

ROTARY NEWS



A new
journey
begins





The AKS League

This April, TRF celebrated the generosity of AKS members from Zones 4, 5 and 6A by hosting them at the RI World Headquarters in Evanston. Their portraits now adorn the famed Arch Klumph Society Gallery.

The three Zones together have inducted 13 AKS members this year, taking the total from these zones to 58. There are 728 AKS donors worldwide.

From left: DG Narayan Nayak and Sunanda (D 3262), Punam and PDG Parag Sheth (D 3060), Amita and Navdeep Chawla (D 3011), DG Jaya Shah (D 3292), PDG Suresh Jain (D 3011), PDGs Rajyalakshmi and Ravi Vadlamani (D 3150), Babita and DGE Subhash Jain (D 3012), Vikram Kadiri and Vijayanthi Reddy (D 3150).

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On the cover: RI Director Elect C Basker and spouse Mala.

Picture by Rasheeda Bhagat.



Young WinS ambassador inspires

Congrats to the Editorial team for bringing out a wonderful May issue which has many inspirational articles like *A charming young WinS ambassador*, which describes the efforts of K P Suchitra in the construction of toilets in her village. *Charity is my passion* is a gift from the start to finish; *A Three-star School at Palra* and other articles are superb. All are motivational stories that shore up the image of Rotary.

The reporting by Rasheeda, Jaishree and others really touches the hearts of the readers. A salute to



your team for publishing such valuable Rotary articles.

H M Harish, RC
Vijayanagar — D 3181

Your discovery of K P Suchitra (Editorial, May issue, and the inside article) is undoubtedly an inspirational and living example of how children in India are showing their individual strengths and attempting impossible targets in an era where adults lack this quality. In this way, great leaders are born and surely Suchitra is one of them. I salute her for her initiative.

Arun Kumar Dash
RC Baripada — D 3262

In the April issue it gave me immense happiness to go through the outstanding work being done by PRID Shekhar Mehta, RILM Chair. The Rotary South Asia Literacy Summit gives just a glimpse of the tremendous efforts and work being done by Mehta's team in the field of Literacy.

The presence of eminent persons like HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar and Nobel Peace laureate Kailash Satyarthi at the summit speaks volumes of the Literacy work being done by Rotarians.

I personally feel happy because in my college days, his father Sumer Chand Mehta and I were neighbours and close

friends. The fact that my friend's son is doing such a great job as a Rotarian in the field of literacy fills my

heart with happiness. I pray for his success in his efforts.

B R Agarwal, RC Siliguri
Midtown — D 3240

A delightful cover photo

I received the May issue of *Rotary News* and was absolutely thrilled to see such a warm and delightful cover photo of Trustee Sushil Gupta and Vinitaji. Having known Trustee Sushil from the time he was nominated RI Director, I can confidently say that you have captured the essence of the human being he is and also his multi-faceted personality in his profile. Well done Rasheeda!

PDG Gulam A Vahanvaty,
RC Bombay — D 3141



The article *Make peace with your aversions* in the April issue is well-written by Bharat and Shalan Savur. The subject is good so please convey my thanks to the authors.

RK Sudarsan Babu,
RC Central
Mulbhagal — D 3190

Thank you very much for the article *A Rotary clinic ensures safe pregnancy* (March issue) on the Rotary Club of Belgaum's project on mother and child health. "Reaching the Unreached".

It's a great honour for our club that you have published our project in *Rotary News*, a prestigious and widely read magazine. This has boosted our morale and motivated us to do more service projects like this in the near future.

Dr Satish
Dhamankar, President,
RC Belgaum — D 3170

A jewel in the crown

My compliments to you and your team for making *Rotary News* truly a jewel in the crown. Good going.

Sanjay Bhatia
RC Chandigarh
Midtown — D 3080

Let's settle magazine dues

I was taken aback after reading the facts and figures in the message *Pay up your magazine dues* by RI Director Manoj Desai in the May issue. It's true that

in India many news magazines are facing financial crisis and on the verge of closure.

But as far as our *Rotary News* is concerned, we as true Rotarians, appreciating the excellent work done by its Editor Rasheeda Bhagat and her team, must follow the 4-Way Test and pledge to give all pending dues at the earliest to take this quality publication to a commendable height.

Piyush Doshi, RC Belur — D 3291

All the articles in the May issue made for riveting reading. One looks in awe at all the good work Rotary is doing around the world and benefitting thousands of people through its various projects. This is possible due to the stalwart Rotarians who give generously their time and money for these projects, and whose Rotary careers you have highlighted so well in the magazine. The articles on *ikkat* and cashew were interesting. Thank you for making me feel proud to be a Rotarian.

*Jaya Savanur, RC Hubli
Midtown — D 3170*

All the articles and information provided in the May issue are good. Particularly, RI Director Manoj Desai's letter *Pay up your magazine dues* is very important and a notable message to all Rotarians.

*Devarajan K, RC Coimbatore
East — D 3201*



With less than a month to go before the Rotary year ends, it is a matter of grave concern that *Rotary News* magazine dues are short for the year 2016–17 by a **whopping Rs 40 lakh**. In the last issue of the magazine, RI Director Manoj Desai had already appealed, through his message, to Rotary clubs to pay their dues.

This is an appeal to all District Governors and club leaders to educate their members that subscription to at least one Rotary magazine is compulsory. In India, we are still missing some 20,000 subscribers, which is distressing. Complaints about such clubs to Rotary

Too many pictures of senior leaders

Recent issues of *Rotary News* have been publishing too many photos of Indian Rotary leaders, making us feel as though we are reading a club bulletin! The April issue has so many pictures of Kalyanda, Rajaji, Sushilji, Dr Manoj Desai, Shekharji, P T Prabhakar and Basker. Of course I am not against any of these greats who constantly inspire us. They have obviously not told the editorial team to put in so many of their pictures. This is just an observation and not a complaint.

Anyway, fortunately the best still remains... the top quality of articles and their diversity still makes *Rotary News* remarkably readable to the last page, no doubt! Congratulations for that... and I mean it.

*Dr Lucky S Kasat
PP, RC Thane
Hills — D 3142*



Apparently this has been a complaint with *Rotary News* for long years, but fortunately first in my 33 months as Editor! The explanation is simple; the April issue reported two mega events — the *South Asia Literacy Summit* and *Disha*, the all-in-one training programme for DGEs. Also, while carrying pictures of Literacy heroes who have done amazing work, and MoUs being signed, the Rotary India tradition of calling so many senior leaders on the stage, is reflected in the pictures.

Editor

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

Please pay your Rotary News dues

International can attract suspension of the club. So do ensure that all members subscribe to either *The Rotarian* (at \$24) or *Rotary News* (\$6.45).

And please square up your magazine dues before July 1.

We also note that apart from the Rs 40 lakh, we have an **unreconciled amount of Rs 10 lakh in our books**. This is because some of the clubs who have done online transfer of their subscriptions, have not sent us the details. Kindly do that at the earliest, by sending a message to rotarynews@rosaonline.org.

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Plant a sapling, start a revolution

As Chennai reels under acute water crisis with the mercury soaring to a punishing 42-43 degree Celsius, and rare dark clouds gather only to disappear, it was heartening to hear incoming RI President Ian Riseley's message, both at the International Assembly (IA) and the MDPETS in Jaipur, requesting incoming District Governors (IA) and club presidents and secretaries (MDPETS) to ensure that between July 1, 2017 and April 22, Earth Day, every Rotarian in their clubs plant at least one tree. "That way Rotarians would plant at least 1.2 million trees, hopefully more."

Riseley added that D 3142 DGE B M Sivarraj has promised that his district alone would plant 1.2 million this Rotary year. (An MoU with the Maharashtra Government is being signed for this green initiative). A fantastic commitment, but what happens to the saplings after they are planted is crucial, as RI Director Manoj Desai pointed out at Jaipur. "For years, we've been planting trees; had we taken care of them India would have been absolutely green by now."

Greening the earth is a fantastic idea, but there are two ways to do it; a crusade by environmental enthusiasts to save our planet. But what will resonate much better with the disadvantaged, particularly in urban India, is planting trees which give people direct benefit through fruits and vegetables. Rural India understands much better the value of trees, as more rural farmers move into the more profitable horticulture. But in our urban

jungles where trees are hacked with abandon and greed to make way for concrete structures, if the greening initiative can combine giving people direct benefits from the trees planted, they will surely be protected.

Let's rewind to what D 3131 DG (2014-15) Vivek Aranha had done during his term. Apart from adding 1,500 new members, the highest by a district in the Rotary world, he had ushered in what he called a drumstick revolution. Having seen in Tamil Nadu's villages how the vegetable drumstick, a rich source of iron, is used to improve low haemoglobin levels in women, he encouraged Rotarians in his district to plant tens of thousands of drumstick trees. When a new club, RC Pune Next Gen, with a whopping 406 members was chartered, one of its first big projects was to plant 100,000 subsidised drumstick saplings in rural and urban areas of the district. All members were asked to plant at least two saplings in their homes and neighbourhoods, as in a few years this would improve the nutritional intake of the local community. Such a simple, wise and effective way to benefitting the community. And while improving the health of our women, giving back to Mother Earth a minuscule fraction of what we continue to snatch from it all the time.

Remember the historic *Chipko* movement of the 1970s, which came to a peak in Garhwal Himalayas, when women embraced trees to prevent contractors from cutting them? Passionate environmentalists such as Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Sundarlal Bahuguna had then galvanised simple but feisty village women to check the frightening deforestation that was happening, holding out such dangerous ecological implications in the fragile Himalayan region. Without such committed crusaders, what would we do to our Earth? Refusing lunch at an environment seminar at a five-star hotel in Delhi, where Bahuguna was the keynote speaker, he had quietly told me: "Such hotels are built on the graveyards of forests; I won't be able to digest food served here!"

Rasheeda Bhagat

President Speaks



Acting on the desire to help

Dear Fellow Rotarians,

Growing up in Chattanooga, Tenn., my brothers and I learned young to work hard. It was a lesson taught to us by our father, who had come to the United States, alone, as a teenager. He wanted our lives to be better and easier than his had been; he wanted to give us the education and opportunities that he had missed. We always knew, when he came home at 8 o'clock in the morning after working a night shift at the paper mill, that he was doing it for us.

Looking back, through the prism of many years, I see in my father's hard work not only an expression of his love for us, but the universal desire of each generation to care for and lift up the next. And looking back at this year of service in Rotary, I see that desire reflected in each of us who have chosen to be part of this great organisation. It is natural for parents to want to make things better for their children. Through

Rotary, we can do so much more: We can make things better, not only for our own children, but for all children. We have the opportunity to care for and lift up those who need us the most — whether they are in our own community or on the other side of the world.

As Judy and I have travelled the world for Rotary over the last two years, we've been reminded, again and again, of what motivates us in Rotary: the simple desire to be of assistance, to give a helping hand to those who need it. Whether it means building a blood bank in Uganda, delivering an X-ray machine to a village in Guatemala, or taking care of refugees in Lebanon, Rotarians are doing what is needed most for the people who are most in need. They're working hard for the communities they care about, helping the people of those communities lead better lives.

To me, that is the essence of Rotary: that desire to be of assistance, that willingness to work for the good of others. In Rotary, when someone needs help and you can give that help, you don't walk away. You don't turn your back. You say, I'm here for you. I'll do whatever I can. And I know that whatever I do, I'm not doing it alone — I'm doing it with *Rotary Serving Humanity*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John F. Germ".

John F. Germ
President, Rotary International

Message from the RI Director



Let's welcome Gen Next

Dear Friends,

Let us be ready for Gen Next. There are many names given to this generation like Mosaics, Millennials, Net Generation (N-Gen), Navigators, the Y-Generation.

The Net Generation now adds up to over 81 million young people, which is approximately 30 per cent of our current population. In case you haven't picked up on this yet, this group is larger than the Baby Boomers.

We have to be prepared for them as they are a force. So let's get to know them.

- They are growing up in a world that is remarkably different from the one older adults have lived in.
- They are still pretty young.
- They have only known one Germany.
- They are too young to remember the space shuttle blowing up and Tiananmen Square means nothing to them.
- *Star Wars* looks very fake and the special effects are pathetic.
- They were born the year the walkman was introduced by Sony.
- Most have never seen or used a rotary dial phone.

Their general trends are as follows:

Self-reliance: They believe that becoming successful is up to them, and they don't depend on others for help, but they want to be treated fairly.

Empowered adventurers: They think and learn in interactive, nonlinear ways. They are willing to explore, search and navigate.

Love of family: A surprising trend is they often rely on

their family as a sanctuary against the difficulties of life. They view their parents as the most important source of guidance and emotional support.

Relationships are paramount: They rely strongly on close personal networks of friends and family. They also have a desire to be connected with others.

Global icons: This generation is returning to the tried and true dream of all marketers — brand loyalty.

Educational achievement: They believe that good education is the gateway to success.

Diversity is important: This generation values diversity like none before them. They believe strongly in equal rights. They know they are growing up in an increasingly multicultural world.

Mobility equals freedom: This generation promises to be one of the most mobile ever. They don't intend to stay at home.

Service-oriented: They have a strong sense of the common good and collective social and civic responsibility.

Hungry for the transcendent: They are spiritually hungry.

Hope: These kids are growing up with hope. They are not pessimistic or cynical.

Some tips on how to talk to them:

- Respect their intelligence, knowledge and ability
- It's about how and where you fit into their world
- Talk TO them, not LIKE them
- Relevance! Show how you offer them value
- Communicate your message quickly and clearly
- Search/need for value will continue.



Manoj Desai
Director, Rotary International

Message from the Foundation Chair



Working to ensure the Foundation's future

We've had a wonderful time celebrating all the extraordinary achievements of The Rotary Foundation's first 100 years. As we approach the end of this centennial year, it's time to turn our attention to the Foundation's future. What can we do right now to ensure that the Foundation will reach even greater heights in the next 100 years?

First, we must finish our work to eradicate polio. If we fail, we risk a global return of the disease — up to 200,000 new cases every year, within 10 years. But if we succeed, the world would enjoy a savings as high as \$50 billion by 2035. There really is no choice: We must succeed.

What can you do? Raise money, advocate for government support and share the inspirational story of Rotary's steadfast commitment to a polio-free world.

Of course, our work to end polio isn't the only compelling story we have to tell. Your club's district and global grant projects

are successes that you should share with your local community and media. Tell them about the scholars you are sponsoring, the vocational training team that is visiting or travelling from your district, and the causes the Foundation supports.

After you've impressed people with the Foundation's many accomplishments, ask them to join us — as members, supporters, or volunteers. I believe that every Rotarian should make an annual contribution to the Foundation, because it is our Foundation, and we are ultimately responsible for its success — yet that doesn't mean that we shouldn't also encourage others to contribute. Telling others about our work — providing clean water and basic education, fighting disease, and promoting peace — helps drive interest in our Foundation and clubs.

Even though you and I won't be around to celebrate the Foundation's 200th anniversary in 2117, we begin to set the stage now. Working together, we can continue the Foundation's long tradition of good work and give future Rotarians even more reasons to celebrate.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kalyan Banerjee".

Kalyan Banerjee
Foundation Trustee Chair



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Childhood Cancer
is highly treatable and curable
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Quality Matters in Cancer Care

More children than ever before are surviving cancer.

Most type of Cancers can be cured completely but either there were not many facilities equipped for the same or people were not aware. The reasons were varied, some patient specific and some trivial. For instance, not having the money to travel to the hospital or nobody to accompany them here, not being told that the disease can be totally cured in four or five sittings, etc.

Statistics reveal that, every year around 6000 to 8000 children are diagnosed with cancer in our state. The overall cure rate in our state is estimated to be a dismal 10% when compared to the worldwide standard of 90%.

40% of those children belong to BPL. Cancer treatment is very expensive and is beyond affordability for these people, resulting in mortality. Children of disadvantaged class have no means or financial support. Basavatarakam Indo American Cancer Hospital & Research Institute (BIACHRI) helps such people in terms of providing free treatment through generous donations from patrons like you. The treatment comprises of chemotherapy, radiotherapy and surgery, on need basis.

We truly appreciate your generous support in our endeavor to improve the care of children battling with cancer. Your contribution is entitled to IT benefits under Section 80 G of Income Tax Act.

The Donations received are accounted separately and judiciously spent for the purpose mentioned

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District Wise TRF Contributions as on April 2017

(in US Dollars)

District Number	APF	PolioPlus*	Other Restricted	Endowment Fund	Total Contributions
India					
2981	2,01,938	19,394	0	0	2,21,332
2982	34,928	13,948	0	0	48,876
3000	1,94,861	0	69,105	70,382	3,34,348
3011	9,91,052	2,971	3,183	88,373	10,85,579
3012	1,81,975	2,530	72,381	6,000	2,62,887
3020	34,760	12,985	0	1,01,114	1,48,858
3030	(5,129)	0	(1,76,099)	(8,825)	(1,90,053)
3040	1,297	29	27,512	0	28,838
3051	14,662	27	0	0	14,688
3052	(23,407)	0	53,175	0	29,768
3053	2,839	0	0	12,500	15,339
3060	1,05,612	175	26,075	60,373	1,92,234
3070	76,510	1,368	6,191	0	84,070
3080	62,764	22,151	1,38,968	25,833	2,49,716
3090	39,683	0	0	0	39,683
3110	39,402	26,815	53,000	0	1,19,217
3120	37,686	626	30,000	0	68,312
3131	2,88,871	32,865	2,94,198	1,24,955	7,40,888
3132	49,622	3,213	16,877	0	69,711
3141	7,30,514	36,177	3,63,273	25,699	11,55,662
3142	1,47,431	100	5,250	2,000	1,54,781
3150	1,71,414	17,919	1,08,507	97,585	3,95,424
3160	89,557	2,198	3,000	0	94,756
3170	90,637	20,060	21,582	58,735	1,91,015
3181	1,81,191	4,118	27,261	0	2,12,570
3182	74,105	2,476	12,590	35,373	1,24,543
3190	1,27,296	(9,190)	1,73,724	74	2,91,903
3201	61,585	2,964	88,833	0	1,53,382
3202	35,052	1,419	0	15	36,486
3211	85,479	1,015	3,505	18,015	1,08,014
3212	87,880	1,800	49,265	1,000	1,39,945
3230	2,34,660	7,855	91,440	24,525	3,58,480
3240	1,08,506	7,824	0	2,866	1,19,195
3250	20,954	0	722	0	21,676
3261	13,237	100	0	0	13,337
3262	1,24,060	5,608	1,25,508	2,000	2,57,176
3291	1,09,885	2,800	73,765	9,875	1,96,325
India Total	48,30,441	2,44,339	17,62,790	7,58,467	75,96,036
3220 Sri Lanka	64,674	325	705	11,068	76,773
3271 Pakistan	74,011	1,16,362	20,011	100	2,10,484
3272 Pakistan	96,501	23,575	0	4,000	1,24,076
3281 Bangladesh	1,73,597	12,363	60,651	7,000	2,53,610
3282 Bangladesh	61,987	3,957	0	3,000	68,944
3292 Nepal	3,23,633	1,421	1,67,611	0	4,92,665
South Asia Total	56,24,844	4,02,342	20,11,768	7,83,635	88,22,589
World Total	9,97,94,938	2,59,39,698	1,04,55,474	2,06,16,500	15,68,06,610

* Excludes Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Source: RI South Asia Office

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Ready wit & full of fun

Rasheeda Bhagat

Rasheeda Bhagat



The RI President Elect is optimistic about a “massive future” for Rotary with great opportunities to do more humanitarian work and amazing community projects to make a difference.

