

Rotary NEWS

INDIA
www.rotarynewsonline.org



Moments from IA in Delhi



Spouses of DGEs with RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi, Amita and Rashi Mehta.

Rasheeda Bhagat



From L: RID Bharat Pandya, Madhavi, Amita, RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi, RIDE A S Venkatesh and Vinita.

Hemant Kumar

Inside



10

10 Celebrating 10 years of polio-free India
IPPC chair Mike McGovern gives an overview of Rotary's polio eradication project, addressing RC Madras.



20

20 RIPE Mehta urges his governors to 'serve to change lives'
Unveiling his Presidential theme, RIPE Shekhar Mehta urged the incoming governors to make service and membership growth their mantra during the next 17 months.



48

24 Zambia Malaria elimination to be TRF's first Programme of Scale
Addressing DGEs at the IA, incoming TRF trustee chair John Germ unveiled the Foundation's plans and goals for the coming year.



52

40 Covid opens opportunities for Indian pharma
Healthcare experts express their views on the Covid pandemic and the way forward at the zone institute titled *The Odyssey*.

48 Project Resound targets avoidable deafness in Karnataka
Rotary Bangalore Brigades is providing free hearing aids to underprivileged children with hearing impairment.

52 Afghanistan — where India is loved and respected
Vignettes from a trip to the war-ravaged country in 2005.



62

62 Women in rural Shimoga receive cows to boost their income
RC Shimoga gifted hybrid cows to over 70 rural women through a global grant to support their livelihood.



64

64 Asha, the queen of bold, brassy, peppy melodies
A peek into the life and journey of the legendary singer who continues to mesmerise millions.

On the cover: Rukhsar Khatoon, the last polio-infected child in India, rides a bicycle gifted to her by RC Howrah.



A colourful, relevant zone institute

I am very impressed by the February issue, which is flooded with interesting and knowledge-oriented content on Rotary and matters of general interest.

Generally, outsiders used to ask the Rotarians what is so special about Rotary and why are they proud to be members of this organisation. They get different answers such as selfless service, the classification principle, Rotary Foundation, etc. We can definitely add to this list, one more reason: our magazine, *Rotary News*, as it enlightens us every month with a fund of knowledge.

No wonder that an outsider like Dr Srikanta K Panigrahi, director general of the Indian Institute of Sustainable Development, wants to receive the magazine. The credit for building Rotary's PR image thus has to go to Editor Rasheeda Bhagat and her enthusiastic team.

When the editorial team is doing such an excellent job tirelessly, it is the responsibility of all our members to regularly subscribe to the magazine and enrich themselves with good knowledge of Rotary.

R Srinivasan, RC Madurai Midtown — D 3000

I like your words in your February editorial: "Even though fragile, let us provide lifeline of education to our girls, and then handhold them to safer shores and a future filled with hope." I am sure that all of us in Rotary are doing our bit in empowering women



and children, but I believe that this is not enough.

One of the reports on the RI zone institute refers to the absence of handshakes, which are not practised now. I felt the same lonely feeling when I attended our club's meeting during the governor's visit, where I could not shake hands or hug my fellow Rotarians whom I have not met face-to-face for several months.

In the article *Embracing the digital age* RI President Holger Knaack says, "Let us make a concerted effort to reach out to people who feel left out and find ways to make them feel a part of the Rotary family". These words ring loudly in my ears.

In Jaishree's report on the *Lessons in leadership*, I very much liked the words of RIPE Shekhar Mehta: "I won't sleep nor will I let you sleep until a job is done." This is the mantra of every successful CEO of business houses.

TRF Trustee chair Ravindran's statement that our belief in the Supreme being would turn a test into a testimony, a trial into a triumph and a victim into a victor, is a positive note indeed. Every page in the Feb issue makes me ponder over the statements as reported by your editorial team. The choice of pictures in the article on Pandit Ravi Shankar is excellent. Team Rotary News deserves a round of applause.

*Nan Narayenen
RC Madurai West — D 3000*

Meaningful articles

The Editor's Note explains lucidly how the pandemic was harsher to girls and women in our community and issues related to them will need to be handled with empathy and compassion in the post-Covid era.

The RI directors state that Rotary is all about hope and dwell on peace-building and other services rendered by Rotarians during the pandemic. The speeches made by RI President Holger Knaack and other Rotary leaders during 'The Odyssey' are

all meaningful and worth reading. Thanks for including all motivating speeches.

The write-up *UP CM commends Rotary* has neatly described RC Gorakhpur's service, which is commendable. TRF Trustee chair's statement is surely an inspiration to us to overcome this depressing time. The steps being taken by TRF leadership to overcome post-Covid difficulties are commendable. Glad to read about and remember late AB Vajpayee, former PM and a man of vision with admirable qualities.

It was nice to read about Ravishankar, the sitarist. As a whole it was an issue filled with meaningful and interesting articles, thanks to the efforts of the editorial team.

*Philip Mulappone MT
RC Trivandrum
Suburban — D 3211*

The editor has described the glowing tributes paid to former PM AB Vajpayee by the author in the book *Vajpayee: The years that changed India*. In this present age when political opponents are

LETTERS

considered as untouchables, it is refreshing to note that the then PM PV Narasimha Rao wanted Vajpayee, who was then in the Opposition, to lead the Indian delegation to the UN for a discussion on the Kashmir issue. Nice to read about the qualities of Vajpayee in this article. Another interesting article is the one on Pandit Ravi Shankar, the sitar maestro.

*K P Balasubramanian
RC Ambasamudram — D 3212*

A remarkable club

I was happy to read about the 70th anniversary of RC Quilon, one of the oldest clubs in southern India started way back in 1949. All its members are now multiple Paul Harris Fellows. It has contributed six governors, a remarkable feat. The club is known for its weekly bulletin that was well-edited by Rtn VV Prabhu.

*A R Bhaskar Raj
RC Sivakasi Central — D 3212*

Diversity, gender equity

RIPN Jennifer Jones has rightly focused on the importance of diversity and gender equity, so essential for Rotary to grow in the years ahead. She also recalled how she climbed the Rotary hierarchy from club-level to RI Board and then as Trustee before getting nominated for the top-most post... all on merit.

RI President Holger Knaack says Rotary reaches out to beneficiaries beyond national, language, social, religious and political barriers. RIPE Shekhar Mehta is all for Rotary and Lions joining hands to implement projects as 'both can complement each other'. Once I visited a weekly meeting of a Lions

club in Chennai. I was surprised to find that it was celebrating its 25th anniversary and being led by women office-bearers. In her speech, the club president called for both Lions and Rotary to do joint service projects. This was 10 years ago. And Mehta has once again aired similar views.

*S Muniandi, RC Dindigul
Fort — D 3000*

Strategic plan is a must

In his January message, RI President Holger Knaack has focused on the crucial need for strategic planning for Rotary clubs. This is very relevant as most of the clubs do planning for just a year. We need to have a strategic planning meet to plan for achieving Rotary's objectives in an effective manner by involving all the members, especially the club's past presidents, who should continue to be part of project activities.

We need to utilise the time and energy of young Rotarians with proper orientation so that the club remains vibrant with proper fellowship. This will also ensure retaining of members.

Every club should take serious note of RI President's advice to have a multi-year strategic plan by holding brainstorming sessions

to fix some important milestones. I have decided to initiate this process in our club.

*Vijay Anant Shetti
RC Mapuca — D 3170*

Set up clubfoot clinics

The article *Helping children walk* was informative. I congratulate the team of surgeons and physiotherapists for their excellent services done free of cost. Kudos to RC Coimbatore Meridian for taking up this project.

I would like to bring to notice the services of CURE International India Trust (CIIT) who with the coordination of state governments and some Rotary clubs which are non-surgically treating children affected by clubfoot through the Ponseti method of treatment.

Our club, with the guidance of Dr Santhosh George, director, CIIT and PDG Raman Bhatia from RC Delhi Midtown, is doing regular service at the clubfoot clinic at the Government Rajaji Hospital, Madurai. We have donated 50 FABs (foot abduction braces) and helped the Inner Wheel club to donate another 50 FABs. We encourage other clubs to sponsor more clubfoot clinics in their areas to benefit needy children.

*Devika Ravindran
RC Madurai Malligai — D 3000*

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

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

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

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



Rotary-Rotaract synergy is the future

As someone who knows firsthand the great leadership potential of Rotaractors, I always look forward to World Rotaract Week, which we are celebrating from March 8 to 14. Rotaractors are the focus of all three of my presidential conferences this year, and I was proud when, two years ago, the Council on Legislation voted to elevate Rotaract by including Rotaract clubs as members of Rotary International. Before that, the Council had already made dual membership possible, and shortly after, the Board of Directors decided to do away with Rotaract's age limits.

But we are only just embarking on our journey together. Partnering effectively doesn't happen by itself. It requires both sides to be open and to understand the value of cross-generational alliances. Louie De Real, a dual member of Rotaract and Rotary, explains:

Joint virtual meetings have helped Rotaractors introduce Rotarians to new ideas and tools, pioneering unique ways for clubs to collaborate. In the case of pandemic and disaster response, Rotaract clubs used social media to coordinate efforts, drive information and fundraise, while Rotary clubs used their networks and resources to amplify support, provide logistics and bring the goods and services to communities.

Rotaractors' innovative virtual engagement and professional development activities inspired Rotarians to support and follow suit. The pandemic made Rotaract clubs realise that we can immediately connect and partner with Rotary clubs through virtual platforms. With constant collaboration, we realise that Rotary and Rotaract indeed complement each other — that we are part of a single organisation with shared goals.

Both sides add value. Rotarians can be mentors and service partners to Rotaractors, while Rotaractors can demonstrate to Rotarians that difficult jobs can be simplified and limitations can be surpassed through digital approaches. This synergy motivates Rotaractors to become future Rotarians. I joined Rotary because Rotarians gave me memorable membership experiences through inspirational moments of collaboration. I needed to be a Rotarian to inspire Rotaractors the same way, now and in the future.

That same synergy leads Rotarians to realise that while Rotaractors may have a different culture, we all share a common vision of uniting people to take action. Rotaract's unique ways of doing things serve as inspiration for innovation, helping Rotary increase its ability to adapt to future challenges. Rotarians and Rotaractors will build the future together, so let's start today.

I see no difference between a Rotary club and a Rotaract club, except perhaps for the average age!

Many Rotarians still view Rotaract as our youth organisation, but I see it differently. For me, they are part of us, and they are like us. To be successful together, we need to have mutual respect — to see each other as equals. Let's see Rotaractors for who they really are: students and young leaders, but also successful managers and entrepreneurs who are capable of planning, organising, and managing a Rotary institute — including breakout sessions in five languages — as they did in Berlin in 2014.

As we take this journey together, let's remember the strengths of Rotary and Rotaract. And, as Louie says, let's get started right away in building the future together. In doing so, we open endless opportunities for our organisation.



Louie De Real
Rotaract Club of San Francisco del Monte Malaya Achievers Philippines

Rotary Club of San Francisco del Monte Philippines Chair Pilipinas Rotaract MDIO

Holger Knaack
President, Rotary International



A leader par excellence

Finally, the Rotary world is making a serious bid to right the historic wrong of admitting women members only in 1987, and that too after litigation. But for 2–3 decades after that, there wasn't much of an attempt to take more women into Rotary. It is only now that the need to increase women's membership substantially from the present 24 per cent is being discussed seriously by Rotary clubs across the world. Jennifer Jones' nomination as RI president for 2022–23 is bound to become a defining moment for this goal. Of course all senior RI leaders have been stressing not only the need for more women members, but also the necessity to give leadership opportunities and roles to women. But when a woman, who has crossed the hurdle and reached the topmost position at RI, says all this, it is bound to carry more credibility and create an impact.

In recent events, Jones has been marketing women's membership from a purely business perspective and a market share that is underperforming. "What would we do in our company where a particular market share was underperforming? We would tweak our business plan. Similarly, let's take the opportunity to bring a gender balance in Rotary," she recently said at a conference.

Comparisons and generalisations are odious, but we have to concede that most successful women leaders have a different style of leadership. This has been demonstrated by some of the best female political leaders. New Zealand's Jessica Ardern has become the darling of the free world for her very distinctive style of governance which is inclusive and respectful of all religions, regions and cultures. Her handling of the Covid pandemic has won her fresh laurels. Germany's Angela Merkel is another perfect leader. A no-nonsense woman, she has served four terms as Germany's chancellor and

has ruled out seeking a fifth stint in power, when her term ends in September 2021.

It is mind-blowing to look back upon what this woman brought to her office from 2005 onwards... administrative and leadership skills par excellence; grit and determination, passion and compassion, equity and inclusiveness when she decided, against popular opinion, that Germany would embrace a huge number of Syrian refugees, and so much more.

During her time in office, she has dealt with five UK prime ministers, four French presidents, seven Italian prime ministers, and with Joe Biden heading the US, the fourth American president. And yet despite her track record, Merkel had to constantly prove herself, often with her male counterparts trying to overpower or humiliate her. Vladimir Putin once famously brought his Labrador for a meeting with Merkel, who is afraid of dogs; Donald Trump made his dislike for her known and Italy's Silvio Berlusconi once left her waiting for 15 minutes while he chatted on the phone! As the pandemic panic began, on March 23, Merkel was sighted queuing up at a supermarket with some toilet paper, toiletries and four bottles of wine in her shopping cart.

A chemical physicist, her handling of the pandemic was superb, without either denial or hyperbole. Considered "uncharismatic", she wasn't influenced by fluff or fashion; at a press conference when asked why she repeated her suits, didn't she have new ones, she quietly replied: "I am a government employee, not a model." When she recently stepped down as her party's leader, Germans came out spontaneously in their balconies and clapped for her for a whole of six minutes. Forget Germany, the world will find it difficult to find a leader such as Merkel.

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

Rasheeda Bhagat

Governors Council

RI Dist 2981	DG R Balaji Babu
RI Dist 2982	DG K S Venkatesan
RI Dist 3000	DG AL Chokkalingam
RI Dist 3011	DG Sanjiv Rai Mehra
RI Dist 3012	DG Alok Gupta
RI Dist 3020	DG Muttavarapu Satish Babu
RI Dist 3030	DG Shabbir Shakir
RI Dist 3040	DG Gajendra Singh Narang
RI Dist 3053	DG Harish Kumar Gaur
RI Dist 3054	DG Rajesh Agarwal
RI Dist 3060	DG Prashant Harivallabh Jani
RI Dist 3070	DG CA Davinder Singh
RI Dist 3080	DG Ramesh Bajaj
RI Dist 3090	DG Vijay Arora
RI Dist 3100	DG Manish Sharda
RI Dist 3110	DG Dinesh Chandra Shukla
RI Dist 3120	DG Karunesh Kumar Srivastava
RI Dist 3131	DG Rashmi Vinay Kulkarni
RI Dist 3132	DG Harish Motwani
RI Dist 3141	DG Sunnil Mehra
RI Dist 3142	DG Dr Sandeep Kadam
RI Dist 3150	DG Nalla Venkata Hanmanth Reddy
RI Dist 3160	DG B Chinnapa Reddy
RI Dist 3170	DG Sangram Vishnu Patil
RI Dist 3181	DG M Ranganath Bhat
RI Dist 3182	DG B Rajarama Bhat
RI Dist 3190	DG BL Nagendra Prasad
RI Dist 3201	DG Jose Chacko Madhavassery
RI Dist 3202	DG Dr Hari Krishnan Nambiar
RI Dist 3211	DG Dr Thomas Vavanikunnel
RI Dist 3212	DG PNB Murugadoss
RI Dist 3231	DG K Pandian
RI Dist 3232	DG S Muthupalaniappan
RI Dist 3240	DG Subhasish Chatterjee
RI Dist 3250	DG Rajan Gandotra
RI Dist 3261	DG Fakir Charan Mohanty
RI Dist 3262	DG Saumya Rajan Mishra
RI Dist 3291	DG Sudip Mukherjee

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

The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or Trustees of Rotary News Trust (RNT) or Rotary International (RI). No liability can be accepted for any loss arising from editorial or advertisement content. Contributions – original content – are welcome but the Editor reserves the right to edit for clarity or length. Content can be reproduced with permission and attributed to RNT.

Message from



One-to-One

He who smiles rather than rages is always the stronger.

Kudos to all clubs and districts of our zones for the significant work they are doing and to all the Rotarians who smilingly carry on the work of service. They bring home the message that even in the midst of unprecedented challenges our work for and through Rotary goes on. We can't change the world at one stroke; but we can make it a brighter place. As we approach the last quarter of the current Rotary year let us all focus on doing the best we can right here, right now.

Increasingly water is becoming a precious commodity. More and more of the world's regions are facing water scarcity. Lack of safe water and basic sanitation lead to poor hygiene and diseases. Working to make our community a better place means starting with the basics. We start with water and sanitation. Clean water is something we take for granted but in our own neighbourhoods and in villages across India thousands of people lack access to clean, safe water. Women and young girls have to walk a few kilometres every day to meet their daily water needs. We cannot talk of literacy or positive health without water.

Sustainability is the key to working in water and sanitation projects. Meeting the basic needs is important but equally important is education and training to change people's behaviour. Rotarians across our zones are doing tremendous work in WinS — building toilets, making handwash stations, training, providing hygiene education and ensuring proper sanitation facilities including menstrual hygiene management.

As we celebrate World Rotaract Week the focus has to be on making Rotaract stronger, effective and vibrant. For Rotaract to be strong the roots have to be strong, and the roots are in the clubs. Clubs become strong when a strong foundation is laid. A strong foundation will help Rotaract clubs to grow, become vibrant and thrive. Transparent constitutional documents, clear leadership roles, well-organised club meetings, a good member engagement strategy and harmonious working are the keys to ensure a Rotaract club's success. The Rotary–Rotaract partnership can range from mentoring to leadership development, working together on service projects and other activities.

Our sages say, "In the measure one metes out to others, so is meted out to him." In the course of our lives we face many situations when we are dependent on the kindness and generosity of others to make it through difficult times. The way we reach out to others when fortune is on our side will often determine how fate will treat us in our moment of need. Fortunate to be Rotarians who can lend a hand. Let us use the opportunity Rotary opens to us to Serve to Change Lives. Enjoy Rotary.

Dr Bharat Pandya
RI Director, 2019–21

RI Directors

Let's tackle the WATER challenge

Dear Rotary leaders,

Clean water is a basic need for all living beings. When people, especially children, have access to clean water, they live healthier and more productive lives.

While very few people die of thirst, millions die from preventable waterborne diseases. This gives the impetus to Rotarians to build wells, install rainwater harvesting systems, and improve sanitation facilities in underdeveloped countries. Rotary clubs provide toilets that flush into a sewer or a safe enclosure and promote hand-washing and other good hygiene habits.

Recognising the urgency of the situation we need to address the water and sanitation issues in India .

WATER

We have defined W-A-T-E-R, as an acronym: W - Watershed development; A - Advocacy/Awareness/Activism; T - Transformation/rejuvenation of water bodies; E - Efficient rain water harvesting; R - Reduce/Reuse/Respect/Retrieve/Recharge/Recycle water.

In the next five years let us strive to construct 10,000 check dams impacting 500 million acres of land, intensify afforestation by planting five million trees in the vicinity of these structures, rejuvenate 10,000 large water bodies, create 50,000 urban RWH structures and make 25,000 villages self-sustainable. We can then align with the Jal Shakti Abhiyan, a national mission launched by the Jal Shakti Ministry.

Sanitation

In the next five years let us strive to provide WASH facilities in 150,000 schools; renovate/construct toilets, provide handwashing and drinking water facilities, promote MHM, BCC and hygiene education and make 5,000 villages ODF-Plus, provide 1,000 villages with tap water connection under GoI's Jal Jeevan Mission, 500 community toilets in Gram Panchayats/villages, and construct 500 public toilet blocks for the use of floating population such as migrant workers, visitors and tourists, in Gram Panchayats/towns/cities

India's sanitation crisis

India is the second most populous country in the world, with more than 1 billion citizens. A staggering 344 million practise open defecation. The World Bank estimates that 21 percent of communicable diseases in India are linked to unsafe water and the lack of hygiene practices. Further, more than 500 children under the age of five die daily from diarrhoea in India alone.

So friends lets us tighten our belts. The climb is steep, but climbing must be done.



Kamal Sanghvi
RI Director, 2019-21



Board of Permanent Trustees & Executive Committee

PRIP Rajendra K Saboo	RI Dist 3080
PRIP Kalyan Banerjee	RI Dist 3060
RIPE Shekhar Mehta	RI Dist 3291
PRID Panduranga Setty	RI Dist 3190
PRID Sushil Gupta	RI Dist 3011
PRID Ashok Mahajan	RI Dist 3141
PRID P T Prabhakar	RI Dist 3232
PRID Dr Manoj D Desai	RI Dist 3060
PRID C Basker	RI Dist 3000
TRF Trustee Gulam A Vahanvaty	RI Dist 3141
RID Dr Bharat Pandya	RI Dist 3141
RID Kamal Sanghvi	RI Dist 3250
RIDE AS Venkatesh	RI Dist 3232
RIDE Dr Mahesh Kotbagi	RI Dist 3131

Executive Committee Members (2020-21)

DG Sanjiv Rai Mehra	RI Dist 3011
Chair - Governors Council	
DG Sudip Mukherjee	RI Dist 3291
Secretary - Governors Council	
DG Sangram Vishnu Patil	RI Dist 3170
Secretary - Executive Committee	
DG Prashant Harivallabh Jani	RI Dist 3060
Treasurer - Executive Committee	
DG S Muthupalaniappan	RI Dist 3232
Member - Advisory Committee	

ROTARY NEWS / ROTARY SAMACHAR

Editor

Rasheeda Bhagat

Senior Assistant Editor

Jaishree Padmanabhan

ROTARY NEWS / ROTARY SAMACHAR

ROTARY NEWS TRUST

3rd Floor, Dugar Towers,
34 Marshalls Road, Egmore
Chennai 600 008, India.

Phone : 044 42145666

e-mail: rotarynews@rosaonline.org

Website: www.rotarynewsonline.org

Now share articles from
rotarynewsonline.org on WhatsApp.

Celebrating 10 years of polio-free India

Rasheeda Bhagat

As the Rotary Club of Madras, RID 3232, celebrated the 10th anniversary of a polio-free India through a power-packed virtual meeting presided over by IPPC chair Mike McGovern, there was palpable presence of its late veteran past president Kris Chitale. Along with a core group of dedicated Rotarians from RC Madras and some other clubs from Tamil Nadu, Chitale had spearheaded the vaccination drive to eradicate first red measles and then polio from the region, even

before a full-fledged polio eradication drive was announced by Rotary International.

Giving an overview of the polio eradication project of Rotary, the ground it has covered, the money it has raised, and the children of the world it has helped, as also the challenges that Rotary is facing during the Covid pandemic, McGovern said: “Isn’t it amazing that today 19 million people are walking on this earth who otherwise would have been paralysed by polio? We don’t know who they are but it could be one of us.”

Rukhsar Khatoon, the little girl with the last reported case of wild poliovirus in India.

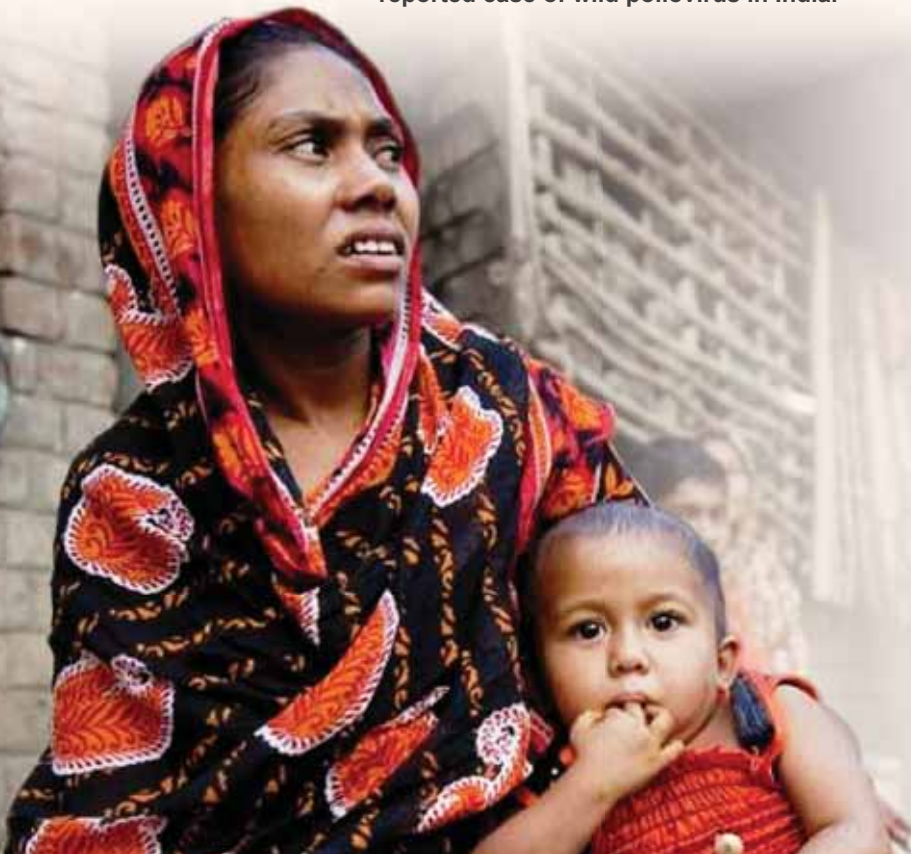
Analysing the data from the two endemic countries left, Pakistan and Afghanistan, he said the news was “good” from Pakistan where the infections from the wild poliovirus had come down to 84 in 2020 from 147 in 2019. Even though in Afghanistan, the cases had gone up from 29 in 2019 to 56 in 2020, worldwide the cases of wild poliovirus had come down from 176 to 140 in these two countries. “This is a 20 per cent decline. And if you consider the challenges this year of the corona pandemic, to me it is almost miracle.”

