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Rotary News

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Good luck to RI Prez McNally

I was delighted to see the beautiful picture of RIPE Gordon McNally and Heather taken at the *Lakshya* meet in Kolkata. It was great to see beautiful pictures of the couple with their family. I wish the new RI President a fruitful year ahead. It is inspiring to note that the outgoing president Jennifer Jones has committed additional \$150 million to the polio eradication initiatives. Her farewell message and the photos are excellent. The Editor's note explains the importance of airing our opinion boldly where required.

RID Mahesh Kotbagi's farewell message depicts clearly his satisfaction in carrying out his duties well and the support he got from his colleagues. While RID AS Venkatesh stresses the importance of taking up large projects, focus on membership growth and making members aware of the good work done by TRF. Trustee chair Ian Riseley urges Rotarians to give to TRF generously.

Other articles like *Don't shy away from big dreams, Show empathy to others, McNally meets Rajashree Birla in Mumbai, A Rotary club for doctors, Only*



love can instil hope in the world, Unveiling transgender livelihoods, A day out for senior citizens in Nagpur and Egypt blessed by Nile are all read-worthy and filled with facts. The feature on RD Burman is interesting and the health column urging us to take care of our teeth is useful. *Club Hop* looks good and descriptive. Another superb edition.

Philip Mulappone MT
RC Trivandrum Suburban — D 3211

The June issue brings down the curtain on one RI team and raises it on the next one. (For McNally, *Rotary is about continuity... and heart*).

For *Rotary News* too, it is all about continuity and heart. We enjoy reading the magazine with regular columns like Music and Melody (S R Madhu), Wordsworld (Sandhya Rao), Health (Bharat and Shalan Savur), and LBW (TCA Srinivasa Raghavan). Keep bringing cheer and positivity.

Sanjay Bhatia, RC Chandigarh
Midtown — D 3080

Awestruck by Egypt's beauty

Your vivid description of Egypt, the oasis in the desert, which nurtured and nourished civilisation for thousands of years is very interesting to read. I felt as though I was in my astral form visiting *The Land of The Pharaohs*.

It is news for us that Queen Cleopatra, whom we all idolised after seeing the film of the 1960s, is mostly a matinee idol. And that Nefertari, the favourite queen of Pharaoh Ramesses 2, and Nefertiti, stepmother of Pharaoh Tutankhamun, were much more prominent in Egypt.

We are wonder struck by the Temple of Abu Simbel built during the reign of Ramesses 2, and appreciate

the skill of modern engineers for relocating this magnificent temple in a safer site when the Aswan Dam was built.

Queen Hatshepsut's Temple, the Valley of the Kings, and the Valley of the Gates of Kings (tombs decorated with frescoes and filled with treasures for after life) have to be seen to be believed. Your balloon ride reveals a bird's-eye view of the Nile (Blue Nile and White Nile), the verdant lifeline of Egypt.

VRT Dorairaja
RC Tiruchirappalli — D 3000

A thought-provoking editorial

Kudos to editor Rasheeda Bhagat for her frank views in the Editor's

Note with the headline 'Be different... stand up, speak out'.

She has boldly touched upon the need for people to have the courage to speak out when the situation warrants. If done, this will definitely make a difference in the long run. Her capacity to put her thoughts in a few lines is remarkable. Her expressions are gentle and persuasive for readers not to ignore. Some Rotarians may think of the relevance of her thoughts in the editorial column of a Rotary magazine. But, according to me, it is very much relevant to all Rotarians, as we identify ourselves as leaders of our respective professions.

To face challenges in our professional life, we should be capable of being strong and self-reliant. Then

only, we can awaken social consciousness. Really, a thought-provoking editorial with a striking message for us all.

*R Srinivasan, RC Bangalore
JP Nagar — D 3190*

The Editor's note with the headline 'Be different... stand up, speak out' caught my attention. It takes courage to write such a bold editorial and you need to be applauded.

Also, through this write-up, you made us aware of one-of-its-kind, Club for the Cancelled, thanks to Pamela Paresky, the mother hen of the cancelled. Thought criminals are welcome as they make a difference. Let's take a cue and have such out-of-the-box clubs in every district.

*Yashica Jain, RC Chandigarh
Uptown — D 3080*

Congratulations to SR Madhu for the excellent article *Naushad: The Kohinoor of Bollywood music*. Also, the write-up has nice pictures, especially a rare picture of Bimal Roy, Meena Kumari and Naushad at the first Filmfare awards.

*Brij Gopal Roy
RC Calcutta — D 3291*

As outgoing president of my club, I would like to convey my appreciation for *Rotary News*. This publication is an invaluable resource in keeping us informed about the diverse activities of the Rotary community.

Under your leadership, the editorial team is diligently recording the significant projects and activities of Rotary clubs, presenting them in an engaging manner. As my term as club president draws to a close, our special thanks to your team for regularly featuring our club activities.

*Col Vijayakumar, RC Alleppey
Greater — D 3211*

With reference to the article *International Polio award for PDG Sagadhevan*, the latter is an excellent example for a Rotarian. A man with noble and great thoughts, he treats everyone alike with a positive attitude.

*Rajasekar Sivasamy
RC Karur Texcity — D 3000*

The article *A marathon fundraiser for Rotary cancer care hospital* will inspire other clubs to take up similar initiatives.

*Vivek D Kanada
RC Aurangabad Elite — D 3132*

On the cover: RI President Gordon McNally

Picture by: Monika Lozinska

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

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

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

Make RI's Code of Conduct binding

My family is involved with Rotary for almost 17 years, our children have also been Interactors and Rotaractors. My wife has been a successful club president and did meaningful projects.

I see and hear of deteriorating Code of Conduct issues in many clubs, including harassment of club presidents, international exchange students, etc. It needs a lot of courage and gumption for a Rotarian to report harassment. Most clubs prefer brushing things under the carpet and not call a spade a spade.

The Rotary oath on Code of Conduct (2019) which has been revised by RI board a number of times should be made compulsory during the installation of Rotary club board members and while inducting new members.

Incoming club presidents, governors, regional leaders and directors should be provided with annual training on RI's harassment policies and procedures at events like PETS and International Assemblies.

*Jagannath Santra
RC Jamshedpur — D 3250*

My call to action

Even as we face new and serious challenges, Rotary takes care of its members and those we serve, works to build lasting peace, and embeds belonging and inclusion in everything we do. That is why I am asking everyone in Rotary to *Create Hope in the World*.

This year, we're prioritising projects to support mental health. This effort is deeply personal to me. I know what it's like to see someone suffer in silence. I have also witnessed the power of personal connections, the value of discussing emotional and mental well-being, and the lifesaving impact of preventive care and treatment.

Research shows that performing acts of kindness is an effective step any of us can take to protect our well-being. And by building peace within, we become more capable of bringing peace to the world.

Building peace is the essence of Rotary. Many of our service projects foster the conditions for Positive Peace. We work tirelessly to overcome barriers and create new connections. This year, we'll promote virtual international exchanges for members to strengthen those vital connections.

Peace isn't a dream, and it's not passive. It's the result of working hard, earning trust, and having open conversations that may be difficult. Peace must be waged persistently — and bravely. Everything we do across our areas of focus has the potential to foster the hope that can make peace possible.



The spirit of connection and purpose should inspire every Rotary member. When club leaders focus on offering an excellent club experience, we retain more members and attract more prospective members. We must make our clubs as welcoming and as engaging as we can.

Our goal is to create a sense of belonging, from our club meetings to our service activities. We need to continue creating inclusive, welcoming environments where everyone can be their authentic selves. All people of action need to be able to imagine a place for themselves in Rotary — it's up to us to ensure they can do so.

Over the next year, I will be putting a focus on continuing our journey in diversity, equity, and inclusion — ensuring that Rotary reflects the communities we serve and continues to take significant

steps toward accessing the full range of human talents and experiences, so that we can better serve humanity. And we will continue to empower women and girls by helping them unlock the potential already within them.

As we begin this journey together, I take inspiration from Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, who in the 18th century spoke of all the world becoming kin, promoting "sense and worth, over all the earth." This has long been my call to action, and I share it now with you.

Let us build peace within and spread it freely. Let us create belonging and imagine the future of Rotary afresh. Let us work together joyously and *Create Hope in the World*.

R Gordon R McInally
President, Rotary International



A toast to new beginnings

As a new Rotary year begins, and one set of leaders — at the club, district, zone and international levels — steps down to give way to the next set, Rotarians and Rotaractors, turn their eye, with great expectations and aspirations towards the new leaders. This is so much akin to getting a new boss at the workplace. He/she always brings hope, sometimes exceeding expectations and at other times causing dismay all around. For the first couple of weeks, the new leadership, at every level, will be watched keenly for the all-important signals... what is the direction the club or district will take, the enthusiasm, the motivation, and above all, the leadership that the chosen ones will provide, along with both equity, inclusion and integrity. Very few voluntary organisations, if any at all, put the kind of emphasis on training club and district leaders as Rotary does. So GETS, PETS, SETS and other training programmes were planned all across the Rotary world and executed diligently during the last few months.

Now that the training is over, it is time for the leaders to perform. Leadership comes in a variety of hues and contours... some leaders lead from the front, put their boots on the ground and hands in the mud and the flock follows suit. Others are content to provide the direction and allow their team members to execute the work — community service projects, programmes, image-building events, etc. They kickstart the work and then take a backseat, but are always available when needed to step in. This is like planting several saplings and providing the right nourishment (nurturing) to the

plants to grow and blossom. Such leadership creates the next crop of leaders.

Leaders can also be dominant and dominating; the dictionary gives the connotation of control to the former and 'tyrannical control' to the latter group. At the bottom of the pile are leaders who are uncaring, inefficient or indifferent; one only hopes that they are rare, and at the end of the year, the best that the unfortunate ones who had to suffer them can do is heave a huge sigh of relief... that is, if they have not left Rotary by then!

But let's look at the positive; look around and you will see the difference a good leader has made to your club or your district. The unique thing about such leaders is that even though their year might have ended, their leadership and drive never do. That is exactly why some PDGs continue to do dramatic work and impressive projects well beyond their year at the district's helm, while others fade into oblivion. Identify the first category of leaders, stand with them, lend a helping hand, one day at a time, and then see the impact you create in transforming lives around you. Bringing smiles to anxious/stressed faces, and hope to those who do not have any, is no mean task. Only the very fortunate ones get that opportunity. So if you have been given a leadership role, or have the opportunity to be a part of your club or district team, make full use of every moment of the year that is unfolding before you... to serve your communities, help those less privileged than you, ignite minds and make a difference.

Well begun is half done... so here's a toast to new beginnings.

Rasheeda Bhagat

See you soon, Singapore



Singapore and Rotary have some things in common. For one, the Southeast Asian island nation hosting the Rotary International Convention 2024 is known for bringing cultures together and celebrating business connections and innovation.

When Rotary chose the site, then RI President Ian H S Riseley said Singapore was an excellent venue as a global business and knowledge hub. “Given our international scope and commitment to cultural diversity, our conventions are often described as a ‘mini-United Nations’ where our global network of volunteers connect to address lasting solutions to local and global humanitarian challenges,” he said.

Here’s a taste of what makes tropical, sunny Singapore special: It has four official languages — English, Malay, Mandarin Chinese, and Tamil, reflecting a population

with heritages rooted in many countries. Singapore is committed to environmental sustainability, and its main island — smaller than Rhode Island — is, quite simply, a beauty. Nearly half is covered in green space, including lush plantings in public areas and tidy parks tucked among modern skyscrapers.

Nature and technology converge in breathtaking fashion in attractions such as several giant human-made waterfalls, including one in the main airport. Gardens by the Bay next to the convention site mixes plants and artistic fantasy, featuring steel “supertrees” and an artificial indoor mountain with piped-in clouds.

The convention is on May 25–29 at Marina Bay Sands Expo & Convention Centre with general sessions at National Stadium. Join us in *Sharing Hope with the World*.

Learn more and register at
convention.rotary.org

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Magazine

Director speak



Let's embrace new challenges, opportunities & past wisdom

around us, it is essential to recognise the importance of both change and continuity in leadership. While change brings with it new opportunities, challenges and perspectives, continuity allows us to maintain the momentum, knowledge and experience gained over time. It ensures a seamless transition, enabling us to sustain our ongoing projects and initiatives.

My dear Rotarians,

It is with great enthusiasm and a deep sense of responsibility that I write to you today, marking the beginning of a new Rotary year 2023–24. Being part of a team dedicated to driving the organisation forward is indeed an honour. When individuals come together with a shared vision and collaborative mindset, they can accomplish remarkable things.

Rotary has a rich history of service and impact, made possible by the collective efforts of passionate individuals like all of us. Our organisation's ability to make positive changes across the world rests on the strong foundations built by past leaders. It is our duty to honour that work and continue their success. Each of us here has a vital role to play in continuing this legacy. Rotary International is a global service organisation which follows a specific leadership structure to ensure continuity and effective governance. This leadership structure and succession planning help to maintain continuity and effectiveness within Rotary, allowing for the consistent pursuit of the organisation's mission to promote world peace, goodwill and understanding. As we navigate the dynamic and ever-evolving world

The world is constantly evolving, presenting us with new challenges and opportunities. As changemakers, we must foster an environment that encourages fresh ideas, embraces technology and explores innovative approaches. By amalgamating the wisdom of the past with the new-age technology and innovation, we can address the pressing issues of our time and make lasting impact. Furthermore, we need to invest in the development of future leaders, nurturing their potential and instilling in them the values of Rotary. Mentoring and supporting the emerging leaders will act as an investment in the sustainability of our organisation.

As we embark on this new chapter, let us commit ourselves towards service and action by uniting our strength, our experience, and our diverse perspectives to make a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for your trust, dedication and unwavering commitment to Rotary. Together, we can continue to *Create Hope in the World*.

Anirudha Roychowdhury

RI Director, 2023–25

The RI Directors have decided to send their message every alternate month.



Audacious goals

I love Rotary for many reasons, perhaps most of all for the impact we make when we work together. There is really no other group like us. In the last five years, The Rotary Foundation has helped 100 million beneficiaries.

That is staggering.

But the need is great. There are countless more we could be reaching and supporting right now if we had the resources. We could reach twice as many in the next five years. And your fellow Rotaractors and Rotarians are ready to help. They're hungry for more grants to help more people who need us.

That's why, this year, The Rotary Foundation Trustees have set an ambitious goal for giving of \$500 million, our highest ever. This breaks down to \$150 million for the Annual Fund to help fund grants and \$50 million for polio eradication, to be matched 2 to 1 by \$100 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. For the Endowment Fund and our future, we are targeting \$60 million in outright giving and \$80 million in commitments, totalling \$140 million. And we want to collect \$60 million in other contributions, such as direct giving, cash for global grants, and Disaster Response Fund donations. To make this happen, we need all of you — each and every Rotarian and Rotaractor.

Did you know that over 80 per cent of Rotary members make no contributions to PolioPlus, or that over 60 percent make no donation at all to The Rotary Foundation? For an organization of 1.4 million members, that means that nearly 1 million of us are not contributing each year. Imagine the tremendous difference it would make if each of those 1 million could contribute just \$25 a year. That would be \$25 million we wouldn't need to raise from our best donors.

We can all give something. That's why I am asking each of you to set a goal to give what you can to The Rotary Foundation this year. Never have we set such an audacious goal, but I believe that you, who make up Rotary, always respond to a challenge, especially when you see the difference we can make with those funds. We are part of an audacious organisation, one that dreams big and makes our dreams a reality. Let's think bigger and differently this year, so we can meet our goal and do more to *Create Hope in the World*. In this way, we will make the Rotary year ahead an unforgettable one, not just for ourselves, but most importantly, for those whose lives we will soon touch.

Barry Rassin
TRF Trustee Chair

The right time to give is Now

All great achievements start with a dream. The Rotary Foundation started as a dream in the mind of one man — Arch Klumph. From that humble beginning it has today become one of the foremost agencies of humanitarian good. A foundation that is respected, agile, nimble and one of the most efficiently managed charities in the world. It is the charity of choice for Rotarians and many non-Rotarians too.



The University of Notre Dame's 'Science of Generosity Project' defines generosity as "the virtue of giving good things to others freely and abundantly." Three parts stand out clearly from this definition. Generosity is giving *good things*, giving *freely*, and giving *abundantly*. When we support TRF that is what we do — give 'good things' — our time and talent — freely and abundantly — to support its remarkable work through the various grants that impact and transform lives in our community and around the world.

Equally important is to give and invest in TRF. Sant Kabir says: "When the wealth in the house increases, when water fills a boat, throw them out with both hands!" There is joy in giving. When we give to TRF we know that the money will be used wisely and well by other Rotarians and together we can do much more than what we can do alone. And remember no one ever becomes poor by giving.

We all know the famous incident from the *Mahabharat*. Yudhishtira asks a beggar seeking alms to come the next day. On hearing this, Bheema rejoices that Yudhishtira, his brother, has conquered death! For he is sure that he will be around the next day to give. Yudhishtira gets the message. One does not know really whether one will be there tomorrow to give! The best time to give to TRF is NOW.

When Dr Albert Schweitzer was asked what does the future hold, he replied, "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know; the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve." One of the best ways of service is through TRF. As we start a new Rotary year let us lead the way in giving and serving to and through The Rotary Foundation.

