all the districts and Kotbagi said that they will be monitored quarterly and deviations will be set right.

RID 3131 PDG Ravee Dhotre was the *Lakshya* chair. ■

Covid vaccination: Rotary lends a hand

Ashok Mahajan

Little did we realise when the first reports of the coronavirus began trickling in Jan 2020 that the entire world would be turned topsy-turvy.

The GoI is now faced with the monumental task of vaccinating 1.35 billion people. It is a daunting task, unlike other vaccines which have been administered to specific segments of the population like children below five years. No government exercise, except

the National Census and the Lok Sabha elections, comes anywhere close to the scale of this Covid vaccination drive.

Since the Pulse Polio immunisation programme started in India in 1995, Rotary has gained immense experience in this field. It was therefore fitting that Rotary's leadership in India offered its hand of partnership to the GoI for the Covid vaccination. I was invited to take charge as chairman,

Rotary India's Covid Task Force.

Following a series of meetings with officials from the Union health ministry and the Niti Aayog, the Task Force, under the mentorship of RIPE Shekhar Mehta, has appointed 13 zonal coordinators for all the Rotary districts in India. We have a three-fold task ahead: 1) Create awareness of the Covid vaccine; 2) Overcome pockets of public resistance caused

by misinformation; and 3) Provide logistical support wherever required. I urge the readers to trust the government, have faith in modern science and get themselves vaccinated when their turn arrives. Please do not let any of your friends fall prey to negative information spread by ill-informed sources.

The writer is a past Rotary International director and chairman, Rotary India's Covid Task Force.

A village school gets a facelift

Team Rotary News

Club President M Nandakumar, Secretary Rajesh Candamoury and project convener DP Raghavan hand over a carrom board to the school authorities.



The focussed efforts of the Rotarians of RC Pondicherry Port, RID 2981, since 2018 to upgrade a government primary school in Poothurai, a village on the Tamil Nadu-Puducherry border, has resulted in

the school getting new classrooms, a library, toilet blocks and drinking water facility. More recently, the club members donated a computer to the school. “Next, we are planning to install play equipment in the school ground. The

children have been asking for it,” says club secretary Rajesh Candamoury.

The 25-year-old club has been associated with the school for almost six years. The school was in a dilapidated state then and “each time our member Srikant Sivaraman passed by it, on his way to attend our club meeting, its condition would affect him so much that he would suggest that our club should extend support to renovate it and make it attractive for the children,” says Candamoury. Initially the club members visited the school and distributed stationery kits and sweets to the students on special occasions and “with Srikant’s generous support we undertook to upgrade

the school.” Around ₹20 lakh was spent over the four years when the club slowly added facilities to the school.

It is the only school in the village and has 135 children studying upto Class 5. “We will be ready to support it if it adds more classes as there is enough space in the campus,” he says.

The club supports RILM’s Asha Kiran programme in a big way and has sponsored the education of 66 children with a total contribution of ₹1.65 lakh. “While all of us collectively sponsored 33 children, club president M Nandakumar matched it with an equal amount to support 33 more children,” says the secretary. ■



A computer being given to the school.

African nations to replicate RILM's digital classroom

V Muthukumar

At the goal-setting virtual seminar *Lakshya* RIPE Shekhar Mehta urged the incoming district governors to recommend to the state governments RILM's e-learning curriculum being telecast in Hindi and English for 10 crore students from Class 1–12 through the PM e-Vidya TV and Diksha App so that they could be translated into regional languages to benefit 25 crore schoolchildren in India. "The Diksha portal — with 10 per cent of it having Rotary content — alone got over 50 crore hits in the last six months," he said, and added that the governments of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Sikkim and Odisha had approached RILM for extending the e-curriculum designed with the NCERT support to their local schools. Besides the GoI channel, six digital service providers such as Tata Sky, Airtel and Jio TV are telecasting the audio-visual content. "Soon, a pilot e-learning will be done in Togo, Africa, which has sought World Bank funding. Based on its outcome, we will take this up with 10 more African nations," said Mehta. RILM would negotiate with suppliers and contractors "to

procure material at discounted price for Happy Schools and get work done at concessional rates," he said.

RID Kamal Sanghvi, who is also RILM chairman, urged the DGEs and DLCCs to "dream outrageously with strength, patience and passion to make India fully literate by 2025."

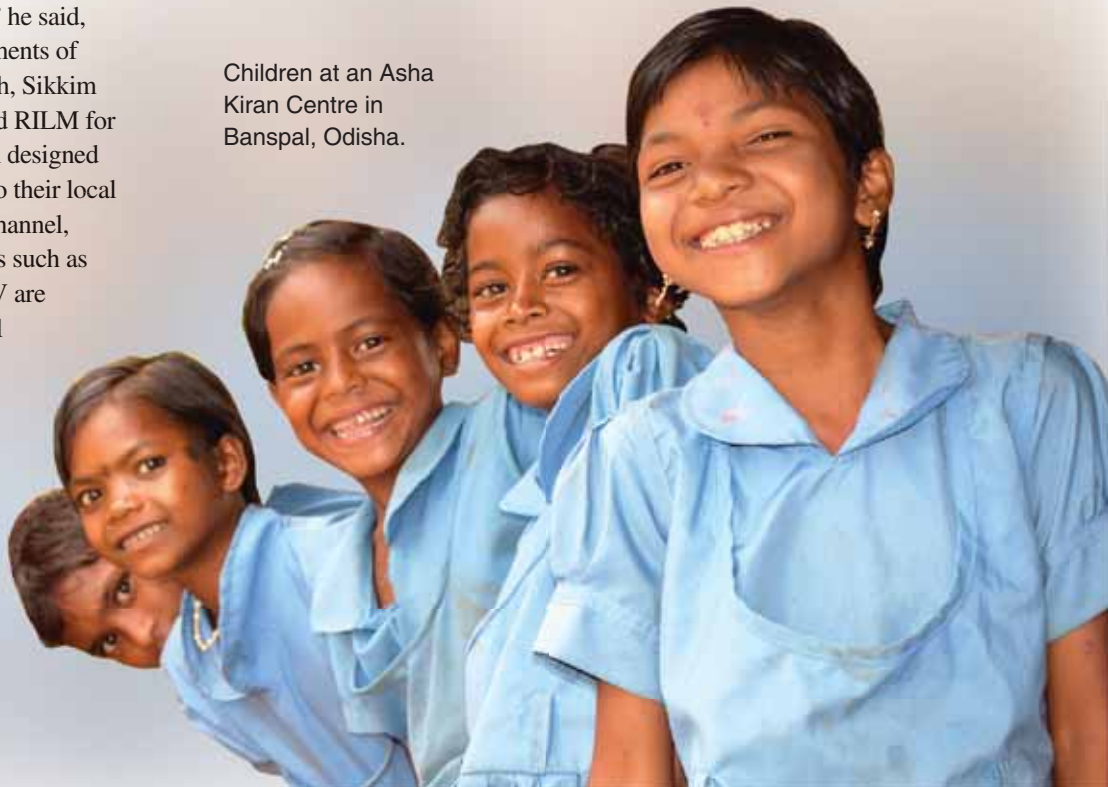
Even during the Covid lockdown RILM had curated probably one of the world's largest e-learning programmes reaching out to 10 crore children and over 100,000 teachers became digital savvy through online training sessions.

Education of girl children ranked six among the top determinants that could tackle the adverse impacts of climate change, according to a study by climate scientists in 2017, he said. In his presentation, RILM chief strategy officer Biswajit Ghosh said that over 16,000 schools, 20 lakh students and 45,000 teachers benefitted from the donation of e-learning devices and hardware by Rotary clubs.

Adult Literacy

In a pilot programme from 2015–18, Rotary made 87,870 illiterate adults into literate persons through a Diksha programme where a student volunteer taught an adult to read, write and do simple arithmetic. "We formed partnerships with groups like Brahmakumaris, Bharat Scouts and private schools and introduced new programmes like Vidya, Shiksha and Swabhimaan in adult literacy to cover five crore beneficiaries in the next five years," said Ghosh.

Children at an Asha Kiran Centre in Banspal, Odisha.





Learners at an adult literacy centre in Sitarampur, West Bengal.

With 28.7 crore adults illiterate, 37 per cent of global total, India leads the world in adult illiteracy, he said.

RILM has developed a primer for a functional literacy course which is being translated into regional languages, said Aapga Singh, head, Adult Literacy, RILM. “We are forging

partnerships at the regional-level to achieve the target.”

Project Dignity is training over 1,000 widows and single women on vocational skills through five global grants (under Adult Literacy), said Jhilam Roychowdhury, programme director, RILM. “Under Saksham Bharat, a pilot in 10 cities with Apollo Medskills is training over

140 young adults in value-added medical services,” she said.

Asha Kiran

In the first phase, Rotary worked with 33 NGOs across 12 states to identify 37,436 children who had either dropped out of school or never attended one and “we mainstreamed 35,078 of them in government schools,” said Jhilam. Rotary has set a target of sending back to school 100,000 children in the next five years through state-level partnerships. Anshu Bery, deputy director, RILM, said that 2,964 government schools have been converted into Happy Schools and over 3,000 libraries were created. Under *Padho Bharat*, each club is encouraged to do at least one Happy School project with a library. RIDEs Mahesh Kotbagi, A S Venkatesh also spoke. ■

Doing good with TRF help

Blood Bank on wheels

Team Rotary News



From L: PDG B A Muruganathan; Rotary IMA Blood Bank chairman Dr Sendhilkumaran; RC Tirupur Smart City president M Premanand; PDG A Karthikeyan; RC Tirupur Metal Town president Sivachandran; project chairman K Ganeshamoorthy; DGN B Elankumaran and DGE K Shanmugasundaram.

A mobile Rotary IMA Blood Bank was flagged off by RC Tirupur Smart City, RID 3202, through a global grant project called ‘The Life on Wheels’.

The well-equipped van designed at a cost of ₹41.59 lakh has facility to receive blood donations from three persons simultaneously and can store up to 150 units of blood. It can collect 100 units of blood a day.

“This vehicle will help us to create awareness on blood donation through its public address system, hold camps in remote, rural areas and enhance Rotary’s public image,” said project chairman K Ganeshamoorthy.

While the club roped in RC Wuse Central Abuja, Nigeria, RID 9125, as its international partner, RCs Tirupur South and Tirupur Metal Town were the associate partners for the project. ■

Project Positive Health creates young advocates of healthy living

Kiran Zehra

Calling *Project Positive Health* (PPH), a “great project,” RIPE Shekhar Mehta congratulated RID Bharat Pandya on its success. “The highest number of global grants are given for health projects. In the next five years, focus on developing and doubling these projects and at the same time raise awareness on brand Rotary.” Speaking at the health session of the goal-setting virtual session *Lakshya*, he said, “let’s talk about the lives we’ve changed and end with showcasing Rotary’s brand to the world.”

The data collected from health camps conducted by the clubs should

be used to form partnerships with local health centres and government agencies, he said.

In his presentation, RID Bharat Pandya said, “medicine is the only profession which works day and night to decrease its clientele. The ultimate aim is to remove the need for a physician.” Being a surgeon, he always believed in curative healthcare. But PPH has made it clear that the future of healthcare lies in preventive healthcare, he said. The biggest killer he warned is “SOS — salt, oil and sugar, leading to obesity, hypertension and diabetes, which together account for the big NCDs causing 60 per cent of deaths

in India.” Improper lifestyle, stress and lack of physical exercise were to be blamed, said Pandya.

Young advocates

The plan is to first conduct awareness programmes in schools as part of PPH. “We are targeting around 4,000 schools this year, and 8,000 next year to create young advocates of healthy life.” Health camps, Rotary Family Health Days, and vaccination drives for cervical cancer, rubella, and hepatitis B are also part of this mega programme. “While we are working towards TB prevention and elimination by 2030, PM Narendra Modi has a more

RIPE Shekhar Mehta (seated right) and PDG Ravi Vadlamani (left) reach shelter kits to disaster victims in Guntur (file photo).



ambitious target and wants to eliminate TB in India by 2025. Through PPH we can play a vital role in achieving this goal,” he said. On drug addiction, he said “50–60 per cent of the youth in Punjab and a few other states are affected by drugs and every 10 seconds one person dies in India because of nicotine or tobacco.” Working with the Drug De-addiction RAG could be of great help, he suggested.

PDG Bal Inamdar pointed out that all Rotary health programmes have been “carefully selected for the next five years with two things in common — they either give life or change lives.” Some of these projects include programmes on avoidable blindness, dialysis centres, paediatric heart surgeries, mobile clinics, skin banks and organ donation.

Covid and India

Covid Vaccination Task Force chairman PRID Ashok Mahajan said, “we need volunteers who can tap into the resources of big organisations, use their infrastructure and raise funds for the cause. The Aditya Birla Group has contributed ₹15 lakh towards the vaccination drive.” Wherever there is local resistance to vaccination, he asked the DGEs to “highlight its efficacy. Our advocacy skills were proved in breaking down the resistance during



RI Director Bharat Pandya.

our polio eradication programme. Our expertise and network in handling polio immunisation will be of immense value to the government,” he said.

There is no way we can bring back the people we lost to Covid, said Mahajan. “But we can ensure the safety of the ones who are with us by practising personal hygiene, social distancing, wearing a mask, and following WHO guidelines. It is every individual’s responsibility to stop the spread of coronavirus.” PRID Manoj Desai moderated the session.

Disaster management

PDG Kishore Kumar Cherukumalli highlighted the RRR (Rescue, Relief and Rehab) programmes for disaster management that the clubs can take up in case of a natural calamity.

Briefing the DGEs on the Shelter Kit programme, he said, “this partnership for disaster relief enables Rotarians to take action by

connecting their community directly with disaster-affected communities around the world.” Adding to this suggestion, RIPE Mehta said, “with the help of shelter kits we have been able to provide emergency shelter to families who have lost their homes in natural disasters, helping them rebuild their lives.” A few DGEs offered to store the shelter kits in their industrial warehouse and others mooted the idea of creating a similar disaster-relief kit. But Mehta pointed out that to maintain quality and build a Rotary brand “a centralised approach will be appropriate.”

DGE J Sridhar, RID 3232, highlighted his district’s *Rotary Ready for Rescue* initiative “which aims to provide food, shelter, medicine and other necessities to disaster survivors. We have a 45-member team and a Rotary Disaster Plan and Disaster Management Fund kept aside for emergency which will enable us to sustain this project.” ■

Medicine is the only profession
which works day and night
to decrease its clientele. The
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need for a physician.

Bharat Pandya
RI Director

Concentrate on WASH projects

RIPE Shekhar Mehta

V Muthukumar

Rotary India
Sanitation
Mission
Chairman
Ramesh
Aggarwal (centre)
and WinS
Global Chair PT
Prabhakar (R) at
a training event in
Goa (file photo).



Each of the four zones must appoint a DGE at the Rotary India Humanity Foundation (RIHF) and Rotary India Literacy Mission (RILM) to form executive committees that will facilitate a hassle-free implementation of literacy, water and sanitation projects and also help in securing CSR partnerships, said RIPE Shekhar Mehta.

Speaking at the WASH session of the goal-setting virtual seminar *Lakshya*, he urged the incoming governors to

find new technical cadres and members for Rotary expert bodies for effective implementation of global grant projects. The five-year WASH goals were set in tune with the “national thought process evolved last year after discussions with government officials.” Rotary would strive to implement 10 per cent of government projects in watershed development, restoration of waterbodies, rainwater harvesting, household tap connections, toilet blocks, and programmes related to

WASH in schools (WinS) and healthcare facilities (WinHCF).

Against the GoI’s target of one lakh check dams in 2021–26, Rotary will strive to complete 10,000 such facilities during this period at the rate of ₹3 lakh a check dam. Each district has a target of 25 check dams with an overall target of 1,000 such dams in 2021–22. Likewise, Rotary is aiming to implement 7,500 WinS and WinHCF projects out of 55,000 over the next five years; household

tap connections to 160 villages (1,000 villages); 20,000 household toilets (1.2 lakh units), 5,000 RWH projects (50,000); and transform 750 waterbodies (lakes, ponds and stepwells) out of 10,000 such restoration work over a five-year period.

Water tap connections

Every home in India will have water on tap by 2024 under the flagship *Har Ghar Nal Se Jal* programme of the GoI’s Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). Only 3.27 crore out of 17.87 crore houses had

tap connections in 2019, that is 18.5 per cent, which has been raised to 37 per cent (seven crore) in the last one year, said PDG Ramesh Aggarwal, chairman, Rotary India Sanitation Mission. Rotary will also take up retrofitting of piped water supply, grey water management (recycling) and capacity building under the JJM initiatives.

WinS projects being implemented in 14.7 lakh schools, 70 per cent of them government

schools, had seven components — gender segregated toilets, drinking water, hand wash stations, MHM, maintenance, behaviour change and capacity building.

Besides improving the school enrolment ratio, WinS projects made children the agents of age with tangible outcome in living standards in the villages, said Aggarwal. In the last six years, one lakh toilets were built by Rotary clubs in India, he

said, as this sanitation facility is being extended to all houses as part of ODF-plus strategy launched by GoI.

Restoration of watersheds (check dams) to increase their capacity to absorb rainwater; renovating lakes, ponds and tanks to raise their storage levels; and meet the irrigation needs of the community, besides making them a source of drinking water, are the overall aim of Rotary India Water Mission, said

PDG Ranjan Dhingra, president, Rotary India Water Conservation Trust. “There are 7,000 waterbodies across India that can be restored through a gradual process. During 2005–19, we have rejuvenated 300 waterbodies in over 500 villages benefitting over 10 lakh people,” he said. RIDE Dr Mahesh Kotbagi moderated the session and PRID PT Prabhakar summed up the proceedings. ■

Doing good with TRF help

Human Milk Bank in Guwahati

Team Rotary News



Rotary Club of Guwahati, RID 3240, has set up a human milk bank at the Satribari Christian Hospital in Guwahati, with a \$35,158 global grant support from TRF and RC Moorpark, RID 5240, USA. The facility will help to pasteurise and store in a deep freezer breastmilk collected from donor mothers who have enough milk and are willing to donate, said the club’s past president Bibhuti

Dutta, adding that it is probably the first such facility in the Northeast region. More such facilities will soon be established at Shillong, Silchar, Tinsukia, Siliguri and Malda, said PDG Dr Debashish Das.

Despite the many NICUs across the state, the need for sufficient breastmilk to provide adequate nutritional support to premature or newborn babies with low birth

weight was always felt. The milk bank facility will help reduce neonatal mortality rate in the region, said Dr Devajit Kumar Sharma, paediatric and neonatal intensivist at the hospital. While mothers who are delivering their babies at the hospital are going to be the prime donors, the hospital will organise camps in rural belts to encourage lactating mothers to come forward. ■

Let peace begin with us

Jaishree

Rotary's peace programmes are not popular in our part of the world. It is a pity that we do not place much emphasis on them; I think we should," said TRF Trustee Chair K R Ravindran addressing the virtual TRF seminar for zones 4,5,6,7 recently.