Ask Juliet Riseley what her husband, Rotary International President Elect Ian Riseley, enjoys the most about Rotary, and without a moment’s hesitation she says: “It is clearly the people. There is a New Zealand saying (a Maori proverb) *he tangata, he tangata, he tangata...* it’s the people, it’s the people, it’s

the people. And for Ian, it is always the people. He gets such a lift from the enthusiasm that is there in Rotary. And there are so many ordinary Rotarians who have done such extraordinary things, and that is what both of us enjoy the most about Rotary.” She herself is a Past District Governor.

We are seated in PDG Ashok Gupta’s spacious office at the IIS

University in Jaipur where Riseley (pronounced rise-lee) is the chief guest for the MDPETS of Districts 3060 and 3054. It’s been a whirlwind and hectic trip of India; after Bengaluru, Chennai, Madurai, Khopoli, they are now in Jaipur and headed next to Mumbai. If they are exhausted, they mask it well, and with absolute grace, pose for photographs with Rotarians.

At the dinner, where Riseley loves the vegetarian fare — he is a vegetarian by choice from the age of 27 — he displays a great sense of humour, is full of fun and wears his senior Rotary leadership role



lightly... without any fuss, frills or fluster. What comes to mind is the image of the President-Elect at the International Assembly in San Diego, swaying/dancing his way up to the stage before and after every speaker, to peppy music clips he had personally chosen, "to match the personality of the speaker".

Career in accounting

Born and raised in Melbourne, Riseley became an accountant as his aunt worked in an accounting firm and "it seemed like a good career at a time when direct entry into universities was difficult and expensive,

unless you had a scholarship and I wasn't smart enough to get one of those," he smiles.

So he went into accounting business, did his studies part time, tertiary education later, including a part time Masters course, and today runs the immensely successful Ian Riseley & Co. Growing up, an important value he imbibed from his parents was hard work. "My father worked at two jobs at a time, mainly to enable me and my four siblings to have a good education, which he firmly believed in. Juliet and I place great emphasis on the need for quality education and I tell my children if we've given you nothing else, we've given you possibly the best education."

So why did he join Rotary? "This may sound frivolous, but because I was asked."

He was invited to speak at a Rotary club, "they seemed like nice people", and then when they approached him a couple of weeks later saying that a new club was being chartered, and would he like to join, "I asked Juliet for her opinion. She was happy with the concept that

it broadens our acquaintance levels." At the 'interest meeting', he found "all the business and community leaders of the suburb where we lived were present. We had fun, enjoyed ourselves and when the structure of what Rotary does was explained, I thought why would I not want to be involved in this group which had the crème de le crème of that area?"

So he joined the Rotary Club of Sandringham in 1978. Much later, in 1995, Juliet followed him into Rotary, when Riseley's club was asked to charter a new club. Of course by 1995 women were able to join Rotary; "Australia took up the idea of membership of both genders

Juliet and I place great emphasis on the need for quality education and I tell my children if we've given you nothing else, we've given you possibly the best education.



From left: Juliet, daughter Jill, son Andrew, GSE team member Gaby Gummesson from Sweden and RIPE Ian Riseley.

At a glance



Music: Just about everything. I am not a huge Rap fan, I should say, but I'd love to be able to sing; to carry a musical instrument with me at all times would be fabulous. I will not say I am tuneless. What I will say is that I can hear a tune really clearly, but it just doesn't manifest itself very well in what comes from me! (Juliet chuckles away). There is good music in every era of course, but I love the music I grew up with in the 1950s. In my early teens, I'd have a small transistor next to my bed and listen to that music and go to sleep listening to music. I simply love music.

Sports: I used to play cricket but obviously can't now. But I am a very keen golfer, and am blessed with a membership in Royal Melbourne, one of the world's greatest golf clubs and among the top ten. I love the place. It is a kind of escape from day-to-day, which is wonderful. These days I simply don't find the time to play golf, but will go back to it. Juliet doesn't play golf, though. (She: 'It spoils a good walk!')

Fitness: The one thing that is most difficult about being RI President Elect is finding the time to exercise, which I am missing. I feel sluggish and am putting on weight. My exercise of choice?

Twice a week a group of us back in Melbourne get together and we walk 7 km and just talk about the world, and that is fun.

Food: I am a vegetarian, Juliet is not; when I was 27, I gave up eating non-vegetarian food. I am blessed to be in India where you get such delicious vegetarian food. But I put on weight every time I am here!

Cooking: I am a master chef at eggs ("he can make a good omelette," Juliet says approvingly), I crack eggs very well and I can do soups which are so nutritious and full of wholesome ingredients.

Favourite cuisine: You can tell from my shape ... most of them!

Religious: Not very, but I am spiritual in the sense of being a vegetarian. I don't go to church but we follow the basic tenets of Christianity.

Family: A son, who is an outstanding lawyer and a daughter, who has expertise in corporate sustainability and good reputation and she runs her own company. She is extremely successful.

Reading: When I have time, which isn't often, I love to read, and Juliet will tell you there is a pile of books back in Australia waiting to be read. I get the *Harvard Business Review* every month and I enjoy it very much. A Rotarian in the US, knowing I am a fan of the Green Bay Packers, a professional American football team, gave me a book on a player called Bart Starr who was their quarterback in the '60s, and I am reading it now.

All-time favourite book: Because I enjoy being amused, my all-time favourite is Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*, and the *Trilogy* books. I tend to read something that is light and enjoyable, rather than serious, in-depth reading.

Future of Rotary: Rotary has a massive future, and a future with great opportunities. We have a critical mass of 1.2 million Rotarians who are so focussed on doing humanitarian work. And now that women are taking an appropriate level of not just participation but also responsibility in our organisation which is bound to improve, and with that the public perception of Rotary will improve as well.

Rotary in Australia: Its membership is between stable and stagnant and in fact like in so many other countries, there is a big opportunity for Rotary in Australia and we need to grasp the nettle and encourage more people to take part... Rotarians are doing some great projects in Australia.

Juliet's role

She will be the first past governor to be the partner of the RI President. What she brings, apart from her very sharp mind on just about everything, is her varied experiences on Rotary issues. She has been a club president more recently than me, and a District Governor in 2011-12, as also a club secretary, which I have never been, and she is a very keen and astute observer of Rotary issues. I am unbelievably fortunate to have her as an advisor.



With spouse Juliet, Margaret Hewko and RI General Secretary John Hewko at the Rotary Institute in Cleveland in 2016.

very easily, and my club has always been 50 per cent male and 50 per cent female, and very different to Ian's club which was mostly male," says Juliet.

Riseley quickly jumps in to defend his club; "what is important is that my club was one of the first in Australia to quickly endorse the idea of women

entering Rotary. In fact, we were promoting it prior to the Council on Legislation, which finally passed it and we have been very strongly in favour of women in Rotary from the early stages and had women members even before Juliet entered Rotary."

Women in Rotary

So what have women brought to Rotary?

"Well, I could again be flippant and say numbers, but it's much more than that. It is a different perspective, a different set of life experiences, and in particular, representation of the broader community," he says.

Riseley adds that in 1978, when he joined Rotary, and women

weren't allowed in Rotary, "it just didn't occur to me that this was possible. I just didn't think how come the membership of our club is all male. And when I came to realise this fact, I was very strongly involved in changing that position."

While over 100 years ago, when Rotary was founded, "there were fewer women in a position to join an organisation such as Rotary, this is not the case now, and every club would certainly benefit from having a significant number of women Rotarians," he maintains.

Riseley received the Australian government's AusAID Peacebuilder Award in 2002 in recognition of his work in East Timor-Leste. He has

What Juliet brings, apart from her very sharp mind on just about everything, is her varied experiences on Rotary issues. I am unbelievably fortunate to have her as my advisor.

also received the Order of Australia medal in 2006 for his service to the community. On the East Timor award, he says that for long decades a strong affinity between Australia and East Timor has existed, and when he was DG, one of the clubs in his district started a programme for a manufacturing facility to provide roofing that had been destroyed in the civil war, to orphanages, schools and hospitals. This project also served another crying need of the community, which was employment after the guerrilla fighters had been immobilised. "So setting up this facility also provided employment to the local people and the project was a raging success."

Priorities as RI President

Riseley has served RI as treasurer, director, trustee, RI Board Executive Committee member, etc. On his priorities as RI President, Riseley says, "I'll be very happy if at the end of my year of Rotary leadership, the world knows more about Rotary than it does now." In his speech at the

I love the music I grew up with in the 1950s. In my early teens, I'd have a small transistor next to my bed and listen to that music and go to sleep listening to music.

India's importance to the Rotary world

So how important is India to the Rotary world, I ask RI President Elect Ian Riseley. "Well, it is important in many ways, and not just in numbers. As (RI) Director Manoj (Desai) pointed out, you will soon go from 2.5 to 4 Zones."

Which will only increase my headache, as I'll have more Directors to deal with, I joke. Riseley grins sympathetically and says, "But the good news is that future directors will be easier to deal with than Manoj (Desai)!"

On a serious note, he adds that one of the advantages India brings to Rotary is membership development, along with countries such as Korea and Taiwan, making up for the regions where membership is falling. "But it is not just numbers. Take Foundation giving, for example. What

a tremendous change has taken place in the last 20 years when India was, for a long time, the beneficiary of Foundation giving. Now it is a net donor. This is fabulous. That is one of the reasons why it is important."

But, he adds grimly, a really important fact and "the only one potential reason that can stop India from being a pre-eminent nation in the Rotary world is that you have so many election disputes and arguments that happen. I don't know what causes them; it is not for me to say. But I do know that it denigrates Rotary in India when that happens."

But take away that, Riseley reiterates, "Rotary in India is achieving great things, implementing some great projects, which I got to see during this visit, and has a bright future."



Jaipur MDPETS, he had urged Rotarians to keep an account of the hours of community work they clock in. This, he says, comes also from "my professional curiosity" to keep an account of the number of hours Rotarians put in as volunteers. Till now, the Rotary world has no clue about this collective figure, which when available would give Rotary image coordinators

something specific to talk about.

Riseley is also very passionate about the environment and asks all Rotary leaders to ensure that at least one tree per member is planted per club; this would make our planet greener by at least 1.2 million trees in the coming year.

On his passion for environmental issues, he points out that Past RI

Women have brought to Rotary a different perspective, a different set of life experiences, and in particular, representation of the broader community.

President Paulo Costa from Brazil had introduced the Preserve Planet Earth programme in Rotary, "but I don't think we've done much about it since then. I think this issue is becoming increasingly important to the world and Rotary can't turn a blind eye to it. It is a vital part of our life today and there are many opportunities for us to make a difference," he says.

Ian is an extraordinarily talented individual, with a strong sense of purpose, the highest of ethical values and a ready wit. He will watch costs and bring about a casual management style that only the Aussies can, and yet hit every target he has set.

Past RI President
K R Ravindran

I ask him about Clem Renouf, a very popular Past RI President from Australia; is he a role model? “Oh absolutely. Juliet and I were so lucky to spend some time with him last year. He is a special human being and I’ve read so many things about him in Rotary history, particularly on the start of the polio immunisation programme.” Riseley strongly recommends reading “a relatively small book Renouf has written on the interesting time when PolioPlus was launched. “It is such an interesting read.”

Presidential theme

His theme is *Rotary making a difference*. But with the world we live in getting more and more turbulent with all kinds of negatives — from terrorist attacks to civil wars/rebellions triggering a massive refugee crisis, what kind of difference can Rotary hope to make?

“Often we forget that times are almost always turbulent and there is always a need and opportunities available for organisations like Rotary to make a difference. We have 35,000 clubs; the work these clubs do can certainly make a difference,” he says confidently.



Visiting a medical project in Bangladesh in 2005.

That confidence stems from his recent tours during which “I’ve seen some amazingly good programmes and projects that Rotary clubs have done to meet the community’s needs. It’s inspirational. They just have to continue doing that.”

Fun guy

In RI circles Riseley has the reputation of being a “fun guy”; the introductory video at the Jaipur MDPETS had an image of him wearing a raincoat-like polythene apron and eating watermelon, seated beside RI General Secretary John Hewko. Asked to elaborate, he says, “Oh, that was at

the Rotary staff picnic. They have an annual picnic on the lakefront in Evanston; it’s a fun day and they do all sorts of things, like playing volleyball. One of the activities this time was that you have to eat what I thought was going to be a piece of watermelon. But it turned out to be a massive wedge. Our hands were tied at the back and they gave us a (polythene) poncho to keep ourselves vaguely dry or else we would have been terribly sticky!”

Along with Hewko and some senior staff members, the contest began. “While most of us lowered ourselves on the watermelon and went munch,



munch, there is this guy from the IT department who, most amazingly, was able to pick up the entire wedge by his teeth and he won.”

But Riseley is much more than a ‘funny and fun guy’; Past RI President K R Ravindran has interacted with him at close quarters as the Chairman of his Korea Convention in 2016. Perhaps the only thing wrong with the nomination of Ian Riseley as

President is that it was long overdue, he says, adding, “In fact if he had put in his name at the time I did, he undoubtedly should have been picked ahead of me and I have no qualms in saying that.”

Ravindran describes Riseley as an “extraordinarily talented individual, with a strong sense of purpose, the highest of ethical values and a ready wit. He will have

Often we forget that times are almost always turbulent and there is always a need and opportunities available for organisations like Rotary to make a difference.

RIPE Ian Riseley



At a watermelon eating competition organised by the RI staff in Evanston, along with RI General Secretary John Hewko (Left).

a careful watch on costs and bring about a casual management style that only the Aussies can, and yet hit every target he has set. He is a strict vegetarian and is an encyclopaedia of knowledge on any sporting event whether it be ice hockey or women’s netball, American football or lacrosse!”

Grateful for his good fortune that he had “a person of his calibre chair for me at the Korea Convention”, Ravindran adds, “The record speaks for itself; an attendance of 45,000 and a profit close to \$ 2.5 million. The Rotary world will benefit from his leadership.”

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Quality & participation of Indian Rotarians need to improve

Rasheeda Bhagat

Even though India is doing “extremely well” in the Rotary world, clubs need strengthening through better training, TRF grants need monitoring, and Rotary projects need to focus on the local community’s needs, says incoming RI Director C Basker.

Taking new initiatives, giving a direction and leading teams is something that was honed in him from a young age by his father, and this includes giving a new avatar and dynamism to his home club — Rotary Club of Karur, Tamil Nadu. When our incoming RI Director C Basker was in his mid-20s and doing a management course at the Loyola Institute of Business Administration and a part time job at the Citibank in 1983, “my father — I was born into a landlord family in Karur — wanted to start an industry. And to do so I moved



from Chennai to Karur to start the manufacture of welding electrodes.”

Subsequently they diversified and moved into steel wires for the construction industry and other products. “We’ve created three brands in 25 years, all of which are today the leading brands in South India with a considerable market share, and we are known for quality and commitment in the market,” he says.

Today the VNC Group, of which Basker is the Managing Partner,

does annual sales of Rs 1,200 crore, employs 1,300 people in 13 branches across South India, and is the largest retail distributor of all branded products of Tata Steel in Tamil Nadu. Both his sons Gokul and Goutham are now helping him expand and diversify the business.

We are chatting in Basker’s swank office in Chennai, with spouse Mala seated beside him. He comes through as a workaholic, one who takes both his business and Rotary

I had no experience, but was elected president, because the other three active members of our club had already been presidents a couple of times!

responsibilities seriously... so seriously that the two of them have never had a single holiday ever!

Starting an enterprise

Soon after his return to Karur, the young businessman found the business community not well organised, and took the lead role in starting the District Chamber of Commerce, and improving telecom facilities for business. The opportunity to prove his mettle as a leader came when the then Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa wanted to bifurcate Trichi district. He led a committee that met and convinced her that Trichy should be trifurcated. “Only if you are a district headquarters will you show up on the geographical map; Karur was already a leading textiles town for exports but people could hardly locate it on the map. We succeeded in convincing her and Trichy was trifurcated,” smiles Basker.

He was also instrumental in starting many sports associations — the district cricket, volleyball, basketball and other sports associations owe their existence to him.

A Rotary journey begins

On how he joined Rotary, Basker says, “In 1983 when I returned to Karur, being a first generation entrepreneur, my focus was only on business and I had little time for anything else.” His father was a charter member and past president of RC Karur, chartered in 1955, and is one of the oldest clubs in India. “The doyens of



K Vishwanathan

Karur were members and then it was the only Rotary club in Karur; now there are seven. But because they did not admit younger members, the club became dormant and at one stage, wasn't even functioning."

In 1988, his father said he would step back and "I had to join and support it. I was only 31 and joined Rotary because my father insisted! We had hardly four persons regularly attending the meetings." One fine evening in 1990, they elected him president of the club. "I didn't have any previous experience of Rotary, but was elected because the other three had already been presidents a couple of times! I had no choice but to accept."

The club had hardly 10-12 members "and having taken the

responsibility, I decided to strengthen the club by inviting 38 worthy people and they all accepted." He increased the club's membership to 42 the day he got inducted; it has never looked back since then and today with 430 members, is "the second largest club in India," he says.

Apart from the members contributing generously for service projects, and the club being the highest in District 3000 for TRF contributions, its biggest advantage is that it owns an asset worth Rs 40 crore, having its own building, a walking track, and abundant vacant land for future use. "We run a micro credit centre for self-help groups, a Rotary Medical Centre along with the Lakshmi Vilas Bank, where 100 patients are treated free every day, and we do many welfare projects," says Basker with pride.