Dr Bharat Pandya
TRF Trustee Vice Chair

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Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 37,183

Rotaract clubs : 11,283

Interact clubs : 13,527

RCCs : 12,886

Rotary members : 1,201,101

Rotaract members: 175,301

Interact members : 311,121

As on June 15, 2023

Membership Summary

As on June 1, 2023

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	137	6,350	6.99	73	492	31	255
2982	83	3,776	6.83	34	820	81	76
3000	132	5,554	10.30	104	1,639	168	215
3011	125	4,806	28.73	82	2,677	112	37
3012	152	3,848	23.44	74	1,296	75	61
3020	87	5,025	7.34	43	1,195	116	350
3030	101	5,572	14.95	122	2,032	447	383
3040	116	2,639	15.88	59	794	64	213
3053	71	2,892	16.32	35	576	42	128
3054	172	7,086	19.98	107	1,466	153	577
3060	105	5,130	15.79	68	2,396	52	144
3070	128	3,558	16.50	47	545	51	60
3080	108	4,375	12.87	121	2,268	108	117
3090	106	2,487	5.55	46	575	180	164
3100	112	2,387	13.87	15	137	30	151
3110	145	3,987	12.34	17	118	29	106
3120	89	3,803	15.93	36	411	25	55
3131	144	5,846	24.75	142	3,216	174	145
3132	91	3,705	13.55	37	527	100	168
3141	111	6,315	27.02	152	5,594	158	175
3142	102	3,937	21.54	92	2,985	72	88
3150	113	4,492	13.16	153	2,038	93	129
3160	78	2,726	8.88	32	234	80	82
3170	148	6,848	15.86	111	1,871	145	178
3181	87	3,710	10.62	39	480	76	117
3182	88	3,671	10.11	45	216	101	107
3190	170	7,212	20.58	223	5,286	191	74
3201	171	6,746	9.83	133	2,033	82	93
3203	94	4,971	7.81	86	1,183	118	39
3204	78	2,632	7.37	24	226	17	13
3211	158	5,245	8.33	10	133	19	133
3212	127	4,807	11.61	87	3,552	140	153
3231	97	3,517	8.25	37	400	39	417
3232	173	6,707	19.87	124	7,210	129	101
3240	110	3,729	16.87	71	1,306	60	226
3250	104	3,996	21.37	68	1,032	42	191
3261	101	3,571	23.91	17	70	20	45
3262	124	3,890	15.17	75	736	640	282
3291	152	4,021	25.09	135	2,039	54	708
India Total	4,590	175,569		2,976	61,804	4,314	6,756
3220	72	2,173	16.34	98	5,224	71	77
3271	171	3,439	18.46	185	3,006	311	28
3272	162	2,261	15.30	74	1,017	14	48
3281	312	7,239	18.11	280	2,122	144	207
3282	184	3,650	10.05	203	1,590	29	47
3292	158	5,920	18.73	180	4,936	79	135
S Asia Total	5,649	200,251		3,996	79,699	4,962	7,298

Source: RI South Asia Office

Ethos into action

Dave King

Scotland's Gordon McNally stands ready to bring his presidential priorities to fruition.

It's Burns Night, celebrated every January with folk music, drams of Scotch whisky, enthusiastic renditions of the songs and poems of Scotland's greatest poet, Robert Burns, and, of course, haggis with neeps and tatties (turnips and potatoes). It is quintessentially Scottish, and McNally is in his element with friends as he marks the occasion in Galashiels, a town in Scottish Borders close to his home in Yetholm.

Heather McNally, his wife of 42 years, is wearing a sash of tartan — checks of green, light blue, and dark red — created for the 1997 Rotary International Convention in Glasgow. A classically trained former professional opera singer and music teacher, she belts out songs by Burns learned from childhood.

Contented wi' little, and can-tie wi' mair, Whene'er I forgather wi' Sorrow and Care, I gie them a skelp as they're creeping along, Wi' a cog o' gude swats and an auld Scottish sang.

Now the haggis is something else. It is made of a sheep's pluck — the heart, liver and lungs — minced with onions, oatmeal, suet, salt, pepper and other spices, mixed

with stock and then, originally, boiled in the animal's cleaned stomach. It sounds like a culinary nightmare, but on their travels the McNallys have been spreading word of haggis's appeal throughout the Rotary community.

Heather McNally explains how, on their visits to the States, they have sourced local supplies of haggis and even warmed up the Scottish delicacy in their hotel room microwave. "The smell of haggis lingered in the room the entire week," she recalls. "We served it to other RI Board members while in Chicago. Everyone seems to love it, even though they were not quite sure what they were eating."

Gordon McNally grew up in Portobello, a picturesque seaside area of Edinburgh, notable for its beautiful beach with light-coloured sand and wooden groynes (barriers to protect the shoreline) jutting out into the water of the Firth of Forth. His mother owned and operated a private nursery, and his father worked for Macdonald & Muir, which makes Glenmorangie whiskies. His late brother, Ian, was three years younger, and the two spent much of their childhood playing and watching rugby.





Gordon and Heather McNally in South Queensferry, Scotland.

Gordon and Heather met in their late teens, and their relationship blossomed on a trip to Florence, Italy, with a combined choir from their separate schools in Edinburgh. “We’re not in each other’s pockets; we do our own thing,” Heather McNally says. “Even with Rotary, I belong to the Borderlands passport club (a satellite club of the Rotary Club of Selkirk), and Gordon is a member of South Queensferry. Our lives have always worked like that, largely due to work commitments, where we go off in different directions. We’re both independent people, but we always come home at night and tell each other what we’ve been doing.”

Her husband agrees. The couple have two daughters, Rebecca and Sarah, and two grandchildren, Ivy and Florence. He describes Heather as “a very, very tolerant lady who has been a great support to me over the years.”

He adds: “She’s always a good sounding board. I can rely on Heather to tell me it as it is. If I give a presentation, everyone’s going to tell me it was great, but Heather will always tell me

A young bagpiper parades out of a hotel banquet room playing the familiar refrain of “Scotland the Brave.”

Behind him, carrying a plated ceremonial haggis and wearing blue, green, black, and yellow Gordon Modern tartan is 2023–24

Rotary International President Gordon McNally.

the truth! I know I couldn’t do this job without her support.”

When they married at Craigsbank Parish Church in Edinburgh, Gordon McNally became a member of the Church of Scotland, having previously been a member of the Methodist Church. Now an elder and trustee

in the church, he has also served as a presbytery elder, chairman of his parish congregational board, and a commissioner to the church’s general assembly.

“My parents instilled in me and my late brother a sense of helping and caring for others that has remained with me for life,” he says. “My personal faith, and my upbringing within a family with a similarly strong faith, has definitely impacted my life choices and career.”

McNally owned and ran a busy dental practice in Scotland’s capital for more than three decades, retiring in 2016. He held teaching and examining posts and served as a branch chairman of the British Paedodontic Society (now the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry). After living for many years in South Queensferry, the McNallys relocated to Scottish Borders when he stepped back from day-to-day practice. The move was over 30 years in the planning.

“All the time I was working as a dentist, we said it would be nice to



Gordon and Heather McNally with Rtn Andy Ireland (left) and friend Eric Williamson at Murrayfield rugby stadium in Edinburgh.

ultimately make our home in the Borders, because it's where my forebears came from," he says. "My mother's family were farmers, and my mother was born on a farm about 15 miles from here. I've said to people since we came here that I feel as if my DNA has come home."

For McNally, this is a night off, listening to youngsters from Galashiels' schools deliver dramatic recitations of Burns' works, including the "Address to a Haggis" read by young Poppy Lunn, who then theatrically cuts it open. There's more pipe music and fiddle playing, plus community singing, until the evening rounds off with a hearty rendition of "Auld Lang Syne".

A few days later, McNally is at Abbotsford House, which towers over the gently flowing River Tweed in the heart of Scottish Borders country. The countryside is a tapestry of greens, and in the distance loom the three conical peaks of the Eildon Hills, steeped in Roman history. It's a beautiful spot and one of McNally's favourite places to take visitors, as he has done today.

Abbotsford House was the home of Sir Walter Scott, the novelist, poet, and historian, who popularised the wearing of tartan, created the historical novel, and counted Queen Victoria among his fans. Abbotsford's architectural style inspired many buildings in Scotland, including Balmoral Castle, Queen Elizabeth II's summer home. Now, Scott's works such as *Ivanhoe* and *Rob Roy* have been adapted for the screen.

On this day, the 19th century Scots Baronial building with its crow-stepped gables, "pepper-pot" bartizans, and elements taken from medieval structures in Scotland, is shut to the public for the winter. Dust sheets hang over the furniture, and one poor soul is in the middle of cleaning the 9,000 books that line the library's shelves.



The McNallys take a walk in Roxburghshire.

Scott's connection to the Borders began when he contracted polio at 18 months old. He was paralysed in the right leg, and so his parents sent him to recover at his grandfather's farm outside Kelso. "It was because of polio that Sir Walter was brought to the Borders where he heard the stories and songs which would inspire his writing," explains Mary Kenny, Abbotsford's heritage engagement officer. McNally and Kenny agree that Scott would have made a great Rotary member.

McNally's own Rotary journey began at 26. He joined the South Queensferry club after being invited by a farmer friend who was a member of the family's church. "Initially I saw the Rotary club as a great way to make friends in the town and to do things in the area that would benefit the wider community," he says. "As time went by and I realised the work done by Rotary all around the world, I was hooked."

Except for a three-year period when McNally was a member of the sadly now-closed Rotary Club of Kelso, he has remained a member of the South Queensferry club. He served as district governor in 1997–98 and marked Rotary's centenary year in 2004–05 by serving as president of Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland (RIBI).

Shortly before becoming RIBI president, McNally visited Rwanda and South Africa to work with children orphaned by the 1994 Rwandan genocide and by HIV/AIDS. He subsequently helped set up an RIBI partnership project with Hope and Homes for Children, which had been operating in both countries, to support orphans there with food, shelter, medicine and education toward a sustainable future. McNally is a proud patron of Hope and Homes for Children, which is now supporting the Rwandan government to develop a national child protection system that minimises family

separation and provides family-based alternatives.

McNally's work in Africa has spread to Kenya. Just before the Covid-19 pandemic, he travelled to the country to volunteer as part of an initiative led by Scottish Rotary members. There he carried out dental screenings in Nyumbani village, a self-sustaining, purpose-built eco-village that provides homes and support for orphaned children and grandparents who serve as their guardians. He also helped renovate residents' accommodations.

"I have found Rotary to be a great vehicle for being able to care for and help others," he says. "Rotary has also given me friends all over the world and, as a consequence, a better understanding of the world in which I live. All that, together with the personal development, is what makes it continue to appeal to me and what makes me want to share it with others."

While McNally stayed close to home, his brother, Ian, after graduating

The McNallys talk with Anna Hinnigan, senior operations manager at Lochcarron of Scotland, a manufacturer of tartan cloth in Selkirk.



from Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, lived outside of London, where he was a member of Rotaract and met his wife while working in the computer industry. The two brothers and their families would visit one another over the years, but little did McNally suspect that his brother was suffering from the “black dog” of depression, as Winston Churchill called it. Ian McNally took his life on February 8, 2014.

That moment forever changed the lives of those who loved Ian, and they continue to ask themselves questions: Why? What signs did we miss? What more could we have done?

McNally recalled all of this in a speech at the International Assembly in Florida in January, the first time he spoke on a public stage about his brother’s suicide. He had gotten emotional when he practised the address. “I might tell you, it was not an easy presentation to give,” he says. “That day was the first time I had ever been able to get through it without breaking down.”

His goal in telling the story was not to seek sympathy but rather to let people know mental health issues can touch anyone, to illustrate why he feels so strongly about this subject. “A number of people came up to me afterwards and said, ‘Your story is very similar to mine,’” he says.

My parents instilled in me and my late brother a sense of helping and caring for others that has remained with me for life.



The McNallys with daughters Sarah Wardell (left) and Rebecca McNally in Yetholm.

Last year, McNally became an ambassador for the charity Bipolar UK, which then launched a partnership with RIBI. After his brother’s experience, he shares a deep resonance with the organisation and has supported it by hosting a webinar about suicide prevention and producing a video about the condition.

And one of his presidential initiatives is prioritising mental health. “My call to action in this new initiative for Rotary,” he says, “is that we advocate for removal of the stigma of talking about mental health, help people to find better quality care, and also support them through their journey to recovery.”

It’s another opportunity for McNally, through Rotary, to put his personal ethos into action.

After Abbotsford House, McNally’s next stop is the grounds of the Kelso Rugby Football Club for its local derby against Gala in the Tennent’s National League Division 1. If there is one passion that unites Border folk, it’s rugby. The region has produced some of the best rugby players to come out of Scotland, many

of whom have gone on to play for the revered British & Irish Lions.

Joining the McNallys at the clubhouse for a pre-match meal of lentil soup followed by steak pie are six friends from their Rotary clubs. The conversation is rich and the laughter frequent with friends catching up on the latest news.

A former police officer, Doug Forsyth has good instincts and takes the opportunity to approach Kelso RFC President Neil Hastie to talk about joining the new Borderlands passport club.

“Neil is someone who knows what Rotary is about in the community, but he likes the flexible approach of the passport club,” says Forsyth. “We don’t have weekly meetings, we don’t have meals. We meet maybe once a month for a coffee and a scone, and we do projects. ... We’re here to do Rotary, not talk Rotary. We’re all about making Rotary active and attractive.”

McNally looks on approvingly. “This is flexible Rotary, and this is the future,” he adds.

Around the table, there’s widespread admiration for the man who

2023–24 presidential initiatives

Prioritising mental health

Talking about mental illness and emotional health may feel uncomfortable, but it's vital to the well-being of Rotary's global community. RI President Gordon McNally encourages clubs and districts to work toward creating a space where it's safe to address these issues to help provide a welcoming and equitable environment for all.

To do that, think about ways that you can:

- Erase any stigma associated with discussions of emotional well-being
- Raise awareness of mental health needs
- Improve access to mental health services

Building peace through virtual exchanges

Rotary has a long history of working for peace through

personal connections, but the Covid-19 pandemic made it difficult to do that face-to-face. Inspired by what we've learned during this time, McNally encourages districts to incorporate virtual components into more of their programmes, events and activities. By using innovative technologies to make connections, we give more people the opportunity to experience Rotary's global community while laying the foundation for peacebuilding through improved intercultural dialogue, awareness and understanding.

Adding or maintaining these components in our exchange programmes like Rotary Youth Exchanges and Rotary Friendship Exchanges will:

- Give members and participants new ways to experience other cultures, make new friends, and broaden their global awareness

- Make membership more accessible to people with time, health or financial considerations
- Build stronger intercultural communication and understanding, and ultimately foster more stable and peaceful communities

Empowering girls

McNally will continue the initiative launched by 2021–22 RI President Shekhar Mehta and maintained by 2022–23 RI President Jennifer Jones that focused on elevating the voices and unlocking the power of girls and women around the world. Rotary encourages members to keep finding ways to improve the health, well-being, education, economic security and agency of girls.

For more information, please visit rotary.org/initiatives23-24

will become president of Rotary International — the second Scot and the sixth person from the UK. Out of earshot, Sandy McKenzie, president of the Rotary Club of South Queensferry, insists everyone is very proud of the achievement. “We are absolutely delighted,” McKenzie says. “Gordon is a down-to-earth, coalface Rotarian. He is a man with his feet on the ground.”

Club colleague Kate Gibb reveals how she always knew her good friend of almost 30 years would reach the pinnacle of Rotary International.

“I have found Rotary to be a great vehicle for being able to care for and help others. Rotary has also given me friends all over the world and... a better understanding of the world.”

“I remember telling our (Queensferry Parish Church) minister, David Cameron — not the former British prime minister — that he would be Rotary International president one day,” she says. “Call it instinct. Gordon is self-effacing, humble and hardworking.”

McNally was a second row forward and a number 8 in his rugby playing days — “a promising career cut short by a severe lack of talent,” he concedes. After the meal, at the Kelso rugby match with his friends, he watches from the stands wedged

in the front row between boisterous fans of both teams. It's a fast and flowing match with plenty of tries and plenty of good-humored advice being dished out by the spectators.

Rugby is a big part of the family's life. McNally's former dental practice is just a drop kick from the Murrayfield rugby stadium. When he sold the practice in 2016, one condition was that he had permission to park there for Scotland internationals.

Heather McNally recalls one occasion when the television cameras were at Kelso and they homed in on daughter Sarah, then a toddler, who was with Gordon watching a match. "Aye, they start them young in the Borders," sang the lyrical tones of legendary BBC rugby commentator Bill McLaren.

Gala steal victory over Kelso 36–31 with two late penalty goals. As we're getting ready to leave the ground, Heather notes: "Gordon jokes in his speeches how he is waiting



McNally at The Borders Distillery in Hawick, Scotland.



McNally skips around a maypole with his granddaughters, Florence (centre) and Ivy, in East Lothian.

for someone from the nominating committee for RI president to come along and say, 'Sorry, we called the wrong person with the invitation to be president. We meant to call the next person on the list!'"

"It is such an honour. We're meeting heads of state, visiting glamorous places, and I'm pinching myself thinking, 'I am just Heather. What on earth are we doing here?'" she says. "We're from a small village in Scotland of 500 people, and here we are representing Rotary International."

Before we part, she acknowledges being immensely proud of what he's achieved: "Of course," she says, "but please don't tell him that!"

Pictures by Monika Lozinska



Full potential of Rotary's talent pool in India yet to be tapped

Rasheeda Bhagat

You're as much surprised to hear RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury say he loves to "gossip every evening with my friends for nearly an hour," as much as to see him belting out and jiving to old western songs from the stage at the *Lakshya* training event in Kolkata. His wife Shipra tells you that a typical Bengali, he loves his rice and fish, and has made it his staple diet.

I sit down with him and Shipra in Chennai for a chat, and he candidly shares his views on the several challenges before Rotary, his priorities as director and resolve to do "all I can to attract more women members to Rotary in India. I will also strive to see how we can provide them leadership opportunities."