But unfortunately, the vaccine derived cases of paralysis reported from 28 countries were 1,000.

He said we had reason for cheer if we made a comparative analysis of polio cases in 2009 in India, from where no case has been reported now

We have been patient, persistent and given so much for this cause... thanks for all that you have done towards the 10th anniversary of ensuring that Rukhsar was the last child from India to get polio.

IPPC chair Mike McGovern



My most memorable achievement as RI president was leading India to become polio-free in 2011. Rotarians went to remotest parts of UP and Bihar; I remember crossing unbridged rivers by boat, climbing mountains, risking alligators and tigers, and a miracle happened!

PRIP Kalyan Banerjee



From R: RIPE Shekhar Mehta, past IPPC chair Robert Scott, INPPC chair Deepak Kapur, PRIP Kalyan Banerjee and PRID late Y P Das. (file photo)

for 10 years and compared the figures with Pakistan. In 2009, India had reported about 700 polio cases, but in 2010 there were only 40 and in Jan 2011, Rukhsar Khatoon, from Howrah in West Bengal, was the very last case in India. “In 2017, the scenario in Pakistan is similar to what happened in India in 2004–05, when the polio cases came down substantially, before spiking up again.”

The same thing had happened in Pakistan in 2019. “But under TRF Trustee Aziz Memon’s leadership, Pakistan continues to fight, and follow the path we saw in India. While during the whole year there were 80 cases in that country, in the last six months the number had declined to 24 cases, and in the last three months, the cases fell from 4 to 2 to 0 and thus far, no cases have been reported in 2021. This

is really a good sign that Pakistan is working very hard to eradicate polio.”

Coming to Afghanistan, the IPPC chair said “our challenge is the areas that are controlled by the anti-government elements. For two years those areas have not been open for house-to-house vaccination.” Both WHO and UNICEF have been talking to Taliban regarding this and “we hope for some progress soon. We do have some good news but it’s not official yet. The fact remains that as long as those areas remain inaccessible, we are not going to be able to get rid of polio. Covid did pose challenge but also gave opportunities and our polio network, already in place, helped with surveillance, labs, etc for Covid-19.”

But once other organisations picked up responsibility for Covid, house-to-house polio vaccination in Pakistan and Afghanistan was resumed. Attention was also given to vaccine derived cases in the African region and elsewhere. “The almost



President of India Ram Nath Kovind giving polio drops to a child at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, Delhi.

Impact of Rotary's End Polio work

Through a series of charts and quick facts, IPPC chair Mike McGovern put into simple numbers the impact of the work done by Rotarians on polio eradication across the world.

- 19 million people are now walking on earth, who would have been otherwise paralysed due to the polio virus
- An estimated 650,000 cases are being avoided every year
- Since 1988, three billion children have been given oral polio drops
- In 2019, 430 million children were given polio vaccine in over 40 countries using 1.2 billion oral polio vaccine doses
- The world has seen four years without a single case of wild poliovirus outside of Afghanistan and Pakistan
- Rotary has helped with other vaccine preventable diseases through the Polio-Plus programme and assisted the world in responding to both Ebola and Covid-19.

1,000 vaccine-derived cases do cause concern because they can also cause similar paralysis as the wild poliovirus cases.” One response was trying out the new vaccine called the Novel Oral Polio Vaccine 2 (nOPV2), “which is genetically more stable. Clinical trials have shown great results and we hope it will be successful,” McGovern said.

Underlining the importance of getting “this job done along with our partners, and do advocacy with the governments of the world”, he shared a screenshot of President of India Ram Nath Kovind giving polio drops to a child at the Rashtrapati Bhavan last month, and said just before the pandemic began, RI President Holger Knaack and TRF trustee chair KR Ravindran, along with TRF trustee Aziz Memon, had called upon the Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and discussed the progress made in polio eradication work in Pakistan.

Advocacy with governments helps a lot, and thanks to Rotary’s advocacy, the governments of UK, US, Japan, Monaco, Canada and Australia have contributed a significant amount for this programme.

Urging Rotarians to stop the vaccine derived cases and encourage “the shot in the arm, as I call it”, McGovern said Rotarians would also have to keep convincing parents to vaccinate their children. “We have the obligation to get this done for the children of the world. We have been patient, persistent and given so much for this cause... thanks for all that you have done towards the 10th anniversary of ensuring that Rukhsar was the last child from India to get polio.”

Addressing the meet, PRIP Kalyan Banerjee said a decade of India being polio-free really called for a celebration. “I have always admired RC Madras for being engaged in controlling and eradicating diseases like measles and polio in the 1960s and 1970s when Kris Chitale was the main person leading the efforts.” He was on the IPPC with both Bob Scott and McGovern and “we all were happy to get the opportunity to do whatever we could to get our job done.”



By ending polio in India, the annual gains to the national economy, by the most conservative estimate, is \$400 million. Nobody recognises Rotary as a wealth creator but it has done just that!

Virologist Jacob John

Referring to PDG and Nigeria PolioPlus Committee chair Tunji Funsho, who made it to the *Time* 2020 list of the world's 100 most influential people, Banerjee said: "He is one of the heroes of immunising Nigeria and helping to make it polio-free. I have known him from the early 2000, when I was in his district as an RI president's representative for the district conference."

He recalled that during his tenure as TRF trustee, "when Nigeria needed a new national PolioPlus chair, I got in touch with PRIPs Raja Saboo and Jonathan Majiyagbe and talked about



Tunji's many abilities and then persuaded TRF chair Wilf Wilkinson to have him as the Nigeria chair. And he has been a gamechanger, handling admirably well an extremely difficult situation in a difficult country with several problems ranging from the Boko Haram problem to the Ebola disease. But he got the job done."

Banerjee said that "perhaps the most memorable achievement during my year as RI president in 2011–12 was leading India to become polio-free that year. With our enthusiastic and young Rotarians joining hands with the government and going to the remotest parts of UP and Bihar, which were the most difficult states, we got the job done. I remember crossing

Left: Rotary leaders called on Pakistan Prime Minister in Feb, 2020. From L: Pakistan National PolioPlus chair Aziz Memon, TRF trustee chair K R Ravindran, RI President Holger Knaack, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and Minister of State for Health Zafar Mirza.

The first tranche of \$1 million from Gates Foundation

Introducing past TRF Trustee chair and past IPPC chair Bob Scott, past president of RC Madras NK Gopinath recalled how many years ago, while Scott was at a polio fundraising dinner in Japan, along with the then RI President Wilf Wilkinson, present IPPC chair Mike McGovern, and representatives from the UNICEF, WHO and trustees of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, "Bob received a very important

call from the Gates Foundation confirming that the first tranche of \$100 million had been electronically transferred into the TRF account. This was announced by Bob who raised a toast."

That was the beginning of Rotary's relationship with the Gates Foundation and as McGovern announced at the meeting, only the earlier week its total contribution toward the Polio Fund has crossed \$1 billion!

unbridged rivers by boat, climbing mountains and risking both alligators and tigers... yes, tigers, really...and a miracle that none had expected possible, happened!"

Apart from the tremendous work put in by the India National PolioPlus Committee chair PDG Deepak Kapur, "we had the guidance of Dr Jacob John, an amazing man, who all the time advised us on how to get on with the job." The Indian government was so happy, that not only did it acknowledge Rotary's help and role "but the health minister of India personally came to Evanston to thank us. It is wonderful to relive those terrific moments in the presence of people who led us in that effort," Banerjee added.

Bob Scott recalled how he and his wife had first visited RC Madras in Jan 1988. During a later visit to India, he had visited Howrah and "met Rukhsar as a toddler, who was screaming her head off as she

How polio funds are spent

Stressing the importance of being “transparent” about how Rotary spends the money and allocates region-wise the funds raised by Rotarians, IPPC chair Mike McGovern said recently the TRF trustees had approved the allocation of \$100 million for the End Polio programme and an additional allocation of \$50 million will be taken up in July 2021. About 45 per cent of the funds are being spent in Africa, Pakistan and Afghanistan, which are very important and critical regions, and 25 per cent of the budget goes for the vaccines.

By the end of June 2021, \$150 million would have been spent.

“But what about the money spent since we began in 1985 or 36 years ago? For Pakistan we spent \$291 million (13 per cent); on Nigeria \$282 million (12 per cent); for WHO-AFRO \$230 million (10 per cent), Afghanistan \$207 million (9 per cent) and for India \$181 million (8 per cent).

Of the \$3 billion spent on polio eradication since 1985, Rotarians had raised \$2 billion and recently the contribution of the Gates Foundation had crossed \$1 billion.

didn’t like being lifted by this tall white man!”

He told past president SN Srikanth, “when you first approached me, when I was the IPPC chair, to take the End Polio flame around the world, being a cautious Scott, I was a bit hesitant, but you were persistent and convinced me. That flame has been around the world, including my club in Canada where we had a special dinner and raised some funds.”

Eminent virologist Dr Jacob John said it was nothing short of miraculous that by ending polio in India “the annual gains to the national economy, by the most conservative estimate, is \$400 million. Nobody recognises Rotary as a wealth creator but it has done just that!”

Dr Funsho thanked both Saboo and Banerjee “who have been friends of Africa well before I became the chair of



Kris Chitale, member of RC Madras, addressing a Rotary meet; the then Tamil Nadu Health Minister Dr H V Hande is seated second from left.



RI President Gary Huang holds aloft the Polio Flame at the Sao Paulo Convention in 2015.
From L: PRID P T Prabhakar, RC Madras president S N Srikanth and secretary N K Gopinath.

the Nigeria PolioPlus committee” for all their help in ridding Africa of the wild poliovirus. India Rotarians, he added, “have played a huge role in mentoring us to ensure we meet the goal of making Nigeria polio-free in 2016. Both Saboo

and Banerjee were at our beck and call, and came with teams of Indian surgeons for polio corrective surgery.”

RC Madras president Kapil Chitale proudly announced that their club has been chosen as the nodal club

to partner with and assist the health department of Tamil Nadu in Covid vaccination.

Past president Srikanth moderated the Q&A session with McGovern, and played a video of the End Polio flame programme started by the club during his presidentship, and thanked past president Gopinath for his immense help and support in this venture. It was taken to the Sao Paolo convention of RI and has already visited 35 countries and helped collect over \$10 million for ending polio. Recalling the efforts of the pioneers from RC Madras who had led the red measles and polio eradication drive, braving cold chain challenges, he added that thanks to Rotarians from the state, Tamil Nadu was the first state in India to become polio-free.

The cynosure of all eyes at the zoom event was Rukhsar. Club president Chitale announced that to mark the 10th anniversary of a polio-free India, the club is gifting her a tablet, which will be sent to her. RIDE A S Venkatesh, TRF trustees Aziz Memon and Geeta Manek and PRID PT Prabhakar attended the meeting.



Rukhsar Khatoun, now 11, at her home in Shahpara village near Howrah.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

RC Madras chosen nodal club for Covid vaccination

Rasheeda Bhagat

Rotary Club of Madras, RID 3232, has been chosen as the nodal club by the Tamil Nadu government for assisting it in the task of Covid vaccination in the state.

In a letter to the club president Kapil Chitale, TN health secretary J Radhakrishnan invited the club to assist the government in the procurement and delivery of Covid-19 vaccine doses. The club has also been requested to help out with the cold chain requirement for proper storage of the vaccine, as well as implementation of the actual vaccination, and the logistics involved in this massive public health programme.

It may be recalled that RC Madras played a vital role in the 1980s and '90s with a bunch of passionate Rotarians led by its late president and eminent Chennai architect SL Chitale (known in the club as Kris Chitale) to literally move heaven and earth in those early years to get the oral polio drops airlifted from overseas and store them at the right temperature to safeguard their efficacy.

It was thanks to the pioneering work done by these Rotarians and others from other Rotary clubs of Tamil Nadu, and a closely coordinated partnership with the TN health department headed by the then health minister Dr HV Hande, as well as constant advice by professor of



From L: Rtn Dr Anuradha Ganesan; Rtn Dr Gauthamadas Udipi; TN health secretary Dr J Radhakrishnan; Rtn Vivek Harinarain and RC Madras president Kapil Chitale.

virology at CMC, Vellore, Dr Jacob John, that Tamil Nadu became the first polio-free state in India, as stated by one of its members at a recent event organised to celebrate the 10th anniversary of India being polio-free.

Interestingly, Tamil Nadu is also one of the states where there has been resistance from frontline health workers to come forward and get vaccinated against Covid-19. In the early 2000s, Rotary's advocacy efforts, led by PRID Ashok Mahajan in some of the most backward regions of India, including Maharashtra and UP, where there were a lot of misconceptions about the oral vaccine drops, had resulted in parents coming on board. Rotary had then got the local ulemas and other religious personalities involved

in advocacy. Recalls Mahajan: "I had clearly asked all the religious leaders 'Are you with us in protecting our children against the crippling disease of polio?' and they had unanimously said 'yes'."

The TN government as well as other state governments will also be looking up to Rotary to raise CSR funds for Covid vaccination and "we will be working very hard to do that," Mahajan added.

RCM president Chitale added that as "the nodal club in Tamil Nadu for Covid vaccination, we will soon reach out to other clubs in RID 3232 and the DGs of other districts in the state to formulate a plan of action. This partnership was made possible thanks to the efforts of our past president Vivek Harinarain." ■

Challenge and opportunity

One year ago this month, the WHO declared Covid-19 a pandemic. As I write these words, the coronavirus continues to wreak havoc: taking lives, choking economies, and changing our societies in myriad ways. It has disproportionately hurt the poor and worsened inequalities.

Even as some countries have done better than others in controlling this deadly disease, the rapid development of vaccines is bringing us closer to the end of our strange new reality of social isolation.

This dark chapter in our history is also an opportunity for Rotary, because it reminds us of the impact we can have through The Rotary Foundation if we commit to helping others and live up to our highest ideals. It reminds us of the truly international spirit that we must embody to recover from this moment.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we have witnessed compassion and sacrifice, friendship and resilient good humour. I am reminded of that famous insight popularised by John



F Kennedy: “When written in Chinese, the word crisis is composed of two characters: One represents danger, and one represents opportunity.”

Working together, we have done so much to adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic, to care

for our communities, and to seize the opportunity to be a part of perhaps the most complex task ever undertaken in history — vaccinating seven billion people.

This does not mean we will deviate in any way from our avowed commitment to eradicating polio, which remains our highest priority and will continue to be our only corporate programme.

On the contrary, while continuing polio vaccinations and surveillance, we can apply all our experience in fighting polio to counter Covid-19. We all have a part to play in combating the growing force of vaccine resistance and misinformation. Our advocacy in our communities will be critical — we need to spread the message about the power of vaccines

to save lives. We need to work closely with governments and support them in the vaccination drive. We need to add to the more than 3,000 projects already registered on Rotary Showcase to raise awareness, deliver critical personal protective equipment, and support frontline health workers.

As Aristotle said, human beings are social animals, and while Covid-19 has cruelly deprived us of our natural or habitual environment, it does not prevent us from finding connections and helping others in new ways. As you will see in the coming months, Rotary members are already finding the means to channel their humanitarian spirit through the Foundation, which is constantly adapting to address the world’s challenges. Every Rotarian has a role in this effort, and you will find that however you choose to help others and make lasting change, you are not alone.

KR Ravindran

Foundation Trustee Chair

Goodies for Rukhsar

Team Rotary News

Rotary Club of Howrah, RID 3291, led by president Dr Pamela Ghosh presented a bicycle to Rukhsar Khatoon, the last child to have contracted polio in 2011 after which India and the entire S E Asia was declared polio-free by the WHO in March, 2014.

“We visited Shahpara, Rukhsar’s home village, 50 km from Kolkata, to spread awareness among the people to continue vaccinating their

children against polio. She was 18 months old when she was affected by polio and cured after extensive physiotherapy. Back then the village was known to be unhygienic and vaccine-resistant,” recalled club secretary Joyati Bhattacharya.

The gift would help the child, now 11, to commute to school and back. She will soon receive a tablet from RC Madras to help with her studies. ■



Rukhsar Khatoon with RC Howrah president Pamela Ghosh and secretary Joyati Bhattacharya (R). Her parents are also in the picture.

Miracles do happen, that's how India won the battle against polio

Rajendra Saboo

At a time when the world battles Covid-19, the story of how the polio virus was eradicated brings hope that mankind will triumph over adversities at all costs. On January 13 this year, India celebrated ten years without polio, the last patient to be diagnosed with the disease on this date in 2011 being two-year-old Rukhsar of Howrah.

For her we were too late but after that India was well on its way to achieving the status of a polio-free country. In 2012, the government of India and Rotary organised a polio summit at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi and just before the inauguration, Bruce Aylward from the World Health Organisation, Geneva, came to the dais and announced that India had been removed from the active list of polio endemic countries.

On March 26, 2014, India was certified by WHO and declared polio-free. That is the reason why January 13 is a memorable day in the public health history calendar. It was estimated that in

1988, 450 children in India were affected by polio every day. Only 1 out of 200 children who contracted the poliovirus got paralysed. The other 199 went undetected. Experts opined that India would be the last country in the world to eradicate polio (even as late as in 2002), because of its huge cohort of 170 million children below the age of five, the population density, unsanitary conditions, impure drinking water and enteric diseases, etc.

India's victory over polio was achieved after a long drawn struggle.

From 3,50,000 children affected by polio in 122 countries of the world in the '80s, through the global partnership of Rotary with WHO, UNICEF, Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and numerous partners, except for Afghanistan and Pakistan, the world as of now is free of polio. Rotary has contributed more than \$1.7 billion and countless volunteer hours to immunise more than 2.5 billion children in countries worldwide.

Rotary's advocacy efforts have also played a significant role in decisions by donor governments to add more than \$7.2 billion to the effort.

It all began in 1977 when Sir Clem Renouf who was nominated as president of Rotary International came across an article in the *Reader's Digest* about eradication of smallpox. That prompted

him to look for another health challenge facing the world. After discussions with numerous health agencies, polio was identified as the biggest threat to the children of the world.

In 1979, Rotary initiated the polio immunisation campaign with the Philippines by acquiring six million doses of OPV (oral polio vaccine) developed by Dr Albert



Sabin and immunised the total population of young children in the country. Encouraged, Rotary took up this programme to free the world of this dreaded disease.

Despite World Health Assembly in 1988 persuading all nations to join in this fight, no substantive headway was made in India. Late Sudarshan Agarwal, then secretary general of Rajya Sabha and also a senior leader of Rotary, prompted some members of Parliament to ask questions in both houses about why India was lagging in polio eradication while many countries had gone far ahead.



Due credit has to go to Dr Harsh Vardhan, currently the Union minister of health and family welfare, for his contribution in changing the direction of the polio movement. It was one single factor that helped India finally reach its eradication goal. Before 1994 the bureaucracy at the government of India level did not believe in the strategy of National Immunisation Day (NID), observed so successfully by other countries including large population areas such as China and Brazil.

Dr Harsh Vardhan took the immunisation initiative in Delhi on October 2, 1994, naming it the ‘pulse polio programme’. With D-Day approaching, however, the plague endemic popped up in Surat with an all-too-real threat over Delhi. However, Dr Harsh Vardhan was determined to go forth. All Rotarians and other stakeholders assured active participation. Wearing masks the health workers of the Delhi government with the support of Rotarians, reached out to 12 lakh children in a single day to protect them from polio and also the plague.

The then newly appointed Union health minister A R Antulay grabbed the opportunity and convened a meeting of all state health ministers where I could make a presentation to them. The result was the adoption of a plan for observing NID. This was the change-maker in the policy. It was also decided that to ensure the success of the programme the Indian government had to be in the driving seat, which was also done. Rotary took up the responsibility of supplying the entire polio vaccine stock and also funding the activities of WHO and UNICEF in the country.

India has been very fortunate that irrespective of the party in power, the immunisation efforts continued year after year. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, however, had problems with minority communities boycotting immunisation due to false rumours. The government encouraged Rotary to develop a connect with these communities. Through notable work such as conducting free polio corrective surgeries and befriending Ulemas this hurdle too was crossed.

Rotary has contributed more than \$1.7 billion and countless volunteer hours to immunise more than 2.5 billion children in countries worldwide.

In August 2020, Nigeria, and all of Africa as a result, were declared polio-free. The only countries with polio cases now are Pakistan and Afghanistan. All efforts are being focused on them and after three years of nil cases the entire world will then be polio-free, the second disease to be vanquished after smallpox.

Step by step, overcoming hurdles, never losing determination despite setbacks, the Indian government with Rotary and other partners moved forward. Indeed, the last decade has shown that persistence, perseverance and perspiration can move mountains.

Victor Hugo, well-known poet and novelist, rightly said, “Perseverance, secret of all triumphs.”

The writer is a past RI president.

© Hindustan Times.

Left: File photo of a polio vaccination drive in India. (From L) Industrialist Lakshmi Mittal, Aditya Birla group social initiatives chairperson Rajashree Birla and PRIP Rajendra Saboo. Also seen in the picture are Binota Banerjee and PDG Ramesh Chander.

RIPE Mehta urges his governors to “serve to change lives”

Rasheeda Bhagat

Unveiling his Presidential theme for the Rotary year 2021–22 — **Serve to Change Lives**, at the International Assembly which went virtual this year, RI President Elect Shekhar Mehta urged the incoming governors to make service and membership growth their mantra during the next 17 months. “As we all know, you, the DGEs, are the movers and I am Shekhar. Today is the most important step in your journey of service and leadership. The forthcoming 17 months will be the most amazing and fruitful period of your life. During this period I urge you to dream big, guided by our shared vision for Rotary. Plan your goals and reach them, and inspire your members to plan and reach goals to expand the

reach of our organisation by increasing membership and the impact of Rotary by serving the world.”

Saying that they would play a “stellar role” in the coming months, Mehta encouraged them to do bigger and more impactful service projects.

“Membership continues to be our biggest challenge; for the last 17 years we have been at 1.2 million. Together, let’s change that during the next 17 months; you have the opportunity to make the biggest change in Rotary’s history by increasing membership to a level of 1.3 million. What we have not accomplished in the last 17 years, I challenge you to accomplish in 17 months.”

He added that they might say “it’s too big a dream. But then if I ask you

to dream big, I have to lead from the front.” Quoting George Bernard Shaw, who said “You see things and ask why; but I dream of things that never were and ask why not.” The dream to grow Rotary’s membership to 1.3 million by July 2022 could be done by asking each Rotarian to bring just one member in 17 months. “To do that you have to lead by example and your presidents have to do the same,” he added.

Mehta then went on to give a personal example of how the Rotary mantra of *Service above Self* had been etched on his soul... “it has taught me to care for others and share with others and think of others before thinking of myself.” His “Rotary moment” came soon after he had joined his club — RC Calcutta



RIPE Shekhar Mehta and Rashi.



Special focus on empowering girls



Incoming RI president Shekhar Mehta said that during his year in office, while Rotarians would reach out to all their children and work for better health and nutrition, schools and sanitation, “the

focus during 2021–22 will be on empowering girls. One of our core focus areas is diversity, and we will work for equity, inclusion and diversity. It is important that we empower girls because in many parts of the

world, the girl child is disadvantaged. We will do service projects for all children, but our focus will be on girls and we will try and mitigate the disadvantage that girls have.”

Mahanagar — and was participating in an artificial limbs camp conducted by his club. It involved the distribution of callipers, artificial limbs and hand cycles. Like every member he too was given a responsibility; his was to check if the beneficiary of the hand cycle had enough strength in his hands to operate the tricycle with his upper limbs. The Rotarian had to test the recipient’s strength by asking the latter to pull his hand.