"Our peace programmes are the mainstay for many US Rotarians. They are attracted to the prospect that our Foundation tangibly contributes to world peace." Beyond being a catalyst for drawing funds to the Foundation, the peace programmes have also produced some outstanding alumni who have contributed in their own way to the cause of peace, he added.

The Trustee Chair cited the success story of Manuela Mot, a peace scholar from Duke University, US, in bringing truce to the Mindanao islands in the Philippines, plagued with conflict for almost 60 years since 1960. "In 2019 she spent a month evaluating and processing a World Bank investment proposal on the island. This brought together the warring Christians and Muslims to the table because they all wanted the same thing — the vast infrastructure development in the island."

Another great example of working for peace through service was the declaration of a polio-free Africa. "We applauded the health workers, mainly women, who travelled throughout the country with the polio vaccine to reach out to every child. Many of these places are riddled with conflicts. So we celebrated them this year by opening Rotary's eighth peace centre, which is the first in Africa at the Makerere University in Uganda."

Ravindran went on to narrate the genesis of the Rotary peace centres.

"At one time we wondered if Rotary can build a university dedicated to peace studies." As the dream gathered dust, PRIP Rajendra Saboo, then a TRF trustee, got a brainwave to establish a peace centre at the prestigious Kellogs School of Business, an existing institution, instead of building a new one. He shared the idea with the then TRF Chair Paulo Costa and PRIP Luis Giay, and was authorised to form a committee. This was the forerunner to the present Rotary peace centres. Today there are eight peace centres in seven universities with the Duke University and the University of N Carolina in the US sharing one centre. The other centres are in

Japan, UK, Australia, Sweden, Thailand and Africa. Fifty students graduate with a Masters' degree in peace and developmental studies each year from these centres. "We may not be able to stop wars. But we are training enough individuals who can be placed in positions where they can negotiate for peace."

He shared a close encounter with a war spillover at his home town in Colombo. It happened when a van, filled with plastic explosives driven by two suicide bombers, was stopped by six security guards at the gates of the Forward Command headquarters of the Defence Ministry in Colombo. The suicide bombers detonated the chargers

TRF Chair K R Ravindran and Trustee Gulam Vahanvaty



killing all eight. The roof of the building was blown off and about 15 houses in the vicinity, including Ravindran's, suffered damages.

About 21 people were killed and 175 injured including the young children studying in the nursery wing of a school nearby. "This happened in June 1991 just before I took over as DG. When the bomb went off it shattered windows of my house more than a km away. My wife knew instinctively that it came from the direction of our daughter Prashanti's school. That morning, one moment she was holding a new pencil she had bought at the school shop and the next moment she was flung to a side, the air filled with sand and her ears ringing. Everywhere around her she could see children running, screaming and bleeding. She remembers the roof collapsing, and everybody huddled on the ground with the teachers and waiting for their parents. We went and brought her home which was filled with broken glass and her favourite dog had splinters on its back."

That war in Sri Lanka lasted 25 years. It killed 100,000 people and displaced countless more.

"Many of us think that peace is absence of war. Yet there are many who do not know what the absence of peace is," said Ravindran.

He highlighted that last year 76,000 people died in Syria, around 14,000 in Afghanistan and 15,000 in Africa in the countries of the Boko Haram insurgency. A war does not end with a truce sign. The effects linger on the people who have gone through it — the financial impact, families that have lost breadwinners, infrastructure that never got built, the resources that were diverted for so many years towards the fighting. This apart, the trauma and the many memories that none of us can ever forget.

Referring to the song by Jill Jackson written in 1955 — *Let there be peace on Earth* — he said, "the second line tugs at my heart every time it is sung — *Let there be peace on earth; and let it begin with me.*" He added that peace must be enshrined in each one of us and must show in the way we conduct ourselves. "It means we must disagree in an agreeable manner and

Many of us think that peace is absence of war. Yet there are many who do not know what the absence of peace is.

K R Ravindran
TRF Trustee Chair

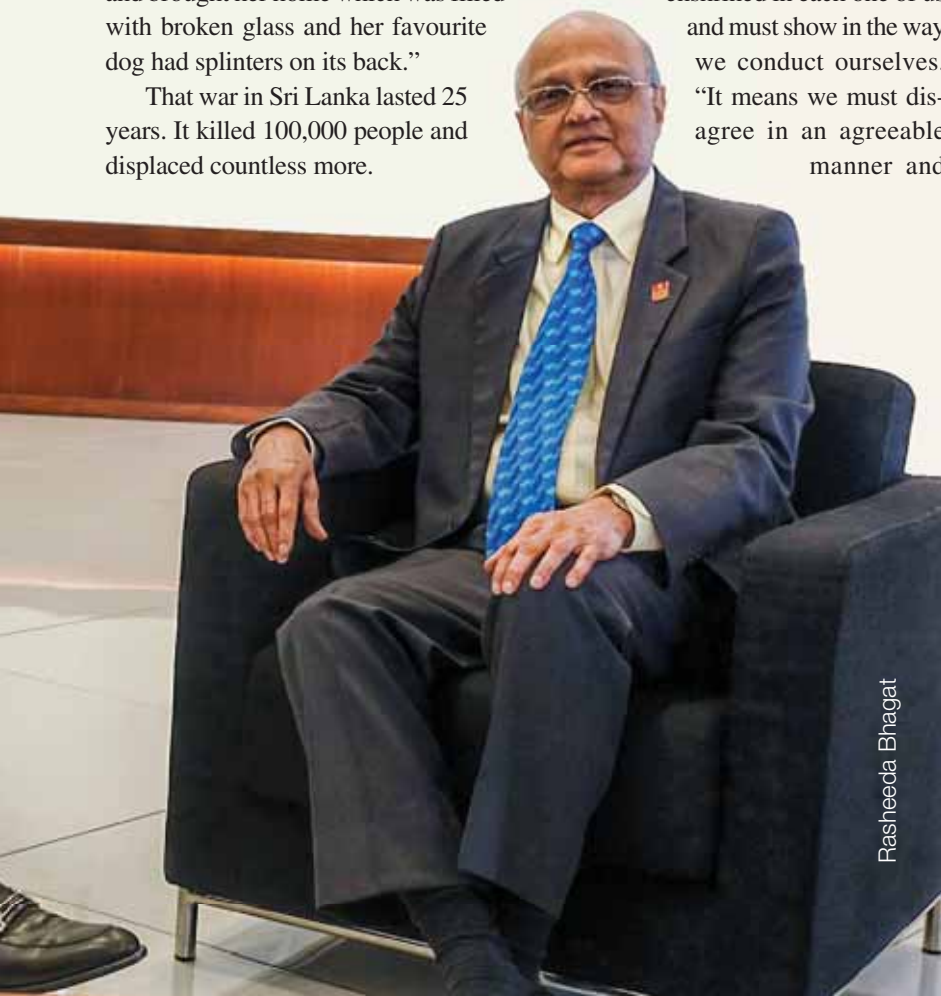
limit our disagreement to that issue and move on."

RI Director Kamal Sanghvi urged the incoming district governors to inspire Rotarians to give generously to the Foundation. "The saying that money cannot buy happiness is false. Your money can give happiness for the poor and the needy. This seminar will help you understand the magnanimity of the Foundation and the joy of giving," he said.

RID Bharat Pandya alerted the delegates saying that the Annual Fund is lagging across the world. "It is the engine that drives the Foundation and if this scenario continues for the next five years, things will get derailed. Our service projects will suffer. It does not require a huge donation but any amount from \$25 to \$1,000 regularly would suffice," he said.

TRF Technical Cadre Chair PRID Manoj Desai urged the DGEs to "invite cadre members to address your district TRF seminars. Their guidance will help you get your GG approved by the Foundation."

RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi explained why some trustee decisions may not be suitable for some countries or districts. "Trustees have to think globally and cannot limit their plans to a particular region," he said, and urged the DGEs to utilise their DDF for what they were meant for.



Rasheeda Bhagat

Trustee Gulam Vahanvaty, who anchored the seminar, appreciated the fact that India continues to retain its second rank in total giving to TRF for the fifth consecutive year. Until Dec 2020, donors from the four zones have contributed \$5.7 million to TRF which is more than the figure during the same period last year. The total value of district and global grants for all four zones during 2019–20 was \$41.7 million. In comparison, its value during the six months ending Dec 2020 has exceeded \$25 million, he observed.

AKS members Ravishankar Dakoju, Dr Krishnendu Gupta and Vikram Reddy inspired the delegates to contribute generously to the Foundation and PDG Sam Patibandla

spoke on how to become a Bequest Society member.

RIDE AS Venkatesh moderated a panel discussion titled *Joy of Giving*, in which AKS members Amita Anand Mohindru, past president of RC Delhi City; RID 3131 DG Rashmi Kulkarni and Saif Qureshi, past president of RC Bombay Pier, participated.

“A chat over coffee at Evanston with Ravishankar and Paola Dakoju inspired me to become an AKS member. I was reminded of the book, *The monk who sold his Ferrari*,” said Amita. If you are appointed trustee chair for a day what change will you want to bring to TRF? asked Venkatesh. Amita’s answer: “I would like to put in place an SOP for approval of grants. When I was president, I found one grant being approved in three



**RI Director
Bharat Pandya**



RI Director Kamal Sanghvi

months, but another similar one took six months. We were answerable to the corporates as CSR funds were involved and we didn’t have an explanation for the delay. Our reputation was at stake.”

Rashmi said that she “liked the fact that the money we give to TRF through the Endowment Fund will come back to us as DDF and will help my club execute global grant projects, not just now, but also after we pass on.” She said more efforts should be made to educate people about the Foundation. “Still many think that it is a fundraising body. In truth, our Foundation does much

more than that. Enlightening people about its power will encourage people to contribute liberally,” she added.

On how he would describe Rotary to his non-Rotarian friends, Qureshi said that generally when friends meet they discuss politics, economy or budget. “But when Rotarians meet we discuss service projects and the impact they create in communities. We share a common bond and passion for doing good in communities. The friendship among Rotarians is far deeper than a few drinks and food. We tend to hang out with each other like birds of a feather.” ■

Rotary must act now to save our planet: **Holger Knaack**

Team Rotary News

Making a strong pitch for saving the Earth in his address to the DGEs and DGNs, RI President Holger Knaack called upon Rotary clubs to ‘act now’. An essential part of serving humanity is “taking care of the planet and protecting it from the worst potential impacts of climate change.”

He reminded the delegates about the constant disasters around us — wildfires in Australia and California, storms in Central American and Pacific nations. “Our environment is under attack. And now, the environment is an area of focus for Rotary. It is high time

for Rotary to act. And it is so important that we emphasise environmental concerns in our programmes and service projects,” said Knaack. Young people including Rotaractors want Rotary to take clear positions on ecological issues and “want us to show leadership with vision and solutions.” Recalling the pandemic months of 2020, he said, this has been “building for quite some time. Terrible pandemics have been predicted for years. And the transition to a digital, online world was well underway until Covid made it a necessity.”

New global village

But Rotary clubs across the world have faced these challenges by showing greater care for each other. “Our clubs have taken on an important mentoring role for members with businesses who are struggling through the pandemic. And we have learned that renewed focus on each other is often an important service work that we can all do.”

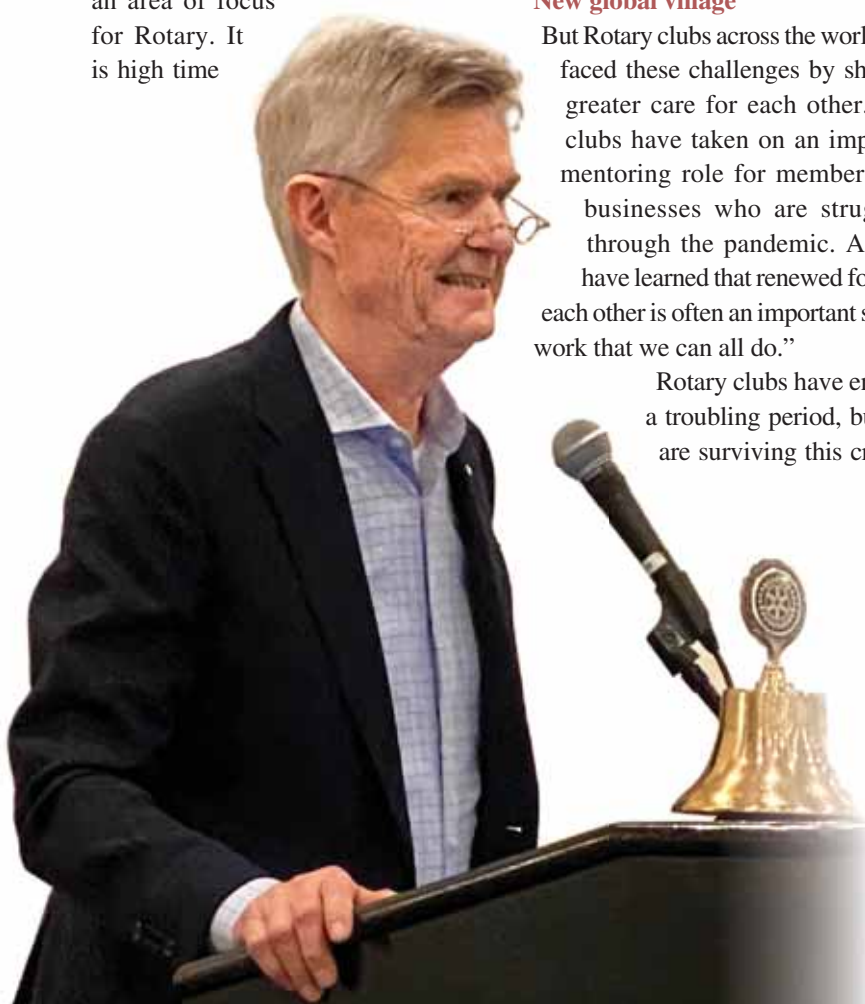
Rotary clubs have endured a troubling period, but “we are surviving this crisis to

become stronger.” Many have lost their jobs and businesses. Life has become more difficult for people everywhere, and more people than ever need help. “We have been forced to give up so much — not just simple handshakes but our entire way of life.” But this has not just been a year of loss. It has also been a year of new opportunities. “Social media and online connections have become more important. Now, we are all used to meeting virtually,” he added. A new global village has emerged with new social rules. People who normally would not look each other in the eye as they spoke have now become accustomed to doing so on zoom meets, he noted. “Today, physical distance is required. But we are now getting to know a whole new closeness.”

With new vaccines and treatments in 2021, he hoped the world would start to return to closer to normal. “But it will be a different normal and we have no choice but to embrace this (digital) age. Going forward, we will need to prepare carefully for unanticipated events. Adapting to the future also means connecting truthfully to ourselves,” he explained.

In Rotary, the five core values of service, fellowship, diversity, integrity and leadership form the basis for the organisation. “If we do not embrace all the values all the time, then it is just talk,” said Knaack. Rotary International has formed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force and taken strong steps to ensure that “Rotary meets and exceeds the diversity goals that we have established”.

Rotary is not just a club that you join. “It is an invitation to endless opportunities to service.” This was most notably evident in Rotary’s historic project to end polio, which made Rotarians’ lives richer and more meaningful, “with friends around the world based on our core values,” Knaack added. ■



Leading, in Rotary, means you are leading your equals: **Kalyan Banerjee**

Team Rotary News

Your office is only for one year and you would want to leave your mark. But if you try to start from scratch, to achieve something monumental in one year, you are going to fail. You need to look beyond yourself, and your year, at the long-term health of your clubs, communities and our organisation. That is how we get closer to achieving our vision,” said Past RI President Kalyan Banerjee, motivating the DGEs and DGNs at a session in the International Assembly which went virtual in February this year.

Greeting the district leaders world over, he said, “we are all connected today uniquely, only through our computers, iPads and cell phones, and in circumstances that are not only unusual but unprecedented. Let’s hope to see the end of this dreadful pandemic and rejoice together in a brave and safer new world.”

Reiterating the significance of Rotary’s core values and referring to the medical missions carried out by Indian Rotarians in Nigeria, and the American Rotarians in the Caribbean countries to help them recover and rebuild their homes after disastrous hurricanes, he said that friendship, diversity, integrity and “above all, our leadership, have all motivated us to engage in the service that we provide.”

Rotarians have always been leaders, he said, and highlighted the leadership of past RI presidents Rajendra Saboo “who conceptualised our unique peace scholarship programme, producing committed ambassadors to work for lasting peace around the world”; Sir

Clem Renouf “who inspired Rotary to take up very large international projects for the first time”; Luis Giay “who helped make our Rotary Foundation programme more focused, more impactful”; and Cliff Dochtermann and Carlos Consecro “who helped Rotary engage in our quest to banish polio from the world.”

In Rotary, part of the leadership is about being a role model. “Leading in Rotary is different because here you are leading your equals. You are not there to give orders; you are there to lend support,” said Banerjee.

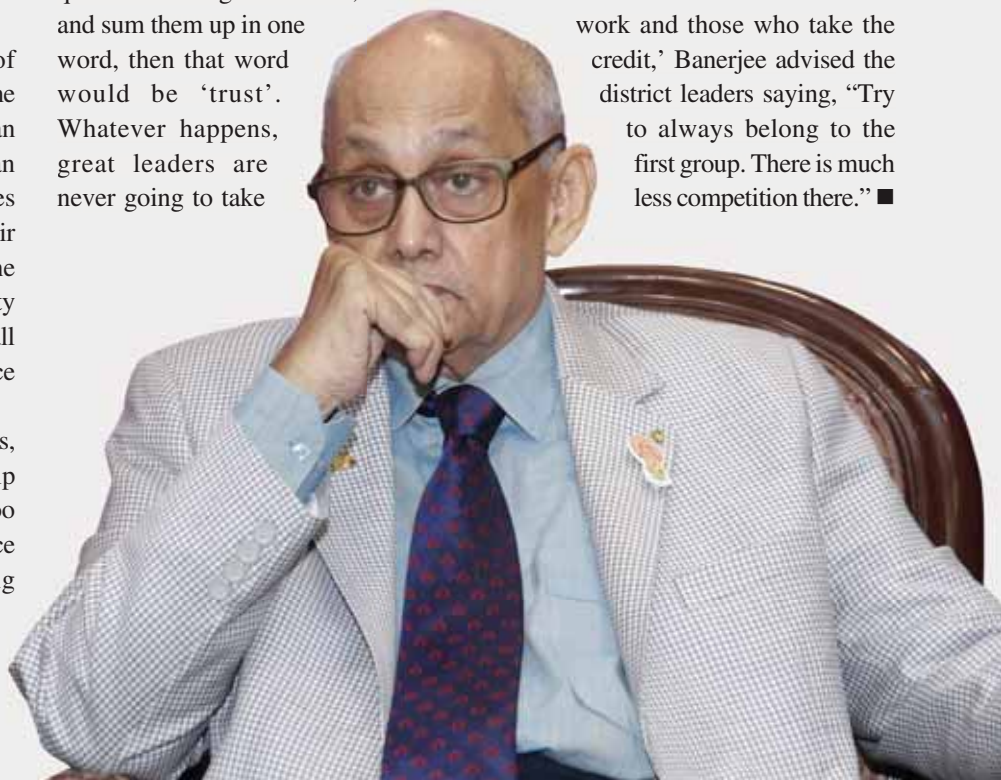
Great leaders don’t ever set out to be a leader. They set out to make a difference. “It’s never the role. It’s always the goal,” he said, adding that good leadership is to help those doing poorly, to do well, and those doing well, to do even better. “If you take all the qualities of a good leader, and sum them up in one word, then that word would be ‘trust’. Whatever happens, great leaders are never going to take

more than their share of the credit or less than their share of the blame. He or she may not have all the answers, but they will tell you where to find them. They listen, motivate and inspire you.”