Anirudha's father was a meteorological officer working for GoI, "and since he had a transferrable job, we lived in different and far-flung places. So from a very early stage in life, I was exposed to so many different cultures, regions, people, sometimes in godforsaken places! We have experienced severe tornadoes and that left an imprint of nature's fury on my mind."


He did his pre-engineering from Chandigarh, and as he was a good

football player, he played football all over Punjab for his university. No prizes for guessing that his favourite football player is Lionel Messi. Later he graduated in electrical engineering from Kolkata.

Early years

On his early career, and how he joined Rotary, Anirudha says, "I come from a very middle class family and traditionally we Bengalis mostly have the notion that we should be in service, some kind of a secure job and not business. And at that time a bank job was regarded the most desired one." After graduating in electrical engineering, he joined EID Parry, worked in Bengaluru for some time and then returned to Kolkata in 1980.

"But the spirit of entrepreneurship was within me... and I wanted to do some venture or the other." One of his seniors from college, who was working with the Bengal Chamber of Commerce as the chief economist, gave him the idea "why don't you do film processing? The new format of 16mm and 35mm had then come in." The Janata government was in power and Kolkata was poised to be one of the centres for the processing of 16mm films, with 35mm films going to Chennai and Mumbai.



RI Director Anirudha
Roychowdhury with
wife Shipra.

“I went in for 16mm film processing. But then the government, policy and technology changed; the 16mm film was gone and videography came in.” He had to change track and he shifted to processing and printing, but as a first-generation entrepreneur, he faced multiple challenges, including that of finance. However, the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation supported his business. “I started my enterprise; my brand is Zoom 16, as I had started with 16mm films,” he smiles.

Around this time, he was invited to join Rotary but being busy with his business, he didn’t act on it. “But then one of my colleagues insisted that people like you should join Rotary, so in 1994, I joined RC Calcutta Metro City as a charter member.

Leadership roles

It took him another three years to really get engaged in Rotary activities. “Around that time Shekhar (Mehta) was nominated governor and he coaxed me to join his core team. As I was in the printing business, he made me co-chairman of his publications committee.”

Having tasted a leadership role, and succeeding in it, Anirudha went on to become club president in 2000–01, and district governor in 2007–08.

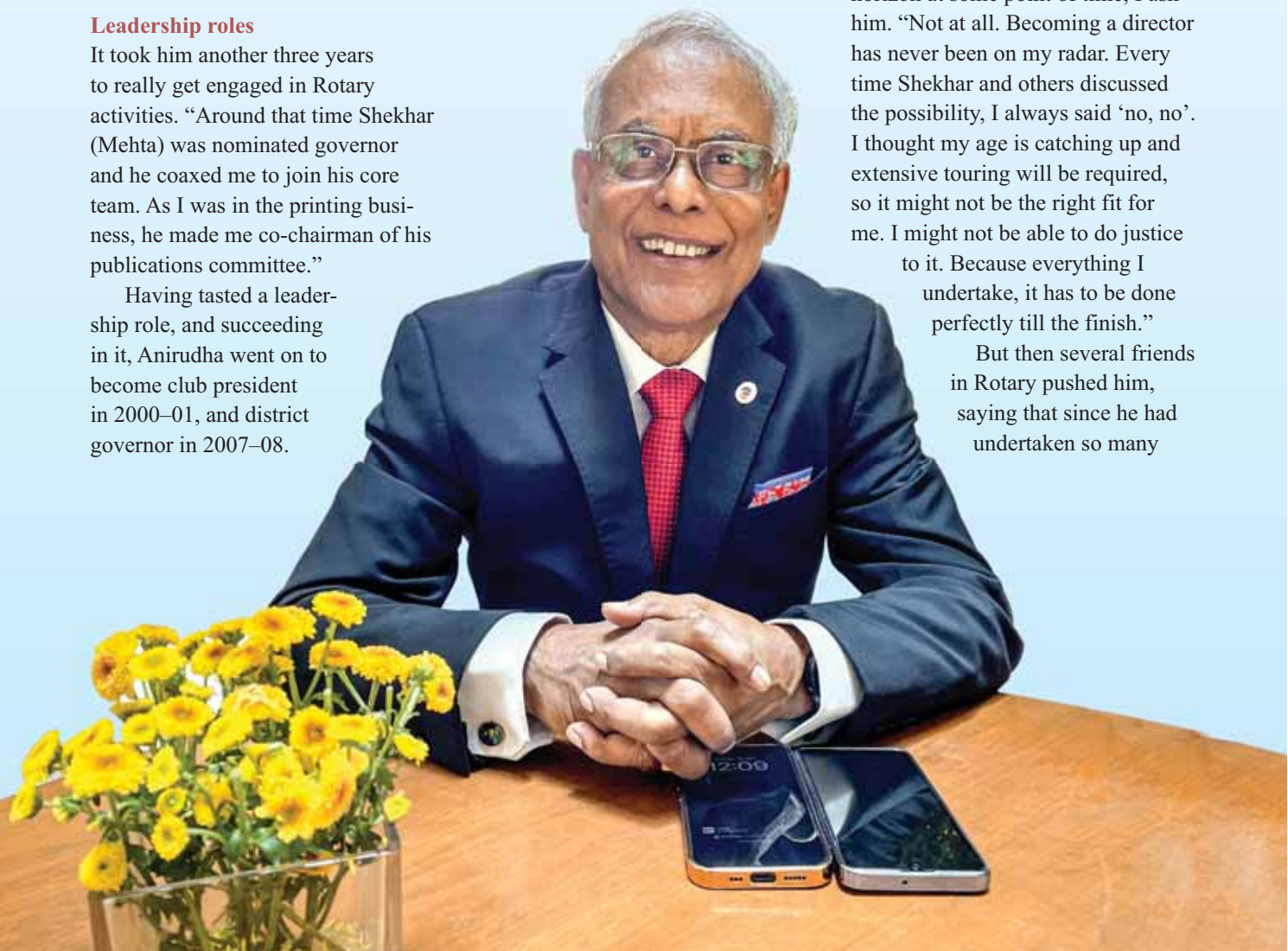
Rotary can't be seen any longer as a small-time service provider. We must be seen as nation builders working for the development and progress of India in collaboration with the government.

Asked about the highlights of his year as governor, he says that was the last year the district remained unified as RID 3290; it included nine revenue districts of West Bengal, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Nepal. The next year it was bifurcated into 3291 and 3292. “It was a huge district with 187 clubs and my objective was two-fold; visit and meet the members of each and every club in India and Nepal. I decided to spend three weeks in India and the fourth was dedicated to Nepal because Nepal was on the verge of going separate and I had to give them a lot of support to become an independent district,” he says.

Director's post

Was becoming an RI director on his horizon at some point of time, I ask him. “Not at all. Becoming a director has never been on my radar. Every time Shekhar and others discussed the possibility, I always said ‘no, no’. I thought my age is catching up and extensive touring will be required, so it might not be the right fit for me. I might not be able to do justice to it. Because everything I undertake, it has to be done perfectly till the finish.”

But then several friends in Rotary pushed him, saying that since he had undertaken so many



At a glance

Music: Sufi music is my favourite; I started really liking it from 2010 onwards. I find the lyrics as well as the tunes have such a soothing effect, as the music transmits the philosophy of life. I also like old film music. I don't care much for hard rock... I love melody.

Food: Shipra chips in: Homemade food, mostly rice and fish... that is his staple and favourite!

Cooking: I am a big zero there!

Religious: I go to temples but am not dogmatic about religion. I go to temples to offer my prayers and respect; I'm a god-fearing man but there is no rigidity that I have to go to Tirupati for this or some other temple for that.

Reading: Oh, I used to read a lot, particularly before going to sleep. But these days don't find too much time. When it comes to books, I believe that there is no end to learning and each one of us has infinite potential to learn. I prefer books that deal with self-improvement and technology that changed human life. My favourite author is Jack Welch.

Travel: I don't have much fascination for foreign places. I believe there are many exotic and historical places in India which can offer a variety of locations. Typically, I like places with serenity and pristine nature, as I live in a concrete jungle. I love Jaipur because of its colour and vibrancy, I find it fascinating. Ooty is another favourite... my grandson was studying



in Lawrence School and I love it. (Shipra: We like going to Puri, once a year.)

Relax: By seeing good movies. And also gossiping, at least 45 minutes to one hour with my friends in the evening!

Fitness: I follow a 45-minute fitness regimen daily; mostly yoga and walking and a few other exercises.

Movies: My liking for cinema has changed from decade to decade as I evolved mentally and emotionally. I like short films with a strong message, which are now available on the OTT platform. No action films for me.

Mentor in Rotary: Basically two persons; first one was my trainer Anjan Kumar, he was Shekhar's trainer too. And PRIP Shekhar Mehta.

different roles, he should try for this position.

Priorities as director

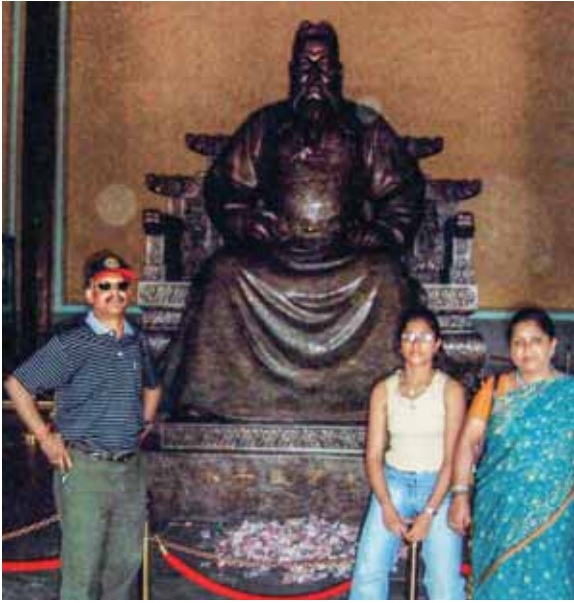
Anirudha says his first priority as director will be to see that “Rotary should become free of all the negative things which are happening in India. It is doing extremely well in all aspects of Rotary. But this is spoiling our name.”

Prompted to define the negatives, he says, “Election complaints; any small matter is exaggerated and blown out of proportion and people are sending mails to the RI president, and creating a ruckus. By doing so, they are spoiling our good name, and the



From L: RID Anirudha Roychowdhury with Shaswati (daughter-in-law), Arundhuti (daughter), Tanu Roy (son-in-law), Shipra and Arindham (son).





great work and service projects we do. Everything can be settled at so many levels, clubs, districts etc,... I have to work on this. Right now, directors Venky and Mahesh are dealing with this, and I am silently watching.”

He says that more than the club level, these disputes are taking place at the district level. “And it is all because of elections and positions. Human psychology is such that if I

have become a successful leader, then I can continue to hold on to that power. So once the governorship goes, the person feels lost, and is reluctant to give up power.” But the structure and rules of Rotary are such that once your term is over, you have to step back and allow new people to take over.”

Is he referring to PDGs? “Of course, PDGs! I have seen PDGs, who behave in a diabolic manner which should not happen in a forum like Rotary. We have to sort it out.”

Focus on projects

The director will also ask the clubs to concentrate on projects. “I’ve always been a project-centric person, so I will try to escalate service projects. I will tell our club and district leaders to take up big projects. If you do good projects money will not be a problem; it



Shipra's role

Asked about his spouse Shipra's role in his Rotary journey, RID Anirudha says: "Shipra has always been very quiet and shy, she doesn't speak much, but she was always behind me, giving quiet but strong support from behind. While I was so busy, she took care of the children and our home. Without her support I would not have been where I am today."

Shipra adds that she is "proud... very, very proud that he has reached this position of director. I know the next two years will be very challenging for him, but I will be with him. I also know for sure that whatever he does, he always tries to do it perfectly. He plans to the last detail and executes it well."

will come from all sources, and new resources will open up."

He adds that the Indian economy is thriving and many companies are interested in doing work for the community. "People's psyche is slowly

I shall be working hard to bring in not only more women members, but also give them leadership opportunities.

changing, they are becoming more philanthropic; if you ask for money for good work, it comes in," he says.

But while CSR funds are available for community welfare projects, "we have to organise our clubs. Many clubs are not organised, their balance sheets are not proper. Today, for any CSR work, you have to give your annual report, so your records should be straight, you should be a registered body at the appropriate forum, a non-registered entity will not be entertained by corporates, as in all the banks KYC has become mandatory."

Coming to the areas where Rotarians in India need to work more, Anirudha says that in basic literacy and education we have done well, but we have to do much more

work in the area of water. He is a member of ESRAG (Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group), and will be concentrating on projects focused on the environment. "This is a vital area today and one where you can keep your entire club engaged. Participation and engagement of members are very vital for Rotary. This is not happening and people leave because they don't get any opportunities to do good work. In environment, there is so much you can do."

He gives the example of a small tree plantation drive; every member of a small club with just 30 members can plant one tree every month and look after it. In a year they would have planted 360 trees;

something that will give the members “a tremendous sense of having done something good.”

Rotary in India

Coming to Rotary in India, he says, “There are so many positives here; the biggest is our enormous human resources and the huge talent pool we have. But the real potential of this huge talent pool is yet to be realised. In this area, we have only touched the tip of the iceberg. If we can really tap this massive resource, Rotary in India will blossom to its full potential.”

He points out that Rotary has grown so much as an organisation that today it “can be a very effective partner to any government — state

Many clubs are not organised, their balance sheets are not proper. For any CSR work, you have to give your annual report, so your records should be straight and you should be a registered body.

or at the centre. Rotary can’t be seen any longer as a small-time service provider. We must be seen as nation builders working for the development and progress of India, in collaboration with the government.”

At RI too, maintains Anirudha, India is looked upon with respect. He gives the example of a Board meeting that he had attended in April 2023, where the finalisation of the venue for the 2029 Convention was on the agenda. “I found that the name of New Delhi, which we had proposed, giving all details of a large convention centre coming up in Dwarka, was missing.” He took up the matter and got the assurance that Delhi will feature on the list



of possible venues for the 2030 Convention.

“India is doing so well economically, we are the second largest contributor to TRF and No 2 in total membership. We are a huge force, there is no doubt about it. And when small places like Lisbon and Hamburg can have Rotary conventions, why not India,” he asks.

Women’s membership

Coming to women’s membership, Anirudha is concerned that in this aspect “things are not satisfactory. Worldwide, women’s membership in Rotary is 23 per cent, but in India, it is only 19 per cent. RI’s target for women members by 2025 is 25 per cent, so we will have to work extensively in this direction and towards this target. I shall be working hard to bring in not only more women members, but also give them leadership opportunities.”

Only the previous day, “at the RI district 3211 PETS, I was so happy to note that Tina Antony had been nominated DGND and will become the first woman governor in that district.”



The Roychowdhurys with PRID Noraseth Pathmanand and his wife Khunying Chotima from Thailand at the Rotary Zone Institute in Chandigarh in 2006.

Another aspect that worries this director is the “tendency to think in Rotary along regional levels. My cardinal principal as director will be to tell everyone to think of the organisation in its entirety.”

Challenges before Rotary

Spelling out the several challenges before Rotary at the moment, Anirudha says the first one is its declining membership, continuity

in leadership, adaptability in getting used to new systems which is not happening, regionalisation of which we have been talking for a long time (the RIBI pilot has not worked, he says), and the identification of the next big project after polio.

These were issues that demanded the leadership’s total attention. “Why are we losing membership in the western hemisphere, particularly in the US and European regions?” He believes that’s because these countries eradicated polio many decades ago, and “have no great cause that they can take up or relate to. There is little scope for hands-on work, so the fatigue comes in. RI leadership must have a plan ready on ‘what after polio’. Even while keeping our focus on total eradication of polio, we have to get our next big programme ready.”



Inking a literacy agreement in the presence of PRIP Shekhar Mehta (R), PDG Ranjan Dhingra and PRID Manoj Desai (L).

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat and special arrangement

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RI Director Raju Subramanian and Vidhya.

A ‘hyper’, outspoken and no-nonsense RI Director

Rasheeda Bhagat

At the outset his spouse Vidhya asks: Do you want him to be honest ... “Well, I won’t give out any names,” jokes RI director Raju Subramanian. The banter between the couple, along with the camaraderie, is amply evident and fills their beautifully done up spacious flat with so much greenery in Mumbai. The plants and creepers are thanks to her. She points to the thriving mango saplings and says: “These will go to the Biodiversity Park of our club RC Deonar that was recently inaugurated by RIPE Gordon McNally.”

The reference to him being honest is obviously related to the acrimony, election complaints and challenges that took place recently for the RI director’s post in zone 4 and 7. Even RI President Gordon McNally had told *Rotary News* that the “elephant in the room is the election complaints from India,” when India is doing so well in Rotary.

Raju agrees that “interference in the election process by

leaders at every level has to stop. I am very clear in my mind that I don’t have any candidates, I don’t propose to support anybody, and during my term as director, I’m going to be tough when a complaint comes in.” However high the position he/she might have or holds, “it will not deter me from placing the matter for consideration before the (RI) Board as this is harming the growth and image of Rotary in India.”

But outweighing the negatives, he says, are so many feathers in India’s cap. “We were at one point an asking

Public image is more than billboards and newspaper cuttings and different from publicity... public image has to be created in the minds of the people.



Raju and Vidhya with (from L) son-in-law Rohit, daughters Rohita, Ashwita, son-in-law Ajay and grandson Nikhil.

If I am wrong, correct me; I am also fallible. I'll accept it, I have no ego. Ultimately, we're in the business of service. But make it constructive criticism. Don't speak behind people's backs.

country; today we are a giving country and No 2 in TRF-giving. It is no mean achievement to be ahead of Taiwan, Korea, Canada, UK, Australia and so many European countries. This is our one singular great achievement."