The first recipient came crawling to him as he had no legs, and before Mehta stretched his arm to the beneficiary, “I will be honest, I was thinking about his cleanliness and my health. I did not want to hold his hand, but did it, and kept thinking of myself for the second and third hand I grasped. But after the sixth or seventh set of hands, my empathy for their plight grew. And soon enough, I could feel their pain, their challenges. I was suddenly thinking about them and not myself and it was at that moment that I became from just a member of my Rotary club to a Rotarian.”

As he started participating in more service projects and travelling to rural India, “I understood the true plight of my brethren. They had no toilets in their homes. The water they drank was from the same pond they bathed in. Their school was under the shade of the tree and the only blackboard they had was the wall of their school compound. And the nearest health centre was a few miles away with just basic facilities.”

Through his club, toilets and clean drinking water were given to these villages and the education system bolstered, and world-class health facilities set up “not only in my community or city but the country. Rotary kindled the spark within me to look beyond myself and embrace humanity. Service became a way of life for me and my life’s guiding philosophy became: ‘Service is the rent I pay for the space I occupy on this earth, and I want to be a good tenant of this earth’.”

Added Mehta: “I am sure all of you have found your opportunity to provide eyesight to the blind, food to the hungry and homes to the homeless. This

might have been through large or small projects, but more than the size it is the attitude that defines service.” Giving an example from Gandhiji’s life, he said once while travelling on a train one of his slippers fell off and when he quickly threw out his other slipper too, his friend asked him the reason. And the Mahatma said: ‘What good will one slipper do to the person who finds it; so I threw the other.’ This was the definitive attitude to service, he added

Marvelling at the sheer breadth and volume of the work that Rotarians and Rotaractors do across the world, the incoming president said they had built thousands of schools, hundreds of hospitals, provided drinking water to parched villages, given dignity to people by constructing toilets, and given the gift of life to tens of thousands of children by getting their heart surgery done.

Rotarians love challenges; a ship is safe in the harbour but that is not what ships are meant for. They need to go out to the high seas.

“One project in Nepal changes the lives of thousands of people. The family health programme in Africa has served millions of people. A water project in Haiti has changed the lives of over 10 million people. Back home in India, the TEACH programme of literacy and education has impacted the lives of millions of children.”

Saying that today the need of service was even more urgent in our world, he urged the DGEs to lead service projects that have sustained impact, form partnerships and do projects that change lives of people across the country and around the world. “At the end of your term you should feel that because of your leadership and inspiration



Sephi Bergerson

31 DGEs from India and Nepal get ‘lucky’

The International Assembly, a yearly training event for DGEs, was originally planned in Orlando, Florida, but was held virtually because of the Covid pandemic. But in the Indian capital of Delhi, 31 DGEs had the unique privilege of watching Mehta’s theme address on the big screen, as it was beamed by Rotary International, in the physical presence of both Shekhar and Rashi Mehta, RI directors Bharat Pandya and Kamal Sanghvi, and incoming directors AS Venkatesh and Mahesh Kotbagi.

The flavour of the International Night at the IA was also palpable as the earlier evening, the incoming governors, along with their spouses, dressed in the vibrant colours of Indian traditional wear, marched into the main hall, led by Mehta, Rashi, and other senior Indian leaders and their spouses.

The DGEs were reminded how “lucky” they were to have the incoming president for only 31, whereas at the international platform he would have had to be ‘shared’ by 500-plus DGEs!

to Rotarians and Rotaractors, the world has changed for the better because of the service done by them.”

Most important, he urged them to remember, “as we do service for others and change their lives, we change our lives too.”

Summing up the areas the incoming district leaders should focus on, Mehta said these included “ending polio, fighting Covid, working on large impactful projects and increasing our membership to a never-before-1.3 million. The task ahead should excite you. Rotarians love challenges; a ship is safe in the harbour but that is not what ships are meant for. They need to go out to the high seas. The biggest gift we are given is to touch a life and change it, if we can reach out with our hands, hearts and souls, the magic will begin to happen as the wheel begins to turn. Let us join together to move the wheel.” ■

TRF Awards for Rotary Year 2019–20

Zone - 4		
Award Category	Awardee	District
Highest Contribution to Annual Fund, Rank 1	Harjit Singh Talwar	3141
Highest Contribution to Annual Fund, Rank 2	Mohan S Chandavarkar	3142
Highest Contribution to Endowment Fund, Rank 1	Harjit Singh Talwar	3141
Highest Contribution to Polio Fund, Rank 1	Anish Shah	3060
Highest per capita APF Contribution to TRF – Rank 1	Harjit Singh Talwar	3141
Highest per capita APF Contribution to TRF – Rank 2	Mohan S Chandavarkar	3142
Highest Total Contribution to TRF – Rank 1	Harjit Singh Talwar	3141
Highest Total Contribution to TRF – Rank 2	Ravee Dhotre	3131
Highest Donor Participation (%-wise)	Anish Shah	3060
100% Club Participation	Mohan S Chandavarkar	3142
Zone - 5		
Highest Contribution to Annual Fund, Rank 1	Sameer Hariani	3190
Highest Contribution to Annual Fund, Rank 2	Joseph Mathew	3181
Highest Contribution to Endowment Fund, Rank 1	Sivanarayana Rao Pandi	3150
Highest Contribution to Polio Fund, Rank 1	Chandramohan Govindarajulu	3232
Highest per capita APF Contribution to TRF – Rank 1	Sameer Hariani	3190
Highest per capita APF Contribution to TRF – Rank 2	Joseph Mathew	3181
Highest Total Contribution to TRF – Rank 1	R Madhav Chandran	3201
Highest Total Contribution to TRF – Rank 2	Chandramohan Govindarajulu	3232
Highest Donor Participation* (%-wise)	Zameer Pasha; Sameer Hariani; A Karthikeyan; A K Natesan	3000, 3190 3202, 2982
100% Club Participation	Zameer Pasha; A K Natesan; Girish Ratnakar Masurkar	3000, 2982, 3170
Zone - 6A		
Highest Contribution to Annual Fund, Rank 1	Debashish Das	3240
Highest Contribution to Endowment Fund, Rank 1	Kiran Lal Shrestha	3292
Highest Contribution to Polio Fund, Rank 1	Debashish Das	3240
Highest per capita APF Contribution to TRF – Rank 1	Debashish Das	3240
Highest Total Contribution to TRF – Rank 1	Kiran Lal Shrestha	3292
Highest Donor Participation (%-wise)	Kiran Lal Shrestha	3292
100% Club Participation	Debashish Das	3240

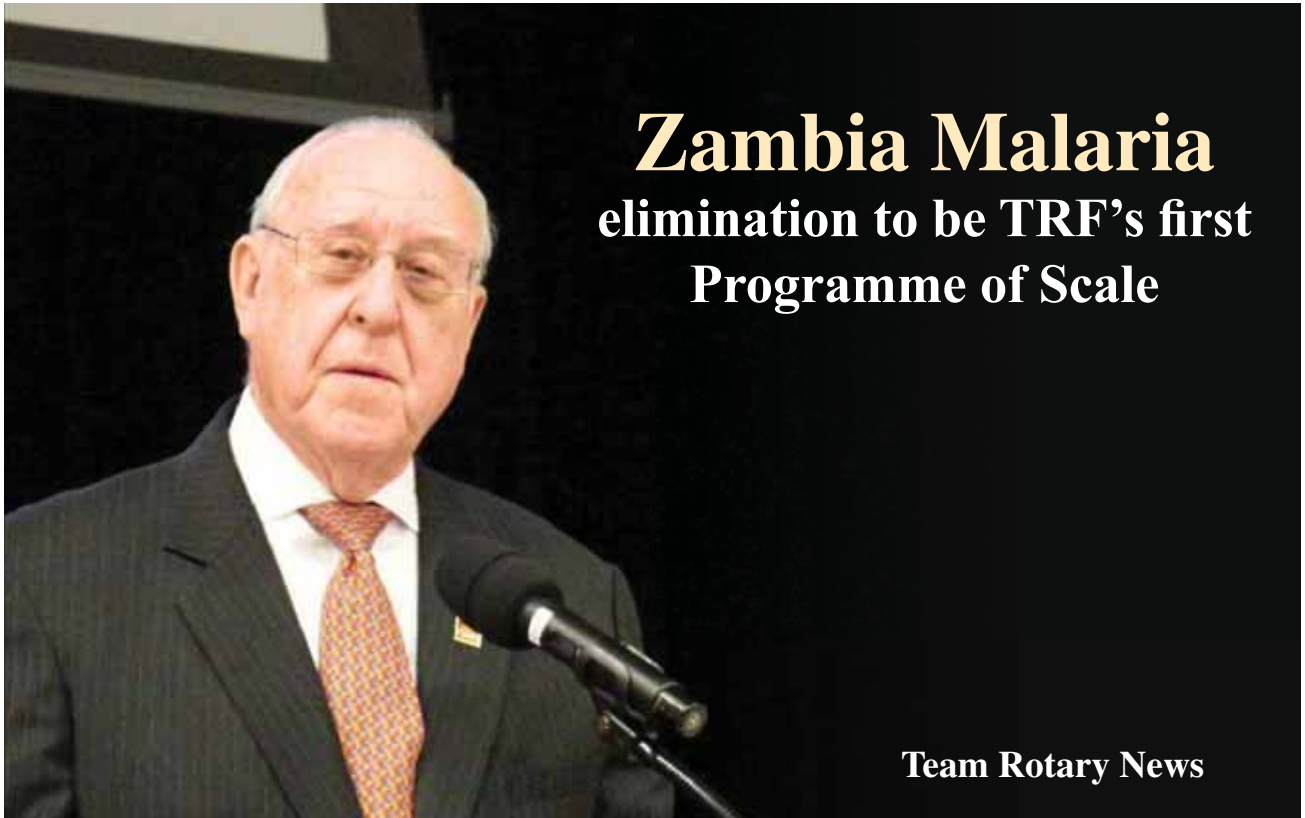
All India Trophies

Nitish Laharry Trophy for All India Highest Total Contribution to TRF — RID 3141

Usha and Raja Saboo Trophy for All India Highest Annual Fund Contribution to TRF — RID 3141

Binota and Kalayan Banerjee Trophy for All India Highest Endowed Fund Contribution to TRF — RID 3141

Highest All India Polio Fund Contribution to TRF — RID 3060



Zambia Malaria elimination to be TRF's first Programme of Scale

Team Rotary News

The world needs the service of Rotarians now more than ever before. It needs our courage, optimism, idealism. It needs the voice of tolerance, cooperation, and hope that we offer. It needs the example of an organisation that has proven that the citizens of all countries can work together successfully, and in friendship,” said incoming TRF Trustee Chair John Germ, addressing the International Assembly, which went virtual this year.

Mother Teresa once said, “I cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters and create many ripples.”

Reminding the incoming governors that TRF “helps each of us to do good — whether by eradicating the poliovirus, by training the next generation of peace and conflict resolution experts with the Rotary Peace Centers, or through district and global grants,” he said through global grants Rotarians

are meeting local community needs across the world. “Beginning on July 1, 2021, The Rotary Foundation will accept applications for global grants funding to support projects to protect the environment.”

In order to support the growth of global grants, the Trustees are rebalancing and improving the Foundation’s long-term financial health after carefully considering many options.”

For example, operational costs had been reduced and other changes made to provide an additional \$4.4 million for global grant awards, “above what was originally budgeted for this Rotary year. We have also made a number of changes to World Fund matches for next year to stretch the amount available for global grants.”

Germ said that for the year ahead, to help expand Rotary’s reach, TRF had set three priorities.

“Our first priority is, of course, to end polio.

Our second priority is to increase contributions to the Annual Fund and PolioPlus while building the Endowment Fund to \$2.025 billion by 2025. To that end, we have set a comprehensive fundraising goal of \$410 million.”

The break up of these goals was:

- \$50 million for PolioPlus, which is then matched double by the Gates Foundation to bring the total to \$150 million. If every club contributed just \$1,500, this goal could be surpassed. Encouraging their own districts to contribute 20 per cent of their available District Designated Funds would also provide leadership and set the pace for this programme.
- \$125 million for the Annual Fund. Newer members need to be introduced to Rotary’s strong culture of philanthropy as embodied in “Every Rotarian, Every Year” slogan for the

Annual Fund. So the DGEs would need to encourage every club, and every individual in every club, to contribute to this fund.

- The aim is also to raise \$95 million for the Endowment Fund in outright gifts and new commitments.
- And then \$40 million for other outright gifts.
- All of it adds up to a grand total of \$410 million.

TRF's third priority is to improve the measurable impact of the grants. "Increasingly, Rotarians, prospective members, philanthropists, and partners want to know the measurable impact of our programmes. While the impact of PolioPlus commitments is clear, we need to move to the next level of quantifying the impact of our other programmes."

With this priority in mind, Programmes of Scale was introduced this Rotary year. It's a competitive grant programme to fund promising, Rotarian-led,

evidence-based programmes that have already demonstrated success in effecting change. These grants support longer-term activities that last for three to five years. "Through these Programmes of Scale, we want to find new ways to learn together, accomplish our mission, and demonstrate Rotary's power to create real change."

After receiving and reviewing 70 proposals, a deep analysis of the top applications was completed, and the first Programme of Scale recipient was the Zambia Malaria Elimination Programme.

This programme seeks to reduce the incidence of malaria by 90 per cent in 10 target districts in two provinces in Zambia and contributes significantly to a nationwide strategy. Led by the Rotary Club of Federal Way near Seattle, Washington, RI will collaborate with several African and international partners to co-fund and implement this programme. TRF's

contribution will be \$2 million, with the others contributing \$4 million, for the total project cost of \$6 million. The project will reach 1.3 million people.

"In Zambia, malaria is a leading cause of illness and death, and Rotary and our partners are about to change that. This kind of large-scale service project should inspire us all on every level of Rotary — to think creatively about everything we do, to have the greatest impact that we can.

Germ said a past Rotary president had said we need to approach Rotary with an intelligent heart. And by that he meant that "we had to combine our emotional responses with pragmatic action. It was not enough to work with just one or the other. You need both. To me, that intelligent heart is The Rotary Foundation. It sends the life-blood throughout our organisation; its constant beat is what powers Rotarians to achieve the very best in humanitarian service." ■

Rotary  PEOPLE OF ACTION

E-learning lab inaugurated at a school in Delhi

Team Rotary News

An e-learning lab was inaugurated by RC Delhi Panchshila Park, RID 3011, at the MCD Girls Primary School, Shahpur, with a CSR grant from Dana Care Foundation. The project will benefit over 250 students each year.

Along with various learning software in the activity room, the club has donated 10 computer tablets, children's books, craft material, drawing books, colouring sticks, toys, puzzle boards and related activity material for use by schoolchildren to enhance their learning abilities. The



(L to R) Rakesh Singh, CSR head, Dana Corporation, DGE Anoop Mittal, DGN Ashok Kantoor and club president Aniel Sahni.

project was conceived and launched with the efforts of the club's CSR-TRF chair Avinash Gandhi and vocational services director Y K Kapoor. The club's vice-president Dr Saroj Sagar's grandson Pragyat Karna donated 10

computer tablets equipped with the latest software. DGE Anoop Mittal inaugurated the e-learning lab in the presence of DGN Ashok Kantoor, club president Aniel Sahni and other members of the club. ■

Dakojus take up community projects in Goa

Rasheeda Bhagat

This is a fascinating story of the journey of 44,000 books, which literally travelled all the way from a far-off place in the US, Atlanta, to the Tuticorin port by sea. From there they travelled to Bengaluru by road.

It all began in 2018 when Ravishankar Dakoju was president of RC Bangalore Orchards, RID 3190, and was introduced to Dr Vijay Raghavan from Atlanta, a friend of late Indian President APJ Abdul Kalam.

Raghavan is committed to promoting Kalam's dream of distributing knowledge and eradicating the poverty of education throughout the world

through his organisation called *We Serve Foundation*.

Cross over to India where in 2018, Dakoju was passionately involved in implementing his club's iconic project—126 Rotary Happy Schools, and books are an integral part of any literacy initiative. Hence Dakoju and wife Paola, through their own charity organisation, the *Paola Dakoju Ravishankar Foundation* undertook the mission to ship these books from Atlanta to India, bearing the expenditure of nearly ₹8 lakh.

From Bengaluru, these books were then sent out by the couple to various parts of India; the only condition was an

assurance that these books would be put to good use and enrich lives through the knowledge contained in them.

One of the dearest projects of this couple, who hit the headlines two years ago not only in the Rotary world, but throughout India and beyond, by donating ₹100 crore to The Rotary Foundation, is building school and libraries in Manipur. From this stock of books, some 5,000 books were sent to Sangai village in Manipur, which were received by Sonal Sethi of Sunbird Trust, which is partnering with the Dakojus for their projects in the state, to be distributed to several open-door

Ravishankar Dakoju, past president of RC Bangalore Orchards, and his wife Paola honouring RC Panaji president Carlito Martins for sponsoring 10,000 books to the Central Library, in the presence of DG Sangram Patil.



Theft is the only skill prison inmates have. Having served a prison term leads to their social ostracisation. So we are setting up a skilling centre in the Central Prison in Goa.

Ravishankar Dakoju



Goa CM Dr Pramod Sawant hands over a set of books to a representative of the Central Library.

libraries. Similarly, about 25,000 books were distributed among several schools, orphanages, old age homes and other libraries in and around Bengaluru in RI District 3190.

For finding the right home for the remaining 11,500 books, Dakoju contacted PDG Jorson Fernandes from RID 3170, who also shares the same passion of this couple to “give back to society selflessly,” says Dakoju.

Fernandes got in touch with DGE Gaurish Dhond, RID 3170, a member of RC Panaji, the first club in Goa which was chartered in January 1963.

Dhond assured the Dakojus that Goa would be an ideal place to receive their generous gift as it is not only one of the most literate states in India, but its people also have a strong reading habit.

RC Panaji president Carlito Martins quickly responded and it was mutually agreed that these books could be distributed through the Central Library in Panaji. On Jan 30, the club’s 59th charter day, and during the official visit of RID 3170 DG Sangram Patil, it was decided to hand over the books to Panaji’s Central Library. The event was presided over by Goa chief minister Pramod

Sawant, who is an honorary member of RC Panaji.

DG Patil appreciated the efforts made by RC Panaji to organise the handing over of the books and thanked the Dakojus for their gesture. The chief minister also thanked the couple and congratulated Rotarians for their selfless service to the community. He said to get maximum benefit from the generous donation of 10,500 books, they will be distributed to 11 government libraries and 140 libraries run by NGOs across the state of Goa. Rotarians from RC Bangalore Orchards led by president Narasimha Dwarkanath participated in the event.

Addressing the meeting, Dakoju said he and his wife Paola were very happy that the books had found their rightful place in a region like Goa, where the reading habit of people is relatively high. He added that earlier this month, over 1,000 books were distributed to RC Kudal.

Dakoju later told *Rotary News* that he has assured the Goa CM that his Foundation will be doing two more projects in Goa. The first, to be done in partnership with PDG Fernandes and RC Cuncolim, is aimed at skilling prisoners.

“So many thieves are in prison because that is the only skill they have. And the fact that they served a prison term leads to their social ostracisation. So we are setting up a skilling centre in the Central Prison which is located in the CM’s constituency where the prison inmates will be trained in making files. We have also given a commitment that we will buy all the files they make.” The hope is that when the inmates return to the community after serving their term, they will have a useful vocation to make a respectable living.

Dakoju said that as building schools is close to his heart he volunteered to build a school in partnership with the government for which his Foundation would donate one acre of land. “But after a discussion, we agreed to first build a home for senior citizens. As you know, this too is a subject close to my heart. So we will be donating the land and our Foundation, in collaboration with RC Panaji and RID 3170 will build that home.”

The plan is to lay the foundation stone for this home in July at the installation of DGE Gaurish Dhond in the presence of RIPE Shekhar Mehta, he added. ■

Indian DGEs get lucky with IA



Above: The incoming governors of 2021–22 in their traditional attire.

Below: From L: RIDE AS Venkatesh, RID Kamal Sanghvi and RIPE Shekhar Mehta.

Right: From L: RIDEs Mahesh Kotbagi, AS Venkatesh and PDG Ravi Vadlamani.



in Delhi



From top: From L: TRF Trustee Gulam Vahanvaty, Madhavi, RID Bharat Pandya and PRID Manoj Desai.

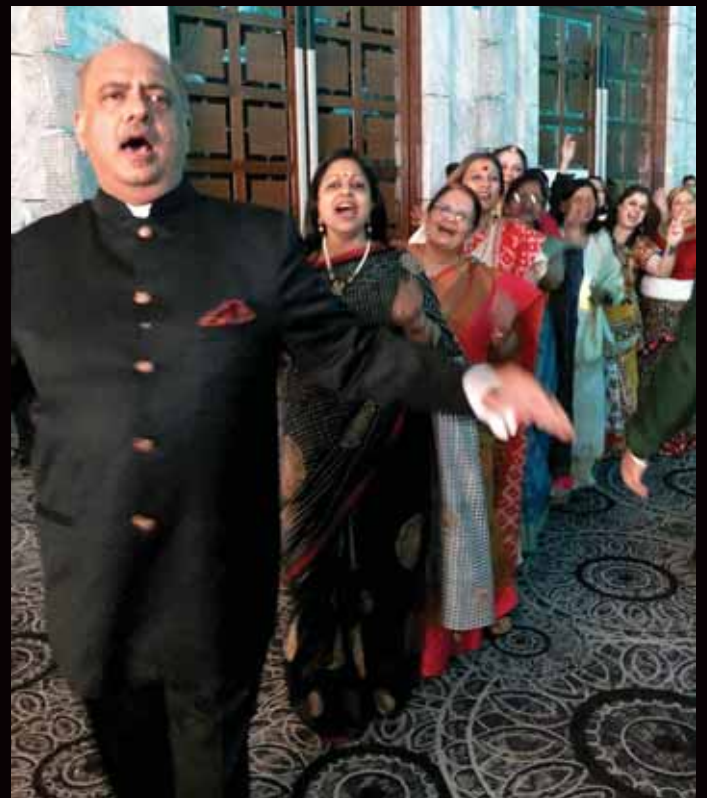
Rashi Mehta with Susanne Knaack and Rtn Nick Krayacich, spouse of RIPN Jennifer Jones.

RIPE Shekhar Mehta inaugurating the IA in the presence of Rashi, RID Bharat Pandya and Madhavi.



Above: RI leaders on a procession.

Right: RIDE AS Venkatesh (L) with RID 3232 DGE Sridhar and his wife Punitha.



Above from left: RID Pandya shakes a leg with PDG Ranjan Dhingra; DGEs with their spouses; RIPE Mehta followed by Rashi and Madhavi lead the delegates for the IA celebrations.

Below: DGE Dr Rajesh Subash (3204) takes a selfie with Parimaladevi and DGE K Shanmugasundaram (3203), Dr Deeshma Subash and DGE S Balaji (2981).





Clockwise from top: RIPE Mehta, Rashi, RID Pandya, Madhavi, Dr Amita and RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi.

RIDE Kotbagi with (from L) PDGs Prashant Deshmukh (3131), Bina and Ashish Desai (3054). PDG Jitendra Dhingra (second from L) and Ritu (R) with DGE Ajay Madan and Savita (3080). PRID Manoj Desai and RIDE Venkatesh.



Be part of RI's diversity, equity, inclusion policy

Team Rotary News

RI President Holger Knaack has asked Rotarians to participate in RI's commitment to diversity and respect for all.

In 2019, the RI Board articulated a vision and commitment to advance diversity and inclusion in Rotary by adopting the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) statement. It recently engaged PwC to develop perspectives and practices to make DEI a part of Rotarians' shared experiences.

"As we begin this work, Rotary's leadership is united in stating that Rotary does not tolerate speech or behaviour that promotes bias, discrimination, prejudice, or hatred because of age, ethnicity, race, colour, abilities, religion, socioeconomic status, culture, sex, sexual orientation, or gender



identity," said Knaack. There is no place within Rotary for racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, classism or ageism. "We do not believe that this is a political stance and we do believe that we should openly discuss these issues within our organisation," he added.

Diversity is one of Rotary's core values, and the tremendous breadth and variety of experiences, cultures, and perspectives represented in the organisation makes it unique.

The goal is to support members and participants, particularly those from communities traditionally underrepresented in the organisation, "so that they see our clubs and programmes as places where they are welcomed and encouraged to celebrate their lived experiences."