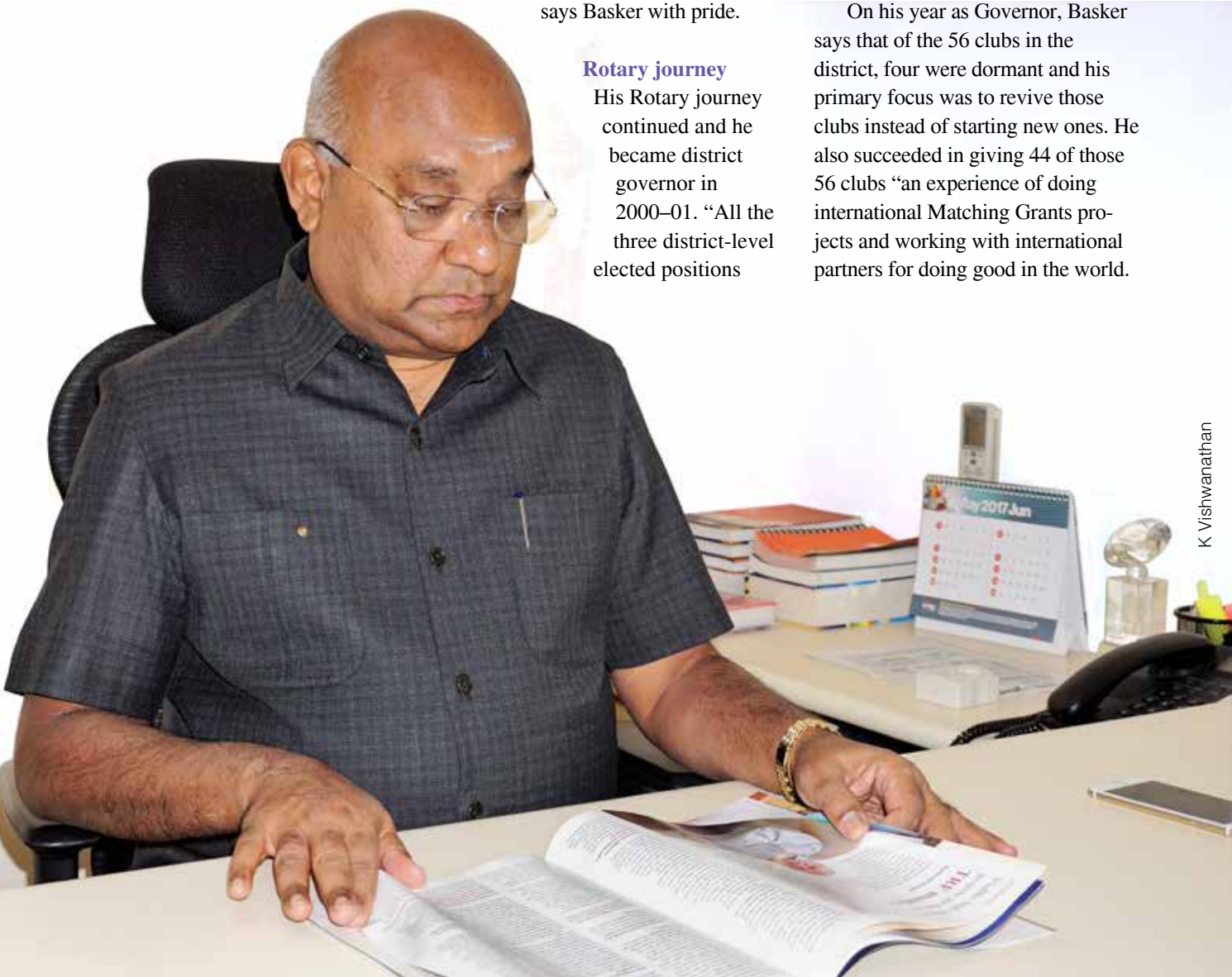
Rotary journey

His Rotary journey continued and he became district governor in 2000-01. "All the three district-level elected positions

We have grown but without creating a strong base at the club level. My first priority will be to strengthen Rotary clubs and train the presidents and other office bearers, so that we can better address the community's needs.

I've held have been unanimous in that there wasn't even a nomination against me. The Rotarians of the district have respected me and given me opportunities, for which I am grateful."

On his year as Governor, Basker says that of the 56 clubs in the district, four were dormant and his primary focus was to revive those clubs instead of starting new ones. He also succeeded in giving 44 of those 56 clubs "an experience of doing international Matching Grants projects and working with international partners for doing good in the world.



At a glance

Religion: I am a religious person, I pray every day at home in my pooja room, but I rarely go to temples.

Food: (Mala chips in: "Oh, he can have anything.") Basker adds: I am a vegetarian, and like Indian vegetarian food. When we travel overseas, we always look out for Indian restaurants, and have a good continental breakfast, something light in the afternoon and then dinner in an Indian restaurant.

Relaxation: That is something I've never had in my life. We've never been for a vacation... not a single holiday so far, and that is the constant problem. I was in the Star Cruise from Singapore for the D 3120 Assembly. We boarded on Sunday afternoon at Singapore, on Monday the Assembly finished at 1.30 pm, we reached Penang and returned home. The DGE and his spouse were very disappointed; but it has always been like this. Earlier, for my business I travelled at least 3 days a week.

Reading: Only some general reading; but I make it a point to read the morning newspapers.

Movies: I hardly see any movies; not much of a movie fan. Even Mala

doesn't go to the cinema theatres... we must have watched a movie in a theatre seven years ago! After marriage, both of us would have seen only 10 movies in a theatre. But at home, I sometimes watch English movies... I like action, fast-paced movies.

Music: The only time we listen to music is in the car. It is always light film music... film songs.

Exercise: I used to walk in the morning on the walking track put up in the Rotary building in Karur, but now due to continuous travel, walking early in the morning has become a challenge.

Mala's role: She has been a silent supporter in my Rotary journey. When you are a businessman and then become an active Rotarian, the time given at home is negligible. She has taken care of the family, as I discharged my duties as a businessman and a Rotarian. Not being able to give time to your family... that is the biggest sacrifice I've made in my life. You realise it much later, but can't do anything about it. Anyway, Mala is now emphasising to the DGEs' spouses the need for a separate training programme for them. By the way, Mala



Basker and Mala at Rochester, USA, attending the DGE hospitality programme in January 2000.

is a Rotarian, even though not an active one. I can't ask Rotarians to bring their spouses into Rotary, without bringing mine first!

Mala adds: I find the spouses very energetic and they want to make a difference. So I have suggested two projects to them; giving sanitary napkins to rural women; and to concentrate on farmers, as Indian farmers are today in a very difficult position.

A project to remember: When I was DG, we put up a talking book library for the visually impaired in Madurai. The former VC of Madras University

G Thiruvassagam, a member of RC Madurai Midtown, was passionate about such a library, which only Bombay had then, and sought my help to get an international partner. Before going to the International Assembly, which was then held at Anaham near Los Angeles, Mala and I participated in a hospitality programme in Rochester, where Elizabeth Richardson was the incoming President of that club. She was keen to do a project in India, and I recommended this library project for Madurai and connected the two clubs and the library was established.

Once Rotarians identify you as a person who can lead and guide you, you gain respect.

I identified the international sponsors involving 25 countries and we did 72 projects that year. All the Matching Grants projects were completed on time, and accounts submitted as required by TRF. That became a benchmark in our district. Once Rotarians identify you as a person who can lead and guide you, you gain respect," he says.

He clearly has well defined leadership skills; so did his business development skills help him gain leadership positions

in Rotary, I ask him. "Certainly, they do help, but Rotary also helps to improve your leadership skills in business. I did a management course and entered business, but the different training programmes I underwent as

a president, DG, regional coordinator and recently an incoming RI Director... in Rotary everybody is trained... have improved my leadership skills and polished and helped me discharge my duties in business much better than

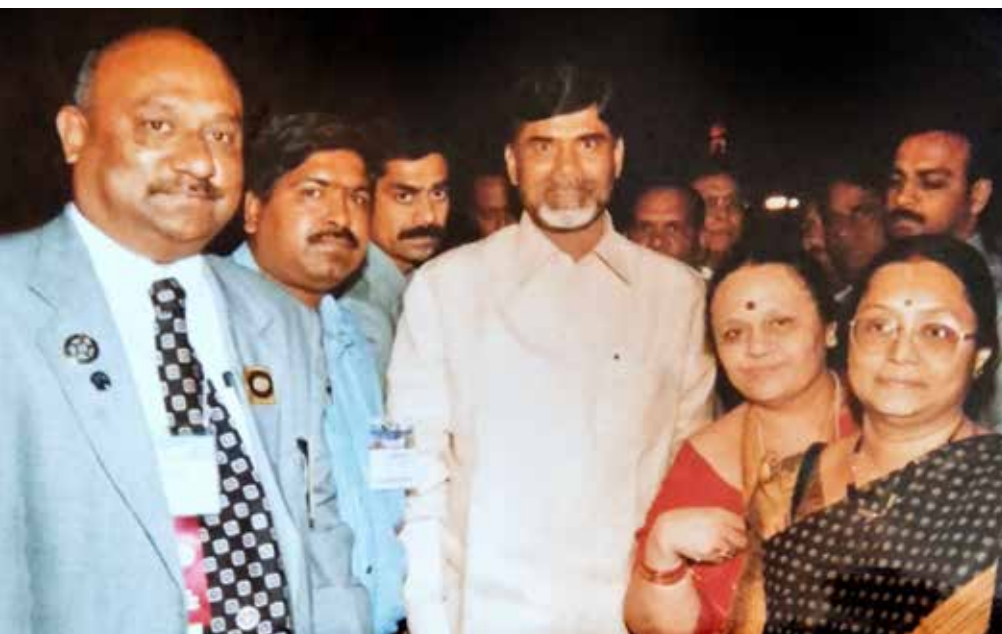
before. So it is a mutually beneficial relationship."

So what aspect of Rotary does he enjoy the most? In a flash, Basker responds, "Undoubtedly, meeting people, making new friends, and understanding how Rotary works. I enjoy thoroughly the fellowship aspect of Rotary." I smile, thinking he will really hit it off with his RI President for 2017–18, Ian Riseley, who also had exactly the same response to a similar question!

Strengthening clubs

While one of his priorities will be to bring more women into Rotary, on his other priorities Basker says, "India has grown; in 2014–15, we contributed 35 per cent of Rotary's growth in the world, a very big contribution, of which I was very proud at that time. But now, as Director

From (L): Mala, Goutham, Basker, Gokul and his wife Divya.



Basker and Mala with the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu during the Rotary Institute, 2001, in Hyderabad.

Women Rotarians great at projects

On what women have brought to Rotary, incoming RI Director C Basker says, "To be frank, I find women Rotarians to be more committed, more dedicated. I also find they display better leadership when it comes to execution of service projects. They are more focused; and I've always found that when women play a leadership role in execution of projects, their quality is far superior compared to men executing them. I have expressed this in all my speeches and it is high time we encouraged more women to come into Rotary."

Basker urges all male Rotarians to bring their spouses into Rotary and "introduce them to new areas of service. If you go to the US and other developed countries, you'll find that most of the time both the husband and wife are Rotarians; they travel together for meetings and share their work. And it gives them tremendous amount of satisfaction, as couples, to do this work, which is lacking in India. My request to Indian Rotarians is: Induct your wives into Rotary, take them to Rotary meetings, give them exposure and freedom to work in different avenues of service. It will not only transform them but also transform the image of Rotary in India. You asked me about my priorities as the RI director. This is one of them; bringing more women into Rotary, not for numbers, but because they are good for the organisation."



K Vishwanathan

The training programmes I underwent in Rotary as president, DG, regional coordinator and recently an incoming RI Director, have improved my leadership skills and polished and helped me discharge my duties in business much better than before.

Elect, I feel that we have grown but without creating a strong base at the club level."

He says one shortcoming Rotary has in India is "the lack of proper training of the incoming office bearers. Ultimately the organisation depends on how the club and its members work at the grassroots level to understand and address the community's needs. So my first priority will be to strengthen the clubs by proper training of club leaders and office bearers."

He adds that this year, across India, the training format has been standardised and it will be uniform

for all clubs "from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. The training format has been handed over to the incoming Governors, and at their request, we have translated the Club President's manual into eight Indian languages, and Sinhalese." This, he adds, was translated free of cost with help from PDGs, the booklets printed and distributed to the clubs, with the printing cost being borne mainly by him.

The other problem was proper conducting of club meetings. "When a new person walks in and finds the meeting conducted in an orderly

Soon a panel to monitor Global Grants

Quizzed on the challenges that Rotary in India faces, such as a district having to be suspended/disbanded, charges of siphoning/diversion of TRF funds, election disputes, inadequate account keeping, etc, Basker sighs, “Yes, these are challenges indeed; election disputes are the biggest challenge

I face. I have requested the DGEs, who I call Trendsetters, to run a free, fair and transparent election. Two, with regard to Global Grants, even though India has become No 2 in giving, we are No 1 in getting TRF grants and it is our responsibility to ensure these funds are properly utilised. I’ve also told DGs to appoint an efficient stewardship committee at the district level to guide the clubs on what to do and what not to do; what is acceptable and what is not.”

Basker says that keeping in mind that India does a large number of projects with TRF grants, but also faces a large number of

complaints, he has suggested to TRF Trustees, that to check such complaints, TRF should appoint a stewardship committee or “a panel of volunteers to oversee all the Global Grants executed in India. This will ensure that the money is spent rightly and the project requirements are met in true spirit. I’m awaiting their approval. Once that comes, from July 1, all the Global Grants done in India will be tracked by one of our own people. So there will be both a moral responsibility on the Club and the District as well as better motivation and engagement to implement the project properly.”

Relaxation is something I’ve never had in my life. We’ve never been for a vacation... not a single holiday.

fashion, he would like to join. So we’ve prepared an animated video titled *Dos and Don’ts* to help club presidents conduct an orderly meeting.” (See the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3_bCkYvDwg)

Various training programmes have been

combined into single events; “after all Rotarians are volunteers and cannot spare too much time, so I’ve requested DGEs to combine programmes, to reduce time and cost on travel. And clubs will also be educated about the standard club constitution and by-laws; many clubs

are not even aware that such a thing exists”

But above all, adds Basker, in doing projects, “I want the Rotary clubs to understand the requirements of the local community and address them. Right now, we are working from top to bottom. But now I have requested the clubs and the districts to look at the local community issues and fulfil their needs, so that you not only improve Rotary’s image in the community, but also attract quality people from the community to join Rotary. And, get better financial support, so I am asking clubs to look at the grassroots level requirements.”

Another priority is of course youth; I’ve called for Rotaractor and Interactor installations in a fitting manner, so they get inspired. And I am open to suggestions/feedback...



RIDE Basker with (from R) DGE Vyankatesh Channa, PDG Sibabrata Dash and DG Pramod Parikh.



Even though India has become No 2 in giving, we are No 1 in getting TRF grants and it is our responsibility to ensure these funds are properly utilised.

even from you, and even if it is negative!”

Rotary's future in India

Basker is happy that India is doing extremely well in the Rotary world. “From two and a half zones we are expanding to four zones. So out of 34 RI zones, four will be in India. I will be the last Director to

handle Zones 4, 5 and 6. RID Manoj was handling only 6A, I am handling 6B also, which includes Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Cambodia and Myanmar. After two years, these countries will go into Zone 7.”

But, he adds, on a sombre note, “even though we are really strong, constituting 10 per cent

of Rotarians in the world, at the same time, I'd say the quality of Indian members has to improve; not only the quality but also our functioning and participation have to improve.”

Asked about the opportunities for improvement, Basker says, “Everywhere I go these days I speak only on *What is Rotary* and *Why Rotary*. Primarily, these are the most important points. I tell them, first understand Rotary, the organisation, and then answer the question why Rotary? When they're able to answer these two simple questions, they will become better Rotarians.”

Last, but not the least, the one question that all Rotarians are asking: After polio, what next? What is the Board's thinking on this? “Well,” replies Basker, “The Board is fully aware of this question, but feels that the polio drive is not yet complete, and we should not dilute our concentration or attention from polio, unless we make the world completely polio free.”



Basker and Mala hosting a team from D 5330, USA, at their home, when they came to to attend the NID in India.

Designed by Krishnapratheesh S

What is the Plus in PolioPlus?

Dr T Jacob John

Read on to find all about the 'Plus' in PolioPlus — protection against not only polio, but many vaccine-preventable diseases such as diphtheria, measles, whooping cough, etc.

A progress report on polio eradication

We all know that Global Polio Eradication was championed by the Rotary International. Rotary therefore became a member of the quartet partnership of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative — World Health Organisation (WHO), Rotary, Unicef and US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) — a unique and unprecedented experience for Rotary.

Polio eradication, the largest and most ambitious global public health programme in history, is nearing completion: of the three types of natural (or wild) polio viruses, Type 2 was globally eradicated in 1999. Type 3 has not been seen anywhere since November 2012; probably that too has been eradicated but we must wait some more time to be sure. Type 1 continues to circulate in Pakistan and Afghanistan. India remains vulnerable to its import; to mitigate that risk we must sustain high population immunity. Hence Pulse Polio immunisation is continued in India even though we eliminated Type 1 way back in January 2011.