Two, Indian Rotarians do the maximum number of global grants in the world; "if we do 50, the next country does only 5 or 6. We are far ahead in doing grants, which

touch so many lives. So nobody can touch us on the service that we do. But the caveat — there has to be a clear financial transparency, which is lacking in some quarters. Let us not shove the truth under the carpet. We need to correct that; Bharat (Pandya) as a trustee, Anirudha (Roychowdhury) and I are going to work very hard to see that stewardship is brought in." He concedes this too happens only in a minority of projects, "but there is no excuse. It shouldn't happen at all."

The bottom line is that Rotary is a "fantastic organisation which we can build further, adding new dimensions. Who else could have thought of eradicating polio, or saving lives in Zambia by eradicating malaria? The black spots should be converted into grey and moved out. But people should have the courage to speak their minds which is not happening. If I am wrong, correct me; I am also fallible. I'll accept it, I have no ego. Ultimately, we're in the business of

service. But make it constructive criticism. Don't speak behind people's backs."

Raju grew up in Mumbai, his father was in shipping industry. Initially he joined his uncle in a business; during the Emergency, as a law student attending courts, he witnessed cases pertaining to freedom of expression, speech, liberty, human rights, etc, "all argued in court by great lawyers such as Ram Jethmalani and others. I thought this is the profession to get into. You can do independent thinking and your mind will always be active as a lawyer."

Graduating from the Government Law College, Mumbai, in 1976, he is a senior counsel practising basically civil and corporate law.

On why he joined Rotary, the director says that after their marriage in 1981, the couple shifted from his parents' home in Bandra to Deonar, "where we had no connect, no friends." Chandrakant Mirje was

If leaders at all levels, including the governors and senior leadership, stay away from elections, it would help in reducing conflicts, and create a better atmosphere for service.

the DG of the district and wanted to start a new club. The young man was invited to a preliminary meeting and seized the opportunity to make new friends by becoming a charter member in 1986 of RC Deonar, now in its 36th year. “It was friendship that drew me into Rotary,” he says. Vidhya joined the club in 2001, after being an active

member of Inner Wheel and district Inner Wheel chairman in 2018–19. She is now the club president and he is the sergeant-at-arms.

Raju was club president in 1996, and governor in 2009–10. How easy was that journey? “Frankly, I was not interested in becoming a governor, because the presidency had taken a toll on my

practice. But (TRF trustee vice-chair) Bharat Pandya and (PDG) Rahul Timbadia convinced me to take up district secretary and coordinator’s posts. I then realised there was potential for me to lead the district and hence filed for the governor’s post.”

As DG, he recognised those who do silent work; a prostitute and a transvestite were recognised

Raju and Vidhya
with son-in-law
Rohit and daughter
Rohita.



Vidhya speak

Did she resent Rotary taking away a lot of her husband's time as he rose in the ranks, I ask Vidhya Raju. Her candid response: "Well, both yes and no, especially when the children were growing up. His profession as a lawyer took him away from Bombay a lot. When he travelled, we'd plan what we would do when he returns. But then he would either go away for Rotary events or more work."

Both the young girls would want to eat out, "and then he'd come from Delhi and want to eat home food. But he's a wonderful father... for him both his daughters mean the world. They are more important to him than even his profession."

By training Vidhya is a special educator; "I gave up because the girls were young and also sometimes it was very depressing."

When asked for her personal reaction at his getting the director's post, she shrugs and says candidly: "He is still my husband and Raju. It's strange when people now call him Sir, etc. It is evident sometimes that they want to please him and I feel why? He is such a simple person, he doesn't even like being called Sir!"

She winks and adds: "Of course I'm very proud of him. But he is a person with black or white; he doesn't see the grey." Raju intervenes: "Ask her how many times I've been proved right? As lawyers we learn psychology in court. So when I meet a person, from the first handshake I know whether it is genuine or not."

So would you call him a straight shooter, I prompt Vidhya. "Oh, he is too much of a lawyer; that's the problem, he goes too deep into everything." The husband adds, "I speak my mind, but before that I analyse and see if it is backed by facts and evidence. I am a stickler for rules. Competence alone should be the criteria for assignments. Not going by merit has hurt Rotary in the past."



Raju and Vidhya with daughters Rohita, Ashwita and grandson Nikhil.

at his conference, “well before DEI became the Rotary mantra.”

And then, “at the Hamburg convention, Bharat and (PRID) Kamal (Sanghvi) convinced me to file for director, saying I would do India good. I agreed making it clear that if I lose there will be no election complaint. I told them if I am destined to become a director, I will, but will leave it to the lord.”

But in the end, the election got vitiated; why, I ask him. “It got extremely vitiated, because of the involvement of senior leaders in our country.”

He chooses to go on record, “because that’s a fact! It even went up to the RI Board, and this is not good for Rotary in India because we do so much good work.”

Priorities during his term

On his priorities as director, Raju says: “Continuity; if something is good for the community, it



Above: With TRF trustee vice-chair Bharat Pandya.

should continue. Bharat started the *Do chhammach kum, char kadam aagey* initiative, essential as diabetes is exploding and heightened cholesterol is wreaking havoc in the 30–50 age group. To save lives, I propose to revive it.”

For the DGs and DGEs during his term, the message will be clear; “I don’t believe DGs should initiate district projects; clubs should do them and governors must support them as a guiding force.” The club leaders know best what that specific community needs, “so to impose something at a general level takes away the leadership of the club president, which will be disastrous because we have to build club-level leaders, for membership, projects and TRF. By cutting off that leadership, you harm rather than develop the organisation.”

What DGs and DGEs can do is to have one impactful project to



At a glance



Food: Basically, I'm a Southie, I love my South Indian food, but also Maharashtrian and Guju food, provided it is less oily.

Cooking: Haha, if I cook nobody will eat. I don't know which *dal* goes into *rasam*.

Religious: I believe in god, I don't go to temples regularly because I believe I can see god everywhere and if I do a good act in the temple of service like Rotary, I don't have to go to a temple. But I believe strongly in god and I do *puja* every day at home. I've gone to churches and mosques; I have no inhibitions in visiting any place of worship because I believe it's the same lord called by whatever name.

Travel: I love travel, as for my favourite city, there are too many; but one of my favourite places is Kashmir. Its beauty is amazing.

Reading: (Laughs) Anything that pays me! I also read other stuff. *Mind: Its mysteries and control* by Swami Sivananda is one of my favourite books.

Favourite writer: Ayn Rand

Music: Love traditional classical music. Old Bollywood songs are my favourite.

Movies: I'm not a movie buff. (Vidhya: It's better not to take him. He sleeps and then starts snoring. But we love to watch plays. Recently we went to *Sound of Music*. the Broadway play at the Nita Ambani Cultural Centre.)

Relax: (Vidhya: Please answer Raju, even I want to know!) Yes, I am a hyper guy... I dot the Is and cross the Ts. A perfectionist... after the Indore Institute (which he chaired), Bharat and I closed the accounts within 15 minutes of the institute's closing, paid all the vendors and left within 30 minutes for the airport. But the problem is that I expect others also to be exactly like that, which doesn't happen! (Vidhya: He is an A-plus personality).

Fitness: Walk in the morning; not very regularly!

Dream for the future: A healthy life ahead for me and my family. Would love to spend more time with my children and grandson, and travel to so many of our dream destinations. We will soon leave for Cambodia and Vietnam.

Continuing his legal practice: Monday to Thursday will be for work, unless something emergent comes up. Friday to Sunday will basically be for Rotary.

He is still my husband and Raju, It's strange when people now call him Sir. He is such a simple person, he doesn't even like being called Sir!

Vidhya Raju

Sport: It used to be cricket initially. I appear for the BCCI. Love football and tennis. Used to play badminton in my younger days.

Women in Rotary: I feel they are phenomenal leaders. I had 23 women presidents when I was DG; two of them reluctant ones, and they proved to be the best in the group. Women in India, when given an opportunity, have done well. All of us must allow them to grow... in fact allow every Rotarian to grow irrespective of caste, creed, colour or gender.

Vidhya's role: Amazing! Without her support I don't think I could have come this far. I was at the CoL as vice-chair in April 22, when the complaint came against my election. She called me, read it and said: 'Raju, I don't think it's worth continuing in this organisation. Let's both resign. Look at the kind of allegations. They have stolen data and made false allegations.' I could have filed a criminal complaint, my friends in the police department have appraised me of what happened but if I did that, I'd have harmed the organisation. She said you resign, but I said we will fight. The complaint has no substance. She understood and stood by me. She is my best critic. Many a time when you walk off the stage you know you have spoken well or not, but people will always say you were great, but she would always give a critical honest analysis. I could not have asked for more.

create public image, which is more than “bill boards and newspaper cuttings. Public image is different from publicity... public image has to be created in the minds of the people. I’m also telling governors to tell club presidents that instead of inviting them as chief guests, the clubs should invite social entrepreneurs, business leaders or politicians for their impactful projects. This will boost your CSR support and membership.”

Stern action against fake clubs and integrity in paying membership dues to RI after collecting money from members is an area that needs to be addressed. “I urge DGs to adopt humility, simplicity and gentleness, bidding goodbye to their egos,” he says, in another clear message. If leaders at all levels, including governors and the senior leadership, stay away from elections, it would help in reducing conflicts and create a better atmosphere for service,” he says.

Rotarians in India should also do much more work in prevention and treatment of TB and cervical cancer as there is a huge need for this, he adds.

On the use of CSR funds for service projects, Raju feels there



Today we are a giving country and No 2 in TRF-giving. It is no mean achievement to be ahead of Taiwan, Korea, Canada, UK, Australia and many European countries. This is our one singular great achievement.

is tremendous scope, but finds a handicap in the clause pertaining to CSR funds. “Recognition for CSR contribution needs to be looked into seriously to enable us to garner more CSR funds not just from ‘family companies,’ but also other large corporates.”

On the qualities required to be a good Rotary leader, Raju puts on top of the list “ethics, integrity, character and a positive attitude. A leader must be caring, compassionate, have a vision and be trustworthy. Rotary leaders must showcase the organisation and not themselves. It should be

service above self and not self above service.

His last word is on DEI — “it must and should happen but not happening because of the mindset in certain parts of our country. The gays, transgenders, are no different from us. They are all children of god... we have to involve them, respect and care for them.”

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat and special arrangement

Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S

Rotarians are 'change champions'

V Muthukumaran

Fight or flight? Those club members or newly inducted Rotarians “who feel dissatisfied with their clubs have a choice either to form a like-minded group to put up a brave fight to change the organisation for the better or take off from there to somewhere else,” said RIPN Stephanie Urchick.

During an online presentation at the weekly meeting of RC Madras, RID 3232, in May with her aide PDG Tom Gump, RID 5950, UK, on the topic ‘Transforming club culture,’ she said people leave the club, not Rotary, “as they don’t feel happy with the product or service they get there. So, they just take off. Hence, club culture is extremely important in engaging new members. It should not be a revolving door.” In fact, the club culture is the force behind Rotary’s global

Club culture is extremely important in engaging new members. It should not be a revolving door.



RIPE Stephanie Urchick

projects and outreach, she said. If a club is doing great projects, its members are contributing to the Foundation, and receiving global grants, “then it is running smoothly with its members united in strength.”

But it is important for clubs to do an in-depth assessment of their members; ascertain their interests and what they want to do primarily in Rotary. “The survey must find out why they are dissatisfied in the first place, to know if there is a problem that needs to be fixed,” said Urchick. Embracing change and diversity is one sure way to attract youth looking for a different set of experience, she added.

Start new clubs

New cause-based clubs would enable Rotary to grow quicker, said PDG Gump. Adding to that, Urchick said, “such clubs will retain new members longer, and attract youngsters of diverse professions. Rotarians must be change champions and catalysts to take Rotary forward.”

Explaining the five facets of Rotary’s *Change Model*, Urchick said, “assess (the members and their problems), design (the club’s vision of success), build (a communication strategy), implement reforms (nurture members who are resistant to change and respond to them thoughtfully), and finally, sustain growth (by putting structures in place, and investing in technology). As long as Rotary’s core ideology of service, fellowship, and the Four-Way Test are retained, “we can be flexible to meet the needs of the youngsters,” said Tom Gump.

RC Madras immediate past president Jayshree Sridhar said that as the third oldest club in the country, after RCs Calcutta and Bombay in that order, her club would be entering its 95th anniversary next year. The legacy club inaugurated on May 10, 1929, and chartered in July that year, “has pioneered the Red Measles Programme in 1979 and the Polio Eradication Initiative in 1985.” Around 140 Rotarians from across the world attended the online meet. ■

We don't want to build a park, but an entire forest

Rasheeda Bhagat

One of the highlights of the training event *Lakshya*, held in Kolkata recently for the DGEs and DGNs was a session on the environment chaired by RI director Mahesh Kotbagi. The audience was all ears as Ravishankar Dakoju, the mega donor to TRF, explained how under the leadership of RC Bangalore Orchards, RID 3190, of which he is a past president, and members such as Neil Michael Joseph, the cyanide dumps at the KGF township in Kolar district of Karnataka were transformed from a toxic hellhole to a green area filled with trees, birds and animals.

He explained that the British had extracted gold from the Kolar gold fields; “to do that you need to use cyanide to separate the gold from the slurry.” Once the British left, the mining was stopped and the whole area dried up, and “the residual cyanide dust blown by the wind wreaked havoc on the health of the people in the KGF township, causing cancer, tuberculosis and other diseases.”

This was considered a lost cause till Rotary stepped in, built a partnership with the local government and won its confidence. To green the area, “we dug trenches at different levels, each trench being 14x2x2ft. About 14,000 trenches were formed at different levels, and in each trench trees and cactus, along with wild grass, were planted. The grass retains the moisture and binds the soil.”

The trees started growing but hit a rough patch at some point and

started dying. What was needed was compost or manure to sustain the greenery.

“Believe it or not, we had to literally ‘smuggle’ the compost all the way from Bengaluru to Kolar, because the transport of the smelly manure was not allowed. But we Rotarians never give up. We don't mind failing... I am a failure throughout my life; failed in Class 10 three times, and just about managed to pass Class 12! Anyway, we used to transport it at midnight and we filled all the 14,000 trenches with 700 tons of compost brought from Bengaluru to Kolar,” said Dakoju, amidst applause.

“Finally, we won and the cyanide started giving up.” The Rotarians planted 1.2 lakh saplings and 15,000 cacti and “we want to make it a forest land. We've planted Singapore cherries and now the birds come, and so do snakes, rabbits and black bucks.”

This success story was a great compliment to Rotary; the government had given up saying this is a highly poisonous region and nothing can grow here. “But as PRIP Shekhar Mehta said: ‘You should be either mad, passionate or courageous to face failure. We did that and we won.’”

Along with PDGs Suresh Hari and KP Nagesh, Dakoju, who has now joined



Rasheeda Bhagat

RC Bangalore, has initiated a new project, “where we are taking up 1,500 acres to make a mini forest in one of the driest areas of Karnataka. It’s an ambitious and comprehensive project which will cost ₹26 crore to put up five lakh trees, restore two lakes, put up grasslands, protect the animals and enhance the livelihood of the 8,000-odd tribals in the area. Meenakshi Venkataraman, director, Projects, ESRAG (Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group) is helping us. She tells us, develop grasslands, don’t just keep planting trees.”

Admitting that this was “a very ambitious project,” he added, “this is called thinking big... we don’t want to put up a park or a plantation but an entire forest, and thus give something back to the planet.”

Addressing the meet, Meenakshi said that Rotarians in both Asia and Africa will have to respond to the environmental crisis that was unfolding; Pakistan had seen flash floods last year and Sri Lanka had faced the nightmare of its agricultural systems collapsing.

Saying that funding was going to be available for environmental projects, she talked about projects involving pollination, adopting a river, reduction of carbon and methane from the environment. “Three ways we can reduce that is by working on the soil, on mangroves and coral reefs.” Shekhar Mehta, as RI president, had announced at the UN Conference on Climate Change that Rotary would do large projects on developing mangroves. She was happy to tell the participants that as many as 30 global grants were in the pipeline for this work.

Expressing concern about the missing data on projects done by Rotarians, Meenakshi, who is a member of RC Nilgiris West, RID 3203, said, “We need to measure our impact as Rotarians. We all rose up to PRIP Ian Riseley’s challenge of planting trees, but no one seems to know how many trees were planted.”

RID 3141 DG Sandip Agarwalla gave details of the biodiversity park that his district, under the leadership of his club RC Bombay, had put up in the

Bombay University over an area of 1 ½ acres. “There we have put up a bamboo growing Zen garden, an amphitheatre, revived a lake and put up a huge rainbow model from recycled material.” The trees have been QR coded and the Rotarians will be involved in the development and maintenance of this park for the next 10 years. “We have appointed a naturalist and started getting schoolchildren in groups of 40–50, who spend 4 to 5 hours with the naturalist going around the park and connecting with nature.”

Since the park will be under their care for the next 10 years, “we are going to add to it incrementally. Already we have put up a mini windmill and an interactive fountain; when children pedal on static cycles, the water starts falling. Rotaract clubs have shown some interest in adding to this park with lots of creative ideas,” he added.

Mrutyunjay Suar, head of KIIT Incubator, said he came from a “university bringing the innovation culture and an ecosystem called ‘incubator’ promoting more than 380 companies started by young minds thinking of solutions for society.”

People he worked with were engaged in making inexpensive products; “we bring in to solve local problems the best minds, policymakers, innovators, intellectuals, and give solutions that are scalable, sustainable and affordable.” An example he gave was of extremely cheap technology to test the potability of water in rural areas; “it costs just a few paise.”