"We know that this journey will take time and lead to challenging conversations, deep self-reflection and new opportunities for discovery and growth. We must all feel empowered to speak out respectfully and hold ourselves and each other accountable when our actions do not reflect

Rotary's ideals. Look for more opportunities to be a part of this shared journey. We want participation, input, and ideas from our members all over the globe as we strive to show what's possible when we uphold our commitment to diversity and respect for all," he says. ■

STATEMENT ABOUT OWNERSHIP

Statement about ownership and other particulars about *Rotary News* to be published in the first issue of every year after the last day of February

1. Place of Publication : Chennai - 600 008
2. Periodicity of its publication : Monthly
3. Printer's Name : P T Prabhakar
Nationality : Indian
Address : 15, Sivasami Street
Mylapore
Chennai 600 004
4. Publisher's Name : P T Prabhakar
Nationality : Indian
Address : 15, Sivasami Street
Mylapore
Chennai 600 004
5. Editor's Name : Rasheeda Bhagat
Nationality : Indian
Address : 25, Jayalakshmiapuram
1st Street
Nungambakkam
Chennai - 600 034
6. Name and address of individual who owns the newspaper and partner or shareholders holding more than one percent of the total capital : Rotary News Trust
Dugar Towers, 3rd Floor
34, Marshalls Road
Egmore
Chennai - 600 008

I, P T Prabhakar, declare that the particulars given are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Chennai - 600 008
1st March, 2021

sd/-
P T Prabhakar

There is no place within
Rotary for racism,
homophobia, transphobia,
sexism, classism or ageism.

Holger Knaack
RI President

Living the dreams

President-elect Shekhar Mehta isn't afraid to make big plans. With a little teamwork, he has a way of making them a reality.

Throughout an hourlong interview with *Rotary* magazine, Shekhar Mehta mentions dreaming no fewer than a dozen times. Dreams about repairing broken hearts. About eradicating polio from the world. About reaching a 95 per cent literacy rate by 2026 in India, a country where 1 in 4 people can't read.

"Dreams have to be big enough for people to be motivated to achieve them," he says. "Gandhi once said that if you find the goal, the means will come. That's how it's been my whole Rotary life."

Mehta grew up in a home committed to service; both his parents were members of Lions Clubs International. Having learned from an early age about the good that service organisations can do, when his friend Chittaranjan Choudhury asked him to become a Rotary member, Mehta readily agreed. Though only 25 years old at the time, he was quickly tapped to take on additional roles within Rotary — his motto being that if somebody asked, he would say yes. Mehta, who values the contributions of a team, would then enlist others to help.

That exemplifies his ability not only to dream big, but to get things

done. "I either have done it or have a plan for it; otherwise I won't ask others to do it," he says. He is a director of the India arm of Operation Eyesight Universal, a former trustee of ShelterBox (he helped build nearly 500 homes for families affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami), and the architect of a literacy programme that has reached thousands of schools. Yet he didn't mention any of that during this interview, and when talking about accomplishments, he always says "we," rather than "I".

His theme, *Serve to Change Lives*, flows naturally from, and informs, everything he does.

With his wife, Rashi, seated next to him, Shekhar Mehta spoke with Rotary editor-in-chief John Rezek and senior staff writer Diana Schoberg in November from the Mehtas' home in Kolkata, where Shekhar is a member of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Mahanagar. Although the discussion took place over zoom and the participants were separated by 8,000 miles, Mehta's message and enthusiasm were as stirring and immediate as if everyone were together in the president-elect's office at Rotary International headquarters in Evanston. By the end, everyone was thinking about how big and daring our dreams can be.

When did you realise that you could accomplish something significant in Rotary as a member?

I had a baptism by fire. I was 25 when I got admitted to my club, after a friend asked me if I'd like to join. The first month I was asked to create a souvenir

publication to raise funds through the sale of advertisements. I had no clue how to do this. But I was asked, and I said OK. Many people offered to help me, and suddenly it became very successful. We raised a lot of money and everybody said, "Wow, Shekhar, well done!" Three months later, I was asked to become the editor of the club bulletin. I loved that job! If ever I were asked to do another thing at the club level, that's the job I'd love to do. You become the nerve centre; every piece of information passes through you. You know what's happening around the club, which was one of the reasons I got so involved.

Shortly after, we organised an artificial limb camp, where we would fit limbs for people who did not have legs and give them hand-crank tricycles. Everybody was given a job. I was given the responsibility to determine whether the recipient had enough hand or arm strength to pedal one. So I'd have the person grab my hands and I would pull.

I saw the first person coming, but he wasn't walking, he was crawling. And as he stretched out his hand, and I stretched mine to pull his, I shuddered. I didn't want to touch his hands; they were very soiled. The fourth person was a leper, but I had no option: I had to hold every hand. But by the seventh

A Rotarian is a volunteer, and
being a volunteer means yes,
I want to do something.



Sephi Bergerson

or eighth hand, I had forgotten about my reservations and I was thinking about their plight. I think that's when I became a Rotarian: I started feeling how others felt.

Did you seek higher levels of responsibility in Rotary or did higher levels of responsibility seek you?

I never sought anything in Rotary and I never said no to anything. This is what I keep telling everyone: A Rotarian is a volunteer, and being a volunteer means yes, I want to do something. What kind of volunteer are you if you say no?

What was your reaction when you found out you were going to become president of Rotary?

The immediate reaction? It felt nice. I didn't jump with excitement or

anything like that. Whenever responsibilities come to me, I think of them as a greater opportunity for service.

I'll give you an example. When I was nominated to be a Rotary director, I was invited to a huge felicitation programme. These are very common in India. People come and say nice things about you, and I felt such embarrassment. I thought I needed to do extraordinary things to justify the adulation. So, that night, I wrote down what I hoped to achieve in the next two years. I was coming from a world where there are too many needs and there is a lot of opportunity to do the work. And so I sat down until four in the morning thinking of, say, opening 50 eye hospitals in India, of doing 5,000 heart surgeries for children. One of the former presidents of India, APJ Abdul Kalam, used to say that dreams are not what you see when you sleep, but dreams are those things that do not let you sleep. That day his thoughts resonated with me so vividly.

People laughed when they heard what I was planning to achieve. But when you're trying to do something extraordinary, they may laugh at you, but you'll have the last laugh. I am happy to tell you, many of these dreams got fulfilled.

Are we going to see an exponential series of dreams during your time as Rotary president?

Absolutely. If that doesn't happen, in my heart, I'm not a worthy president. But I also understand that when I was a Rotary director, my focus was on India. When I'm the president of Rotary, my focus has to be on the world, and Rotary is not the same around the world.

We're an organisation that is 116 years old, which is present in more than 200 countries and geographical areas, and has 1.2 million leaders — not just Rotarians, leaders — and the

legacy of nearly eradicating a disease. We have to do projects that have an impact on the national level. I come from one of the largest countries in the world, and Rotary's work today is absolutely having an impact on the national level. It can have a national impact in Nepal, I'm aware of it. It can happen in Bangladesh, in Pakistan. And polio eradication is something we have done on the world level, with polio now endemic in only two countries.

Rotary in India had the idea to present grade school education on TV, one channel for each grade — so grade 3, channel 3; grade 9, channel 9. The telecast is the same curriculum that the child would get in school, and at the end of each lesson there's a message that this was made possible by Rotary. This is presented to 100 million children every day; 100 million children get to hear the name of Rotary and get to know Rotary as an organisation that does good in the world.

Our plan was to do this in five and a half years. But Covid-19 provided an opportunity, the government was interested in supporting this, and what was supposed to take five and a half years, we did in so many weeks.

So when I say we can have an impact on the national level, I know we can. Rotary has the power to do it.

What are the characteristics of Rotary in India, and which of those characteristics do you think other areas of the Rotary world should adopt?

Think first from the heart, not from the mind. Imagine the people who thought we would eradicate polio, and if they had used only their minds, we'd never be able to do it. It was a crazy dream. Have you ever planned anything that would take decades? Yet we have the courage to dream of such a thing.



Rashieda Bhagat

RIPE Shekhar Mehta with Rashi.

We need to have the courage to take up these projects and be ready to take the risk. I am not worried about failures at all. I would rather have 10 dreams and succeed in only six of them than be a person who only has two dreams and succeeds at them both. This is not a percentage game; this is about doing good in the world. Dream big.

What do you want to accomplish in your year?

I have two broad goals. One, that our membership needs to reach 1.3 million. It's been 1.2 million for 20 years. This needs to change, and it's not too difficult to change it: Each member brings in just one new member. Every one of us will do that job. And yes, I will get one as well.

I'm very passionate about service. Our organisation is doing good in the

world by serving people. For the coming year, the focus will be on empowering girls. We are committed to educating all children, but the focus will be a little more on girls. We will concentrate on providing toilets and all other hygiene facilities. We need to understand that girls are more vulnerable — to trafficking, especially sexual trafficking — and it is crucial that we protect them.

Is a year too short a time for the Rotary presidency?

I don't think the president makes a lot of change to the organisation, and I don't think the president should. And if you look at the past 10 years, it's very difficult to say this thing happened during that year. I'm very happy you're not able to say that, because that shows that it's not about the president; it's about the organisation. A president can do

well to inspire the 1.2 million members to grow more and do more.

Is the Rotary presidency the best job in Rotary?

The presidency at the club level is the best job you can have in Rotary. You do far more at far greater speed as club president than you do as RI president. You get to have the pleasure of doing hands-on work.

Did you come up with your theme by yourself?

No. With me it's always about teamwork. I love to take everybody's views. There were about 10 of us in the room. It truly reflects my philosophy in Rotary. I wanted it to be service, but people said it should be a call to action. So service became serve. And when you do that, you change lives for the good. So the theme is: *Serve to Change Lives*.

What do you think will be the greatest challenge?

The only challenge, if any, will be the pandemic, because it may hamper my meeting people. I love the virtual world, because it has great advantages. But Rotary is a people's organisation. People have to meet people. The impact I can have with an in-person meeting is much greater than when I'm just taping a message. So let us overcome Covid and meet each other as soon as possible.

Do you acknowledge that there are hopeless situations?

No, never. Nothing could be more hopeless than this pandemic, but we still find a way. I'll give you an example. My club has 90 members, but during the pandemic we had 2,400 people at a recent regular weekly meeting. Without the pandemic, we would not have been able to do it. So, hopeless situation? No, we find opportunities there.

Rotaractors renovate Karur War Memorial

V Muthukumaran

A Rotaract project has enabled the residents of Karur, a historic city in Tamil Nadu, to take pride in their grand heritage. It all began at one of the weekly meetings of RAC Karur, RID 3000, when they were finalising their annual projects. “We wanted to do some additional projects that can really create an impact,” said club president R Sabarish. Following this, a four-member team visited the Karur War Memorial at Rayanur, 3km from the town, to have

a first-hand view of this ruined structure and “in no time, we decided to renovate the entire complex,” he said.

The Rotaractors met district collector T Anbalagan with a 2D layout, 3D visualisation, walkthrough graphics and a project estimate and got formal approval for the renovation work. One of the Rotaractors, NCB Kaviarasu, an architect, came forward to design the facelift and provide technical inputs for the renovation.



State transport minister MR Vijayabhaskar inaugurates the refurbished memorial in the presence of RAC Karur president R Sabarish (right) and district collector T Anbalagan (3rd from right).

An aerial view of the renovated Karur War Memorial.



Sabarish and his team approached Asian Fabricix who readily agreed to sponsor the entire project amounting to ₹3.25 lakh under their CSR arm. The main structure, the obelisk dome, got a fresh coat of paint and the entire premises measuring 846 sqft (approx) got a new makeover with steel rafters, fencing, tiling, civil work, solar lights, compound work, etc.

The wild bushes, weeds and debris were cleared and flowering plants were grown to enhance the site’s aesthetics. However, the main highlight

is the erection of six pillars with inscriptions that narrate the history behind raising the War Memorial.

It was raised in memory of the soldiers killed and as a symbol of victory when the British captured the Karur Fort from Tipu Sultan during the Second Anglo-Mysore War (1780–1784 AD). “Sadly, the fort was destroyed in the battle. This memorial stands as a testimony of that ancient legacy of Karur,” said Sabarish. TN Transport Minister MR Vijayabhaskar inaugurated the renovated War Memorial on the 35th charter day of the club. ■

Coimbatore's 'gear man' who did selfless service

Jaishree

Amma, don't stress yourself today. I will have breakfast and even pack my lunch from SSS," says Ramasamy, a bank employee, to his mother as he leaves for work. This is a familiar scenario in most of the households in a locality called Singanallur in Coimbatore. SSS (Shanthi Social Services) has been a boon to the people of Coimbatore since 1996 when it was set up by the founder of Shanthi Gears P Subramanian. The sprawling facility houses a medical centre, diagnostic lab, radiology centre, blood bank, pharmacy, eyecare centre, petrol bunk and a spacious canteen. It also runs an LPG crematorium close by and has optical shops across the city.

'Service to humanity is service to god' had been the mantra of Subramanian, who passed away last December. So popular was this philanthropist that his obituary was run in newspapers by people at their own cost and posters depicting his charitable

spirit and service propped up all over Coimbatore. Totally media shy and a very low-profile man, Subramanian shunned all publicity and awards or citations. "It is rare to see such outpouring of grief and tributes from all over for a man whom they have only heard of and not seen," said a staff member of the SSS canteen.

But even though the "gear man" of Coimbatore has passed on, his mantra of selfless service is reflected in every service facility of SSS. Lunch is served free for at least 300 needy people while 10,000 people get food at a nominal cost each day. "I eat a full meal here every day and it costs me just ₹10 and dinner costs ₹15," says Ibrahim Basha, an autorickshaw driver. The lunch menu includes unlimited rice, *sambhar*, greens, *rasam*, vegetable curry and buttermilk. Dinner includes varieties such as *idli/dosa*, *sambhar*, chutney; *poori*, *subzi*; *vada* or *pongal*. Tea costs ₹5 and coffee ₹10. The unhealthy refined white

sugar is replaced with a healthier demerara sugar. Drinking water is dispensed from an RO unit and sanitation staff sporting grey t-shirts with the founder's mantra printed on its back; mask and gloves in place, are quick to clean up tables unobtrusively.

The canteen serves nutritious vegetarian food in a hygienic setting. "We don't include maida, *ajinomoto* or any such unhealthy ingredients, instead millets, grams, sprouts and ragi are used liberally," says a canteen employee, adding, "our *ayya* (owner) was particular that only healthy food should be served. We don't want people spending unnecessarily for treating diseases due to unhealthy diet, he would say."

"Subramanian would often say, 'I am only sharing with people around me what god has given me'," says one of his closest acquaintances, a Rotarian, who does not wish to be named. "Although I knew him very well and know what a gem he was, I don't



The pharmacy offers medicines at subsidised price.

want to speak about him to the media because I respect his sentiments even after he has left us,” he adds.

The admin manager at SSS also echoes the same thought. “Our *ayya* was steadfast in his philosophy: What the right hand gives, the left hand need not know. Although people have suggested that publicising his services could inspire many others, he would still say, ‘I do this in my personal capacity. There are several others who are doing good in their communities and there is no need for one to replicate the other.’

Subramanian was a first-generation industrialist when he set up a gear manufacturing unit to cater to the textile sector in the city in 1960. This grew into a private limited company — Shanthi Gears — in 1972 after which he became popular as ‘Coimbatore’s gear man’. The company was sold to the Murugappa group in Chennai in 2012 allowing him to totally focus on SSS, his pet project, which he established in memory of his wife. Apart from his activities in the manufacturing sector, his social service activities made him a formidable personality. He stood by his policy to not accept, request or solicit donations. He was awarded Padma Shri



People organised in a queue to place their food orders at the canteen.

in January this year for his outstanding contribution to trade and industry.

The trust’s other services are also as economical as the canteen without compromising on quality. “The hospital services come at a price 50–75 per cent lesser than any other in the city. The doctor charges just ₹30 whenever I bring my family here for consultation; I have not visited any other hospital ever,” says Basha. The crematorium services are free for the needy and at a nominal charge for others. Medicines are sold at 30 per cent less than the market price. SSS provides educational

aid to meritorious students, supports government schools and construction of roads.

The *balvadi* that SSS runs provides nutritious food and teach values to children. Parents can leave them there as early as 7 am and pick them up as late as 8 pm. It is a boon to working parents who have nowhere else to leave their children, and it is totally free.

The petrol bunk is famous for selling fuel at the same price at which the stock was procured, despite subsequent increase in price. “‘The commission I get from purchasing the stock is sufficient and I don’t want to make unreasonable profit, he would say,” says his acquaintance, adding, “he was a *karma yogi*. Every day he would be in the canteen and when people appreciated him, unaware of his identity, he would just smile; but he would take critical feedback seriously and rectify the shortcoming immediately. I am truly blessed to have been in his company.”

Getting a house for rent in this locality is tough because people hardly shift from here as they are so used to benefitting from all services of their neighbourhood SSS. Even after his passing on, he lives in the hearts of thousands of people, in every single meal and in everybody’s thoughts, says Ramasamy. ■



The trust’s petrol bunk that offers fuel at its procurement price.



Covid opens opportunities for Indian pharma

V Muthukumaran

There will be no compromise on basic healthcare services during the Covid vaccination rollout and the Central government will follow strict scientific norms and protocol, said Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Aayog, the planning body of the GoI.

“Priority will be given to healthcare workers, frontline warriors, civil defence forces such as police personnel and home guards, those over 50 years with comorbidities and younger people with underlying illnesses,” he said at a panel discussion on “Covid-19: Way forward to managing the pandemic challenge” at the virtual Rotary institute.

He assured that it will be an orderly, smooth rollout of the vaccination drive with importance attached to technology platforms and digital

Dr Prathap C Reddy
chairman, Apollo Hospitals



interfaces. “We will set up Covid cold chain and strengthen government medical depots and stores.”

Echoing the words of session moderator Rtn Habil Khorakiwala, CEO, Wockhardt group, who called for restructuring the healthcare spending in India, Kant said from less than two per cent of GDP spending on public health, the government must raise it to five per cent with equal focus on enhancing the nutrition level of children. In comparison, Western countries spend 10–12 per cent of their GDP on healthcare with US spending 18 per cent.

Under the Ayushman Bharat scheme, GoI has set up 50,000 health and wellness clinics out of 150,000 it has planned and the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), the largest cashless insurance scheme in the world, has covered 500 million Indians who can avail free treatment at empanelled hospitals. Dr Randeep Guleria, director, AIIMS said the global data on Covid vaccines must also factor in variant strains as recently found in the UK.

While the UK is completely revising its vaccine strategy due to mutant strains, we should have an open mind to look for as many new vaccines for the country including Sputnik and one under development by Zydus Cadila to immunise a huge population, said Dr Guleria. “We need to have an aggressive approach, invest in genomic surveillance



Nandan Nilekani
non-executive chairman, Infosys

for possible mutations to prevent future pandemics.”

India is unique

To a query from Khorakiwala if there could be a sudden spike in cases like in the UK, Dr Guleria ruled out such a possibility in India “as we have incrementally raised our RT-PCR testing rates and found that even in poll-bound states there were no recent surges in Covid cases.” The Indian situation is unique as we have the largest youth population who have protection thanks to the BCG vaccine and the population would have developed herd immunity by now, he said. “But we have to persist with Covid-appropriate behaviour (like social distancing and wearing mask) till enough people are vaccinated. At the same time, we have to keep up the surveillance to prevent untoward outbreaks.” He said a multisectoral approach is needed to bring down pollution, especially in the Indo-Gangetic belt, as it is linked to higher mortality due to lung inflammation. “We need to move out of our silos, develop strategies and innovate to reduce pollution in a sustainable manner,” he said.

Digital platform

To ensure a scalable architecture for Covid vaccine, “GoI has developed CoWin App, a digital interface, to ensure last mile delivery of the vaccine”, help stakeholders with control over their

stock inventory and keep track of inoculated people,” said Nandan Nilekani, non-executive chairman, Infosys. “At the end of the vaccine drive, we should be able to unlock our economy, and enable people to travel freely. The government will issue a digital vaccine certificate for those immunised,” he said.

The pandemic has led us to a hybrid working model at most offices with Infosys, having a workforce of 240,000, allowing a third of its staff to work from home, he said. India Inc is in the process of redesigning its office space, reinventing business processes by eliminating excess workflow with the reskilling of its staff for the ‘new normal’, he said.

Zydus Cadila Healthcare is in the third stage of the clinical trial for the development of a Covid vaccine based on a DNA platform and “once completed, we will deliver 150 million doses a year to the government,” said its CMD Pankaj Patel. “The world is looking up on Indian companies to develop vaccines as we have a huge market. We also need the right treatment procedure for Covid which we are working on,” he said. While there is a good ecosystem in India with a proactive government, “scientific talent must be harnessed so that we create a difference in the world,” he said.

Medical automation

A 24x7 helpline at the Apollo Hospitals offers counselling for Covid patients



Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Aayog

and “this has helped to bring down panic among the vulnerable people,” said its founder-chairman Dr Prathap Reddy. The hospital chain has 3,000 hotel rooms and 40,000 beds exclusively for Covid patients, he said. “Focus must be on disease prevention in 2021 and India can tap the \$4 billion worth global medical tourism as many patients from the West have shown interest in the low-cost, quality medical services being offered in Chennai hospitals,” Dr Reddy said.

In the near future, automation, artificial intelligence (AI), robotic surgery and 3D printing will be the order of the day, he said and warned that 80 per cent of global deaths would be related to non-communicable diseases (NCD) and India would have a fair share of this mortality as heart attacks, strokes and NCDs have become common among the 25–40 age group.

Fiscal stimulus

Giving an economic spin to the vaccination drive, Ajit Ranade, president and economist, Aditya Birla group, said the massive programme with 500 million doses, each costing ₹200–300, having its own supply chains and volunteers is worth a ₹1.4 lakh crore fiscal stimulus to the Indian economy. “We are able to flatten the infection curve remarkably well, but we should not relax in our treatment and prevention efforts,” he said.

Boosting consumers’ confidence is the key to reactivate business activity, but in the current fiscal (ending March 2021) we have to contend with a negative growth rate, he said. However, he added, “our young and dynamic workforce gives us a huge potential for growth.”

Just like the midday meal scheme for 110 million children who were served freshly-prepared food, “we can provide a glass of milk to undernourished kids with India producing 180 million tonnes of milk, largest in the world.” Another worrying factor is



Dr Randeep Guleria
director, AIIMS

over 200 million elderly people who need emergency medical care and a reliable social security which the government can provide by rejigging its priority over healthcare spending and mobilising resources from the industrial and service economy, said Ranade.

Summing up the discussion, Khorakiwala said India is on the cusp of cashing in on new opportunities in the post-Covid world as it only needs to “reimagine and recreate a better tomorrow.”

Despite spending \$4 trillion on healthcare every year, “the world was not prepared when the pandemic struck and 50 million people were affected.” The global economy has lost \$10 trillion in the last nine months, but the good news is that it has taken less than a year for us to develop Covid vaccines as against several years in the past for other diseases, he said. ■

Habil Khorakiwala
CEO, Wockhardt group



THIS IS OUR ACTION PLAN

OUR PRIORITY

**WE'RE
EXPANDING
OUR
REACH**

Welcoming all kinds of leaders

People of Action are from every background and in every community. But even though Rotary is made for leaders at the forefront of change, only 35 per cent of those we surveyed* see Rotary as an organisation for people like them. And that's not good enough.

We must commit to becoming a more welcoming place for people to connect, grow, and lead change. Let's seek out new partnerships and collaborations with organisations that are committed to getting things done in the community and around the world. Let's demonstrate the value we provide — and help new people find their way into Rotary.

What we will do

Develop participant models that appeal to diverse audiences

Create flexible engagement models

Support Rotary fellowships to strengthen our ties around the world

Update our social media presence and outreach resources

What your club can do



Share

your people of action stories
(Visit Brand Center at My Rotary)

Encourage

innovative clubs and flexible options

Reach out

to new groups for
participants or partnerships

Update

your club's website and
social media

* 2015 general public
global survey

Want to know more?

Read the full Action Plan at rotary.org/actionplan



Rotary invests in sustainable global peace

Kiran Zehra



PRID Larry Lunsford, chair, Rotary Peace Centers

Rotary was instrumental in helping to formulate the original documents that created the United Nations,” said RI director Peter Kyle, addressing a panel discussion at the virtual zone institute titled *The Odyssey*. He recalled the milestone events from 1921 when at the 12th Rotary Convention in Edinburgh, Scotland, Rotary added promotion of peace and goodwill to its Constitution. Eleven Rotarians led by RI President Richard H Wells guided the agendas and played a key role in formulating the resolutions to help resolve disputes between warring parties after being

invited by the US in 1945 to participate in the San Francisco Conference that led to the birth of the UN.

The success in fighting polio has earned Rotary “tremendous credibility and sway in the arena of international problem-solving,” said Kyle. “We often complain that the world doesn’t know about Rotary’s role in eradicating polio. The whole world doesn’t need to know! Policymakers and international organisations — they need to know. Our relationship with key policymakers at the UN and other global organisations was important for polio advocacy. We should deepen and expand those relationships.”