The second phase of polio eradication

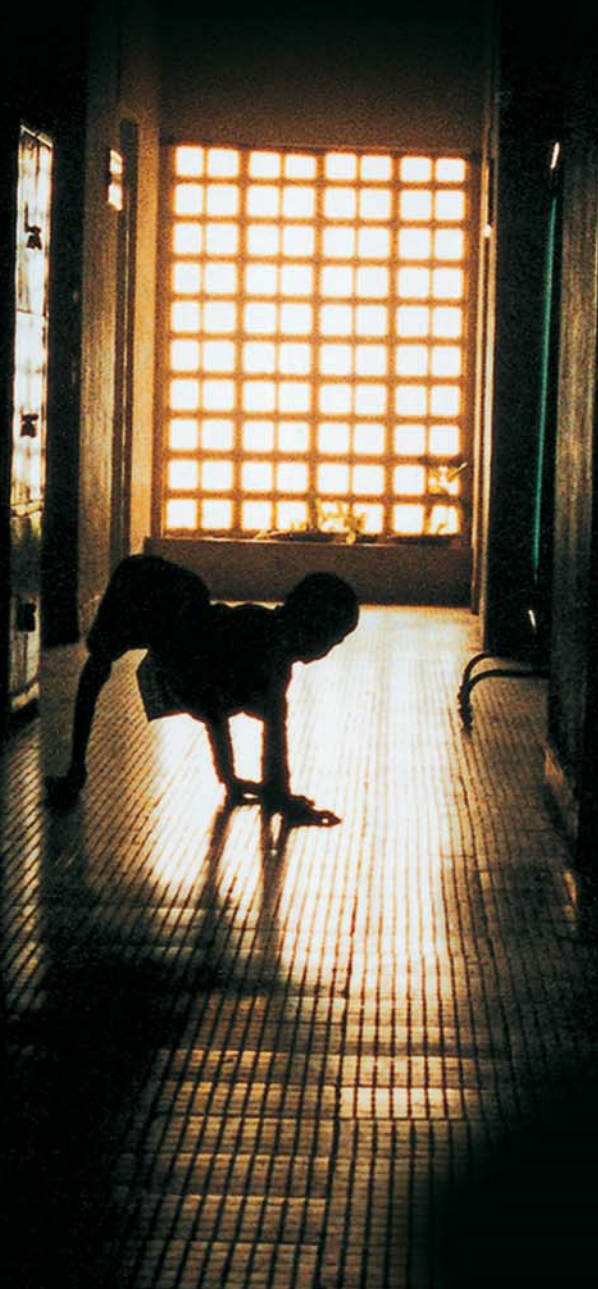
Also known as the 'endgame', the second phase is to withdraw the live vaccine viruses contained in the Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV), because they also can cause polio paralysis, though rarely.

The risk-benefit ratio of OPV was highly favourable as long as wild viruses were causing polio in large numbers. Once wild viruses are eliminated, the risk is more than the benefit so we must withdraw OPV. Since wild Type 2 is certified eradicated, Type 2 vaccine virus was withdrawn in April 2016, in a dramatic move, globally and synchronously. Now we give only bivalent OPV (bOPV) containing Types 1 and 3 vaccine viruses. After wild Types 1 and 3 are eradicated globally, bOPV will also be withdrawn. When vaccine viruses are withdrawn, an immunity vacuum will be created — that is very risky and to provide insurance against any chance re-introduction of poliovirus, wild or vaccine, immunity cover must be created with the injectable Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV).

India has introduced IPV nationally; currently it is given as intradermal injections at 6 and 14 weeks of age, but this schedule may be modified.

Pulse Polio, a forerunner of PolioPlus

The term 'pulse immunisation' was coined in Vellore (Tamil Nadu) in the context of making the town polio-free during 1981–83 through a project of Rotary Club of Vellore and the Christian Medical College (CMC). Past RI President Clem Renouf visited Vellore in 1982 to watch Rotarian volunteers giving OPV to children



during the Vellore pulse polio immunisation. Today 'pulse polio' is a well-known phrase.

But many of us don't know what the 'Plus' is, in PolioPlus. The Plus indicates an addition to Polio immunisation. To understand it, let us go back in history and see how Rotary got involved in major health projects.

Traditionally service projects by Rotary were predominantly in the fields of education and economic and social development, including water supply and sanitation. Some local humanitarian projects included medical screening camps, eye-camps for cataract surgery, orthopaedic camps for corrective surgery of children with deformities due to polio etc. These were club or occasionally District-level projects, not global.

Health Hunger and Humanity (3H) Project

In 1978, Canadian Rotarians raised funds and applied for a Rotary Matching Grant for RC Madras for 78,000 doses of measles vaccine. That project was a game-changer. In 1978, the Indian Government had launched the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI), designed by WHO. In India EPI vaccines included BCG, DPT and OPV, but not measles vaccine. Measles was a major problem in India — in rural communities about three per cent of children did not reach their fifth

birthday on account of measles mortality. India urgently needed measles immunisation. However, there was widespread belief about 'supernatural' causation of measles and the worry was the possibility that rural folks might reject not only measles vaccine, but also all of EPI.

PRIP Clem Renouf told me that on the first day of The Rotary Foundation meeting in Singapore in 1978, the Canada-Madras measles vaccine project was turned down by the committee. That night Clem mentioned this to his wife saying he felt this wasn't an important activity for Rotary to get involved with. She chided him and described how she had struggled with their children when they got measles. Measles is a terrible disease, and if some Rotarians want to protect children against it, TRF should encourage it, she insisted.

The next day the item was back on the agenda and passed. The project was called 'the red measles project' and it was later expanded under the 3H Programme to cover all of Tamil Nadu. The red measles vaccination campaigns in Tamil Nadu were a roaring success, conducted by Rotary with full participation of the government health department. Although measles vaccine was not licenced in the country, the then Chief Minister MG Ramachandran had obtained special permission for its use in Tamil Nadu.

In 1979, PRIP Renouf designed the 3H Programme. That enabled Canadian Rotarians to raise more funds under

the 3H programme and increased measles vaccine doses to 3.7 million, as it was in great demand. Grandmothers reminded us of how the smallpox vaccine was welcomed by the people, in spite of popular belief about it being caused by Goddess Mariamman (in North India, Sitala Devi). The measles vaccination success in Tamil Nadu inspired the GoI to licence the vaccine and include it in EPI in a phased manner — from 1985 to 1990. With all WHO-recommended vaccines included, EPI was renamed as Universal Immunisation Programme, UIP.

The first 3H polio immunisation project was in the Philippines along



From left: Dr Jacob John, Dr Albert Sabin and PRIP Carlos Canseco (Evanston, 1984).

Grandmothers reminded us how the smallpox vaccine was welcomed by the people, in spite of popular belief about it being caused by Goddess Mariamman or Sitala Devi.

with tetanus vaccination of pregnant women, and thus immunisation, especially of children, to prevent vaccine-preventable diseases — measles, polio and tetanus — became *ipso facto* a Rotary priority.

‘Polio 2005’ and ‘PolioPlus’ Committees

PRIP Renouf and other RI leaders wanted a mega project to celebrate the Rotary Centenary Year in 2005. He wanted a health related project and homed in to the idea of a ‘gift of a polio-free world’ to the children. His idea was accepted by the top leadership of Rotary and thus a “Polio 2005 Committee” was established in 1984.

The “Polio 2005 Committee” was chaired by PDG Dr John Sever. RI President Dr Carlos Canseco was a member and Dr Albert Sabin, the creator of OPV, a special invitee. Thanks to PRIP Renouf, I was also

included. Discussions focused on two items: Did Rotary want to go alone with providing OPV to all the children of low and middle income countries of the world, or did it want to join forces with WHO and Unicef and support global EPI? Dr Sabin strongly advocated that RI should go alone and conduct polio immunisation throughout the world. Two, how much funds should Rotary raise for immunising all the world’s under-five children with OPV for five years consecutively?

The final decision was that Rotary would spearhead polio immunisation for children globally, but do so with tacit support for EPI. We did not want children protected from polio paralysis dying of diphtheria, measles or whooping cough — all vaccine-preventable under EPI. In order to highlight this change in perspective, the committee

The UIP immunisation schedule	
Age	Vaccines
Soon after birth	BCG, bOPV, hepatitis B vaccine (HBV)
6 weeks	bOPV, Pentavalent vaccine (DPT, HBV and Haemophilus influenzae b vaccine), IPV, Rotavirus vaccine, Pneumococcal Conjugate vaccine (PCV)
10 weeks	bOPV, Rotavirus vaccine, Pentavalent vaccine
14 weeks	bOPV, Rotavirus vaccine, IPV, Pentavalent vaccine, PCV
9 months	Measles-Rubella vaccine (MR), PCV
15-18 months	Pentavalent vaccine, MR

was renamed “PolioPlus Committee” and the global Rotary Centenary Project was known as ‘PolioPlus’. The Plus indicated Rotary’s support for protecting children against all vaccine-preventable diseases.

The initial estimate for fund requirement was \$120 million. For the first time in Rotary history, appeals for donations went to non-Rotarians and bilateral donor agencies. In 1985, donations surpassed \$240 million — Rotary was now in the limelight for championing child health and survival in countries where under-five mortality was unacceptably high.



PRIP M A T Caparas applauds as President of India Giani Zail Singh flags off a walkathon in 1987 to raise funds and public awareness for PolioPlus. President Singh made a personal contribution of \$1,000 to PRIP Caparas.

PolioPlus and global polio eradication

To be honest, PolioPlus Committee was not exactly thinking of ‘global polio eradication’ with the idea being born only in 1988. WHO has the world divided into six WHO regions — SE Asia, Western Pacific, Americas, African, European and

Eastern Mediterranean. The Americas Region is administered by the Pan American Health Organisation, PAHO. No sooner than the PolioPlus Committee decided to give grants to countries proportional to the number of under-five children, PAHO made a decision, in 1985 itself, to eliminate polio in the Americas by 1990 and obtained a PolioPlus grant to kick start intensified polio immunisation for the polio elimination project.

Encouraged by the PAHO move and progress, WHO designed the concept of global polio eradication, and brought it to the World Health Assembly in 1988, where it was approved. The Assembly consists of Ministers of Health of all nations and a resolution passed in the Assembly is binding on all nations. WHO then received a grant from PolioPlus, to establish a unit in WHO headquarters to oversee the global polio eradication.

How satisfying is the popular sentiment — “No More Polio, Thank You, Rotary”. Today medical students are shown pictures of children with polio — real children getting infected by polio is a thing of the past.

As feared in 1984, children protected from polio paralysis are still dying, though less frequently than earlier, of diphtheria, whooping cough, measles, and several other diseases that are eminently vaccine-preventable.

The time for focusing on the Plus has arrived

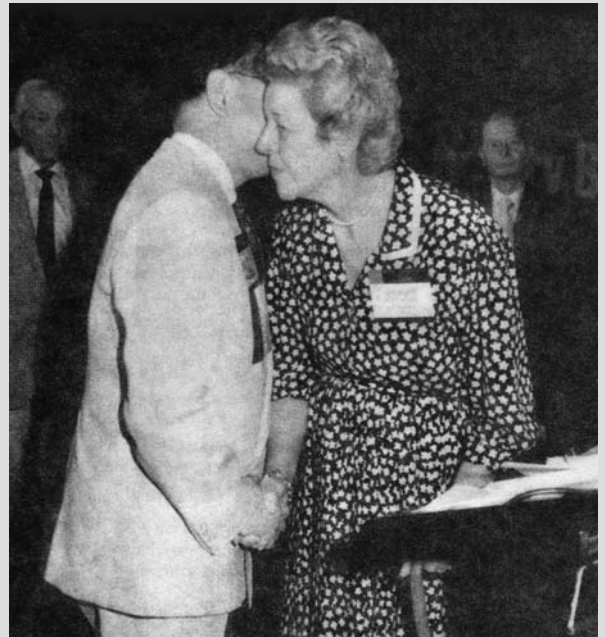
As feared in 1984, children protected from polio paralysis are still dying, though less frequently than earlier, of diphtheria, whooping cough, measles, and several other diseases that are eminently vaccine-preventable. The UIP in India is fully funded and managed by the Central Government and implemented by the State Governments. But its success is patchy. The national average of the proportion of children “fully immunised” by age one has remained below 80 per cent for a number of years. The need is to achieve more than 95 per cent for all children, irrespective of circumstances, to share equally the benefits of immunisation — lives saved; health protected; scholastic attainment maximised; physical growth on par with richer countries — all these are benefits of full immunisation.

We sow much, but do not reap the full harvest. We invest adequately for preventing all vaccine-preventable diseases in all children, but the returns are not commensurate with investment in

infrastructure, cold chain, staff and vaccines. Something is amiss — gaps in public understanding and acceptance of the benefits of immunisation. With PolioPlus experience, we Rotarians are experts in public education and ‘social mobilisation’ to make UIP a complete success.

An opportunity and a responsibility for Rotary India

As seen above, India has an ambitious programme to protect children from a number of vaccine-preventable diseases. We Rotarians in India have a great opportunity to work with the Government in promoting immunisation so we can prevent diseases in our children and protect their health.



PRIP M A T Caparas thanks Shirley Whitcroft following her dramatic announcement of \$250,000 contribution to the PolioPlus campaign at the RI Pacific Southwest Regional Conference in 1986.

Disease prevention allows better school attendance and scholastic performance. That will later on lead to better employability and higher incomes. Families will save from unnecessary healthcare costs of sick children with vaccine-preventable diseases. We know how to work in communities; we know public health education and social mobilisation.

The Plus in PolioPlus is thus a broad agenda. Through immunisation, we will be able to serve the causes of education and social development. Thanks to the visionary leadership of great Rotarians, like Clem Renouf and Carlos Canseco.

The author, a past president of RC Vellore, is a virologist, and Founder-member, PolioPlus Committee of Rotary International.

Taking water up the mountain

Jaishree

It is like a dream from which I don't wish to wake up. No words to describe my happiness and gratitude as I see water at my doorstep for the first time in 50 years since I came to this village as a daughter-in-law," says Tarabhai Gholap.

"Earlier, we would walk up and down the hills, gasping for breath as we balanced the pots on our

heads and waists. The whole body ached, leaving us so tired and drained that we found it difficult to attend to other household chores," says Sitabhai Wadker. But now she is happy to fill pots from the tap close to her house. And, her daughter can spend more time and energy on her studies.

These women are residents of Oholi, a 400-year

old village on the Sahyadri ranges, near Pune. The village is revered for its temple where a teenaged Chatrapati Shivaji vowed to establish a separate State for the Marathas.

Life was tough for the 600 villagers in its 121 households, as there was no piped water supply. Girls and women had to trudge long distances to bring

water for daily use from a water source at the base of the hill. As a result, farming and livestock suffered, children couldn't attend school and women often fell sick. "The Domino effect of water shortage was so much that the village could not sustain soil, livestock or crops, which meant no milk or milk products for children, resulting in poor



A family collects water from a tap at their doorstep.

Right: Villagers present a handwoven quilt to Rtn Swati Herkel (fourth from left) and PDG Meena Patel of D 6650 (second from right).

nutrition,” says Swati Herkel, past president of RC Wai, D 3132.

A visit by the club members, led by Swati, changed the scenario entirely. Pooling their resources, they designed a water project and applied for a global grant. The club approached Dr Meena Patel, past governor and District Foundation Chair of D 6650, Ohio, who assessed the community’s needs and gave the nod to partner this project in just eight hours.

The total cost was around \$33,000; the local community pitched in with

labour. The project was completed in three phases.

A well was dug near the water source at the foothills of the mountain in the first

phase. In the second phase, pipelines were laid to take up the water from the well to a reservoir constructed on the hilltop. In the final phase, pipelines were laid across the village to bring water to the doorsteps of the villagers. The entire project was completed in five months. Overjoyed with this invaluable gift, the villagers presented Swati and Meena, who had come down from the US specially for the occasion, with hand-woven quilts symbolically depicting the Rising Sun.

Availability of water has served as a great catalyst for the villagers as the State government has sanctioned construction of 60 pucca houses here.

“Now that the people have water, we are giving them seeds and saplings of medicinal and fruit-bearing plants so that

they can put their land to income-generating use,” says Swati. Volunteers from the club’s Rotaract Club will assist them in the cultivation.

The Rotarians have also provided bicycles for children to commute to school which is at Village Titegarh, four km away. They have also distributed educational tablets to students of the village’s primary school, which has “classes upto Grade VI, but just two teachers. The tabs will take care of the lessons for the rest of the students when the teachers are otherwise engaged,” she says.

Water purifiers and toys for the anganwadi and gas stoves to the households to deter them from destroying the forests are other activities undertaken by RC Wai under this integrated village development programme. ■



Children carried water to their homes from the foothills prior to Rotary's intervention.

We need clubs with Quality, not Quantity

Jaishree



Let us shift the focus to quality from quantity in the coming year. We are respected for our membership. Let's also be respected as good quality Rotarians, good leaders to take the organisation to greater heights. Let's move ahead and strengthen the clubs to sustain the growth we have achieved over the last five years."

With these motivational words, RIDE C Basker kickstarted the Regional Leadership meet at Chennai. It was a participative, brainstorming workshop for the seven regional leaders of Zones 4, 5, 6A and 6B — RPICs Rajadurai G Michael and Chairat Prasertlum of Thailand (Zone 6B), RCs H Rajendra Rai and Ashok Gupta, EMGAs Ashok Panjwani and KP Nagesh and RRFC Avinash Potdar. A renewed thrust on inducting quality

Rotarians and more women members, and better engagement of Rotaractors and Interactors set the tone of the meet.

Basker urged the regional leaders to improve rapport with their deputies as their recommendations will be vital for moving to the next level. "Unless they perform, you won't be able to bring good results," he said.

The emphasis will be on strengthening clubs through membership, by making existing clubs stronger and weak clubs adding more members or merging with stronger clubs. District Assemblies have to be training programmes for incoming governors. "Everyone wants to teach the governors-elect. The RCs, RPICs and RRFCs, or their assistants, mandatorily have to be the resource persons to address the respective sessions on membership, public image,

grant management and contribution to TRF," he said.

When Rai commented that most of the regional leaders were not invited for the PETS/SETS or the district assembly, Basker said, "Some DGEs call people of their own choices and in some districts, the training lasts for just 30–45 minutes! They don't seem to understand the significance of the training. We need to correct it in the next batch."

Welcoming Nagesh's suggestion of introducing fellowship groups, similar to what was done in his District 3190, Basker said two such groups — Cricket and Music — will be installed in every District, while Zone 6B can have music and golf fellowships as cricket is not popular there. A mega cricket tournament, the Rotary Premier League, on the lines of the IPL, will

From L: EMGAs Ashok Panjwani and K P Nagesh, RC Ashok Gupta, RIDE C Basker, RC H Rajendra Rai, RPIC Rajadurai G Michael, RRFC Avinash R Potdar and RPIC Chairat Prasertlum (Zone 6B).



be conducted at the end of the year at an all-India level. Players can be auctioned just as in IPL, and funds raised could go for community projects.

He urged the governors to distribute the translated copies of the Presidents' handbook to the incoming presidents as it'll be useful for them in their regional language. "While some governors don't seem to take this seriously, the Bangla copy was a huge hit with the presidents in Bangladesh," he said.

Local community needs

Basker urged the clubs to give priority to local community needs. "If we lose focus of the local issues, our image in the community will diminish." Encouraging the clubs to have a bottom-to-top approach, he said the danger with the top down approach was clubs ending

up doing little that was of relevance or actually required by the community. "Initially Rotary clubs were formed to focus and fulfil the community's needs. This is the shift you have to bring in the minds of club presidents. And don't encourage 'projects' just for the sake of creating records."

