

Rotary News

India

www.rotarynewsonline.org



Giving flight to Tejas



Institute convener RI Director
KP Nagesh and Institute chair
PDG Sharat Jain.

Picture by Rasheeda Bhagat

Inside



12

Let's strive to
make peaceful
communities



18

Advice from
the top



20

Should directors
have a 3-year
term?



28

Polio warriors
honoured



36

RID 3233 gifts
sewing machines
to women




42

Abhi na jao
chhod kar...



48

Rotarians reach
out to flood
victims

Rotary 

A publication of Rotary
Global Media Network

**Switch to E-version.
Save the environment.**

E-version rate Reduced

From July 1, 2024, our E-version subscription
has been revised from

₹420 to ₹324



To health and happiness

This month's special issue of *Rotary* magazine is all about happiness, that most elemental of human yearnings. More than a feeling, though, this state of positive well-being, and the conditions necessary to create and sustain it, should be considered a universal right.

December also marks Rotary's Disease Prevention and Treatment Month, when we highlight our members' work to promote health and wellness, including mental wellness. Globally, nearly 1 in 7 people have a mental health disorder, according to a recent World Health Organisation report. Yet only 9 per cent of people with depression receive adequate treatment.

We are fortunate in Rotary to have a powerful way to support emotional well-being and happiness: friendship. The connections we build in Rotary can be a powerful force for change. I know this from personal experience.

When my fellow members first proposed that I become club president, I demurred. I had a stutter. I was terrified of speaking. But having club members who supported me and surrounded me with affection enabled me to face my fear, and I found a way to stand confidently before a crowd.

Today, I regularly address audiences — some numbering in the thousands — in a language that is not native to me. The Rotary members in

my life helped me create lasting change within myself.

That fellowship gives us the courage and means to create lasting change in the world as well, and mental health services are in desperate need of improvement. The WHO reports that governments on average devote only 2 per cent of their health budgets to mental health, and only 11 per cent of that funding reaches community-based services. In some countries, only one trained mental health professional is available for every 100,000 people. The WHO has called for strategic and urgent action to close the gap.

Rotary can answer that call by championing mental health awareness in our clubs, working with local health systems, funding training for community health workers, and supporting initiatives that bring care to places where none exists. Even small investments in mental health yield enormous returns in productivity, public health and happiness.

While we are creating lasting change in the world, we cannot forget to take care of each other. Past RI President Gordon McNally wisely reminds us that we must go beyond asking, "How are you?" We owe it to each other to instead ask, "How are you really?"

As we transition to a new year filled with new possibilities, let us *Unite for Good* — for healing, friendship, and access to happiness.

Francesco Arezzo
President, Rotary International



An Institute that delivered value

A zone institute is always a great time to listen to some incredible stories from and about ordinary people who have done extraordinary things to reach out a helping hand to the less fortunate. At the Tejas Institute in Delhi too, the 1400-odd participants got a chance to meet some incredible people. But this time around, two of the speakers who left us spellbound and speechless were both from the Indian Army — Capt Raghu Raman, who spoke on *Leadership at 26000 feet* and Brigadier DS Basera, recipient of the Vishisht Seva Medal and currently the secretary of the Kendriya Signing Board, Ministry of Defence, who takes care of the welfare of ex-army personnel and the families of those who have been killed at the front.

Capt Raman painted a vivid scenario to the stunned audience on what life is beyond 21,000ft at the Siachen Glacier, where temperatures can go down to minus 20–25 deg C, and more, if you include the wind chill factor. Through video clips he showed patrolling soldiers carrying packs weighing 15–20kg, and a rifle to boot. Whereas a patrol in normal conditions from Delhi to Dwarka would take 3–4 hours, in a glacier it would take 4 days.

He said leadership had to be provided in an impossible terrain where to get a cup of morning tea, a soldier used a pick axe to break “pieces of concrete-like rock solid ice, heat it in a *patila* for an hour and half with tea leaves.” The soldier’s clothes were black, thanks to the abundant use of liquid gold of the glacier — kerosene. “You can survive without food or water for weeks, but without kerosene, you will not survive a single night, because if the *bukhari* in your enclosure goes off in the night, in the morning, you’ll wake up like an ice tray.” Here leadership had to be provided


by military generals taking their men into battle “without ESOPs, pay hikes, employee of the month award or bonus,” he said wryly.

In a moving speech Brigadier Basera told Rotarians how the armed forces “fight for *naam* (country), *namak* (soil) and *nishan* (Indian flag). This is the reason that we are fearless; if we are alive, we have medals in our chest. If we are dead, our name is in the national war memorial which is behind India Gate, written in golden words. Every day, thousands of people remember us. What bigger honour is there than to be wrapped in the national flag and depart from this world?”

While these two speakers alone would have provided the *paisa vasool* feeling to the participants, two outstanding sessions that stood out included *At the Crosshairs*, where past RI President K R Ravindran quizzed the RI President, Vice President, the two Indian directors on the RI Board and a TRF trustee on tricky questions such as ‘Who really runs Rotary — the RI Board or the staff!’ The other one was where three polio warriors from India — PRID Ashok Mahajan, PDG Deepak Kapur and former Union Health minister Harsh Vardhan, who were honoured, spoke about their polio journey.

The icing on the cake was each participant receiving a car of her own, which annihilated the need to battle with Uber or Ola, and the evening sessions filled with great food, music and dance. And of course, the women made a beeline for the popular yoga trainer Saurabh Bothra.

All in all, the trip to a pollution-laden Delhi, proved enjoyable.


Rasheeda Bhagat

LETTERS

Outstanding issues of RN

The latest issues of *Rotary News* have been outstanding. So much is happening in our Rotary world, so many doing so much everywhere. And your reporting makes it seem like we are reading a thriller! More power to you and your team. Don't stop.

PRIP Kalyan Banerjee

It was a pleasure reading the article on our AED project. It was well covered and will increase awareness on cardiac arrest, its recognition and proper response by bystanders. Congrats for the wonderful work you are carrying on with the prestigious magazine.

Dr Akshay Mehta

RC Bombay Airport — D 3141

July 20 is a golden day which will be inscribed in the annals of our Rotary District 3000, a new club, RC of Tiruchirapalli, was installed, thanks to the efforts and meticulous planning of our friend Vijayalayan and his team.

His next target is to form a new Rotaract club with 555 members. Vijayalayan is a role model for other aspiring leaders. For DG Karthick, this new club will be a milestone crossed in his Rotary career. Rotarians can make wonders if there is a will and a vision.

S Mohan

RC Madurai West — D 3000

Your article in the Nov issue. *RYLAs transform Akola's children* is well-written, emphasising the importance of RYLA in the Rotary programmes. It is through RYLAs only we can reach the minds of the young generation and transform them into positive thinkers. Once the children absorb the right lessons, it remains with them throughout their lives.

In the *Meet your Governors* column, the DGs speak of member retention, fellowship, their contributions to TRF. But not much is spoken about the service projects. It is high time we Rotarians reshape Rotary's mode of service to bring lasting benefits to the underprivileged.

Members in Rotary should introspect why they are in Rotary; in fact, they should feel lucky to be a part of Rotary, an organisation which enables them to do good for others in a big way, as they have a big force of other Rotarians with them. Once the members understand this, then there is no question about their leaving the organisation and the talk of retention will not be necessary.

Radheshyam Modi

RC Akola — D 3030

It was interesting to read the LBW column in the November issue with the headline *Guests and gripes* on the last page. I am sure most of the readers would have missed it. The article is very practical and gripping. Also, the contribution by RID director Muruganandam for renovating the Paul & Jean Harris Home is really commendable and praise worthy.

Piyush Doshi, RC Belur — D 3291

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.



Betty Karunakaran no more

Betty Karunakaran, a woman of quiet strength and enduring grace, and the wife of PDG Revi Karunakaran, passed away in October. Their 100-year-old home in Alappuzha was one of a kind. It had no front door — not out of oversight, but as a gesture of faith in the affection and protection of the people around them.

When Revi passed away in 2003, Betty took charge of the family's business, and philanthropic commitments and became deeply engaged in Rotary. She was an AKS member, a regular at Rotary conventions and institutes, and a familiar figure by the side of her dear friend, Usha Saboo. She built one of Kerala's most exquisite tributes to love and legacy — the Revi Karunakaran Memorial Museum in Alappuzha. Spanning 28,000sqft, it houses one of the world's largest private collections of Swarovski crystals, ivory carvings, porcelain, and religious art from various cultures. When she inaugurated the new building, Swarovski gifted her a saree embellished with Swarovski crystals!

On the cover: A cultural programme at the Rotary Zone Institute.

Director speak

Recommit, re-energise, reimagine



December has a way of inviting us to pause. In that pause, we're reminded of something Rotary has always understood well: good health is the first step toward a life of dignity and opportunity. Across our zones, clubs are helping make that possible every day — through screening camps, tele-health support, cancer detection initiatives, mental health outreach, and countless interventions that quietly restore confidence and stability to families.

When we listen carefully to our communities, the path forward often becomes simple: act early, act wisely, act with people at the centre. Prevention still gives us the strongest advantage — timely information, routine screenings, protective vaccinations, and conversations that help families make informed choices. Strengthening health is, ultimately, strengthening the future.

As our work grows, our partnerships must grow with it. The new **CSR-1 framework** is an important part of that evolution. Increasingly, companies begin every conversation with a basic question: Are you CSR-1 compliant? Compliance isn't a box to tick; it is a signal — that Rotary is ready, transparent, well-governed, and capable of delivering long-term impact. Whether you are applying for the first time or managing renewals, treat CSR-1 as an essential step. It opens doors in healthcare, education, environment, technology and skills — doors we want to walk through with confidence.

We were reminded of what coordinated effort looks like at **Tejas, the Rotary Zone Institute 2025**, in New Delhi. The institute was a reflection of many hands working with one intention. Thoughtful sessions, the presence of Rotaract, Interact and Inner Wheel, and the warmth extended to every delegate created an atmosphere where ideas could travel freely. My gratitude to the organising team, volunteers, guests and delegates — the success of Tejas belongs to all of you. It showed, once again, what Rotary can accomplish when preparation meets collective will.

As we close the calendar year and complete the first six months of our Rotary journey, this is an opportune moment to refocus our energy and realign our priorities. Let us welcome committed new members through meaningful engagement, strengthen The Rotary Foundation with our generous contributions, and deepen participation so every Rotarian feels valued, connected and inspired. Let us also re-energise our clubs and teams, ensuring that our most promising ideas grow into impactful, long-term projects supported by partners who share our confidence and purpose.

If December leaves us with one reminder, let it be this: every time we strengthen a community, we strengthen humanity, one thoughtful action at a time.

KP Nagesh

RI Director, 2025–27

Why I attend

"Where else do you have this many countries working together? That's peace. It's like you're traveling the world but you are in one place."



Robin Hollingsworth,
Rotary Club of Franklin, Kentucky

Gathered tips to make her traditional noontime club more accessible

"I am looking for what projects others are doing, how they go about it, and how different that is from what we are doing."

Used her convention time to "cross-fertilize" ideas with global members

Levina Owusu,
Rotary Club of Accra, Ghana



"No matter what we do, we can't get this energy at our club or sitting in a district conference. It has to happen here at the convention."



Nitesh Joshi,
Rotary Club of St. Albans-Verulamium,
England

Impressed by a breakout session on using artificial intelligence to boost project results

Members can't help but smile when you ask why they attend the Rotary International Convention. They're uplifted by celebrated speakers, bubbling with ideas from learning sessions, and joyful when handshakes turn into friendships. These first-time attendees this year shared why you don't want to miss the convention June 13-17 in Taipei.

Register now at convention.rotary.org.

Governors Council

RID 2981	Leone J
RID 2982	Sivasundaram P
RID 3000	Karthik J
RID 3011	Ravinder Gugnani
RID 3012	Amita Anil Mohindru
RID 3020	Kalyan Chakravarthy Y
RID 3030	Dnyaneshwer P Shewale
RID 3040	Sushil Malhotra
RID 3053	Nisha Shekhawat
RID 3055	Nigamkumar L Chaudhari
RID 3056	Pragya Mehta
RID 3060	Amardeep Singh Bunet
RID 3070	Rohit Oberoi
RID 3080	Ravi Prakash
RID 3090	Bhupesh Mehta
RID 3100	Nitin Kumar Agarwal
RID 3110	Rajen Vidyarthi
RID 3120	Ashutosh Agarwal
RID 3131	Santosh Madhukar Marathe
RID 3132	Sudheer V Lature
RID 3141	Manish Motwani
RID 3142	Harsh Virendr Makol
RID 3150	Raam Prasad S V
RID 3160	Ravindra M K
RID 3170	Arun Daniel Bhandare
RID 3181	Ramakrishna P Kannan
RID 3182	Palaksha K
RID 3191	Sridhar B R
RID 3192	Elizabeth Cherian Paramesh
RID 3203	Dhanasekar B
RID 3204	Bijosh Manuel
RID 3205	Ramesh G N
RID 3206	Chella K Raghavendran
RID 3211	Tina Antony Kunnumkal
RID 3212	Dhinesh Babu J
RID 3231	Suresh V
RID 3233	Devendran D
RID 3234	Vinod Kumar Saraogi
RID 3240	Kameswar Singh Elangbam
RID 3250	Namrata
RID 3261	Amit Jayaswal
RID 3262	Manoj Kumar Tripathy
RID 3291	Ramendu Homchaudhuri

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

Contributions are welcome but will be edited. Content can be reproduced with permission and attributed to RNT.



Website

Board of Trustees

M Muruganandam	RID 3000
RI Director & Chairman, Rotary News Trust	
KP Nagesh	RID 3191
RI Director	
Dr Bharat Pandya	RID 3141
TRF Trustee	
Rajendra K Saboo	RID 3080
Kalyan Banerjee	RID 3060
Shekhar Mehta	RID 3291
Ashok Mahajan	RID 3141
PT Prabhakar	RID 3234
Dr Manoj D Desai	RID 3060
C Basker	RID 3000
Kamal Sanghvi	RID 3250
Dr Mahesh Kotbagi	RID 3131
AS Venkatesh	RID 3234
Raju Subramanian	RID 3141
Anirudha Roychowdhury	RID 3291
Gulam A Vahanvaty	RID 3141

Executive Committee Members (2025–26)

Rohit Oberoi	RID 3070
Chairman, Governors Council	
Dnyaneshwar Shewale	RID 3030
Vice Chairman, Governors Council	
M K Ravindra	RID 3160
Secretary, Governors Council	
Chella K Raghavendran	RID 3206
Treasurer, Governors Council	

Editor

Rasheeda Bhagat

Deputy Editor

Jaishree Padmanabhan

Administration and Advisement Manager

Vishwanathan K

Rotary News Trust

3rd Floor, Dugar Towers,
34 Marshalls Road, Egmore
Chennai 600 008, India.
Phone: 044 42145666
rotarynews@rosaonline.org
www.rotarynewsonline.org



Magazine

Message from TRF Trustee Chair



On a grander scale

As 2020–21 Rotary president, I shared our hopes for a new initiative: Programs of Scale. The seeds we planted then are now bearing remarkable fruit.

After the success of Rotary's first Programs of Scale grant recipient, Partners for a Malaria-Free Zambia, the Gates Foundation and World Vision approached us to do more and bigger projects. They know Rotary can make great things happen. From that partnership grew the Rotary Healthy Communities Challenge, now Rotary's most significant disease prevention initiative after polio eradication.

The Healthy Communities Challenge aims to combat pneumonia, malaria, and diarrheal diseases, the leading killers of children under 5 in many parts of Africa. Despite progress, these diseases still claim 1 million young lives annually.

This strategic partnership between The Rotary Foundation, the Gates Foundation, World Vision, and PATH, a global nonprofit dedicated to health equity, is now saving lives in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zambia.

Let us not forget that our partnerships are made up of people — volunteers, Rotary members, and professionals — striving to make a difference. One of them is **Gisela Bettencourt Mirção**, of the Rotary Club of Chimoio-Planalto, Mozambique, Healthy Communities Challenge national coordinator and assistant governor for District 9210, who reports:

In Mozambique, preventable diseases remain leading causes of death of children.

With support from our partners, District 9210, and the Ministry of Health, the Healthy Communities Challenge mobilizes resources, technical expertise, and volunteers to strengthen community health systems in two provinces in the country's west.

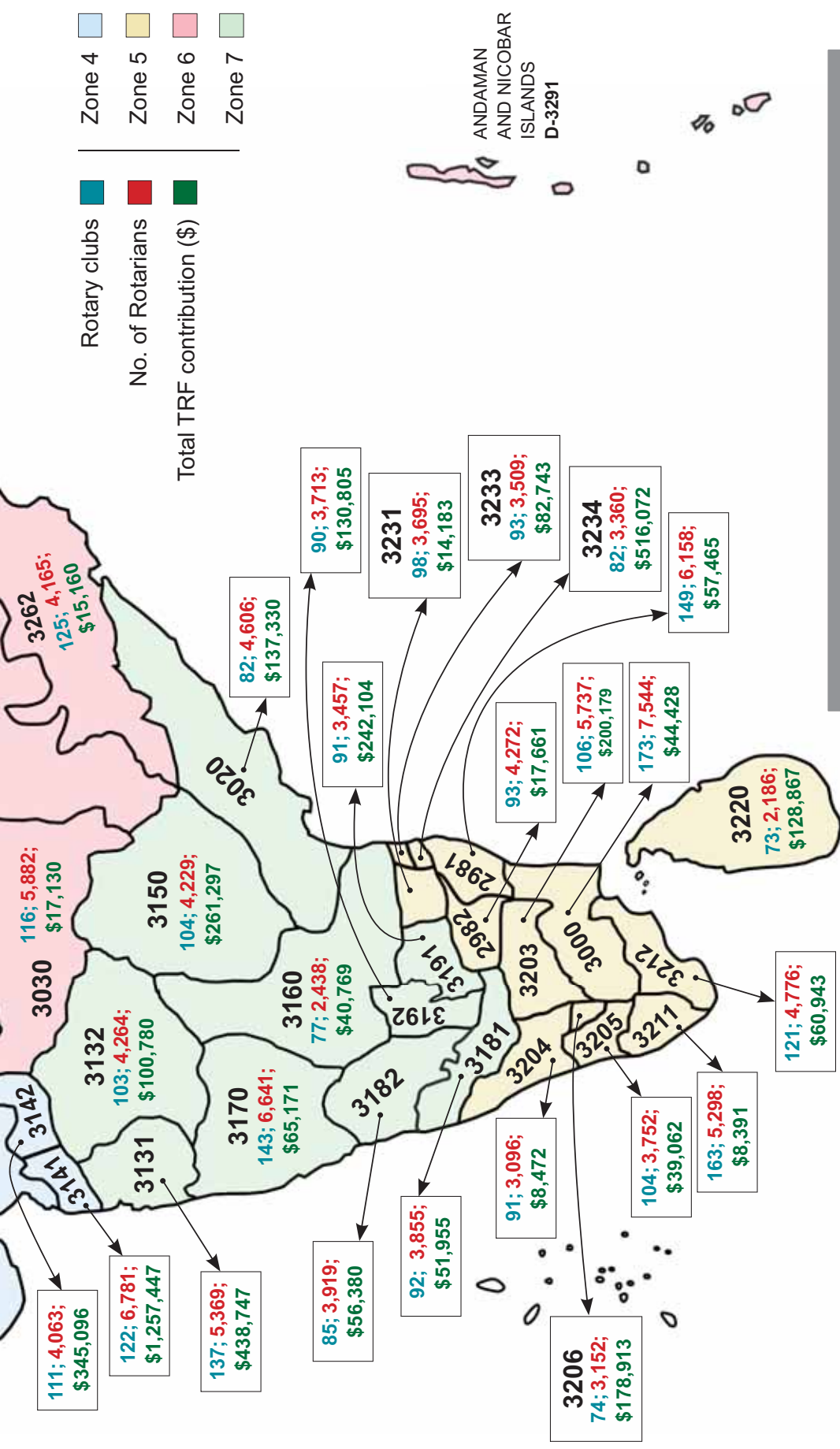
Community health workers are trained to deliver lifesaving education, prevention tools, and early treatment to families in hard-to-reach areas. The program expands access to testing, diagnosis, and treatment, ensuring children receive timely care. Rotary coordinates advocacy, procures essential supplies, and ensures local ownership alongside government health structures. In its first year, the Healthy Communities Challenge reached thousands of households across four districts, supporting more than 4,400 community health workers to protect children.

I have been involved since the planning stages, but I hadn't grasped the true impact until seeing it firsthand.

Through the Healthy Communities Challenge, Programs of Scale, and polio eradication, Rotary proves that partnerships, community engagement, and vision can transform global health and save lives.

Your support of The Rotary Foundation makes you part of this life-changing work.

Holger Knaack
TRF Trustee Chair



Rotary worldwide

Rotary clubs	: 36,625	Rotary members	: 1,167,882
Rotaract clubs	: 9,841	Rotaract members	: 143,470
Interact clubs	: 18,549	Interact members	: 426,788
RCCs	: 14,258	As on November 18, 2025	

*Membership figures as on November 1, 2025.
*TRF contribution figures as on October 31, 2025.