Complimenting Rotarians for the several projects they have undertaken on environmental sustainability, RI director Kotbagi said, “We have to understand the importance of reducing carbon emission. Today regulations are in place and many industrial houses are keeping a close watch on this. Developing mangroves is a wonderful project of Rotary, and we need to continue the good work done in this area last year.” ■

From R: RIDE Anirudha Roychowdhury; Mrutyunjay Suar, head of KIIT Incubator; Ravishankar Dakoju; RID Mahesh Kotbagi; Meenakshi Venkataraman, director, Projects, ESRAG; and Lakshya chair PDG E K Sagadhevan.



Prachi & Pawan Agarwal
District Governor, RID 3110
(2022-23)



District 3110

District 3110 Crossing the Magical Figure of US \$ 1 Million

They say that the records are made to be broken. This record of District 3110 needs to be broken, year after year. And no-one will ever complain. The District which had no respectable standing in TRF giving, has suddenly discovered its potential, which is immense and abundant. Rotarians of 3110 have utilized the leveraging power of TRF for doing meaningful and impactful projects throughout the year. As a result, the total giving to TRF this year has crossed the magical figure of \$ 1 Million. Congratulations to the generous donors of the District!



Prachi & Pawan Agarwal
District Governor & 1st Lady

Congratulations

All the members of District 3110

for

crossing TRF contribution of

US \$ 1 Million

1st Time Ever in District 3110

Thanks to Generous Donors for this monumental achievement !!

AKS Member (Chair Circle)

It is an honor for District 3110 and RC Kashipur that District Governor Pawan Agarwal and First Lady, Prachi Agarwal have become AKS Member (Chair Circle) by a total accumulated contribution of \$ 500,000 to TRF. Rtn Pawan Agarwal is the first ever serving District Governor in India to achieve the recognition of both AKS Member (Trustee Circle) & AKS Member (Chair Circle) in the year of service as DG.



Congratulations

DG Pawan Agarwal and
First Lady Prachi Agarwal

for becoming
AKS Member (Chair Circle)
by donating
US \$ 500,000
to The Rotary Foundation

Approval of 9th Global Grant Projects in Current Year

Congratulations

RC ALIGARH

for approval of District's
9th Global Grant this year

Total Cost :
USD 53,000

The Grant aims to provide
ophthalmic equipment for eyecare
services and surgeries



PDG Devendra Kumar Agarwal
ARRFC



PDG Sharat Chandra
DRFC



Rtn. Vinay Krishna
Chair, District Grants Committee

It's a matter of great pride and pleasure for the District to get approval for its 9th Global Grant Project in the current year. The project proponent is RC Aligarh, which is one of the oldest clubs and the largest club of the District. The project aims to provide "Ophthalmic Equipment for Eyecare Services and Surgeries". The total cost of the project is USD 53,000. This is the biggest ever Global Grant project in Aligarh in terms of cost.



Approval of 13th CSR Project in Current Year

Naini Papers (P) Ltd. contributed USD 22,777 (Rs 18,67,714) for a CSR Project which aims for "Establishing Eight Women Vocational Training Centres for Stitching" in association with RC Kashipur. This is the 13th CSR project by our District in the current year. The Managing Director, Rtn Pawan Agarwal and Mrs Prachi Agarwal have become "AKS Member (Chair Circle)" by this contribution to TRF.



Congratulations

RC KASHIPUR
for approval of
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In association with CSR partner
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Participation of DG & First Lady in RI Convention, Melbourne



With RI President Jennifer Jones



With PRIP KR Ravindran



With IPRIP Shekhar & Rashi Mehta



With RID A.S. Venkatesh



TRF Unity Ball Dinner of AKS Members



Registration Counter at MCEC



"End Polio Now Booth" at House of Friendship

Break-Out Session by DG Pawan Agarwal



Distribution of Baby Warmers



South Asia Dazzlers



PRIP KR Ravindran and wife Vanathy. RI President Jennifer Jones greets RIDE TN Subramanian as his wife Vidhya and PDG John Daniel look on. PRID Mikael Ahlberg is seated on the right.



Ravishankar Dakoju and Paola with RIPE Gordon McInally and Heather.



Above: (From L) Vinita, JK Thomas, RID Vicki Puliz, RID 3211 assistant governor Susann Koshy and RID Venkatesh.

Left: RI Director AS Venkatesh and Vinita greeting the guests at the South Asia Reception during the RI Convention in Melbourne, Australia.

Right: RI President Jones and RID Venkatesh greet each other.



Chairman of South Asia Reception PDG M Muruganandam honours RIDE Anirudha Roychowdhury and Shipra.



PDGs Bhashkumar Rajan, Krish Rajendran and Gowri Rajan of Sri Lanka (RID 3220) greet PRIP Shekhar Mehta and Rashi. Amita Kotbagi is seen on the left.



From L: RIDs Venkatesh, Faiz Kidwai, RI President Jones, TRF Trustee Aziz Memon, Anil Srivatsa, his wife Deepali, PRIP Mehta, PRID Kamal Sanghvi, TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya, RID Mahesh Kotbagi and DG N Nandakumar.



Above: Event chairman Muruganandam honours TRF Trustee Pandya and Madhavi with a memento.

Right: From L (standing): PDG Rajiv Sharma, Sumedha Nandakumar, PDG J Sridhar and TRF Trustee Geeta Manek. (Seated): Anil Srivatsa, Mithilesh Jha and PDG R Bharat.



Above: (From R) Paola Ravishankar, PDG Suresh Hari, Asha and Neeraj Bhatnagar.





RIDs Venkatesh and Kidwai.



PRIP K R Ravindran and RID Venkatesh.



PDG Muruganandam with PRID Manoj Desai and Sharmishtha.



RI President Jones greets the guests at the Reception.

Eco-friendly stoves for a Maharashtrian village

Jaishree



RC Panvel Elite president Swati Likhite (R) and club members with the tribal women after distributing the eco-friendly stoves to them.

Rotary Club of Panvel Elite, RID 3131, has embarked on a transformative mission to distribute unique smokeless stoves to ten Adivasi families in the hill village Varavane, near Panvel, Maharashtra. These stoves, called Panval Rocket Stoves (PRS), use twigs instead of wood to burn, and cook food in record time. “PDG Deepak Shikarpur introduced this model to us and we found it a perfect solution to save trees which were being felled indiscriminately for wood to be used in the traditional *chulhaas*,” says club president Swati Likhite.

Six women from the club, along with technicians from Applinnova, the stove manufacturers, visited the village to demonstrate its working to 50 women assembled in a school. The technicians gathered a few fallen twigs from under a Gulmohar tree in the school campus, assembled the stove, and lit it up with the twigs. “The audience was impressed with the entire process and was awed to see how rice, sufficient for six people, was cooked in just 15 minutes. The best part, they commented, was the absence of the stifling smoke,” smiles Swati.

The club had undertaken this eco-friendly project on a pilot basis, but “we were surprised to be flooded with requests from other families too. However, we want to assess its success in the village before moving on to the next phase.” The stoves have earlier been distributed to households by Rotary clubs in Uttarakhand and Hubli, “and we have received positive feedback about their impact and sustainability from the clubs there.” Each stove which originally costs ₹3,080 was procured at ₹2,500. It takes 21 days to manufacture each lot, she adds. The technicians from the company

About the stove

The stove works on 'rocket stove' principle which uses thin twigs that are burned in a simple combustion chamber containing an insulated vertical chimney, ensuring complete combustion before the flames reach the cooking surface. Here are a few features of the Panval Rocket Stove as mentioned in the manufacturer's website: aplinnova.com

The PRS-v5 is a smoke-free, economical biomass stove that can cook meals for 5–6 people using fallen twigs from trees. It can be ignited easily using few dry grass, leaves or paper as tinder and does not require an air-blowing or kerosene like traditional stoves.



It can make 20 cups of tea in 15 minutes using about 6–8 twigs (approximately 150gm of wood), cook 1kg rice with 8–10 twigs and

10 rotis in 30 minutes using 12–15 twigs.

The tall body of the stove acts like a chimney and creates a strong natural draught of air flowing through the stove to make it work almost smokeless throughout its operating power range.

Ash can be flushed out without extinguishing the fire or halting cooking operation. This can be done by simply pulling out the fuel grate while holding the burning sticks in place. Such mid-operation ash-disposal permits uninterrupted cooking for as long as needed.

The stove can be assembled easily, is portable and can be used as a camping stove when going on a picnic.



A technician explains the working of the stove to the tribal audience at the hill village.

trained three youngsters to troubleshoot and maintain the stoves.

Roshan, a young villager, recalls his childhood memories of a hillock behind the school. "The winding paths of the hill were then lined with huge trees. But as I grew older, I could see how they were all cut down gradually for firewood. Today it is just another barren land." He points out to the logs of wood each house has stacked up in its rickety shed to be used during the monsoon. "Imagine the number of trees that have been hacked to build the pile," he adds.

The Rotarians explained to the villagers how detrimental to the lungs it is to inhale the smoke from traditional *chulhaas*. The smokeless stoves fuelled by twigs would warm hearts and homes without the toxic haze of smoke, and is an ingenious solution to effective environment care, says Swati. ■

A heart awareness campaign in Pune

Team Rotary News

To promote heart health and raise awareness about cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) among the general population, on April 7, World Health Day, RC Pune Laxmi Road, RID 3131, and Revive Heart Foundation, came together to launch *Project Dhadkan*, a three-week CPR awareness programme which was

carried out in various parts of Pune. MLA Siddhartha Shirole launched the project.

The programme had guidance from eminent cardiologists such as Dr Jagdish Hiremath, Dr Sunil Sathe, and Dr Kinjal Goyal from RHF, said project director Ketan Shah, who is the club's immediate past president.

Increasingly, incidents of people getting sudden cardiac arrest and collapsing are surfacing. Add to this relatively fit people in their early 40s succumbing to sudden heart attacks. The importance of trying to revive such people with immediate CPR was stressed during the various sessions.

To raise public awareness multiple initiatives, such as media interviews, a well-attended music programme etc were held in the city. Shah estimates that the involvement of 12 Rotary clubs, PYC Deccan Gymkhana, and many other institutions, as well as a dozen cardiologists, ensured this awareness and educative programme reached thousands of Pune's citizens. Following each training and awareness session, the team distributed free booklets in both Marathi and English, providing comprehensive guidance on administering CPR and operating the required machines to revive the affected persons.

In phase two of the project, five AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) machines were installed at strategic locations. Bollywood stars such as Kajol, Ajay Devgan, Shilpa Shetty and Abhishek Bachchan lent support to this project on their social media handles. "We are happy that with the hard work put in by Rotarians, led by our club members, this project was a resounding success, effectively spreading the message of heart health and CPR, and hopefully will go a long way in making Pune the most cardiac-safe city of India," Shah added. ■

A demo on CPR administration being given to police personnel.





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From Happy Schools to Happy Students

Rasheeda Bhagat



On a warm May evening in Goa, the Panaji Gymkhana came alive with its sprawling grounds buzzing with smartly dressed schoolgirls, each wearing a helmet, waiting their turn to ride away on a spanking new bright

pink bicycle, of which they had just become the proud owners.

The explosion of pink bicycles and girl power that evening was thanks to a project of RC Panaji Midtown, RID 3170, the president and members of which had decided to act on the disturbing statistics

about how so many adolescent girls from underprivileged families drop out of school at puberty as they do not even have modes of transport facilities and have to walk to schools located 2 to 5km away. The 500 beneficiaries are students from Classes 5 to 9 in 25 schools.

When president of the club Siddha Sardessai was planning an iconic project for his year at the helm of the club, “I thought I should do something big, and nearer the scale of what PDG Ravi Vadlamani does while launching his projects.... he always thinks big.” With this idea in mind, his team drew up a plan to give 500 bicycles to rural girls from poor families, so that they could have a safe means to reach their school. The club has 78 members and they were aware that apart from safe transport, many girl students drop out from school because the long walk not only exhausts them but also leaves them exposed to the vagaries of extreme weather such as torrid heat and torrential rainfall.

Sardessai explains that as this is their club’s silver jubilee year, the project had to be a remarkable, sustainable and impactful one. The money required for the 500 bicycles was around ₹20 lakh and two corporates — Vianaar Infra LLP and Marikety Foods — funded the project through their CSR grants. The corporates were represented at the inaugural event by Savio Monteiro and Spiro Grana respectively. The Rotarians did not forget the safety feature; the girls’ heads needed to be protected while they rode to school and West Coast Mohit Ispat Foundation sponsored the helmets.

The beneficiaries were identified through the schools, so that only the most deserving girls got the



Schoolchildren with bicycles gifted to them by RC Panaji Midtown.





bicycles. The club president explains the ground rules which have been laid down to ensure that maximum benefit accrues from this project. “While the criterion for selecting the girls was the distance between the school and their homes, and the financial status of the family, the bicycle was presented to the girls with the clear understanding that if the girl leaves the school for any reason it has to be passed to another deserving student.” The same will hold true when the girls pass out from the schools; essentially the bicycles, even though presented to the girls, belong to the 25 schools, so that the maximum number of girls can benefit from this project and get empowered through education in the coming years. The colour has been deliberately kept a bright pink to ensure that the other condition of this project — the vehicles should be used only by the girls for going to school, and not by the family for running errands, or attending to farm work. And of course to safeguard them from the village thieves!

Predictably enough, the girls who became the proud owners of the new bicycles, were beaming with joy as they received this empowering tool from the dignitaries, who included Indian cricketer Mohinder Amarnath, DG Venkatesh Deshpande, club secretary Sachin Bhandare, silver jubilee celebration chairman Milind Shankwalker, and past and future presidents of the club. At the glittering event, balloons were released to reiterate the underlying theme of this project — empowerment, freedom and endless possibilities that education brings.

Addressing the meeting, DG Deshpande congratulated the club for this initiative of giving mobility to rural girls and advised the recipients of the cycles to make the best use of

the gift and excel in their education. Amarnath added, “This excellent project reminds me of my childhood when in a boarding school I received my first bicycle and was thrilled to get it.”

On the possibility of helping the brighter among these 500 girls get higher education, Sardesai said such students would automatically be screened for monetary help by the club’s ongoing, 25-year-old project titled *Sakshrta*. “This is an educational grant project, where we have been funding the education of less privileged students from Class 1 till graduation. This started way back in 1998. But now that education in government schools is free, we are funding students for graduation courses.”

He explains the tough rules that are observed to ensure that the funds are not taken from the club and frittered away on non-educational activities. While the scheme funds the education of medical, engineering and other professional and graduate courses, the money is released only after the student completes the first semester. So it is almost like a reimbursement. “Earlier, we had found that there were students who were taking the money but not doing the course; unfortunately, what is given free is rarely appreciated. So now we have brought in these new rules.”

On the ratio of girl students who go for higher education, he says, “I am happy to share that recently of the 11 grants we approved for professional courses, six were girl students. Earlier we used to do Happy Schools; now we feel we are creating happy students!” ■

The person who lent a hand

Rajendra Saboo

Jonathan Babatunde Majiyagbe was a great leader. In 2003, Jon made history by becoming the first African to be appointed as RI President, and becoming Trustee Chair in 2008. A strong believer in the value of history, he was an intellectual, enlightened and knowledgeable Rotary leader.

He joined Rotary in 1967. He was a member of RC Abuja Metro, RID 9125, Nigeria, and a past member of RC Kano. He was also Major Donor and Benefactor of TRF with his wife, Ayo. He received TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service and the Distinguished Service Award. He served on several polio committees, being dedicated to the global effort to eradicate polio.

When he was RI Director in 1988–90, he came to India to attend District 308 conference in Ambala in Feb 1989. Usha and I met Jon and his wife Ade when they visited Chandigarh. He saw the "Open Hand Monument,"

Jon was a man who "ate, slept and dreamt Rotary and polio". He believed in service before self.

a symbolic structure which symbolises "the hand to give and the hand to take, peace and prosperity and the unity of mankind". When I became RI President my theme was "Look Beyond Yourself". Then Jon laughed that he would have a theme on "hands". Thereafter, he became RI President and chose the theme "Lend a Hand," where two hands are on the same level and the person receiving is in equal standing with the person giving the aid.

On Dec 13, 2003 Majiyagbe as RI President unveiled the peace monument at Sukhna Lake, Chandigarh, in the presence of Punjab Governor and UT administrator O P Verma. He said, "Rotary is committed to world understanding and peace, which can be achieved only through concerted endeavours to banish poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and disease from the world." Later, he also visited the slums in the city to check out different Rotary projects.

Jon was a man who "ate, slept and dreamt Rotary and polio". He believed in service before self. He was in Brisbane, Australia, for the Rotary Convention when he got the news of the passing away of his wife, Ade, in June 2003, only a few days prior to taking office as Rotary President. But this did not deter his zeal for the cause. He was in much grief but he had to take the responsibility. He was regarded as impeccable and a man of peace.

PRIP Mark Maloney was his aide in 2003–04 and during that time he



observed Jon giving real meaning to the term, 'family of Rotary'. He was keen that Rotarians must provide friendship and support to the families of Rotarians who had suffered a loss or illness.

He married Ayo in 2007, has a son, Folorunso and three grandchildren. Usha and I met Ayo and Jon at RI Conventions and International Assemblies. Ayo became part of Rotary family very quickly and four of us were close friends.

Jon was a lawyer by profession. He had earned a law degree from the University of London and was a member of the Bar of England and Wales. He was principal partner in the firm JB Majiyagbe and Co, and also a 'Senior Advocate of Nigeria,' a title conferred on those who have distinguished themselves in the practice of law. He was a member of the Body of Benchers, served on the interim judicial service committee of Kano State, was a past vice-president of the



PRIP Jonathan Majiyagbe (second from L) with PRIPs Glen Estess, Rajendra Saboo, Bill Boyd, RI PolioPlus Committee Chair Robert Scott, PRIPs Carl Stenhammer, Luis Vicente Giay and Bhichai Rattakul honouring Rajashree Birla, founder, Aditya Birla Centre for Community Initiatives and Rural Development, for her contribution to Rotary.

stated that 45 children from her state were heading for this hospital for polio surgery but were given wrong impression in the bus that they would be sterilised and the children and their parents ran away. She was able to get 15 of them back and surgery was done on them. She was so thrilled to see them recovering that she promised to go back and carry the positive message.