Rotaract and Interact clubs

Basker urged the coordinators to rejuvenate Rotaract and Interact clubs and make them more organised. "They lack guidance. Suggest to the governors to appoint Rotaractor-turned-Rotarian as chairman at the club level; Rotaractors will connect with them better." To encourage Rotaractors to become Rotarians, Rai suggested an increase in the lower age limit from 30 to 35, "as they will be economically sound then, which will help in their easy transition to Rotary." A suggestion to organise a zone institute to train DRRs on the lines of Rotary's Zone Institute was welcomed.

Underlining the lack of visible projects by Interact clubs, Basker recommended the *Swachh Bharat* theme and handwashing as their focus project for the coming year.

As for women in Rotary, against a global average of 21 per cent, India has only 7 per cent women members. Installing Rotary clubs in gated communities, assigning active roles to women and special recognition at District/club levels to enroll more women were some suggestions.

Prasertlum said that his District 3350 has 43 per cent women Rotarians. "People used to confuse Rotary with 'lottery' and thought that bringing in women will break a club; but thanks to our public image team promoting a strong Brand Rotary, we have around five women joining my club every year."

TRF giving

To attract major gifts and AKS giving, Panjwani suggested Endowment and CSR chairs be trained systematically. Basker added that these leaders should fit a perfect eligibility criteria

The RCs, RPICS and RRFCs, or their assistants, mandatorily have to be the resource persons to address the respective sessions at the PETS/ SETS or District Assembly.

RIDE C Basker

and the roles of the EMGA and RRFC be clearly defined to avoid duplication. TRF and CSR dinners were other promotional strategies suggested to increase giving for TRF.

When Rai said that Rotarians registering in My Rotary was very poor, Basker explained that lack of exposure and orientation is the main reason for poor usage of the website. He wondered how many past governors have registered in My Rotary!

Rotary News channel

Creation of an exclusive Rotary news channel highlighting the various humanitarian projects, a short movie competition open to students and the general public on the theme, 'Rotary changing lives', usage of the FM band to promote Rotary and a nation-wide marathon programme in February to celebrate Rotary's anniversary, 'People of Action' hoardings featuring major donors which would in turn cause a ripple-effect were some of the ideas spelt out by RPIC Rajadurai Michael to improve Rotary's visibility.

Basker suggested a panel of volunteers to perform preliminary investigation of global grant projects after their completion "just to ensure that our house is in order. They will submit their report to me. If things are not proper, the district will be taken to task."

'Rotary Membership Workbook' compiled by Assistant Rotary Coordinator Ajay Kala was released by Basker at the meet. ■



At the SSB office in Delhi.



Shattering barriers

Rasheeda Bhagat

In a freewheeling interview, Archana Ramasundaram, India's first woman paramilitary force chief, busts a few myths, such as policing is only about muscle power.



She was initially reluctant to join the IPS, “being more interested in dance, dramatics, debates and didn’t fit the stereotype of a police officer, being neither athletic nor masculine.” But her father convinced her to take up the challenge, and today she holds the distinction of being the first woman IPS officer to head a paramilitary force — Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) — with a 78,000 strong force.

Meet Archana Ramasundaram, the 1980 batch IPS officer from Tamil Nadu cadre, whose most recent award was from *India Today* for being the “most inspirational woman of the year”.

Archana was born in Delhi and as her father joined the Rajasthan judicial service, she studied in Jaipur, getting her PG degree in English Literature and Economics from the University of Rajasthan. Along with the IPS, she also qualified for the Indian Economics and Statistical Service, and preferred the second, but on her father’s advice, reluctantly opted for the first. Finding herself the only woman in her batch at the National Police Academy “made me even more nervous, but my batch mates made me feel comfortable.”

Another shock was allotment of the Tamil Nadu cadre, a State “I had read about only in textbooks. I was very nervous, didn’t know the language and wanted to quit.” But she stayed on, and

36 years later, has evolved into one of the finest police officers TN has produced.

Early career

First posted to Madurai, she slowly learnt Tamil and liked the place and the people, “who showed so much respect for women”. In 1984 she married S Ramasundaram, an IAS officer. After a brief stint in Salem as ASP, on promotion as SP in 1985, she moved to Vellore. “To avoid family dislocation, I settled for a less important post as SP Prohibition Enforcement Wing (PEW), as our elder son was very young. At that time, my career took a backseat; this was the time my batch mates were in important district postings. This is the dilemma many working women face in the early phases of their career; they concentrate on family and children while their male colleagues consolidate career gains in important postings,” she says.

But the less coveted job of PEW gave her insight into the plight of women. “When I went for raids, I found women being arrested just for being on the spot as they were wives of Prohibition offenders and couldn’t run away fast enough. I would set them free, ignoring the grumbling of my junior colleagues for bringing their statistics down. ‘Every time Amma comes for raid, we lose out a few cases,’ was the refrain.”

I didn't face any discrimination as a woman but gender bias is always there. For instance, as an SP I was allotted Nilgiris district, which is considered a "light district".

At home with her dogs
Leo and Simba.



So surely it is the woman in the police officer who takes such decisions, I comment. "Maybe, partly it is gender, but it is something which any good human being would spot. Why should such women languish in prison just because they are married to those criminals? Our system is such that the women's lot is linked with their husbands'."

Gender blues

We next discuss the attitude of male police officers to their women colleagues, who were then too few in number in the IPS. Striking an introspective note, Archana says, "I didn't face any discrimination as a woman, but gender bias is always there. As an SP, I was allotted Nilgiris, considered a "light district". Now of course, things have changed as there are too many women in the service and they can no longer be ignored and hence have to be given important postings. Recently in Gaya (Bihar), a tough district where the SSB is deployed for tackling Left Wing Extremism (LWE), I found the SP is a woman! This wouldn't have happened 20 years ago."

So were they trying to be protective, I ask her. She responds firmly: "No, it's the attitude that a woman cannot handle tough law and order situations. The belief is that at the cutting edge level, policing is all about muscle power. Of course some toughness is required, going by the violent nature of the agitations we face these days. I recently said in an interview that the police force is not a place for delicate darlings. But at the supervisory level, leadership qualities are required, and more than muscles, something inside has to be strong... courage and inner strength."

After Nilgiris, she returned to Chennai; from 1989-91 the couple went on a two-year study leave to the US and she did a Masters in Science in Criminology from the University of Southern California. "There the focus, concept and treatment of various subjects were very much different from ours and much more scientific."

At a glance



Preparing pongal for the harvest festival.

Fitness: Would like to be fitter than I am. I do yoga for 30–45 minutes and do walking.

Music: I am fond of music, but Indian music, *halka phulka*, *hamarey zamane key* Hindi songs.

Movies: Watch very few; my all-time favourite movie is *Teesri Kasam*. It was not well recognised, but is the story of most of us. Each frame of that film was classic.

Food: I am a vegetarian and eat simple food...

daal-roti. Am fond of potatoes which is not good for fitness!

Cooking: I can manage, but don't cook at home; my father was in service too, so we always had staff at home. But when I was in America

I like to cook when
I get time, but knitting
and embroidery,
I simply can't do!

for two years, I cooked. I like to cook when I get time, but knitting and embroidery I simply can't do! I've told my husband when I retire, I'll cook a different dish each day, and he looked a little scared!

Reading: Love non-fiction, historical stuff, but don't get time to read. We have a huge collection waiting to be read once I retire.

Women police officers today

Things have improved; today's junior women IPS officers are much more confident. Women 'adjusting' to the system is no longer there. They want the system to adjust to them! Feels good. Since their numbers are growing, no system will be able to ignore women for important positions, and then their merit will take them forward irrespective of gender.

In the police, we do need women who are physically fit but more than the muscles, it is something inside you that has to be strong... courage and inner strength.

Important posts after return were SP, Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, and then a promotion to DIG Headquarters. To my comment on hers being a mixed career with varied postings, Archana quips: "Well, there is a less charitable explanation; women often opt for less important postings due to family reasons. Men prefer and get more coveted law and order postings which are considered more important due to prestige and paraphernalia."

Glitter and salutes

The result is "as a woman you end up getting the worst deal; you are not in a limelight posting but slogging nevertheless!" She gives the example of her posting at the DIG Headquarters; "if you ask me did you do anything spectacular, I can't pinpoint anything. But I worked very hard, the personnel welfare schemes took so much time, and I developed acute neck pain.





(Clockwise from top Left) Lending a shoulder to a cadre killed by militants; with children from the Northeast; with sons Pravir and Kartikeyan and husband S Ramasundaram at home; receiving the degree Master of Science in Criminology in 1991 at the University of Southern California; receiving an award as State topper in 1973; as SP in Vellore; on duty as SSB chief; receiving the *India Today* award from Hema Malini; with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



They said *aap purey waqt jhuki rehti hei* (you are bent all the time) on the files! And you don't get any recognition for such work. The system also exploits you. Don't forget there is no paraphernalia at the Headquarters postings. And in police, paraphernalia is very important... You yourself took so many photos outside when we entered my office!"

And this office is an impressive, glittering edifice exuding power, with uniformed men in red and gold head-gear saluting her smartly at the entrance to her room, a huge colourful red SSB flag, along with the flag of India, pictures of Archana greeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President of India Pranab Mukherjee, and the rest of the "paraphernalia" she talks about!

Compared to that, she laughs, at her previous posting as DG, NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) “there were only few people in the office when I entered; even the CBI doesn’t have anything like this, which influences and impresses people! In law and order, you have both the opportunity and the capacity to help people, but in other jobs such as welfare training, you can’t dole out favours to anybody.”

Moving into a reflective mode, Archana adds, “Now that I am at this stage in my career — 36 years and about to retire — after five years my views will be more frank. But then we as women also choose these postings, because *hamari apni majbooriya hoti hei...* you don’t want to be summoned in the middle of the night, and because the children are young and need mother’s care.”

And often, out of sight becomes out of mind! She gives the instance when she remained at DIG Headquarters for two years. When she approached the DG requesting a posting to a range, he said, “But your husband is here! You are made to feel *kaisi bekar aurat hei* (useless woman), who wants to go away from her family! So I said it

Often, men corner the creamy law and order postings and as a woman you end up getting the worst deal; you are not in a limelight posting but slogging nevertheless.

didn’t matter, I’d be away for a while but it would get on my CV. And he offered me a post as DIG CB-CID, but again the same catch was there.”

But she has also paid a price for not kowtowing to politicians. As DIG Vellore she was transferred in 1998, in less than a year, after a tiff with a local politician. When she was posted as DIG Civil Supplies, she told the DGP: “Sir, there are a lot of corrupt people there, I don’t know what to do. Give me DIG Training, which is falling vacant. He almost fell off his chair and said ‘Archana, for the first time somebody is asking for a training post.’ I’ve always liked training assignments.”

Good stint at CBI

Next came a rewarding posting as DIG in CBI in 1999, where she handled

many good cases, including corporate frauds.

In 2002 she was promoted Joint Director in the CBI’s Economic Offences Wing, where she handled with distinction the infamous Telgi fake stamp paper fraud. “It was challenging work and I enjoyed it; we were able to expose that racket. It was an excellent seven-year period from 1999–2006 and I remember the names of each and every person in my team,” she beams.

In February 2014, she was posted as Additional Director of CBI, but the TN government wouldn’t relieve her. She joined the post in May 2014, only to face disciplinary action and suspension, which were set aside by the Central Government and the courts, “but the scars remain”. Archana remembers this as a battle in which she suffered professionally, emotionally and also financially. Asked to comment, she says, “I wish this chapter in my life wasn’t there. Unfortunately, I became a victim of misunderstanding. Life is a mixed bag, and looking back, I often face turbulence, but have now reached a point where I’ve accepted that life is not always fair, and once you reconcile to this reality, it becomes a lot easier.”





Paying homage to the martyrs on Martyrs' Day in Ooty.

SSB stint

In February 2016, Archana became the DG of the Sashastra Seema Bal, earlier known as the Special Service Bureau. A unique organisation started in 1963, it's a 78,000-strong force, having grown from just 25 battalions in 2001 to 67 now. With six frontiers and seven States (Uttarakhand, UP, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim) under it, SSB guards the Nepal and Bhutan borders.

"It is a tough but interesting assignment," she says. SSB tackles trans-border crimes such as human

trafficking and narcotics and smuggling of wildlife and forest products. SSB has its own informal intelligence system; both authorised and unauthorised routes are used for movement; "and as these are friendly neighbours, we have to exercise restraint."

The SSB has 634 border outposts or workstations, and she has initiated a special training programme for the jawans "who are posted at these far flung areas and their welfare is our priority. I've set up a cell in my office to monitor redressal of their grievances." Recently SSB signed an MoU with the National Skill Development Corporation for better skilling of jawans and their families. "The families bond with me very well as for the first time, the DG and President of the SSB Wives Welfare Association is the same person!"

SSB is engaged in LWE areas too, and also does counter-insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir and recently a picture of hers lending a shoulder to the coffin of one of her cadres killed by militants in the State, was widely carried in the media. But what she loves most about her present job is organising civic action programmes, "which has become our USP. We have

a budget for welfare, and we do medical camps, training, and other activities as confidence building measures."

Recently SSB rescued 533 victims of human trafficking and child labour. "We work with NGOs, and if they are found in areas of our jurisdiction, we rescue them." As Additional DG, Crime Branch, CID in Tamil Nadu, human trafficking was her passion, and she set up anti-human trafficking units in the State. Child rights is another area of interest and she hopes to work in it after retirement.

She is grateful to the Central government for this "wonderful opportunity to head one of India's finest paramilitary forces. However, I believe that this posting was less due to my gender and more due to my seniority and outstanding track record."

At the end of the day, she says "it feels great to have broken a glass ceiling and in a way facilitating my junior women IPS colleagues to reach such positions in the future."

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat &
Special arrangement

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

In law and order, you have both the opportunity and the capacity to help people, but in other jobs such as welfare training, you can't dole out favours to anybody.

Women demand toilets; old men reluctant to use them!

Rasheeda Bhagat

While an 11-year-old girl, K P Suchitra, from a little village in Karnataka is making waves by getting all the homes in her village to build toilets through her crusading spirit and by stressing upon the dangers of young girls using open fields to relieve themselves, Rotary Club of Madras, D 3230, is combating a totally opposite mindset.

Once a premier club of Chennai that spearheaded among the first measles and polio vaccinations in India, RC Madras is emerging in the last few years from a sort of lull to step up its community welfare projects.

Over the last few years, the club has been carrying out a series of community services in a cluster of villages near Chennai, with the

main activity being water and sanitation and water conservation. Sundaresan Ravi, International Director of the club for 2015–16 says the club's aim is to make all these villages 'open defecation free' (ODF) during 2016–17 (Rotary year). During 2014–15, while 100 toilets were constructed in Amarempedu village, in 2015–16, 107 toilets were constructed in Keemalur village. "More than 90 per cent of the beneficiaries are using toilets in these two villages, and their health and hygiene habits have significantly improved." An additional 175 toilets have been constructed at Periyapuliur village and another 205 at Paiyanoor village.

A S Venkhat Ramani, RC Madras President for

2015–16, says that before undertaking such construction and other work, "we first create awareness among the villagers. Construction of toilets is very easy, but changing the mindset of people is not."

Adds Ravi, "First we have to create the need for toilets; instil in their minds that the toilet is a very important part of their daily life. Then they themselves come and request us; without their request it is not worthwhile to give them something they will not use. But once you trigger that thought, then behavioural change, which is very important, comes easily."

Interestingly, while ushering in this "behavioural change," these Rotarians divide the population of the village where they are

working, into four categories. Children below 18; young adults up to 30; the 30–60-year age group and the above-60 group. "The first three segments, particularly women, change their behaviour very fast. Most rural women do not have toilets and are obviously reluctant to use open fields during daylight hours, and hence end up with all kinds of urinary tract infections, not to mention their vulnerability to sexual assaults. They are the first to ask for toilets. "But it's very difficult to bring about behavioural change among elderly men, those above 60," says Ravi.

Reluctant old men

RC Madras has a history of doing projects to ensure ODF villages. So meticulous



Women undergoing tailoring and embroidery classes at the Rotary Nagar Community Centre run by Rotary Club of Madras.



PRIP K R Ravindran declares a village in Gummidipoondi region 'open defecation free.' (From L) Club President Dr N V Arulmozhi Varman, past president A S Venkhat Ramani, the club's International Director Sundareshan Ravi, Dr P Srinivasan, DGs Natarajan Nagoji (3230), H R Ananth (3190) and Uma Varman.

have been these Rotarians to ensure that the toilets they build in the villages are really used, from the population of about 1,200, they have identified 16 villagers, all of them elderly men who refuse to use toilets. “We have recorded their names and taken them to the Collectorate where on our request, people from the health department talk to them about the benefits of sanitation and hygiene and how use of toilets can prevent airborne, waterborne, and more important, land-borne diseases,” says Ravi.

And after so much effort, only three of the 16 have converted to using toilets.

It's very difficult to bring about behavioural change among elderly men, those above 60.

“The others argue that for long years they have used a vast stretch of open space and can't change their habits now!”

Dr N V Arulmozhi Varman, the current President of RC Madras, adds that in order to give the villagers continuing awareness messages on using toilets, the club works with the NGO Nalamdana, which does street plays to raise awareness on the need to use toilets. “This NGO was chosen as they have prior experience in spreading awareness about using toilets for better sanitation and hygiene. The government has been building toilets for some 20 years or more, but unless you bring about a behavioural change in people and convince them to use the toilets, they are converted into storerooms in many homes.”

He adds that behavioural change is effected through this NGO in three stages — first before building the toilet, during the construction

phase and after the toilet has been completed.

Water conservation

Ramani explains that donation of term gifts of \$30,000 each was converted into a Global Grant on the suggestion of CR Raju, when he was the DG. “And after a long lull our club got a grant of \$160,000 from TRF and as we had another \$20,000 from the previous year, we are using \$180,000 for building 206 toilets in the two villages.”

Long ago, Rtn Markand Desai had given 14 acres of land in Gummidipoondi and “we added another 20 acres; so with 34 acres, we support a poor Boys' Town there; they stay there and go to school.” Beginning with his predecessor, S N Srikanth, the club has built some 175 toilets in Gummidipoondi, taking the total number of toilets to 400.