Let's strive to make cohesive and peaceful communities

Rasheeda Bhagat

Considering the state of the world in which we live today, Rotarians need to come together and “use Rotary as an instrument for peace... reaching out across divides and forming connections with people you might otherwise never meet. Let's strive, through the service we give, to make our communities more cohesive, healthy and peaceful. Peace is of special importance today as peace is all about making people free from poverty, harm, disease, environmental pollution, unclean water and poor sanitation,” said RI President Francesco Arezzo at the inaugural session of the Zones 4,5,6 and 7 Institute titled *Tejas Wings of Change* held in Delhi.

From *anna daan* or giving food to those in need to the great community kitchens of the gurudwaras, to everyday kindnesses that stitch neighbourhoods together, giving is woven into the daily Indian experience.

Peace also comes when you provide educational opportunities, access to medical care and freedom from poverty, he said. Elaborating on the presidential message for this year — *Unite for Good* — he said this was much more than a slogan. Over the last decade “we have welcomed tens of thousands of new members around the world each year, but nearly the same number departs, year after year. This dynamic between growth and departure is not a Rotary problem... it's a mirror of the world itself. People are longing for meaning but they don't always find it.”

Arezzo said people join Rotary because they admire what Rotary stands for but they leave when Rotary becomes “only a structure or just a way to spend time, rather than meeting their expectations, hopes or desires. If we unite for good to give every member a sense of belonging, to make them feel an essential part of our organisation, and ensure that clubs are



committed to giving members the best of experiences as people of action and changemakers, perhaps they won't leave Rotary."

Rotarians can unite for good by being contributors to the communities they live in, learning from each other how to create lasting change and by demonstrating how to build a foundation for peace by earning trust... helping to meet essential human needs, reaching across divides and forming friendships despite differences.

The RI President urged Rotary leaders to

check with their members what they expect from their membership. "Have open discussions about what they hope to gain from Rotary and connect personally as best as you can to improve your members' experiences. Reach out to people in your communities to see what your club can do to make a positive change. In many cases, that will mean new opportunities for service projects. Having meaningful dialogues can be just as important."

Reiterating the core ethos of Rotary to make the world a better place for all, Arezzo said, "Sending a young person as a peace scholar or another young person to another country for a youth exchange programme is working for peace. Preventing and curing disease, providing clean drinking water and sanitation where there is none, is working for peace." Ensuring that women can give birth safely, improving the environment, supporting girls' education and sustaining families' livelihoods, would also enhance peace.

"Rotary service makes the world a little more free everyday, and in doing so we create conditions for peace. Gandhi once said non-violence is the weapon of the strong. That is why we unite for good, for a world built on compassion, love and not greed."

The RI President then turned upon all the positives that Indian traditions, history and scriptures offer. "Here in India generosity is not an event, it's a way of life; from the concept of *anna daan* or giving food to anyone in need to the great community kitchens of the gurudwaras, to everyday kindnesses that stitch neighbourhoods together, giving is woven into your daily experience."

Whether it was Krishna talking in the *Bhagwad Gita* about *daan*, the

We win only as a team,
never alone or as individuals.

So we must do more than
move quickly, we must move
gracefully and mindfully
and prepare to help the next
leader succeed.

act of giving, becoming sacred when it was done without expectation of returns, or the *Chaitanya Upanishad* advising people to give with humility, joy and not measure the size of the giving but the openness of the heart, all of them found a connection with Rotary's ideals. "Rotary's 4-Way Test finds resonance in India with the spirit of dharma and seva... above all it reflects *Vasudeva Kutambakkam*, the world being one family."

But a big challenge comes from modernity... "whether in Rome or Milan or Delhi we feel the same wave; digitalisation, acceleration and disconnection. The world spins faster... it's a time when values dissolve before they can take shape, institutions feel lifeless, choices multiply yet matter less, power outpaces responsibility." In such a world, Rotary could be a place where people were not measured by achievements but welcomed into a dialogue, not manipulated, not entertained but entrusted. "But to do this we must reflect on the work we do and the schedules we follow. Too often projects end with the term of the



**RI President
Francesco Arezzo**



governor or the club president. But the work that truly matters, such as education and peace, requires time and continuity. I like to think of Rotary as a great relay race. We have many batons, club presidents, district governor, the RI president; we each take our laps, do our best, achieve all we can and then pass the baton. But if we miss the handoff or make the next runner trip, it doesn't matter how fast we go. We win only as a team, never alone or as individuals. So we must do more than move quickly, we must move gracefully and mindfully and prepare to help the next leader succeed. We must also know which way to run."

Here Arezzo quoted from *Alice in Wonderland*; when Alice seeks directions from the Cheshire cat, she is asked where she wants to go. 'I don't much care where', says Alice, and the cat replies: 'Then it doesn't matter which way you go!'

"This is a warning, if we don't know where we want to go, not just this year, but beyond, then any direction will do and no direction will matter. Strategic thinking helps us prepare the ground for those who come after us. Let us commit to projects that go across leaders and egos, let us build for the long run and not short applause," said Arezzo.

And India was showing the Rotary world what this looked like in practice. Consider the Rotary Program of *Scale Partners for Water Access and Better Harvests in India*. This five-year initiative led by Indian Rotarians "is transforming rural life, building check dams, ponds, teaching sustainable farming and restoring aquifers. The numbers are really impressive: ground water levels rising 10 to 50 per cent each year, but beyond numbers lies something really remarkable. A mother no longer walks long distances to fetch water, a farmer who does two harvests



RI President Arezzo and Institute convener RI Director K P Nagesh present a memento to Vice President of India CP Radhakrishnan. From L: Institute chairman PDG Sharat Jain, RID 3160 DGN Trivikram Joshi, TRF Trustee Ann-Britt Asebol from Sweden, RI Director M Muruganandam, Institute secretary Manjoo Phadke and Kiran Kumar from RC Bangalore Orchards, are also present.

a year, a child who now goes to school instead of fetching water. This is generosity; the same that comes from the Indian tradition of *daan*, the same spirit that fuelled Gandhi's mantra of non-violence and the one that works in the gurudwara kitchens, and moves Rotary's service."

Just as Prophet Baruch, riding in exile in a time of despair and darkness, had given the call 'look to the east' today Rotary too has two reasons to look east, not only in a metaphorical but real sense. The east, particularly India, is seeing "the most strong and vibrant growth in membership. And in India we are witnessing something

extraordinary; not just an increase in membership but also in meaning and clarity. Rotary is made of not just clubs or projects but of people and "people stay when they feel something deeper than obligation. They stay when they feel connected not just to a cause but to one another."

He was happy to see that "here Rotary is rising not only symbolically but concretely, joyfully, spiritually. If we can transfer our clubs not just in size but also spirit, if we can practise the 4-Way test, not just as a recitation but a resolution, if we can invite others into Rotary not only to serve but to belong, then we will not only retain

members, we will become a beacon, a gathering place not of slogans but meaning, not of charity but shared transformation. And by doing so we can change the world," said Arezzo.

Addressing the inaugural session, convener and RI director K P Nagesh said after a lot of questions and deliberations, Delhi had been chosen as the conference venue. The region had two very dynamic governors Ravinder Gugnani (RID 3011) and Amita Mohindru (RID 3012) "who

took ownership and delivered, and “a very disciplined and determined PDG Sharat Jain, who did elaborate planning and put everything together. The result was that we saw a record number of 1,456 registrations.”

Apart from giving a car to everyone for the three days of the institute, it was decided to launch many new schemes such as the lifetime achievement awards to those who had put in mega efforts to eliminate polio from India. “We thought we can’t wait for polio to be totally eliminated before recognising these people, so we decided to reward those who had really worked hard for this cause with lifetime achievement awards.”

The other new idea introduced was creating the million-dollar club among the Arch Klumph ranks. While the US already had over 700 AKS members, India had reached 258, and “we want to make this number 500 as soon as possible. We found that many AKS members reach the Levels 1 and 2 and there ends the story. So we decided to launch the million-dollar club, and there are



RI President Arezzo



RI Directors Nagesh and Muruganandam.

already 7 in that club with pledges of \$1 million. Of course Rajashree Birla and DGE Ravishankar Dakoju have already given several million dollars to TRF.”

Nagesh added that when several AKS members were approached, even more came forward to join the \$1 million club, taking the total number to 14. Many other initiatives would unfold during the institute through which Rotary would extend a larger helping hand to local communities, particularly the children of defence personnel, he added.

Institute chair Sharat Jain assured the delegates that even though this was a serious training programme, care had been taken to “blend learning and leadership skills with fun and laughter. We have put together for you a programme that will remind you why Rotary fellowship is unique.” ■



Sri Lanka to host Rotary Institute 2026

V Muthukumaran

Yohani, the Sri Lankan pop sensation whose viral song *Manike mage hithe* has taken the social media by storm, is excited that the Rotary Zone Institute is coming to her “enchanted island after 21 years.”

Yes, the next institute for our zones 4,5,6 and 7 will be held at the City of Dreams, a tourist and luxury resort in Colombo overlooking the Indian Ocean, in December 2026. After giving a scintillating performance at the Tejas institute, the pop diva said, “my years in Rotaract as charter secretary of my club has shaped me what I am today.”

Expressing her gratitude to PDG Gowri Rajan, who is the chairperson of Rotary Institute 2026, Yohani said the past governor is her inspiration. “Your strength, grace and leadership have led me from a little girl with no skills to the present status as a pop singer.” With over four million subscribers for



Pop singer and YouTuber Yohani performing at the Tejas Institute.

her YouTube channel, and 1.5 million views a month, Yohani is one of the most trending singers in the global music firmament. When Gowri was district governor (2014–15), “I first met Yohani who then said, ‘I cannot sing as I don’t have skills.’ Now, she has become a global singing icon.”

RI director M Muruganandam, who will be the chair of the Lanka institute, said “Aim high will be the theme of the upcoming event, and we are looking for a minimum of 1,000 delegates to begin with.”

RI director and Tejas Institute convener K P Nagesh said, “I am thrilled that the Rotary institute is going from

Delhi to Colombo, a beautiful city known for its rich hospitality.” PRIP K R Ravindran said Lanka is one of the favourite destinations of globetrotters, and ranks top among surveys done by media outlets for its pristine beaches and resorts. The island is blessed with an “unmatched beauty and wildlife. My family spends a lot of time here in these resorts.”

Inviting delegates from all over India, Nepal and Bhutan, PDG Gowri said the Colombo Institute will be a digital-age conference in the backdrop of a scenic and breathtaking landscape. She has formed a “dynamic team to organise such a Rotary conclave” with PRIP Ravindran as the advisor, PDG Y Kumanan from Madurai zone and PRID Raju Subramanian as counselors, host committee head is PRID C Basker, and PRID A S Venkatesh as general trainer. ■

**Colombo institute convener
RID M Muruganandam with
senior Rotarians.**



You are not the leader of your district... the most important person in the Rotary world is always and only the club president,” said RI President Francesco Arezzo to the governors-elect at the valedictory of Rotary’s annual training programme organised on the sidelines of the Rotary Zone Institute.

“The heart of Rotary lies not in offices but in clubs. It is the club president who has to go in his community to find new members, raise funds, identify community’s needs and plan the projects that can transform it. Our job, your main job, is to support your club presidents,” he said, and urged the incoming governors to invest time in knowing, meeting and befriending every president. “If you support the presidents well, it will be a great year for all of us. Leadership in Rotary is not about power; it is about purpose, people and principled action.”

Arezzo reminded delegates that Rotary’s five core values — service, diversity, integrity, leadership and fellowship — must never be lived in isolation. “Service without integrity is not good service. Service without fellowship, without the joy to work together, is not Rotary service.”

Recounting his visit to Pakistan, he delivered an emotional plea for finishing Rotary’s 35-year struggle to end polio. He recalled seeing a wall of photographs — portraits of 68 health workers killed while vaccinating children — and learning that over 1,000 workers worldwide may have lost their lives in the campaign. “We have 1,000 martyrs. In their memory, we are obliged to finish this campaign.”

What moved him even more was the paralysed three-year-old girl he met in Rawalpindi. “Her smile was a scream. It asked me, ‘Why didn’t you finish your campaign earlier? I would have been running with my friends.’

Advice from the top

Jaishree



RI President Francesco Arezzo (R) and PRIP KR Ravindran.

I cannot see another child paralysed by polio.”

Calling peace the third goal of his year, Arezzo said, “We have to work for world peace not just with our peace centres or youth exchange programmes, but also with our projects. If we want our projects to create peace, we must do something different.” He urged Indian districts to take Rotary beyond their borders. “Ninety-nine per cent of your global grants are in India. India has grown. Now it is time to work abroad, in Africa, even in Pakistan, to create peace,” he said.

He ended with a personal metaphor about leadership as a climb up a mountain, only to realise the true work remained at the base. “To be a great leader, I had to come down again and stay with Rotarians. That great white light at the top? It was only the flashlight of the photographers,” he smiled.

Past RI President K R Ravindran reflected on the four values that shape a “superior president”: integrity, humility, compassion and courage. Speaking about integrity, he recalled



visiting the Lego factory founded by Ole Kirk Christensen, a carpenter who once specialised in making wooden toys. Christensen insisted that every toy receive three coats of varnish, not because customers would notice, but because he would. “He believed only the best was good enough. That is why Lego remains one of the world’s most trusted brands; its true legacy lies in integrity, in excellence without shortcuts.”

He urged the incoming leaders to remember that spirit: “Don’t forget the third coat — whether in the accuracy of your reports, the transparency of your accounts, or the promises you make. Integrity is not what we say; it is what we do when no one is watching.”

Humility, he said, is equally critical. He narrated the story of US Supreme Court Judge Sandra Day O’Connor, who lovingly accepted her Alzheimer-stricken husband’s newfound bond with another patient. “That is humility at its highest, excellence without ego.”

Compassion often comes from unexpected places, said Ravindran, as he spoke of his granddaughter Tessa, who befriended a neighbour’s medically fragile child without seeing illness

or limitation. “Where adults see limitations, children see possibilities.”

But compassion must be balanced with courage. Ravindran recounted the tense moment during Rotary’s post-tsunami school-building project in Sri Lanka when militants demanded a 10 per cent cut. He refused, despite threats. “I was trembling... but courage is not lack of fear; it is choosing to do the right thing despite it.” He reminded governors-elect that leadership tests come quietly, often when compromise feels easier.

“Integrity tells you to do it right. Humility tells you it’s not about you. Compassion urges you to see the person, not the problem. And courage tells you to stand firm even when your voice is trembling,” he summed up.

RI director M Muruganandam stressed accountability, ambition and disciplined execution. “You are the representatives of your districts. There are expectations from your clubs, from all clubs, and from regional leaders. You are the torchbearers.”

He urged the DGEs to set audacious, measurable goals, recalling his own ambitious milestones as governor (2016–17) — from \$1 million to TRF to 10,000 organ donations and 14 Guinness World Records. “Take your assignment seriously. For you, 2026–27 is your year. Spend your time, energy and resources for that year.”

He reminded them that leadership, is never about comparison with others. “Compare only with yourself — yesterday’s version and today’s version.” Calling communication the governor’s most powerful tool, he advised leaders to consult the college of governors and build a strong team spirit. “Aim high. Be a multimillion-dollar district. Bring more AKS members. And let’s reach 300,000 members by 2030, that is Mission 2030,” he said.

PRID Raju Subramanian, the general trainer for the incoming leaders, reminded them that focus should never be on personal visibility. “The Rotary Wheel, its beneficiaries, and the service it delivers, matter the most. This is particularly important during your public image activities.”

RID 3192 DGE

Ravishankar Dakoju appealed to his co-governors to join for three pan-India projects: to plant one crore saplings across the country, to get government support to make it mandatory for residential societies to provide water facilities for birds and animals, and to urge Rotary clubs in every district to adopt and transform tribal schools. ■



Institute chairman Sharat Jain, PRID Raju Subramanian and Vidhya, President Arezzo and Anna, RID KP Nagesh and Uma, RID M Muruganandam and Sumathi, and training facilitators with DGEs and their spouses.

Should directors have a 3-year term?

Rasheeda Bhagat

One of the most awaited sessions of our Zone Institutes is moderated by past RI President K R Ravindran, known for his incisive conversation with senior RI leadership. The recent session at the Tejas Institute in Delhi upheld this tradition of rigorous and engaging dialogue.

Titled *In the Crosshairs*, the session raised some tough questions such as why not move the Rotary headquarters out of the US and who really runs Rotary — the RI Board or the staff. The first question, directed to RI President Francesco Arezzo, was about the present US regime coming out with adverse decisions/comments on issues such as DEI, need for environmental protection, laws on corruption, suspension of funding for USAIDS, withdrawal from WHO, etc.

Since these were in direct contrast to the core principles and work done by Rotary, “why are we still sitting in the US; why don’t we get out,” asked Ravindran.

Thanking his interlocutor for “a really comfortable question,” Arezzo replied: “RI was founded 120 years ago in the US and for all this time we’ve stayed in Evanston with liberty, freedom of communication and investment of our funds. Now there are some decisions that bring some difficulties for the organisation, but Rotary has 120 years of history.” So its judgement has to be based long-term; “we don’t take decisions on immediate problems, but see far ahead and judge everything for the long period. So it is too early to think about change.”

Next Ravindran asked RI vice-president Alain Van de Poel why the International Assembly should

continue to be held in US considering that getting a US visa was so difficult. “This year 64 governors have been refused visas. I understand the President’s answer about moving our headquarters. But why go to the US for our training? If you come to India, I guarantee that our two directors (K P Nagesh and M Muruganandam, who were both in the firing line) will ensure every single person gets a visa.”

De Poel, who is from Belgium, said visa difficulties were not confined to the US. Last month there was a summit in Brussels which brought together about 1,500 Rotarians from Europe, Middle East and Africa. “We had the same problem; 200 friends coming from Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, etc didn’t get a visa. I think in the next year, visa will be a problem globally for Rotary.”

From R: PRIP K R Ravindran, RI Vice President Alain Van de Poel, RI President Francesco Arezzo, RI Directors K P Nagesh and M Muruganandam and TRF Trustee Ann-Britt Asebol.



Ravindran then asked TRF trustee Ann-Britt Asebol that considering it took 200 years for the last case of small pox to be detected after the discovery of its vaccine, would it take 200 years for polio to be completely eradicated?

She said she was certain that “just like all of a sudden polio had disappeared in India,” it would end at some point, and it wouldn’t take 200 years. “But till that happens, we need to be there, vaccinate every child, and remember that every child is not born in a hospital where we can easily vaccinate them. They are also born in villages, so we need to fulfil our promise to the children of the world to vaccinate them, including in villages.”

Muruganandam shared her optimism and added, “One thing is clear, we must take care of the next generation; we are there 99.99 per cent. In India we eradicated polio 14 years ago; let us all support this programme till it is done.”

Ravindran next quizzed Arezzo on the election complaints that the RI Board receives; “some Rotary countries are riddled with politics at the DG election

level, sometimes even at the director level. Why don’t you just allow canvassing and campaigning to take place, and make it free for all,” he asked.

Ruling out the idea, the RI President said Rotary was an organisation with strong ethics and “allowing a free campaign or canvassing, as in politics, is not positive for our organisation which is rooted in core values like integrity, fellowship and friendship. We are leaders and we must be leaders also in integrity, fellowship and the correct way to compete.”

Directing the same question to the two directors from India, Ravindran added that when “we moved to electronic ballot... I was director then... I thought at last we have solved this problem and you can’t beat this. But it took only one cycle before they learned how to beat the electronic system.”

Addressing the query, RID Nagesh said that it was true that the highest number of election complaints came from India. “There are multiple reasons for that; one, many aspiring to become leaders, some say it is part of our culture. In Lions, it is the other end...canvassing, campaigning, everything happens. But we don’t allow it; yes, there is a little confusion here and there. Even though

we love to play cricket, we are also good at playing chess. It is a matter of time. In the end, Rotary is going to win by checkmating all these things, and the complaints, already on the downward trend, will reduce and come to zero.”

RID Muruganandam said two things had to be considered. Out of Rotary’s 34 zones, our region had only four, which was disproportionate to the higher number of Rotarians our zones had. Giving numbers, he said Rotary, with a membership of 1.12 million, had a total of 34 zones, our zones — 4,5,6, and 7 — had a membership of 170,000 or 0.17 million. District-wise, Rotary has over 550 districts, so the average number of Rotarians per district is only 1,900.

But in our four zones, the number per district is much higher at 3,900, or double.

“This means we have lost 45 governors, four RCs, four RRFCs. Please understand, we are talking about 1.4 billion people. While everywhere, there is a drop in membership, here there is growth. We are balancing the rest of the world, but missing 45 leadership positions.”

While this shortage in leadership positions could be the reason for election complaints, the complaints themselves are going down; four last year, and zero so far. Our zones were “No 2 in membership, No 1 in adding members, and No 2 in giving (to TRF).” And yet, when this region was mentioned, only election complaints were talked about. “But we are moving ahead; under our policy Vision 2030, we want to go for a total of 250,000 Rotarians and 125,000 Rotaractors.”

Also, “going around and talking to Rotarians, I don’t think qualifies as electioneering,” he added.

To this answer Ravindran responded: “Mr Director, India is not the only country where there are complaints. There are complaints from South America, Philippines and other places.



My question: what is the Board doing about it? Both of you are directors on the Board.”