When Kyle said that anything to do with global peace would likely have Rotary involvement, as “peace is in our DNA”, Arthur Matty, the Swiss ambassador in Romania, quipped “peace is part of our country’s constitution too and this is equivalent to Rotary’s DNA.” Explaining why Switzerland is investing in peace, he said “we want to create more opportunity for people to build peace as violence in any part of the world not only brings great suffering but crushes the economy of that state or country, invariably creating ripples that would affect us all.”

“Rotary has so much knowhow on peace that we should ask ourselves how could we use these resources better to promote peace. In Geneva we have a Rotary Peace Incubator that has more than 50 Rotary peace fellows, Rotarians and Rotaractors working together to prepare 20 global grants for peace projects,” said Matty.

PRID Larry Lunsford, chair, Rotary Peace Centers, said that “Rotary’s peace programmes have a great legacy.” Indian Rotarians should be proud that “20 years ago, PRIP Rajendra Saboo was among the architects of this programme,” that today comprises seven centres in the world. Five of them offer a Master’s programme, while the other two give a diploma in peacebuilding. “Since its inception 1,300 peace fellows have graduated from our programmes working on peace and development initiatives in 115 countries and we have seen that 93 per cent of the 1,300 alumni are working in jobs connected to peace and development,” he added.

Congratulating zones 5, 6, 7 and 8, Lunsford said, “Out of the 170 finalists selected for the peace scholarships nine come from your zones” — four from India, three from Nepal and two from Sri Lanka. “We hope that each Rotarian will be a strong advocate of our peace programme. I would urge

you all to determine how the people in your network can support Rotary Peace Centers,” he said.

As a member of the Independent Eminent Persons for the UN Peace Building Architecture Review, Liberata Mulamula, Tanzanian ambassador to the US, spoke about the underlying weaknesses and gaps that are being addressed in the review process for the sustenance of global peace and development, keeping in mind the UN sustainable development goals. She reminded that “peace cannot be sustained without development, and lasting peace is essential for the preservation of development gains. A world with wars is a heavy burden to leave on the shoulders of any one country



RI director Peter Kyle

or government and this is where I find the relevance of this meeting.”

Answering a question on the need for Rotary to invest in peace,

Silvia Alejandra Fernández de Gurmendi, International Criminal Court Judge and past Rotary scholar said, “whether you are a teacher, diplomat or a CEO, peace is in everyone’s interest and responsibility. This may sound like an abstraction because every time we talk about peace or war, we think of it as something that is far away from us. War is real, not just for those fighting but for us too.”

PRID Bryn Styles, aide to RIPE Shekhar Mehta, in his closing remarks thanked convener RID Kamal Sanghvi “for bringing together senior Rotary leaders who have experience and passion for peace and international diplomats who have worked in the field of peace.” ■

Doing good with TRF help

Rotary donates robots to Assam medical college hospital

Team Rotary News



Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal hands over the robot driving app to AMCH principal Dr Sanjib Kakati in the presence of PDG Kalpana Khound (L).

Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal handed over two robots to Dr Sanjib Kakati, principal, Assam Medical College and Hospital. The robots that will be used for dispensing food and medicine to patients were sponsored by RC Dibrugarh, RID 3240, under a global grant initiative with support from RC Dhaka Royal, RID 3281. The robots named Yantrabot were designed and developed by the Technology Incubation Centre at IIT-Guwahati. Under this global grant, more such equipment will

be given to three other hospitals. Addressing the audience, Sonowal dwelt on the Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission and the initiatives in the field of science and technology towards fighting the pandemic.

He praised Rotary’s service to mankind and urged Rotarians to focus more on education, sports and culture in their activities. Union MoS for food processing Rameshwar Teli appreciated Rotary for providing Covid infrastructure to district hospitals.

PDG Kalpana Khound was the project’s primary contact. ■



The digital world will only expand

V Muthukumaran

Are you making more digital payments after the pandemic struck and will you continue to do so in the future too? Have you given cyber protection to your mobile phone and computer against malware, hacking and other electronic frauds? India is witnessing a paradigm shift in digital technologies with electronic transactions becoming the order of the day, as this can be done with just a few buttons on our mobile Apps, but the government, banking sector, financial institutions and payment companies

Philippe Mareine, chief digital officer, Atos, France



Ashok Vaswani, CEO, Barclays Bank

are constantly challenged to set up a reliable, safe and trust-worthy architecture for digital economy to take off, said panellists at two sessions at the virtual Rotary institute.

Giving the European viewpoint on the digital industry, Philippe Mareine, chief digital officer and CSR head, Atos, France, said, “there is an explosion of online shopping with consumers enjoying a new easy payment experience. After coronavirus, we have made many improvements in the safety aspects of digital transactions by leveraging artificial intelligence for detection and prevention of fraud.”

Digital solutions can have a huge impact in decreasing global carbon emission by at least 15–20 per cent. “At times such transactions may be a problem, but this is a global solution in moving towards carbon neutral world,” said Mareine. Europe has made a strong commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 as stated in the Paris Agreement on climate change. He said companies like Atos are making collective efforts through

joint research on global solutions that usher in a better environment.

New standards are being developed in Europe to ensure trust and confidence while exchanging data on digital platforms. Also, products are being recycled with close relationship between the manufacturers and retailers to minimise e-waste. “New digital solutions are being explored through research in quantum computing for reducing carbon emissions and building a trustworthy ecosystem between companies and their partners,” he said.

Inflexion year

Front-end companies, startups, financial institutions and payment firms have a great opportunity now to achieve exponential growth by leveraging various payment networks and the emerging new fintech architecture, said Ashok Vaswani, CEO, Barclays Bank. Digital transactions which had a nominal growth rate of 3–5 per cent in the last few years, suddenly went up to 20–25 per cent in 2020, an inflexion year, and continue to rise rapidly.

There are four key stakeholders in the digital economy: consumers and small businesses; government and regulators; banks and financial institutions; and network companies. “With the physicality of cash getting reduced, the velocity of cash flow through digital platforms will increase exponentially. Along with a level of convenience, we have to worry about frauds, scams and regulators have to move in,” he said. Banks have to install systems that are resilient and can prevent cyber attacks on its data servers and networks. “Digital advances and innovations will give rise to new solutions and many network and payment companies will leverage on this new-wave technology,” Vaswani added.

Barclays Bank is pushing for digital receipts for each transaction then and there and if one uses a credit or debit card for shopping, a “return process based on the QR code will reveal what you have bought at the supermarket,

through an SKU-level data.” This will enable companies to know consumer preferences and market trends through analytics, thus giving rise to a new line of business model. Fear of handling cash and the rising cost of logistics will force all segments of society to adopt digital payments at a much greater pace than before, said Anish Sarkar, CEO, Sodexo BRS India.

“Mobile payment, a part of digital transactions, alone is expected to grow by over 60 per cent in the next five years, a paradigm shift in our economy,” he noted. With such massive explosion of digital payments and India being a grossly under-banked country, fintech dealers will benefit from this huge growth opportunity, said Sarkar.

Goodbye to bank branches

In the next 5–6 years, banks will close down most of their branches as

customers need not visit them for transactions. “As we move ahead, personal banking will be done at the touch of few buttons on your mobile Apps. Most banks have already started realising the need to cut down their branches,” he said. Regulators must check in to see that various financial entities and the banking sector manage and address the customers’ needs in a fair manner.

Varun Sridhar, CEO, Paytm, and Bhupesh Daheria, CEO, Aegis School of Data Sciences, explained that new players in the market would have to scale up their business volumes to make profits, while consumers have more choices for digital payment platforms. “Artificial intelligence and data sciences have key roles to ensure digital networks follow rules of the game and cyber security is extended to appliances, data servers, cloud and network systems,” said Daheria. Nasir Shaikh, HR head and VP, Atos India, moderated the panel discussion. ■

Doing good with TRF help

40 patients get free corneal graft in Hoshiarpur

Team Rotary News

Under its flagship project *Mission Give Light to Sight*, RC Hoshiarpur Midtown, RID 3070, in partnership with RC Plano Metro, Texas, RID 5810, sponsored the surgical treatment for 40 patients suffering from corneal blindness. The club has signed an MoU with the Guru Ka Langar Eye Hospital, Chandigarh, and the Shakeen Eye and Dental Hospital, Amritsar,



for implementing this global grant project.

“All expenses for these corneal operations were borne by our club,” said Parveen Palial, secretary, RC Hoshiarpur Midtown. Most of the patients came from Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, UP and Jammu and Kashmir. The club is holding awareness camps for people to donate eyes and give vision to others suffering from corneal blindness. ■

Project Resound targets avoidable deafness in Karnataka

Team Rotary News

For the first time, 12-year-old Namratha could hear the sounds around her, including human voices after she was fitted with hearing aids under Project Resound of Rotary Bangalore Brigades, RID 3190. “Diagnosed with congenital deafness at age six, she is a classic example of delayed diagnosis causing delayed treatment affecting her quality of life. It was a joy to watch

the instant glow on her face,” said club president Ashwani Kinger.

“To speak like others, Namratha will need speech therapy and training at home and school for months. The hearing aids have brought a quality change in her life,” said Dr MP Raghu, chairman, Project Resound Committee. The club seeks to make a difference in the lives of hearing-impaired children

from underprivileged families in urban and rural Karnataka through this project. “We have devised a five-pronged action plan. The first step is to screen children and provide treatment. For serious cases where hearing aids and therapy are required, we have set up a Deafness Control and Prevention Trust Fund to extend necessary aid. Our objective is to send these children to mainstream schools and

enable them to have a fun-filled normal life like their peers,” said Kinger.

Children’s park

Local legislator Ramalinga Reddy, along with DG BL Nagendra Prasad and commandant MV Ramakrishna Prasad, inaugurated a children’s park created by the club in partnership with five Rotaract clubs, the Karnataka State Reserve Police and two private firms.

Namratha and her mother at the launch of Project Resound, where she was presented with hearing aids. DG BL Nagendra Prasad (centre) and Rotary Bangalore Brigades president Ashwani Kinger (2nd from right) are also present.



Christened Kalarava Makkala Udyana Vana, the park located at KSRP Koramangala is now reverberating with peels of laughter and joy of around 500 children who live in this residential colony. Club secretary Ravi Gerard was instrumental in planning and execution of the play equipment made with recycled tyres and procuring saplings and fruit trees planted in the park.



The park developed by RC Bangalore Brigades at Koramangala.

LPG iron kits

Under its Livelihood Betterment Initiative, the club distributed LPG iron kits to several beneficiaries who press clothes for a living. This gas box is an

eco-friendly alternative to the smoke-filled, coal-fired traditional iron. It offers less strain, is 50 per cent more efficient and saves more time for the worker,

said Kinger. DG Prasad launched the initiative by presenting the iron kits to the beneficiaries in the presence of DGE Fazal Mahmood.

The recipient pays what he can, and the balance is borne by the club through donations from its members, friends and well-wishers. ■

Kolkata Interactors start a ‘street library’

The Interact Club of Silver Point School (formed by the Rotary Club of Calcutta, the longest running club in Asia), in association with iLead (a UGC recognised higher education institution of repute), has set up a ‘Free Street Library’ at their school premises. RID 3291 DG Sudip Mukherjee, along with Pradip Kr Chopra, chairman, iLead, participated in the inaugural event.

The core objective of this project was to provide a fascinating platform for sharing books and knowledge with the local people of all age groups who cannot afford to buy expensive books but are ardent book lovers, said Debasish Biswas, youth services chair, RC Calcutta. Ratna Chanda Roy, teacher coordinator of the Interact club, talked about the series of projects undertaken by the

Interactors during Covid times and other projects during 2021 that will have at least 500 beneficiaries. People from the local community were highly appreciative of this centre which will make the ‘street library’ accessible to them. DG Mukherjee appreciated the efforts of the Interactors, and the event saw donation of more than 600 books in English, Mathematics, general knowledge, science and story books by the Interact club of the school to Divine Social Welfare Society, an NGO which supports education of poor and slum children.

Others who participated in this inaugural event included Sulagna Daw, district interact chair; Bani Roychowdhury, secretary of Silver Point School; Purnendu Roychowdhury, trustee member of the school and RID 3291 zonal secretary Debasish Biswas. ■



Interactors donate books to the Divine Social Welfare Society.



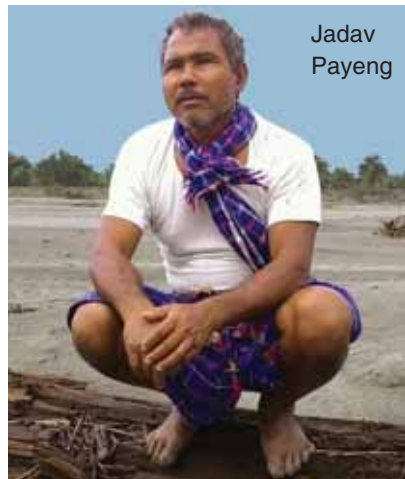
Zone institute felicitates unsung heroes

Kiran Zehra

Five individuals doing remarkable work in Rotary’s focus areas — economic development; health; literacy; and water, sanitation and hygiene were honoured at the Rotary institute with a citation and a cash reward of ₹1 lakh each.

Ayyapa Masagi, also known as Water Gandhi, for creating solutions to overcome water scarcity and making communities more water efficient; Jadav Payeng, popularly known as the Forest Man of India and

an environmental activist; Kulwinder Kaur Minhas, a social worker and educationist who gave up her teaching career to serve the slum children in Ludhiana through her Jhuggiwala School; Thaslima Nasreen, a transgender woman, for her startup Halal Catering, a food catering business entirely managed and run by transgenders; and Dr Abhijit Sonawane, who is providing free treatment to beggars and the street dwellers in Pune, were presented with the Rotary Hero Awards.



Jadav Payeng



Ayyapa Masagi



Kulwinder Kaur Minhas



Dr Abhijit Sonawane

Gender equity

“For me, women’s empowerment is about bringing attention to some of the issues that we’re facing here in our country in the hope that people will learn more, educate themselves and hopefully take action,” said Jai Madaan, a lifestyle coach, in her

address at the institute. She stressed on the need for better awareness on gender equity and pointed out that gender bias is a universal issue. “Be assertive and not aggressive in your approach. Ask questions, talk about the problems women face at their homes, and workplace,” she said,

adding that sensitising women about their rights and opportunities will go a long way in their empowerment.

Boys should be taught to be more respectful rather than girls getting conditioned towards conservatism. “We must bring up both men and women on an equal platform. Whether a woman chooses to work for money or follows her passion or opts to stay at home, her choices must be respected and she must be treated with dignity always,” she said, adding that respect for women should begin at home. “Teach your children to respect the mother as much as the father. In many cases the father maybe the provider but in all cases the mother is the nurturer.” ■



A post-Covid new moral order in the making

V Muthukumaran

How to sustain moral values when one rises to powerful positions? “The only answer I was able to come up with is the Indian word ‘Sangath’, that is who you surround yourself with. This is a powerful idea, but more critical is for you to create the right conditions and be open for those around you to point your mistakes. For you need truth speakers as friends to avoid moral failures on your part,” said Nitin Nohria, dean, Harvard Business School. He was speaking at a session on ‘Moral humility’ at the virtual Rotary institute chaired by DGN Sandip Agarwalla, RID 3141.

Having truthful friends and peers around you and be open to their criticisms is the only “systematic defence I have seen on people who remained morally humble at powerful roles and top positions over time,” said Nohria. Some of the value failures were exposed more deeply in this pandemic time, but “as an eternal optimist I feel that if such moral failures are revealed more sharply now, then there are opportunities for recovery as well.”

The Four-Way Test of Rotary is extraordinary and if we apply it today, how much better the world will be, he said. “Covid has revealed so much of inequities and unfairness in the society that the cost of any tragedy is borne mostly by the vulnerable groups, far more than those privileged to escape into the comfort of their homes and follow social distancing norms to protect themselves,” he explained.

Why do seemingly good people behave badly at times? When we see



Nitin Nohria, dean
Harvard Business School

examples of ethical or moral failures, our immediate reaction is to say that person was bad. Why is it so, asked Agarwalla. “This is one of the greatest moral questions that people have asked for a long, long time and I came to think of this issue deeply through the work of social psychologist Stanley Milgram, a professor at the Yale University.”

Collective evil

In the aftermath of World War II, Milgram, a Jew, could not understand how the entire German people could have done what they did during the Holocaust. Is it possible that all Germans at that time were evil? “To believe that, it requires in some ways to lose your humanity too.” For how could there be a group of people where everyone is personally evil? He conducted an experiment by inviting random people from the streets and putting them in a setting in which there was an instructor and a learner.

If the learner made a mistake, he was given electric shocks to prevent such things and do better next time. “The rest of the participants did not know that the learner was in fact a confederate of the instructor, and not a real learner. The game was rigged as the instructor and learner were chosen by draw of cards. However, two-thirds believed that the learner was genuine. You and I would have ended up getting electric shocks. As innocent persons, just because someone in authority said it, you are supposed to follow the instructions,” said Nohria.

There are many societal influences that might cause us to behave in ways that belie our own moral values such as justifying certain things, actions due to prevailing norms (such as we have to bribe our way to get things done), pressure of incentives and time pressure, among others.

American racism

People affected by racism in the Covid times were disproportionately from the under-represented minority community in the US. “The killing of George Floyd led the American people coming to terms with the racial and inequality issues in their country,” he opined. How is it the case that again and again, we see innocent black men and women being killed by police in horrifying circumstances, he queried. “The sharp manner in which our moral failures are being revealed now will lead us to a moral awakening in this pandemic time,” he added. ■

Afghanistan

where India is loved & respected

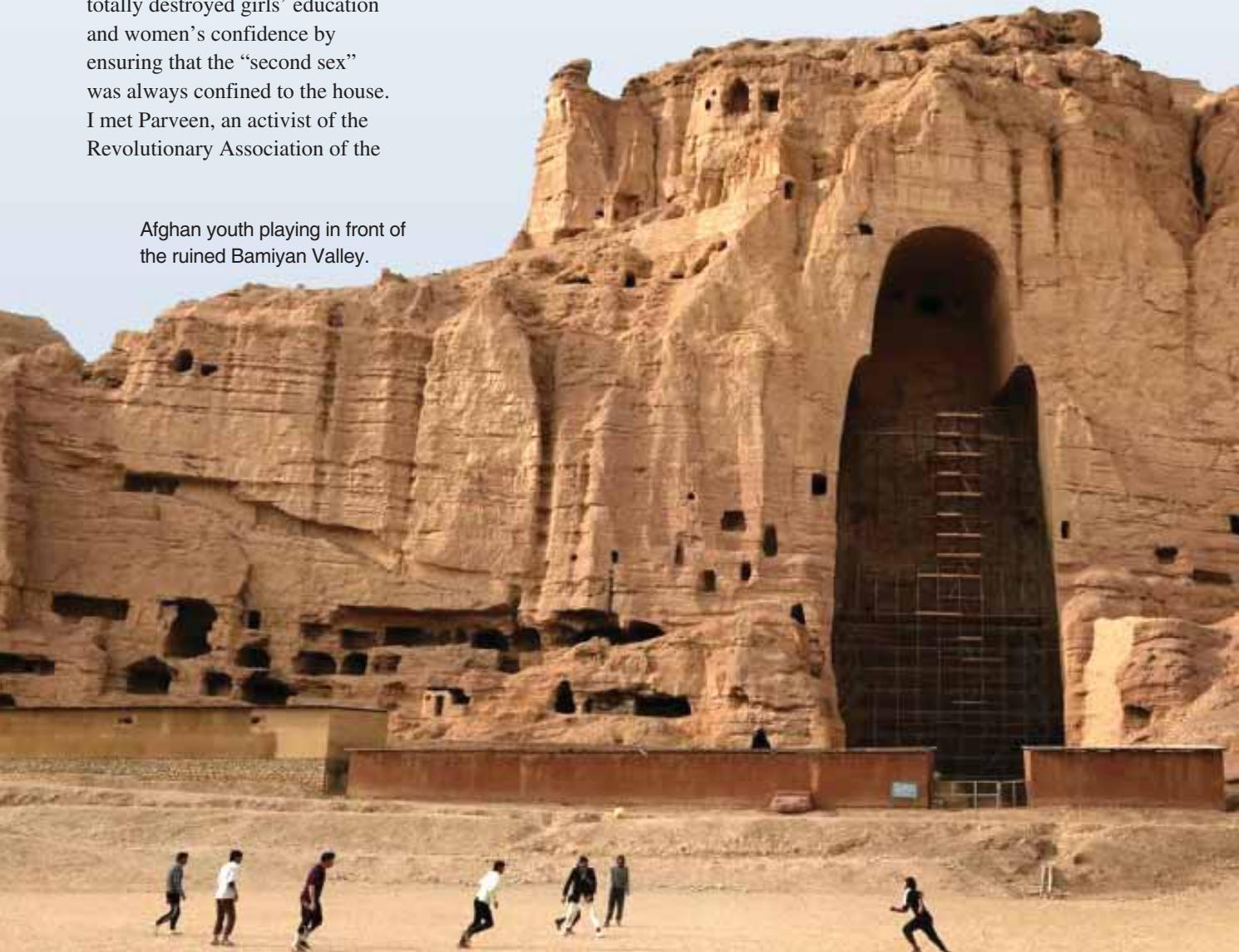
Rasheeda Bhagat

On the gender front, anybody who visited Afghanistan in 2005, as I did, and I suspect nothing much has changed, is bound to come away with a heavy heart. The Taliban had left the scene in November 2001, but they totally destroyed girls' education and women's confidence by ensuring that the "second sex" was always confined to the house. I met Parveen, an activist of the Revolutionary Association of the

Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), which had put up such a valiant fight for the rights of women during the Taliban era, and even earlier. She told me that "even though the situation on the gender front has improved compared to the Taliban era, much more needed to be done".

She had left the country during the Taliban years and worked for RAWA from Peshawar in Pakistan, and was rather sceptical about the "liberal stance" taken by the then Hamid Karzai government on the gender front. "This is more due to pressure from the US. We find

Afghan youth playing in front of the ruined Bamiyan Valley.



most people in the administration, including some of the top ministers in the government, fundamentalist at heart. Right now, they are just paying lip service to women's emancipation to please the Americans."

What she said next rang so true to all countries, including ours, which often pay only lip service to the gender cause. "The Afghan woman is most persecuted within her own home. The father, the husband, the brother... these are the people who torture her the most; in many homes there is a lot of domestic violence, the women are forced to wear the burqa and girls are not allowed to go to school or college or to work." RAWA activists accused the government of packing the country's

top judiciary with male chauvinists who had no qualms in going on record that a woman can never be equal to a man!

I ask a "westerner" — The World Bank's country chief in Afghanistan, Jean Mazurelle — to comment on the gender situation and the role of the international community in improving women's status in Afghanistan. He feels this is an area where the Western aid organisations would have to tread cautiously. For instance, a "white" man telling the Afghan woman to be emancipated and go out without the burqa would be a disaster. "If we do that we could be perceived as Westerners imposing Western values on the Afghan women. We have to be very careful

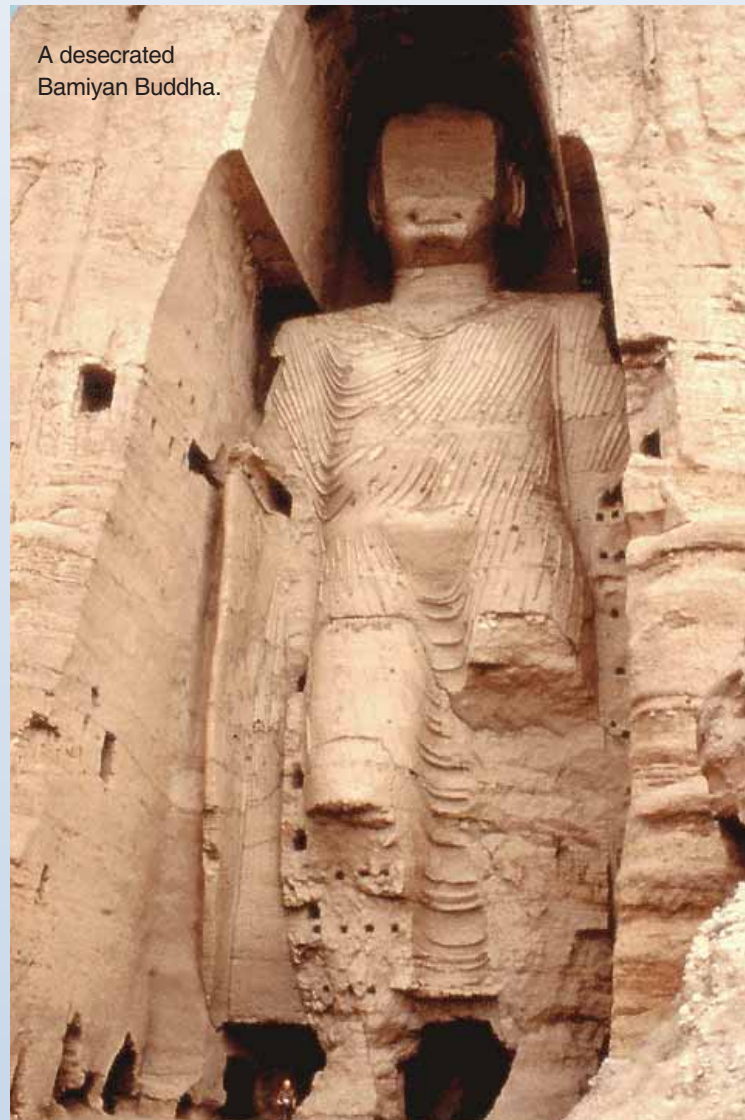
not to create any backlash from people who say the Westerners are trying to unveil our women."