The children were brought by buses and we always monitored the buses because we were afraid whether the buses would be hijacked by the Boko Haram people. Safe arrival of buses was very important as without them our surgeons and doctors would have no work. The children were kept in a hostel which was about 15 minutes away.

Kalyan, Jon and I met TRF Chair Wilf Wilkinson at the International Assembly to replace Busuyi Onabolu, Chair of Rotary's Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee, as he was not doing anything under PolioPlus and PDG Dr Tunji Funsho became Chairman in 2013. Thereafter, Nigeria became polio-free in August 2020, thanks to Dr Tunji and due to Jon's tireless advocacy and efforts.

Jon was an epitome of ethics with astounding wisdom. He was a confidant and an exemplar. We are grateful that Rotary made our paths cross. Jon's hand now rests in the hands of God. I salute him.

The writer is a past RI president

Nigerian Bar Association and member of the International Bar Association.

Jon was a former chancellor of the Anglican Diocese of Kano, chair of the Kano branch of the Nigerian Red Cross Society, and a member of the Kano Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture. In 2008, he was awarded the Order of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Jon did not plan to retire that early from his legal profession. But in 2010, by force of circumstance, health challenges due to renal failure, he had to take things easy. He was on dialysis, two or three times a week, which affected his work. In search of the best medical facilities, he relocated to Abuja.

Many times I went to Nigeria for medical missions. In December 2012, the medical mission team went to Abuja, Nigeria. Jon was the mentor of the project to conduct polio corrective surgery. The medical mission activities were coordinated by Dr Girish Gune

as team leader, Dr Deepak Purohit as project chairman and Dr Rajiv Pradhan as project counsellor. This was the first time when a speciality surgical team went to Africa with the sole objective of conducting polio corrective surgeries. Jon and his wife Ayo were very generous hosts for an evening. The High Commissioner of India also hosted a reception at the embassy official residence.

PRIP Kalyan Banerjee was there as a volunteer for the medical mission and handed over 20 incubators which were manufactured in Pune to the Nigerian Health Minister. The then RRFC Vinay Kulkarni mobilised the entire quantity from his district.

We were working in two hospitals, University Teaching in Abuja and Federal Medical Centre on the opposite side. The moving experience of the team was when Dr Salma Anas-Kolo, honorary commissioner from Maduguri, Borno State, visited the University Teaching Hospital and

Rotary loses an iconic Rotarian in Prez Majiyagbe

Kalyan Banerjee

The Rotary world is saddened by the passing on of an iconic Nigerian, African and international figure, Jonathan Babatunde Majiyagbe on May 27, a few weeks short of his 89th birthday.

Graduating in law from the University of London, he was called to the English and Wales Bar in 1964, attended the Nigerian Law School in 1965 and was admitted to the Nigerian Bar in 1966.

A trailblazer, he was the first African to become RI President in its more than a century of existence in 2003 and made all African Rotarians very proud of him. As a true humanist

and a lover of all people, irrespective of their tribe, religion, caste or creed, he was always willing to *Lend a Hand*, and that naturally, was the theme of his year as RI president in 2003.

One of his enduring legacies as RI president is putting the family at the core of Rotary activities with his Family of Rotary programme; Rotary's focus on family continues strong even today. He will, amongst other trailblazing activities, be also remembered for moving the motion to admit women into Rotary at the CoL in 1989.

If Rotary International played a huge role in making Africa free of the disease of polio, President Majiyagbe led the

polio eradication efforts in Africa from inception and was the pioneer chair of the Africa Regional PolioPlus Committee. During his tenure as RI president, he, like his predecessors and successors, gave our PolioPlus programme the emphasis and resources required to ensure we keep our promise to the children of the world; a world without polio.

Thereafter, he served for many years on the international PolioPlus committee. He remained involved with our polio eradication efforts as adviser to the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee and saw to the end of polio in Nigeria and the certification of Africa as a polio-free region in 2015.



From bottom right: PRIP Jonathan Majiyagbe; PRIP Rajendra Saboo; Bill Gates, co-founder, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; and PRIP Kalyan Banerjee at the RI Convention in New Orleans in 2011.

He remained involved with the African PolioPlus Committee until his last days.

Majiyagbe has left an indelible legacy for us in Rotary. He joined the first Rotary club in Nigeria, RC Kano in 1967, six years after its charter in 1961. By his exemplary service he rose to be appointed to the RI board of directors in 1988.

As a past director, he was assigned to represent the Rotary president at a district conference in India. RC Bhuj in Kutch, RID 3050, sponsored a primary school there named after his spouse Ade Majiyagbe.

He was nominated RI president in 2001 for 2003–04. Unfortunately, his wife Ade took seriously ill and despite her treatment in London, passed away in May, 2003.

He was the principal partner of JB Majiyagbe & Co; a law firm he established in 1971. Despite his

He will be remembered for moving the motion to admit women into Rotary at the CoL in 1989, and putting the family at the core of all Rotary activities.

brilliance as a solicitor and advocate, he is well known for advising the path of arbitration long before it became fashionable, even though it would have been more profitable for his law firm to pursue litigation. He was conferred with the prestigious rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) in 1980, the first practising legal professional in Northern Nigeria to be so elevated.

In recognition of his numerous contributions to legal advocacy and humanity, Majiyagbe was conferred with the national honour — Officer of the Order of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (OFR). A truly de-tribalised Nigerian, he spoke the Hausa and Igbo language fluently apart from his native Yoruba. A devout Christian, he sponsored many Muslims to Mecca for the holy pilgrimage.

He is survived by his wife Ayo Majiyagbe and son Folorunsho Majiyagbe.

The Rotary world would mourn his loss, as we all pray for his soul to rest in peace.

*(Written with support from
PDG Tunji Funsho
Chair, Rotary Nigeria
National PolioPlus Committee)*

The writer is a past RI president

RC Madras North honours women achievers

Team Rotary News

To honour the leadership of RI President Jennifer Jones, and celebrate her theme *Imagine Rotary*, RC Madras North, RID 3232, instituted the Imagine Award of Excellence for the Rotary year 2022–23. This award recognises women leaders who have made exceptional contributions in alignment with Rotary's seven areas of focus.

PDG ISAK Nazar was the chief guest at the Paavai Women's Conclave. Seven women — Kirthi

Jayakumar, founder, Gender Security Project; Dr Manorama, founder, Community Health Education Society; Padmapriya TS, chief executive, Sanitation First India; Dr Umaiyal Murugesan, managing director, Sri Kumaran Hospitals; Aruna Subramaniam, managing trustee, Bhoomika Trust; Madhu Saran, founder, River NGO; and S Padma Priya, founder, Vidhai Vidhaipom — were honoured with the Rotary awards. ■



PDG ISAK Nazar presents the award to Dr P Manorama, founder, Community Health Education Society, in the presence of RC Madras North president Anand Saravanaraj (L) and secretary G Vijayaraghavan.

RC Bangalore Whitefield Central, RID 3190, with the district's Cultural Exchange Committee of the International Service Avenue sprang into action to promote cultural understanding and address the pressing needs of those affected by the recent devastating earthquake in Turkey. "Recognising the power of storytelling as a universal language that transcends boundaries, we

Rotary  PEOPLE OF ACTION

Raising funds through stories for Turkey

Kiran Zehra



John Row, a storyteller from England.

collaborated with AceNovation, a software company from Singapore, and the Startup Ignition Team from Bengaluru to curate a one-of-a-kind event that brought together 195 storytellers from 195 countries, demonstrating how technology can foster global connectivity,” says Manoj Kabre, Cultural Exchange chair, RID 3190.

Titled *Turn 2 Turkey*, this 24-hour non-stop online programme unfolded on the Zoom platform, captivating a diverse audience of Rotarians and friends of Rotary from around the globe. The event showcased a wide array of storytelling techniques, including the Japanese Kamishibai, stories intertwined with sketches and unique musical accompaniments. Storytellers from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, France, Morocco, Sri Lanka, Turkey and India contributed to this cultural tapestry.

With the support of International Service directors Shankar Sastry and Rashmi Tanksali, the organising team orchestrated the seamless



Lorenzo Augusta Calender II, a storyteller from Rhode Island, USA.



Despoina Aristeidou, a storytelling teacher from Greece.

coordination of the 195 storytellers, scheduling their sessions based on their respective time zones. Dr Neena Gayathri, COO of AceNovation, anchored the event, while DGN Dr Murad Ardac of RID 2420, Turkey, and DG Jeetendra Aneja of RID 3190, inaugurated the proceedings.

While the exchange of cultural insights and experiences formed the heart of this event, the underlying purpose was fundraising for the earthquake-affected people of Turkey. Rotary clubs across District 3190 were actively encouraged to contribute to the Disaster Fund at rotary.org for the affected communities in Turkey.

Despoina Aristeidou, a storytelling teacher from Greece, shared her thoughts on the event, saying, “The stories we heard and told were beautiful, mostly folk tales from different countries.

Stories have the power to connect us all; through them it’s easy to point out our similarities as human beings. I hope we managed to raise enough money to give a helping hand to our neighbours who suffered from the terrible earthquake. Thoughts and prayers are always well-meant, but helping out in a fundraiser is a more practical way to show our solidarity with them.”

Geetha Subramanian, a storyteller from Bengaluru, expressed her enthusiasm for *Turn 2 Turkey*, describing it as a wonderful event conducted for a good cause. “I thoroughly enjoyed the plethora of encouraging and interesting stories presented by the amazing storytellers from different parts of the world. This event brought together a global community of storytellers and supported a noble cause.” ■

Apply yourself

As members of the family of Rotary, we are people of purpose, people of influence, and people of action. Each year, committees that support Rotary and The Rotary Foundation focus on putting Rotary’s strategic priorities into action, challenging us to increase our impact, expand our reach, enhance participant engagement, and increase our ability to adapt.

We are searching for qualified Rotarians and Rotaractors to apply their leadership skills to serve on a committee in the 2024–25 Rotary

year. These positions offer an opportunity for you to share your vocational expertise and skill set and help ensure diverse perspectives within each committee. Rotarians and Rotaractors with areas of expertise detailed in the chart are encouraged to apply. The number of openings is limited. If you are not selected this year, we encourage you to apply again next year.

All committees correspond via email and on virtual platforms, typically with one mandatory in-person meeting per year. Rotaractors are encouraged

to apply to any area of expertise based on their background and the skills and experience detailed for each area. Dual members of Rotary and Rotaract are especially encouraged to apply.

To be considered for committee membership or recommend someone for an appointment, visit on.rotary.org/application2023. Applicants must be registered on My Rotary at my.rotary.org and should make sure their My Rotary profile includes current contact information. Applications are due by **August 15**.

Committee openings

Area of Expertise	Function on Committee	Prerequisites	Openings & Commitment
Audit	Advises leadership on audited financial reports, internal and external audits, and internal control systems	Independence, appropriate business experience, and demonstrated financial literacy in accounting, auditing, banking, insurance, investment, risk management, executive management, or audit governance.	One position with a four-year term
Communications	Advises leadership on Rotary’s overall public image, branding, communications, content strategy and approach	Professional background and experience in internal and external communications, marketing, public image, brand and content strategy.	Two positions with three-year terms
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Advises leadership on the implementation of a diversity, equity and inclusion action plan	Professional or educational experience related to diversity, equity and inclusion.	Two to four positions with terms of up to three years
Finance	Advises the RI Board on Rotary’s finances, including budgets, investment policy and sustainability measures	Professional background in a finance-related field; nonprofit experience preferred. Candidates should have experience in financial matters at the club and district levels.	Two positions with three-year terms
Fund Development	Provides guidance and advice to the Trustees of The Rotary Foundation on all aspects of fundraising	Significant fund development or fundraising professional experience. Committee members actively fundraise and support the Foundation.	Three positions with three-year terms

Area of Expertise	Function on Committee	Prerequisites	Openings & Commitment
Learning	Advises leadership with respect to creating effective learning opportunities for Rotary leaders and members	Adult learning expertise within or outside Rotary. Experience in the professional learning field including e-learning and/or with planning and implementing learning events at the member, club, district, zone and international levels.	Two positions with three-year terms
Operations Review	Advises leadership on the effectiveness of operations, administrative procedures, and standards of conduct. Serves as the advisory compensation committee to the Executive Committee of the RI Board.	Experience in management, leadership development, or financial management, and thorough knowledge of Rotary's operations. Appointments are limited to past RI directors and past Foundation trustees.	One position with a six-year term
Strategic Planning	Advises leadership on matters regarding the strategic plan	Significant experience in long-term planning, financial management, and RI and Foundation programme activities.	Two positions with four-year terms
Technology	Advises leadership with respect to enhancing technology practices, products, and strategy to improve the member and participant experience at Rotary	Expertise in technology development, security and data privacy, product and project management, and user/participant experience. Non-Rotarian technology experts may be appointed.	Two positions with three-year terms

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Make your travel sustainable

Preeti Mehra

Explore the planet, as they say, without leaving anything but your footprint behind.

Summer is upon us and suitcases and knapsacks are being packed as we head from the heat of the plains to cooler climes. But how do we make our holiday sustainable? Here are some tips I have picked up from several sources which could help you in making your travel responsible, happy, and most importantly, green.

Once you have chosen your destination it's important to zero in on your mode of travel. If you are travelling by air, a non-stop flight is what you should opt for since multiple landings and take offs only add to carbon emission. Also, it may be greener to fly rather than drive if you are not travelling in a group. If in a group, by road is the most sustainable mode as you share the resources you are spending amongst several people, thus reducing your carbon footprint.

If you are going on an eco-friendly trip planned by a travel agency, make sure, before anything else, that the organisation is truly 'green' and not 'greenwashing' its clients. That means, in simple terms,

that the agency is not using marketing gimmicks to make you believe that it is environment conscious and offering you a green experience, when it is actually not.

Sometimes words like 'organic' and 'natural' are bandied about without any substance to back the claim. To ensure you are not fooled by the marketing hype, do a bit of homework. Find out if green organisations have endorsed the tour agency's work and holiday packages. Whether local help and material are indeed used and if water and waste is recycled at the places where you are accommodated. And most important, does the agency care about the locals and their culture which they will be introducing to you?

Don't forget that a truly green holiday embraces the people and places that are visited and tries to add to the economy of the local citizens instead of taking away from them and littering their environment with your waste. So, do try to get an assessment of the tour operator and transport you will be using, and



the hotel or homestay that has been recommended.

While nobody expects you to play the role of a green activist while on a holiday, a few simple enquiries can make a difference. For example, you could check on the recycling programme of the hotel you stay in. If it is lacking in some aspect, you could point it out and leave your suggestions. Most hospitality establishments take feedback from guests quite seriously.

Holidaying in the hills invariably means going on short walks or long hikes. And here too, green sensitivity makes all the difference. Before planning a trek make sure the weather is clear on those days so that you don't get stranded and need rescuing. Seasoned hikers will tell you that it is best to follow familiar paths that are trodden so that you do not disturb the flora. Also, the chances of disturbing



the habitat of insects are far less and you can avoid getting stung or bitten.

Those who go on treks have the annoying habit of thoughtlessly tossing plastic cups, bottles and waste. Go on any trail in the Himalayas or walk along the shores of scenic lakes and you will find empty packets of chips and assorted waste littered by visitors. While exploring the great outdoors it's a good idea to carry a lightweight bag to store the waste generated so that it can later be disposed in an eco-friendly manner.

There is one rule that trekkers and those who go on holidays to the countryside must strictly follow. Do not feed wildlife or pet them. It is a common sight across India to see birds, deer and monkeys being fed by tourists. You are doing a big disservice by feeding them because they start depending on human beings for their food. Some creatures in the wild even

forget how to fend for themselves and literally wait for tourists to feed them. This makes the animal vulnerable.

There is also a sad practice of using animals for recreation. Elephant and camel rides are a case in point. Very often these animals are displaced from their habitat and are overworked. Camels meant to live in desert conditions are brought to the humid beaches for the entertainment of tourists. It is best to discourage such activity.

Those going on holidays must make it a point to return brochures, booklets and maps to tourist offices. This ensures that they are reused and not simply discarded in the waste bin of a hotel. It will indeed be a nice sustainable gesture if we could ensure that literature provided is returned once we are done with it.

A word about shopping on holidays. Buy locally made products rather

than those that have been brought from far-off places. There is really no joy in going to a hill station in Himachal and buying a souvenir or a bauble made in Mumbai. Transporting such products over distances also means they leave a larger carbon footprint. Also do not buy products made from endangered plants/animals or rare wood. Stuffed animals are often sold to tourists and you should say a firm no to those hawking such goods.

Finally, while going on a holiday please don't forget to carry a reusable water bottle. And, yes, carry a cloth bag for your shopping. That will save you from relying on the plastic ones that shopkeepers are only too happy to offer.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues

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Project Vignettes

Team Rotary News

Homes for the homeless in Bicholim



IPDG Venkatesh Deshpande, along with RC Bicholim members, at the house constructed by the club.

DG Venkatesh Deshpande handed over the keys of a house constructed by RC Bicholim, RID 3170, to a family who lost their mud house in a village on the Maharashtra-Goa border due to a heavy rain last year. This is the 21st house constructed by the club for families who do not have a roof over their head. ■

Raising awareness through cricket



PDGs P Gopalakrishnan and S Rajendran present the winner's cup to RC Karur Texcity Cricket Team captain CB Karthik.