To this Nagesh replied: “The Board is very clear. No canvassing, campaigning allowed. But Muruganandam has made it very clear — more demand, less supply. We are planning to create more supply by uniting to grow, dividing to multiply. That’s a solution from our side; but the Board is very clear on the policy... No election campaigning and canvassing.”

Muruganandam added, “We will follow up on proper complaints. There is no doubt about that.”

The next question directed to de Poel was about the policy of working from home post-Covid. “Most companies I know have reverted to normal work. But we find in our building (in Evanston), there are still lots of empty spaces.”

The vice-president responded that this was related to changing culture in many countries, where people had got used to working from home, and new recruits were asking how many days would they be allowed to work from home. But even though this might have become the culture of American companies, “I feel we are not a normal company. We cannot accept that only when the Board meets, we have 10 people who are aware of the meeting and who are there in the offices.” There were also delays in getting answers to questions asked to the RI staff, “and if you try to phone somebody in Evanston, I wish you good luck. Yes, we cannot accept this.”

Ravindran then asked the RI President: “Who really runs Rotary, the Board or the staff?”

Arezzo replied that while the RI President and directors were volunteers,

who stayed in office for one and two years respectively, the staff stayed much longer, sometimes even for 10 to 20 years. “So they know everything in a very detailed way. The rapport between staff and volunteers was important.” While the volunteers lay down the policy, the staff implement it. “And I must say that the quality of the staff is really very high, and they are all very experienced.” This was also true in Zurich and Delhi. The problem was that often “the staff complains that the volunteers have very high expectations. They want to change the RI rules too much and too quickly. Our aspiration to change very quickly, very rapidly to see the results during our year very often gets frustrated by the staff who say: ‘No, we have to think, we have to decide slowly, probably it’s not possible.’ So I’d like a bit more enthusiasm and readiness to change from the staff.”

But at the same time, Arezzo added, “Rotary is a very old organisation and change is always difficult and we cannot change without good preparation, study and planning. The balance between these two attitudes, one more conservative, one more active, is the key to success. We have had some presidents, as you know, who were fighting all the year with the staff. But for the other years, the report



was very good. So far this year, I have a very good relationship with the staff and I am trying to push to have a more enthusiastic answer to my requests.”

De Poel added that to sort out several such issues, “a new business plan and model were required. We need to take some risks and to prepare for it we might need 3 to 5 years! But I do believe each Rotarian is waiting for this.” The irony was, he noted, “we talk about change but we also do not want to change. My personal view is that we need support from external people to make a full analysis about this business model and what would be needed in five years.”

Ravindran then quizzed Muruganandam on the huge demand for a GST sum from the Indian





and have initiated legal proceedings, and will come out of this.”

To the question whether like directors, trustees should be nominated zone-wise, trustee Ann opined that rather than have a “geographical perspective” the best people should be chosen as trustees, so that the Foundation’s money could be invested prudently.

On why allow only a past RI president to become trustee chair, she said it was a good practice “because when you are president, you get a lot of knowledge about the whole Rotary world, having travelled a lot during your year.”

Ravindran then asked Arezzo about the rationale behind the RI President and directors having only a one and two-year terms. “In our management structure, every one year, two years, everything changes. Now, can you imagine Mercedes-Benz or BMW changing their manager every year? Is it the right thing that we are doing? Should we not extend the directors’ terms for three years and reduce the trustees’ term from four to three years, so it balances off?”

Agreeing with this perspective, Arezzo replied that as director he had spent the first year “just to understand what the machine does, how it functions and to know the people. The second year was more active; you can express really what you want to do.” He agreed that a two-year term for directors was too short, and “moves the balance in the direction of the staff. So when you have a director who stays for three years, the board will get more powerful with people who know the machine much better.” The problem would be that three years might be considered “too long by people who are still active in their professions. And so we risk to lose some of the best Rotarians. But I do think that for the directors, probably three years is a better term.” ■

government. “So how did it come to this proportion? Who messed up on this? I know you asked a very strong question at the Board and Trustees meeting, very bravely. How did we get into a situation like this, all of a sudden?”

The RI director replied that GST had been introduced in India only in 2017, and there were several dimensions to the problem, including GST not being paid properly and taxes related to CSR funds. Being a chartered engineer by profession, he understood the intricacies of indirect taxation. “We are clear that this issue has to be handled properly, and we have to comply with the laws of the land. We are in the process,

Rotary creates waves of transformation in India

V Muthukumaran

As social catalyst and torchbearers of progress, Rotary is the beacon of light with a spirit of service and endeavours for nation-building, said India's Vice President C P Radhakrishnan while inaugurating the Rotary zone institute, *Tejas — Wings of change*, in Delhi. His disclosure about being a former Rotaractor was greeted with a huge applause.

In his address to nearly 1,500 delegates from Zones 4,5,6 and 7 including Rotary leaders from India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, RI President Francesco Arezzo, vice-president Alain Van de Poel and others from Sweden, Belgium and Malta, he urged the Rotary family to continue “with their tireless efforts and unwavering dedication that strengthen the social fabric of the nation and humanity as a whole.”

Rotary's work in health, education, environmental protection and community development have beautifully complimented our national priority.

C P Radhakrishnan
Vice President of India

Recalling his talk with President Arezzo, he said India is not only the fastest growing economy, “but also its Rotary family is the fastest growing in the world.” After the US, India has taken up large-scale Rotary projects, and “your work in health, education, environmental protection and community development have beautifully complemented our national priority.”

Complimenting Indian Rotarians for doing such immense service to society, the vice-president said,

“whether it is *Swachh Bharat, Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao*, or *Har Ghar Jal*, every GoI mission gains strength from the grassroots participation and involvement of Rotary. This partnership and other similar initiatives reflect the power of collaboration between government, Rotary and community leaders... which reminds us that even small acts of service can create waves of transformation.”

On the crucial role played by Rotary through its partnerships with



governments and citizen-led initiatives, Radhakrishnan noted that these activities drive social transformation. “President Arezzo informed me that over the years, Rotary clubs have done impactful global projects in polio eradication, its flagship project, health, literacy, water and sanitation, all worth over \$350 million.” Recalling his participation in a district conference as a Rotaractor, he said, “at that time I spoke about how Rotary is always there, right from birth to death. From polio drops to newborns, building and running schools, ambulances and crematoriums, Rotary is always with us.”

Through its flagship Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), Rotary has invested around \$2 billion, thus proving its commitment to create a healthier society. “Gone are the days when a child lost her leg before she could be taken to a doctor, which is the greatest achievement of Rotary.” Let this *Tejas* event be a launch pad of new ideas in skills development, environmental protection, digital literacy and healthcare. The government will be behind Rotary in all its endeavours.”

During his opening address to the delegates, institute chairman PDG Sharat Jain said, “*Tejas* means

*Tejas means radiance,
which will come alive
in this institute with
brilliance, energy and the
spirit of selfless service.*

PDG Sharat Jain
chairman, Tejas Institute

RI Director K P Nagesh and his wife Uma light the traditional lamp as RID M Muruganandam, Vice President of India C P Radhakrishnan, Rotary President Francesco Arezzo, Institute secretary PDG Manjoo Phadke, TRF Trustee Chair representative Ann-Britt Asebol and PDG Sharat Jain look on.



radiance, which will come alive in this institute with brilliance, energy and the spirit of selfless service as embodied by Rotarians. This institute is not just a Rotary meeting, but a celebration of who we are, a reaffirmation of our shared purpose, compassion, and our enduring friendship across borders.” He added that what we do for our ourselves dies with us, “but what we do for others remains immortal as Rotary is a force that illuminates communities, uplifts life and inspires hope.”

Rotarians have big heart

God sends some people designated as goodwill ambassadors, also known as Rotarians, to earth to serve communities, wipe out tears of suffering people, and “their large philanthropic hearts make a difference in the world,” said Dr C N Manjunath, director, Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research, Bengaluru, and a Rajya Sabha MP.

Speaking at one of the sessions, he said he was associated with Rotary for the last 15 years, and in this period, his Jayadeva Hospital has done over 10,000 heart surgeries for children. “Over the last 18 years, the hospital has treated 75 lakh OPD patients

and performed eight lakh surgeries. We have a credo: Treatment first, payment later, and no patient is turned out for want of money,” said Manjunath.

Painting a gloomy picture, he said 60 per cent of deaths in India occurred due to NCDs like heart attack, stroke, kidney ailments, BP, diabetes, cancer, and “the latest addition to this list – screen addiction and loneliness.” Around 30 lakh people die due to heart attack and brain stroke in India each year, and the number of victims below 34 years is rising steadily, he noted. “There is no happiness in medicine, but there is medicine in happiness,” said Manjunath, and added that there are dozens of simple, daily habits that can keep us disease-free — good sunlight, diet, exercise, smile, fasting, good sleep, attitude of gratitude, talking to each other, intake of fruits and vegetables, family bonding, yoga and meditation, and “being in Rotary.”

His parliamentary committee has recommended to GoI to include HPV

**Rajya Sabha MP
Sudhanshu Trivedi**



From L: RI President Arezzo, Dr C N Manjunath, director, Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences, and RI Director Nagesh.

vaccination against cervical cancer in the National Immunisation Programme. “Rotary clubs are doing a great job in vaccinating girls aged 12–15 for cervical cancer, through which 90 per cent of lives can be protected.”

Rotary is synonymous with friendship, and “your signature today is an autograph tomorrow. Live long, live young,” he added.

On the cusp of new era

Following its age-old development model dictated by its cultural ethos, India is on the cusp of a new era, said Rajya Sabha MP Sudhanshu Trivedi.

He quoted IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva who recently said that India is going to produce 15 per cent of global wealth in the coming years, thus becoming the growth engine of the world. Rating agency Moody’s has forecast the country’s GDP growth at 7 per cent in fiscal 2027, and “we are the no 1 in digital transactions, accounting for 48 per cent of the global volume, more than the US and China put together,” he said

India is the fourth biggest economy, has the fourth largest stock exchange,

ranks third in automobile manufacturing, third in aviation industry and second largest maker of mobile phones. In October 2025, UPI, the country’s largest digital interface provider, overtook Visa to become the world’s single largest digital gateway, he said. Our Moon Mission was the first to land on its South Pole, he added.

India has made a fine geostrategic balance between two warring blocs in the world — “we are founding members of both Quad and BRICS. And we collaborate with Russia to produce Brahmos missile, while US also delivers predator drones to us. India has started attracting global manufacturers including Dassault from France, Foxconn from Taiwan and iPhone from the US.” India’s rise as a global leader is concomitant with its growing leadership in new-age technology like AI and quantum computing, said Trivedi.

In a conflict-ridden world, “India has a significant role to play as the fastest growing economy with the youngest population and is one of the oldest civilisations,” he added. ■

Forging global peace, the Gandhian way

Team Rotary News

The Incheon International Peace Conference was held in September in South Korea. Sankar Kumar Sanyal, a Gandhian peace activist and president of RC Howrah, RID 3291, led the Indian delegation which included Tushar Gandhi, president, Mahatma Gandhi Foundation, Mumbai, and his great-grandson; Kumar Prashant, chairman, Gandhi Peace Foundation, Delhi; P Maruthi, secretary, TBV Samity, Chennai; Prerna Desai, economist; Sonal Gandhi from Maharashtra; Shikha Sanyal from West Bengal; and Sanjay Rai from UP. They all addressed the peace seminar in Korea.

The conference was a collaborative effort between Korean organisations such as Incheon Newspapers, Voice of Peace and

People (VOP), Incheon Cultural Foundation etc and the Indian embassy (Korea), Institute of Indian Studies, Air India, Nonviolent Peace Wave and the Harijan Seva Sangh of which Sanyal is president.

After inaugurating the peace conclave, Sanyal unveiled a Gandhi statue at a public square in Incheon. Chairing the inaugural session, Park Hyunsu Kim, CEO, *Incheon Ilbo*, a popular Korean daily, said, “Peace is not a passive state but an active commitment, rooted in the truth in our dealings, compassion in our hearts, and justice in our societies.” He pointed out that global challenges from war and climate crises, to all forms of discrimination, are forms of violence that must be addressed by first removing hatred from our own minds.

On behalf of Harijan Sevak Sangh, Sanyal signed three MoUs to foster collaboration with the Gyeongin National University of Education (GNUE), Sunshine Miryong Yoga Cultural Centre and Korea Research Institute for Local Administration. The Indian delegates later toured Incheon and Seoul, and left for Japan.

In Japan their journey began near the majestic Mount Fuji, where they were received by Yuka Saionji, great-granddaughter of Japanese PM Saionji Kinmochi.

As a representative of Goi Peace Foundation, she escorted them to the GPF Peace Park, a symbol of global unity as it featured the flags of 194 countries. A joint peace appeal was penned by Sanyal and Toshika Tanaka, an 89-year-old survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bombing, and president of the GPF. The core message was an impassioned plea

to “abolish nuclear weapons” forever, for the sake of all life on the planet.

Sanyal and his team met a group of Japanese peace activists in Hibiya, a neighbourhood town of Tokyo. “We discussed ways to develop specific programmes and strategies for peacebuilding, and strengthening mutual understanding between India and Japan,” added Sanyal. ■

RC Howrah president Sankar Kumar Sanyal (in blue vest) with delegates from India and Korea, after inaugurating a bust of Mahatma Gandhi at Incheon, Korea.





Polio warriors honoured

Jaishree

Tejas, the Rotary Zone Institute, devoted a session to celebrate three stalwarts — PRID Ashok Mahajan, PDG Deepak Kapur and former Union Health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan — whose dedication ensured India's hard-won victory over polio. They were honoured with Lifetime Achievement Awards. The segment was moderated by PRID AS Venkatesh and anchored by institute secretary PDG Manjoo Phadke.

An emotional PRID Mahajan, whose leadership and advocacy were pivotal to Rotary's polio story in India, said, "For me the campaign was never an assignment. It was a calling, ever since I got associated with the Rotary Poliplus programme in 1996." One defining moment was his meeting with nearly 100 Ulemas (Muslim religious leaders) in New Delhi, a breakthrough that softened years of hesitation in Uttar Pradesh. Recalling that day in April 2006 (when he had just been elected RI director), Mahajan said, "As I entered the room, I had no paper in my hand. But Goddess Saraswati was on my tongue that day. I began the meeting reciting: *Bismillah-ur-Rahman-ur-Rahim; La ilaha illah-ul-Azim-ul-Haleem; La ilaha ill-illah-ur-Rahman-ur-Rahim.*" His recitation from the *Holy Quran* instantly won the trust of the clerics. What followed reshaped polio work across the state. "If you want our

support, form a committee in every district in the state," one of them suggested. Mahajan and his team acted immediately, setting in motion one of the most effective community-driven collaborations in the history of the programme.

"We were able to form the core group in Lucknow and other parts of UP. When the sub-NID was announced, we saw to it that on camera, all the Ulemas administered polio drops to their children, grandchildren or relatives' children. This was telecast all over the state and we started receiving support from the community," he recalled.

But the joy was short-lived; within the next 10 days, four polio

cases were reported from Malegaon, Maharashtra, and the state health secretary said the government was helpless. "But PRIP Rajendra Saboo raised his hand and quietly said that if the government of Maharashtra can't do it, Rotary will do it," and introduced Mahajan to the officials.

"In Malegaon, it was more difficult to break through than in UP; apart from the community, here even the medical fraternity and media were against polio drops," he said. Facing suspicion, misinformation and hostility, he, along with PDG Rajiv Pradhan (RID 3132), spent five days in the town, meeting families and speaking at public gatherings. "We even had a meeting in a crematorium where they made us sit on the floor to listen to us," he recalled. Finally, they won back the community's confidence step-by-step, and "for that I thank the India National PolioPlus Committee and its chair PDG Deepak Kapur, who were very supportive."

Mahajan also credited Ajay Saxena, a past president from RID 3120, and Ulema Maulana Rashid, for bringing the Muslim clerics to the table. "We were scared, but we knew



we were doing the right thing.” The turnaround that followed marked one of Rotary’s most significant grassroots victories. “I am very happy that the work we have put in is being recognised today,” he said, thanking institute convener RI director KP Nagesh.

He dedicated his award to PRID OP Vaish, who initially invited him to work on the PolioPlus Committee in 1996, and Rajashree Birla, chairperson of the Aditya Birla Centre for Community Initiatives and Rural Development. “She has contributed over \$19 million to Rotary’s polio eradication initiatives. When PRIP Kalyan Banerjee invited me to be a coordinator to raise funds from the private sector, he set a goal of ₹1 crore. I contacted her and she immediately accepted my request just over a cup of tea. She gave me much more than I expected. Whenever I ask her money for the polio eradication programme, she readily gives.” Mahajan dedicated his award next to Maulana Rashid who guided him through the numerous meetings with the Ulema committee.

“Now that I have received the award, I will not take a back seat. I will keep on fighting till the world is polio-free and Rotary will be remembered for long for the feat. Many times, I had heard experts say that India would be the last country to get rid of polio. At that time it appeared so because of the kind of resistance we faced,” he said.

INPPC chair Kapur was recognised for his meticulous planning and personal commitment on the field. “His ability to mobilise teams made Rotary’s polio strategy more coordinated and impactful,” said Manjoo. Kapur too dedicated the award to PRIPs Saboo and Banerjee, and PRIDs Sushil Gupta, Sudarshan Agarwal and Vaish.

“It is because of their strong shoulders that Rotary managed to work with the GoI and our partners WHO, UNICEF and CDC to get rid of the wild virus,” he said. To reach the last mile, “we need to have the best surveillance; we have to immunise every

child and we still need mega bucks to complete the job,” he said.

Receiving the award, Dr Harsh Vardhan recalled how a chance conversation with paediatricians in December 1993 introduced him to the possibility of eradicating polio, not merely controlling it. His subsequent deep study of global efforts convinced him that if Brazil and Cuba could eliminate polio, “why not India?”

He further emphasised Rotary’s pivotal partnership, calling it “one of the greatest treasures of my public life.” He also acknowledged the fragility of global gains. Referring to recent data which showed that there are 39 polio cases (30 in Pakistan, 9 in Afghanistan) and 169 cases of vaccine-derived polio virus in 13 countries, he said, “If we fail to end the virus in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the other countries, the world may face two lakh polio cases a year within a decade, which will definitely be a number larger than what we used to have in 1988,” he warned. “My last desire is to stand with all of you on the day the world is declared polio-free.”

RID 3182 PDG Dr P Narayana from Shimoga was honoured in absentia. PRID Venkatesh closed the session by reminding delegates that while India celebrates more than a decade of being polio-free, “the last mile is global, and Rotary still has a crucial role.”

Earlier during the day, a Rotary Golf Tournament held on the sidelines of the institute helped raise \$250,000 for TRF’s Polio Fund.

More institute stories in the next issue.



Seated from right: PRID Ashok Mahajan, former Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan and INPPC chair PDG Deepak Kapur. **Standing from left:** Institute chairman Sharat Jain, TRF Trustee Ann-Britt Asebol, RI Vice President Alain Van de Poel, PRIP Rajendra Saboo, RI President Francesco Arezzo, RI Directors KP Nagesh and M Murganandam, PRIP Kalyan Banerjee and PRID AS Venkatesh.



From L: TRF Trustee Ann-Britt Asebol, Anna, RI President Francesco Arezzo, Institute convener and RI Director KP Nagesh, RI Director M Muruganandam and Sumathi.



PRIP Kalyan Banerjee, PRIP Rajendra Saboo and PRID Ashok Mahajan.



President Arezzo and Anna enjoying a lighter moment.



RI Director Muruganandam and Sumathi.



As Anna interacts with a delegate, a "displaced" President Arezzo sportingly sits on the sofa armrest.



Above: The Delhi team put up an entertainment programme mirroring a song from the popular Hindi movie *Om Shanti Om*.



Director Nagesh shakes a leg with a delegate.



President Arezzo and Anna with PRIP Saboo and Usha.



RI Director Nagesh in an animated conversation with his spouse Uma and Institute chair Sharat Jain.



PRID AS Venkatesh and Vinita.



RI Director Nagesh and Uma, and PDG Sharat Jain and Ruchika, with their daughters.



From top: PRIP Shekhar Mehta and Rashi; Institute chair PDG Sharat Jain and Ruchika.



PRID Venkatesh, RID 3011 DGE Ajeet Jalan, RID 3192 DGE Ravishankar Dakoju and Paola.



Left: PRID Raju Subramanian with PDG Suresh Hari.



PRID Manoj Desai and Sharmishtha with PRIP Banerjee.



PRIDs PT Prabhakar and C Basker.



Right: PRIP KR Ravindran and Vanathy with PRIP Saboo and Usha.

Below: PRID Anirudha Roychowdhury and Shipra.



Above: PDG John Daniel and DGN Meera John with President Arezzo, Anna, presidential aide John de Giorgio and his spouse Monique Chambers.



Left: PRIDs Kamal Sanghvi, Mahesh Kotbagi and C Basker.



PRID Raju Subramanian and Vidhya.



RID Nagesh, PDG Sharat Jain and Ruchika with RI President Arezzo and Anna.



Above: President Arezzo and Anna with district leaders and their spouses.



Left: RI Director Muruganandam, RI Vice President Alain Van de Poel and PRID Subramanian.

Above: PRIP Ravindran and Vanathy being welcomed by PDG Pawan Agarwal and Institute secretary Manjoo Phadke.