He left the district leaders to ponder and act on the thought: “Be the kind of leader of whom Rotarians in the district say, ‘if I am ever a district governor, I would like to be someone like him or her’. That is the gold standard of leadership.”

“When you start the 2021–22 year — and hopefully the new vaccines would have stabilised lives by then — the best thing you can do is to leave your district stronger than you found it. In the end, we need to remember that it does not matter who gets the credit,” he said.

Quoting former PM Indira Gandhi’s words: ‘There are two kinds of people in our world — those who do the work and those who take the credit,’ Banerjee advised the district leaders saying, “Try to always belong to the first group. There is much less competition there.” ■



DGs must engage, retain members

John Hewko

Team Rotary News



The creation of 3-H Grants programmes designed to carry out large-scale service projects in the area of health, hunger and humanity, and second, the creation of PolioPlus are two major turning points in Rotary's history, said RI general secretary John Hewko in his address at the virtual International Assembly.

In fact, the concept of transforming the health and well-being of others on a huge scale is now part of Rotary's DNA. "Yet at the time these ideas were conceived they were considered almost revolutionary and the subject of intense debate," he recalled. PRIP Jim Bomar spoke about this debate at the 1979 IA. He had received a letter from a Rotary member who said, "You know, we don't need any changes. Everything is just all right. Let it remain as it now is." And in response, Bomar asked whether keeping things as they were "will meet the tests and demands of the 21st century."

There is a clear need to adapt Rotary's policies and outlook to the changing world. And, thanks to the decisions of the RI Board, the Foundation trustees and the Council on Legislation, the 3-H programme was launched and a 55-year prohibition against corporate programmes in Rotary was overcome.

Thanks to PolioPlus, 19 million people who would otherwise have been paralysed are walking today and Rotary's stature on the global stage has been elevated to a level we could never have dreamed of. "If the 3-H and PolioPlus programmes were clear turning points in Rotary's 20th century history,

the year of the coronavirus is a test of Rotary's ability to adapt in the 21st. Although new and bold ideas might face resistance, if they are responsive to the need for Rotary to continually grow and prosper, they will prevail," Hewko explained.

Service opportunities

If we think about 3-H and PolioPlus, they were ultimately supported by the vast majority of Rotary members for one reason: They provided opportunities for members to make an impact through service projects. "Remember, engaged members stay with Rotary, and through Rotary they can accomplish great things," he said. And the variety of service opportunities to engage members today is even greater than before. "Whether you wish to mentor local high school students or participate in our newest cause, the environment, or our newest grant type, Programmes of Scale, there really is something for everyone at Rotary."

New members must be given clear roles from the beginning, he said and cited an instance. The Rotary Club of Central Ocean in New Jersey, USA, implemented a *Bring Your Own Project* initiative to give new members the immediate ownership of something important to them. The club was able

to complete nine service projects in the first half of one Rotary year and thereby engage and retain its newest members.

Now, in addition to engagement at the club level, fellowships and Rotary Action Groups connect members across the world who share a passion. "And to keep members engaged, we must also encourage them to make full use of the more than 600 courses in over a dozen languages available on the Rotary Learning Center. And they can also take the leadership development courses, thanks to Rotary's alliance with Toastmasters," said Hewko.

For most companies, "Covid has accelerated the adoption of digital technologies by several years, and some things will need to change permanently as we move forward." The role of district governors is critical. "Now is your time to lead, shape a better world as we emerge from this crisis. And if you can engage and retain our greatest asset — our members — we can seize the moment and prepare for a better future."

District governors are far more than administrators. "You are the agents of change and innovation. In the words of one of Rotary's greatest innovators, the late PRIP Luis Vicente Giay, you are 'the architects of the future'," he said. ■

Rotary in India sets a new record in membership growth

V Muthukumaran

As against the target of 4,000 new members in a month-long Paul Harris Challenge from Jan 23, the 40 RI districts in zones 4,5,6 and 7 inducted 6,087 new Rotarians and formed 79 new clubs. “What better gift can we have on the 116th birthday of Rotary than what has been achieved by our district governors, district membership chairs, Rotary coordinators, ARCs and the club presidents, the real heroes, with this remarkable growth in membership across our zones,” said RIPE Shekhar Mehta. “This is just a trailer for our trailblazer governors to set more milestones from July 2021.”

Mehta was addressing a galaxy of Rotary leaders from across India zones to commemorate the record

membership growth achieved by the districts in all the four zones. “All the four RCs along with the ARCs and DGs have surprised us with their performance in the last one month. Their show is confident enough that the slogan *Each one bring one* will surely be a success for 70 per cent of new members is through internal growth, while the rest 30 per cent is from *Grow Rotary* initiatives (forming new clubs),” he said. Out of 40 districts, 28 have crossed the benchmark of adding at least 100 new members. At the same time, DGs must take efforts to retain members by starting hybrid clubs which have a mix of virtual and physical meetings, he said. “The incoming governors have to build on this membership spike if Rotary has to achieve 1.3 million membership.”

RIPE Shekhar Mehta



Paul Harris Challenge winners

Winner
RID 3054 DG Rajesh Agarwal, DMC Ashish Desai (zone-4) - 479 new members
Runners-up
RID 3212 DG PNB Murugadoss, DMC K Selvamani (zone-5) - 437 new members
RID 2981 DG Balaji Babu Rajagopal, DMC Dr C V Padmanabhan (zone-5)
RID 3060 DG Prashant Jani, DMC Amardeep S Bunnet (zone-4)
Highlights
* 28 out of 40 districts added over 100 new members, thus passing the eligibility target
* 1,940 new members were added from 49 new clubs, while 4,147 came from existing clubs
* 6,087 new members were inducted and 79 new clubs formed in one month (Jan 23-Feb 23)
* 70 per cent of new members were from internal growth, 30 per cent from new clubs
Zone highlights
* Zone-4 with 11 districts added 1,880 new members and 28 new clubs
* Zone-5 with 10 districts added 2,028 new members and 23 new clubs
* Zone-6 with 10 districts added 1,228 new members and 18 new clubs
* Zone-7 with 9 districts added 951 new members and 10 new clubs

Inspiring leadership

Making a special mention of the ‘outstanding leadership this part of the Rotary world has seen’, Mehta said RIDs Bharat Pandya and Kamal Sanghvi are two different personalities “who complement

each other” in their working style and he will be happy to work with a similar pair in incoming directors AS Venkatesh and Mahesh Kotbagi. Pandya and Sanghvi as RI Board members have contributed immensely to the organisation, he said.

While Sanghvi will become RI chair for membership growth from next Rotary year, Pandya is nominated as member of the RI Board’s Strategic Planning Committee, informed Mehta.

PDG Ravi Vadlamani will head a Rotaract Committee which has its work cut-out in the coming years. To a query from PDG Shab Elawar from RC Las Vegas, RID 5300, US, during the Q&A session, on the role he envisages for the virtual world in the coming years, especially in knitting Rotarians and Rotaractors, Mehta said, “if I

were a punter, then I will bet on hybrid and virtual clubs. We should have a mix of physical and virtual meetings. We have to stay engaged through virtual sessions which will help us to retain members.”

Pandya said, “A new chapter is being written in our zones which will drive our fellowship and service.” Chairing the event, Sanghvi pointed out the need for more clubs with fresh ideas and service capacity to ensure the future of Rotary. RIDEs Kotbagi and Ventakesh congratulated the DGs for their feat. RCs Gurjeet Sekhon (zone-4), R Theenachandran (zone-5), Pradeep Mukherjee (zone-6) and Vinaykumar Raikar (zone-7) announced the winners from their zones. Around 650 delegates including PRIPs Kalyan Banerjee, Rajendra Saboo and Trustee Gulam Vahanvaty were present at the event. ■

This is just a trailer for our trailblazer governors to set more milestones from July 2021. They must build on this membership spike if Rotary has to achieve 1.3 million membership.

Shekhar Mehta
RI President Elect

THIS IS OUR ACTION PLAN

OUR PRIORITY

**WE'RE
INCREASING
OUR
IMPACT**

Rotary 

Thriving in a data-driven world

We all want Rotary to have an enduring legacy of change. But if we can't offer concrete proof of what we're achieving together, it's hard to engage innovative, motivated changemakers to join or partner with us. And it's even harder to improve our programmes and projects in ways that really matter.

We can reach our full potential by improving our ability to collect and analyse data. We can figure out which programmes are having an impact and which ones need adjustment. And using what we've learned from our polio eradication efforts, we can look for ways to replicate and scale programmes with the most potential to create lasting change.

What we will do

Apply what we've learned from the fight against polio to all of our areas of focus

Direct efforts and resources to the most impactful programmes

Build a measurement methodology and infrastructure that's right for Rotary

What your club can do



Want to know more?

Read the full Action Plan at rotary.org/actionplan

Empowering women through ornamental fish farming

Kiran Zehra

It is better to teach a man to fish than just giving him the fish. Here is a club that teaches rural women to breed exotic varieties of fish for their livelihood.

We aren't just breeding fish, we are cultivating self-worth too," says Manjulata Hembrum, a resident of Chunakoli, a riverside village tucked in the Sundarbans area of West Bengal. Adopted by RC Bhubaneswar Ekamra Kshetra, RID 3262, in 2014, the village has since seen "only good days. Almost every woman in the village can read and write, sign her name, all thanks to the adult literacy centre set up by the club. Some of us have enrolled in multiple skill development programmes conducted by the club which helps us earn a living and raise our voice against domestic violence," she adds.

When a woman is empowered to manage a small business and her home, as an earning member of the family she realises her potential to contribute towards the holistic development of not just her family but her community too.

Starting with the club's adult literacy centre Swabhiman Kendra, to the skill development programmes that teach making cloth bags, incense sticks, growing mushrooms and promoting ornamental fish farming as a livelihood option, the club is

focused on making the village women economically independent. "When a woman is empowered to manage a small business and her home, as an earning member of the family she slowly realises her potential to contribute towards the holistic development of not just her family but her community too," says club president Dr Bani Sen Gupta.

Fifteen women from this village were recently selected as beneficiaries for an ornamental fish farming initiative by the club, in association with the Central Inland Fresh Water Research Institute (CIFRI). The beneficiaries were taken to CIFRI, Barrackpore, for a three-day training programme in February. The expenses for travel, food, lodging, training and study material which otherwise cost ₹30,000 a beneficiary were taken care of by the CIFRI. "This was possible only because of Basanta Kumar Das, president of RC Bhubaneswar Royal who is the director of CIFRI,



Women get trained in fish farming.

Being natural nurturers, women understand the fish breeding process, and can quickly develop the skill to prepare feed, treat sick fish and care for the newborn fish.

Barrackpore,” says Bani. During the lockdown when the women had to stop making cloth bags and incense sticks as sales came to a standstill, “Das suggested that ornamental fish farming will keep them occupied until the fish breed and generate a steady income once the lockdown was lifted,” she adds. After the training each of them received fibreglass portable fish tanks, equipment, fish feed and fish fingerlings in the presence of PDG Sibabrata Dash.

Ornamental fish breeding which started as a hobby around the world has turned out to be a commercial trade activity, explains Das. The major export destination for Indian ornamental fish are Singapore, Japan, USA, Malaysia and Germany. “This sector has been recognised for its ability to generate employment opportunity, alleviate poverty and contribute towards national growth by promoting international trade,” he says.

Rameswar Das, a local trainer and entrepreneur in ornamental fish farming who handles the training for this initiative, says that being natural nurturers, women understand better the fish breeding process, and can quickly develop the skill to prepare feed, treat sick fish and care for the newborn fish. “They apply their hearts to it because their families depend on them for food. They are determined to improve the lives of their children even if that means



Women in Damana Basti near Bhubaneswar being trained in mushroom cultivation.

doing menial jobs in the fish market like cleaning fish, or peeling, and de-heading shrimps. Ornamental fish farming helps them earn a little extra without the intimidation of looking for employment outside their homes.” To make matters easy for the rural women Das has offered to pay the auto fare for those visiting his shop in Bhubaneswar to trade their ornamental fish or clear their doubts on the subject. The women from Chunakoli are currently nurturing six species of ornamental fish such as goldfish, zebra danio and black widow tetra.

Mushroom cultivation

Also undertaken by the club during the lockdown was a mushroom cultivation programme for women from Damana Basti near Bhubaneswar. A partnership with the Horticulture Department of Malkangiri through Rtn Gopinath Kar, horticulture officer and member of RC Bhubaneswar Confluence, led to the training of 15 underprivileged women. Bani funded and sourced the raw material for these women to start mushroom cultivation in their

own homes at a total cost of ₹4,500. The initiative has taught them to make the right kind of compost, harvest and cultivate mushrooms. Lessons on how to spawn and multiply a harvest were also imparted to them. “This is an easy method that can be done indoors and does not need much space. The beneficiaries have completed the second harvest of oyster mushrooms and are beginning to grow button mushrooms for the summer,” says an excited Bani.

The club members visit both projects regularly to check on the development and have transformed the village school in Chunakoli into a Happy School with gender-segregated toilet blocks, a library, and a well-maintained campus. On the occasion of International Women’s Day, the club conducted a seminar on women’s rights followed by a cultural programme. Bani says, “We want to catch them young and make the girls aware of important things. They also know that whenever required, they can reach out to us or local authorities. We will be carrying out more such awareness drives in the future.” ■

Tracing the growth of Finnish women

Jaishree

At 34, Finland's PM Sanna Marin became the world's youngest prime minister in 2019, and her cabinet has a majority of women members. Women in Finland enjoy a high degree of equality and their position in society and business is well-respected.

RI Director Dr Virpi Honkala from Finland shared this fact while addressing a zoom meet on 'Women in Finnish society and Rotary' organised recently by the Rotary International Women's (RIW) group. The group formed in April last year has women Rotarians from across 30 countries and has recently got the RI approval for its Rotary Action Group for Menstrual Health and Hygiene.

Virpi chronicled the growth of women in Finnish society. Finland was part of Sweden for almost 700

years from 1150 until the Finnish War of 1809, after which it became an autonomous part of the Russian Empire as the Grand Duchy of Finland. It became an independent country in 1917.

The country was voted second in the Global Gender Gap Index on

women's rights and is among the top countries for women's equality. In 1906 Finland became one of the first countries to grant women the right to vote, and contest elections. "We were the third country in the world after Australia and New Zealand to enjoy this right. The very next year,

RI Director
Dr Virpi Honkala



We were the third country in the world after Australia and New Zealand to enjoy the right to vote.

19 women were elected as MPs — the first in world history!” recalled Virpi.

The country’s Government Action Plan for Gender Equality proposed in 2003 included over 100 issues that needed discussion such as promoting equal pay for work of equal value, increasing the number of women in political and economic roles, assessing gender equity from the male point of view, prevention of domestic violence and intimate partner violence and protecting victims of trafficking.

Virpi is the head of surgery and a medical director at the Raahe Hospitals in Finland. When she qualified to become a general surgeon in 1986, “it was just about then that things had changed. In the early 1970s and 1980s some vocations such as pilots, chimney sweepers, bus drivers, pastors and surgeons were open only to men. But by the time I graduated more than 50 per cent of incoming medical students were women.”

In 1919, women were granted the right to work in offices for salary without the husband’s consent. “This may sound weird today. But at that time this was quite a revolutionary decision,” she smiled. Wife-beating was declared illegal as early as 1860 and in 1878, both men and women were given equal rights to inherit property. In 1901, women were given equal rights to attend universities.

The RI director recalled that her grandmother attended elementary

classes in 1897 in what was called ‘rotating schools’ as it was conducted in various houses in turns. “She learnt basic math, and to read and write.” Virpi’s mother served at the war front as a volunteer in 1941. The country has a law for maternity allowance since 1937 and one for maternity and child health checkup since 1944.

More recently and since 1994, marital rape is considered illegal; in 1999 the government abolished regulations on homosexual acts and adultery and from 2011 transvestism is no longer considered a ‘disorder’. In 2019 the country banned marriages of minors.

Women in Finnish Rotary

While Rotary first arrived in 1926 in Helsinki, after 1987 when Rotary started admitting women members, RC Helsinki has seen three women presidents, one of them even holding the office twice. Virpi was the first woman district governor in 2008–09 and the first woman RI director from the country. She is all for the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion statement adopted by the RI board in Jan 2019.

Talking about menstrual health management (MHM) among adolescent girls in Finland, she said that the schools educate the girls well in advance. “The situation is good here,” she replied, to a question from an RIW member about the availability of proper infrastructure, especially for adolescent girls in schools.

Talking about her experience as a woman RI director, she said that it has been most interesting. “Decision making is based on discussions and it takes a lot of reading and background checks to try to understand various issues.” She acknowledged the suggestion from Sharmila Nagarajan, RIW’s founding member from the UK, to have a separate action group for menstrual health management and not

Men need to have the knowledge
of what menstruation means.
It is important to empower
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in the world.

as a part of WASH RAG. “The early laws were approved by men but behind all these improving laws there are a group of powerful women lobbying and explaining why MHM is imperative.” Women across the world had faced issues relating to menstruation. “They were thought of as unclean, but all that is far behind us now. Men need to have the knowledge of what it means. It is important to empower girls and ensure their success in the world. I would vote for you,” said the RI director.

PDG Shyamashree Sen requested her to push the RAG forward with RI. “Yesterday when I heard our incoming RI president Shekhar Mehta talking about empowering the girl child he only spoke about the washable cloth napkin.” Probably most men had no knowledge about the cup. “In our country we do not talk about menstruation with men because we are still embarrassed. But we need to initiate this dialogue,” she said.

The menstrual cup needs more exposure. Women need to know how it is better than sanitary napkins, said Sharmila, adding that even in the UK, not many supermarkets stock menstrual cups. They have biodegradable napkins though.