But the Frenchman then went on to add something which had me beaming. "But Indian women, who are here in good numbers and various capacities, representing the voluntary sector and even several UN organisations, are much better placed to make a difference on this front." All praise for the role India was playing in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, he said that many of his female colleagues from World Bank in Delhi either visited or were working in Afghanistan.

"In their interaction with the Afghans, they are respectful of the environment here, but at the same



File photos



A desecrated Bamiyan Buddha.

time they're able to convince them quite a bit on gender issues." He added that he would be delighted to "see the Afghans looking at India's development path rather than that of Iran or Pakistan."

India, an admired neighbour

Forget what Mazurelle is saying about India and its influence, in most of the Islamic world, be it an Iraq or a Turkey, India is looked upon with respect, admiration and even love. Indians visiting Afghanistan were in for a pleasant surprise. Afghans just love India and Indians; not only Indian films and actors Shah Rukh Khan and Aishwarya Rai, but also the country's record in economic development, education, healthcare and promotion of a liberal ethos.

The then Indian ambassador to Afghanistan Rakesh Sood pointed out that the GoI had put in some \$600 million from its aid budget to help the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan, and this was visible all over. As he pointed out, India was one of the first countries to get involved in infrastructure building, "and we worked all across the country at a time many donors were hesitant to go out of Kabul owing to the security situation."

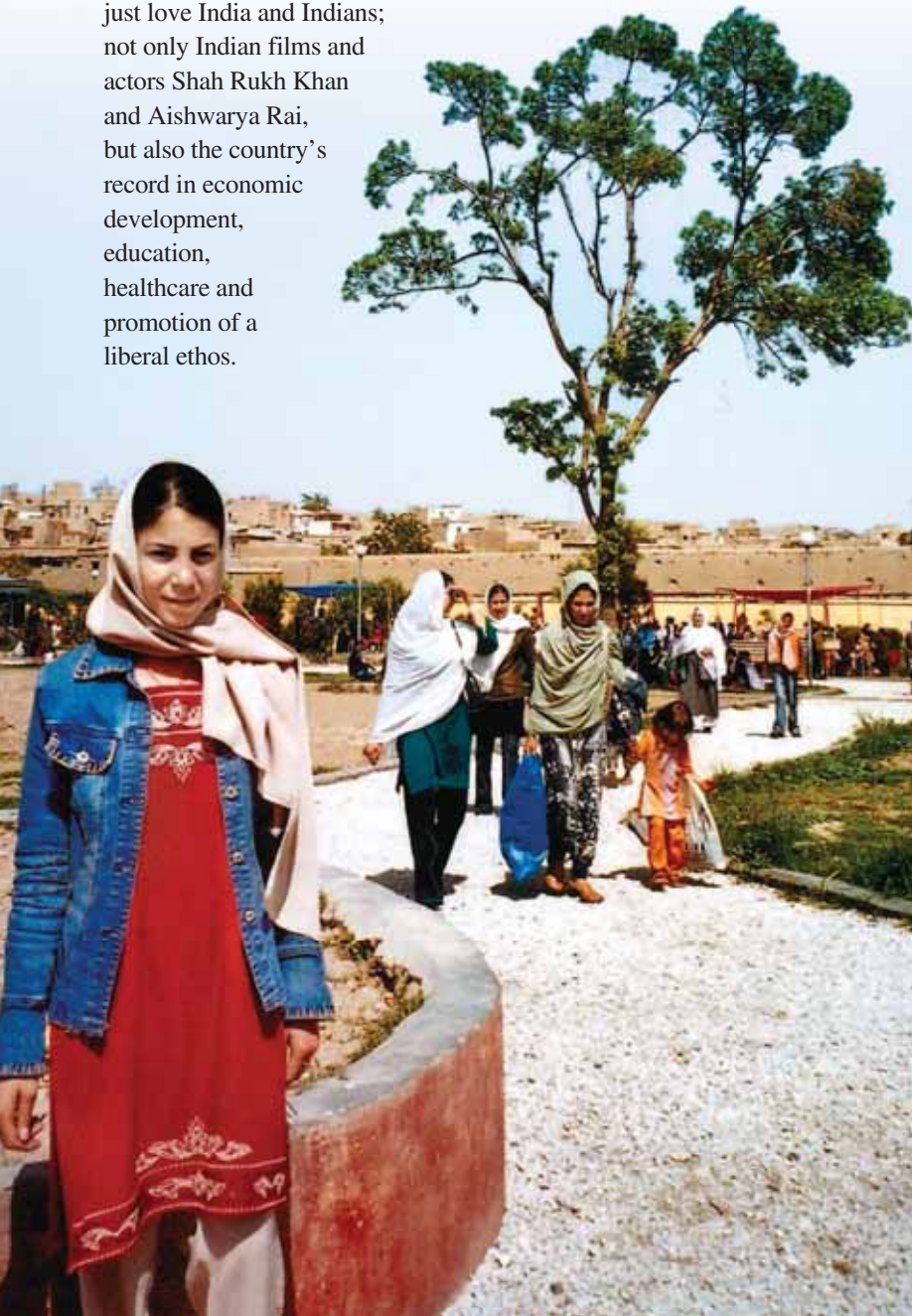
India has always been a friend and has never coveted anything that belongs to us or done anything to hurt Afghanistan's interests.

Haji Abdul Hakeem
a carpet shopowner

So whether it was the rebuilding of the \$90 million Salma Hydel Project; the laying of hundreds of km of roads and power transmission lines; the setting up of Afghanistan's first cold storage plant in Kandahar so that this fruit bowl could process and export its produce; the reconstruction of the famous Habibia School in Kabul where Karzai was once a student; the reconstruction of the 250-bed Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health, the only paediatric hospital in Kabul, at a cost of \$3 million; or the training of teachers and Afghan government staff, Indian presence was very visible.

Interestingly enough, I found, and for obvious reasons, Afghanistan's neighbours Iran and Pakistan were looked upon with suspicion, if not hatred. But India was admired for a host of reasons. At the bustling Chicken Street, one of Kabul's most favourite shopping areas, I talked to Haji Abdul Hakeem, who owned a carpet shop here. An ardent fan of India, he said: "Look at your education system; you turn out such fine students from your institutions."

Baghe Zanana (Women's Garden) in Kabul where women can meet, throw off their veils and relax.



A scenic waterbody on the way to Bamiyan.



He had a very interesting analogy to compare India with other countries when it came to Afghanistan's foreign relations with other countries. "As you know, for long years we have had a troubled history, with so much violence and bloodshed. Afghanistan has been like a muddy river, and so many countries, whether it is the mighty United States, Soviet Union, Iran, or Pakistan, all of them have tried to fish in our troubled waters and exploit us. Except India. India has always been a friend and has never coveted anything that belongs to us or done anything to hurt Afghanistan's interests."

So what would he like India to do towards the future development of the ravaged nation, I asked him. "Nothing much for a country like yours. Your education system is among the best in the world. The best help India can give Afghanistan is to pick up our children, say 500

boys and girls — from Kabul, Mazar, Kandahar, Bamiyan and so on — and give them education in India. When they return as fine scholars and professionals, they will have the potential to reshape the future of our country."

Value of Indian doctors

If Indian education was held at a premium here, Indian doctors and medicines were considered priceless. On our flight from Delhi to Kabul, there were at least two medical teams bound for Afghanistan. While

The Afghan woman is most persecuted within her own home. The father, the husband, the brother... these are the people who torture her the most.

the private players, particularly from the heart care institutions, were scouting for business, the GoI was sending doctors from the central government health services to put in a stint in Afghanistan, where the healthcare services had been devastated by the long-raging war.

Indian ambassador Sood told me that five Indian medical teams were working in hot spots such as Kandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif. When asked if security was not a concern, he said: "People just love Indian doctors and trust them and their judgment implicitly. We find that there is great faith in both Indian diagnostic skills and Indian medicine, because there is a lot of adulterated medicine in the markets here. The general perception is that to get well one must go to Indian doctors and take medicines from them. Sometimes when medical supplies run out, people will wait for a day or two for medicines from

Sometimes when medical supplies run out, people will wait for a day or two for medicines from India rather than buy from the local market.

Rakesh Sood

Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan

India rather than buy from the local market.”

Vile destruction of Heritage Buddhas

However much one had read about the heinous act of the Taliban in destroying the ancient 6th century giant Buddha statues in the Bamiyan valley bang in the heart of the Hindu Kush region, visiting the massive Bamiyan cliff where these majestic Buddhas once stood, and where we could now only see the huge holes in the caves, was nothing short of a stomach-churning experience. In those horrid hollow spaces once rested magnificent Buddha statues, the bigger one 55 metres tall and the smaller 35 metres, resplendent in red and blue attire, adorned with glittering ornaments and surrounded by colourful paintings.

The Taliban, after seizing power at Mazar-e-Sharif and the area around this location around 1998-end, blew hot and cold between 1999 and 2001 about destroying these statues which the savages declared “un-Islamic”, despite UNESCO having declared it a world heritage site. History says

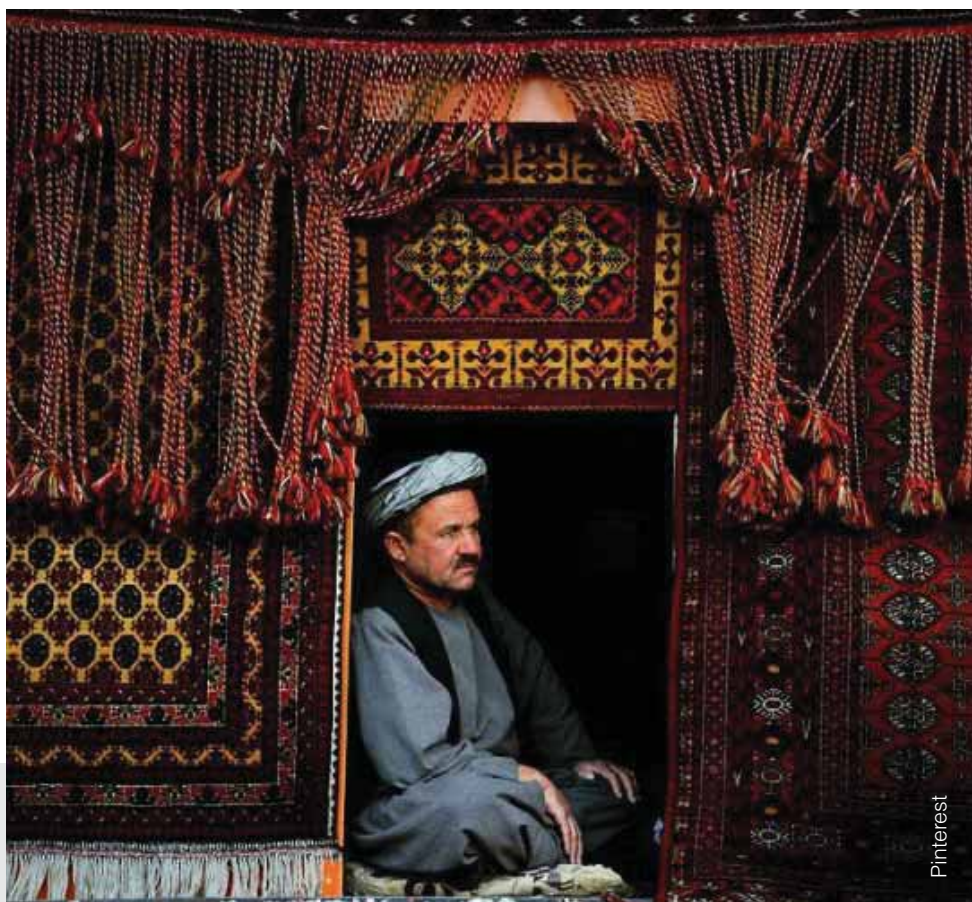
that every year Buddhist pilgrims from within Afghanistan and overseas would come here annually and offer prayers and the most famous cultural landmark of this region saw a festival atmosphere.

In July 1999, Taliban chief Mullah Mohammed Omar decided to preserve the Bamiyan Buddhas saying that as the statues were no longer worshipped, this site could be a potential money spinner as an international tourist spot in the future.

But in Feb 2001, the Taliban did an about turn and decided to destroy the statues causing an international uproar. All the 54 heads of the OIC (Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation) countries condemned this decision at a meet called by UNESCO. Both India and Japan

offered to move the statues to their respective countries at their cost; Japan even offered to “cover” the statues and give additional money to the Taliban as compensation. Even Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf wrote to the Taliban requesting them against “this unIslamic act”. But nothing worked and the Buddhas were blown to smithereens using powerful dynamite, over several weeks, after several rounds of firing by anti-aircraft guns only managed to damage and not destroy these sturdy heritage artefacts.

All that we could reflect upon, in the mind’s eye was the spot with grand Buddha statues gilded with gold and decorated with “precious ornaments that dazzles the eyes with their brightness,” as one visitor had put it.



A carpet seller in Kabul.



Above: A hawker selling posters of Bollywood stars.

Journey to Bamiyan

Our journey to Bamiyan, in a Toyota HiAce, is a memorable one, as the vehicle has to go through large expanses which might once have been roads. When we set off from Kabul, and I naively asked Olivier Guillaume, councillor for cooperation at the French Embassy in Kabul, the distance to Bamiyan, he smiles and says: “In Afghanistan we never talk in terms of distance; but the number of hours.”

Well, the 250km journey, given the state of the roads, took us a back-breaking 11 hours, nothing less. While we were nursing our backs, imagine the plight of our driver who had to negotiate tracts filled with boulders and potholes large enough to swallow his vehicle. Not to mention of running brooks on the road, formed by melting snow from the mountain tops.

But the relief came from the picturesque landscape, the small

rivers that kept us company, at a level below, and the greenery of early spring, helped by an unusually good rainfall, which had brought cheer and hope of a good wheat crop.

But on the most inhospitable roads were located amazingly hospitable *chaikhanas* with friendly people and smiling children, offering us piping hot tea. Despite the status of the country, and their own poverty, there was no attempt whatsoever to fleece foreigners, including the very obvious westerners, the two Guillaumes!

As I look back upon my trip to Afghanistan, 16 years down the line,

Given India’s popularity, it should promote movies with a strong gender theme, focusing on the education of girls and economic emancipation of women.

An Iranian voluntary worker

the dream is to return some day. The Covid pandemic has made travel that much more precious. And given the popularity of Bollywood then, I wonder who their popular icons are now. It was Shahrukh Khan and Madhuri Dixit then, along with Ajay Devgn, Aishwarya Rai and Preity Zinta. Music was back in Kabul after the Taliban’s ban on it was lifted, and you could hear Bollywood songs on Kabul’s streets. As also large posters of Bollywood stars!

But an Iranian woman, working for an NGO, had me thinking when she said: “I know India makes great films; but unfortunately, what we get in Afghanistan is the usual colourful song-and-dance romance stuff. But given the status of women here, and India’s popularity, your government should promote movies that have a strong gender theme, focus on the education of girls and the economic emancipation of women. The Afghan authorities certainly need inspiration from such movies!”

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat

Designed by Krishnapratheesh



Waste segregation begins at home

Preeti Mehra



As responsible green citizens, there is one issue that needs our whole-hearted and urgent attention. Managing the waste generated in our households requires more than just dumping it in the bin. In fact, if we extend ourselves a wee bit, it will go a long way in making the world a healthier and cleaner place.

The statistics vis-à-vis garbage to be disposed of are quite alarming. Going by official figures, Indians generate 145 million tonnes (MT) of waste annually. And by 2047, it is projected that this figure will reach a staggering 260 to 300 MT per day.

Compounding the problem is the fact that not enough is being done to mitigate the situation. Data from the Central Pollution Control Board reveals that of the 117,644 MT of waste collected in a year, only 49,401 MT is currently treated. The rest piles up in city landfills as mountains of garbage.

And this, unfortunately, is growing by the day.

Given the scale and enormity of the problem, what can we do as citizens? A lot. The best part is that waste management begins at home.

It starts with the simple action of segregating our garbage. For this, it is best to keep three marked bins and a big cloth bag. A large bin for the dry waste and two relatively smaller ones for wet waste and hazardous waste. Keep the big cloth bag in an obscure corner to collect plastic packaging that can be given away periodically for reuse.

Dry waste typically consists of cartons, cardboards, cans, aluminium foils, plastics, metal and paper — all made of material that can be recycled. Glass also comes into the dry category but needs to be packed carefully to avoid breakage, before dropping into the bin. Alternatively, it can be kept separately for disposal.

Your wet waste, which needs daily disposal, will include used tea leaves, ground coffee, vegetable peels, meat and fish bones, leftover foodstuff, dried flowers and leaves. In short everything organic that needs to be thrown away and can be composted.

It could all go into an organic waste converter, if you can invest in one. Or else, an ordinary compost box would do. The waste could thus be turned into manure for your plants. If you live in a high rise, a common composting unit for the entire apartment block could be started which can generate manure for all the green areas around. Many environment organisations now actively help apartment blocks to initiate such green practices.

The hazardous waste is a bit more complicated. It includes expired medicines or cosmetics, dried shoe polish, dried paint, fused bulbs, fluorescent tubes, spray cans, batteries, fertilisers,

and pesticide containers. They must be collected separately in a bin and marked as hazardous before disposal. Sanitary waste including sanitary napkins also require separate paper bags for disposal.

You must be wondering what the cloth bag is for. A lot of households and building societies tie up with not-for-profit organisations that grow tree saplings, turn trash to cash, make toys or furniture for children. These outfits are constantly appealing to the public for used milk packets, strong grocery bags, courier bags and other packing material. These can be set aside in the cloth bag and handed over once a month for recycling.

Apart from this, every household generates electronic waste which needs to be disposed of in a proper manner. Be it an old mobile phone, charger, keyboard, computer mouse, mixer, lamp, iron or headphone. It is best to sell these to a kabadiwalla who knows exactly how to deal with

Going by official figures, Indians generate 145 million tonnes of waste annually. By 2047 it is projected that this figure will reach a staggering 260 to 300 MT a day.

electronic waste down the disposal chain. Of course, some brands of old mobiles and laptops can be retained to be exchanged for a discount when a new one is purchased.

It is heartening to note that many resident welfare committees have kickstarted the process of segregation by making provisions for dry, wet and hazardous waste by assigning chutes or specific space for each. They have also ensured that the waste collected reaches the appropriate destination. But it all begins at home. The simple act of segregation makes

it easier to apply different processes like composting, recycling and incineration to the trash.

Segregating waste should not be taken lightly. If we do not carry out this exercise systematically in our living space then it would require an enormous effort in the future to manage the pile up at the landfills. Currently some of these mountains of garbage are mined for waste recovery and disposal at a huge cost.

Shifting to a sustainable lifestyle means following the 4Rs — Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover. Basically, it advocates reducing your consumption of inorganic material, reusing what you have used before trying to recycle the object to its maximum, and recover whatever is possible from it. To discuss the 4Rs and composting techniques would need a whole new column.

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

Doing good with TRF help

A Rotary dialysis centre in Ahmednagar

Team Rotary News



RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi and Dr Amita with DG Harish Motwani, DGE Om Prakash Motipawale, DRFC Pramod Parikh and club president Kshitij Zaware at the dialysis centre.

Rotary Club of Ahmednagar Midtown, RID 3132, set up the Rotary Midtown Dialysis Centre with five dialysis units at the Maccare Super Specialty Hospital in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra.

The \$48,000 worth project was supported through a global grant from TRF; RC Miami Airport, RID 6990, US and RC Faridabad Aastha, RID 3011, said club president Kshitij Zaware. The club handed over the machines, genset, RO water purifier, air conditioners and hospital beds to the hospital. Zaware said that the services will be offered at subsidised rates and this facility can help perform 400 dialysis a day benefitting 50 to 80 needy patients.

RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi inaugurated the centre in the presence of DG Harish Motwani, DGE Om Prakash Motipawale, DRFC Pramod Parikh, project chair Vijay Ingle and Zaware. ■

Meet your Governors

V Muthukumar



“Project Orange will be a gamechanger in eyecare”

S Muthupalaniappan

Realtor

RC Madras Central Aadithya, RID 3232

He is excited to share that by the end of this Rotary year, Tamil Nadu will have 200 vision centres at a cost of ₹30 crore. S Muthupalaniappan says that under the district project — *Project Orange* — the district team has come out with a hybrid model to plug the huge gap in the GoI’s target of setting up 20,000 vision centres across India by 2020 with support from WHO, International Association of Preventable Blindness and six major hospitals in India. “We have not even crossed 1,000 vision centres so far. Under the hybrid model, we will set up 200 eyecare facilities in RID 3232 and neighbouring districts. By Feb-end we will roll out the first batch of 104 vision centres for which seven GGs (\$1.6 million) have been okayed with support from 32 clubs,” he adds.

For the second phase, 96 vision centres were “already mapped and we are in the process of applying for GG. This milestone will be a gamechanger for Rotary and the eyecare sector and will trigger the process to meet the GoI’s target.” The district has added four more dialysis centres to its existing 10 such facilities with the support of Tanker Foundation. A mobile cardiac screening unit will be donated to Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Hospital in April (GG: \$180,000). So far, 13 GG applications worth \$2.2 million have been filed, of which 10 grants valued at \$1.9 million have been okayed and “are under different stages of implementation.” To help the differently-abled persons, “100 mobile vending carts are being given in a phased manner so that the vendors can overcome difficulties faced during the pandemic.”

Muthupalaniappan has set a target of training 100 women in beauty care under *Project Sundari*. With 129 clubs having a total of 5,400 Rotarians, he is aiming for a 10 per cent membership growth. Being the largest Rotaract district in the world (130 clubs, 25,000-plus Rotaractors), he is keen to retain members and engage the youth “so that they find value in Rotaract clubs.” His target for TRF giving is \$1million.

Tree plantation, road safety projects his top focus

K S Venkatesan

Edible oil manufacturing, RC Chinnasalem, RID 2982



He will focus more on environment-related projects including mega tree plantation drives. K S Venkatesan has set a target of planting at least 50,000 saplings across the district. “All my 72 clubs were asked to take up plantation camps, and so far 20,000 trees have been planted,” he says. His second priority is road safety awareness for which the district will be holding a mega bike rally that will boost the public image of Rotary. “So far 12 road safety awareness camps were held, and we will easily cross the target of 30 such camps this year.” Pamphlets will be distributed at tollgates, bus terminuses and busy junctions urging motorists and heavy vehicle owners to drive safely with precautions. On the membership front, he is aiming for a 15 per cent growth. At present, there are 3,180 Rotarians, of which 120 were newly-inducted.

There are 1,500-plus Rotaractors across 83 Rotaract clubs and he plans to add 200 new members.

He has plans to organise 30 blood donation camps across the district and till now, 20 have been conducted. All the clubs were given Smart TVs to be donated to government schools as part of the Happy Schools project. “We will be giving 200 cupboards to school libraries, and so far 113 units have been delivered at Hosur, Krishnagiri and Salem,” he explains. He aims to contribute \$400,000 to TRF from his district. Venkatesan joined as a Rotaractor in 1989, having been inspired by PRID C Basker when he was the club president. “Later on, I became a charter secretary of RC Chinnasalem in 1997. Basker is my role model in Rotary,” he adds.

Membership growth a big challenge under new guidelines

Rajan Gandotra

Realtor, RC Dhanbad, RID 3250



Just when Rajan Gandotra was looking forward to give a push to community service projects and motivate Rotarians, “I was taken aback by the Feb 1 circular from the RI board that there will be no more funding for governor’s monthly visits to clubs and in-person meetings,” he says. He was in the middle of an official visit when he got the RI circular. While he has a target of adding 500 new members, “I am not sure, if this is possible after the new guideline on club meetings.” The clubs are not motivated through zoom meetings, and prefer a face-to-face meet with their governors, he says. There are 101 clubs in the district with 3,870-plus Rotarians. *Project Vasundhra* with a target of planting 1.2 million trees was virtually launched by RIPE Shekhar Mehta in the presence of 30 global leaders across time zones.