RI Vice President de Poel and Francois.



PRIP Shekhar Mehta and Rashi with PDG Ramesh Chander and his spouse Raj Shri.

Above: President Arezzo and Anna, RI Director Nagesh and Sharat Jain with the sergeants-at-arms.

Pictures by
Rasheeda Bhagat and
Institute photographers

Designed by
Krishna Pratheesh S

Uplifting women in Bikaner

Team Rotary News

The Rotary Club of Bikaner Uprise, RID 3053, organised a three-day vocational training workshop to help local women and girls enhance their skills, confidence and economic independence. “Most families in our town do not encourage women to work outside their homes. So the girls prefer to engage in beauty care, tailoring and embroidery,” explains Ruchi Dastari, charter member and president of this three-year-old all-women’s club.

Nearly 80 participants attended sessions on mental wellbeing, nail art, advanced hair treatments,

hairstyling, bridal makeup and personality development. “We also included a basic session on cyber security and digital awareness, with an expert teaching safe practices for online fund transfers and social media use. This was particularly aimed at young women who are vulnerable to digital fraud,” she says.

Given the enthusiastic response, the club is now planning a second, longer-duration programme with additional modules.

Alongside its work in women’s empowerment, the club has taken up meaningful community service initiatives. It recently installed two

sturdy concrete animal shelters at the Bezubaan Welfare Society campus, replacing temporary structures to better protect handicapped dogs and cats from harsh weather. “The shelter is now home to around 150 stray animals, up from 50–60 earlier. The society has requested an animal ambulance, and we are currently raising funds for it,” says Ruchi.

In another green initiative, members planted 1,000 medicinal plants at Radhanagar Colony. The club, which prides itself on its youthful energy, has 38 members — “the oldest being just 35,” says the president with a smile. ■



DG Nisha Shekhawat (fourth from L), RC Bikaner Uprise president Ruchi Dastari (second from L) and club members at the Bezubaan Welfare Society.



Club members with participants at the vocational training workshop.

RID 3233 helps 200 women weave an economic empowerment dream

Rasheeda Bhagat

In October, several clubs from RI district 3233 came together in an ambitious venture to give 200 underprivileged women in Chennai not only sewing machines, but also the crucial training and skills required to use those machines to become economically self-reliant and make a financial contribution to their families.

The brainchild of Anees Begam, member of RC Chennai Sunrise and chairperson of the Women's empowerment committee of RI District 3233, this project made headlines in the local media, providing the visual appeal of 200 women assembling at the recently renovated Valluvar Kottam in the city and returning

home with gleaming new sewing machines.

Giving details of the project, Anees, its project chair, said when DG Devendran called her and said he was appointing her as chair of this committee, as she was herself a woman entrepreneur (chairperson of Haiku Foods, which makes breads, chapattis, etc) and would have some good ideas on how to create more women entrepreneurs, she decided to convert the club project she had in mind of giving sewing machines to women into a district project.

Eventually, what had been planned as a small project expanded into a much bigger one, with ₹15 lakh being spent to provide training and give sewing machines to women from poorer homes. Normally an Usha sewing machine of the model chosen costs ₹7,500, but after a lot of negotiation and considering that this was a community service project, she was able to procure the sewing machines at ₹5,000 a unit.



Project chair Anees Begam (seated third from L), Rajya Sabha MP Kanimozhi, DG D Devendran, PDGs ISAK Nazar and G Chandramohan with the beneficiaries of *Project Thaiyal Nayagi*. Savera Hotels MD Nina Reddy is seated second from left.



DG D Devendran and PDG ISAK Nazar (R) giving a memento to Rajya Sabha MP Kanimozhi as District Women's Empowerment Committee chair Anees Begam looks on.

When a good deed is being done, it attracts sponsors; a single club in RID 3233, RC Madras Arch City, came forward to sponsor 33 machines, and RC Madras North West sponsored 20 machines. Anees herself and two of her friends, each paid for 25 machines

and a total number of 200 women were helped through the project titled *Thaiyal Nayagi* (Tailoring champions).

On how the 200 beneficiaries were identified, Anees says that she wanted to concentrate on North Madras as poverty levels are

higher there. She explains that to help women who have passed their 12th class, and have a dream but no jobs or skills to get an income, government PHCs (Public Health Centres) keep a note book where such women can provide their details and the area in which they have some interest/skill. "So we scouted the PHCs near slum areas in North Madras and identified 100 women from Old Washermanpet and another 100 from Vyasarpadi who were interested in getting training in tailoring."

The next obvious step was to equip them with tailoring skills. Here she took help from a friend who does training courses for women in beauty care, tailoring etc. "So I asked her if apart from tailoring skills, can you also teach them *aari* work (embroidery). I want you to train 200 women for me, not only in tailoring, because if they stitch blouses they will make as little as ₹150. But if they can





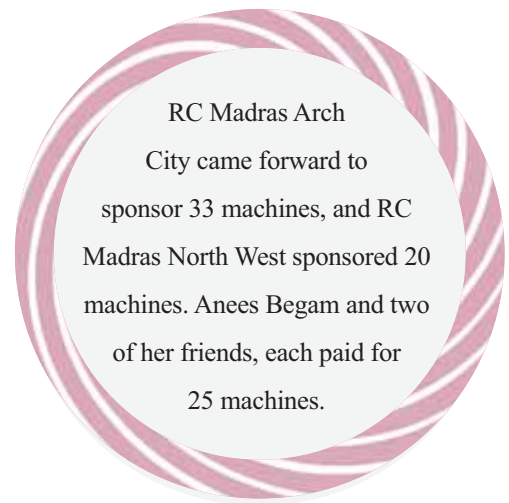
Kanimozhi handing over a sewing machine to a woman. DG Devendran and Anees Begam are also present.

embellish the blouses with some *aari* work, they can earn much more. And she agreed,” says the project chair.

Anees is always brimming with ideas on how to empower women. For instance, earlier, she had come out with the idea of empowering women by giving them auto rickshaws, and 115 autos were given to women in what became the famous Pink Auto project, with the Lead2025 conclave seeing the RI President Francesco Arezzo and Tamil Nadu Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin giving out keys of autos to 100 women drivers in Chennai. This enterprising Rotarian recalls that when she first thought of the autos-for-women project in 2019,

she herself spent ₹9,000 required to pay for the beneficiary’s driving lessons. “At that time, the cost of one auto was ₹2.75 lakh and I paid ₹1.25 lakh from my pocket!”

With the right partnerships — TN government, which provided two Corporation school premises during non-school hours to conduct the training, the Trinity Training Academy which is founded and owned by Rtn Ganapathy Suresh, DGN of RID 3233, and whose co-founder and CEO Kavitha Rammohan is her friend — the women underwent the training course. She didn’t need to organise the money — ₹3,000 a person — for the 75-day training course as Kavitha told her that funds



for this were available under a government welfare scheme.

The women were trained, the 200 sewing machines were bought and the project was launched with Rajya Sabha MP Kanimozhi being the chief guest. Expressing her happiness that



extend its support to this initiative,” she said.

Kanimozhi’s advice was taken seriously; “I have spoken to Ambattur Clothing and another friend who produces cotton kurtis in bulk and exports them, to pass on some work to these women. I am also connecting them to some wholesalers; they will have to pick up the fabric, sew the garments at home and continue the cycle. Marketing linkages will also be given through social media,” said Anees.

Addressing the meet, RID 3233 DG D Devendran said foundation-building was important and emphasised the need for women’s education as this was the bedrock upon which all empowerment rests. His message was clear: today’s sewing machine could become tomorrow’s small business, but only if paired with knowledge and skill.

He added that when first conceived, the goal was audacious: to provide 200 underprivileged women not just with sewing machines, but with comprehensive skill training, creating pathways to self-reliance and dignity. “But an unwavering belief

prevailed and Rotarians across the globe rallied behind the cause. Clubs from RI District 3233 joined hands. Friends became partners in purpose. What began as one person’s dream evolved into a collective mission, stitched together with determination and supported by a community that refused to let it fail,” added the DG. Well known entrepreneur and philanthropist Nina Reddy was also present.

Addressing the meet PDG ISAK Nazar reiterated Rotary’s enduring commitment to women’s empowerment, and added: “We don’t see this as charity; this is an investment in human potential.” PDG Chandramohan connected *Thaiyal Nayagi* to the broader landscape of women’s economic empowerment, and described how the *Pink Auto* project was also changing lives and giving independence to women.

For the assembled Rotarians the most gratifying moment was when the 200 women came forward to receive their machines. “Behind every woman stood a family, and behind every family, a future now reimagined with possibility. Seeing these smiling women receiving their machines, each representing a family on its way to stability and happiness, and more important, dignity and future possibilities as the children would now get

the Rotarians had undertaken such an important project to give economic independence to 200 underprivileged women, the MP urged the project team to ensure that the women got marketing support, and some marketing skills. “The crying need for this project is clear, and I assure you that the Tamil Nadu government would



Anees Begam with members of the District Women’s Empowerment Committee.

better education, and the entire family a better lifestyle,” said Anees Begam.

The hall was filled with smiles and laughter and along the edges of the venue, stalls run by women entrepreneurs displayed their wares. “They themselves were testimonials of empowerment and their presence seemed to be whispering to the 200 recipients: ‘This could be you’” added the beaming chair for women’s empowerment in RID 3233.

She added that this enterprise showed that grand events and projects were not always necessary to bring about change. “We all felt that the machines these women carried

Behind every woman stood a family, and behind every family, a future now reimagined with possibility; the children would now get better education, and the entire family a better lifestyle.

home were humming with so many possibilities. Some would mend torn clothes for neighbours. Others would create new garments for sale. A few might eventually train others, paying forward the gift they’d received.

The specific paths would vary, but the direction remained constant: forward, toward self-reliance, dignity and a future they’d sew with their own hands.”

Encouraged by the huge success of the project, which has now become a district project, and the event (organised under the advice of PDG AP Kanna), Anees is determined to enlarge its scope to benefit more women.

“Next year, I plan to organise 500 sewing machines to underprivileged women after training them. At that event we plan to get Chief Minister MK Stalin. And the year after, I hope to expand it to another 1,000 women beneficiaries,” she says optimistically. She has plans to rope in CSR funds into this project. ■

A piggy bank of compassion

Team Rotary News

When six-year-old Viraj Agarwal broke open his little piggy bank and offered the coins to his grandfather, Vimal Agarwal, a member of RC Lakhimpur Kheri, RID 3120, he did not realise that this would turn into a service project. *Khushiyaon Bhari Deepawali* (A Joyful Diwali), organised on Dhanteras by the club, brought cheer to children from nearby slum areas. “Viraj’s savings were the first fund that went into buying sweets and sparklers for children who rarely get to celebrate the festival,” smiles his grandfather Agarwal.

The club invited around 100 children to the Sakam Hotel and Shraddha Restaurant in Lakhimpur Kheri (UP), providing many of them with their first experience of dining in an air-conditioned restaurant and selecting from a variety of dishes.

After the meal, a series of competitions, games and fun activities kept the celebration lively, and the children went home with gift

hampers, toys, sweets and fireworks, tokens of a festival they would remember for years.

Club president Preeti Singh and secretary Aruna Agarwal coordinated the event, describing it as an effort to “spread light not only through lamps but through acts of kindness that brighten hearts.” Senior members, including PDG Ajay Kumar Arora participated in the event. ■



For many beneficiaries, simply holding a glass of water or picking up an object became an overwhelming moment of rediscovered ability. Some cut vegetables with ease, others operated vehicles confidently, acts they had long been unable to perform. Tears, smiles and quiet disbelief filled the room as individuals experienced the joy of independence once again.

These were scenes from a two-day prosthetic hand distribution camp organised in November at Jeevanjyot Hospital in Beed, Maharashtra. The initiative was spearheaded by RC Beed Midtown, RID 3132, in partnership with Arya Vaishya Mahasabha (Beed), Inali Foundation (Pune), and RC Pune Downtown, RID 3131.

A total of 103 battery-operated electronic prosthetic hands were fitted at the two-day camp. "The devices enabled orthopaedically-challenged individuals to regain mobility, dignity and confidence, bringing a new chapter of hope into their lives," says club president Rahul Bora.

The camp was inaugurated by PDG Om Prakash Motipawale and other dignitaries from partnering organisations. The closing ceremony, attended by DGE Jayesh Patel and PDG Harish Motwani, also featured a flag exchange ceremony between

RCs Beed Midtown and Pune Downtown.

Bora and club secretary Prakash Konka led the effort, with project chairman Nilesh Jagdale and club member Vaibhav Jharkar ensuring seamless execution. "Doctors, physiotherapists, staff of Jeevanjyot Hospital, and several Rotary members worked tirelessly to support every beneficiary through the fitting and training process," adds Bora. ■

Transforming lives with prosthetic hands

Team Rotary News



Sheikh Hasan, a Rotarian from Pune, training the beneficiaries.

Abhi na jao chhod kar...

Rasheeda Bhagat



Who can forget a stunningly handsome Dharmendra delivering the soulful melody *Ya dil ki suno duniyawalo, ya mujh ko abhi chup rehne do* (Hemant Kumar), and gently serenading Sharmila Tagore in one of Hrishikesh Mukherjee's best films *Anupama* (1966). Even though this film tells a story primarily of a woman Uma, enacted so beautifully by Sharmila Tagore, who recoils into herself and ceases to speak as she is rejected by her father, who blames her for her mother's death during childbirth, Dharmendra, who delivered one of his most impressive performances in his early career, quietly stands by her side, caring and loving, but never aggressive or forceful.

As the veteran actor bid goodbye to his family and fans at 89, the most common recall included his nickname *Garam Dharam*, his macho image in most of the roles he played, and of course the most iconic film not only of Dharmendra, but all of Bollywood, Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay* (1975), where he plays the flamboyant and gregarious Veeru to Amitabh Bachchan's silent and stoic Jai. The two are ex-convicts, hired by Thakur Baldev Singh (Sanjeev Kumar) to nab Gabbar Singh, a notorious and deadly dacoit, who has spread havoc in the village of Ramgarh.

Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar's scintillating dialogues, all the three male stars' acting, not to mention the bubbly and constantly chattering Basanti, played by Hema Malini, and above all Amjad Khan's impeccable delivery of the character of Gabbar Singh, gave this film the aura and title of being an evergreen classic that continues to resonate with Indian audiences even after 50 years. It

was here that Dharmendra firmly established his expertise in the genre of comedy.... Remember the unforgettable

mausi and *chakki peeing and peeing* scene where an inebriated Veeru threatens to commit suicide if Mausi doesn't give him permission to marry her niece Basanti?

Dharam's dialogue delivery here and in the temple scene where the actor hides behind a pillar and impersonates Shivji, who urges Basanti to accept his love, left audiences spellbound and in splits. In Hrishida's *Chupke Chupke* too, where he masquerades as a driver in order to fool his heroine (Sharmila Tagore's) guardian Om Prakash and the hilarious consequences, proved Dharmendra's capacity to play comedy roles with an ease one hardly expected from a rugged and macho actor.

Widely known as the "original he man," the tall and broad-shouldered actor had a macho persona that came through effortlessly in movies like *Phool aur Patthar* and other subsequent films. The man, who came from Ludhiana to Bombay with no godfather and made it big in Bollywood through his own merit, once admitted in an interview that in his earlier years when he was a nobody, he would look enviously at Dilip Kumar's posters splattered all across Bombay, and wonder: 'Can I ever become or look like him?' He went on to become a favourite star of women filmgoers. Doesn't his nickname *Garam Dharam*, say it all? In a career spanning seven decades, he acted in some 300 films, and in the earlier years, thanks to his Greek god looks, he was featured in mostly romantic roles, aimed at female audiences.

The rugged, machismo hero also had perfectly chiselled facial features and the combination drove female fans crazy. Add to this his enigmatic smile, a gentle persona and an old-school charm and women simply could not resist him. So how could Hema Malini



Dharmendra with Amitabh Bachchan in *Sholay* (1975).

do so despite knowing that he was already married with four children and would never abandon his family? He fell for her after seeing her at a movie premiere and relentlessly pursued her, and she admitted in her biography that after turning him down several times, she gave in. In a baffling arrangement, they became a married couple, and gave birth to two daughters, even as he continued to live with his first family. But as she put it: "He was always there; every time, everywhere."

Small wonder that many of Bollywood's actresses were heartbroken

at his passing. In her tribute Preity Zinta wrote, "What do you say about a man that was all heart, so loving, so compassionate and one of the biggest superstars and a legend of Indian cinema? When I didn't know him, I loved him and when I met him, I loved him even more. Words fail me as I feel sadness creep into my heart." His leading lady in seven films Sharmila described him as "an affectionate, simple and caring person, completely without guile."

She along with Shabana Azmi and Jaya Bachchan considered him the most handsome hero and once asked

by Aamir Khan on a *Kaun Banega Crorepati* episode, if he ever felt insecure when his wife Jaya was out shooting films with other heroes, Amitabh admitted that she has clearly told him that she was smitten by Dharmendra. Javed Akhtar, the celebrated lyricist, once expressed his admiration for the actor by saying, “I have not seen ‘Greek God’. I do not regret it. Because I have seen Dharmendra. A person who’d see him, would keep looking, and when we saw Dharmendra for the first time, our condition was the same”.

Small wonder that his heroine in *Phool aur Patthar*, *Kaajal*, *Majhli Didi*, etc, the legendary Meena Kumari, fell for him, and fell hard!

Reverting to Dharmendra’s love and reverence for Dilip Kumar, in Dilip’s autobiography *The Substance and the Shadow*, he recalls how once in 1952, while visiting Bombay as a college student he walked into Dilip’s house unstopped and ended up in his bedroom. Suddenly the veteran actor woke up and seeing a stranger standing there, called for help and the young man bolted. Six years later, he came to Bombay again to participate in a Filmfare talent hunt, and his make-up artist said she was Dilip’s



Dharmendra with his son Sunny Deol.

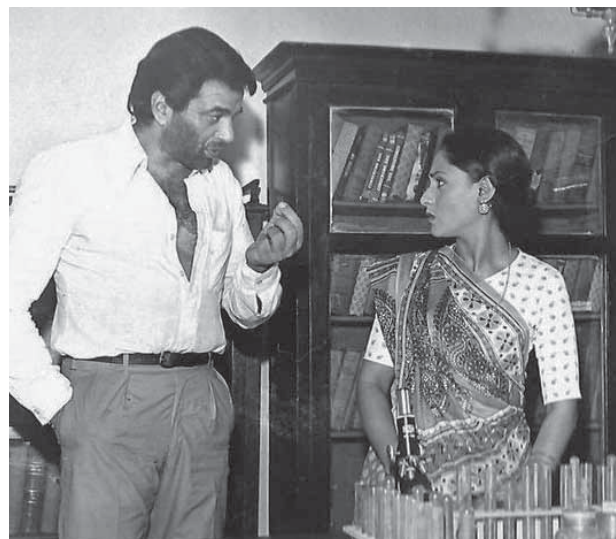


With Meena Kumari, his female lead in seven films.

Left: With Hema Malini (*Tum Haseen Main Jawaan*, 1970)



A still from
the movie
Zalzala, 1988



With Jaya Bachchan (Anandhi, 1975).

sister and arranged a meeting between the two. Dilip received him, “talked to me like an elder brother, full of love and concern and narrated how he became an actor and how difficult it was for him in the beginning to understand the demands of the profession.”