In addition, two huge wells have been built/deepened at the Boys' Town

campus, to which the villagers have access, at a cost of Rs 30 lakh, “as during my year the theme was water conservation. These wells, with a diameter of 40 ft and depth of 22 ft have very good quality copious supply of water and will take care of the water needs of the whole panchayat, some 22 villages, in this drought year.”

Ravi adds that some of the villages take water by tractors; “but we give them water only for drinking purposes and not irrigation.”

Continuity

The most heartening thing about the projects undertaken by RC Madras is their continuity. As Varman puts it “Rotary doesn't begin on July 1 and end on June 30; we have to keep continuing the projects for community welfare. So building toilets and ushering in behavioural change will continue in the coming years too. I am already collecting funds for the next year for incoming



Children spread awareness on hygiene and sanitation in a village through a cultural performance.

President P N Mohan, and next year we hope to build 250 more toilets.”

Rotary Nagar

Another long-term ongoing project that RC Madras has been running is Rotary Nagar, “and we’ve been doing this since Independence, in a small slum behind Queen Mary’s College in Chennai,” says Ramani. For some years the project was on the verge of closure due to several problems, but these have now been sorted out, and this year, Varman says, the project saw a “significant boost.” In the evening special classes are held for the slum children to bolster their classroom

learning. “We’ve got an all-time high of 215 registrations; we have hired nine BEd and MEd regular school teachers, paying them a wage, and classes are being conducted in three shifts as the numbers are huge.” The results in the school exams have been good, and the centre now has CCTV camera coverage and biometric attendance system in place. “Remote site monitoring of this tuition centre is now possible with broadband connectivity in place,” he adds.

As soon as the children come in at 4.30 pm they are given some nutritious food such as fruits, *sundal* or *chikki*. The idea is to

inculcate the habit of learning and now that some quality teachers are on board the parents are also showing interest. Classes take place in two batches of two hours each, and both boys and girls are given supplementary education.

During the day tailoring classes are conducted for women; “these are now oversubscribed with a waiting list of over 200; 40 trainees were taken to Rtn Ranjith Bakshi’s garment factory for a tour. Sixteen have applied for a job there; many are working out of their homes and some have even turned small entrepreneurs.”

A generous employer

Now computer classes are also being organised for women. One touching story Ramani recounts is that of a woman from an ordinary middle class family. “She had a maid Lakshmi, 20, working in her house and she thought this girl can’t

always remain a domestic servant. So she found this centre and enrolled the girl for computer classes.”

But as she thought it dangerous to send the young woman alone for the classes, she too got enrolled and both the women acquired some basic computer literacy! Lakshmi has “really done well and managed to land a part time job which fetches her an extra Rs 4,000,” says Ramani.

At Selaiyur, near Chennai, where RC Madras has a plot of land with 20,000 sq ft facility, it is now working with the NGO Unnati to skill high school dropouts. “We have trained 50 boys in soft skills and all of them are employed as office boys in small offices, making photocopies.” There is a great demand in cinema complexes for trained girls and boys for dispensing popcorn, soft drinks and other eatables and the club is training such youngsters. ■

Rotary doesn’t begin on July 1 and end on June 30; we have to keep continuing the projects for community welfare.

Club President **N V Arulmozhi Varman**



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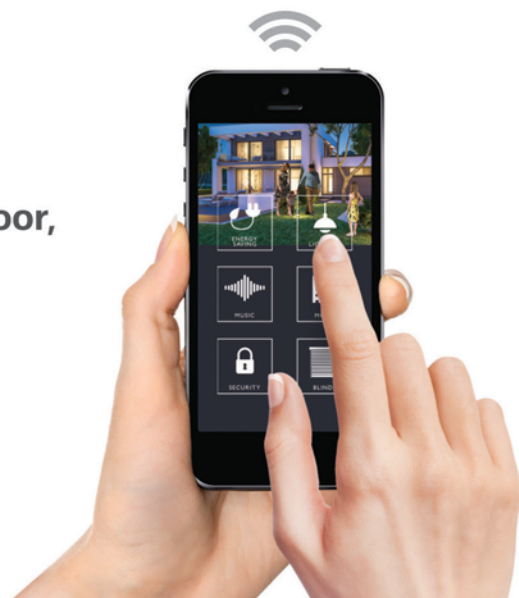
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Corporation school students to visit Germany

KTP Radhika and Kiran Zehra

For eight days in June this year, Pushparaj (14), a Class 7 student at the Canal Bank Road Corporation School, Chennai, will not be able to assist his father in arranging his vegetable cart or help his mother get water from the hand pump. He will be travelling to Germany for eight days. The annual 'Wings to Fly'

competition organised by RC Madras East (RCME), D 3230, has made this "impossible dream come true for me," he says.

Pointing out to the new Adidas shoes Pushparaj is sporting, his Principal J Dhanammal, says with pride, "My student won the competition barefoot. His parents couldn't afford

N Bharathi,
M Parthiban and
Madhan Kumar.



to buy him shoes. Now he has a pair of wings from Rotary and shoes as a gift from a family where his mother works as domestic help."

The story of Pushparaj and seven other corporation school students is "nothing short of a fairytale. This competition aims at helping government schools improve their numbers and sensitise them on value education," says Club President K Ananth.

What began as a small activity to be conducted by the club at a few corporation schools as part of the District's vocational service in 2015, has transformed into "our biggest project, in terms of participation, concept and content," says Rtn Neelakantan, adding that "PDG CR Raju could have organised this as a big district project during his term, sent eight children to Malaysia and forgotten about it the same year. But he wanted to ensure continuity. So, he chose RCME to take this up as one of its regular projects."

"But it wasn't easy; I had to wait for three hours at a Corporation school just to hand over the competition brochures to the head master," says Rtn Mansoor Ahmed, who along with the Project Chairman Magesh





This year's winners with Rotarians of RCME and officials of the Goethe Institut.

Pattabhiraman “visited the Chennai Corporation office almost every day to answer the same question over and over again ‘What’s in it for Rotary or you?’ The green signal came after weeks of “sweet talking.”

Few corporation school heads were hesitant to participate in the event because they had to “perform outside their comfort zones and this was not part of the school routine or curriculum,” says Pattabhiraman. Fair participation and results had to be ensured and “we couldn’t let reluctance or

favouritism get in the way.” Each of the 70 participating schools conducted the first round in their schools and over 100 YMCA College Rotaractors supervised it. Out of 380 semifinalists, 32 competed in the finals for junior and senior levels and eight won tickets to Malaysia.

Smartly dressed and beaming with joy in the pictures, the children didn’t have adequate clothes, footwear or even bags to carry their stuff to Malaysia. Once they were selected, “and we asked them to pack their best clothes

they replied, ‘We will wear our school uniforms, we are very comfortable in them.’ Then we realised that they were hiding their poverty behind their school uniforms,” says Rtn V A Raamesh.

The Rotarians took N Bharathi, a Class 12 student, and other selected students shopping to prepare for Malaysia. “I went to the big shops for the first time and (Rtn) Vasuda Mam got us everything we wanted,” she recalls.

Next came the hurdle of the passport, which obviously, none of the children had. And, to get one, many of them didn’t even have address proof; “neither a ration or Aadhar card and one didn’t even have a birth certificate,” says Pattabhiraman. After a few weeks of “juggling between the passport office and Corporation office, we organised passports for seven children.” But one child who had been abandoned by his father and had no identity proof, couldn’t be helped. “We postponed the trip by a month hoping that we could do something, but in vain.”

Off to Malaysia

Seven winners, one Corporation officer, a Principal from one corporation school and six Rotarians were greeted by PDG Siti Subaidah, D 3300, at the Kuala Lumpur airport. Bharathi, who aspires to become an IAS officer, says, “the Petronas Twin Towers can sway. I was so taken aback that I ran back screaming.” One thing she learnt on this trip was to “keep our country clean. Even the dustbins in Kuala Lumpur are well maintained.”

Recalling her visit to a local Tamil medium school, Shivakami (13) from the Corporation Girls’ Higher Secondary School, Saidapet, says, “They don’t mix languages. For instance, Tamil and Malay aren’t mixed with English, unlike our ‘Tanglish’ here... I loved their culture, especially the respect they give to every language.” She is one of this year’s winners too.

Each student was given MYR 350 to spend in Malaysia, and they wanted to buy souvenirs or chocolates.



Training session by storyteller Jeeva Raghunath.



Last year's winners in Malaysia.

The Goethe-Institut tie-up

Geetha Vedaraman, Programme Co-ordinator at the Goethe-Institut Max Muller Bhavan says she was in complete awe of the students. "Just in three minutes the children quoted a *Thirukural*, discussed the problem and found a solution for the water crisis in the city." The Institut has been addressing water conservation in Chennai ever since its inception.

It organised a training programme for the finalists where story teller Jeeva Raghunath fine-tuned the oratory skills of these students. The institute is facilitating the Germany trip, and is conducting a crash course on spoken German for the winners, and will help the young tourists get a good darshan of Berlin and Hamburg.

In its second year, the project has enthused both students and teachers. Dhanammal, a Principal, says, "We are so happy that two of our children are going to Germany." S Uma Maheswari, a teacher at the Canal Bank Road school who trained Pushparaj and Haripriya (this year's winners) regrets that earlier she did not take this programme seriously, and says, "The majority of our students come from very poor background. I don't even ask my students if they've had breakfast; for if they say no, we can't provide them. But because of Rotary, these children are now dreaming to go to a foreign country." Wiping her tears, she adds, "My students are as smart as a computer. Ask Pushparaj to replace a word, sentence or paragraph just minutes before his speech, and he will do that without a problem."

A foreign trip warranted celebration! So sweets were distributed among students of the Shenoy Nagar Corporation School. "We had to celebrate, this was the second time in a row that our school won and this year two of our students will be going to Germany," says Selvakumari, the teacher who worked hard to ensure M Parthiban and Madhan Kumar win in the junior level.

Water conservation being the topic of this year's competition, it came as a pleasant surprise to find the students

so knowledgeable on the water bodies of Chennai. "My grandfather told me stories of travelling across the city in a coracle and that Chennai had many lakes. I used his story in my speech," says Parthiban. Bright-eyed Madhan Kumar, who wants to be an archeologist and clean up the Cooum river, is an orphan, but is very excited about his upcoming trip to Germany. "My friends have given me Rs 20 to buy chocolates for them from Germany, but I know that the money won't be enough," he laughs. Parthiban says, "When our school's name was called, I never thought I would be the winner. My Appa, who works as a taxi driver believed me only after I showed him the certificate." Both the boys are best friends but are worried they might not get a window seat on the airplane!

Pattabhiraman's worries are a little different. "Do you have a ration card or Aadhar card?" he enquires as he has already started working on the passports. "Last year was a lesson." Next year Wings to fly will be taking off to London. The hard work, happiness, enthusiasm and confidence of these children has inspired the Rotarians to do more. Nityasree of Class 8, who lost in the finals, isn't one bit disheartened. "I will go to London and I have already started preparing for the competition," she says cheerfully. ■

Determining the price of a currency



**TCA Srinivasa
Raghavan**

Had the world been ruled by women, would the exchange rate have become a symbol of muscular national strength? That is, if women had been in charge, would countries have equated a 'strong' currency with national power?

This is not a frivolous question. Throughout the 20th century, and even now when we are well into the 21st many people, especially politicians, think a 'strong' currency signifies how well the country is doing. This shows a complete lack of understanding of a very simple fact that the rate of exchange is no more, or no less than the price of a country's currency expressed in terms of another country's currency.

That's all there is to it. There is no other significance of the exchange rate, especially, political. If there was, a country may as well take pride in the high price of carrots, beans and tomatoes.

That said, it is legitimate to ask: how is the price of a currency determined? The answer is very simple: it is determined exactly like the price of anything else: by the forces of demand and supply.

The exchange rate is thus a measure of the demand for a country's currency: the higher the demand for, say, the rupee, the higher its price

will be in terms of the dollar or the euro.

The opposite is also true. If no one wants to buy the rupee, as was the case in 1966 and 1991, its price will be lower — for every dollar you buy, you will have to pay more rupees. Or, in reverse, for every dollar that the foreigner brings to India, she will get more rupees.

This was not always the case. Until 1971, the world



had fixed — instead of floating — exchange rates. Governments fixed the rates at whatever rate they thought was appropriate. Thus there was a time when a dollar was worth just Rs 5. But this did not mean that the rupee was 'strong' or that there was great global demand for it.

In 1971, all this changed and the world moved to floating exchange rates. That is why today a dollar is worth around Rs 65. But less than

a decade ago it was worth Rs 40. Some months before that it had been worth Rs 45. Last year the rupee had slipped to almost Rs 69 to the dollar.

In other words, the price of the rupee in terms of dollars had become volatile. And the volatility depended on the demand for it. So the real question to ask is what determines the demand for a currency. And the answer is many factors.

The strength of the real economy is one factor. Compared to other countries, the Indian economy is very strong now, so foreigners want to invest here. This has boosted the demand for the rupee.

The absence of alternatives to invest is another reason. Today, India offers the highest returns to investors in the stock markets, so they are flocking here. If things start going badly, as they did

during 2012–14, they could just as easily go away and the rupee would start becoming 'weaker'.

The demand for rupees and the supply of dollars also depend on how much an economy is integrated with the world economy. Until 15 years ago, India was not very integrated and only about 15 per cent of its production was global in nature. Today that number has increased to almost 50 per cent which means what happens in other parts of the world affects the Indian economy deeply, and therefore, the exchange rate as well. In other words, the unpredictability has increased manifold.

Thus we have gone from a world of complete exchange rate certainty before 1971 to one of complete uncertainty now. Those who want to buy dollars can never be sure how much they will pay for a dollar. And those who want to sell dollars can never be sure how much they will get from the sale. This has created a huge problem for the management of countries as well as companies.

The only groups that have benefitted from this change are the gamblers who speculate on the foreign exchange market. They do so on a daily basis and make the problem worse. ■

Tablets to cure illiteracy

V Muthukumaran

Eight-year old Diksha is a darling in her neighbourhood. She goes around teaching illiterate people in her village near Pune with the help of a trendy 'MKD' tablet, a brainchild of 89-year-old Rtn Kulbir Dodd of RC Poona North, D 3131. The Maharashtra government is expected to sign an MoU with the club to distribute the tablet in 10,000 government schools in the State.

Dodd quit his high-paying job as an industrial engineer in the US, and settled down

in Pune in the late 1990s. Even during his stint in the US, in the 1970s-80s, he was promoting the concept of education for all through audio-visual gadgets. After settling in Pune, he started his education outreach in his personal capacity and his activities were funded by his Trust, Multimedia International Research Associates, he had formed in the US, says Kumar Shinagare, a past president of the club and a trustee of the MKD Trust.

Dodd joined Rotary in 1992 and to realise his

dream of Total Literacy, he started the MKD tablet project in 1998. "Initially, there were no takers for his project to spread literacy. Frustrated, he wanted to leave Rotary," recalls Shinagare. The two became friends and worked very hard at the project and the Mira Kulbir Dodd (MKD) Trust was formed in 2014, to give free, compact tablets to government schools in and around Pune. Initially, the students from tribal families were scared even to touch the tablet

as the concept was new to them.

Tripartite agreement

An agreement was signed between MKD Trust, District 3131 and RC Poona North, which would allow a permanent fund flow as DDF to the club each year for global grant projects under the focus area, Basic Education and Literacy. The project motivates children, adults, students, teachers and NGOs to make innovative use of MKD tablets for rooting out illiteracy based on the concept, 'Teach through Technologies of Today'.

The Trust has signed the Endowment Gift agreement with TRF to establish a corpus of \$100,000 to realise the literacy objectives.

Dodd is poised to become an AKS member, being short of the mark by \$60,000. He has contributed to the Term Gift thrice amounting to \$90,000.

So far, 1,200 tablets embedded with Marathi software have been given to government schools. Each MKD gadget has roughly 60 hours of usage and even if one puts in an hour of use, he or she could become a complete literate (ability to read, write and count) in



Children engrossed in learning their lessons with the MKD Tablets.



Children teach adults with the help of the MKD Tablets.

two months. Students take home the tablet, teach their parents and return it to the class teacher who assesses the students after a year.

The tablets are loaded with animated lessons called ‘Akshardhara’ developed by TCS and is also available in 12 other regional languages. The club has tied up with nearly 30 NGOs to distribute these tablets and 150 teachers have been trained.

Following its success, requests have come from Rajasthan, Delhi and Kerala governments for introducing these gadgets with Hindi and Malayalam software.

Shinagare can be reached at kumar@kumarenterprises.com or 98231 88900 for more details. ■

A Zone Institute for Rotaractors

V Muthukumaran

A judicious mix of learning and fun marked the four-day Rotaract Zone Institute 2017, titled *The One*, hosted by D 3230 for DRR elects, nominees and District Secretary designates from 25 Districts across South Asia. PRID Shekhar Mehta and DG Natarajan Nagoji presided over the event and chairman PDRR Ramkumar Raju and DRR (D 3230) Subhadra Marimuthu participated.

“Training sessions on leadership, team management and realising one’s dreams enlightened the delegates,” said PDRR Rajesh Subramanian who is also President, Rotary South Asia Multi District Information Office (RSAM-DIO). The incoming office-bearers were trained on project planning and execution, time and resource management and other features. D 3232 DGN Babu Peram was the chief guest at the valedictory session.

Shiksha project

Both Rotary India Literacy Mission (RILM) and RSAMDIO have undertaken a project — Shiksha — to set up 1,000 libraries across South Asia to mark the golden jubilee of Rotaract this year.

“When Rajesh Subramanian suggested setting up 500 libraries across South Asia, I quickly told him that RILM will match it with an additional 500 libraries,” said RILM Chair Shekhar Mehta. So far, 61 libraries have been set up and the Rotaractors are on a massive book collection drive in their localities.

PDRRs Rajesh Subramanian (seated 2nd from left), Ramkumar Raju (extreme right), PDG A Subramaniam, PRID Shekhar Mehta, DRR Subhadra Marimuthu, DGN Babu Peram and PDG Raja Seenivasan among others at the Institute.



Sprucing up Mumbai Railway toilets

Rasheeda Bhagat

On a sweltering hot and humid day in May, I struggle to keep pace with the brisk walk of D 3141 DG Gopal Rai Mandhania as we race to the Elphinstone Road station on the Western railway segment of Mumbai's suburban rail network through a crowded sidewalk that seems never ending in the heat.