RC Karur Young Gen, RID 3000, organised a turf cricket tournament to raise awareness about bowel cancer. Twelve teams from various youth organisations such as BNI, JCI, Yi, YES, CNI and other Rotary clubs participated in the game. ■

Sewing machines donated



Mallina Ramachandra Rao with a woman after gifting her a sewing machine.

RC Tanuku, RID 3020, donated sewing machines worth ₹3 lakh to 42 underprivileged women. While 85 per cent of the project cost was sponsored by club member Mallina Ramachandra Rao through her firm, Gowthami Solvents, the balance 15 per cent were borne by the Rotarians. ■

Toilet block for a village school



Club members with IPDG Kailash Jethani after the inauguration of the toilet block at the school.

DG Kailash Jethani inaugurated a new toilet block constructed by RC Ambernath Smart City, RID 3142, at the Dnyanamrut Vidyalaya in Ambernath, Maharashtra. ■



Sizzling romantic, foot-tapping melody

SR Madhu

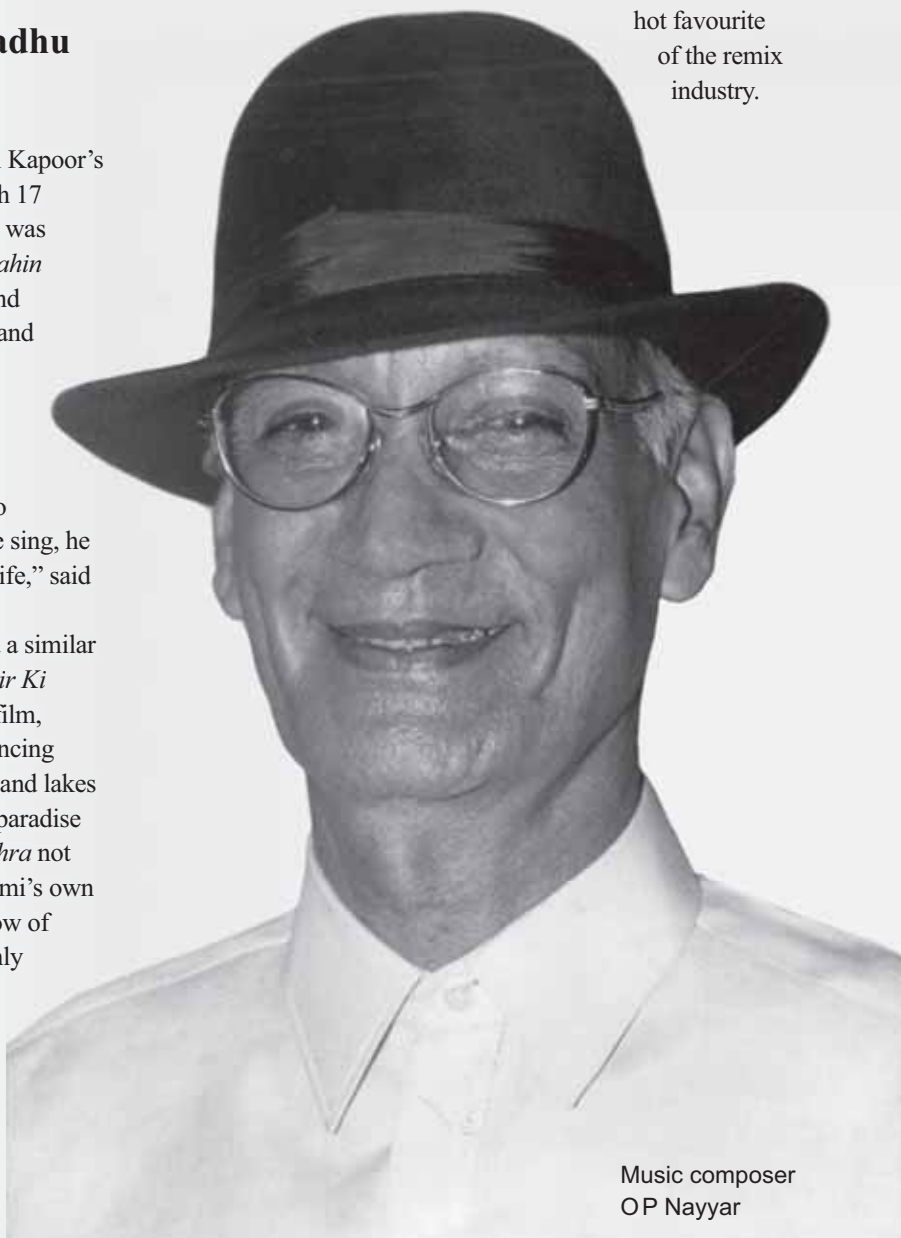
Who transformed Shammi Kapoor's career, which began with 17 flop films? His 18th film was the 1957 musical romance *Tumsa Nahin Dekha* with music by OP Nayyar, and Shammi was reborn — flamboyant and stylish, singing songs with joyous abandon that enslaved young India. *Jawaniyan yeh mast mast, tumsa nahin dekha* and *Chhupnewale saamne aa* were hummed with gusto by the young. "OP Nayyar made me sing, he made me dance, he gave me a new life," said Shammi Kapoor.

OP and Shammi Kapoor created a similar sensation with the 1964 film *Kashmir Ki Kali*. *Deewana hua badal* from the film, picturised on Shammi Kapoor romancing Sharmila Tagore amidst the flowers and lakes of Kashmir, has been described as "paradise serenade". *Yeh chand sa roshan chehra* not merely captivated fans, it was Shammi's own favourite. When invited to a live show of his songs, he said he would come only if this song was played! Nayyar had created a *Junglee* image for Shammi Kapoor before Shankar-Jaikishen did!

Sixteen years after his death, OP is today a cult figure, associated with infectious songs of zest, gaiety, hope

and celebration. They scorch with romance, sparkle with comedy, feature cabarets that sizzle and bhangra numbers that throb with energy. Writer Ganesh Anantharaman calls OP 'the tunesmith of hope'. "We Punjabi people are simpletons, raw, plain, without finesse. Our music is also full-throated, full of vigour, direct, fast-paced," OP remarked once.

His fusion of Punjabi and western beats makes him a hot favourite of the remix industry.



Music composer
OP Nayyar

He composed music for 79 films; apart from their positivity, the songs are known for superlative melody, infectious rhythm and orchestral ingenuity. “He composes with feelings, not words,” said Geeta Dutt. Madhubala was so fond of OP’s music that she offered to reduce her fee for films where he scored the music.

His most popular films — *Aar Paar*, *CID*, *Mr & Mrs 55*, *Naya Daur*, *Tumsa Nahin Dekha*, *Sone Ki Chidiya*, *Howrah Bridge*, *Ek Musafir Ek Haseena*, *Kashmir Ki Kali*, *Mere Sanam*, *Phir Wohi Dil Laya Hoon*, *Baharen Phir Bhi Aayengi* — were landmarks of Bollywood music. He rocked in Pakistan too, with people in Lahore hailing him as “the son of the soil”.

He made the foot-tapping “tonga beat” songs his trademark. OP live shows in India’s metros always feature songs such as *Maang ke saath tumhara* (*Naya Daur*, 1957); *Piya piya piya* (*Baap Re Baap*, 1957); *Ae dil hai mushkil* (*CID*, 1956) and *Yun to hamne lakh haseen* (*Tumsa Nahin Dekha*, 1957).

Mohammad Rafi paid him a handsome compliment with the last song in this list, telling him: “*Yun to humne lakh sangeetkar dekhe hain, OP sa nahin dekha.*” (I have seen lakhs of composers, not one like OP).

Glimpses into his music

OP has been described as a “rhythm king”. Some believe that this label is unfair because he was a master of melody too. Here are glimpses into a few of his famous songs.



Mohammed Rafi, OP Nayyar and Geeta Dutt.

- *Babuji dheere chalna* — rendered by Geeta Dutt (*Aar Paar*, 1954); a rage in its time, a crowd-puller any day.
- *Maang ke saath tumhara* (1957) — Rafi and Asha, Dilip and Vyjayanthi, and OP’s melody, came together for this immortal song.
- *Ae dil hai mushkil jeena yaha* — Geeta and Rafi (*CID*, 1956). This exuberant ode to *Mumbai meri jaan* was filmed on Johnny Walker. But OP borrowed its tune from the romantic western *O my darling, Clementine*. The song topped the *Binaca Geetmala* chart for 1956.
- *Aayiye Mehrban* — Asha Bhosle, *Howrah Bridge*, 1958. Madhubala dazzles, Asha sizzles and OP’s melody enchants in this evergreen nightclub number.
- *Jaiyen aap kahan jaayenge* (Asha, *Mere Sanam*, 1965). What better compliment than Lata loving to hum it!
- *Kajra mohabbatwala* — Rafi and Shamshad (*Kismet*, 1968). This foot-tapping duet filmed on a female Biswajit and a male Babita was a roaring hit.

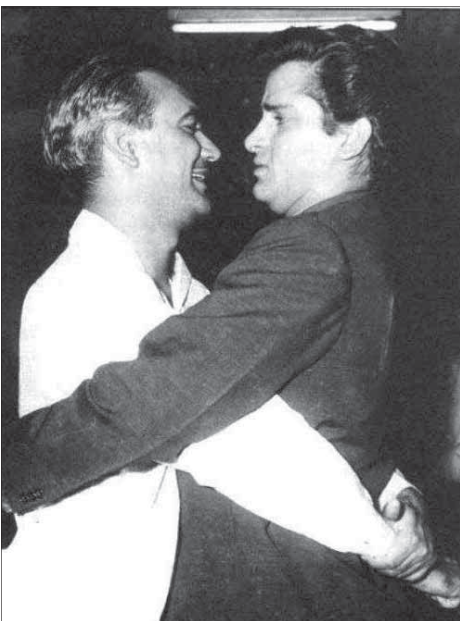
His life and career

OP was born in 1926 in Lahore, to a family of doctors, engineers and bureaucrats. He went through an unhappy childhood — frequent thrashing by his parents, affliction with typhoid, even a bite by a mad dog. He later said the mad dog was responsible for his musical madness!

But his musical talent was recognised early. By the time he

Sixteen years after his death, OP is today a cult figure, associated with infectious songs of zest, gaiety, hope and celebration.





perfection. *Naya Daur* won him the Filmfare award for best music.

Naya Daur led to one of Bollywood's most successful partnerships, that between OP and Asha Bhosle. The partnership was both musical and emotional and lasted 16 years. It was thanks to OP that Asha grew out of sister Lata's shadow. Not merely did he mould Asha's voice and hone her talent, she was almost his exclusive female singer from 1957 till 1974 when they broke up. Asha sang 324 songs, inclusive of 167 solos, in 60 films for OP — more than three

times that of *Geeta* (62 songs) and *Shamshad* (39 songs) put together.

The 1958 *Howrah Bridge* highlighted the Asha-OP partnership. Asha sang several songs in the film including the iconic *Aaiye mehrban* filmed on a ravishing Madhubala dancing at a night club.

Such was OP's impact on the public from the mid-50s that other composers were under pressure to adopt his style. Producers who found him too expensive — he charged ₹1 lakh per film after

For a public soaked in the classicism of *Baiju Bawra* and *Anarkali*, the robustness and rhythm of *Aar Paar*, and its naughty, sensuous songs, were a refreshing novelty.

Naya Daur — turned to other composers but urged them to create OP-style songs. Ravindra Kelkar's well-documented study of composers influenced by OP mentions even top composers like Shankar-Jaikishen and Madan Mohan. Result: With several OP clones in the market, the original one suffered.

In 1961, not a single OP film was released. He decided to revamp his musical style by strengthening the melody and lyrics' quality. He tapped the sitar, sarod and shehnai along with the sarangi to enhance the sweetness of melody.

The 1960s were the decade of romantic entertainers filmed in eye-catching locales in India and abroad — ideal conditions for an OP renaissance, which did happen with many of his superhits including *Aap yoonhi agar* (Rafi and Asha, *Ek Musafir Ek Haseena*, 1962); *Banda parvar*, *Thaam lo jigar*



District Wise TRF Contribution as on April 2023

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution
India					
2981	61,420	778	0	1,184	63,382
2982	57,899	7,013	14,684	75,739	155,335
3000	77,512	5,910	500	2,441	86,364
3011	112,725	18,424	27,127	775,644	933,919
3012	31,500	1,447	77,335	430,042	540,324
3020	148,818	23,509	57,652	2,155	232,134
3030	132,812	33,957	10,012	36,806	213,587
3040	28,347	2,422	0	124,031	154,800
3053	90,296	3,636	10,000	40,757	144,688
3054	30,171	1,474	8,434	94,741	134,820
3060	148,235	5,176	14,183	164,458	332,052
3070	120,816	9,968	53,544	11,347	195,675
3080	42,493	9,563	0	101,262	153,318
3090	19,462	0	6,253	0	25,715
3100	92,216	900	25,012	20,266	138,394
3110	69,134	454	25,317	970,556	1,065,460
3120	43,088	513	0	26	43,627
3131	532,456	14,394	121,887	1,430,617	2,099,354
3132	53,827	8,006	50,000	5,602	117,435
3141	956,173	47,328	168,599	3,561,184	4,733,285
3142	328,449	5,910	63,535	280,416	678,310
3150	117,437	35,063	168,353	68,202	389,055
3160	34,045	3,453	0	3,675	41,173
3170	276,795	43,078	21,506	54,450	395,830
3181	156,280	2,661	25	9,674	168,640
3182	89,785	5,667	0	11,260	106,712
3190	240,297	19,026	108,411	435,842	803,575
3201	259,612	41,291	72,133	824,178	1,197,214
3203	66,653	18,384	9,293	139,916	234,246
3204	26,457	2,178	0	17,668	46,303
3211	197,194	7,415	33,845	17,985	256,438
3212	378,044	169,749	329	113,806	661,928
3231	66,084	23,958	36,278	15,044	141,364
3232	129,487	77,592	112,253	873,591	1,192,924
3240	147,311	20,513	26,000	3,850	197,674
3250	38,250	315	0	59,195	97,760
3261	33,637	931	25,366	5,277	65,211
3262	54,682	818	700	34,165	90,364
3291	106,545	2,798	65,371	16,546	191,259
India Total	5,596,444	675,670	1,413,938	10,833,599	18,519,651
3220 Sri Lanka	84,774	15,537	5,500	1,420	107,230
3271 Pakistan	132	35,715	0	2,025	37,872
3272 Pakistan	6,805	12,687	0	6,000	25,492
3281 Bangladesh	84,271	6,651	24,125	207,520	322,567
3282 Bangladesh	53,563	7,001	2,000	10,320	72,884
3292 Nepal	198,878	20,766	96,174	78,514	394,332
South Asia Total	6,024,867	774,026	1,541,737	11,139,397	19,480,027

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

Source: RI South Asia Office



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Wordsworld

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Sandhya Rao

Everyone's talking about Abraham Verghese's latest offering, so we might as well too. Among other things.

A clip doing the rounds on YouTube features Oprah Winfrey talking to Abraham Verghese about his latest book, *The Covenant of Water*. Heaping praise, she said it featured among her top three books of all time, including a Toni Morrison. 'And I've been reading since age 3,' she added.

This practising doctor and author of four books, a professor of the theory and practice of medicine, and now vice-chair of Education at Stanford University Medical School is an alumnus of Madras Medical College. His first two books — *My Own Country* and *The Tennis Partner* — are based on his experiences in medicine. For the third, *Cutting for Stone*, he turned to

fiction. Successfully. The book was on the *New York Time's* bestseller list for two years, apart from winning several accolades.

That Verghese is serious about his writing in the way that he is serious about his medical profession is borne out by the fact that he took a break from medicine and earned a Master of Fine Arts degree by enrolling for the Iowa Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa, one of the most sought-after writing courses in the world. *My Own Country*, published a couple of years later, reveals the fluidity of his thought process and the lucidity of his writing style. Detailed, yet engaging; probing, yet mindful; of the world, yet rooted. And in that clip with Oprah, he reiterates that for him, practising medicine overrides everything else. You see it in all his writings: medicine overlays, underlies, permeates.

Additionally, there is art and craft and absorbing storytelling. In many ways, Abraham Verghese bears out a long-harboured personal theory: the busiest people somehow manage to make not just the most time, but the most of their time.

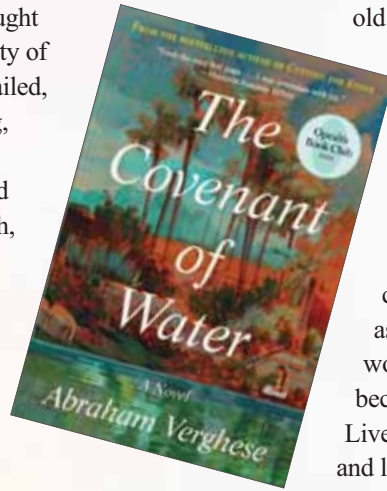
This Kerala story — radically different from what's being currently peddled on the screen and in discussions on various platforms — is real and palpable, enriched and rendered fertile by the inexorable presence of water. According to some accounts, there are some 50 rivers in Kerala, 35 lakes, apart from backwaters, reservoirs, ponds... Relationships with water, naturally, is the leitmotif of the book, in which the story emerges like doors opening,

one after the other, with the social, physical, political, cultural, religious and individual nuances of people in the places they inhabit steadily being interwoven into a strong and seamless bale of cloth. And even if at times it seems as though it addresses — some may say, seems to dress up — a largely western audience, the fabric holds together.

The narrative begins in Travancore, in 1900, where a 12-year-old is shown lying on the mat with her mother. She will be married in the morning to, as it turns out, a 40-year-old widower with a

small son. From there the saga surges forward for nearly 80 years, through three generations. The little girl is central to the novel as she grows into womanhood and later becomes a grandmother. Lives encounter highs and lows as the world recreated in the pages

enlarge with details being added in gradually. You linger over descriptions of the *tharavad*, the kitchen, the river, the walking paths, the hospital, the patients, the soirees... and slowly, ever so slowly, secrets begin to tumble out, connections are unravelled.