“If it is good for the environment and if the next generation is comfortable with it, let’s promote it”, said Virpi. ■

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promote it.

Tailoring skills enhance livelihood for rural women in Thanjavur

V Muthukumaran

It was a defining moment for Savitha Prabhakaran (48) when she received a sewing machine with certificate at the pass-out ceremony. Having lost her husband at a young age, she had to eke out a living as housemaid for years before RC Thanjavur South, RID 2981, offered a three-month training programme in tailoring at its vocational centre.

She almost burst into tears and was speechless after receiving the sewing machine, but managed to say, “now I can look forward to enhance my livelihood with this facility.” Her batchmate Kannagi P (51) who takes care of her bedridden husband said confidently that her monthly earnings would raise manifold with this new vocation. These two women were among the 68 who received certificates for completing the course, “but sewing machines were given to only two of them,” says S Prabhu, club president.

Last year (2019–2020) the club gave 11 electronic machines with district



Club President S Prabhu (second from L) and Rtn Mohamed Ehiya (third from L) hand over a sewing machine to a beneficiary.

grants. Deserving students were chosen through a set of criteria such as punctuality, 100 per cent attendance, skill development and value-addition for donating sewing machines to them, with preference for widows and destitute. Since 2012, the vocational centre has trained 1,056 women in tailoring through four batches annually. “We had closed down the centre for 10 months during the corona lockdown and restarted it last November,” he says. “Free tailoring classes

are held for 96 women in a year. This year we had only 68 candidates due to the pandemic.”

Speaking at the pass-out ceremony, Mohamed Ehiya, chief guest and a club member, urged the rural women to form groups and “take up value-addition in tailoring to embellish their finished products that would fetch them high income.” A jet-setting industrialist with 14 business ventures in Kenya, Dubai, Europe, US, Singapore and Malaysia,

Ehiya also runs a training centre (computer, tailoring) near his residence at Nadukkadai in Thiruvaiyaru, Thanjavur district. “Ehiya is keen to sign an MoU with our club to get skilled manpower for his garment factory in Bengaluru,” says Prabhu.

A self-sufficient club

With 94 members, the 43-year-old club has seven out of 13 endowment donors in RID 2981 and 10 major donors. “We have our own

hall — Rotary Arulananda Swami Nadar Indoor Auditorium — built in 1983 at a cost of ₹50 lakh.” This premises has a sprawling hall on the ground floor, the vocational centre run on the first floor, a terrace garden and an adjoining food court with a total built-up area of 5,300 sqft. Recently, the building was renovated with new interiors. “We have surplus cash reserves and all RI norms are being followed with annual dues remitted in time,” says Prabhu.

The club sponsors RAC Bon Secours with over 1,500 Rotaractors (rural girls) and Interact Club of Little Scholars with around 1,400 Interactors. So far, the club has given ₹2.43 crore to TRF. A Smart classroom was donated by its RCC to the Government Higher Secondary



Students in a smart classroom sponsored by RCC Ambalapattu.

School at Ambalapattu through a matching grant project. The club donated 15 bench-desks, and

cupboards and racks for the library to the Government HS School, Panayakkottai. ■

An innovative sapling project from RC Kangra

Team Rotary News

If you drink *nariyal pani* (tender coconut water) in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, you wouldn't have to throw away the shell. RC Kangra, RID 3070, under its environmental protection campaign is giving out succulent and shallow root plants to the tender

coconut vendors in the city who fill the emptied coconut shell with soil, coco peat or husk and plant a sapling on it for you to take back home and grow.

“We have received outstanding response for this project,” says club president Sunil Dogra, adding that

“the best part is that the coconut shell plant is given free. All you have to do is take it back home and water your shell plant which can be grown into a quirky garden.”

Since coconut shells are biodegradable, they make a fine medium for nurturing saplings which can be transplanted easily into the soil along with the shell after sometime. “Coconut husk is an excellent medium as it contains sugar, minerals, amino acids and vitamins,” says Dogra. Inaugurating this eco-friendly project, DG CA Davinder Singh appreciated the club for its innovation to usher in a clean, green environment.

On the first day of the project, the club had given out over 5,000 saplings. “The club will follow up with the local vendors and give them saplings as and when they exhaust their stock of plants,” adds Dogra. ■



DG CA Davinder Singh (L), his wife Dolly Sachdeva and club president Sunil Dogra (R) with the coconut shell planters.

Empowering the differently-abled

Jaishree

Physically-challenged Gunasekaran was all smiles as I greeted him on a Sunday morning at the Builders' Association premises. His radiance outshone his physical disability. "Today, thanks to these big-hearted Rotarians, I am in a far better position financially. Six months ago I was in dire straits literally, and the Covid pandemic only worsened the situation," he said. Owing to his disability he could not get a steady employment and was surviving on odd jobs. Rotary Club of Chennai Greencity, RID 3232, provided him a push cart and working capital and he is now happy to be selling snacks and earning an average of ₹500 a day.

Gunasekaran is one of the initial beneficiaries of the club's pilot programme — distributing push

carts to help enhance the livelihood of differently-abled people. The project took shape in July 2020 when Dr P Simmachandran, president of the Tamil Nadu Differently-abled Federation Charitable (TNDFC) Trust, requested club member Haricharan to provide a computer. Further discussions brought to light the difficulties faced by the differently-abled, especially during the pandemic. "Some of them who were earlier engaged as domestic help and those selling wares at bus stands or railway stations took a hit during the lockdown. They requested us, through the TNDFC, to help them with a means to earn a livelihood and that is how we zeroed in on this project which we call *Maatrum Thiran* (Alternate skill enhancement programme)," said club member SN Balasubramaniam who is

also the district chairman for community and economic development.

With the success of the pilot he, along with the district director for community development and health Dr R Sriram, scaled it up to the district level and called for all Rotary clubs of RID 3232 to pitch in. DG S Muthupalaniappan urged the team to provide 100 push carts by the year-end. The clubs geared up to the proposal and by January 2021 forty carts were distributed with RC Chennai Sun City sponsoring the highest — 10 carts. The beneficiaries have put up various forms of stalls ranging from food to vegetable/fruits, books, plastic ware and other knick-knacks.

Fifteen more carts were distributed recently at an event in the presence of RIDE A S Venkatesh and DG Muthupalaniappan.

Gunasekaran, a beneficiary, with his push cart given by RC Chennai Greencity.





From R: RIDE A S Venkatesh; DG S Muthupalaniappan; S N Balasubramaniam, district chairman, Community and Economic Development; Dr R Sriram, district director, Community Development and Health; and DRFC M Ambalavanan with a beneficiary.

Kalpana, a polio victim, who was looking after children in a primary school had lost her job due to the pandemic. “This push cart is a godsend for me now. I plan to sell women’s clothing,” she said. Her neighbour Rajeswari plans to sell soups, *pakodas* and snacks prepared by her daughter-in-law on her push cart. The excitement and vibes of hope was palpable as the beneficiaries, some crawling and others limping, and some with little children in tow, gathered at the distribution hall where the carts were parked.

RIDE Venkatesh, speaking at the event, recalled an incident when

We thank each one of you for giving us a chance to help you. Rotary is all about service and we need a platform to serve. You have given us that.

A S Venkatesh
RI Director Elect

he visited a medical camp in Kenya, Africa. “The US Rotarians who were the organisers thanked the African patients for giving them the opportunity to serve. Similarly, we thank each one of you for giving us a chance to help you. Rotary is all about service and we need a platform to serve. You have given us that,” he told the assembled beneficiaries and commended the community service team for providing “a complete package including the mobile cart and working capital to run the business. Providing them just the cart without giving them the means or the knowhow to do business would be a sheer waste.”

DG Muthupalaniappan said, “This is a perfect way to promote Rotary’s public image as one can see the Rotary logo in a hundred places across the city.” Talking about the district’s signature project — *Project Orange* — which will be addressing avoidable blindness in a big way, he said, “We are planning to establish 200 eyecare centres across RID 3232 at a cost of ₹30 crore. It is a huge milestone for,

even in the last 15 years, only 70 centres have come up in Tamil Nadu.” He congratulated RC Chennai Greencity president SR Kumaran for initiating the project for the differently-abled.

The beneficiaries are identified and monitored for two years by TNDFC and the push carts are fabricated at the unit of Panjanathan, a member of RC Madras West at a cost of ₹30,000 each. Rotary clubs/individuals sponsoring the carts will pay the money to TNDFC and IT exemption under Sec 80G can be availed by the sponsor. The carts, painted blue, sport the Rotary Wheel and the sponsoring club’s name.

An orientation workshop was organised to teach the beneficiaries how to avail bank loan and the various government schemes available for them. “We even extend revolving fund assistance to the needy and assist them in solving business-related issues,” said Balasubramaniam.

Five initial beneficiaries were recognised with certificates for their performance at the event. ■

RAGs — an integral part of Rotary

John Hewko

Kiran Zehra

Congratulating the RI Women's group for getting the RI board's approval for its Rotary Action Group for Menstrual Health and Hygiene (RAG-MHH), RI General Secretary John Hewko said, "this grant model that we introduced in 2013 is the most important initiative that Rotary has undertaken since the polio initiative that began in the 1980s. In many ways it represents an important component of our organisation's future, apart from the increased benefits this will have for the beneficiaries." Calling RAGs larger and more scalable he pointed out that they serve as great public image boosters locally, regionally and internationally that in turn, will drive more members and potential donors to TRF.

RAG-MHH will act as a tool to make an impact by providing relevant resources to Rotarians who want to implement such projects in their

regions. "We have put together these groups to try to get more bang for our buck." RAGs are focused on specific topics and issues. So "rather than solving one percent of 100 problems, let's solve 100 per cent of one problem and in this case, it would be menstrual health and hygiene," said Hewko.

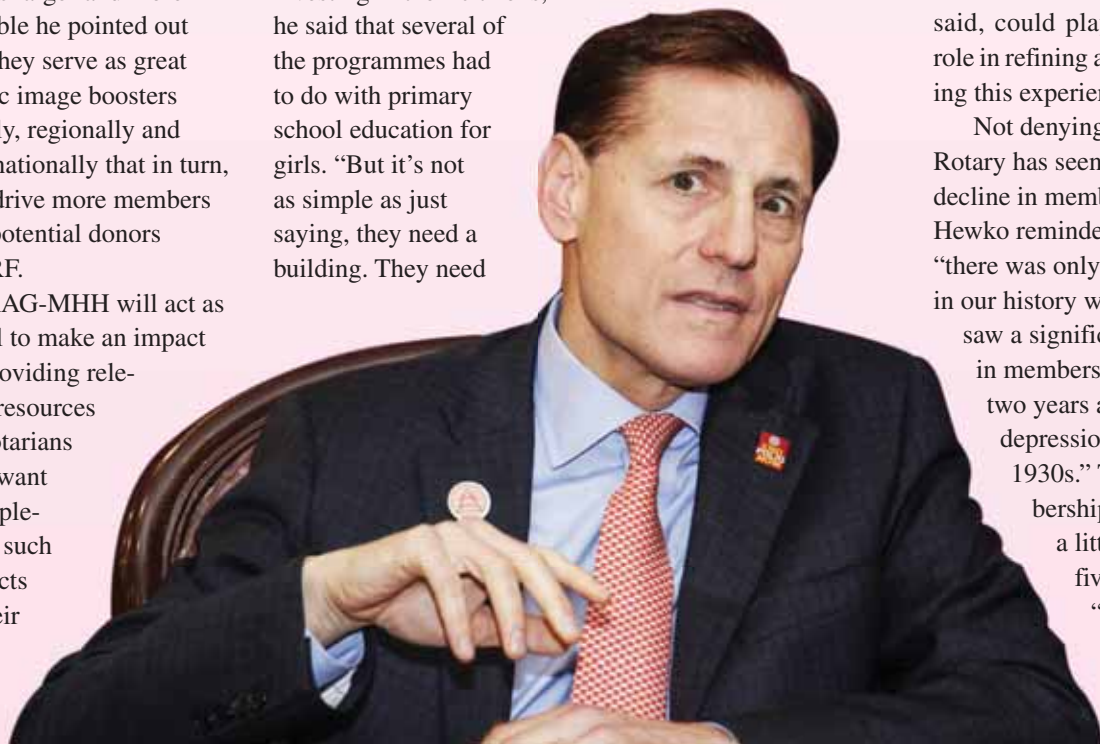
Recalling the time, he worked in the George W Bush administration to set up a foreign assistance agency that forms partnerships with developing countries committed to good governance, economic freedom, and investing in their citizens, he said that several of the programmes had to do with primary school education for girls. "But it's not as simple as just saying, they need a building. They need

much more — separate toilet facilities, meals, teachers, curriculum, safe space to study... I urge you to partner with other RAGs, in your case with WASH, to scale up your work and make a true impact. One of the greatest interventions you can do in global development is providing girls education." He asked the women's group to think in terms of long-term sustainable projects that are comprehensive and deal with the whole panoply of issues that need to be addressed rather than working on a specific issue.

Membership and Covid

Referring to the stagnant membership of 1.2 million members for the last 25 years he said, "It is similar to a product we sell in a marketplace. Here, we are not selling soap or bread. We're selling experience... the experience you get when you join a Rotary club, and you pay for that experience with your time and money." He pointed out that it is time to "rethink our product, those areas where we need to strengthen and ask ourselves if we can offer something different in the market that potential members may find more attractive?" The RAGs, he said, could play a critical role in refining and improving this experience.

Not denying that Rotary has seen a "slight decline in membership," Hewko reminded that "there was only one time in our history where we saw a significant drop in membership — two years after the depression in the 1930s." The membership dropped a little over five per cent. "For each



one per cent decline in membership globally, there is \$800,000 loss of revenue to Rotary. So when there is a five per cent loss in membership, that represents about a \$4 million loss of revenues. Fortunately, Rotary, through the years, has been prudent with your money; both RI and TRF have very solid reserves, more than adequate to overcome these crises. Rotary operationally and financially is on a sound footing.”

Answering a question as to how Rotary reacted to the Covid crisis, Hewko



stated that shortly after the Covid crisis began, the TRF board created a Covid disaster response fund,

which eventually grew to \$7 million where each Rotary district was able to apply for a one-time

\$25,000 grant for Covid related activities. More than 300 districts received these one-time grants. “That fund has now been exhausted and an additional \$20 million of global grants were approved for Covid relief. Within the first few months of this crisis, we moved over \$30 million worth of funding for Covid-related activities. And that, of course, doesn’t even begin to touch all of the extraordinary efforts that Rotarians have done at the club, district or regional level.” ■



Sewing machines donated to needy women in Patiala

Team Rotary News



Fifteen sewing machines were presented, along with course completion certificates, to the first batch of the Free Stitching Centre being run by RC Patiala Midtown, RID 3090.

The vocational training centre was started in memory of late Rtn

Vidyasagar. His wife Suman Sagar sponsored the sewing machines. The centre functions at the Rotary Bhawan and the project is led by a three-member team comprising Rajiv Bansal, N K Jain and Yashwinder Singh. Lal Vishwas, joint commissioner,

Municipal Corporation of Patiala, who was the chief guest at the event, appreciated the club for running the vocational centre. Club president Manik Raj Singla and secretary Vishal Sharma were present along with other Rotarians. ■

On 26 June 2020, then-Rotary President Mark Daniel Maloney made a momentous announcement: The environment would become a new area of focus for Rotary. It was one of the final achievements of a term disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and capped by Rotary's first virtual convention. "Ultimately, the proposal passed the Trustees unanimously, the Board approved it unanimously, and I had this great satisfaction — sitting in my living room," Maloney said during a recent interview over zoom.

The moment was built upon decades of Rotarian interest. In 1990–91, Rotary President Paulo VC Costa made the environment a focus of his term, creating the Preserve Planet Earth Committee to look at ways clubs and members could carry out environmental initiatives. Surveys have found that the environment is one of the top-ranking causes among members of the Rotary family.

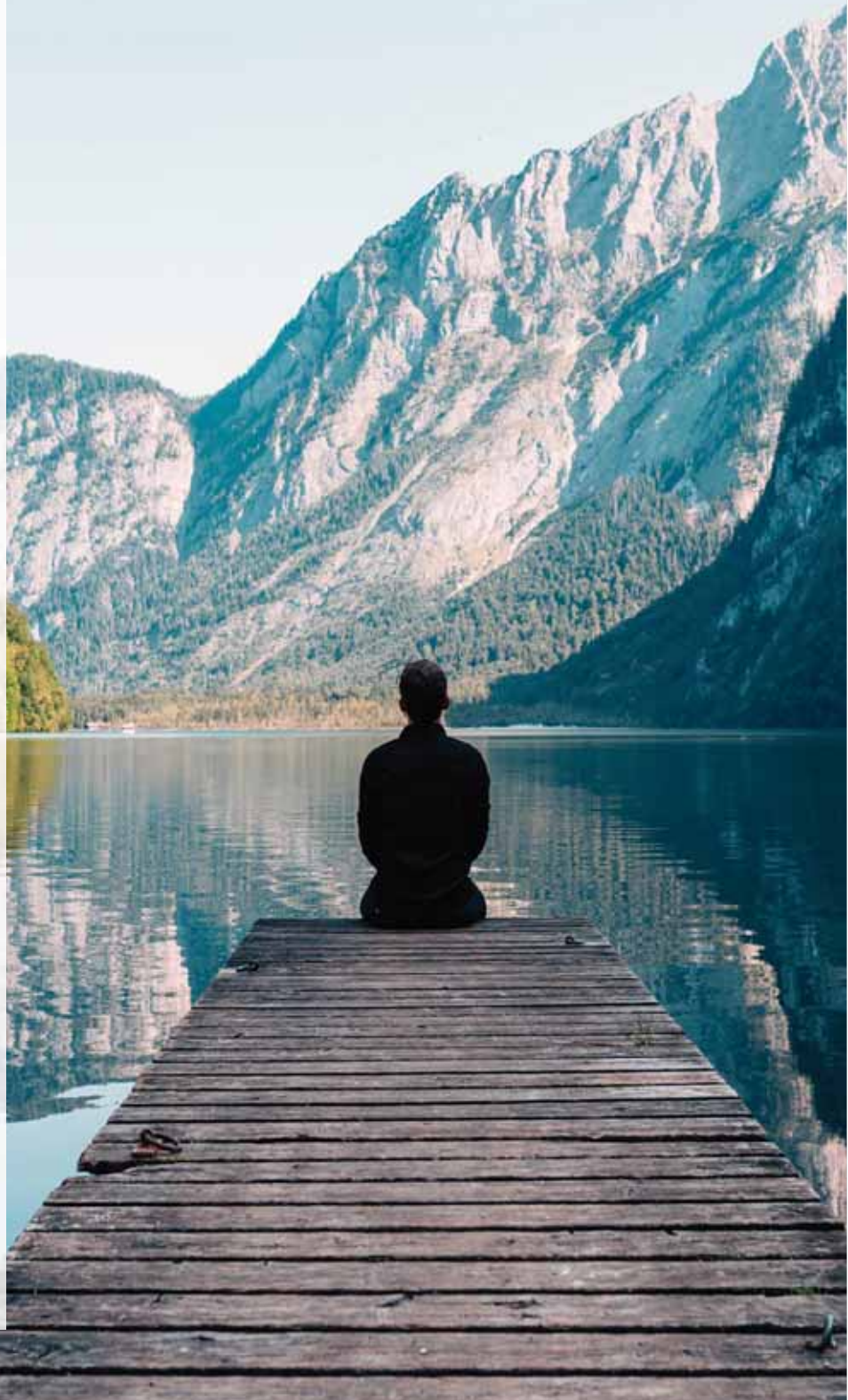
Over the decades, Rotary members have carried out thousands of projects to protect the environment. In just five years, global grants totaling \$18 million have funded projects that help support the environment while also focusing on one of Rotary's causes, such as providing clean water and sanitation, growing local economies, and supporting education. Now that the environment is itself one of Rotary's causes, members have even more opportunities to focus on issues that are important to them.