He is headed there to inaugurate a toilet renovation project at the station, which is being done by RC Bombay Kandivli (RCBK), through a \$90,000 Global Grant that will renovate toilets in 11 railway stations in the metro. The lifeline of Mumbai, over 75 lakh passengers commute through this network and we "felt that providing clean, stench-free toilets at some of these stations would be real service to this city which all of us love so much," says DG Mandhania.

We quickly march to the platform, where the trains are coming and departing, spilling out hundreds of commuters. Sunil Kumar, President of RCBK, is already waiting there, armed with a small hammer to symbolically chip

away a part of the toilet block so it can be renovated. And a few coconuts, and pooja material, with which a small pooja is performed to inaugurate the project. Member of the club, Aparna Garud, an architect in charge, explains that both the ladies and gents toilets are being renovated. "We found that in some cases the space inside has not been utilised properly, in others there are too many urinals and not enough wash closets, particularly western ones for senior citizens. For hygiene reasons, many people prefer Indian toilets, so we

are giving both. And also renovating the toilet for handicapped."

Kumar says they teamed up with RC North Down, D 1160, UK for this global grant, and Mandhania adds that a part of the money has come from the DDF.

As he cordially invites station master Ravi to break a coconut, saying "after all, he is the real boss here", Mandhania says a Rotary logo will go up on all the toilet blocks which will be completed by mid-June. "What better place than such a bustling place to do

I have also travelled by Mumbai's trains and I know the filthy conditions... often you don't even feel like using the toilet.

D 3141 DG Gopal Mandhania



From R: DG Gopal Mandhania, Station Master Ravi and RCBK President Sunil Kumar.

a project to enhance Rotary's public image," he smiles.

Each toilet will cost Rs 5 lakh "but what is more important is that Rotary has been given permission to maintain the toilets for the next three years and we'll employ our own supervisors to take care of the maintenance, which is very important. We just can't spend money on renovation and walk away." Also, he adds, any minor damages will be taken care of by Rotary.

On why this project was chosen, the DG says, "One is public image and I have also travelled by these trains and I know the filthy conditions... often you don't even feel like using the toilet."

Apart from this Global Grant project, "we are going to do toilets in 22 stations on Central Railway, and that is being done by various clubs in Mumbai. The beauty about this project is that within 24 hours, I was able to get confirmation from the clubs to do these 22 toilets, and that too at the fag end of the year, when money is running thin.



The RI staff ask a lot of questions, which is their job, but their attitude is very positive. They answer your questions so fast; we feel they are there to solve our problems and not create new ones.

The generosity and understanding of our club members is amazing."

Of these, on seven stations, totally new toilet blocks are being made, each at a cost of Rs 15 lakh, and those will be aesthetically done on modern design norms, says his core team member Virendra Widge.

Mandhania adds that these 22 toilet blocks are being done from CSR funds and money donated by individual Rotarians and would be completed before June 30.

So was it easy to get the necessary permission from the Railways?

Mandhania smiles: "Not at all; we had to struggle a lot to get the MoU signed. This project was scheduled for last year, but we could not break the ice. Then we met top officials and the sanctions were given. You have to adopt a different way of working with Government when you want to do something!"

He added that under WinS, 500 toilet blocks have been done in Panvel district and many more in Mumbai slums. "This year our District 3141 has done a total of 25 global grants and term gifts."

Appreciative of the help and promptness from the RI/TRF staff in getting the global grants, Mandhania adds, "Of course they ask a lot of questions, which is their job, but their approach and attitude are very positive. And they answer your questions so fast; we feel they are there to solve our problems and not create new ones. It is a pleasure to deal with them."■

Board adopts new zone structure

The Rotary International Board of Directors adopted a new zone structure for Rotary clubs at its January meeting.

Rotary By-laws require the Board to complete a comprehensive review of the 34 Rotary zones no less often than every eight years to ensure that each zone has an approximately equal number of Rotarians. The Board last reviewed the zones in 2008.

The Board earlier approved the creation of three regional workgroups to develop rezoning proposals for Asia, Europe/Africa, and the Americas. These workgroups included one representative (either a current director, incoming director, or immediate past director) from each zone in the region. The regional workgroups submitted their proposals to the Zones Review Committee, chaired by past Rotary Vice President Michael K McGovern, which consolidated them into a single worldwide plan for the Board's consideration.

"I think the regional workgroups did a great job," says Rotary President John F Germ. "Rezoning is always an emotional subject for some Rotarians, but the workgroups and Board acted courageously in an effort to be fair to all concerned."

The Board will consider other zone-related issues such as sectioning, pairing and director election rotation at its June meeting. If you have questions, send an email to zones@rotary.org.

Source: *The Rotarian*

Let's tell the world the value of our work

Rasheeda Bhagat

In the coming year, incoming District Governors across the Rotary world have been requested by RIPE Ian Riseley to compute two pieces of information which can give the world an idea of the collective value and worth of the humanitarian services that Rotarians do across the world.

Divulging this at *Sankalp*, the MDPETS and SETS of Districts 3054 and 3060, that he inaugurated in Jaipur, the incoming RI President said that normally the annual reports of all charities list out what they had done that year — how many disadvantaged people they

had helped and the money spent. This gives the donors a warm feeling and encourages them to donate more. “But the problem is that we can’t do this in Rotary because we are some 35,300-odd individual clubs and while the different clubs do many service projects, nobody adds together the value of what is done by all our clubs”.

“So I have asked the DGEs to encourage each club to give the total amount, in local currency, that the club spends on its charitable activities during the year. And also the number of volunteer hours clocked in charitable work by

the clubs in the name of Rotary by their members, families, and Rotaractors.”

RI is coming out with a communication plan and after “June 2018 I hope to convey to the world the total value of what Rotary does through these two figures, and I am sure the world will be astonished to learn what Rotary actually does,” he said.

Underlining the importance of the incoming club presidents and secretaries undergoing proper training at these annual events, Riseley said such training events would reveal to them the importance of leadership and team





Above: A section of the incoming Presidents and Secretaries at the MDPETS.

Below: (From R) DGEs Ruchir Jani, Maullin Patel, RIPE Ian Riseley, Juliet Riseley, PDG Ashok Gupta, Sohangi Jani and Sonal Patel.



work. "What cannot be disputed is that we can do much more together than we can hope to do as individuals... and this holds absolutely true at the club, district, zone and international level."

As an "environmentally sensitive person" he also stressed the importance of greening the planet. "I believe the time is long past when environmental sustainability can be dismissed as not being Rotary's concern. It is everybody's concern and I'm asking all Rotary clubs to plant at least one tree for each member between July 1 and April 22, 2018, which is the Earth Day." This way 1.2 million trees, hopefully more, would green our planet, and reiterate that Rotarians recognise our collective responsibility not just to the people who live on the planet but the planet itself."

RI Director Manoj Desai complimented the convenor of the meet, PDG Ashok Gupta, for hosting the event in Jaipur and commended his great organisational skills that had already been displayed at the Zone Institute in Jaipur last year.

He said his hard work in holding Troika meetings with the DG, DGE and DGN in each district had paid rich dividends and till April no election complaints had been received and 17 district elections had been decided unanimously. He underlined the importance of each club and district having

their own strategic plans and urged Presidents to update their club's activities on Rotary Central, otherwise there would be no record of the good they were doing in the world.

Desai said that this region had a whopping membership of 1.47 lakh Rotarians, and was also doing extremely well in TRF giving. He reminded the current DGs to ensure that the goal of collecting \$26.5 million for this, the Centennial year, was achieved.

Welcoming the incoming presidents and secretaries from these districts, Ashok Gupta, whose IIS University had hosted the meet, told the participants that till a few years ago, "most Rotarians, including club presidents, could not dream of meeting Rotary world leaders. A few fortunate ones could meet regional leaders, and even fewer could listen to RI directors or past presidents. "But meeting an incoming RI President, shaking hands, having a photo session with him and listening to him was only a wild fantasy of a club leader. We are lucky that RIPE Riseley is going to spend two full days here in Jaipur. This is a historic moment."

He urged the club leaders to make the best of this training opportunity which would improve their Rotary knowledge and hone their skills to do great humanitarian projects in their communities and make a difference in people's lives.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat

Dargah Sharif: the Sufi Paradise

Anubha Agarwal

All roads lead to
Ajmer during the Urs.

Ajmer, the oldest city of Rajasthan, gets its name from 'Ajay Meru' which means invincible hills. Here, the erstwhile Mughal emperors' many majestic kingdoms were built and destroyed, but the sanctity and popular appeal of the Sufi Saint Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chishti's Dargah, also known as the Khwaja Gharib Nawaz Dargah or

Ajmer Dargah Sharif, has continued to flourish for ages. Dargah Sharif is the perfect example of Hindu-Muslim accord as pilgrims from all faiths come here to fulfill their wishes. Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti was the founder of the Chishti order of Sufism. The Dargah, built in the early 13th century, is managed by the Dargah Committee, and its Dewan Syed Zainul Abedin is said to be the direct descendant of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti.

Gharib Nawaz inspires a lot of faith and trust among the devotees and thousands of pilgrims come here from far flung places not only in

India, but also Pakistan, Bangladesh and other countries to offer a *chaadar* at the saint's grave, and pray that their wish comes true.

The Urs

The lakeside town of Ajmer comes alive during the Urs which is held in March-April every year on the 6th day of the month of *Razab*. The festival commemorates the death anniversary of Saint Khwaja Chishti and pays homage to him for six days with night-long *qawwalies* in front of his tomb. The anniversary falls on the seventh month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

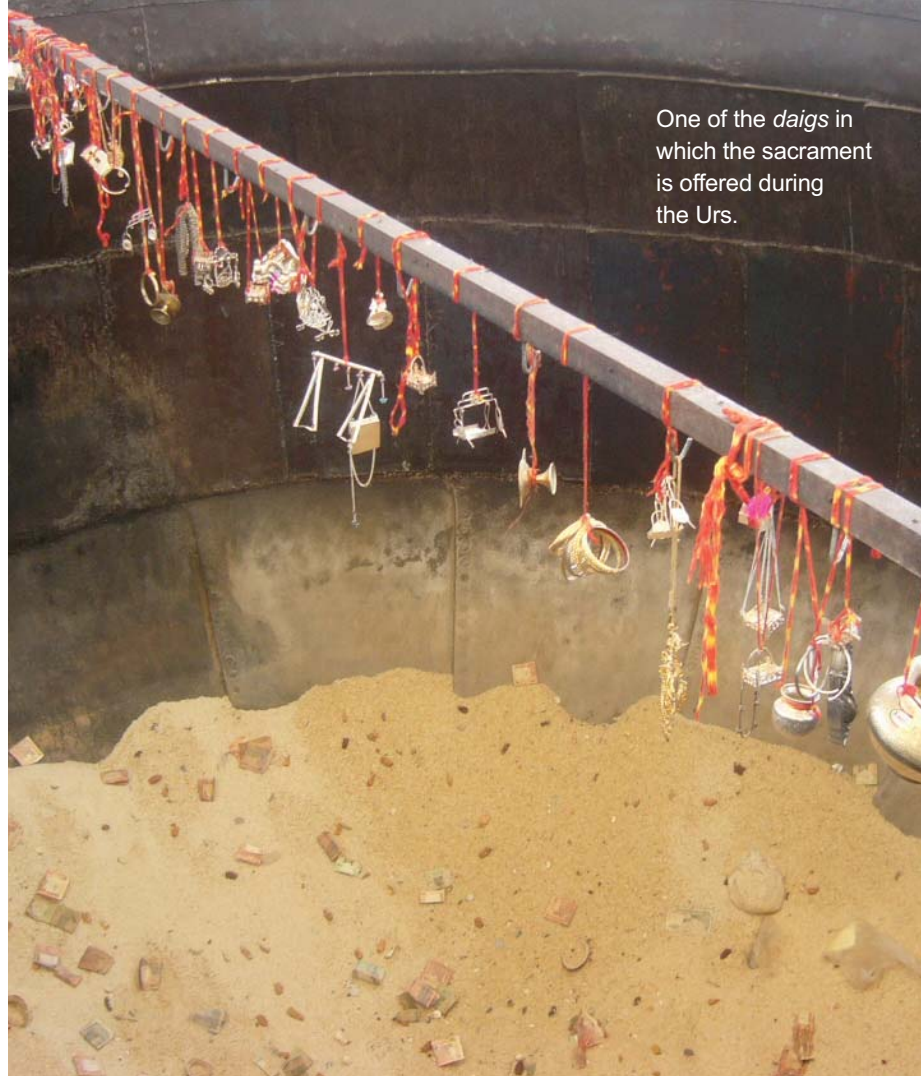


The celebration is initiated by the hoisting of a white flag on the Dargah by the Sajjada Nashin, the successor representative of the Chishtis. The tomb is washed with rosewater and embellished with an embroidered silk cloth. *Shijra* is read by duty-bound Khadims of Moinuddin Chishti, followed by the *fariyad* (prayers).

Pilgrims bequeath offerings of flowers, *chaadar*, and money, which they carry on their heads, at the spot where the Saint is buried. The Saint's tomb is enclosed in a silver platform topped with a marble dome at the centre of the courtyard.

History

It is said that Khwaja Chishti came to Ajmer via Mecca Mukarrama, Madina Munawarra, Baghdad Sharif, Asfahan, Multan, Lahore and Delhi. He devoted his entire life



One of the *daigs* in which the sacrament is offered during the Urs.



Devotees offer the *chaadar* during the Urs.

to preaching the doctrines of Islam and serving mankind. He died at 95 and was popularly known as Gharib Nawaz, because of his empathy for the poor. Mughal emperors such as Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan became his followers. Emperor Akbar and his queen used to visit Ajmer Sharif on foot from Agra every year with a prayer for a son. After getting his wish fulfilled, Akbar built a mosque on the right side of the courtyard of the Dargah Sharif, which is popularly known as Akbari Masjid. Emperor Shah Jahan has also built a mosque in white marble in the courtyard which is called the Shah Jahani Masjid.

The gigantic entrance to the dargah was constructed by the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1911. The two huge cauldrons (*daig*) set at the courtyard were donated by emperors

Akbar and Jahangir. During the Urs, the sacrament (*tabarrukh/prasadi*) of rice and kheer (*payasam*) are prepared in these large vessels. An interesting custom which is being followed since the time of Emperor Akbar is looting the hot cooked sacrament from these huge pots by the devotees.

On October 11, 2007, a tragic incident occurred at the dargah premises. It was the holy month of Ramzan and the evening *namaz* had just ended. A crowd had gathered at the courtyard to break their fast. A bomb placed in a tiffin carrier went off in the courtyard claiming three lives and injuring 17 people.

But this tragedy has not diminished the faith of the devotees, who continue to throng this dargah in large numbers to get their *muraad* (wish) fulfilled. ■



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Rotary at a glance

Rotarians : 12,37,483

Clubs : 35,610

Districts : 534

Rotaractors : 2,33,312*

Clubs : 10,144*

Interactors : 4,95,857*

Clubs : 21,559*

RCC members: 2,16,315*

RCC : 9,405*

* As on April 3, 2017

Membership in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives

As on May 1, 2017

RI Zone	RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians	Rotaract	Interact	RCC
5	2981	109	4,497	189	55	221	171
5	2982	65	2,862	84	55	109	41
5	3000	119	5,298	442	241	539	112
4	3011	73	3,213	594	45	99	28
4	3012	86	3,636	770	62	114	55
5	3020	86	4,307	217	109	459	351
4	3030	99	5,486	695	71	265	156
4	3040	90	2,160	252	51	109	135
4	3051	66	2,506	194	47	146	335
4	3052	61	3,883	884	39	143	134
4	3053	68	2,724	416	16	35	93
4	3060	98	4,084	398	58	111	127
4	3070	108	3,181	277	66	152	54
4	3080	77	3,366	205	63	208	106
4	3090	80	2,126	75	33	36	122
4	3100*	72	1,728	70	10	72	146
6	3110	112	3,897	210	52	49	98
6	3120	74	3,001	288	36	50	50
4	3131	127	5,493	1,021	86	261	73
4	3132	98	4,156	421	59	153	121
4	3141	86	5,360	1,053	103	240	86
4	3142	78	2,996	425	60	180	65
5	3150	98	3,538	337	90	223	108
5	3160	66	2,332	105	20	44	81
5	3170	128	5,602	362	50	280	159
5	3181	71	3,225	214	28	168	102
5	3182	79	3,392	260	27	265	92
5	3190	147	5,783	693	132	336	48
5	3201	140	5,226	312	91	119	46
5	3202	131	5,056	248	92	419	40
5	3211	135	4,438	254	11	80	121
5	3212	96	3,921	204	106	256	126
5	3220	70	1,954	245	80	190	75
5	3230	147	6,284	544	168	456	311
6	3240	87	3,053	350	58	142	142
6	3250	98	3,720	618	35	198	173
6	3261	70	2,366	226	15	100	42
6	3262	87	3,156	367	41	71	73
6	3271	72	1,386	205	43	16	13
6	3272	136	2,718	449	36	36	36
6	3281	195	5,724	776	220	79	184
6	3282	128	3,662	273	124	33	40
6	3291	148	3,868	672	62	126	570
6	3292	115	4,475	676	112	106	105
Total		4,376	1,64,839	17,570	3,058	7,494	5,346

*Non-districted

Source: RI South Asia Office

Car rally to celebrate womanhood

Team Rotary News



Men don't take it as a challenge anymore when women overtake them in a driving lane. They are getting used to it and likewise Rotary too is giving us women an opportunity to control the gears," says Jayashree Mohanty, President, Rotary E-Club, D 3262, talking about the Rotary Kalinga Women's TSD (Time Speed Distance) Rally, organised at Bhubaneswar by the club, in association with Kalinga Motor Sports Club, Bhubaneswar, and Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India.

A training session was conducted to orient the participants about the TSD format, based on which the winners were chosen. The 100-km rally was flagged off by DG Narayan Nayak and spouse Rtn Sunanda Nayak. Strategically placed check points helped to ascertain if the participants were adhering to the set route, time frame and speed.

The winners bagged a cash prize of Rs 75,000. A video clip showing the various Rotary projects was played at the closing ceremony to encourage more women to join Rotary. ■

Making leaders

Team Rotary News

Eighteen stimulating sessions spread over three days at the scenic hillside Mahatma Residential School in Alagar Koil, Madurai, would be etched in the memory of 56 students from 12 colleges. They were part of a RYLA programme organised by RC Madurai West, D 3000.