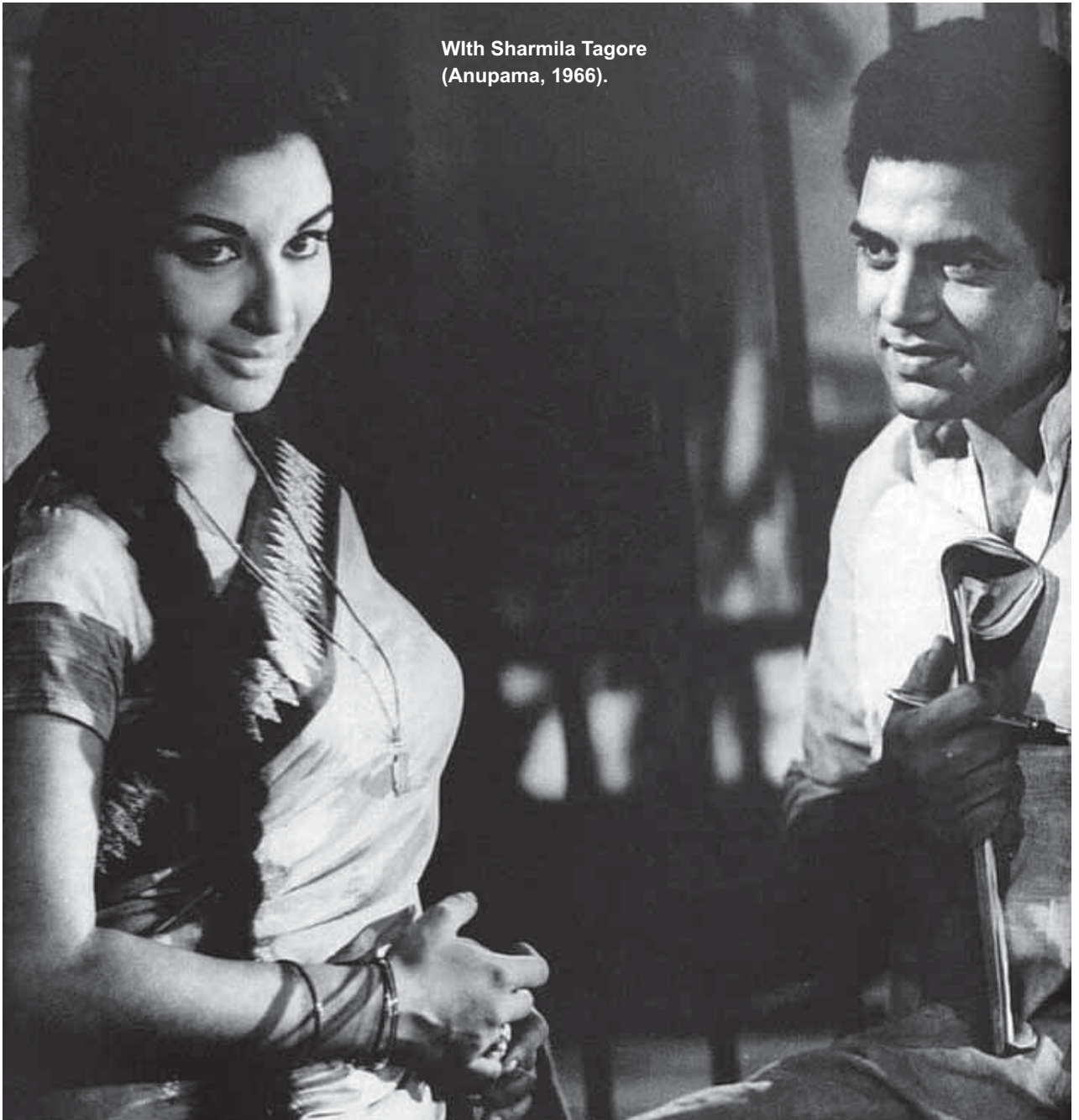
Before he left, Dilip noticed the youngster shivering in his thin shirt. He took Dharmendra upstairs, fetched a warm sweater from his cupboard, hugged him and “saw me off at the gate. I can still feel the warmth of that hug as it was genuine.”

It was the versatility and ease with which Dharmendra handled roles in different genres that set him apart as a great actor. He later got a Padma Bhushan and also became a Lok Sabha MP.

His partnership with Amitabh Bachchan on the screen was magical; whether it was *Sholay* or *Chupke Chupke*, Dharmendra’s screen presence, natural charm and charisma were so huge, that only an actor of the calibre of an Amitabh Bachchan could hold his own before him. But I personally believe that in both the movies, perhaps due to the liveliness and verve of the characters he plays, Dharmendra walked away with the honours.

In his tribute on X, Amitabh wrote: “another valiant giant has left us, leaving behind a silence

With Sharmila Tagore
(Anupama, 1966).



with an unbearable sound.” Describing him as “the epitome of greatness” he praised him for the largeness of his heart and its most endearing simplicity. “He brought with him the earthiness of the village in Punjab he came from, and remained true to its temperament... his smile, his charm and his warmth, extending to all who came in his vicinity, a rarity in the profession... the air about us swings vacant.”

Dharmendra remained active till the end, and as recently as 2023 played a short but memorable role in *Rocky aur Rani ki Prem Kahani*. The one memorable sequence from this average film is where a wheelchair-bound Dharmendra gets up, starts walking and serenades Shabana Azmi, streaks of grey hair et al, as she is leaving the room, singing that Mohammed Rafi-Asha Bhonsle immortal song: ‘*Abhi na*

jao chhod kar ki dil abhi bhara nahi’. I can watch that clip on Youtube any number of times! Such was the magic of Dharmendra, even at 87.

As the veteran charmer took his last bow on the stage of life, leaving millions of fans shattered, the words resonating were *abhi na jao chhod kar ki dil abhi bhara nahi*...

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Skilling women in Surendranagar

Team Rotary News

An idea of Hiren Shah, president of RC Surendranagar, RID 3060, has blossomed into *Project Kala Karmapeeth*, empowering 155 women and girls through skilling in six vocational courses.

With the objective of giving regular income to women, a vocational training centre was inaugurated by DG Amardeep Singh Bunet in July. Training is now being given in tailoring, beauty art, mehndi, resin art, hand embroidery and upholstery design by trained instructors. The courses vary from one to three months, and cost between ₹500–900, says Shah.

The monthly expense of ₹80,000 is funded by members and donors. Women Rotarians and Anns visit the centre to help the teachers and share their expertise.



A tailoring class in progress at the vocational centre.

There is palpable excitement at the centre as the first batches are about to complete their three-month courses in tailoring and beauty care. Sheth Jigna, 28, says the tailoring course “has given me stitching skills that will fetch me a regular income.” Her friend Nisha Kela (35) is confident that with resin art she can

decorate plates, bowls and jewellery, and make gift articles for social and family events. And with mehndi/resin skills, Urmi Patel (25) can get orders for weddings, festivals and family parties.

The project team is now negotiating with banks to offer loans at subsidised interest to the women. ■

From RI South Asia Office

Rotary Foundation Sustaining Member

A Rotary Foundation Sustaining Member is someone who contributes \$100 or more each year to the Annual Fund, that powers global grant projects which create a lasting impact on the communities. Clubs can track and encourage Sustaining Members through the Club Foundation Banner Report. Your contributions to TRF help strengthen and grow Rotary programmes worldwide. For more details, visit: rotary.org/en/donate/recognition.

Paul Harris Society

The Paul Harris Society honours individuals who inform us of their intention to contribute \$1,000 or more annually to TRF, specifically to the Annual Fund, PolioPlus

Fund, or an approved global grant. Recognition includes a chevron-style pin and a certificate, both provided by the District Paul Harris Society Coordinator.

This Foundation Month is an excellent opportunity to focus on recruiting new Paul Harris Society members and ensuring current members maintain consistent contributions each year. Details about Paul Harris Society members and their eligibility can be found in the Paul Harris Society Report. To learn more, visit: rotary.org/en/about-rotary/history/paul-harris-society or my.rotary.org/en/document/paul-harris-society-brochure.

You can also contact the RI South Asia Office’s Annual Giving team to discuss strategies for expanding the society and supporting members in fulfilling their commitments annually. ■

Rotarians reach out to flood victims

Jaishree

Members of RC Gangaghat reach out to flood-affected residents on boats.

This monsoon, several Indian states, including Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir, were battered by heavy rains, floods and landslides. Rising river levels and relentless downpours triggered widespread alarm and extensive damage. Across the country, Rotary clubs swiftly came together to provide emergency relief to affected communities.

In mid-August, Dharali village in Uttarakhand was hit by six

consecutive flash floods, destroying homes, homestays and hotels, trapping several residents under debris, and cutting off communication lines. Helicopter services and rescue teams were deployed for immediate assistance.

The **Rotary Club of Hardwar, RID 3080**, responded by supplying essential groceries, toiletries (soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, sanitary pads, hand sanitisers), and emergency medicines. DG Ravi Prakash flagged off the relief consignment to the Uttarakhand Social Welfare Office for distribution to the villagers.

In early September, continuous rainfall led to a sharp rise in the Ganga River, submerging several residential areas in Kanpur. Members of the **Rotary Club of Gangaghat, RID 3110**, travelled by boat to reach 136 inundated homes and distributed ready-to-eat food packets. “The only way to reach the houses was by boat,” said club president Avanish Shukla.

When floods ravaged parts of Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh, the **Rotary Clubs of Durgapur Central and Dharamshala Central, RID 3240**, stepped in. Led by president



Nikita Verma and secretary Shailendra Mehta, members collected and distributed new clothes, footwear and groceries to nearly 500 households in Sidhbari Baghni village near Dharamshala.

In Punjab, **RC Jalandhar Greater, RID 3070**, supported by funds from **RC Durgapur Central**, provided winter garments to schoolchildren affected by the floods.

Heavy rains in August caused the Beas River, which winds through both Himachal Pradesh and Punjab, to swell and breach its bunds, inundating



RC Gangaghat president Avanish Shukla feeding a cow.



Mukesh Teli (centre), president of RC Pachora Bhadgaon, and club members with schoolchildren.

several villages in Sultanpur Lodhi and Kapurthala districts. “Over 5,000 acres of agricultural land and residential areas were submerged. Farmers lost standing crops and families suffered enormous damage,” said Yogesh Talwar, president of **RC Kapurthala Downtown, RID 3070**.

Talwar, along with secretary Gagandeep Mehra and club members, visited Baghuwal village to assess urgent needs. “Groceries and

clothing were the top requirements. Many had lost household items and were under severe financial stress due to collapsed roofs and walls,” he said. The club subsequently provided groceries, toiletries, footwear, tarpaulin sheets, bedsheets, mosquito repellent and ORS sachets. DG Rohit Oberoi and Rotarians from the region joined the relief efforts.

In Maharashtra, floods severely impacted Gahule and Wanegaon villages

in Pachora district. The **Rotary Club of Pachora Bhadgaon, RID 3030**, led by president Mukesh Teli, distributed 100 sets of educational materials — notebooks, books, bags, slates and pencils — to affected schoolchildren.

In Punjab’s Hussainiwala village on the banks of the Sutlej River, Firozpur district, **RI District 3090**, in collaboration with **RI District 3060** and the **Rotary Club of Bombay, RID 3141**, organised a scholarship camp for flood-affected students.

“The camp provided crucial financial support to 342 students from three local schools in this severely affected region,” said RID 3090 DG Bhupesh Mehta. Blankets were also distributed to help students cope with the winter chill.

A total of ₹3.3 lakh was disbursed in scholarships, with the schools extending a 35 per cent fee concession for flood-hit families. Project chairman PDG Vijay Arora thanked RID 3060 DG Amardeep Singh, IPDG Tushar Shah, RC Bombay president Bimal Mehta, PDG Sandip Agarwala, and RID 3090 PDGs Amjad Ali, V B Dixit, Rajeev Garg, B M Dhir and K C Kajal, whose support made the initiative possible. ■



RC Kapurthala Downtown president Yogesh Talwar, club members Omkar Kalia, Vikas Chauhan, Dinesh Singh and Jamil Mohammed distribute essential items to residents in Baghuwal village.

A unique mother-daughter saga

Rasheeda Bhagat



Mother Mary Comes To Me

Arundhati Roy



If you are not into reading and can read only one book every few months, or a whole year, it has got to be Arundhati Roy's memoir titled *Mother Mary comes to me*. It reads like a thriller... packed with anecdotes, dramatic moments... searingly honest narration of feelings, emotions, relationships, the rabid, hate-filled exchanges between mother and daughter. Mother Mary is of course her mother Mary Roy, who famously waged, and won, a long legal battle for equal inheritance rights for Christian women in Kerala, because she was thrown out of her ancestral home by her brother and mother.

All of us are familiar with her powerful, hard-hitting writing... her beautiful prose, the international fame she got when her book *The God of Small Things* won the Booker Prize, and her essays against India's nuclear blasts during the Vajpayee regime, in favour of the Narmada Bachao Andolan and her famous foray into a Naxal infested region.

Though this book is about her life's journey, relationships, writing, etc, essentially the central theme is her love-hate relationship with her mother, who she and her brother were allowed to address only as Mrs Roy, as did generations of students who passed through her mother's famous school in Kottayam, Kerala. She sums it up in the line, "In these pages, my mother, my gangster, shall live. She was my shelter and my storm."

A feminist to the core, Arundhati writes about how in a small town like Kottayam, where there was little entertainment, as a young girl she frequently watched Malayalam and Tamil movies

and grew up on a diet of women-centred narratives, “mortal or divine, who only valorized absolute submission to the python-coils of tradition and convention.” Those who transgressed faced terrible punishment and lifelong disgrace. Many Malayalam films featured a gruesome depiction of women getting raped, so and so that “as a young girl growing up on a diet of these films, I used to believe that all women were raped, it was just a matter of when and where. That accounted for the knife in my bag when I arrived at the Nizamuddin Station in Delhi at the age of 16.”

In this background, as the school set up by Mary Roy in Kottayam grew popular, for her girl students, “Mrs Roy was the hope for escape. She was the burning flame of courage and defiance. She lit their path, showed the way. Not so for me. My escape route always circled back to what I was trying to escape from. When it came to me, Mrs Roy taught me how to think, then raged against my thoughts. She taught me to be free and raged against my freedom. She taught me to write and resented the author I became.”

And yet, when she won the Booker Prize, the only person she called was her mother, who was awake at 2am and watching the news. Her response: “Well done, baby girl.” This, says Arundhati, was “an incredible expression of love. I’d caught her on a good day.”

Mary Roy comes alive as a larger-than-life figure and a fiery champion of women’s rights in the pages. With the help of a Christian missionary, she started a school in Kottayam in 1967 in two rented halls — which, believe it or not, belonged to the Rotary Club of Kottayam. It began with seven students including Arundhati and her brother; each morning, they would have to

“sweep up the cigarette butts and clear away dirty cups and glasses left by the club members. All men, of course. To whom it would never occur to clean or clear away anything.” (Those of you female readers, who are chuckling away, can expect many such delightful home truths about the other sex!)

This school, where Mary Roy became the “owner, headmistress and wild spirit of a unique school in a unique town” would go on to become an institution to reckon with in Kottayam. Arundhati tells us that Mrs Roy was a unique woman; “she loved herself. Everything about herself. I loved that about her.” She did much more than win

*In these pages, my
mother, my gangster, shall
live. She was my shelter
and my storm.*

equal inheritance rights for Christian women. When she passed away in 2022, and her funeral had to be planned, the daughter knew that “the church didn’t want her and she didn’t want the church. (There was a savage history here, nothing to do with God!)”

The media covered her death widely and “the Internet lit up with an outpouring of love from generations of students who had studied in the school she found, whose lives she had transformed, and from others who knew of the legendary legal battle she had waged and won for equal inheritance rights for Christian women in Kerala.”

One interesting passage relates to how this remarkable woman had “disabused boys of their seemingly God-given sense of entitlement,” and

describes a hilarious instance of how she dealt with boys who teased the girl students about bras!

The boys who went through her school were “turned into considerate, respectful men, the kind the town had rarely seen. In a way, she liberated them, too... she raised generations of sweet men and sent them out into the world. For the girl students, the spirit she instilled in them, was nothing short of revolutionary. She gave them spines, she gave them wings, she set them free. She bequeathed her unwavering attention and her stern love on them, and they shone back at her.”

But that revolution came at a cost, she directed all her fury against men — father, husband, brother and her own son. Once she beat him up mercilessly for getting a report card from his boarding school, saying she wouldn’t accept a son whose report card said “average student”. The daughter was “hugged for being a brilliant student”. Since that day, writes Arundhati, all personal achievements have come to her “with a sense of foreboding. On the occasions when I am toasted or applauded, I always feel that someone else, someone quiet, is being beaten in the other room.”

When the writer was devastated by her mother’s passing away at 89, “wrecked and heart-smashed,” she herself was puzzled and more than a little ashamed by the intensity of her response, leading her brother to wonder why, “because she treated nobody as badly as she treated you.” Perhaps this was true, but she had put that behind her a long time ago because “I have seen and written about such sorrow, such systemic deprivations, such unmitigated wickedness, such diverse iterations of hell, that I can only count myself among the most fortunate.”

Arundhati says that thanks to the acrimony between mother and daughter and the hateful insults hurled at her, she left home, and stopped visiting home, and returned home only at 18 when she entered her third year in the School of Architecture in Delhi.

It is the irreverence in her writing, and little pretence, apart from of course the sheer brilliant writing style, that makes this book so gripping. She calls her father, who was called a “nothing man” by her mother, who walked out on him with her two young kids, a “beloved rogue,” but indulges him by giving him money to hit the bottle. The liquor with huge amounts of varnish he consumed had “burnt his intestines and turned them to lace.”

She calls her mother all kinds of names, including Madam Houdini, but is devastated when she is put on a ventilator for three days in a Kochi hospital. Mary Roy always had lung/breathing problems, but “to watch her, this powerful woman, our crazy, unpredictable, magical, free, fierce Mrs Roy reduced to abject helplessness, was its own form of suffering.” But she fought back and lived for another 15 years, and “until the day she died, she never stopped learning, never stagnated, never feared change, never lost her curiosity.”

Arundhati doesn’t spare herself either in this book, and her searingly honest descriptions of her thoughts, feelings, emotions and relationships make this one of the most honest books. Along with words such as ‘bitch’ her mother constantly conveyed to her that her relatives often called her ‘mistress’ or ‘keep’, leading the protagonist to give herself the endearing title: *The Hooker that won the Booker*.

There is an interesting account of the stupendous success of her book *The God of Small Things* that went on to win the Booker. Once she had completed the manuscript and wanted to publish it, there was a virtual storm. Forty publishers lined up and the advance against royalties was a “ludicrous” \$1 million. She felt as though she “had ambushed the pipeline that circulates the world’s wealth between the world’s wealthy and it was spewing money at me. There were all kinds of reviews. People hated it, loved it, mocked it, wept, laughed. The book flew off the shelves.”



Arundhati Roy with her mother Mary Roy.

But the book, and the buzz around it increased the complications between her and Mrs Roy a “thousandfold”. When a local fruit seller had the “temerity to ask her if she was Arundhati Roy’s mother, I felt as though she had slapped me,” fumed the mother!

The launch of the book in Kottayam met with a lot of drama, as it had offended the Communists, moral police and some conservative Syrian Christians too. She was accused of “obscenity and corrupting public morality,” and the case went on and on before finally being dismissed after 10 long years.

The oddities of Mary Roy are brilliantly brought out in this memoir. She would give her son and daughter shopping lists for the most unlikely things, mostly shoes and clothes and when she got them, she would put them on and flaunt them all at once. On one occasion, “I found her perched on the edge of her bed, looking thrilled, swinging her legs like a schoolgirl, wearing her oxygen nasal cannula, her diamond earrings, a size-44DD lilac lace bra, adult diapers and a pair of high-top Nike basketball shoes —“for stability,” she explained.

An entertaining passage is about the daughter shopping for her mother’s bra in a shop in Italy, accompanied by her favourite writer-friend John Berger. “Every time we entered a shop, I hung back to experience the sheer delight of watching this extremely handsome 80-something man say in his British-accented Italian, ‘Excuse me, could you show us what you have in size 44DD?’ I loved that he was helping me to buy my mother’s lingerie. I occasionally allowed myself these weird, secret games.”

One of her students wrote a book on her titled *Brick by Brick*, which “she edited herself, slashing through whole pages mercilessly, excising paragraphs that even briefly praised other people, rewriting sentences, as if it were a holiday assignment that her student (in his mid-50s) was turning in. Her one-page intro to her own biography, which she had signed below, as though she was signing a cheque, was entirely in capital letters,” says the writer!

Read this book for its engaging and gripping style, elegant and yet forceful prose, searing honesty, wit and humour... you will want to keep it on your bookshelves as a proud trophy. ■

A mobile blood bank to meet Thiruvananthapuram's growing need for blood

Rasheeda Bhagat

Following a need-assessment survey conducted jointly by RC Trivandrum Central, RID 3211, and the CSI Mission Hospital, Kazhakootam, and keeping the focus on the city of Thiruvananthapuram needing about 400 units of blood every day to help those requiring blood transfusion, RC Trivandrum Central has gifted the city a blood bank on wheels. The blood collected from this mobile blood bank

will help save the lives of patients, accident victims and surgical cases in over five medical colleges and medical research centres like the Regional Cancer Centre, Sree Chithra Medical Research Centre, etc in the city.

Named 'Rtn R Ravindrakumar Memorial Blood Bank on Wheels' in the memory of past president of the club who passed away last year, this van acquired and equipped at a cost of ₹50 lakh will "help significantly boost

blood donation efforts, especially among the city's busy urban population, and encourage young professionals and students who often cite time constraints as a reason for not donating blood, to come forward for this great cause," said RID 3211 PDG Suresh Mathew, the moving spirit behind the project and the one who conceptualised the idea of bringing a blood bank to the doorstep of donors in this busy city.

He said this mobile blood bank will directly visit high-density locations like IT parks, engineering colleges and corporate establishments to organise donation camps. "This approach eliminates the need for potential donors to travel to fixed centres, saving them valuable time and effort. The initiative was funded through a global grant, executed in partnership with RC Singapore Raffles," he added.

Fisheries, Culture and Youth Affairs minister Saji Cherian flagged off the vehicle, and said this timely facility "would be a great asset to the health sector, providing essential support to medical colleges and proving particularly helpful for accident emergencies in the Kazhakootam and coastal areas." Equipped with all modern amenities, including a sophisticated refrigeration system for safe blood storage, the vehicle has multiple donation stations, allowing several donors to donate blood simultaneously.

The mobile blood bank has been handed over to its project partners, the CSI Mission Hospital, for operational



Donors donating blood inside the Blood Bank on Wheels facility.

management. The project was initiated by past president PR Kartha and completed this year by club president Col KE Rajan.