Under Happy Schools, Jeevan Jyoti School in Dhanbad will be provided with special equipment for teaching 110 differently-abled children through a GG project (\$60,000) which is under process. “I have plans to do 50 Happy Schools during my tenure,” he says. Six dialysis centres with three machines each will come at one private and five charitable hospitals in Bihar and Jharkhand. “With an average GG of \$50,000 for each centre, we have got approval for two facilities and are waiting for the rest.”

Two eye hospitals and two blood component separator units are in the pipeline. Gandotra was influenced by his school friend PDG Sandeep Narang to join RC Dhanbad in 1996. He is the fourth governor from his home club.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Women in rural Shimoga receive cows to boost their income

Kiran Zehra

On a Rotary Friendship Exchange Programme PDG Robert Macdonald from RC West Springfield, RID 7890, USA, and his spouse visited Shimoga last year and met the beneficiaries of RC Shimoga's cow donation project. A teary-eyed villager Pallavi told the visitors how she reared a herd of four cows with the help of this Rotary initiative and that her income has been steadily growing ever since. Another beneficiary Jagannath spoke of being able to send his son to school with the money he made because of the cow gifted by the club to his wife. PDG Macdonald returned home and shared these success stories at his club meet. As a result, his club supported RC Shimoga, RID 3182, in four out of six global grants for the same project.

In collaboration with RC Ripponpet, RID 3182; TRF and RC West

Springfield, the club gifted 73 hybrid milch cows to underprivileged families in villages near Ripponpet and Shimoga. "The project aims at poverty alleviation by providing self-employment to women from poor economic background. This project has improved the standard of living in these families," says club president Suneetha Sreedhar who initiated this project. The cows were handed over to the beneficiaries in the presence of DG Rajarama Bhat and PDG BN Ramesh, after a traditional *go pooja* (ceremonial worshipping of the cows).

To date over 500 families have benefitted from the popularly known 'cow project' which is worth ₹30 lakh. These cows have been christened 'Rotary Cows,' she quips. The beneficiaries were chosen after ascertaining their knowledge in cow rearing. "We also ensured that they could give the

bovine a simple shelter and enough water. They were also urged to take insurance for their cows against accidents and illnesses," says Suneetha. The local Rotary clubs have also entered into an MOU with the local government's animal husbandry department to organise free veterinary services like immunisation, treatment and artificial insemination. The beneficiaries received hands-on training by veterinarians before taking their cow home.

The beneficiaries assured the Rotarians that they would take good care of the cows and not sell them off for the next three years. The Rotarians also took "a special commitment from them to donate the first-calf heifer to a suitable beneficiary under our guidance. This will enable us to support more poor families and perpetuate the project," smiles Suneetha. ■

PDGs P Narayana, BN Ramesh, DG B Rajarama Bhat (in brown coat), and RC Shimoga president Suneetha Sreedhar at an event to donate cows to the beneficiaries.



From RI South Asia Office desk

Club recognition

The Rotary Foundation offers clubs several opportunities to earn recognition for their support of its grants and programmes. The Club Foundation Banner Report available to district/club leaders in My Rotary, displays a club's progress in the current Rotary year — 100% Foundation Giving Club; 100% Every Rotarian, Every Year Club; Top Three Per Capita in Annual Fund Giving; 100% Paul Harris Society Club; and 100% Paul Harris Fellow Club (one-time banner).

As of 2015–16, new club members (those who joined or transferred from another club during the current Rotary year) are not included in participation requirements for club banners (except for the 100% Paul Harris Fellow Banner). However, new members' contributions will be used for per capita calculations.

Banner recipients listed in the Club Foundation Banner Report may fluctuate throughout the Rotary year due to changes in membership and additional or redistributed contributions. Final banner certification is processed by TRF after June 30. Club banners earned for the previous year are shipped to the current DG in October or November. You may request the District Foundation Banner Report at rotarysupportcenter@rotary.org. It is

also available to club/district leaders through their My Rotary login.

Promote Rotary's Covid relief

- Follow RI's official Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and participate in online events hosted globally and regionally
- Use *#PeopleOfAction* and *#RotaryResponds* hashtags and help promote the good work and stories of hope
- Make brief social media post packages (a set of 4–5 serial posts on a particular initiative/project) and time them weekly/fortnightly on your digital channels
- Develop infographics around the work done across various Areas of Focus and time posts on key dates such as World Water Day (March 22), World Health Day (April 6)
- Use video bytes of club and district leadership and create Facebook and Instagram stories
- Create visual project stories via pictures (8–10 pictures in a story) with appropriate captions and post them on Whatsapp, Instagram and Facebook
- Tag RI's global handles in your social media posts for amplification and reach to global Rotary members
- Upload projects and pictures on Rotary Showcase.

Contribution dos and don'ts

Dos

Covering note with donor details like:

- **Name**
- **Rotary ID against cheque/draft number**
- **Gift designation**
- **PAN** (mandatory for every contribution, irrespective of amount)
- **Corporate letter** (in case of contribution from family-controlled business/trust account)
- **Individual cheque/draft** for each member
- **Only personal/spouse** contribution for Major Donor and above recognitions.

Important:

For online contribution, please use My Rotary login or your official email address to avoid duplicate ID generation and receive timely credit for your contribution. Also, in case of 'Contribute on behalf of members' option available for club leaders through their My Rotary login, the 80G receipt can only be issued in the name of the remitter and not in the name of individual members. Click on the link http://www.highroadsolution.com/file_uploader2/files/give_online_on_behalf_of_club_or_club_members_instructions.pdf to know more about 'How to Donate Online on Behalf of Club Members'.

Don'ts

Cheques/drafts without donor details

Consolidated cheque/draft from club on behalf of members

Contribution on behalf of other member.



Asha, the queen of bold, brassy, peppy melodies

SR Madhu

A song so powerful that it can bring a dead man to life.” That’s how Kishore Kumar described *Dum maro dum*, Asha Bhosle’s peppy song in *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* (1971). Composed by RD Burman for Dev Anand, the song became the international anthem of the Hippie movement. It inspired pop, jazz and rock versions across the world. It shook up Bollywood music.

The song was actually to be rendered by Lata Mangeshkar, but Dev Anand, with his intuitive flair, decided that it was more apt

for Asha Bhosle. He was right. Asha sizzled, Zeenat Aman shimmered, the song thundered to success.

If Lata is the empress of Bollywood melody, Asha Bhosle is the queen of all things bold, brassy and beautiful — and the symbol of change. In her six-decade career, she gave the best cabaret song (*Piya tu ab to aaja* in *Caravan*); one of the most iconic songs of Madhubala (*Aiye Mehrban* in *Howrah Bridge*); Dev Anand’s best romantic song (*Abhi na jao chhod kar*, an Asha-Rafi charmer), and some of the most exquisite ghazals of cinema in *Umrao Jaan* such as *Dil cheez kya hei aap meri*, *Justuju jiski thi* and *In aankhon ki masti ke*.

She gave the definitive bridal song (*Gore gore haathon mein mehndi*



lagake in Bimal Roy's *Parineeta*); an evergreen birthday song (*Tum jiyo hazaron saal in Sujatha*); and one of the most infectious gypsy songs (*Jhumka ghira re in Mera Saaya*). Proving she could do much more than belt out just sizzling and romantic songs, Asha has rendered some of the most soulful songs, one of the most heartrending being *Ab ke baras bhejo bhaiya ko babul* in Bimal Roy's 1963 classic *Bandini*, with the music composed by SD Burman.

Shammi Kapoor once remarked: "If there was no Mohammad Rafi, I would have asked Asha Bhosle to sing for me." Amit Kumar, son of Kishore, recalling Asha's statement that someone like Kishore Kumar is born once in a millennium, added, "one like Ashaji is not born even once in a millennium." Musicologist Ashok da Ranade says Asha has the ability to musically enliven every timbre that composers deploy.

At a recording studio with RD Burman.



The beginning

Asha was 10 when she sang her first film song in 1943.

Today, at 87, she has sung over 13,000 songs in over 20 languages, though some estimates put the number past 20,000! These include pop, ghazals, bhajans, qawwalis, folk and classical songs, and Rabindra sangeet. She has been awarded a Padma Vibushan (2008); Dadasaheb Phalke

Award (2000); a BBC Lifetime Achievement Award (2002); two national awards (*Umrao Jaan*, 1981), and for the song *Mera kuch saaman* from *Ijaazat* (1987). She won seven Filmfare Awards and a Filmfare Lifetime Achievement Award in 2001.

Once branded as a cabaret singer and pop crooner, a poor shadow of Lata Mangeshkar, Asha is today hailed as an icon of change and innovation, as a singer with rock star charisma, and a person who has challenged and redefined the boundaries of Bollywood music. Recalling her modest beginning, she once said, "When





I look back at my early career, I remember dusty movie sets, people running around, lights and cameras. And there was little me, falling asleep and being woken up to sing my part. I think of that time fondly — it was pre-independence India.”

Travails and resolve

But few singers have gone through as much travail in personal and professional life as Asha Bhosle. Few have displayed as much resolve and resilience to overcome prejudice and misfortune.

Asha recalls that many years ago, when both she and Kishore were unknown and struggling,

composer Khemchand Prakash invited them for a trial recording. They got rejected. She says that as they walked to the Mahalakshmi station, the darkness of the night matched the gloom within. There were several such moments in her career.

SD Burman, OP Nayyar and RD Burman were the three composers most responsible for Asha’s success, though Ravi and Khayyam gave her some wonderful chartbusters and AR Rahman gave her career a new spark with the 1995 *Rangeela*.

The initial phase of Asha’s singing career, till 1957, was harrowing, partly because of the huge

blunder in eloping to marry her neighbour Ganpatrao Bhosle. She was just 16 and Ganpatrao was 31. It was an abusive and exploitative marriage. A ration inspector by profession, he encashed Asha’s skills as a singer. He removed the phone at home, and himself hopped from studio to studio, fixing Asha’s recordings and fees.

By then Lata had become a celebrity, much sought after by composers and producers. Asha sang whatever came her way — usually songs rejected by other singers and night club songs (often for Helen). But she was determined to carve her own niche, and not be a second Lata.

In 1957 she got a breakthrough; singing for SD Burman in two Dev Anand films (*Nau Do Gyarah* and *Paying Guest*). *Ankhon mein kya ji* with Kishore (*Nau do Gyarah*) and *Chhod do aanchal* (*Paying Guest*), also with Kishore, were among the most endearing songs of the 1950s.

Career-changing movie

But her career-changing movie was the 1957 blockbuster *Naya Daur*, which starred Vyjayanthimala and Dilip Kumar, produced by BR Chopra. The feisty *Maang ke saath tumhara*, one of OP Nayyar’s famous songs, had all of India humming the Asha-Rafi duet. Dilip, driving Vyjayanthi in a tonga, became an enduring image of Bollywood music. *Naya Daur* also featured other hits including the memorable chorus song *Saathi haath badhana*.





with Lata Mangeshkar.

Nayyar said he needed “a powerful full-throated, sensuous voice”, and he found it in Asha. The two created 324 songs together.

In 1960, Asha walked out on her husband, with her two children Hemant and Varsha. She was pregnant with a third child. She had to give up her savings and her car. In the mid-sixties, she began a live-in relationship with OP Nayyar. Along with love, music blossomed and Asha soared.

Some wonderful Asha solos under OP’s banner were *Ayiye meharban*, *Poocho na hame hum unke liye* (*Mitti Mei Sona*, 1963) and the haunting *Jaaiye aap kahan jayenge* (*Mere Sanam*, 1964), and they turned out to be some of the finest

female romantic solos. There were spellbinding duets in the 1962 *Ek Musafir Ek Haseena* and the 1964 *Kashmir Ki Kali*. *Aao huzoor tumko* (*Kismet*, 1968, filmed on Babita) was simply magical.

Asha terminated the jugalbandi with OP Nayyar in 1972. There



with Kishore Kumar.

were differences and personality clashes. When Nayyar slapped Asha’s teenage daughter Varsha, she decided that enough was enough. So bitter was the parting that Asha disowned the surpassingly beautiful song *Chain se ham ko kabhi* she had rendered for OP in the 1972 *Pran Jaaye Per Vachan Na Jaye*. She didn’t accept the coveted Filmfare Best Playback Award for that song. The irony and pathos in the song, in the context of her bitter parting with Nayyar, can’t be ignored.

Asha and RD Burman

When SD Burman assigned son RD Burman (Panoram) to rehearse a song of *Nau Do Gyarah* with Asha, she was upset to do so with “Burman’s raw son”, and not Kishore. But Asha soon learned to respect Panoram’s originality and talent.

With the 1966 *Teesri Manzil* and its unorthodox songs and music, Panoram demonstrated





with her husband
RD Burman.



his genius. Asha's splendid solo, *O mere sona re sona re sona* in *Teesri Manzil* wowed critics and laymen alike. A string of Panoram-Asha chartbusters followed — the sprightly *Piya tu ab to aaja* in *Caravan* (1971), the epoch-making *Dum maro dum*, the heart-stealing *Chura liya* in *Yaadon Ki Baarat* (1973).

The two sealed their strong bond, with a wedding in 1979. Asha told a journalist, "For years, Panoram would send me flowers anonymously. One day the roses were delivered in the presence of (lyricist) Majrooh *saab* and Panoram. I said, "Throw them away. Some fool keeps wasting his roses on me." Panoram's face fell. That's when Majrooh *saab* laughed, and said, 'It's this fool who's been sending you the roses'."

"I didn't marry Asha, I married her voice," said Panoram. It was a marriage of music and companionship. Both had eclectic tastes. They would sometimes listen for hours at night to music of all genres — folk, pop, jazz,

Bismillah Khan, the Beatles, Latin, Arabic and Bengali folk. Asha would say, "Let me go to bed, you'll get up only at 11am but I have a recording at 10am!"

Asha was house-proud and zealous about order and cleanliness, Panoram was not, he dreaded her cleaning sprees. On one of her birthdays, he gifted her a broom wrapped in a silver foil!

A spate of tragedies

When Panoram died in 1994, Asha was devastated. More tragedies were to come. She doted on her children. In 2012, daughter Varsha committed suicide by shooting herself when Asha was in Singapore. She was 56. In 2015, her second son Hemant died of cancer in Scotland at the age of 66.

Asha took care of Panoram's mother for 13 years after his death. She even took care of first hubby



with Mohammad Rafi.



From L: Helen, Madhubala and Vyjayanthimala for whom Asha has sung several songs.

Ganpatrao Bhosle's mother for four years after his death, as the two had no problems.

In 1996, Asha produced *Rahul and I*, a remix of songs she had done with RD Burman. She disliked the remix business but put this album together to prevent someone else from coming up with a terrible remix.

International concerts and collaborations

During the 1980s and 1990s, Asha went globe-trotting and staged several concerts in the US, UK, Canada, UAE and other countries. Her numerous international music collaborations testify to her appeal abroad. In 1991, British singer and songwriter Boy George produced a song titled "Boy George Sings, Bow Down Mister". It comprised colourful visuals from the *Mahabharata*, Asha's recitation of verses from the *Gita*, and Boy George's interpretation of Indian spirituality.

In 1997, the British band Cornershop paid tribute to Asha

with the song *Brimful of Asha*, an international hit. Says Asha: "I was at the immigration counter at Heathrow Airport once. When the young officer learned that I was the Asha from *Brimful of Asha*, he was very excited and left his post and called his friends over to meet me."

If it wasn't for music, she would have become a cook, Asha has often said. "Cooking comes from the heart. It should be made with love, for others to enjoy, just like singing."

Incredibly, Asha is the inspiration behind 15 international restaurants, six in Middle East and two in the UK. The chain, called *Asha's*, started with a restaurant in Dubai in 2002. The restaurants have won numerous awards. The food ideas and recipes are hers. "*Khana* and *gana* are my formula for happiness," she says.

Asha Ki Asha

Asha has enriched every decade of Bollywood music since she began singing. She now seeks to enrich the future of Bollywood music

through new talent, through her online talent contest, *Asha Ki Asha*. Aspiring singers send her a two-minute video of their music, which is uploaded on to her website. The best new voice will get a prize of ₹100,000. Other deserving voices will be promoted on her Youtube channel and through social media.

"I love this opportunity to share my 70 years of experience with youngsters and give back to music what I got from it," says Asha.

Editor's pick

- *Ab ke baras bhejo bhaiya ko babul*
- *Maang ke saath tumhara*
- *Aankhon me kya ji*
- *Dil cheez kya hei, aap meri jaan lijiye*
- *Deewana hua badal*
- *Chhod do anchal*

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

Designed by Krishnapratheesh S





Games People Play

Sandhya Rao

In the backdrop of the Indian cricket team winning the recent Test series in Australia, thus lifting spirits, it is logical to showcase a cricket-related book. I have picked *The Commonwealth of Cricket* by Ramachandra Guha, a personal memoir by a historian with a passion for the game. As the author description on the jacket flap says, 'He says he writes on history for a living; and on cricket to live.' A few years ago, I had read his *A Corner of a Foreign Field: The Indian History of a British Sport* practically at one go. Constructed on a foundation of solid research, sound argument and felicitous writing, that's a book anyone can, should, read: you don't need to be a cricket aficionado. Just as you don't have to be a rifle shooter to read *A Shot at History*, the story of Abhinav Bindra brilliantly written by journalist Rohit Brijnath.

The Commonwealth of Cricket, however, requires some degree of familiarity and interest in the game because much of it is about Guha's own 'real action' engagement with the game as a school boy and university student.

Those who have read him know that he takes the fight to the front. 'I am by nature and instinct an anti-Establishment man,' he writes in this book. 'I left the academy 30 years ago, and have since had no allegiance to a formal institution. I could not cope with working in a university, and would have found it impossible to work in a newspaper or corporate office. I have never been a member of a political party. The Friends Union Cricket Club is an exception to this rule, but there is nothing formal about this lone institution to which I belong. The FUCC has no office, owns no property, and has no paid employees.'

You may ask what the connection is between cricket, politics, twitter and being



One of the most interesting

bits of cricket's political history that Guha sheds light on relates to the Lodha Committee.

anti-establishment. Guha is the connection. Woven into this book which is on the one hand a journey down memory lane with all the fine print intact, including who scored how many runs and who took how many wickets, is a ringside view of the games people play when they play games. But be warned: it takes patience to get to those bits.

Be prepared for juicy stories, facts and all. The outside stories concern Guha's personal cricketing on-field achievements, or rather, non-achievements, by his own admission. The inside stories are analytical, insightful, and definitely distressing, even though it's no secret that sporting organisations in India are rife with nepotism and corruption. There are a few brave ones still standing, but these are few, too few. Guha's person of such standing is the redoubtable left-arm spinner Bishen Singh Bedi whom he refers to several times in the book. The author revives memories of several moments and personalities in the cricketing history of this game as he revisits different eras and the prodigious talent and prowess of cricketers from his club, state, country and other parts of the world.

While reading, I experienced several moments of *déjà vu*. I remember the last time the maverick Pakistani cricketer Javed Miandad appeared for Pakistan in an ODI; it was a match against India, a World Cup fixture in Bengaluru. The image of him walking off the field after he got out, turning back every now and then to look at the pitch as if to imprint the picture in his mind... that television image remains vivid in my mind. I remember standing up to applaud him in my living



I couldn't cope with working in a university, and would have found it impossible to work in a newspaper or corporate office. I've never been a member of a political party.

— Ramachandra Guha

room, not because he was my favourite but because he had dared so much. Guha refers to this very moment in the book as he recalls that match: 'Nine an over were required when he was run out by a direct hit. When he walked off the ground I stood up to applaud him. "Why are you clapping?" asked an obnoxious fellow from a row behind. "You should clap too," I answered, recklessly. "This is the last time any of us will see him bat." "Thank God I shall never see the bastard again," came the reply. How did I think that an uncertain internationalism would be equal to a single-minded patriotism?'

One of the most interesting bits of cricket's political history

that Guha sheds light on relates to the Lodha Committee. In the wake of several public interest litigations after the match-fixing scandals and instances of conflict of interest exacerbated by the IPL, the Supreme Court set up a three-man committee headed by a former chief justice, RM Lodha to clean up Indian cricket. This committee in turn set up a Committee of Administrators (COA) and invited the author as a member. Guha recounts the experience of engaging with Rahul Dravid on the question of conflict of interest, which is insightful. He refers to an email he wrote to Dravid who, at the time, was coaching the India 'A' team and during the IPL was coach of the Delhi Daredevils, and the resulting stand-off between the two. Luckily this was bridged thanks to the cricketer taking on board some good advice from a mutual friend, the former England captain Mike Brearley.

Individuals, institutions, everything comes under the glare of Guha's keen study and astute analysis — and this includes himself. He describes with candour the less than cordial nature of his relationship with the original Little Master, Sunil Gavaskar, even as he holds nothing back in praising Sunny's remarkable achievements

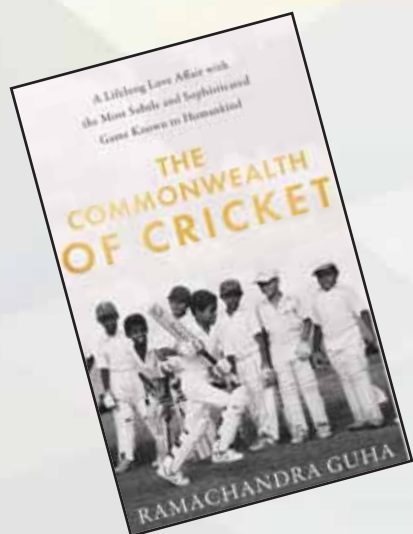
on the playing field. The tension between them had a lot to do with the questions Guha raised as a member of the COA.

He also makes bold to spell out what many, at the time, may have thought but did not voice. A former cricket captain, Vijay Merchant, had once famously said one should quit at the right time, when people ask why and not why not. 'He stayed on, and on,' Guha says of Sachin Tendulkar, and wishes that 'Tendulkar had taken his cues from Merchant and Gavaskar instead. It was not just that he kept going beyond his prime, but that in his (as it were) cricketing dotage he took the cricketing public for granted.'

There's plenty to enjoy and assimilate in *The Commonwealth of Cricket*, among them some quirks such as lists of Guha's dream teams, from a Karnataka XI to an eleven of Indian cricketers he has shaken hands with, to an eleven of his favourite Pakistani cricketers he has seen play, to a similar eleven comprising Indian players, to a joint All-Time Indo-Pak XI. There's just one regret though: I grew up in the small industrial town of Durgapur in West Bengal. Come cricket season (or Davis Cup tennis) my father, who had been a keen cricketer in his college days in Coimbatore, would assign me the task of listening to the radio commentary and relaying to him all that had happened when he returned from work. Perhaps that's what got me interested in sport, and cricket and tennis in particular. I wish my father was alive to read this book. He would have loved it.