"The boundless creativity, enthusiasm and determination of Rotarians everywhere, combined with their willingness to take on significant problems, make them particularly suited to make an impact on the environment," says 2017–18 RI President Ian HS Riseley, who chaired an environmental issues task force that championed the new area of focus.

Read on to find out how Rotary members have already been supporting

In our nature

Diana Schoberg



the environment and to learn about new kinds of projects that will be eligible for global grant funding from July 1.

Recycling

In Campo Mourão, Brazil, only five per cent of garbage is recycled, and workers at the local recycling facility lacked the equipment needed to increase productivity. Without a conveyor belt, they had to sort recyclable materials at tables and move them by hand, requiring extra time and effort. And their outdated press was slow and created bales of recyclables that were smaller than standard for the regional market.

Working with a local environmental programme that coordinates the recycling cooperative, members of the Rotary Clubs of Campo Mourão and Little Rock, Arkansas, developed a project to increase workers' capacity to separate and process recyclable materials, providing both economic and environmental benefits. The project, supported by a \$33,066 global grant in the community economic development area of focus, funded the purchase of equipment to improve worker safety and efficiency and provided environmental and financial training. Workers sorted an additional 2.63 tonnes of recyclables per month after the grant project was implemented, and their income increased nearly 25 per cent per month.

Solar lights

In the remote villages of Ndandini and Kyaithani in eastern Kenya, families live on less than \$1 per day, and their homes are not connected to any electrical grid. Most cannot afford kerosene or paraffin to light their homes, which means students cannot see to do their homework in the evenings.

Members of the Rotary clubs of Sunshine Coast-Sechelt, British Columbia, and Machakos, Kenya, learned about the problem while working in the area on other projects. In 2014,

the Rotarians embarked on a project, supported by a \$101,564 global grant in the basic education and literacy area of focus, to bring environment-friendly solar power into homes and schools.

About 1,500 students attending local schools were each provided a solar light under a rent-to-own programme; students pay \$1 per month, less than the cost of paraffin, for eight months, after which they own the light. The proceeds are used to provide another student with a solar light the following year. Project partner Kenya Connect, noting that the time students spend reading has tripled with the introduction of the solar lights, described the programme as “a gamechanger in our efforts to improve the quality of education for rural schools.”

The grant, combined with funding from The Rotary Foundation (Canada)

and the government of Canada, also created computer labs at two schools and a solar system to provide enough power for the entire setup. More than 200 teachers received training on digital learning and ways to better make use of computers in their teaching.

Water diversion

Residents of two communities near Aurangabad, India, get their water from wells that are recharged annually by monsoon rains. But within a few months after the rains end, the wells run dry, and community members either must go further afield to fetch water or must buy it, which many cannot afford.

Members of the Rotary Clubs of Aurangabad East and Chatswood Roseville, Australia, collaborated on an eco-friendly solution using a simple, traditional technology: check dams.



Alf Ribeiro

These small dams are constructed across gullies to control the rate of stormwater flow. They decrease erosion and increase the amount of water that percolates into the ground. More than 200,000 check dams have been built across India for this purpose; a check dam constructed in India in the second century is one of the world's oldest water diversion structures still in use.

In Aurangabad, the monsoon rains flow via a channel across a government-owned sports training centre toward the sewage-contaminated Kham River. Supported by a \$36,500 global grant in the water, sanitation, and hygiene area of focus, Rotary members funded the construction of two concrete check dams on the campus. The increased percolation of the monsoon rains into the ground is expected to lengthen the period each year during which the area's 20,000 residents can obtain water from their wells. The dams have an anticipated life span of 75 years and require little maintenance.

Water conservation

A series of global grant projects of the Rotary Clubs of Haifa, Israel, and Coral Springs-Parkland, Florida, is using an environmental education programme to unite students of different cultures and beliefs around a topic of mutual importance in the desert region: water conservation. Students from 60 schools participated in

the second phase of the project, which was supported by a \$152,723 global grant in the peacebuilding and conflict resolution area of focus.

Schools selected research topics of interest related to water conservation or technology, such as desalination, rainwater harvesting, or water leaks. The teachers and students were supported in their science projects through equipment and connections with experts

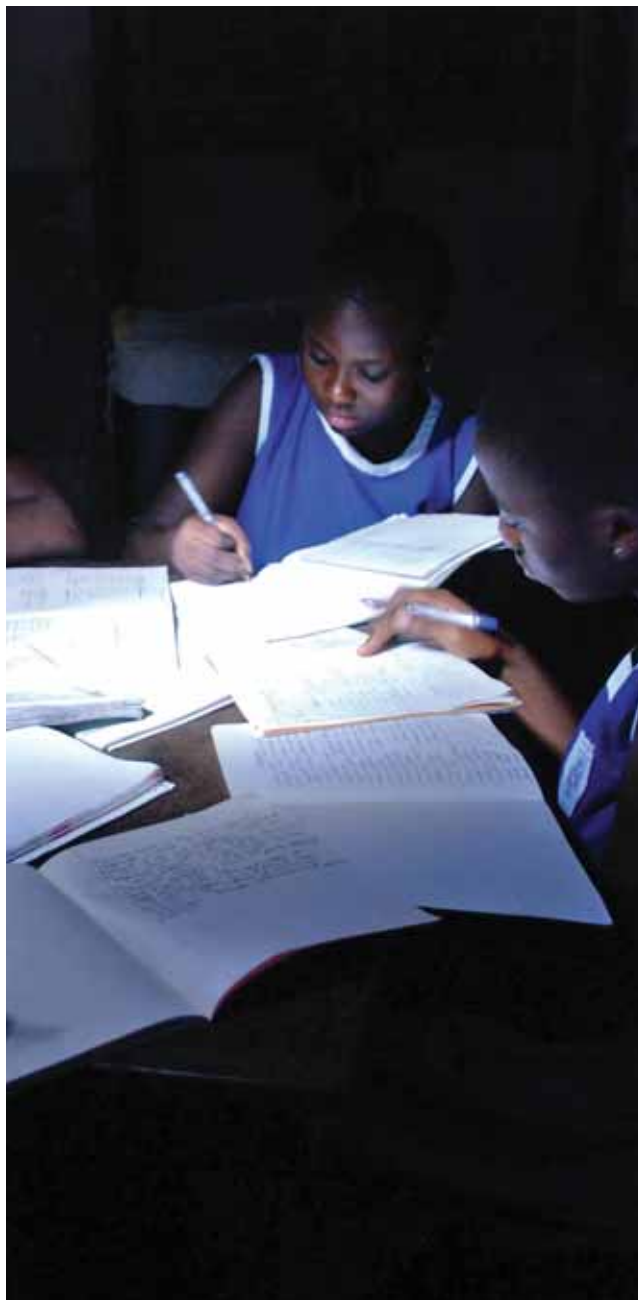
such as engineers, biologists, or physicists. More than 150 teachers received training in 26 training events.

Most schools in Israel are separated by culture or religion, whether Jewish, Muslim, Christian or Druze. Through the cross-cultural component of the global grant project, students visited one another's schools and came together for joint field trips to visit industry

facilities or to hear related speakers, giving an opportunity for interaction that they didn't have otherwise.

Sustainable farming

The Indigenous Tarahumara people live on the remote slopes and canyons of Mexico's Sierra Madre mountains, growing ancient varieties of corn and beans for sustenance. But the seeds for these plants, handed down through generations,



Suprabhat



Inti Ocon



were wiped out by a prolonged drought. In the wake of the resulting widespread hunger, many young people and women with children left their homes to beg on city streets.

Members of the Rotary Clubs of Chihuahua Campestre, Mexico, and St Augustine Sunrise, Florida, worked with a nongovernmental organisation called Barefoot Seeds to facilitate community discussions with Tarahumara leaders to come up with solutions. Community leaders said they wanted seed banks and improved water storage to support continued subsistence farming.

A project supported by a \$49,900 global grant in the community economic development area of focus established seed banks, demonstration farms, and plots to grow additional seeds using sustainable farming methods; reintroduced goats to improve soil fertility; installed rainwater harvesting equipment; and provided training. The project also provided solar-powered chest freezers to further extend the shelf life of stored seeds. At least 500 Tarahumara farmers received seeds, goats, or improved water access the first year.

Eco-stoves

A traditional wood fire for cooking produces the equivalent of 400 cigarettes' worth of smoke in an hour. With around three billion people around the world still relying

on such fires — many of them inside the home — more people die from indoor air pollution than malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS combined, according to the World Health Organisation. Additionally, the black carbon emitted from these fires, which absorbs sunlight, is believed to contribute to climate change, while the need for wood drives deforestation.

Members of the Rotary Clubs of Guatemala del Este and Los Angeles, California, worked together to help families living in San Lucas Tolimán, Guatemala, on the southeastern shore of Lake Atitlán. The lake, which is the primary source of drinking water for communities including San Lucas Tolimán, is severely contaminated in part because of storm runoff from areas where trees have been cut down for fuel for cooking fires. Supported by a \$160,000 global grant in the disease prevention and treatment area of focus, the project provided 1,000 families with eco-stoves that vent to the outside and decrease the amount of firewood needed by 70 per cent. Each stove is expected to reduce carbon emissions by 3–4 tonnes per year.

Clean energy

The Berlin Polyclinic has been the main provider of primary healthcare in Gyumri, Armenia, since it opened in 1993 after a

devastating earthquake in the region. But access to healthcare there remains limited. In conversations with medical centre representatives, members of the Rotary Club of Gyumri learned that the clinic's ability to serve patients is significantly hampered by drastically rising energy costs: In the past decade, the cost of electricity has gone up 200 per cent, natural gas 70 per cent, and water 50 per cent. Those increases, combined with inefficient heating and water heating systems, had forced the clinic to cut its hours of operation during the region's long winters. As a result, during the heating season — which runs from October to April — the clinic saw an average of 25 to 30 per cent fewer patients.

In 2017, Gyumri Rotarians worked with the Rotary Club of North Fresno, California, on a project — supported by

a \$101,000 Rotary Foundation global grant in the maternal and child health area of focus — that both increases patient access and benefits the environment. The installation of photovoltaic panels, a solar hot water system, solar heat pumps, and LED lighting was projected to reduce annual energy costs by 80 per cent, allowing the clinic to operate at full capacity year-round — and reducing carbon emissions by 50 per cent in the process. During the first winter heating season with the new system, the number of patients served increased by 32 per cent.

How 'the stars aligned'

We spoke with 2019–20 Rotary President Mark Daniel Maloney about why Rotary decided to make the environment an area of focus, and about how Rotary members have responded.

Why did you think it was important that Rotary make the environment an area of focus?

I'm not a tree-hugger, but I have grave concerns about climate change as an issue that will affect my grandchildren and future generations. And I must admit to a selfish motivation: I was concerned that we were missing the boat. In surveys of Rotarians, Rotaractors and potential Rotarians, the environment is one of the top five causes for every group. For the general public — prospective Rotarians — it was their No 1 cause. That prospective Rotarian would go to the Rotary website and look at our causes, not see the environment listed, and move on. I saw it as an issue of Rotary's relevance, in addition to being something we need to do substantively. One of my emphases as president was to grow Rotary, and I saw not having the environment as one of our causes as a hindrance to growth.

Before the Board and Trustees votes, what were you hearing from Rotarians about the environment?

In June 2019, while I was president-elect, I made a trip to the Philippines to celebrate the centennial of the Rotary Club of Manila, the first Rotary club in Asia. It wasn't just a celebratory banquet. There was a day of speakers, and I was invited onstage as part of a roundtable discussion with then Rotary International Director Rafael Garcia and several RI presidents and directors as well as past and current district governors. The other panellists asked me questions. Here we were, on the stage with high-level business people, and more than half of the questions dealt with the environment. That really made an impression on me. But it wasn't just in the Philippines. I've encountered questions about the environment all over the world: in South America, at the Brazil Rotary institute. At the 2019 Rotary International



Convention in Hamburg. At a Rotaract event in Surat, India.

The environment task force was set up in October 2019, and the new area of focus was approved the next June. How was this accomplished so quickly?

We were making progress toward having the 2020 Rotary Convention in Honolulu certified as a green convention before it was moved online due to the pandemic. We were partnering with the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group and the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Rotary Action Group to hold an event on World Environment Day on June 5. This was all coming together to bring the environment to the forefront in Rotary. I think it just took somebody willing to push a little. Frankly, I didn't have to push that hard. The stars had aligned. You had the president of Rotary and several past presidents serving on the Board of Trustees who wanted it to happen.

How do you respond to Rotarians who say this isn't Rotary's business?

I have not encountered that. I know when you start talking about climate change in the United States, there are some issues with terminology. But frankly, outside of the United States, I think there's a great deal of lack of comprehension about why there's such opposition here.

We're not forcing anybody to do anything. We're not taking a political stance. This is an avenue that, if you're interested in doing a project with an environmental impact, gives you the opportunity to access funding through global grants. We are responding to what Rotarians want to do: Rotarians want to address environmental issues.

The environment

Rotary members were already able to use global grants to fund projects that



benefit the environment through the existing areas of focus. So what's new?

Under the environment area of focus, Rotary members can tap into global grant funding specifically for initiatives such as:

- ▶ Restoring habitat, planting native vegetation, and removing invasive plant and animal species
- ▶ Protecting endangered species and preventing illegal wildlife trade
- ▶ Addressing overfishing, pollution, and coastal erosion
- ▶ Educating communities in conservation and resource management
- ▶ Supporting eco-friendly agriculture and sustainable fisheries
- ▶ Promoting the use of traditional and indigenous knowledge in resource management

- ▶ Supporting the transition to energy-efficient transportation
- ▶ Eliminating exposure to environmental toxins
- ▶ Reducing food waste.

Like all global grant projects, those under the environment area of focus will require a community assessment and must be sustainable. Projects that will not be eligible include community beautification projects, single-event cleanups, tree plantings that are not part of a broader strategy, and outdoor recreation initiatives.

Applications under the environment area of focus will be accepted starting July 1. Learn more at rotary.org/environment.

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The 5Rs of waste management

Preeti Mehra



It may seem unlikely. But believe me, small changes can make a big difference. This maxim also holds true if you are serious about handling the waste in your home in an environment-friendly manner. All you have to do is incorporate the 4Rs principle into your daily routine. And for those who wish to take the sustainable path to the next level, simply add the 5th R.

The 4Rs can be distilled into the following mantra: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, with the 5th being Recover. I started my 4Rs home project by fixing a large sticker on the refrigerator that prominently showed the familiar recycling sign of three green arrows chasing each other. This will typically remind you of what needs to be

done with every object in the house that you feel has finished its use — in technical language they call it the ‘end-of-life’ of a product.

It could be food that has passed its expiry date, fused bulbs, old batteries, used paper, waste cardboard, plastic packaging, glass or plastic containers, old and broken kitchenware, or worn-out furniture... the list is endless.

The best way to decide what to do is by applying the 5Rs rule. Being

hierarchical about it helps. They say the 1st **R – Refuse** sets the right tone. You can always refuse to change something that is still up and running. Sometimes old is gold and can easily last another year if it is repaired. Repair shops are once again becoming fashionable world over. In India we can try to preserve and extend the lives of products we use, and in turn help a skilled individual earn his or her livelihood.

Strictly enforce the Refuse rule when you go shopping as well: refuse the shopkeeper’s plastic bag; avoid buying individually packed products in small sachets as it generates more waste; take your own sipper and mug along so that you can say no to paper or plastic cups and straws. If you really need to, use biodegradable leaf plates and bowls instead of plastic or thermocol cutlery and opt for e-bills and refuse paper ones.

The 2nd and 3rd **Rs – Reduce** and **Reuse**, like the arrows on the sticker, chase the first one and each other. Try to reduce the waste by not generating it in the first place. Buy products that are hardy, practical, have a long warranty period and can be repaired. For instance, if you are investing in a laptop or an air conditioner, opt for the one with maximum warranty period even if it means paying a little extra in the beginning. Always purchase rechargeable batteries and save plugs and wires to be used





again. In personal products, buy large size bottles, and in clothes, brands that are known to last long instead of inexpensive, off-the-street apparel that need to be discarded in a short while.

Though ‘use and throw’ had become the norm a few decades ago, the world is now realising that this is the crux of the waste issue and we are throwing faster than we can recycle. So, making ‘Reuse’ a virtue may be easier on the purse and also your thoughtful gift to the planet.

Reuse can also serve as an imagination booster. The internet has endless ideas for reusing material. For instance, unwanted shirts could be stuffed and refurbished into cushions; chipped mugs make great toothbrush or pen holders; slim bottles are great for growing plants and can be painted over; an unused guitar can be turned into an innovative bookshelf. There are no full stops — give vent to your creativity and before tossing out trash consider whether it can be repurposed for something useful. Of course, all organic kitchen waste is ideal for composting, a subject to be dealt with separately.

The 4th **R – Recycling** comes when all other options are exhausted, and from your perspective the products has reached its ‘end-of-life’. This is where the *kabadiwalla* and waste aggregators play their role. Now in some cities formal recycling units are also being planned. But before you call in the waste collector or visit a junk shop, sort out the waste according to categories such as paper, cardboard, bottles, tins etc. Your waste is a livelihood for waste

Strictly enforce the ‘Refuse’ rule when you go shopping as well: refuse the shop keeper’s plastic bag.



aggregators, and usually they buy the trash at fixed rates.

Then comes the last **R – Recover**. Mostly it is the recyclers who do the recovery and gain from it. But that is the key to building a circular economy, if only companies bought back their products from consumers and dealt with its end-of-life efficiently. If only they used the recovered material to create a new product, we would be living in a better world. That is exactly where we are trying to get to with the introduction of laws and concepts such as Extended Producer Responsibility, which put the onus of recycling on manufacturers.