Speaking to *Rotary News*, Mathew said since its launch, around 50,000 people had already watched the videos on this blood bank on wheels, posted by social media influencers. “The mainstream print and electronic media covered the launch and the IMA (Indian Medical Association) has already tied up with our beneficiary hospital CSI Mission Hospital to use this mobile blood collection unit for their blood mobilisation drives. Trivandrum Technopark and Trivandrum Techno City have a combined work force of 140,000 techies, of which around 70 per cent are below age 40 years. To encourage this group to donate blood, RC Trivandrum Technopark has already taken up a promotion drive among tech companies. Videos and relevant information has been shared on several Rotary WhatsApp groups.”

He said the van was spacious enough to allow three people to donate blood at the same time. “Our target is to collect blood from 50–75 persons a day; that will give us 150–200 units of blood products. The blood will be separated into components at the Dr SM Memorial Medical College where the mother blood bank is located.”

The CSI Mission Hospital is the satellite city medical centre of this same medical college. “Interestingly, the stationary blood storage unit at this city medical centre was also set up by Rotary under a GG,” he smiles.

On the demand for blood in Kerala’s capital city, Mathew says “as many as 400 units of blood are required in Thiruvananthapuram every



The mobile blood bank being flagged off by state fisheries minister Saji Cherian. PDG Suresh Mathew is seen on his left.

day, mainly because the capital region has so many medical colleges (five), research institutions and super specialty hospitals. Over 100 surgeries are done in the city every day, and numerous accident cases also require urgent blood transfusion. Unlike in the past, today’s youth are too busy to spare half a day to come to a blood bank, but they are not averse to donating blood. This has created shortage of blood in the capital city.”

Happy at the response, the past governor noted that pressing into service this new facility, the IMA has already started mobilisation camps with this mobile unit, and several Rotary clubs have booked this van to organise their own blood collection camps. “We have ensured that our Blood Bank on Wheels will be available to anyone who is interested in conducting free of cost camps.” The CSI Mission Hospital will issue donor cards, so that in a time of need they can avail blood using these cards. “We

already have a Rotary Dialysis Centre and a blood storage unit at the same hospital. This beneficiary hospital is highly service minded and has worked in close cooperation with Rotary.”

Those who have substantially contributed to this project include assistant governor Ranjit Suseelan, president of Rotary e-Club of Kerala Global, Dubai; Roy Kurian Zacharia, PAG Wilson George and Anil T Nair of RC TVM East. The project has received DDF support from IPDG Sudhi Jabbar. Apart from PDG Mathew, who presented the project details at its launch, RC Trivandrum Central president Col Rajan, past president Kartha, PDGs Jabbar and Dr Thomas Vavanikkunel, project director Donn Thomas, and club secretary Prem Thampi participated.

Institutions and groups in Thiruvananthapuram district interested in organising a blood donation camp with this mobile unit can contact 7510356766 or 7510357666 ■

Rotary adds sparkle to seniors' lives

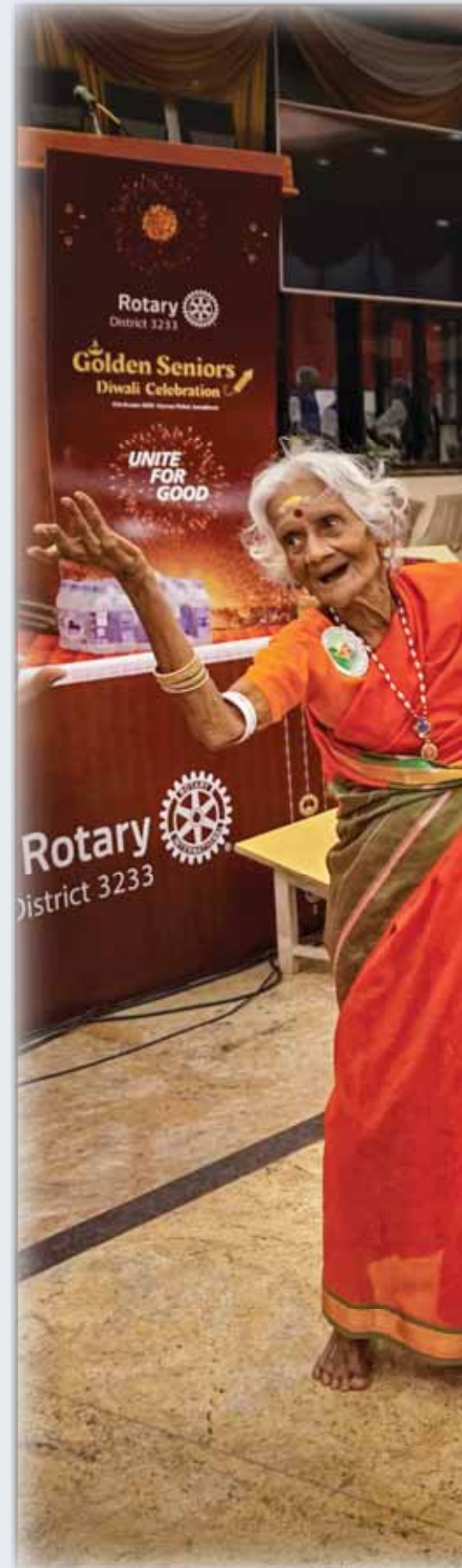
Kiran Zehra

The song *Andru vanthathum the nila* from the 1963 Tamil classic *Periya Idathu Penn* played out loud in the hall. Ninety-seven-year-old Lalitha, draped in a bright orange sari, rose to her feet, her hands moving in perfect rhythm, and her eyes shining with a dancer's grace. Within moments others joined her, and laughter and claps filled the hall. DG D Devendran and other Rotarians joined her on the dance floor.

The occasion was RID 3233's Golden Seniors Diwali Celebration where around 600 elders from ten old-age homes across Chennai joined the Rotarians for a morning of fun and a scrumptious *kalyana sapadu virunthu*, (a traditional South Indian wedding feast on a banana leaf.) "More than an event, it felt like a homecoming for those who had long been waiting to be seen," says the DG.

Later, when the music faded, I ask Lalitha how she had such perfect moves and expressions. Her family lived in Rangoon, Myanmar, before fleeing Burma when war broke out in the 1930s. "I was around five. We walked for days, then travelled by a sampan boat to reach Chennai," she recalls. She learned Bharatanatyam at the Kalakshetra Foundation under her guru, KN Dhandayuthapani, and later joined *Nadana Kala Seva*, a dance troupe. "I was a background dancer in Tamil cinema and have performed in the movies *Chandralekha* (1948) and *Marmayogi* (1951) alongside icons like Vyjayanthimala, Lalitha-Padmini, and Jayalalithaa.

Her eyes light up as she speaks of her performance in the movie *Chandralekha*, "We rehearsed for a year, shot for three months under the scorching sun... but, those were golden



DG D Devendran shakes a leg with 97-year-old Lalitha.



Lalitha stealing the dance floor spotlight.



From L: Project chair M Srikumar, DGND M Ambalavanan, PDGs R Srinivasan, Mahaveer Bothra, ISAK Nazar and DG Devendran.

days!” she says, before rising to show us a few steps from the famous drum dance.

After the loss of her husband and later her son, Lalitha came to Vishranthi old age home in 2012, a home to over 150 senior women. “I did not want to burden anyone. This place has given me peace,” she says. “Today, she is the life of the home, dancing for visitors recently, including Chief Minister MK Stalin,” says Manjula, a staff member at Vishranthi.

Among the audience were residents from homes like Vishranti, each with stories as moving as Lalitha’s. “They’ve lived extraordinary lives. When they get to sing, dance, or simply be celebrated, it gives them a reason to smile again,” says Manjula and proudly adds that in association with Rajan Eye Care, this home has been donating eyes for the last 25 years, 590 pairs so far!

Lalitha *paati*, flanked by a group of Rotarians wanting to take a selfie with her, smiles a toothless yet beautiful smile. “Recognition might come to people at different stages... I am happy that through my dance, people will know I exist. And I will continue dancing till I die,” she says.

“The event was planned with care and precision. Nine buses picked the men and women from 15 different locations in the city and it was heartwarming to see them curiously look out the window at the banners and bright decorations,” says DG Devendran. As the elders stepped out of the bus, some with walking sticks, some holding each other for balance, the Rotarians, with palms pressed together, heads

bowed, welcomed them like family, saying, *Vanakkam Amma... Vanakkam Appa*.

Throughout the afternoon, Rotarians moved with care, adjusting chairs, escorting participants to the washroom, pushing wheelchairs, and serving meals. “We wanted them to have a memorable Diwali. This is not about charity. It is about dignity. When we create spaces like this, we remind our elders that they still belong,” says project chair Srikumar M. During lunch, an elderly man rose to his feet before beginning to eat to thank the Rotarians. “You have treated us like your own parents. Today, we feel seen, valued, and loved. This is what keeps us alive.”

Diwali gift hampers containing toilettries, coconut oil, a pain-relief balm, talcum powder, and a saree for women or a dhoti for men, were distributed to all present. “Another 400 hampers were sent to the respective homes for those who couldn’t attend,” says Srikumar.

A highlight of the celebration was the live band featuring senior retired members from Ilaiyaraaja’s music troupe. Addressing the gathering, actor and former MLA S Ve Shekher spoke about his late mother, “I see her in all of you. This is a blessing for me.” Sahitya Akademi award-winning Tamil writer and translator M Ramalingam also shared his views on ageing and how to “find laughter in everything.”

DGND M Ambalavanan and PDGs ISAK Nazar, R Srinivasan and Mahaveer Bothra were present at the event.

Pictures by Kiran Zehra

Rotary organises a Lit festival in Thane

Harshad Divekar



Industrialist Nadir Godrej, Thane Lit Fest convener Atul Bhide, RC Thane Hills president Samir Limaye and RID 3142 DG Harsh Makol at the unveiling of the TLF book.

The Rotary Club of Thane Hills (RCTH), RID 3142, in collaboration with the National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA), recently hosted the first Thane Literature Festival (TLF).

The two-day festival featured 24 renowned authors and creative minds from across India, travelling from Mumbai, Vadodara, Bengaluru and Chennai — all attending without honorarium, purely for the love of literature and on the special invitation of RCTH.

The festival opened with industrialist-poet Nadir Godrej, the self-styled ‘Poet Laureate of India Inc’, having a tete-a-tete with Atul Bhide, TLF convenor and past president of the club. Godrej’s straight-from-the-heart answers and childlike purity thrilled the packed audience. His recitation of specially curated poems, ranging from those on the Parsi community to a ‘Vote of Thanks’, were greatly appreciated. His new poem on Ratan Tata, recited just a day ahead, served as a formal

launch of the book *Doing the Right Thing, Learning from Ratan Tata* by Harish Bhat, former brand custodian of Tata Sons. In his address, he shared inspiring anecdotes on Ratan Tata. Veteran author, journalist and former editor of *Femina* Sathya Saran, and Sahitya Akademi awardee journalist, poet, and translator Jerry Pinto, enthralled everyone by their take on Bollywood in the session titled *Films and Books*.

Three inspiring corporate leaders — Anil Khandelwal (former chairman

of Bank of Baroda), veteran ad-man Amby Parameswaran and renowned industrialist Rahul Mirchandani, who have all turned authors, shared their take on *Why We Write*.

The discussions went beyond traditional genres. Authors Vikrant and Subha Pande and poet Sampurna Chattarji discussed translation not as imitation but as a crucial act of recreation in *The Art, Science and Business of Translation* session. Retired IAS officer and Marathi

author, and President of the 99th All India Marathi Sahitya Sammelan Vishwas Patil, spoke on the relevance of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in today's era. A powerful session titled *Stories that serve: Editors of Change* featured Rasheeda Bhagat, Editor of *Rotary News*, along with Karon Shaiva. In this session, the moderator Seetha Raju quizzed them on how journalism can become a vital force for empathy and ethical service. The highlight of the first day was an inspiring talk by writer Devdutt Pattanaik, who spoke engagingly about his new book *The Bakasura Effect*.

Two performances stood out: *Daastangoi*, a deeply moving dramatic reading in Hindi, and *Abhivachan* in Marathi. They reminded the audience that storytelling began as a vibrant spoken art long before it was printed on paper.

On the second day veteran journalist and celebrated satirist Bachi Karkaria's session *Erratica and Beyond* earned a spontaneous standing ovation from the packed audience. She was given the first TLF Life Time Achievement Award.

In the session *Accidental Pilgrim*, journalist and acclaimed author Namita Devidayal's new book *Tangerine: How to Read the Upanishads Without Giving Up Coffee* was launched. This writer moderated a session with authors Charles Assisi and Dhamini Rathnam, on *Why we write*, exploring the core compulsion behind storytelling. They affirmed that in the age of AI, the authenticity and unique insight of the human writer — whether imposing an intellectual

order on complex systems or archiving marginalised identity — remains the non-replicable value of the craft. The session titled *Visual Stories* gave an interesting take on the role and importance of images in literature— and celebrated diverse forms of storytelling from art, illustrations and photographs. Artists Kripa Bhatia, Sucharita, and renowned photographer Chirodeep, along with journalist Jane Borges, brought out this unique angle in literature.

During the two days of the lit fest, two performances stood out. *Daastangoi*, a deeply moving dramatic reading in Hindi, and *Abhivachan* in Marathi, by Dhanashree Karmarkar and Shrirang Khataavkar. They reminded the audience that storytelling began as a vibrant spoken art long before it was printed on paper.

Past president Atul Bhide, the prime mover behind the festival, provided visionary leadership and resilience despite recently undergoing a spine surgery. He was fully supported by club president Samir Limaye.

The lit festival was financially supported by corporates such as the Fortress Group, Yes Bank, Bio Zed and TJSB Sahakari Bank, thanks to help from Rtms AS Kumar, Jayant Nagavkar and PP Vijay Shetty. The association with the NCPA and the *Hindustan Times* got it good media coverage.

By organising this lit festival, RCTH has confirmed Rotary's capacity to drive cultural change, demonstrating that when service and community engagement converge, words truly become a lasting force for good.

The writer is a past president of the Rotary Club of Thane Hills



Celebrated satirist Bachi Kankaria being presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Let's finish polio once for all

V Muthukumaran

While there is good progress in the global effort to eradicate polio, almost nil at 99.9 per cent, “we are concerned over the two endemic countries, Pakistan and Afghanistan that are getting new cases of wild poliovirus each year. Political instability, conflicts and militancy affect immunisation drive by health

workers and Rotary volunteers,” said Michael McGovern, chair, RI’s PolioPlus Committee.

Speaking at a webinar on ‘The last mile in the war against polio,’ jointly hosted by RID 3234 and *The Hindu* daily, he urged Rotarians to keep up their engagement at their club and national-level; focus on eradication activities at the high-risk areas; “ensure better

accountability among partners to achieve the objectives, and take part in advocacy groups to work with local governments, that will help in funding the PolioPlus campaign,” he said.

At present, 62 per cent of the global Rotary clubs are contributing to the Polio Fund, and “Rotarians in India have set an example for others through their awareness drives and advocacy efforts with the government.” He added that Rotary has contributed \$25 million to GoI’s steps to migrate from OPV to an injectable polio vaccine.

After taking charge as Rotary President, Francesco Arezzo’s first trip was to Pakistan where he met the political and Rotary leaders engaged in the fight against polio. “Every five years, there is a spike in polio cases in Pakistan during



RI President Francesco Arezzo during a visit to an immunisation centre in Pakistan.

elections as the work of health volunteers and the immunisation drive are affected during this time,” he said. Till October 16, there were 35 cases of wild poliovirus (WPV1) worldwide — 29 in Pakistan and six in Afghanistan. Last year (2024), the world saw 99 cases of WPV1 in these two countries, he noted.

There is a spurt in the cases of polio variants (circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus2 — cVDPV2) in many African and Middle East countries like Ethiopia, Yemen, Chad, Angola, Gaza, Nigeria and Somalia which are in dire need of immunisation drive and surveillance by Rotary teams, said McGovern. Each year, Rotary raises \$50 million for its PolioPlus campaign, and this amount is matched 2:1 by the Gates Foundation. The US government is the largest donor, having contributed \$265 million each year in the last two years, and will provide the same amount in 2026 too. “Since 1985, the US government alone has



TRF Trustee Ijeoma Pearl Okoro with RI's PolioPlus Committee chair Michael McGovern during the symbolic immunisation held at a primary health centre in Nigeria.

spent more than \$5 billion in polio eradication initiatives,” he said.

Through its advocacy efforts, Rotary has brought in the WHO and the Gates Foundation who

are now partners of the rainbow alliance called GPEI (Global Polio Eradication Initiative) formed in 1988 with RI as the founder member, along with other global health bodies. No other organisation in the world has taken on such a challenging project as Rotary did by taking up polio, McGovern said. “Until we finish polio completely, we can’t move on to the next big corporate project.”

DG Vinod Saraogi said Rotarians and the Chennai Corporation gave oral polio drops in Chennai on two days in November. “At metro stations, Rotarians sensitised commuters on Rotary’s global efforts to end polio. We must continue with social media campaigns and surveillance to prevent the re-emergence of polio in vulnerable, high-risk areas, until the last child in the world is immunised.”

Around 700 Rotarians and readers of *The Hindu* watched the live streaming session on various social media channels. ■

Madras was the pilot study

Speaking to *Rotary News*, NK Gopinath, a veteran EPN campaigner and past president, said RC Madras was the first in the country to start the PolioPlus campaign in the then Madras in 1984 by importing vaccines from Canada, thanks to the help from the state government. Club member, the late Kris Chitale, PDG Ken Hobbs from RC Whitby, Canada, and Dr Jacob John from RC Vellore were pioneers in the very first immunisation drive in India. “Based on the success of the maiden 1984 campaign in Madras, a national-level PolioPlus campaign was launched by the then RI President Mat Caparas with the Gol’s support on May 1, 1987,” he recalled. “Gol chose Tamil Nadu as the pilot state and Rotary offered a grant of \$2.5 million for this nascent campaign then.”

Polio Day highlights

Team Rotary News

In a tribute to Rotary's extraordinary contribution to eradicating polio worldwide — and the tireless efforts of thousands of Indian Rotarians who helped the nation achieve polio-free status in 2014 — Rotary clubs across India organised a host of events on October 24, World Polio Day.

These programmes aimed not only to commemorate Rotary's historic role but also to reinforce the importance of

routine immunisation and continuous surveillance to protect newborns and children up to age five from the paralyzing virus. Sustaining India's polio-free status is crucial, especially with neighbouring Pakistan and Afghanistan still polio-endemic — an ongoing reminder that viruses do not respect borders.

Here is a snapshot of how Rotary clubs across India marked the day.

The Rotary Club of Navi Mumbai Joy of Giving, RID 3142, and RCC



Above: Members of Interact Club of Narthanasala and RC Vizianagaram commemorate World Polio Day at a shopping mall.

Right: RC Belgaum Midtown members with children at a World's Greatest Meal fundraiser.



From R: PDG Kailash Jethani, DG Harsh Makol and RC Navi Mumbai Joy of Giving president Rekha Sankhala in front of the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation building illuminated with 'End Polio' messages.



RC Mayiladuthurai Kings president P Ayyasamy (third from L) and club members with a Polio Hundi.



Navi Mumbai Shapers, in partnership with the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation, illuminated the NMMC Headquarters with powerful messages: ‘End Polio Now’, ‘Goodbye Polio’, and ‘Let’s Keep India Polio Free’.

In Pune, a striking 30×40ft hoarding on Senapati Bapat Road, installed by **RC Pune Sportscity (RID 3131)**, highlighted Rotary’s pivotal role in polio eradication. The hoarding drew nearly one million public views over ten days. The club also organised a 12km bike rally through the city’s slums. “We wanted to remind people that the war against polio is not yet over, and that our neighbouring countries remain polio-endemic,” said club member Sandesh Savant.

The club continued its longstanding tradition by contributing \$2,000 to TRF’s Polio Fund. Along with Rotaractors from the DY Patil Business School, they supported 20 polio booths in the suburbs, helping vaccinate over 3,500 children during the municipal corporation’s Pulse Polio drive, and providing transportation and lunch for the booth volunteers.

Community Rallies and Outreach

The **Rotary Club of Roorkee Midtown, RID 3080**, in collaboration with

the Madarsa Rehmania Arabia, organised a polio awareness rally in the city. Islamic scholars, Rotarians and medical professionals came together for a seminar underscoring the importance of vaccinating children.

DG Ravi Prakash highlighted Rotary's monumental role in global polio eradication and urged community leaders to dispel myths and address fears among the public. Around 170 students, teachers, and Rotarians, led by DG Prakash and club president Vikas Tyagi, marched a 4-km route carrying placards promoting immunisation.

RC Belgaum Midtown, RID 3170, hosted yoga sessions as part of the World's Greatest Meal to End Polio (WGM) initiative, raising funds for the Polio Fund. Founded in 2014 by Suzanne Rea of RC Cairns Sunrise, Australia, the WGM programme encourages Rotarians to host a meal, share Rotary's polio eradication story, and inspire others to support the cause. The initiative has since raised over \$7 million globally, supplemented by



RID 3206 DG Chella K Raghavendran (third from L) with End Polio Now coordinator PDG V R Muthu and DGE Maruthi Samba at a marathon event.

matching contributions from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Several clubs, including **RC Beed Midtown (RID 3132)**, **RC Pachora Bhadgaon (RID 3030)**, and **RC Haripad Greater (RID 3211)**, held awareness rallies stressing the need for polio vaccination for children under five.