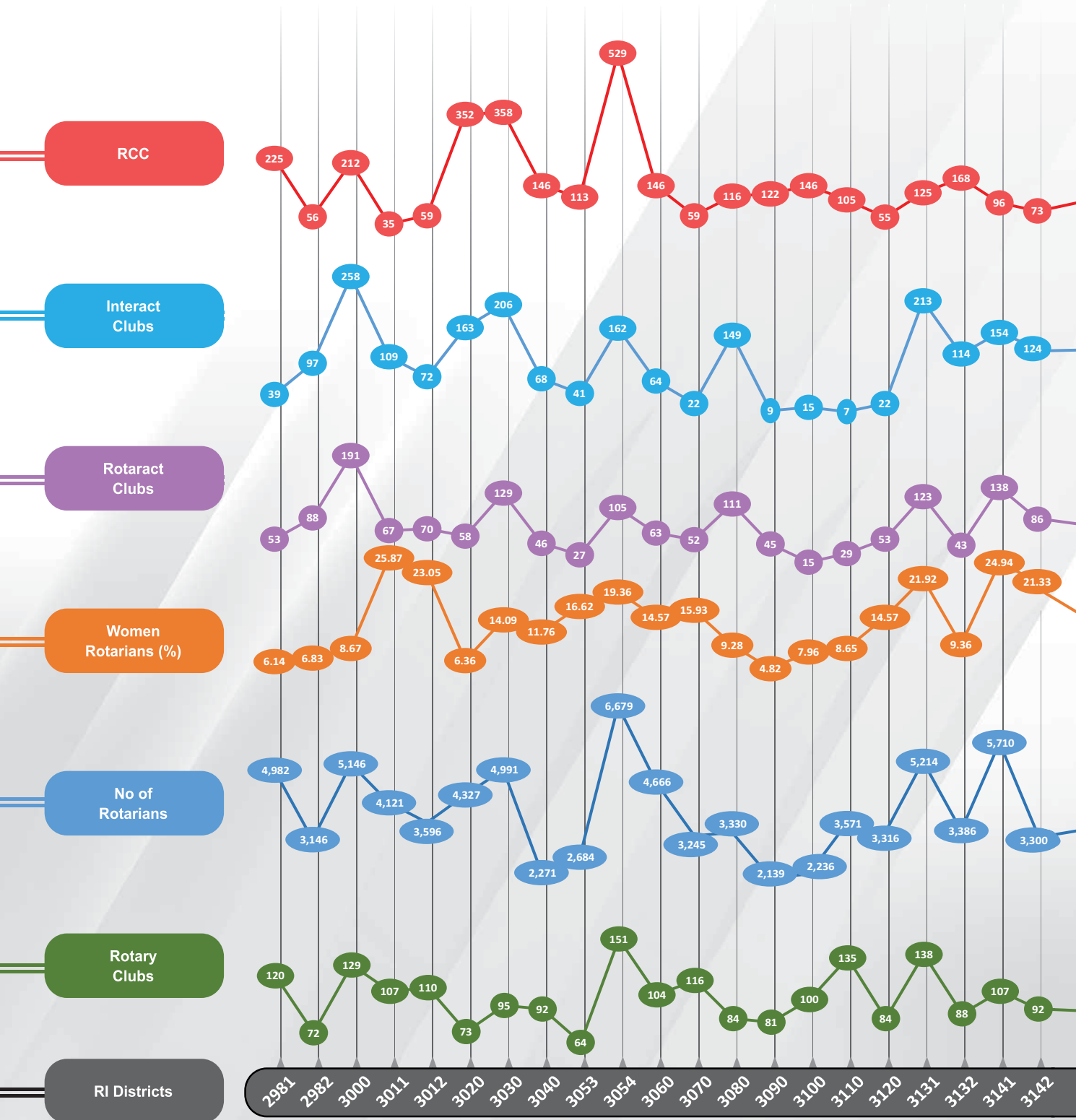
The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist.

Designed by Krishnapratheesh S



Membership Summary

(As on February 1, 2021)

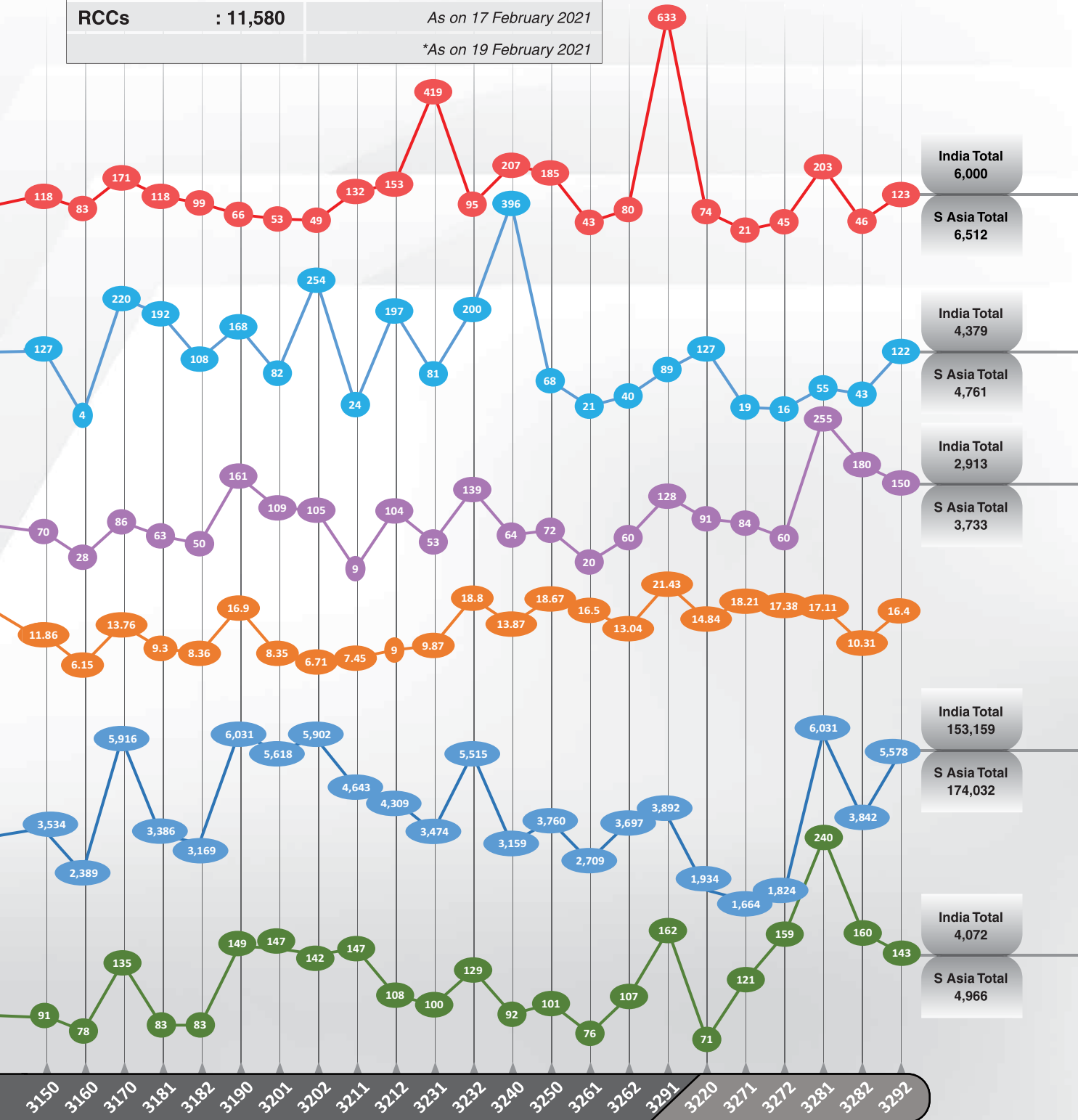


Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 36,490	Rotary members : 1,182,601
*Rotaract clubs : 8,656	*Rotaract members : 217,162
Interact clubs : 15,681	Interact members : 359,214
RCCs : 11,580	

As on 17 February 2021

*As on 19 February 2021



On the racks



The Gilded Ones

Author : Namina Forna

Publisher : Delacorte

Pages : 432; ₹1,545

A unique and female-centred fantasy, this is the story of Deka who has spent the first sixteen years of her life attempting to master the docility and obedience expected from a 'pure girl' whose blood must run red instead of the cursed gold in order to stay in her village and be included in her community. If otherwise, this could lead to the death of her father and herself at the hands of their kin. When she finds out, and so does the village, that her blood is gold, she is guided by an unknown woman to a land where she meets girls as special as herself and prepares for a battle to end the patriarchy and ring in the good times for the gold-blooded line.



Dispatches from Sowparnika

Author : Usha Kumar

Publisher : Notion Press

Pages : 242; ₹298

This book is a microcosm of the passage of human life. With stories of people and places, it's a compilation of everyday experiences as perceived by the author. It takes the readers on a fascinating journey through thumbnail sketches and vignettes. The versatility of the book lies in every narrative being first-hand and lovingly dealt with, be it about family, cities or just musings. The chapter *An Ode to My Mother* is beautifully and lovingly penned; *The Only Kilo* is about the few things she'd take if caught in something like the great Chennai floods; *A Sliver of History* gives you an insight into indentured labour; *Adieu* on a lighter note is about the dear old Ambassador car; and the pachyderm Guruvayur Kesavan is the focus in *Blessed*. The book is a compelling, heartening and ebullient read and will surely leave readers reflecting on the many forgotten times, places and people in their lives.



The Four Winds

Author : Kristin Hannah

Publisher : St Martin's Press

Pages : 464; ₹1,780

The book is set in Texas in the year 1921 when the dust storms damaged the ecology and agriculture of the American prairies. The stock market crash at the same time led to the Great Depression. In the middle of it all, Elsa and her family have to make a choice to either remain in their farm and fight for their land or head west to California for a better life. Elsa is a true fighter, she gives up the comfort of her maternal home when she becomes pregnant with the child of a man who does not care for her and is forced to marry him. With the support of her parents-in-law Rose and Tony, the protagonist comes to realise how tough, brave, and kind-hearted she is. She then guides her family through the toughest decision they have to make. Incidentally, farmers from the drought-stricken Dust Bowl and workers from the cities all converge in California looking for jobs. Could this be a new beginning for Elsa and her children or could it be worse?

Compiled by Kiran Zehra

District Wise TRF Contributions as on January 2021

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contributions	EREY Donors (in numbers)	EREY %
India							
2981	41,501	3,928	12,128	0	57,557	187	3.8
2982	23,865	16,146	20,770	43,358	104,139	76	2.5
3000	44,937	17,296	20	8,700	70,954	60	1.2
3011	49,176	10,571	40,653	180,216	280,617	97	2.7
3012	10,808	2,480	0	8,532	21,820	47	1.3
3020	132,261	52,206	32,000	2,726	219,193	251	6.2
3030	26,596	2,284	22,743	128,275	179,899	76	1.5
3040	4,087	222	0	566	4,874	18	0.9
3053	9,733	3,268	0	92,289	105,289	28	1.0
3054	71,534	1,647	0	127,033	200,214	256	4.2
3060	44,422	(34)	32,641	109,902	186,931	882	20.2
3070	26,095	746	0	36,746	63,587	191	6.1
3080	45,756	12,661	0	(19,761)	38,656	103	3.1
3090	28,905	500	0	(736)	28,669	86	3.9
3100	44,249	252	0	4,224	48,725	159	7.1
3110	20,279	200	0	0	20,479	42	1.1
3120	5,688	1,769	0	3,020	10,477	60	1.8
3131	96,599	40,795	109,000	395,483	641,877	493	9.6
3132	19,092	2,615	5,000	1,935	28,641	45	1.3
3141	314,368	42,294	70,568	823,956	1,251,185	605	11.4
3142	166,021	11,971	101	73	178,167	445	13.9
3150	40,352	8,690	98,044	34,352	181,438	391	11.8
3160	14,268	7,564	16	0	21,849	35	1.4
3170	17,866	20,885	1,240	132,426	172,417	67	1.2
3181	29,224	3,300	0	7,050	39,573	126	3.8
3182	45,352	4,312	0	15,953	65,617	174	5.6
3190	72,854	44,313	25,000	112,074	254,241	497	9.9
3201	63,193	25,177	0	178,367	266,736	372	6.7
3202	35,200	21,557	8,468	20,272	85,498	117	2.2
3211	12,371	3,441	0	123,736	139,548	60	1.3
3212	15,762	35,185	14	108,733	159,694	25	0.6
3231	(249)	359	0	18,110	18,221	5	0.1
3232	25,458	34,350	2,000	417,089	478,896	116	2.0
3240	74,311	21,780	0	49,328	145,418	183	6.0
3250	30,490	4,140	0	565	35,195	226	6.1
3261	81,485	1,108	0	8,360	90,954	30	1.1
3262	26,594	2,649	0	0	29,243	76	2.1
3291	36,135	7,449	10,149	56,626	110,359	68	1.9
India Total	1,846,638	470,075	490,555	3,229,578	6,036,846	6,775	4.6
3220 Sri Lanka	140,346	19,756	26,000	15,015	201,118	218	11.4
3271 Pakistan	6,206	97,191	0	246,533	349,930	3	0.2
3272 Pakistan	50,948	15,221	0	1,168	67,337	272	16.2
3281 Bangladesh	133,670	6,645	29,000	233,288	402,603	391	5.5
3282 Bangladesh	51,244	5,707	0	7,770	64,722	104	2.5
3292 Nepal	143,577	9,317	0	203,431	356,326	1,439	29.1
South Asia Total	2,372,630	623,912	545,556	3,936,783	7,478,880	9,202	5.4

Source: RI South Asia Office

The sensible way to lose weight

Sheela Nambiar

She wakes up exhausted and stares blurrily at the alarm beeping on her phone. Damn! She needs to be in her gym by 6am! Trainer's orders! She has been warned that she has to be there on time for her session, or else... Or else what? She's not sure. But she drags herself out of bed and stumbles to the bathroom.

She reaches the gym at 6.20am. Her body aches from the sheer fatigue of the workout she went through the previous day but she goes through the grind anyway. She would have just loved to lie down on the gym floor and sleep. Her trainer however adopts the role of Hitler as he pushes her through a series of random, punishing exercises with a stern face and loudly shouted instructions. She is sleep deprived and exhausted!

Later in the day she visits dietician and proceeds to climb onto the weighing scale with trepidation and a few mumbled prayers. She is afraid of being called 'fat' right up to her face. The scale has moved only by a hundred grams and she is told she is allowed to eat only a morsel all day

for the following week and even when she nearly faints, she struggles through the diet.

Is there something wrong with this picture or is it just me? Can you not see that this punishing routine of over-exercising and near starvation can't be good for you? Why put yourself through torture when there are perfectly sane and successful ways to actually lose weight. What drives you to believe such nonsense? What makes you want to flit from pillar to post in search of the perfect body or compare notes with other women whose bodies and physiology are entirely different from yours, and decide that you will follow her fitness routine, preferably hire her trainer, eat her diet and miraculously see the results you want?

Isn't it possible that your body would have very different requirements? What it may really need is something like better stress management, more wholesome food or better quality sleep. Isn't it possible that your lifestyle up until this point has created a unique set of problems for you that need to be addressed independently? Your genetic propensity for disease

and weight is completely different and needs to be dealt with as such. Our body will respond only if we treat it with respect and that means by feeding it the right foods in the right amount, exercise just enough for improvement, not punishment, and manage other aspects of ourselves like stress, sleep and relationships.

Advertisements always tell us we are not good enough to sell us something — a product that will all at once make us slim, beautiful and youthful. The fitness industry tells us there is this fabulous new form of exercise or a new-fangled machine that will help you get that flat stomach you so desire in a matter of minutes. Or, this remarkable new drink that burns fat even as you sleep. It's all very promising.

But do you really believe that?

I think you do only because many others are doing it.

You could lose all the weight you want and still be scrambling around for something else that is 'better' to try and satisfy that emptiness within. You could still be searching for recognition or happiness after you achieve that 26-inch waist.



Our body will respond only if we treat it with respect and feeding it with the right foods in the right amount, exercise just enough for improvement, and not punishment.



It's time we take stock and ask ourselves why we drive ourselves so? Why do we punish, belittle and are unhappy with ourselves.

Perhaps it's time to take a step back and ask ourselves what it is we really want. Approval or even admiration from others for our great bodies? Or, satisfaction for ourselves for being able to live our best possible lives?

- Start with respecting your own body
- Accept that you have made mistakes in the past but they don't need to define you
- Make better choices going forward
- Start slow and stay consistent. Consistency is the key to success
- Create one simple habit (like walking for 30 minutes/day) and persist with it till it feels familiar. Then increase the duration/intensity as required
- Eat holistically. Think about your food as a 'lifestyle' not a "diet" you follow for a stipulated time only
 - Identify the kind of exercise you enjoy. That's the only one you will persist with
 - Find the right coach/mentor/trainer/consultant. It's important they understand not just physical exercise and diet, but the psychology of staying fit and well
 - Most importantly, believe in yourself. It is possible to get healthier and fitter to be the best possible version of yourself.

The author is a lifestyle medicine physician.
sheela.nambiar@gmail.com
www.drsheelanambiar.com

Designed by
N Krishnamurthy

RC Muthupettai — RID 2981



An eye camp was held at Thambikkotai village in which 325 people were screened. Around 100 patients were identified for surgery.

RC Sonepat Education City — RID 3012



A blood donation-cum-health camp was held in partnership with NGOs at a gurudwara. Around 225 units of blood was collected and 200 patients were examined.

RC Tiruchirappali — RID 3000



To mark the 72nd charter day, the club kicked off *Meals on Wheels* to distribute food to 300 people at old age homes and a special home for destitute.

RC Chandrapur — RID 3030



Thirty women trained in beauty parlour courses were given certificates under a vocational training programme. Some of them plan to set up their own parlours.

RC Delhi Khubsurat — RID 3011



Ration kits were distributed to 60 families at the Jeevan Deep Kushth Ashram, a leprosy centre, at R K Puram to provide relief during pandemic.

RC Bikaner Aadhya — RID 3053



A geyser was donated to an old age home at the Vrindavan enclave and 100 warm blankets were given to families living in slum areas.

RC Bhavnagar Royal — RID 3060



A literacy centre was set up at a night shelter at Sardarnagar to teach 75 migrants and their children basic skills like reading and writing.

RC Chandausi Lakshya — RID 3100



Under its RILM initiative, 250 school teachers were trained. Online classes for the first batch of 100 teachers were inaugurated by RIPE Shekhar Mehta.

RC Ghumarwin — RID 3070



Makar Sankranti and Lohri were celebrated by distributing sweets to children by club president Anil Sharma. Rotarians spread cheer by greeting people.

RC Agra Taj City — RID 3110



Eleven children undergoing TB treatment were adopted by the club. Nutritious food packets were given to them by club president Dr Narendra Malhotra.

RC Ambala Industrial Area — RID 3080



The club honoured 15 Asha workers at the Dr Joginder Singh Civil Hospital. The club has enrolled 12 girls for a six-month course at a tailoring centre.

RC Pune Sports City — RID 3131



Four schools were given 110 tablets (₹8.8 lakh) with sim cards and preloaded course work to enable under-privileged students access online classes.

RC Shirdi Saibaba — RID 3132



The club donated oxygen concentrate machine to Shri Janardan Swami Hospital, Kopargaon, in the presence of hospital staff and Rotarians.

RC Mangalore Central — RID 3181



The club hosted its 15th annual district-level inter-club Rotary Quiz. PDG Dr Bhasker felicitated the winners and runners up.

RC Sullurpet — RID 3160



Sarees, lungis and shirts were gifted to 140 conservancy staff of the municipality at a cost of ₹68,000 donated by Rtn Balu Lokanatham.

RC Kota City — RID 3182



DG B Rajarama Bhat inaugurated a bus stand near Kota High School and appreciated the work done by the club. The project cost ₹2.5 lakh.

RC Dharwad Central — RID 3170



An ICU ward was donated to the district hospital under a global grant worth \$42,500. It was inaugurated by Union minister Pralhad Joshi in the presence of IPDG Girish Masurkar.

RC Cochin Beachside — RID 3201



Furniture worth ₹50,000 was donated to Tagore Library, Fort Kochi, using CSR fund from Aspinwall.

RC Tellicherry — RID 3202



The club donated a water purifier and books for a library at the sub-jail.

RC Jabalpur South — RID 3261



Pocket life-saving kits were given to Jabalpur police to provide emergency aid to the public. Project chair Vipan Lalan gave a demo on how to use the kit.

RC Sivakasi Diamonds — RID 3212



The club honoured students who scored top ranks in the Class 12 board exams with a certificate, shield and gift to each one of them.

RC Keonjhar — RID 3262



Winter jackets and blankets were given to school children and women in tribal villages to protect them from harsh winter.

RC Tiruvallur Royals — RID 3231



The club has taken up the annual maintenance of a blood collection centre at the Tiruvallur Government Hospital for 10 years at an estimate of ₹73 lakh.

RC Belur — RID 3291



Around 3,500 PPE kits and face masks were donated to One Howrah District Hospital and ILS Hospital, through a GG worth ₹35.83 lakh.

Compiled by V Muthukumar

Of Editors... and their whims



TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

As the 70s loom ahead of me, many decisions have to be taken. The most important one is that after 40 years I have decided to stop writing except once a month for this journal. And I cannot describe how blissful it is to wake up and not have to wonder what to write on. It's been a wonderful four decades, of being able to hold forth on every subject under the sun even without knowing much about it. Freedom of speech clearly has its uses, not the least of which is it allows otherwise useless chaps like me to earn a living, and a handsome one at that.

The urge to write started when I was in my teens. My father had told me that I needed to improve my English because most of my schooling had been conducted in Hindi or Hindi medium, as it is called. So while reading the editorial pages of newspapers, I used to often wish that I too could be an editorial writer. My wish came true in 1980, on July 15, to be precise, six months after I switched from five years in publishing to journalism. I joined an economic weekly. It has been dead for 38 years now.

From time to time, the editor would ask me to write an editorial, of about 800 words. And except on one or two occasions, when he let them through unmolested, he would always re-write them. That was my first lesson in the business: the

editorial was the personal view of the editor, although the fiction was that it was the view of the newspaper or the journal. Editorial writers therefore gauge their worth by how much and how often their efforts get re-written.

The morning editorial meetings used to be a solemn affair but depending on the editor, there was also a snappy gossip session. Then you got down to business. You soon realised, though, that when the editor asked you, "What are we going to say on this," what he was really asking was, "What are you going to say on this with which I agree?"

The editor may respect the facts you provide — and sometimes even that can't be taken for granted — but the interpretation has to be his, even if it is wrong, biased, or just plain daft. Well, you tell yourself, it is his funeral. So sometimes a bad piece of

prose can get published and sometimes a perfectly good piece can be reduced to mediocrity. But even this is tolerable compared to when he doesn't care what you have written. We once had an editor who would barely glance at the editorial before okaying it. Believe me, that really hurts.

The problem is this: people outside journalism don't know that editors have absolute power, as absolute as absolute can be. There are no fetters, except self-imposed ones, on their ability to do exactly as they please. And many do. I can tell so many stories about this phenomenon, but will not bore you. It is all about bias and preconceived notions. Fortunately, of the nine editors I have worked with only two were like that. One couldn't care less. The other was so biased that I had to resign eventually.

I stopped writing editorials in 2002 except if there was an emergency, and this because of sheer boredom. I had written so many by then — sometimes I ended up writing all three or both editorials published the next day — that I could churn one out in just 20 minutes. But, lest you get the wrong impression, I am happy to say that editors usually turned to me for the really important editorials. As one editor told me once, "you are better than even me at camouflaging your shallowness". ■

**When the editor asks you,
"What are we going to say
on this," what he is really
asking is, "What are you
going to say on this with
which I agree?"**



SERVE TO CHANGE LIVES

Moments from International Assembly 2021



Hemant Kumar

The IA team with RIPE Shekhar Mehta and Rashi, RID Kamal Sanghvi, RIDs Mahesh Kotbagi and A S Venkatesh at Delhi.

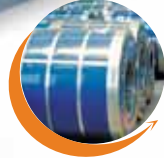
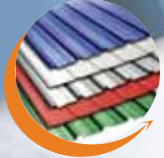
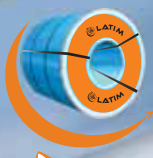


Rasheda Bhagat

The graduating DGEs and spouses celebrate.



Vibrant, Robust



LATIM
COLOUR COATED STEEL

LATIM's high quality coloured / pre-painted galvanized / galvalume steel coils can be used for various Applications - Roofings, Claddings, Crimping, Warehouse, Cold Storage, Furnitures, False Ceilings, Shutter Doors, Vehicle Bodies, Decorative Container & Trunks, etc. **Ideal for Interior and Exterior Applications.**

- Coloured / pre-painted sheet in various profiles available
- Available in various thickness, sizes and colours

E-mail : sales@latimsourcing.com • Web : www.latimprofile.com



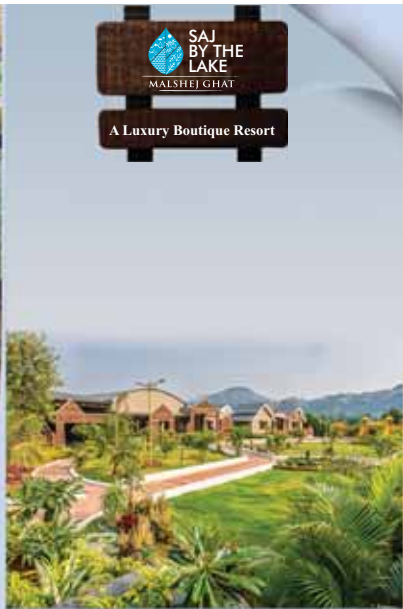
MAHÉ

at Goa
Near Anjuna Beach



CHAMPACA
BOOKSTORE
LIBRARY &
CAFE

7/1, Edward Rd., Vasant Nagar,
Off Queens Rd., Bengaluru.



SAJ BY THE LAKE
MALSHEJ GHAT

A Luxury Boutique Resort



LATIM GROUP

102, Navkar Plaza, Bajaj Road, Vile Parle (W), Mumbai - 400056.

Tel. : +91 22 26202299 / 26203434 / 26203399 / 62875252 | E : enquiry@sajresort.in • Instagram: [sajbythelake](https://www.instagram.com/sajbythelake)



SAJ
HOTELS
PVT. LTD.

www.sajresort.com