But for those who want to Recover at home, it is best to refurbish by upcycling the worn-out piece and creating another use for it, or else handing it over to the waste collector for breaking it down or downcycling.

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



The ox that brings good tidings

Jaishree

Be it Diwali, Pongal or the Tamil New Year, the *boom boom maadu* is part of the festivities in most parts of Tamil Nadu, although it is becoming a rarity in urban locations of late. Excited children run to the gate as soon as they hear the sound of the *nadaswaram* played by the man accompanying a colourfully clothed bovine. The man and his ox go from house to house asking for some help, mostly clothes — a sari or dhoti, or sometimes a bedsheet or a blanket, and rice.

There was a time when mothers would scare their children saying that they would hand them over to the ‘boom boom *maattukarar*’ (owner of the performing ox) if they misbehave. The very thought of the huge ox and its oddly-dressed owner used to send shivers down the spine of the young. Often people draw the analogy

using the term ‘boom boom maadu’ to denote a weak-willed person and one who just nods his head for everything.

This Pongal I got to ‘greet’ these guests at my home. The moment I heard the *nadaswaram* I ran to the gate armed with some bananas. I thought it perfect to feed the ox on such an auspicious day. As I give a banana to the ox — his name is Gopalakrishnan, his

owner Narasimhan tells me — he goes on to ask the animal in Tamil, “*Ammavukku padhavi uyarvu iruka, Gopala?* (Is there a promotion for the lady)?” The ox nods his head vigorously in the affirmative, with the bells in his horns and neck jingling pleasantly, and another nod to a question prompted by me if my daughter will pursue journalism like me. It however shook its head in the negative answering a prediction if she will settle down abroad!

Unfortunately, it will end with me. My son is not interested in this tradition. He wants to work in ‘an AC office’.

Narasimhan with his ox Gopalakrishnan.



I strike up a conversation with Narasimhan after filling his bag with some rice and placing a blanket on the ox's back. He is a third generation practitioner of this traditional vocation. "Unfortunately, it will end with me. My son is not interested in this tradition. He wants to work in 'an AC office', he says," says Narasimhan. This community is popular in Madurai, Trichy, Coimbatore and Chennai and live in tribes, mostly on the city's outskirts. The men and their oxen move out of their hamlets and trudge across a city for about 25 days a month, going door-to-door collecting alms by making the animals nod to the drum beats — mainly the eerie 'boom boom' sound created by rubbing

the sticks on the drum hung on the shoulders. They earn as much as they can and spend about 5–6 days with their families before embarking on the next journey.

Once a ubiquitous lot, their numbers have dwindled now. "People in cities are flooded with entertainment avenues. Not many are interested in watching an ox nod its head or perform some antics. It has cost us dearly for we know no other job," he laments.

The oxen are given to the community by temples where people donate the animals as a form of thanksgiving to god when their wishes are fulfilled. "We are happy that there still are some people who consider it auspicious when

We are happy that there still are some people who consider it auspicious when our ox wishes them well.

our ox wishes them well," smiles Narasimhan and, lo and behold, Gopalakrishnan nods his head excitedly. As the two get ready to leave, the ox performs a cute little dance — just to show off his anklets! The visitors did bring us some good tidings during the day. ■

Doing good with TRF help

Rotary sets up Covid ward at Jaipur hospital

Team Rotary News

With a quick sanction of global grant during the pandemic, RC Jaipur Round Town, RID 3054, has set up a Covid ward at the Rajasthan Hospital, Jaipur, in

partnership with RC Emory-Druid Hills, RID 6900, US, at a cost of \$69,500.

Although the Rajasthan government was doing its best to control spread

of Covid, a large number of patients were forced to go to private hospitals with beds in government hospitals already filled to capacity. "The private hospitals were charging huge amount for treatment and the patients had no choice. We were looking for a hospital that could provide treatment at no profit basis or at least at government rates and this hospital agreed to it," said

PDG Ramesh Agrawal, primary contact of the project.

The club procured the equipment to start a 70-bed Covid treatment facility at the hospital and set up a round-the-clock Covid Command Centre to provide virtual diagnosis and medical support for quarantined patients. "The command centre has so far treated over 1,000 admitted patients and 3,000-plus home quarantined patients during the Covid period," said Agrawal. In the first five months, around 100 patients visited the Covid ward. Till September 2020, 550 patients were admitted and treated. "Our members, especially doctors, visit the ward and are in close touch with the doctors," he added. ■





Bhimsen Joshi

Hindustani music's vox populi

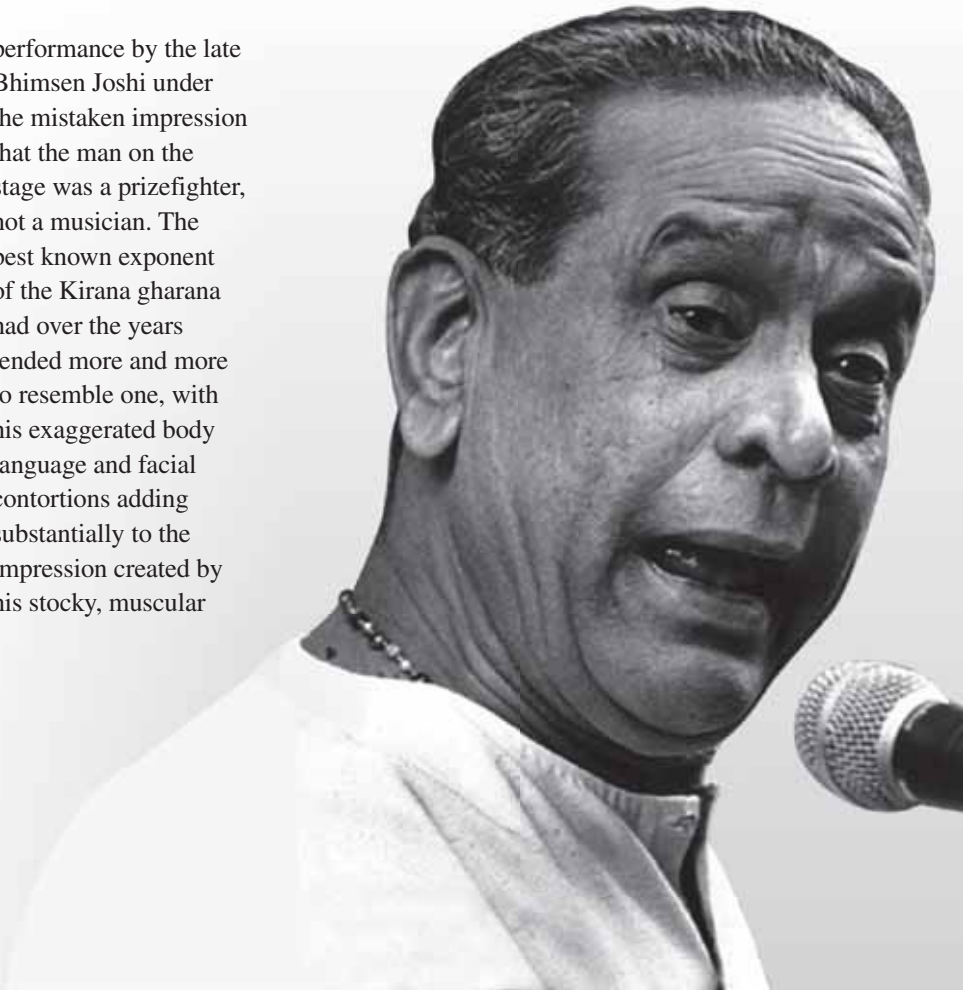
V Ramnarayan

If Allah wants to sing, it would be in Bhimsen Joshi's voice." This, says Dr Nagaraj Rao Havaladar, the late Kirana gharana icon's disciple-biographer, is how a Pakistani music critic paid his homage to Joshi. And every time you listen to the maestro's impassioned rendering of *Tum rab, tum sahib* in the raga *Brindavani Sarang*, you cannot help wondering if Ishwar or Allah could be unmoved by this voice from the depth of the singer's very being. Yet a newcomer to the world of Indian classical music could have easily been forgiven for hastily leaving a concert hall featuring a vocal

performance by the late Bhimsen Joshi under the mistaken impression that the man on the stage was a prizefighter, not a musician. The best known exponent of the Kirana gharana had over the years tended more and more to resemble one, with his exaggerated body language and facial contortions adding substantially to the impression created by his stocky, muscular

build, though truth to tell, his given name suggested he was quite sizable even at birth.

The inimitable vocal music of Bhimsen Joshi was an amalgam of meditative depth, a sonorous, malleable voice, perfect *laya* control and absolute *swara* precision. He worked assiduously for decades at making the gharana his own, incorporating the influences he had sought from all the masters he



admired, no matter what school they belonged to — Patiala, Agra, Gwalior or more. Which is why his unique style was characterised by a reverberant masculinity quite removed from the softer nuances of his parent gharana that had transplanted itself from Kairana in the north to Dharwar in the south, though the faster and higher pitched the *taans* he purveyed, the softer his voice grew.

To many faithful followers of Bhimsen Joshi's music, his voice, even at its most resonant, had a rare intimacy, somewhat reminiscent of the effect the voices of Amir Khan or D V Paluskar had on them. Heard live, it reverberated from the stage to the last row of closed halls and open spaces alike, its sheer power captivating the audience. In recordings, its almost paradoxical tenderness never failed to suffuse listeners with a feeling of other-worldliness.

Bhimsen's obsession as a child with music frequently led to his disappearance from home, as he followed passing bhajan groups as if hypnotised, only to be restored to his parents by friends.



with Hindustani classical singer Gangubai Hangal.

A typical Bhimsen Joshi concert during his best years was a slow awakening from a trance, deep immersion in the music gradually unfolding to give way to displays of immaculate vocalisation in three octaves, perfect control and acute sensitivity in shaping the aesthetics of the raga that he explored to the hilt. (For over a decade

through the seventies and eighties of the last century, however, Joshi was a victim of alcoholism, which affected his music adversely. Luckily, he overcame his troubles through his bhakti and total surrender to a higher power.)

Joshi was born on 4 February 1922 at Gadag, Karnataka, in a Kannada-speaking family. His father, Gururaj Joshi, the headmaster of a municipal school, wanted Bhimsen to qualify as an engineer or a doctor, but the boy was music-mad from early childhood. He eventually scaled heights in Hindustani

classical vocal that few could equal, emerging as one of the most distinguished products of the bilingual musical culture of Dharwar.

His love affair with Hindustani music began when he was still a slip of a lad, as he daily stopped on his way from school at a tea stall owned by a true *rasika* to listen the gramophone records he played. This is where he fell in love with an oft-repeated disc of Ustad Abdul Karim Khan. He had already been exposed to devotional music as a child born in an orthodox Madhva family of kirtankars. He had also had some grounding in music





guided by a certain Agasara Chennappa of Gadag.

Bhimsen's obsession as a child with music frequently led to his disappearance from home, as he followed passing bhajan groups as if hypnotised, only to be restored to his parents by friends, sometimes even the police after he had fallen asleep at strange locations. He eventually ran away from home after repeatedly listening to an Abdul Karim Khan recording — a *thumri* in the raga *Jhinjhoti*. The *ustad* had been the 'founder' of the Kirana

gharana whose disciple Sawai Gandharva was to eventually become Joshi's guru.

Bhimsen wandered from place to place in search of a guru, mostly travelling ticketless by train. After unsuccessful visits to several cities, he reached Gwalior after three months, all along entertaining his co-passengers with songs he had learnt from gramophone records.

Bhimsen then travelled to Kharagpur, Calcutta, Delhi and finally Jalandhar, trying to learn from several great masters. One of his early mentors was

Panditji wrote to his father that he was willing to return home, on the condition that he must be allowed to learn from Sawai Gandharva. The parents were only too delighted to see the return of their son, and agreed to his terms!

sarod maestro Hafiz Ali Khan of Gwalior, while the famous film star musician Pahadi Sanyal of Calcutta was impressed enough to recommend him for acting-singing roles on the silver screen, though Joshi was clearly keen on music, not movies as a career choice. His travels took him to the

annual Har Vallabh festival of Jalandhar, where he came into contact with Vinayak Rao Patwardhan. The celebrated vocalist, an exponent of the Gwalior *gayaki*, advised him to seek out Rambhau Kundgolkar of Kundgol — a village not far from Gadag — already



with legendary tabla player Ustad Allah Raka Khan (L).



Todi in the morning, raga *Multani* in the afternoon, and raga *Pooriya* in the evening, strictly adhering to the time theory of the ragas.” The redoubtable Gangubai Hangal, senior to him as Gandharva’s pupil, assumed the mantle of elder sister to him, while a fellow disciple Firoz Dastur also rose to prominence.

All his life, Joshi bore a scar on his face caused by a missile his guru had hurled at him; he also remained deeply committed to his *taleem* and his raga music, strongly grounded in its traditional base, exhaustive, intense, deeply felt, even as his music underwent many significant changes. He accompanied Sawai Gandharva on his concert tours and also

famous as Sawai Gandharva, a tribute to his celestial music, or *gandharva gana*, paid to him by an adoring public. Biographer Havaladar says: “Panditji wrote to his father that he was willing to return home, on the condition that he must be allowed to learn from Sawai Gandharva. The parents were only too delighted to see the return of their son, and agreed to his terms!”

Though Gururaj Joshi had wanted his son to take up a proper job, he had the vision to support him in his journey seeking musical excellence. He took Bhimsen to Sawai Gandharva who subjected him to a rigorous audition before accepting him. He demanded a monthly fee of ₹25, a stiff

burden on the humble schoolteacher, who also paid for harmonium and tabla accompanists for Bhimsen’s regular practice sessions.

The tutelage under Sawai Gandharva, lasting five years, was arduous — full of menial tasks and corporal punishment typical of the traditional

guru-sishya system of yore — until Bhimsen convinced the guru of his seriousness of purpose. Gandharva was cruel only to be kind during Bhimsen’s intense *gurukula vasa*. “Though he would appear to be very strict, he was affectionate in his teaching. Every day he taught raga



Pandit Bhimsen Joshi with wife Vatsalabai and Gangubai Hangal (L).





with Carnatic vocalist M Balamuralikrishna.

heard the recitals of several contemporary greats from all over India. His concert in Pune, on the occasion of the 60th birthday of Sawai Gandharva, in January 1946 was the starting point of his meteoric rise to fame.

Joshi's relatively limited repertoire of ragas was offset by his exquisite rendering of these ragas which he constantly reinterpreted afresh. His *Todi*,

Darbari and *Miyan ki Malhar* were perennial favourites, but his *Gaud Sarang*, *Suddha Sarang* and *Brindavani Sarang*, his *Suddha Kalyan* and his *thumri-s* in *Jogia* and *Bhairavi* were no less enchanting. As if to compensate for his so-called raga limitation, he created a few new melodies, mainly combinations of known ragas.

A versatile, peripatetic musician (his

jetsetting ways earned him the sobriquet 'Havai Gandharva') who blended the best of north and south in Hindustani music, he sang for the purist and lay *rasika* alike, taming a magnificent voice to produce flawless music. If his *Santvani* and *Dasarpadas* were testaments to his devotion to God and the Kannada language (he even had pure Hindustani bandishes composed in Kannada), his *jugalbandi* ventures with Balamuralikrishna remained no more than curiosities, hardly reducing the north-south divide in Indian classical music. He, however, became an inspirational symbol of national integration with his poignant rendition of

Mile sur mera tumhara as part of a televised campaign that captured the imagination of a vast populace. His film songs in Hindi and Kannada were big hits with lay audiences who knew nothing of his classical music background as well as *shastriya sangeet* aficionados. Madhav Gudi was perhaps his best disciple, though the vocalist never received his just deserts as a concert performer.

Bhimsen Joshi married twice at a time bigamy was not yet outlawed everywhere in India. He had children by both wives, Sunanda and Vatsala. "He loved fast cars and travelled at the speed of light, performing tirelessly for over four decades," says a music critic and admirer.

The Bharat Ratna, conferred on him in 2008, was the crowning glory of his career. Amongst his major awards were the Ustad Enayet Khan Foundation Award (2002), Padma Vibhushan (1999), HMV Platinum Disc (1986), Padma Bhushan (1985), Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1976), and Padma Shri (1972).

The writer is an author and former editor of Sruti magazine.

The tutelage under Sawai Gandharva, lasting five years, was arduous — full of menial tasks and corporal punishment typical of the traditional *guru-sishya* system — until Bhimsen convinced the guru of his seriousness of purpose.

From RI South Asia Office desk

Every Rotarian Every Year

Every Rotarian is encouraged to make a personal gift to the Annual Fund and participate in a Foundation grant or programme every year. The Annual Fund is the primary source of funds for TRF activities. Contributions help Rotarians carry out a broad range of local and international projects making their communities better. Use this link to download EREY brochure: <https://my.rotary.org/en/document/every-rotarian-every-year-brochure>

Every year clubs that achieve outstanding giving in EREY, ie, a minimum Annual Fund contribution of \$100 per capita, with every dues-paying member giving at least \$25 to the Annual Fund are

awarded with 100% Every Rotarian, Every Year club banner. Help your club achieve this banner in the current Rotary year.

Major Donor recognition

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

Crystal engraving instruction:

Donors may include their spouse name too on Major Donor crystal. The Major Donor Recognition name can be written as (for example) John and Jane Smith or Jane and John R Smith or John Smith and Jane Green

CSR India Grants

CSR India Grant model approved by the Trustees will be rolled out from July 1. Its salient features include:

Minimum CSR contribution will be \$21,000, including five per cent additional contribution to offset administrative expenses; sponsors may add cash contributions along with five per cent additional contribution to offset administrative

expenses if sent to RF(I); districts may allocate portions of their district grant to augment specific CSR India Grants while applying for district grants; TRF will not provide matching funds from the World Fund; CSR payments may be made by the corporation after e-approval of the CSR India Grants application. Grant reporting will remain the same.

TRF will stop accepting CSR pilot global grant applications using CSR funds from June 30, 2021.

The corporate affairs ministry has issued Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Amendment Rules 2021 dated Jan 22, 2021. Refer: https://www.mca.gov.in/Ministry/pdf/CSRAmendmentRules_22012021.pdf ■



Rotary Public Toilets in Dhone

Team Rotary News



Rotary Club of Dhone, RID 3160, constructed a public toilet block in the centre of the town. “The area has a floating population and is dotted with government offices. So the facility will serve its purpose here,” said club president Shankar Goud. The sanitation block constructed at a cost of ₹8 lakh was inaugurated by DG B Chinnapa Reddy and municipal commissioner KLN Reddy.