In Coimbatore, PDG V R Muthu, the End Polio Now co-ordinator for

Zone 5, flagged off a marathon organised by **RI District 3206**. The event saw 4,000 runners. Under the leadership of DG Chella Raghavendran, the district secured pledges amounting to \$50,000 for TRF's Polio Fund from 33 Rotary clubs, of which \$20,000 has already been remitted to the Foundation. RC Coimbatore Texcity was the lead club for the marathon.

Five clubs in **Durgapur (RID 3240)** joined hands to organise a joint rally, while in **Mayiladuthurai**, Tamil Nadu, Rotary clubs collaborated to screen *Little Drops*, a Tamil film about polio, for the public.

Rotarians of **RC Tirupattur, RID 3231**, conducted a polio immunisation camp and administered polio drops to 200 children.

The young members of the Interact Club of Narthanasala, sponsored by **RC Vizianagaram, RID 3020**, performed a flash mob with the End Polio Now theme, at the Fort City Central shopping mall.

Across India, these coordinated efforts once again demonstrated Rotary's steadfast commitment to keeping the nation polio-free and contributing to the global fight until polio is eradicated everywhere. ■



Students of the Madarasa Rehmania Arabia participate in a polio awareness rally organised by RC Roorkee Midtown.

Autorickshaws empower women

Under *Project Auto-Magic*, Rotary clubs from RID 3191, in partnership with CSR sponsors Tessolve and Wesco, Bengaluru, distributed autorickshaws to 60 women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The event also included distribution of gifts and sarees sponsored by the Arya Vysya Ladies Group.



IPDG Satish Madhavan (L), DG B R Sridhar (third from R) and DRFC Kashinath Prabhu (R) with a beneficiary.

Breast cancer awareness

RC Hubli West, RID 3170, and RC Kodaikanal, RID 3000, in association with the Karnataka Northern Diocese CSI, organised a breast cancer awareness and mammography camp in Hubli. Over 600 people registered, with 250 women screened and 15 identified for further medical evaluation.



Rotarians and members of the Karnataka Northern Diocese CSI in front of the mobile breast screening clinic.

Boosting school facilities

RC Meerut, RID 3100, handed over facilities funded by a \$36,038 global grant from TRF to the Vedic Kanya Inter College, Tatiri. The support included computers, smart boards, lab equipment, toilets, solar panels and bicycles for students.



Rotarians with school students and their new bicycles.

Rotary 'Natyanjali' for children of slain Army men

RC Madras Heritage, RID 3234, hosted the *Rotary Natyanjali*, a fund-raising Bharatanatyam programme to support the education of children of deceased Army personnel. Over 100 dancers performed on the theme 'Navarasa'. The club raised close to ₹6.5 lakh.



A performance at the fundraiser.

Women-centric initiatives

Doing long-term sustainable projects is her top priority; “I have urged all the 162 clubs (5,276 members) to take up service initiatives that will live on for years to come,” says Tina. The district theme, ‘Create your own legacy’ is reflected in the flagship *Project Oppol* (elder sister) which has seven verticals, all being women-centric initiatives.

Project Asha, under *Oppol*, will screen around 75,000 women for breast cancer through the AI-powered thermalytix mam-mography. “This technique enables radiation-free, non-invasive and affordable screening of large communities. We are doing this through a GG valued at \$50,000,” she says. There are six more *Oppol* verticals — *Abhaya* (building homes and one-stop centres); *Vidya* (education); *Janani* (mother and child care, smart angandwadis); *Shreya* (economic independence); *Nirmala* (building toilets and water ATMs); and *Bhumika* (environmental protection).

Twenty panchayats will be made sanitary pads-free with the distribution of 75,000 eco-friendly menstrual cups, each costing ₹200, by the district clubs. Around 3,000 bicycles, sponsored by club members, will be given to school girls (₹80 lakh). Each club will be doing around 8–10 medical camps, reaching out to thousands. For TRF-giving, her target is \$1 million. She wants to induct 1,000 new members and charter 10 clubs.

Tina joined Rotary in 1998 as it promoted friendship and shaped her leadership traits. She is inspired by her husband Antony’s work as a Rotarian.



**Dr Tina Antony
Kunnumkal**
Dental surgeon
RC Aroor Satellite City
RID 3211

Meet your Governors

V Muthukumaran



Nisha Shekhawat
Academician
RC Ajmer
RID 3053

Medical Mission at Gwalior

As a young girl, Nisha was influenced by her father Shivraj Singh Gaur, an 82-year-old Rotarian from RC Kota. “He has put in 44 years of active Rotary service, and held key posts in the district Rotary. He is my role model,” says Nisha, whose husband Amarpal Singh Shekhawat is also a Rotarian.

She has lined up two GG projects — donation of 1,600 bench-desks to 30 government schools (GG: ₹50 lakh) in Jodhpur and Ajmer; and providing medical equipment (₹26 lakh) to the neonatal ward of MG Hospital, Jodhpur. In the last week of March, a seven-day mega medical mission will be organised at Shivpuri by RC Gwalior in partnership with RID 3080, and the state government. RC Bhiwadi will do a Happy School project (CSR funds: ₹1 lakh) benefitting 1,500 students.

Nisha aims at a net growth of 15 per cent members from a base of 3,400 in 77 clubs. Since July, 50 small projects in mother and child care, health, and literacy areas, worth ₹6–7 lakh in all, have been done. “We have collected 3,500 units of blood, and planted 10,000 saplings under ongoing activities.”

For TRF-giving, her target is \$260,000. After being a Rotaractor (1990–93), Nisha joined Rotary in 2007.

Focus on mammography buses

To optimise the functioning of Rotary in the district, Sudhir Lature does not want clubs with less than 26 members. He wants the Rotarians to choose a club closer to their home, and has directed each club to have at least five women members. "At present, women constitute 16 per cent of our count, and I want to push it to 20 per cent by June-end. I will add 500 new members and charter 25 new clubs in my tenure," he says. Currently, there are 4,240 members in 103 clubs.

To increase cancer detection, five more mammography buses (GG: \$300,000) will join the existing three mobile clinics in March, all of "which will help screen two lakh women in remote villages." For newborns, three human milk banks will be set up (GG: \$150,000) at the government hospitals in Solapur, Nanded and Ambajogai. "Projects to promote 100 Happy Schools (GG: \$200,000) in the government sector, will be done. We will set up four farm equipment banks (GG: \$100,000) in Aknui, Chakur, Jalna and Shirdi to benefit farmers," he says. He will induct 250 Rotaractors (490 members now) and add 10 new clubs to the existing 34 Rotaract clubs.

To achieve the TRF target of \$1 million, several Rotary Runs were held at many places in November with the help of 2,000 Rotarians and 3,000 public volunteers.

Lature joined Rotary in 2011.



Sudhir Lature
Metal fabrication
RC Latur Mid-Town
RID 3132

In a major initiative, seven derelict ponds near Patna will be rejuvenated through CSR funds. High-tech equipment will be donated to the Government Mental Hospital, Ranchi, for treating patients.

DG Namrata, RID 3250



Namrata
Dams and canals
RC Chanakya
RID 3250

A mix of medical, water projects

DG Namrata is doing a mix of medical and water projects benefitting large segments of people. First in the list is the setting up of three blood banks (GG: ₹144 lakh) at government hospitals in Buxar, Muzaffarpur and a private nursing home in Patna. "The GG is in the pipeline, and will be okayed soon," she says. This will be followed by installing two dialysis machines (GG: \$20,000) at the GH, Ranchi, and a charity hospital in Motihari, Bihar.

Around 250 Tulu motor pumps will be installed (GG: ₹60 lakh) at Goh village in Aurangabad district, Bihar, to meet the drinking water and irrigation needs of villagers. In a major initiative, seven derelict ponds near Patna will be rejuvenated through CSR funds. High-tech equipment (CSR funds: \$225,000) will be donated to the Government Mental Hospital, Ranchi.

Namrata's TRF-giving target is \$500,000. With 4,700 members in 120 clubs, she is aiming for 20 per cent net membership growth, and 10 new clubs. She joined Rotary in 2008 with the purpose of "making a tangible difference to communities, even while growing as a leader professionally and in personal terms," she smiles. ■



RID 2981

RC Vijayapuram

Under the *Project COPSE*, planting drives are held to increase the green cover, enhance biodiversity and create long-term ecological balance. The initiative is sponsored by Subsel Tech Solutions.



Club matters



RID 3012

RC Delhi Shahdara

Groceries were donated to the Andh Mahavidhyalaya Blind School, Panchkuian. The club will be providing uniforms to 25 students and 80 bedsheets for the visually-impaired children at this boarding school.

RID 3100

RC Bhartia Gram

Nutrition kits were distributed to 70 TB patients at the community health centre in Gajraula, Amroha district, in the presence of the CMO and the district TB officer. Jubilant Bharatia Foundation supported the project.





RID **3120**

RC Allahabad South

Books, drawing material, stationery and food packets were distributed to 30 special children at the Udaan School, Prayagraj.

RID **3000**

RC Tiruchirapalli Phoenix

Club president Manivel Annadurai and project chair S Dinesh participated in Green Diwali at the St Antony's Primary School, Vadakku Paganur. The event aimed at educating the students about the need to make the planet greener.



RID **3132**

RC Solapur Smart City

During the second phase of its greening mission, 200 saplings were planted at the Sai Temple complex, Hotgi. So far, the club has planted 300 trees of diverse species out of a targeted 500 saplings. Villagers took part in the mission.



RID **3141**

RC Mumbai Inspire

Over 70 women entrepreneurs displayed their products at an exhibition organised by the club. The event was led by president-elect Chaitali Chatterjee and Vocational Services vice-president Zainab Patel.

B12

the key to nerve health

Gita Mathai

Everyone knows that vitamins are essential for the healthy, efficient functioning of both the body and the mind. In the body, vitamins function as coenzymes and cofactors in the millions of chemical reactions that occur every second. Some people even take large or “megadose” amounts of vitamins in the hope of promoting health and longevity. This is self-defeating, as excess water-soluble vitamins are excreted in the urine. In contrast, fat-soluble vitamins can remain in the body and reach toxic levels.

The body does not make vitamins. Most of our vitamins are obtained

from a balanced and nutritious diet. Deficiencies can occur in strict vegans, those on highly restricted or unfortified liquid diets, those who have had radiation or surgery, and in seniors.

The fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K) are stored in the body for long periods. In contrast, the water-soluble vitamins (the B-complex group and vitamin C) are not stored. They must be supplied regularly through the diet.

Within this group, vitamin B12 is an exception. Unlike other B vitamins, it is found mainly in meat, fish, and dairy products rather than in leafy vegetables or fruits. Moreover, while most B vitamins are destroyed by heat and cooking, vitamin B12 remains relatively

stable. The body can store about 1 to 5 milligrams of vitamin B12, so symptoms of deficiency may take several years to appear.

The absorption of vitamin B12 is more complex than that of other water-soluble vitamins. The process begins in the mouth, where vitamin B12 binds to a protein called haptocorrin in the saliva, and then binds to another protein known as intrinsic factor, which is secreted by the parietal cells of the stomach. This new complex is then absorbed in the ileum, the final part of the small intestine. When vitamin B12 is added to fortified foods or taken as a supplement, it can be absorbed more directly but still needs to bind to intrinsic factor.



Vitamin B12 deficiency can occur because of an inadequate diet, particularly one that lacks animal products. Sometimes, xerostomia (dry mouth) can reduce saliva and interfere with absorption. The gastric glands that produce intrinsic factor can become damaged and replaced by fibrous tissue. This can occur in thyroid disorders or autoimmune diseases. Chronic *Helicobacter pylori* infection, as well as regular use of tobacco or alcohol, can also reduce absorption. Intestinal diseases or surgical procedures such as partial removal, banding, or bypass of the stomach or small intestine, or weight-loss surgery, can further contribute to falling vitamin B12 levels.

Metformin is one of the most used drugs for the control of diabetes. Proton pump inhibitors such as omeprazole and pantoprazole, and antacids like cimetidine, ranitidine, and famotidine are widely prescribed. These medicines, along with certain anti-epileptic drugs such as phenytoin and phenobarbital, can also lower vitamin B12 levels.

Vitamin B12 requirements are about 0.4 mcg per day in infants and 2.4 mcg per day in adults. Pregnant and lactating women need slightly more, around 2.8 mcg per day. Foods rich in vitamin B12 include liver, beef, fish, eggs (especially the yolk), and dairy products such as curd, paneer, and cheese.

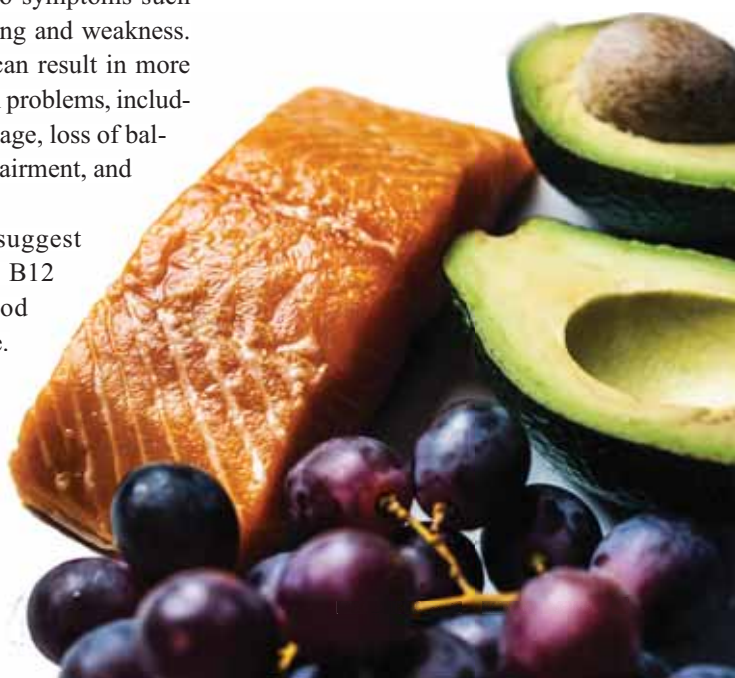
All cells contain DNA, and vitamin B12 is a key nutrient required to produce DNA in all dividing cells. It is essential in the formation of red blood cells. A deficiency can lead to a type of anaemia in which the red blood cells are larger than usual and less efficient (megaloblastic anaemia). The nerves are also affected, as B12 is needed to maintain the protective myelin sheath that insulates them and is crucial for the synthesis of neurotransmitters that allow nerves to communicate. Without enough B12, nerves can become damaged, leading to symptoms such as numbness, tingling and weakness. Severe deficiency can result in more serious neurological problems, including spinal cord damage, loss of balance, cognitive impairment, and forgetfulness.

If symptoms suggest a possible vitamin B12 deficiency, a blood test should be done. A level of around 300 pg/ml is considered normal. If a deficiency is detected, the underlying

cause must be identified and addressed along with corrective treatment. Medicines should not be stopped without a doctor's advice, even if they contribute to low B12 levels. When the cause cannot be corrected, replacement therapy should be started. In mild cases where absorption is intact, vitamin B12 capsules or tablets containing 250–1000 mcg can be taken daily. They may be prescribed alone or in combination with folic acid and other B-complex vitamins. If the deficiency is severe or the absorption is impaired, vitamin B12 injections can be given daily for one week, followed by weekly doses for six weeks. Monthly maintenance injections may then be required for the rest of one's life. Blood levels should be rechecked after three months of treatment.

As we age, vitamin deficiencies can develop gradually and often go unnoticed. These deficiencies may aggravate symptoms such as fatigue and age-related memory loss. The good news is that they are often reversible with timely correction.

The writer is a paediatrician and author of Staying Healthy in Modern India.



Making a difference

A new blood bank in Moradabad

DG Nitin Agarwal inaugurated a component separating blood bank at the Crest Hospital, Moradabad, set up by RC Moradabad East, RID 3100, through a global grant of \$50,000.

Five club members donated blood on the occasion. The new facility will make three blood components — RBC, platelets and plasma — from one unit of blood which can help save three lives. PDG Lalit Mohan Gupta, who is also the DRFC, and hospital director Dr Raj Shekhar were present at the inaugural. ■



RID 3100 DG Nitin Agarwal (third from right) and to his right DRFC Lalit Mohan Gupta at the new blood bank in Moradabad.



Diwali sweets being given to patients from Gadchiroli tribal areas.



Cataract surgery for Gadchiroli tribals

In an ongoing medical project of RC Nagpur South East, RID 3030, 35 patients from the naxal-hit tribal areas of Gadchiroli underwent cataract surgery at the Shalinitai Meghe Hospital, Nagpur.

So far, this Rotary year, 194 underprivileged people have benefitted from this project. The club provides free transportation, and takes care of their accommodation during the pre- and post-operative care at the hospital. ■

Pune Rotarians visit Mauritius

A 12-member team from RID 3131 visited Mauritius on a five-day trip under a Rotary Friendship Exchange programme. Members of RC Poona, PDG Deepak Shikarpur, Dr Farida Irani and Dr Kamal Palia, presented the club flag to Mauritius President Dharambeer Gokhool who shared memories of his India visit and interaction with former India president Abdul Kalam.

The delegates consisting of members from RCs Poona, Khadki, Pune Gandhi Bhavan and Pune Amanora, also attended a weekly meeting of RC Haute Rive, and garlanded the statue of Mahatma Gandhi on Oct 2 during a project visit. The Indian Rotarians were led by Dr Madhura Vipra. ■



RID 3131 Rotarians with Mauritius President Dharambeer Gokhool (centre) during a RFE visit to the island nation. PDG Deepak Shikarpur is at the back row (centre).



Alappuzha district collector Alex Varghese (third from R) gives a dialysis kit to a beneficiary as RC Alleppey Greater president Nazeer Punnackal (to his right) looks on.



Dialysis kits for kidney patients

Alappuzha district collector Alex Varghese inaugurated a medical project of providing dialysis kits to underprivileged patients by RC Alleppey Greater, RID 3211.

The club will deliver 20 dialysis kits a month for a year to 20 individuals with kidney disease at a cost of ₹3 lakh.

Varghese handed over the first kit to a patient at the inaugural, and the remaining kits were distributed by club president Nazeer Punnackal to the beneficiaries at the weekly club meeting. ■

TRF Star Performers (2024–25)

Trophy	Zone 4	Zone 5
Highest Contribution to TRF Annual Fund	Chetan Desai, RID 3141	Meerankhan Saleem, RID 3212
Highest Contribution to TRF Endowment Fund	Chetan Desai, RID 3141	Meerankhan Saleem, RID 3212
Highest Contribution to TRF Polio Fund	Dinesh Mehta, RID 3142	Meerankhan Saleem, RID 3212
Highest per capita APF Contribution to TRF	Dinesh Mehta, RID 3142	Meerankhan Saleem, RID 3212
Highest Total Contribution to TRF	Chetan Desai, RID 3141	Saravanan NS, RID 3234
Highest Donor Participation (% wise)	Tushar Shah, RID 3060	Subbarayan Baskaran, RID 2981
100% Club Participation for TRF Giving	Mohan Parashar, RID 3055 Tushar Shah, RID 3060 Chetan Desai, RID 3141 Dinesh Mehta, RID 3142	Sivakumar V, RID 2982 Suresh Babu S, RID 3203 Santhosh Sreedhar RID 3204 Meerankhan Saleem, RID 3212 Sushena Ranatunga, RID 3220
Highest Giving Club towards TRF Polio Plus Fund	President Chetna Singh RC Hiranandani Ivan, RID 3142	President VNMAK Rajivan RC Virudhunagar, RID 3212



RID 3234 PDG N S Saravanan and Bharati receiving the award from RI President Francesco Arezzo. Also present (from L): PRID A S Venkatesh, RID K P Nagesh, Ravi Sundaresan, PRID Raju Subramanian, TRF Trustee Ann-Britt Asebol, Kumar Rajendran, RID M Muruganandam, PDGs J Sridhar and Madhav Chandran. (Seated): PDRR Sasikumar and DRRE Vignesh Chandran.



RID 3141 PDG Chetan Desai receiving the award from Trustee Ann-Britt Asebol. Also seen: RID Nagesh, PRID Anirudha Roychowdhury, President Arezzo and Jwala Desai.



RID 3291 PDG Krishnendu Gupta and Simran with (from L) RID Nagesh, PRID Roychowdhury, President Arezzo, RID Muruganandam and Trustee Ann-Britt Asebol.