Luiselli, in her book *Tell me how it ends*, tries to show us what the children are fleeing from and the challenges they face as they are caught between the 'ideals of the American dream' and the 'reality of American racism and fear'.

Sometimes the descriptions read like explanations or monologues, but that does nothing to interrupt the flow because the writing is facile, rich, layered. There is drama without the dramatic.

It is a slow read. Therefore, as the name of a bookstore in Lisbon suggests, *Ler Devagar*, ‘read slowly’. This piece of advice, in Portuguese, is just the mantra for hot summer afternoons and long, leisurely train rides. I read slowly, but steadily, every day.

Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions by Valeria Luiselli is a short but eye-opening account of another kind of journey. The real and dangerous routes undertaken by children forced to escape from unimaginable horrors in countries like the Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, through Mexico and into the United States, in search of a fundamental right: safety. All refugees slipping into the US are labelled ‘undocumented aliens’. Luiselli revisits this troubling matter even as today, there appears to be increasing resistance to immigrants, even though you see them everywhere in the US: repairing roads, doing housework, even running vegan cafes. While large numbers of Mexicans seek asylum in the US, the irony, we learn from this book, is that immigrants from Central America are treated harshly by the Mexican government itself.

According to an article from the Council on Foreign Relations about US detention of child migrants, in 2022, ‘immigration authorities encountered more than 152,000 unaccompanied minors at or near the US-Mexico border,’ apparently ‘an all-time high’. Luiselli tries to show us what the children are fleeing from and the challenges they face as they are caught between the ‘ideals of the American dream’ and the ‘reality

The Holocaust, Partition, and George Floyd, Gowri Lankesh, Safdar Hashmi, the anti-Sikh riots, Babri Masjid, the Kumbakonam school fire, the farmers’ agitation, the wrestlers’ protests... all these stories have to be aired and shared.

of American racism and fear’. You realise that behaviours, attitudes, and rigid politico-legal systems are not restricted to the US; they prevail all across the globe, including India.

The 40 questions refer to the questionnaire presented to the children by US immigration. Luiselli, herself of Mexican origin, is a novelist who worked as a volunteer interpreter at the federal immigration court in New York City, interviewed children following the intake questionnaire, translated their stories from Spanish into English, met with lawyers to explain the notes and transcriptions. Beginning with ‘why did you come and when,’ through ‘did anything happen on your trip to the US that scared you or hurt you’ and ‘did you stay in touch with your parents,’ the horror of the journey, the dangers encountered, the fear that often renders the children speechless, apart from unfamiliarity with the English language... all of this can be mapped and the mental condition of the children imagined, provided the attorney has the bandwidth and/or the compassion. By the time, the last few

questions come around — What do you think will happen if you go back home? Are you scared to return? Who would take care of you if you were to return to your home country? — we get the full picture; we see how children are raped, robbed, even killed on the way. And most importantly, why they cannot afford to be deported, which in most instances they are.

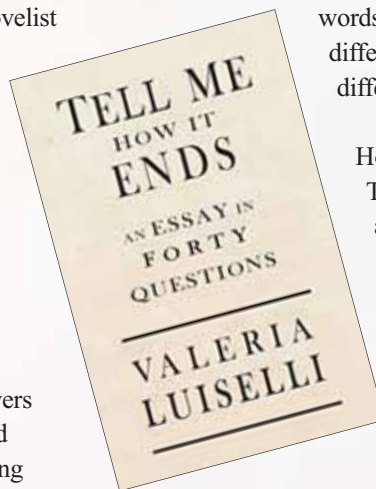
Towards the end of the essay, Luiselli writes, ‘There are things that can only be understood retrospectively, when many years have passed and the story has ended. In the meantime, while the story continues, the only thing to do is tell it over and over again as it develops, bifurcates, knots around itself. And it must be told, because before anything can be understood, it has to be narrated many

times, in many different words and from many different angles, by many different minds.’

That is why the Holocaust, Partition, Trayvon Martin and George Floyd, Gowri Lankesh, Safdar Hashmi, the anti-Sikh riots, Babri Masjid, the Kumbakonam school fire, the Peshawar school

massacre, the Rwandan civil war, the farmers’ agitation, the wrestlers’ protests... all these stories have to be aired and shared. Not only so they are remembered, not only so they are not repeated, but also so that these narratives are not changed through lies. Only by converting to compassion and truth-telling can we eliminate ignorance, fear and hatred. Reading helps in the process.

The columnist is a children’s writer and senior journalist



Beating summer & monsoon blues

Bharat and Shalan Savur

Dear readers, please don't ignore muscle stiffness or cramps in the belief that they will go away. Recently, my calves suddenly felt stiff. I was surprised. I'm fit. I drink two to three litres of water a day. So, what was the matter? The fact is: weather conditions are changing and our bodies are sensitive to the environment. So we've got to factor in the ever-changing conditions bringing heatwaves, heavy monsoons, lingering winters and navigate our way to health accordingly.

It sounds strange to link my calf stiffness to the weather... but as our planet emanates heatwaves, our muscles lose water and salts quicker and hence come the cramps. Research says that since 1975, the temperature has been rising by 0.15 to 0.20 degrees Celsius per decade. And according to the United Nations, 'It is near-certain that 2023 to 2027 will be the warmest five-year period ever recorded.'

To avoid heat exhaustion, these are the symptoms we've got to watch out for: acute thirst, loss of appetite, headache, dizziness, blurring of vision, feverishness, nausea, cold and clammy sweat or high body temperature, loss of concentration and, hence, confusion, irrational behaviour, weakness, cramps, fainting, anxiety and depression. Remember, these are not things to be alarmed of, we just have to take a few extra precautions amidst these changing conditions until, one day, our body adapts, strengthens and stabilises itself. And those precautions for the long term are:

Avoid the midday sun. When your body is already heated, its temperature

could continue to rise. If you must go out, wear a cap and move around in a vehicle as that would allow the breeze to cool your face.

Keep drinking cool water. Include a beverage containing electrolytes. People who sweat a lot lose potassium and sodium — this can cause weakness, spasms, cramps in muscles, or reduced brain functioning resulting in feeling disoriented, fuzzy and confused. Have a banana or two. Plan your meals around potatoes, sweet potatoes, leafy greens, peas and beans. Don't go on a low-salt diet if you sweat profusely. The body needs sodium to maintain

body-fluids balance to help muscles and nerves to function smoothly.

Apply a cool, wet cloth on your forehead. Or press an ice pack to your head, face and neck on a sweltering day. Have cool baths instead of warm ones.

Eat water-rich fruits and vegetables — water melon, musk melon, strawberries, oranges, cucumber, lettuce, cauliflower, cabbage, tomatoes and de-seeded capsicum. Chilled cucumber soup with mint leaves cools the stomach instantly.

Substitute dehydrating liquids — alcohol, coffee, caffeinated soft drinks — with cool hydrating skimmed milk,



buttermilk or lassi. Add sabja seeds to these beverages as they are natural body coolers. They ease constipation too.

It's the perfect time to quit smoking. Why draw more fire and smoke into your over-heated lungs? Besides, smoking constricts blood vessels that could lead to high blood pressure, strokes and heart disease.

Continue exercising. It strengthens your immune system. Don't push yourself — use lighter weights, do fewer reps. Prefer cool indoors to sizzling outdoors. Walk only at dawn or dusk. Swimming is a good option. While exercising, if you feel uncomfortably hot, pause... drink an electrolyte drink, shower and relax. Your well-being is more important than those reps.

Wear loose, light clothes. When you sweat, a loose shirt or top acts like a cooling, billowing sail when the wind

goes through it. Carry a spare. Prefer light colours as they reflect heat, while dark colours absorb it.

From the waves of heat, let's move on to the gales of storms.

According to doctors in Mumbai, the early showers drenched many a commuter and cases of viral fever shot up in the city. There is no doubt that abrupt climate change impacts our health and well-being. Experts say unseasonal rainfall affects the air movement and the quality of the air that we breathe in — along with oxygen, we also inhale airborne allergens and pollutants.

How do we deal with our monsoons which have turned mercurial? Some suggestions:

Remain reverent. In India, we've always seen rain as a blessing. Continue to do so even when it plays hide and seek or drops in like an unexpected guest. Love the rain for it cleans the pollution from the smoggy air and the dust from our tired minds.

Increase Vitamin C intake — sprouts, green beans, oranges and lime. It shields us from fever, throat infection, cold and flu by strengthening our immune system.

Drink boiled or filtered water. Even in the wet season, the body needs hydration.

Avoid street food. The potholes around incubate germs. And the food in the vicinity left uncovered is susceptible to these germs. It's wise to stick to well-cooked home food.

Have more probiotics — curd and buttermilk — laced with prebiotics: raisins. Together, they keep the gut healthy. Be even more careful if there's flooding in the area. It spreads pathogens that cause gastrointestinal problems. Also, water getting into the building or flat can result in mould which releases tiny spores into the air and increases asthma, coughing and throat infections. Gargle with hot water daily. Keep cough syrups and inhalers handy. Add ginger to

tea and cinnamon to coffee. Ginger has anti-inflammatory properties. Cinnamon provides anti-bacterial benefits.

Observe strict hygiene. Wash hands, feet, legs after an outing.

Cover vessels. Don't allow any water to pool anywhere — it's a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Consider an annual maintenance contract with a reputed pest control agency.

Exercise! If the streets are flooded or there's a heavy downpour, stay indoors and use the stationary bike, spot-march or dance. Do breathing exercises to help reduce respiratory problems. It's safe to walk in a mild drizzle. Wear a windcheater or raincoat. Use only shoes with grooved soles — they grip the ground better and prevent you from slipping.

Where's the sun? When the clouds hang heavy and sunlight is absent, the body continues producing the sleep hormone melatonin in our waking hours, causing sleepiness. Besides, the continuous pitter patter of rain referred to as 'pink noise' can lull us further. To remain alert and active, switch on the brightest lights in the room. Do 20 windmills vigorously. Eat protein-rich foods — pulses, paneer, nuts, tofu, milk, green peas. Protein stimulates the mind. Avoid noodles, burgers, fries, alcohol — they promote lethargy.

Every morning, be grateful for all that you are and all that you have. Gratitude brings about a psychological balance and provides the ballast of trust instead of fear and anxiety.

Embrace weather extremes by good practices. Be calm and stable amidst the fluctuations. It's the kindness you give others, the gentleness you gift yourself with that foster tranquility in turbulent times and remind us that life is still beautiful.

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



RC Cuddalore Coastal City — RID 2981



An ambulance and x-ray machine were donated to the Government Hospital, Cuddalore. Local MLA G Ayappan and district collector K Balasubramanian flagged off the ambulance.

RC Delhi Mayur Vihar — RID 3012



Two sanitary pad vending machines were installed at the Shri Gandhi Smarak Government Inter College, Mandola. Raw material was supplied for making sanitary pads for one year.

RC Madurai Sangamam — RID 3000



Around 350 saplings were planted at the Angel Devaki old age home in a joint project with RCs Madurai West, South, Star and Elite. IPDG Jerald and DGE Raja Govindasamy were present.

RC Vijayawada Midtown — RID 3020



Sewing machines were distributed to 100 women who were trained at the Makineni Basavapunnaiah Vignana Kendram. PDG Manzoor Massey, US, donated ₹7 lakh for the project.

RC Delhi Heritage — RID 3011



A handwash station was installed at the SDMC Primary School in Sarai Kale Khan village. District WinS chair Vineeta Kakkar spoke on good hygiene habits.

RC Surat Tapi — RID 3060



A library was opened at Dharampur on World Book Day. It was a joint initiative with the Gopal Charitable Trust and Lokmangalam Trust, Khoba.

RC Moga Stars — RID 3090



An ambulance was donated to the Civil Hospital through a global grant. RCs Pokhran, RID 3292, Nepal; Gold Coast Lake Success, RID 7266, and Hicksville South, RID 7255, US were the partners.

RC Lucknow Baradari — RID 3120



A drinking water unit with 400ft borewell and submersible pump was inaugurated by then DG Anil Agarwal at Dali Ganj, a busy locality.

RC Moradabad — RID 3100



A team of Italian Rotarians participated in a polio NID programme organised by the club, along with RC Moradabad Heritage.

RC Pune Lokmanyanager — RID 3131



A bus, physiotherapy lab and other equipment were donated to Bal Kalyan Sansthan, Pune, a government institute for skilling disabled children, through a CSR grant of ₹22 lakh.

RC Nainital — RID 3110



UP minister Ajay Bhatt flagged off an ambulance and inaugurated medical devices at the Indersheel Hospital. RC Sarasota Sunrise, RID 6960, US, and RID 3012 were the partners.

RC Solapur Pride — RID 3132



Over 60 people participated in a walkathon organised by the club to promote the goodness of walking as an exercise to keep diabetes at bay.

RC Ambarnath — RID 3142



A Marathi guide book on Rotary written by Hemant Gogte was released by RID Anirudha Roy Chowdhury in the presence of PRID Ashok Mahajan, and then DGE Milind Kulkarni.

RC Kota City — RID 3182



A house was built with the support of Bandhavya, a local NGO, for a woman who had lost her husband. The new house was handed over to her in a simple ceremony.

RC Adoni — RID 3160



Around 150 patients were screened at the eye camp in Basarakodu village. While 62 patients will undergo ocular procedure, 22 were chosen for cataract surgery.

RC Kovai — RID 3201



In a joint project with Tera Panthi Mahila Mandal, a petty shop was set up for an educated blind girl, Akalya, under a government scheme.

RC Vita City — RID 3170



Following a measurement camp, artificial limbs were distributed to 145 physically-challenged people in a prosthetics fitment camp.

RC Quilon Heritage — RID 3211



The club provided a sewing machine to a woman and wheelchair to a physically-challenged person in the presence of IPDG K Babumon.

RC Sivakasi — RID 3212



A Golden Heart Camp with doctors from Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, screened 135 children for cardiac illnesses and 22 patients were identified for surgery.

RC Gauhati South — RID 3240



A freezer box worth ₹84,960 was sponsored by Rtn Priyam Goswami in memory of her late husband Binode Mohan Goswami, a club member.

RC Vellore South — RID 3231



A two-day RYLA was conducted for 175 polytechnic students with the support of Sri Venkateswara Polytechnic College.

RC Jamshedpur West — RID 3250



A handwash station with drinking water facility was inaugurated by then DG Sanjeev Thakur at the Bal Kalyan Mandir which offers free education to students from poor families.

RC Alandur — RID 3232



A three-day RYLA was conducted at the Jawadhu Hills for Rotaractors and children of St Joseph's Orphanage.

RC Calcutta South Suburban — RID 3291



A Rotary Selai School with 10 sewing machines was started with the support of RCC Kankura Masat at South 24 Parganas at a cost of ₹94,930.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran

It so happened...

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan



More than half a century ago, in 1971 Gulzar directed a film called *Mere Apne*. It was a commentary on the social conditions facing the young in the late 1960s, namely, unemployment and hopelessness. I was one of those millions. With an MA degree halfway done and with no clear idea of what I was going to do in life by way of a job. There weren't many options then. The government and the public sector were the largest employers. The private sector wasn't trusted by potential employees and, in turn, the employers didn't trust anyone enough to give them a job unless they came highly recommended — not by their teachers but from acceptable social circles. That's why a song from that film went what is today called 'viral'. Its key line was "*BA kiya, MA kiya, jo kuch kiya aiwein kiya*". *Aiwein* in Punjabi means pointless, or in Tamil, *chumma*, or *justu only*. Both terms denote futility.

At that time my family consisted largely of bureaucrats and lawyers. So we had a genetic inclination to obstruct and argue. In keeping with family tradition, after finishing my MA in Economics, my father said "Right, ok, now you enrol for a law degree and sit for the civil services exam." I did both. With great commitment and application, and effort and hope. In the event, I failed at both and thereby hangs a tale. Not only did I lose a girlfriend, I started constantly humming the tune of the song I mentioned above.

The lyrics were apt and the tune catchy and together they captured my situation perfectly.

I didn't actually fail in the law course. It was taught so badly and examined even more badly that I told my father it was nothing more than a driving licence and dropped out after two years. The classmates were mostly other duffers like me and the exam could be passed even by us after reading case law for three days before it. The five questions came from a set of 20 cases and if you knew those, you got your 40 per cent. I should not have dropped out, but, as it turned out, the legal profession's loss would be journalism's gain. It was the only profession those days that welcomed misfits more warmly than even the legal profession.

As to the civil services, I worked hard — on strange subjects like British

history and British constitutional history. If you ask the fellows who cleared the exam between 1952 and 1985, half of them will tell you they had chosen these subjects even though they were not history graduates. These were 'scoring' subjects, like Chinese! Can you imagine? Chinese? In the 1970s? But that's how the exam was oriented. Very few chose their graduation subjects. But I was one of those, cocky and stupid, who did. My MA degree was from the Delhi School of Economics, which, until the mid-1990s, was among the world's ranking institutions. They taught the latest stuff and, as students, we thought no end of ourselves. Even the girls treated us with respect. But pride always goes before a fall.

I passed the written exam and was asked to attend the interview. It lasted all of ten minutes as I was the last chap to be interviewed before lunch. I had done well in the interview as was expected, at least by me. But when the results came in May, my name was not on the list. It was disappointing, but not the end of the world. The marks list, when it arrived, showed that in the written exam I got less than 20 per cent in the two economics papers — and over 60 per cent in British history and British constitutional history which I had studied, like lakhs of others, from a guidebook! When I told my father this, he had only one question: why didn't you study economics also from the guidebook? Touché. ■

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