The club has also installed 25 concrete benches in a local park at a cost of ₹2 lakh. A hearse van worth ₹7 lakh was dedicated to the community with support from club member Rajaiah Goud. ■



Wordsworld

My friends and other animals

Sandhya Rao

It's not just humans who make history, you know

For a long time, when I pushed open the curtains in the morning, I saw a small white cat sitting curled up beneath the coconut tree, staring intently at me, almost as though we had an 'otherly' connection. Or is it earthly? My son's friend, for instance, is married into a conservative family, but they adore dogs. They have two or three pet canines, and the arrival of each, as a puppy, is greeted with a visit to the temple and special pujas performed in their names. The pets participate in every function in the family, be it social, celebratory or religious, and when they fall sick, it's not only vets that attend on them, but potions and prayers to ward off the evil eye.

The bond between humans and animals is as old as they have been around. All animal-lovers have stories to share — stories that make you laugh, move you to tears or amaze you. Nandini Sengupta has written just such a book: *The Blue Horse, and other amazing animals from Indian History*. As the top line on the back cover says: 'It's not just

humans who make history, you know.' Although the publisher has categorised it as a children's book, this beautifully written and engaging paperback is most definitely for all ages, it's one for the family from the littlest one up. If you love animals and history, then this one's especially for you!

We've all heard or read stories about the valour of animals. Many schoolchildren can recite Shyam Narayan Pandey's poem 'Chetak ki Veerta' about Maharana Pratap's horse. It's possibly one of the most well-known animals in India, and that's probably why the book is called, after Chetak, *The Blue Horse*. The blue horse? 'I am a Kathiawari horse,' says Chetak. Incidentally, the stories are all told in first person. 'Not as big and imposing as an Arab stallion, but sturdier and just as fast. And then there's my dappled grey coat, which earned me the sobriquet of the 'Blue Horse'.'

Chetak goes on to say: 'Maharana Pratap was an exceptionally tall man. And strong as an ox to boot. Bard songs say he weighed nearly 200kg in his full

chain mail and armour, fitted with all his weapons! I am not sure about the numbers — I am a horse, not a maths teacher! — but it was a heavy burden I carried on my back. Remember, I also wore armour — my *Pakhar* saddlery, my *Jhool* mail and caparison clothes, all of which weighed a lot too. But weight or no, I had to be quick, or *Hukum* and I would both be dead.'

The descriptions in the book are detailed and engaging; they are based on historical facts, unearthed after painstaking research and cross-checking by the author. Yes, the Nawab of Junagadh did in fact hold a lavish, three-day celebration for the marriage of his favourite pet dog, Roshanara, with Bobby, a pet belonging to the Nawab of Mangrol. Both dogs were heavily bejewelled and taken in a procession. The author provides the sources for the details at the end of each story. The info-box at the end of 'The Wedding Belle' mentions the source of the information as *The Dog Book: Dogs of Historical Distinction* by Kathleen Walter-Meikle. The info box at the end of Chetak's story, for instance, can clarify — for those who wish to know — the historical position on the Battle of Haldighati which, in recent times, was embroiled in controversy following the rewriting of some portions of it in school textbooks. As Nandini points out, this event is well-documented by

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Mughal chroniclers as well as Rajput bards; she draws attention to the view of contemporary historians that there was no clear winner: Maharana Pratap lost many soldiers and had to leave the battlefield while the Mughals could neither kill him nor end the Rajput resistance.

It's not surprising that many of the stories are about dogs, but there are cheetahs and elephants too. And an extraordinarily beloved parrot that belonged to a scion of the Kadamba dynasty in what we now know as Goa. The author says she first came across this story in 'a passing reference by historian Upinder Singh in her seminal book *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India*' in which she 'referred to a 12th-century inscription at Tambur that talks of the king who killed himself for his parrot'. Further research revealed more details. As the parrot says, 'It isn't every day that a human, much less a king, gives up his life for the sake of his pet parrot. But then again, I was no ordinary bird. I was a talking parrot who had been trained to recite the Vedas and discuss *Chanakya Niti*. And my loyal human was a king called Jayakesi.' Now, in that palace prowled a cat intent on making a meal of the parrot. Jayakesi

had promised to protect his parrot from the wiles of the cat and if he did not do this successfully, he had promised that he 'would follow him to the next world'. So, when the cat finally got the parrot, Jayakesi honoured his promise.

'To be honest,' the author has the parrot say, 'I didn't expect Jayakesi to stick to his promise. There was no one in the room when he made the vow. And humans don't value their friendship with animals the way animals do with humans. To them, it's just a few moments of amusement. To us, it is our whole life. But Jayakesi was different. It didn't matter to him that his promise was made to a bird. And that the bird was now dead and could not speak for itself. He ordered a funeral pyre piled high with sweet-smelling sandalwood and climbed inside, holding me in the palm of his hands.'

I was so enthralled and enchanted by this book that I wanted to chat with the author about it. After all, she was practically my neighbour, in Pondicherry, barely 170km away from Chennai! Nandini was more than generous and answered all my questions passionately. She had been researching the *Akbarnama* — the official chronicle of Akbar's reign written by Abu'l-Fazl ibn Mubarak — for a book she was working on, when she came upon a reference to the cheetahs. One thing led to another and

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My son's friend has two or three pet canines, and the arrival of each, as a puppy, is greeted with a visit to the temple and special pujas performed in their names.

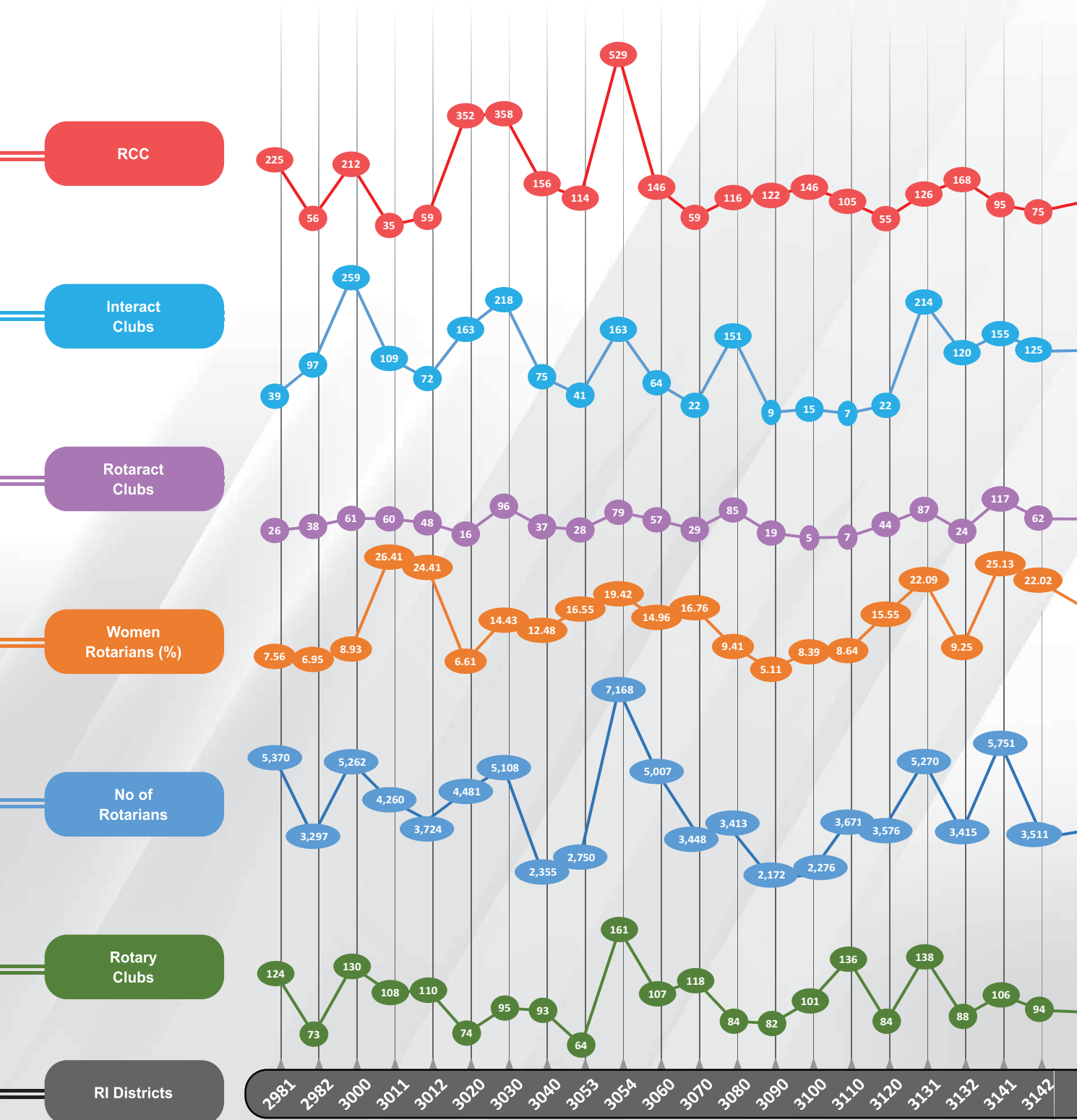
the idea for this book was born. 'I am a history evangelist, and an animal evangelist,' she says. The cheetahs open this collection, and the names they are called by in the story — Samand Manik, Madan Kali, Chitrnanjan — are the actual names of Akbar's cheetahs. Nandini says the book is only 15 per cent embellishment, the rest is historical facts.

The world knows of many animals that have made a mark on history, and some of them find mention at the end of the book, such as Caligula's horse Incitatus, King Dutugamunu's war elephant, Queen Isiemkheb's pet gazelle, Genghis Khan's falcon, Emperor Yongle's giraffe and so on. But Nandini consciously chose to focus on Indian animals. 'They are known so little,' she says, and she would like them to be known. For about two years, she researched, located authentic sources, and wrote their stories. She located many animals that had played a significant role in Indian history, but the book tells the stories only of those that could be clearly attributed to authentic sources. That's why it's a slim book, but who knows, perhaps the next edition will be thicker because the research continues. Meanwhile, *The Blue Horse* is a beautiful way to experience adventure and get a taste of the past, source and all.

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist.

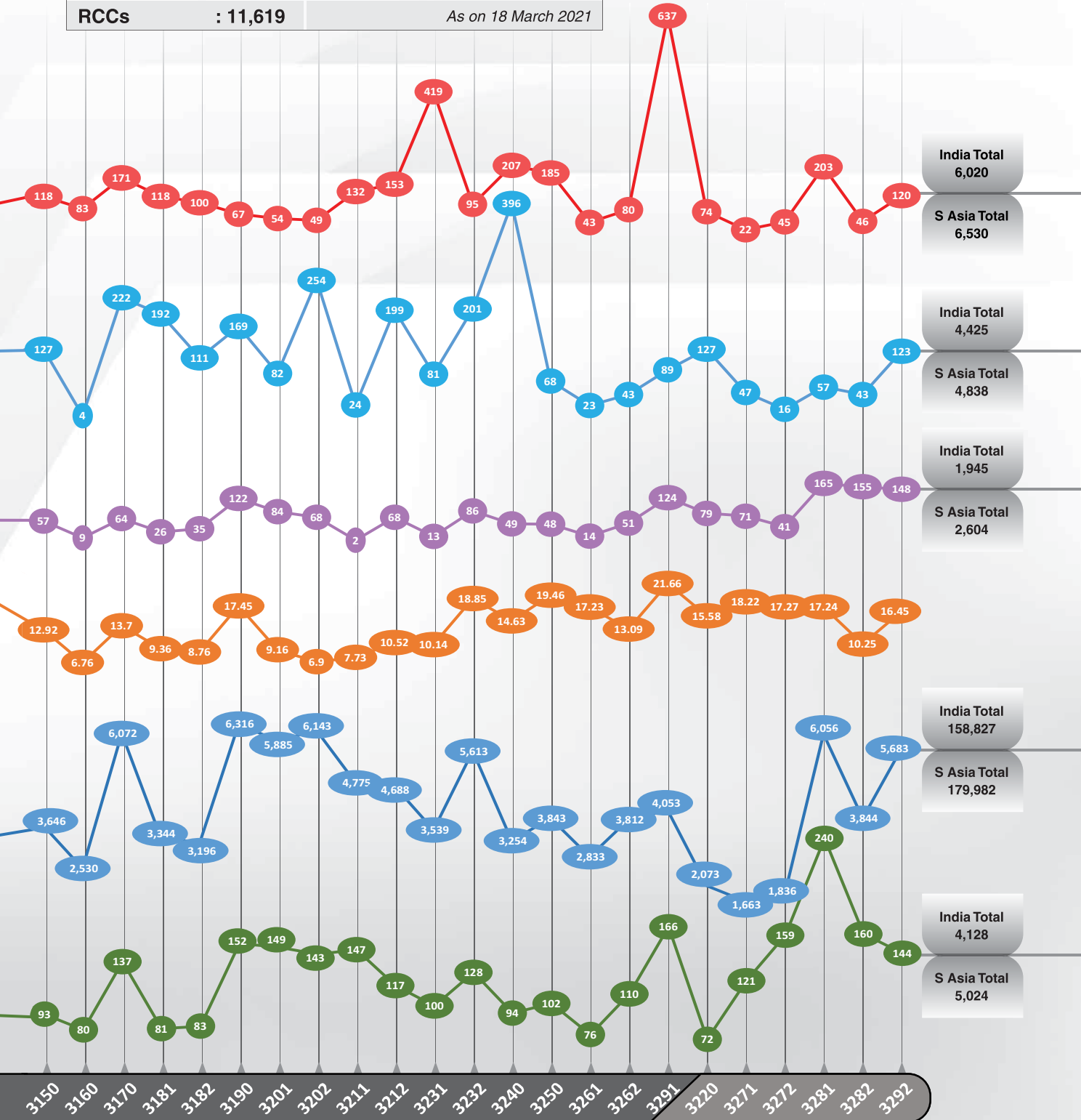
Membership Summary

(As on March 1, 2021)



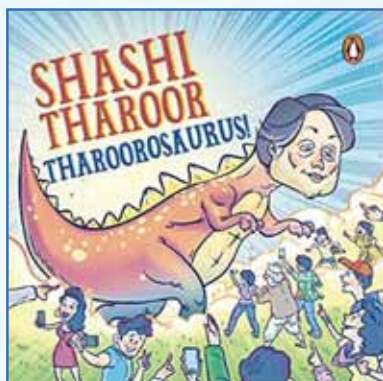
Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 36,598	Rotary members : 1,190,766
*Rotaract clubs : 9,273	*Rotaract members : 219,157
Interact clubs : 15,758	Interact members : 362,434
RCCs : 11,619	As on 18 March 2021



A book for word-lovers

SR Madhu



Tharoorosaurus

Author : Shashi Tharoor
Publisher : Penguin Random
House India
Pages : 325
Price : ₹399

Shashi Tharoor is a mesmeric speaker and prolific writer (he brings out a book every year) as everyone knows, but his fondness for big words is a myth. Good communication in speech or writing is a matter of using the right word, as Tharoor has said often.

A big word is justified only if it's the best one for the occasion. Otherwise it looks absurd and pompous, like a person wearing a three-piece suit for shopping in a bazaar round the corner.

However, Tharoor's wordsmith reputation led to a request from Penguin India for a book titled *Tharoorosaurus*, which covers three

words — Tharoor, tyrannosaurus (because "people are terrified of big words") and thesaurus. Tharoor clarifies that the book isn't a scholarly work but reflects his love for words, which he inherited from his father Chandran Tharoor. There was no word game at which his father did not excel, whether it was Scribble or Bingo or games that he devised himself.

The book describes and analyses 53 words: there's a definition for each word, a sample usage and a little essay. Plus a one-page fun sketch. The cover shows Tharoor's head on a long dragon's body.

The cover and the sketches inside fascinated my four-year-old grandson. He took the book away from me before I could read it, opened its pages again and again over the next couple of weeks and stared at the sketches, and asked me to "explain". By the time he was through with the book and agreed to part with it, its cover had come off and the pages began to look frayed.

The book begins with the horrendous-sounding *Agathokalogical* which means "consisting of both good and evil". The word was coined by English poet Robert Southey in the early 19th century. Tharoor says Indian philosophy has often held that good and evil can coexist in the same person. The heroes of the *Mahabharata* were god-like, yet not perfect human beings.

They were prone to lust, greed and anger.

The longest word in the book is *Floccinausinihilipilification* which means "the act of estimating something or someone as worthless". Sir Walter Scott in 1826 said the inventor of the word was William Shenstone who used it in a letter in 1741. Perhaps one could describe a book, a movie, a theory or a budget as an exercise in *Floccinausinihilipilification*.

Conronym is an interesting word "which can mean the opposite of itself". Tharoor cites the example of President Trump's "sanctions" on Iran's oil supplies. Sanctions is a conronym because it means both "permitted" and "prohibited".

The book features common words like apostrophe, brickbat, curfew, impeach, jaywalking, pandemic, phobia, lunacy, lynch, quiz, quarantine, hyperbole, namaste, umpire, yogi, zealot. There are less familiar words like aptagram, authorism, cwch, cromulent, defenestrate, panglossian, epicaricacy, epistemophilia, lithologies, rodomontade, snollygoster, valetudinarian and zugzwang.

Have you heard of the word *Cwch* which just means a hug? You are *Panglossian* if you are foolishly optimistic. *Epicaricacy* is deriving pleasure from the misfortunes of others. On the familiar word *hyperbole*, Tharoor quotes American humourist Will Rogers who said of a particular politician that if brains were gunpowder, he wouldn't have enough to blow the wax out of his ears.

In sum, this is a fun book, particularly if you are a word-lover.

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

RC Bombay targets 470 paediatric heart surgeries

V Muthukumaran

Neither Covid nor lockdown restrictions has stalled the paediatric heart surgeries project of RC Bombay, RID 3141, which it is currently implementing through two global grants. While the first GG project (₹1.3 crore) will be wrapped up by March-end with a target of 125 heart surgeries (119 done so far), the second GG is much bigger aiming to reach out to at least 350 needy children.

Giving a ringside view of the implementation process, Paediatric Heart Surgeries Committee chairman Jaymin Jhaveri says all the surgeries under the first GG are being done at the Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital (KDAH), Andheri, and for the second GG, the club has tied up with two more hospitals — SRCC Children's Hospital,

Haji Ali, and Haria Rotary Hospital, Vapi (Gujarat). "So far 75 surgeries were done under the second grant (₹3.6 crore) and we have received 50 per cent of this amount. Once we finish about 140–150 surgeries, a detailed report with patient details, documents, types of surgery with accompanying pictures and audited paperwork will be sent to RI's grants department. After vetting the report, they will release the balance amount for the rest of the project," he explains.

The club has tied up with local hospitals to conduct mega heart-screening camps for children in and around Mumbai. "We had the last such medical camp at the Aastha Hospital, Manor, in November to identify the project beneficiaries," says Jhaveri. The state government also comes up with a list of eligible patients under its children's health-care schemes.