— Zones 4, 5, 6 and 7

Trophy	Zone 6	Zone 7
Highest Contribution to TRF Annual Fund	Sukhminder Singh, RID 3240	Shital Shah, RID 3131
Highest Contribution to TRF Endowment Fund	Krishnendu Gupta, RID 3291	Sharad Pai, RID 3170
Highest Contribution to TRF Polio Fund	Sukhminder Singh, RID 3240	Malla Venkateswara Rao, RID 3020
Highest per capita APF Contribution to TRF	Sukhminder Singh, RID 3240	Shital Shah, RID 3131
Highest Total Contribution to TRF	Krishnendu Gupta, RID 3291	Shital Shah, RID 3131
Highest Donor Participation (% wise)	Bipin Chachan, RID 3250	Vikram Datta, RID 3181
100% Club Participation for TRF Giving	Sukhminder Singh, RID 3240 Bipin Chachan, RID 3250	M Venkateswara Rao, RID 3020 Shital Shah, RID 3131 Suresh Saboo, RID 3132 Sharath Choudary, RID 3150 Sharad Pai, RID 3170 Vikram Datta, RID 3181 Mahadev Prasad, RID 3192
Highest Giving Club towards TRF Polio Plus Fund	President Milan Kumar KC RC Pashupati Kathmandu RID 3292	President G Vinod Kumar RC Vizianagaram, RID 3020

Zone 4, 5, 6 & 7 (India, Nepal and Sri Lanka)	RI District
Nitish Laharry Trophy for Highest Total Contribution to TRF	3141
Binota and Kalyan Banerjee Trophy for Highest Endowment Fund Contribution	3291
Usha and Raja Saboo Trophy for Highest Annual Fund Contribution to TRF	3131
Highest Polio Fund Contribution to TRF	3020
District with highest new AKS members	3141



RID 3170 PDG Sharad (R) Pai receives his award from Trustee Ann-Britt Asebol and RI Vice President Alain Van de Poel. President Arezzo, DGE Lenny Da Costa and RID Muruganandam are also present.



RID 3212 PDG Meerankhan Saleem (R) receives his award from President Arezzo. From L: DG J Dhinesh Babu, RID Nagesh and PRID Subramanian are also seen.

Membership and Public Image Awards in the next issue.



At home with nature

Be part of an extraordinary, immersive experience of living in harmony with nature, and observe the consequences of mindless development.

Many years ago, I read a short story by Saadat Hasan Manto, whom many believe to have been the subcontinent's shining literary star in the early 20th century, called 'Toba Tek Singh'. Inspired, I tracked down an audio version in the original Urdu and was further blown away. Set in the time of Partition in an asylum for the mentally disturbed, located in what is now part of Pakistan, it examines the impact of that momentous division upon the inmates, focusing on Bishen Singh, who hails from the village of Toba Tek Singh. He's been incarcerated for 15 years and has been mostly silent all this time, but when it is decided by



Sandhya Rao

the authorities that the inmates too will be divided up, with Muslims going to a Pakistani asylum and Hindus and Sikhs to an asylum in India, Bishen Singh has only one question: Is Toba Tek Singh in India or Pakistan?

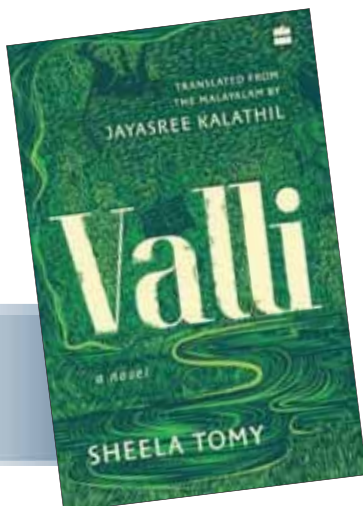
This inadequate precis of the short story fails to reflect the nuances and insights that Manto lays out. My request to you, dear readers, is: Please look for the story and read it. You will find it online. I have it in print, in Penguin's excellent series on cities, this one called *City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore*. This version has been translated by Khushwant Singh, who began as a lawyer practising in Lahore, and grew into a maverick journalist, writer and chronicler, known for his

most famous novel, *Train to Pakistan*. He successfully edited *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, and wrote a hugely popular column called 'With Malice Towards One and All'.

The reason for remembering this story is the book I want to introduce today, originally in Malayalam, called *Valli*, by Sheela Tomy, translated by Jayasree Kalathil. Read what writer Nilanjana S Roy (author of the brilliant *The Wildings*) says of the book: "... it is a soaring and unforgettable song of the earth, a magnificent and wrenching story of four generations in Wayanad, but also a book shot through with the murmuring, stifled but always resurgent voices of the forest and the land itself." Another award-winning writer, KR Meera (author of *Hangwoman*, *Aarachar* in Malayalam, much lauded in both languages) calls the translation "lush and luxuriant". *Valli*, in Malayalam, has multiple meanings: land, plant, young woman, and daily wages, and is used by the author as a metaphor for Wayanad itself, today a popular tourist destination in Kerala.

The book was recommended by a friend whose opinion I value, but for some inexplicable reason, it took a couple of attempts for me to get started on it. But once into the novel, I couldn't put it down. Somewhere along the way, the connection between humans and the earth, delineated so vividly, helped me begin to understand, actually palpably understand, the connection that human beings, actually, all living things, have with the idea of 'home'. That's when 'Toba Tek Singh' flashed in my consciousness and I re-read the story.

Valli begins with a teacher-couple coming to Wayanad (then known as Bayalnad or Vananad) to settle and live among the indigenous people whose lives are interwoven with the forests and ferns, the flora and fauna, and the





ways of the natural habitat. Over time, there are changes that take place that shape and shake up humans and nature alike. This, to put it simplistically, is the foundation upon which the world of *Valli* is built. But of course, as in life, so in this novel, there are layers and layers that unravel as the story unfolds over a few generations until the region becomes the tourist attraction it is today, reflecting so-called development and prosperity for the inhabitants, mostly settlers from elsewhere, and comfort and conveniences for visitors.

The story is told through the diary entries of Susan, the daughter of the teacher-couple, revealed as her daughter, Tessa, reads what her mother has written. Time flits between

the past and the present, even as the narrative switches between myth and reality, tangible and intangible, human and natural existence. We are familiar with the term ‘magic realism’ in literature, commonly associated with writers from South America. *Valli* could well carry that label, except that the Wayanad it conjures up is full of magic even as it is implacably real. The writing is luminous, lyrical, and every experience is felt, by writer, translator and reader — or so it seems. I know that I couldn’t put the book down once I got into.

However, such a book may not be an ‘easy’ read, even for hardcore bookworms. For instance, a friend who downloaded *Valli* on her Kindle the moment I recommended it — and she is a bookworm that burrows deep and constantly — was ready to give up after about 200 pages. “I don’t understand!” she said, when she called to discuss the book, and asked what she was missing, seeing that I had enjoyed it so much. That’s the thing about those who love books: they don’t give up, they want to know what, why and how. They don’t let personal likes and dislikes subsume them.

After we had talked about it for a while, we decided that maybe one thing to do was to read up a couple of well-written reviews of *Valli*. Not for the synopsis, but for a sense, for clues, for direction. Then, maybe to allow the book’s narrative to lead the way, and not look to plot the action. “Yes, maybe,” she said. “I tend to look for clarity in the plot.” She decided to give it another go after a while, and not worry about a clearly defined plot.

I hope now that she has decided not to try and control her reading, but to allow the world created in the novel to

control her, she will begin to enjoy the experience.

And, out of the blue in the curious way in which serendipity strikes, I received a recommendation on WhatsApp from someone who has never made a book suggestion before: *Inside Fuming Forests* by Ira Saxena. It is set among the sal forests of Bastar and, going by the blurb, is an adventure set in the midst of exploitation of nature. I think it’s primarily intended for young readers and is, in that sense, likely to be different from *Valli*. However, another young adult book that came to mind is *Oonga* by Devashish Makhija (‘A Sense of a Meaning,’ *Wordsworld*, November 2022), a hard-hitting critique of the exploitation of natural resources and indigenous peoples. The more obvious connection, though, is with Abraham Verghese’s *The Covenant of Water* (‘A Solid, Absorbing Read,’ *Wordsworld*, July 2023).

We need look no further than the project to develop the Andaman and Nicobar Islands into a strategic and economic hub, plans for which are well underway, to realise that *Valli* hits right home. Everyone knows that such a project will destroy the ecosystem of the region and the existence of the inhabitants, both irreplaceable. *Valli* may be fiction, but, as one of the characters in the novel says: ‘Stories contain more truth than histories. ... Because storytellers are bound to bring the truth in their heart to the story they tell. It’s different for historians. They are obliged to side with the vested interests of those who make them write those histories.’ Something we may think about.

The columnist is a children’s writer and senior journalist

The plan to turn the Andaman and Nicobar Islands into a strategic hub echoes Valli’s warning — that unchecked development can destroy both a fragile ecosystem and its people.”



Climate adaptation is the new mantra

Preeti Mehra

We must adapt ourselves for the future and be resilient enough to face climate change.

When you can't reverse it, you must adapt to it. That is what the world has come to believe as climate change wreaks havoc and countries are pushed into standing up and recognising that something needs to be done. This also means, through extension, that the responsibility also lies with each of us, in whatever part of the world we live. In our case it is India.

Last month Brazil hosted the Conference of Parties (COP30) on climate change which involved taking stock of what nations across the world are doing to bring down global temperatures and weather shifts that are creating difficult conditions and often disaster situations. India too was a participant at the COP 30 meet. Simply put, climate change is caused by human actions, and the worry is that this in the long term will adversely impact the health

of citizens, flora and fauna, and bring irreversible damage to planet Earth.

In India too we have felt the harmful effects of climate change and have seen several extreme weather events taking place over the past few years. These include landslides, melting glaciers, increasing heat, unprecedented rain, floods, cloud bursts, cyclones, hurricanes, and unprecedented air pollution. It is believed these will only increase in frequency as the Earth warms up.

India is rated as the seventh most vulnerable country to climate change. These disasters are bringing terrible hardships to our people, and going forward, are only going to increase in number. So, what can we do as citizens, especially those for whom the environment is an important issue?

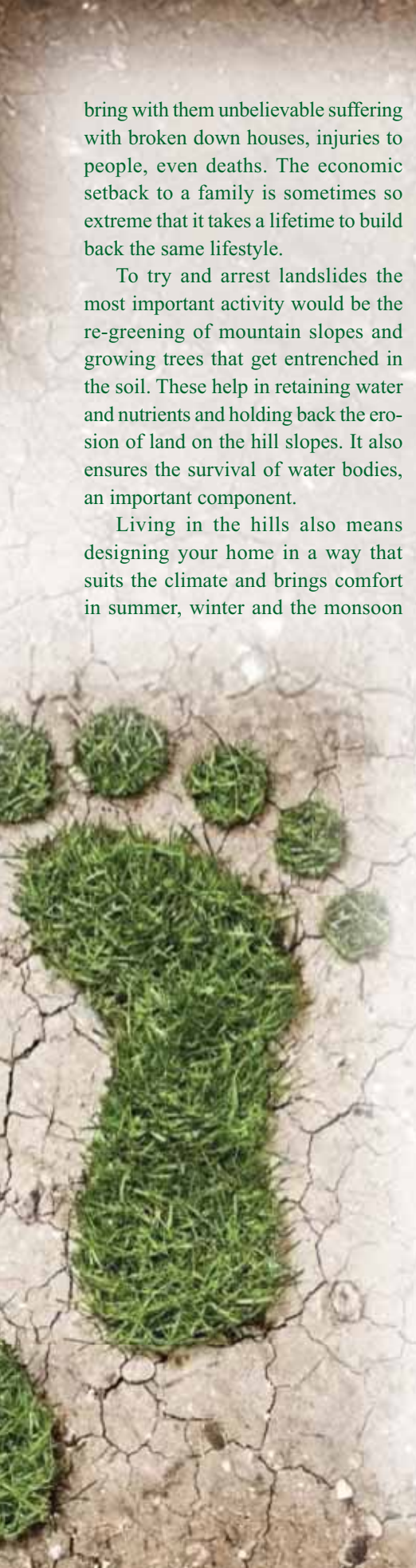
The buzz word now is 'climate adaptation'. In simple words, it means getting ready to face these disaster events and helping people around us to adjust to actual or expected future climate crises. This can only happen by taking appropriate action in advance to stop, prevent or reduce the damage that disaster events can have on our lives and that of others.

The action we take for reducing the impact of climate change will depend on where we live. If we live in the hills, what we need to do is totally different from if we are living close to the sea. Ditto for living in a city in a high-rise apartment, in a bungalow, cottage, slum or even a village hut.

The intention of this column is to help you understand how to be prepared to face the upcoming weather changes or adapt to them so that you are not caught unawares.

Let's start with living in the hills. Though we rave about the cool climes and the beautiful vistas that you can witness, high altitude areas are the most vulnerable to climate-induced landslides and avalanches. These

To arrest landslides the most important activity would be the re-greening of mountain slopes and growing trees that get entrenched in the soil.



bring with them unbelievable suffering with broken down houses, injuries to people, even deaths. The economic setback to a family is sometimes so extreme that it takes a lifetime to build back the same lifestyle.

To try and arrest landslides the most important activity would be the re-greening of mountain slopes and growing trees that get entrenched in the soil. These help in retaining water and nutrients and holding back the erosion of land on the hill slopes. It also ensures the survival of water bodies, an important component.

Living in the hills also means designing your home in a way that suits the climate and brings comfort in summer, winter and the monsoon

months. Environmentally conscious citizens should urge local governments to study and opt for ecosystem-based adaptation to contain the climate crisis.

In contrast, living near the coast is an altogether a different experience. Many of the coastal areas have mangrove forests that serve as natural sea defences. Alas, they are brutally done away with in India to build ports and industry. With the Earth heating up due to climate change, it is best for people to leave the coastline with as much natural vegetation as possible as these act as a deterrent and reduce the height and strength of sea waves, protecting the shore from storm surges. Leaving mangroves untouched is also much cheaper and more sensible than building massive seawalls to keep away flooding. It is our duty to ensure this happens.

Now for the landlocked city dwellers who are increasingly facing terrible bouts of air pollution, don't take it lightly because the assault is directly on your lungs. See to it that the local administration cuts down on petrol-based transport and encourages or even incentivises public transport and the use of bicycles and e-vehicles.

If you are building a house or looking for a flat, ensure that the design is based on future climate projections so that the extreme temperature situations are taken care of. With the climate crisis, adapting to what is to come is the best way forward, as also readying yourself for it.

For instance, when it comes to food, you can make a big difference. Just make it a point to never waste food as it has been grown using energy and many resources. If your thrown food reaches the landfill, it rots and produces a greenhouse gas and deadly pollutant --- methane. It is of grave importance what food you buy, how much you buy, consume and throw away. So, being conservative in

**The mangrove forests are
brutally done away with in
India to build ports and
industry.**

purchasing food and composting food waste so that it mingles back with the soil is the way to go.

City residents, town dwellers, and villagers as well have one duty in common. They all need to keep an eye on their energy footprint. Small things like switching off an air conditioner or a fan or even avoiding using them is an obvious plus point. But most of us ignore the smaller points like replacing an air filter for more efficiency, buying star labelled gadgets for reducing energy usage, or unplugging gadgets when not in use.

A simple decision like opting for a newer energy star gadget model can reduce energy consumption from anywhere between 10 to 50 per cent every year. It is said that an average person, across the world, produces four tonnes of carbon dioxide through their activities annually. But if you live in a highly developed country like the US, you produce 16 tonnes of carbon dioxide, and if you are in India, you produce around two tonnes. But the trouble is that India has that many more citizens and this statistic for India is going up every year. So, it is time we halt the increase of our carbon footprint, become resilient and adapt for a future where we will have to live cautiously.

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

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



RID 3150

RC Guntur-Vikas

Over 200 persons were screened at an eye check-up camp at Ananthavarappadu village with the support of Sankara Eye Hospital, Peda Kakani, and Vidhisha Paleti from RecycleSpecs, Texas, US. Among them, 105 were selected for cataract surgery.



Club matters



RID 3205

RC Trichur

The club is partnering with the Association of Mentally Handicapped Children/Adults (AMHA), Thrissur, to support their autism training and rehab centres. An RCC was started to provide capital for its skilling centre.

RID 3231

RC Tirupattur

The club presented equipment to 100 construction workers in Keezhanoor village near Pudurnadu Hills in Tirupattur district of Tamil Nadu. Fertilisers were distributed to 30 farmers at this village.





RID 3234

RC Chennai Galaxy

Around 1,200 students from 150 schools took part in a Science and Tech Quiz hosted by the club. All the 12 finalist teams were given prizes, shields and certificates. School education minister Anbil Poyyamozhi was the chief guest.

RID 3170

RC Dharwad Central

RI director K P Nagesh inaugurated a chapter of the International Fellowship of Rotarian Musicians (IFRM) at a membership seminar. DG Arun Bhandhari was present. Sanjay Ingle is chairman nominee of IFRM.



RID 3261

RC Sambalpur

One thousand saplings of diverse species were planted on the campus of IIM, Sambalpur, by club members as part of the club's greening mission.



RID 3291

RC Calcutta Presidency

A kidney health-cum-wellness camp was held in partnership with Vivacity Hospital for frontline workers. BP, blood sugar, BMI, ear check, breathing test, and kidney function tests were done. Health cards with test results were given.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran



Japan, India: A study in contrast

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan



Last month, after our trip to Japan, many people were curious to know what struck my wife and me the most about Japan. My wife is way too diplomatic to answer such direct questions. But I have no such inhibitions and quickly replied, “Speed breakers. There are none in Japan whereas here, even in a small community like where I live, there are 8 in the perimeter road of 800 metres.” My response was prompted by a bump on my head because of an unmarked speed breaker. So I said what was uppermost in my mind.

The thing is it’s not as if the place where we live is full of *junglis*. Not by any reckoning. It might have been, when journalists were in the majority. It is, after all, a complex built by media persons. But not any longer. We now have some highly educated non-media people living in our housing complex. But despite that we need a speed breaker every 100 metres. Likewise with dog excreta. True, that in that respect, Japan isn’t unique. Europe and most other countries are the same. But in India it’s the “love my dog, and love its poop as well” attitude. So if you are driving in our housing colony you have to deal with the speed breakers. And if you are walking, you have to deal with the dog poop. It’s best to stay at home.

One other major difference is walking. The Japanese walk three or four km a day and not because someone has asked them to walk 10,000 steps a day. It’s because there’s very little parking space and they have an absolutely marvellous subway system. In India, however, we take the car or motorbike to go a couple of hundred yards. I asked a neighbour’s son about this one day. He said walking was boring. “Boring? What about that earphone you wear all the time?” I asked.

“Uncle,” he said, “now you are being boring”. There wouldn’t be a single Japanese person who would say that to a senior citizen — and believe me I am very senior, nearly 75 years old.

We saw something else in Japan that you don’t get to see in India — the tendency to defer to others, what in old Lucknow was called the “pehle aap ” *Tehzeeb* (politeness), or way, even if it meant huge inconvenience for you. The Japanese take politeness to an extreme unheard of anywhere else. This is in sharp contrast to India. I recall once how on a train in our lovely and polite country two young louts had placed their suitcases about six feet in either direction above their own seats. This deprived at least 15 passengers of space on the overhead racks. I was one of them. But when I protested, they asked me if my father had bought the train. In Hindi, of course, in which it sounds much better. It was only my wife’s intervention that prevented fisticuffs.

But, she says, Japan is also becoming rudier. She has been there several times and notices the little changes, especially in the attitude towards foreigners. Too many tourists have made the Japanese wary. They don’t, like we often do in India, welcome foreigners, and then proceed to cheat them. They think it’s undignified to do things like that and they do place a lot of store by dignity.

Anything else, asked my interlocutor. “Well,” I said, “dustbins. There are hardly any in Japan. India and Japan are identical in that respect.” The reasons are different, of course. There, people don’t litter at all. Never. If they have something to throw, they put it into their pockets and take it to their home dustbin. Here we simply steal the dustbins which is why no dustbins are seen here. Hence India-Japan bhai, bhai. ■

A Record Year of Generosity: **Rotary Members Make History**

In 2024-25, Rotary members around the world came together to make history — raising more than US\$569 million to support life-changing service projects. This remarkable achievement reflects the power of collective action and the deep commitment of our global community.

2025 by 2025 Endowment Goal Achieved

Through the successful completion of our 2025 by 2025 Endowment campaign, we set out to raise US\$2.025 billion and surpassed that goal with an incredible **US\$2.050 billion**. This achievement secures Rotary's ability to keep Doing Good in the World for generations to come.

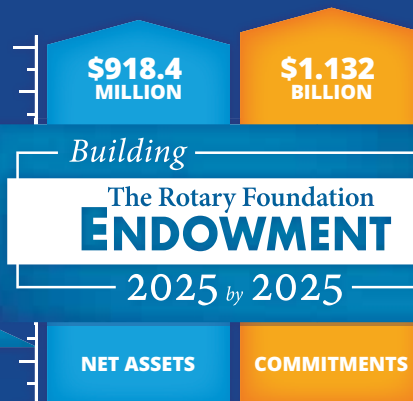
Your Gifts Making an Impact

Thanks to the generosity of supporters around the world, The Rotary Foundation awarded over

1,424	468	74
GLOBAL GRANTS	DISTRICT GRANTS	DISASTER RESPONSE GRANTS

Better Together

- Renewed our agreement with the **Gates Foundation**, recommitting to the fight to end polio
- Awarded the **Programs of Scale grant** to an initiative that works to build peace in Colombia
- Partnered with Symbiosis International University to create a **Rotary Peace Center in India**



“Your gifts, commitments, and dedication matter not just today, not just this year, but for future generations of Rotary members to come. This is why the goal of reaching 2025 by 2025 was set, not just as a number, but to deliver on the promise of Rotary for our communities.”

— Mark Daniel Maloney
2024-25 Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair,
at the Rotary International Convention





ROTARY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

TAIPEI, TAIWAN | 13-17 JUNE 2026



Register and pay in full by 15 December 2025,
before prices increase, at convention.rotary.org.