Vetting process

Having received two sets of children's names, one from the government and the other from the hospitals, a four-member panel led by Jhaveri and consisting of DGN Sandip Agarwalla, past president Vijay K Jatia and Rtn Swati Jajodia shortlist the beneficiaries.

The panel first verifies the financial status of a child's family, then looks into the Aadhaar, ration cards and the income certificate of the patient's father. "Any needy child from across the country, from newborn to 18 years, is



eligible for free heart surgery," says Jhaveri.

It all started when Inner Wheel District 314 chairperson Jyoti Doshi came out with the idea of heart surgeries for poor children two years back and RC Bombay took it up with zeal, says DGN Agarwalla. While the first GG project is being done with support from RC Bombay Pier and RC Detroit, US, RID 6400; the second one is executed with RC Lviv-Centre, Ukraine, as its global partner. "Among the Rotary volunteers and Anns overseeing the surgeries is Ann Natasha Sejpal (wife of Parth Sejpal of RC Mumbai Lakers), who has devoted her entire life in taking care of children at the KDAH," he says. ■



Live light

Bharat and Shalan Savur

Decluttering your brain is one of the most healing things you can do in these information-overkill times. ‘To ponder’ should not be a lost art. It is when the mind glimpses signs and stories beyond our current limitations, beyond time to a realm best-known as eternity. It enables us to pause, appreciate and be awash in gratitude.

But before we get there, there are things to be done which would ease and free the mind and heart. Being to well-being: Completing little tasks is breathing meditation. We literally ‘allow

the breath to enjoy itself,’ as Thich Nhat Hanh describes it so evocatively. When the quality of our breathing improves, our body relaxes along with the mind. It greatly elevates the quality of our life — from being to well-being.

Brooding and worrying make the face hot, the scalp tight. My friend Muku, a healer, tells me her buzzword for 2021 is ‘I deserve’. Yes, you deserve all that’s good in life. So, please break the inertia you may find yourself in.

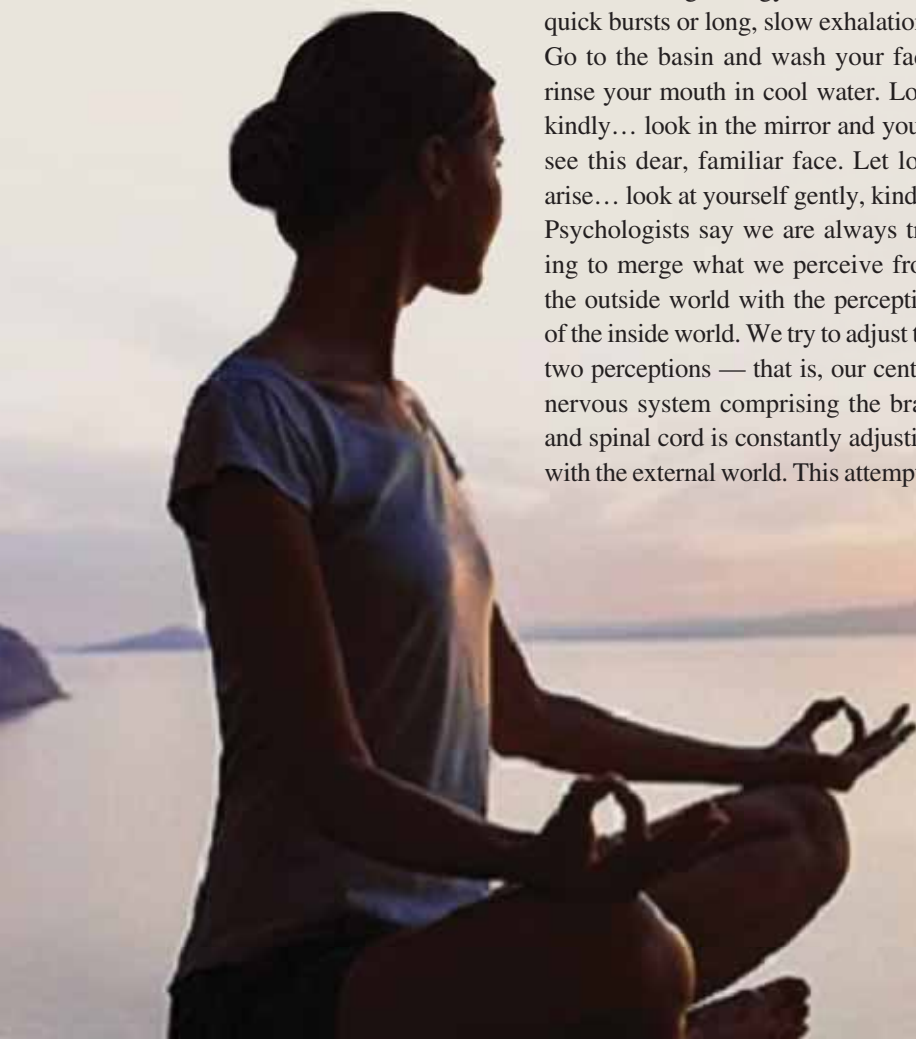
Snap your fingers. Move out of the space you’re in — physically. Blow that brooding energy out in short, quick bursts or long, slow exhalations. Go to the basin and wash your face, rinse your mouth in cool water. Look kindly... look in the mirror and you’ll see this dear, familiar face. Let love arise... look at yourself gently, kindly. Psychologists say we are always trying to merge what we perceive from the outside world with the perception of the inside world. We try to adjust the two perceptions — that is, our central nervous system comprising the brain and spinal cord is constantly adjusting with the external world. This attempt is

felt as distress or calmness, sometimes numbness.

To reduce or ease the stress, we need to cut off or change what the mind is paying attention to. Sleep rests the brain and nervous system circuits. Listening to soothing music helps immensely too. When the constant perception-adjusting mechanism is given a break, peace reigns.

The nervous system is in an adjusting and reflexive mode practically 24/7. A few aids regulate it and make the going easier:

- * *Take decisions.* Don’t let things hang in the air. Should I invest in these stocks? Should I not invest? Should I inform my colleagues? Should I not? When you take a decision, it means it is done and over with. There is no need to be constantly adjusting, hovering. You are on course and, boy! that’s a relief.
- * *Mix up tasks.* Make a flowchart of activities. Have a masterly mix of things you like to do with things you don’t like to do. Congratulate yourself after each task is done — it warms up the brain. Dopamine,



popularly known as the reward chemical because it rises when you feel you've achieved something, is a great declutterer. It pushes away the alertness chemical norepinephrine which when too high can cause jitters and unnecessary stress.

* *Treasure your alone-time.* It is not for nothing that the wise-like Mohanji tell us, 'we are the completion we are looking for.' We are. Which also explains why psychology has discovered what creative people knew all along — that we are at our best when alone. Being by ourselves keeps our mind clear with no outside interference. When we don't have to be in the social-niceties zone of smiling, nodding, replying, explaining, defending or offering tea, our brain is able to make all kinds of free associations and come up with a solution perfectly suited for our constitution and disposition. As Mohanji puts it, 'when we contemplate on our own, we come to terms with our doubts, fears and situation. Then we do little things, drop some old habits...'

* *Dispense with details.* Some people are very particular about small details — the pleat, the angle, the whatever-it-is has to be exactly right. It's great to be so focused but it can also mire you in a whole lot of inconsequential things. It's like literally hoarding garbage lest you need it. Result: you feel you are up against a wall, you can't proceed or progress; in short, you're stuck. Here it's important to take a step back and ask yourself: Am I being too detail-oriented? Use some reasoning, logic or even some urgency. You leave a trail of empty ice cream cups behind and walk towards your dreams.

* *Decant emotions.* These are tough times. Many people have lost

their jobs, some have lost their loved ones. How do we decant fear, anger, grief? Into journals, says psychologists. Writing helps you vent where you can begin to perceive a reassuring order in your chaotic feelings. It is also important to know that carrying frustration or any harmful emotion around is carrying a hazardous chemical in a fragile body. When we know and understand, it becomes easier to take measures. Somewhere in us, we have to also cognise that grief is a process we have to go through and that it's okay not to be fine, even more so, when the wounds are fresh.

I learnt this from a wonderful lady, a senior citizen who lost her spouse. She said, initially, the beauty of nature around helped her cope for a few days. And later, when a friend told her gently, 'it's okay not to be fine,' she broke down and cried out all her sadness in his arms. She says though we tend to say 'I'm fine, I'm managing,' it's healing to also admit to your sadness and give way to tears. The soul needs to know what it feels like to be human. The day doesn't dim but it generously holds our sorrows as willingly as it holds our laughter.

* *Change the cycle.* Do things that feel as familiar, comforting and reassuring as a sunrise. Change the cycle of grief or hopelessness to a cycle of strength and stability. Some suggestions:

Clear the decks — put away files and books, fold clothes, wash a few dishes, water the plants... doing things with your hands grounds and heals you.

Get into a healing zone — a bit of cardiovascular exercise like walking or cycling creates new life in a tired body and mind. Eating vegetables, cereals and pulses fills

Look out for heartwarming news, happenings, little signs that things are good or returning to normalcy. It's a send-off to the past and a welcome to the present and future.

an inner emptiness and brings on a reassuring relaxation. Rest and sleep are wonderfully comforting practices. Have Vitamin C daily to boost your immunity. Look out for heartwarming news, happenings, little signs that things are good or returning to normalcy. It's a send-off to the past and a welcome to the present and future, a send-off to old memories with respect and love and a welcome to a new way of being in a new world.

The laughing woman. A new-world parable goes: A woman was admired for always laughing. A passerby asked her curiously, 'why do you laugh all the time?' The woman said, 'I'm enjoying my life because things are going the way I planned.' A few days later, all the woman's possessions were stolen. Yet, she was still laughing. Another passerby asked curiously, 'why do you laugh all the time?' And the woman said, 'I'm enjoying my life because things aren't going the way I planned!'

Live light. As screenwriter Gene Roddenberry said, 'It isn't all over, everything has not been invented, the human adventure is just beginning.'

Until tomorrow...

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

RC Vriddhachalam — RID 2981



Miyawaki forests (1.13 lakh sq ft) at different locations are being implemented at a cost of ₹11 lakh. RWH pipelines are laid to irrigate the microforests.

RC Amalner — RID 3030



The club is providing protein supplements and other requirements to 25 HIV-infected children and widows at Aadhar, a special home.

RC Salem South — RID 2982



The club joined hands with Rotary E-Club Bangalore to provide 12 computers (₹2 lakh) to Don Bosco Anbu Illam, an orphanage with 100 boys.

RC Sagar Central — RID 3040



Drawing material and warm jackets were distributed to inmates of Baal Anaath Sewa Ashram at Kudari village to mark World Children's Day.

RC Aranthangi — RID 3000



Vision screening and hearing test camps were held for drivers as part of Road Safety Awareness month. Bed sheets were given to Namathu Illam, a home for mentally-challenged.

RC Alwar Fort — RID 3053



The club sponsored the surgery for physically-challenged Mehtab Singh to replace his elbow joint replacement surgery.

RC Gandevi — RID 3060



N95 masks, gloves, PPE kits and other Covid kits were given to paramedical staff at the PHCs, hospitals, blood banks in Gandevi, Navsari and Bardoli areas through a GG project.

RC Moradabad Brasscity — RID 3100



Ceiling fans were donated to the Deputy Jagannath Singh Memorial Kanya HS School and the School of Child Development. DG Manish Sharda was the chief guest.

RC Kapurthala Elite — RID 3070



The club distributed eyedrops, masks and spectacles for the needy inmates at the district jail which helped to enhance the public image of Rotary in the city.

RC Hathras — RID 3110



A health check-up camp was conducted at the Prem Raghu Hospital where around 35 patients were screened for various illnesses.

RC Roorkee Midtown — RID 3080



The club distributed 250 sets of woollen caps and scarves to needy people and served them hot snacks to beat the chill winter weather.

RC Balrampur — RID 3120



Blankets were distributed to needy families to protect them from wintery nights. This gesture enhanced the public image of Rotary in the neighbourhood.

RC Barsi — RID 3132



A vocational training on tailoring is being provided to 15 rural women. The club will also create employment for them after they complete the course.

RC Bhatkal — RID 3170



Five hundred N95 masks and 200 surgical face masks were donated to the government hospital, Bhatkal. DG Sangram Patil handed over the kits to CMO Dr Savita Kamat.

RC Nizamabad — RID 3150



A large banner was unveiled on World Polio Day along with posters to create awareness on End Polio campaign. The posters were released by the district medical officer.

RC Puttur Yuva — RID 3181



DG Ranganath Bhat handed over a toilet, sponsored by club president Dr Harshakumar Rai, to an underprivileged family at the Kaniyar forest region.

RC Bhalki Fort — RID 3160



Six precast benches and play equipment were installed at a children's playground in Bhalki.

RC Shirva — RID 3182



The club donated 20 chairs to an anganwadi centre at the Indrapura locality. DG Rajarama Bhat handed over the furniture to the staff.

RC Pattambi — RID 3201



The club distributed dress material to inmates of Sadasiva Madhava Balasadanam, an orphanage for boys at Peringannur.

RC Malda — RID 3240



More than 100 saplings were planted at Kanchantar, Malda, by Rotarians, Inner Wheel members and local dignitaries.

RC Sivakasi Diamonds — RID 3212



Training in tailoring and other crafts were provided to the staff at the Rotary Matric HS School, Viswanatham village. Umbrellas worth ₹2,750 were donated to street vendors.

RC Sambalpur West — RID 3261



Blankets were distributed to needy people, in association with Parmeswari Bai Memorial Trust, at Sakhipara to protect them from the winter cold.

RC Arkonam — RID 3231



A breastfeeding awareness camp for mothers was held at the PHC in Perumuchi village. The women were advised to consume nutritious diet during the postnatal period.

RC Salt Lake Metropolitan Kolkata — RID 3291



100 blankets were distributed to the elderly at Malia and Amragachi localities. The project costing ₹20,000 was led by Rtn Indra Kumar Bagri with Anns.

Compiled by V Muthukumar

Perils of school-hopping



TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

Many middle class Indians of my generation face a peculiar problem. They don't know what to say if you ask them a simple question: which school did you go to? This is because of transferable jobs of their parents. In my own case I went to school in Raigarh, Raipur, Delhi, Jabalpur, Bhopal and finally Gwalior. This was between 1955 and 1967. Of these 12 years, six were spent in one school in Delhi, the Sardar Patel Vidyalaya. They were the happiest of my school life.

But when I reached Class 9, my father was transferred to Jabalpur. After six months he was posted to Bhopal. And after 18 months, to Gwalior. So which school did I go to? I think it was the one in Delhi but this belief was rudely shattered about six months ago. I was told by a fool who had spent only two years there but graduated from there that I was not eligible to be called alumnus because I had not graduated from there.

By that token I am an alumni of the school in Gwalior where I spent just six months! I don't mind that because it was a nice little school where I made some good friends. But it's plainly absurd that someone who spends six months in a school in his final year is an alumnus but not someone who spends

six years but doesn't graduate from there because his or her father gets transferred. What made it especially galling for me was that this guy had mistakenly sent a school group photo to me — he wanted someone with a name like mine but who had joined in Class 10 — asking if I could identify the kids. I did because I had spent from Class 3 to 9 with them. We had spent such happy times together.

But instead of saying thanks, the idiot wrote back to me saying he didn't know me. Obviously he didn't. How would he? He had joined in Class 9 after I had left but spent only three years in the science section. Most of those in the photo had opted for Arts, as it was called then. It doesn't matter to me which school I am an alumnus of but the question

remains: how do you define an alumnus? I am sure thousands of people whose parents worked for the government have faced this problem. It has become worse now after schools have opened branches. People ask for the branch also now. It's almost a new caste system.

Some parents who could afford the fees would send their children to boarding schools. That ensured stability but also made the kid a member of a new caste system. These boarding schools had, and still have, a strict hierarchy. I think at the top of the pile were the schools in the hills in North, South and East India. West and Central India had many boarding schools but they came lower down in the pecking order. Be that as it may, the alumnus status problem resolved itself unless, of course, you were expelled. But that happened only infrequently.

Actually I am very glad that I am not an alumnus of any school because WhatsApp has led to a proliferation of school groups — the fellow I mentioned above was trying to make such a group — and these are a huge, crashing bore. So are other large groups that with more than, say, ten members. And since the lockdown, I fear, the problem has become worse. Now zoom has been added on. I mean, can you even begin to imagine how horrible that is! ■

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In Brief



41-year-old sues parents for financial support

Faiz Siddiqui (41), a jobless man, has sued his parents to force them to pay him maintenance for life. A trained lawyer with a degree from Oxford University, Siddiqui said that he is completely dependent on his wealthy parents. After a family quarrel his parents want to stop supporting him. He lives rent-free at a £1 million-flat his parents own in London and all his bills are taken care of. Siddiqui says that he is entitled to claim maintenance as a “vulnerable” grown-up child with health issues and preventing financial support would be a violation of his human rights.



Andaman beckons for underwater weddings

Havelock Island Beach Resort located in the Andaman and

Nicobar Islands is gaining popularity for conducting underwater weddings. It boasts of being the only place in India where you can get married under the water! The ceremony is held a few feet below sea level, where close friends and family members accompany the bride and groom. Also, an underwater stage made of coconut shells, flowers and palm leaves is set up for the couple to exchange vows with the rich marine life in the backdrop.

Stray dogs with bow ties up for adoption

During his visit to an adoption centre, Sir Darius Brown, a 14-year-old from Newark, New Jersey, learned that hundreds of dogs are euthanised daily at some shelters due to overcrowding. A dog-lover, he was devastated when he learned of this horrific reality and decided to help dogs at shelter homes get adopted by making them stand out with adorable bow ties that he stitches himself. Brown has been donating them to animal shelters across America.



Man walks 4,000km to honour Covid warriors

Bharath P N (33) from Mysuru, decided to pay tribute to the Covid warriors and embarked on a 4,000km-Walk for Humanity to honour their efforts and selfless service. In his 99-day-journey that started from Kanyakumari to Dal Lake in Srinagar, Bharath walked around 45–50km every day covering eleven states. Along the way, he spread awareness on environment protection, importance of planting trees, and being physically fit.



A mobile home on autorickshaw

A Chennai-based architect Arun Prabhu NG converted an autorickshaw into a mobile home which went viral on social media. The architect wanted to demonstrate the efficient use of space. His design drew praise from Anand Mahindra, chairman of Mahindra Group. Sharing a post about Prabhu’s mobile home, the business tycoon tweeted “I’d like to ask if he’ll design an even more ambitious space atop a Bolero pickup. Can someone connect us?” The home built at the cost of ₹1 lakh can accommodate a single person and has solar panels, a water tank, batteries, cupboards, doors, a staircase, a toilet, a lounge area, bedroom and a workspace.

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