"We learnt team management through games riddled with brain teasers. I personally got to know how to synchronise personal and team goals," says T Ramanathan (21) from Madura College who was crowned 'Mr RYLA.'

It was an exercise in building self-esteem, creative thinking, heritage values and leadership skills, the highlight being 'experimental learning' through management games and activity that taught participants how to optimise energy to achieve their dreams. Deepak, a facilitator from National Adventure and



Leadership School, Coimbatore, gave a peek into the intricacies of group dynamics and how leadership traits can be effectively implemented for better results.

A campfire opened the gateway for the collegians to showcase their skills and trekking on the Alagar Koil hills offered a mix of fun and adventure.

Summing up the mood, 'Ms RYLA' M Kalaivani (23) from Agricultural College says that the camp taught her to express her views confidently in a group and has boosted up her self-confidence. Pilot Faculty T Ravee and RYLA Chairman Ravi Paarthasarathy coordinated the event. It was curtains with parting tips from PDG R Rajaram. ■

Bandhini...

dots of elegance

Sabita Radhakrishna

I have always been fascinated by Gujarat... for its colour, people and its plethora of textiles. The women with their red *bandhini odhnis*, swirling skirts, heavy silver jewellery and dangling earrings are fashion icons in their own right. Not to be ignored, the bejewelled men in their beautifully tailored *peharans* and *dhothis*, wearing the most

colourful of turbans, handcrafted to perfection, and usually made from bright red cloth with little dots.

I have ridden in rickety buses with the craft folk, and rubbed shoulders with them as they chit-chatted and craned their necks to see if they have arrived at their destination. Embroidery skills are handed over from mother to daughter and

the products embellished with a riot of colours are preserved as dowry pieces.

Bandhini is the prime craft here but it is not possible to ascertain the exact period when the craft of tie and dye originated in Gujarat. It is conjectured, judging from the small fragments of silk discovered in the medieval period, that the Jain





monks used the silk to protect their manuscripts and paintings and the *bandhini* technique transferred to Gujarat by communities of craftsmen who migrated from Sind, most likely in the 16th century. Jamnagar was one of the earliest dyeing centres for *bandhini* as the water here brings out the intensity of colour

Judging from the small fragments of silk discovered in the medieval period, Jain monks used silk to cover their manuscripts and paintings.

in the dye. Very intricate designs are done in Kutch, and sent to Jamnagar for dyeing and marketing. The Khatri community of textile craftsmen, both Hindus and Muslims, are the main protagonists of *bandhini* production since the 17th century. According to legend, the Khatri community took up weaving



Right: Abdul Jabbar Khatri tying the knots to design a bandhini fabric.

Below: A bandhini saree designed by the Khatri community.



to escape the wrath of Parashurama (an avatar of Vishnu) who was a staunch defender of Brahmins.

Bhuj and Kutch follow a complicated process. The fabric is bleached and folded precisely into several layers, and fixed by stitching the borders of the folded fabric. The *rangari* or colour-specialist marks the design on the topmost layer. Using a mixture of burnt sienna and water, smeared on a cord, he draws lines with it to mark the field of design. Then he stamps the design, using wooden blocks dipped into the same colour. Next he chooses the portions of the fabric, which have to preserve its base colour. These small portions are pushed up with a pointed nail. The projected portions are bound with string and the same process is

repeated from one dot to the other. It is only the women and girls who carry out this delicate art of tying as it is a skill very rarely acquired by men. The first colour dyed is a light colour, usually yellow. The portions, which need to remain yellow, are again tied and the fabric dyed in a darker colour. The tie-and-dye process is repeated for as many colours as required. This technique is applied to the sari borders as also the *pallu*. With the present-day cold dyes and plastic foil easily available for wraps, the process is somewhat simplified, but the fact remains that it is the handcraft which makes the effect so breathtakingly beautiful.

Bandhini fabric is often sold without the tied thread removed, and today the crinkled effect is in vogue.



Abdul Jabbar Khatri at work, getting the fabric ready with the tie and dye process; Right: The leharia design produced by the Khoja community.

The more gossamer the fabric, the better the design shows off. Georgettes, mulls, kotas and light silks do best with *bandhini*. Of course, heavier silks are also used, like satins and *gajji* silks, but they are more difficult to work with. *Bandhini* is worked on *odhnis*, turban material, shawls, as also fabric, for contemporary garments such as skirts, tops and kurtas.

Like many of the age-old textiles, *bandini* has a socio-religious significance. The *Gharchola*, or the *zari chowkda*, gifted to the bride by her in-laws, mostly in the Marwari and Jain communities, either in cotton



or in *gajji* silk, is a traditional wedding sari in bright red with thick zari checks in seven patterns of *bandhini* enclosed in the squares. The bride wears this over her head during the wedding rites. The *vira bhet bhat*, the brother's offering, is distinctive for its ceremonial significance.

The Khoja community produced interlaced circular designs as also the *lehar* designs, which brought in the *bandhini* in waves or zigzag patterns. The Kutch *bandhini* workers tie multiple designs in squares of parrots, elephants, birds, lotuses, jewels, women, etc, and add the green colour where required. The *bavanbagh*, which is literally "52 gardens", usually has the ties in green and red with diagonal squares containing different motifs in each square like the *chakli chaklo*, *haathi*(elephant), *puthli* (doll), *mor* (peacock), *popat* (parrot), *pachak* (five circles), *panihari* (figure carrying a pot), *leher* (wave) and *kharek* (as in grapes). Some of the upper classes enhance the work further with *gota*, attaching other borders, and embroidery.

The Khatri is a family of centuries-old traditional tie dyers, living in Khatri Chowk in Bhuj for generations, and as is usual, faced competition from the mill-produced duplicates which were sold much cheaper becoming a threat to this hand-crafted tradition. Abdul Jabbar Khatri, who told me this story, described how his great grandfather

Jabbar's story is a classic example of learning traditional skills alongside education which is the dream of every craft activist.



Gharchola — the wedding sari of a Marwari and Jain bride.

began to make fireworks for royalty and took to bicycle repairing, while his father got a job with a bank. Simultaneously, the Government began to promote *bandhini* at national and international levels.

Jabbar's story is a classic example of learning traditional skills alongside education which is the dream of every craft activist. He, along with his brothers, learnt the intricacies of dyeing and tying the fabric using age-old techniques from experts in the family. Jabbar graduated in Commerce and this helped him understand the world of business and economics. The break came when he was invited by the National Institute of Design for a workshop organised by the Shibori World Network, which led to an introduction to Dosa Inc, a US based company specialising in garments, whose representatives worked on a collection of tie-and-dye garments with the Khatri family.

Abdul Jabbar got the UNESCO Seal of Excellence and the World Craft Council Award of Excellence,

and the Shanta Prasad Award from the Crafts Council of India. The family made inroads into the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market and in 2007, he participated in a programme on traditional textiles sponsored by the Warwick University, UK, held at the Victoria & Albert Museum. I prize the sari I ordered from him, a contemporary star-spangled *bandhini kota* against a sky of midnight blue; it is unusual and captivating.

The Khatri have worked with Indian fashion designers such as Tarun Tahiliani, Aneeth Arora, Abraham & Thakore, Rajesh Pratap Singh, Neeru Kumar and international buyers under the name of SIDR Craft.

The challenge, for these artisans, is to retain their image as folk artists, and at the same time create new products that are contemporary, usable and affordable.

Pictures by Sabita Radhakrishna

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Rotary Ankleshwar celebrates TRF Centennial

Team Rotary News

RC Ankleshwar, D 3060, dedicated four social projects to mark the TRF Centennial. The mega event was presided over by RI Director Manoj Desai. EMGA Ashok Panjwani extended his support and guidance for the successful implementation of these global grant projects.

Literacy

The club, in association with Jhagadia Industries and ONGC Ankleshwar Estate, provided secondary education to 100 tribal women aged 18–40, under its project titled ‘Second Chance’. RID Desai distributed certificates to these women who had successfully completed the course.

While an excited Mahida Hiraben of Boidra village “want to teach and motivate other girls from my locality,” her friend Pathan Sabiha from Jitali expressed a desire for higher studies, although she had to overcome stiff resistance from her family.

“One common feature among these women was that they had to overcome social hurdles with grit and hard work. We will support them to study further,” said Jinendra Kothari, the past president of the club.

Sanitation

Jitali will soon become the first open defecation free village in Bharuch district if everything goes as planned. Under its ‘Gram Kalyan’ project, the club, along with the Bharuch Enviro Infrastructure Ltd (BEIL), is constructing 478 toilet blocks at a cost of Rs 86 lakh in this village. RID Desai



RID Manoj Desai and Sharmishtha inaugurate a composting site at Jitali village in the presence of (from L) Club President Sunil Vyas, EMGA Ashok Panjwani, DGE Pinky Patel and Meera Panjwani.

inaugurated the first phase, where 200 toilet blocks have been completed.

Waste management

The club, along with Shroff S R Rotary Institute of Chemical Technology and BEIL, has installed compost facilities in Jitali to convert solid waste from the households which can be used for agriculture.

Firoj Hasan Solanki, a villager from Navi Nagari said, “Not only is our village clean, the whole exercise gives us organic manure for our crops too. Now we are spreading this idea to our relatives in the neighbouring villages too.”

Another villager Ammar Goman felt proud that they were actively

involved in the Swachh Bharat Mission and thanked Rotary for setting up the waste management system.

100 Four-way Test plaques

The club distributed Four-way Test plaques to 100 schools in and around Ankleshwar to expound Rotary’s principles and shore up its public image.

Apart from these projects, the Rotarians distributed course completion certificate to 100 women who had completed vocational training at the Rotary empowerment centre. The event also marked the third anniversary of a mobile education van that was commissioned under a global grant. ■

A symposium for world peace

KTP Radhika

World peace begins with enlightened public opinion at home, and to achieve it we should bring peace to our homes and communities,” said TRF Trustee Chair Elect Paul Netzel, inaugurating the International Understanding and Peace Symposium at MAEER’s MIT College in Pune. The two-day programme conducted by D 3131 and hosted by RC Pune Shivajinagar and World Peace Centre, MAEER’s MIT and Development Education International Society, threw light on various aspects of peace building.

“Peace is at the core of Rotary’s DNA. We promote peace through grass-roots training, community-based programmes, diplomacy and peace scholarships. Every time you work in one of the six focus areas of Rotary, you are working for peace,” he said. When Rotarians from two countries engage in international service projects, they work beyond cultural differences and borders for the common good of humanity. Rotary sends 9,000 students every year on exchanges.

PDG Chandu Agarwal and Dr C P Anto, Founder and Executive President of Peace Channel, Nagaland, received the Rotary National Peace Awards. Dr Vishwanath Karad, founder, MAEER’s MIT, was recognised with the



TRF Chair-elect Paul Netzel honours PDG Chandu Agarwal. Also seen (from L) RC Pune Shivajinagar President Pradeep Wagh, DG Prashant Deshmukh and PDG Vinay Kulkarni.

Rotary World Peace Prize. “Only a union of science and spirituality will bring in harmony; following the Indian path of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* will help achieve this,” he said.

The event, conceptualised by Rtn Pradeep Wagh, had 30 speakers from India, US, Germany, Nepal and Australia, addressing about 700 delegates. ■

D 3120 Conference

Team Rotary News

It was more like a family get together. Rotarians shared ideas and basked in the general warmth and camaraderie for two days,” says DG Pramod Kumar, D 3120, referring to the District Conference held at Khajuraho.

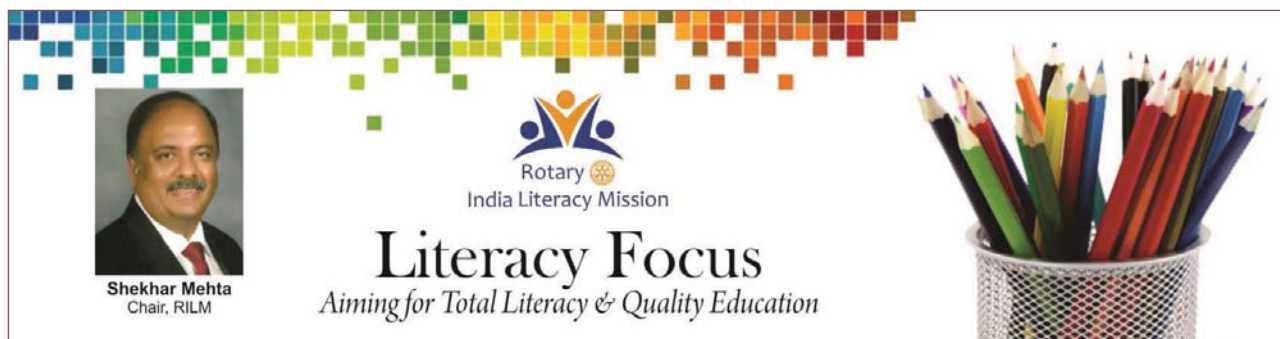


PRID Shekhar Mehta and Rashi being honoured by DG Pramod Kumar and spouse Premlata Yadav in the presence of RIPR Pamela Akins.

With electronic voting in place to elect the DGN-designate (Sanjay Agarwal of RC Varanasi East was declared winner later), there was no pressure of election canvassing or backdoor funding and the Rotarians could concentrate on the fun side of the Conference. “For the first time, we had to close registrations at 600; 67 of the 74 clubs participated.”

PDG Pamela Akins from Connecticut, D 6960, was the RIPR. “Her connect with the audience had a Pied Piper effect,” says Kumar. She also helped in the speedy processing of a Global Grant to equip a hospital in Renukoot with equipment to treat patients with vector-borne diseases.

Giving an update on Literacy, PRID Shekhar Mehta said, “Let’s fight illiteracy as we did Polio.” RPIC Sam Patibandla spoke about improving Rotary’s visibility. Ramon Magsaysay awardee Sanjiv Chaturvedi, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Faggan Singh Kulhaste and Minister for Child Development Lalita Yadav participated. ■



Just one click away from your Asha Kiran child

Have you seen the progress of the Asha Kiran child you sponsored? If not, then please visit www.rotaryteach.org and click on 'My Asha Kiran Child' tab to know about the progress of your sponsored child. Each of the approximately 27,000 donors have been tagged for long now.

RILM's call for volunteers for Asha Kiran

Have you downloaded the T-E-A-C-H App yet? If not, do it now. Go to Play Store and search for 'TEACH by RILM'. Once downloaded, go to 'Engage' on the home page and register yourself as a TEACH volunteer. Currently we need volunteers to train teachers of the Asha Kiran centres.

The training would focus on classroom management skills of teachers teaching Hindi, English, Bengali and Mathematics to the children enrolled in the Centre.

We need volunteers mostly from Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh.

Launch of Swabhimaan with the NGO model

Rotary India Literacy Mission (RILM) has embarked on a mission to make a difference in the lives of non-literate adults (15+ years) in India through its Adult Literacy Project — Swabhimaan: Dignity through Education.

Earlier these Swabhimaan centres were run independently by Rotarians. Innovation and volunteerism are

at the core of the programme with locally devised incentives used to motivate adult non-literates to engage in a literacy programme and socially responsible volunteerism at every level.

However we wanted to see if Swabhimaan centres through the NGO model will yield any better results. So we have done a pilot in collaboration with two NGOs in West Bengal — Agradut Pally Unnayan

Samity in Howrah and Sitarampur Vivekananda Seba Pratisthan in Magrahat.

What is an NGO model?

RILM will select and tie up with various NGOs who will in turn identify adult non-literates across India and enroll them for the functional literacy course at the Swabhimaan centres. The course spreads across four months, at the end of which the learner appears



An adult learner at Agradut Pally Unnayan Samity in Howrah.

for the NIOS examination which takes place every March and August. On clearing the examination, the beneficiaries are certified as functionally literate by the Government of India.

RILM's role

RILM's role would be to identify the partnering NGO, sign an MoU with the NGO and monitor the entire process.

One hundred learners have enrolled from each of these two NGOs and they are mostly women from BPL background and are engaged in seasonal farming. The NGOs focus on imparting functional literacy through the Swabhimaan centres and train teachers for mentoring and guiding the learners through the course; organise supplemental educational sessions to raise awareness about health, hygiene, sanitation and governmental schemes and strengthen the SHGs through the literacy course.

While the learners are in the age group 20–65 and members of SHGs in one NGO, in the other, they are in the age group 17–60 and are engaged in weaving zari work on sarees. They are more confident and are mostly self-reliant, taking care of the daily accounting and documentation of the SHGs or the zari weaving work they are engaged in. They help their siblings and children with studies at home and are enthusiastic to continue education, post the course completion.

All the learners had appeared for the NIOS examination on March 19 and are awaiting results.

1,000 municipal corporation teachers trained in Mumbai

Rotary International District 3141 organised a teacher training programme during April 15–27 for 1,000 BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation teachers. The training was held for six hours for a batch of 100 teachers each day.

The teachers were trained on topics such as curriculum, pedagogy,



A Swabhimaan centre of Sitarampur Vivekananda Seba Pratisthan.

enhancement of English language skills and life skills, student leadership, personality development, gender sensitivity and stress management.

There were four trainers and they conducted various activities and games to bring out the essence of each topic. The teachers were also provided with relevant reference materials. DG Gopal Mandhan, ZLC Balkrishna Inamdar, DLCC Sunil Mehra, Education Officer Mahesh Palkar, Deputy Education Officer Prakash Charate and District Trainer Mahendra Sawant attended the programme.

Six schools converted into Happy Schools with RILM Grant

Six schools in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Haryana have been supported by RILM with grant from Euro Kids. Rotary Clubs of Pune Westside, Hosur Midtown, Rasipuram and Inner Wheel Club of Ambala had been involved in transforming these schools into Happy Schools.

To receive financial support, a Rotary Club has to apply for a grant online on our Rotary TEACH website. These grant applications were thoroughly reviewed and sanctioned at various levels such as the Rotary Club President, District Literacy Chair,

District Governor, Happy School National Committee Members and the officials at the Rotary India literacy Mission.

A club seeking grant has to give quotations from specific vendors and list out other strategies of implementing the project. The application will be scrutinised and modified at various levels. RILM then reviews the proposal, assesses the costs involved and other details. The final payment, which is 50 per cent of the cost incurred by the clubs or Rs 2.5 lakh, whichever is lower, will be made after the receipt of the completed report from the club, along with utilisation certificates signed by a Chartered Engineer and Chartered Accountant.

No 'Bars' for Education

Chairman of Inner Wheel District 325 Deepti Sahay, along with Shweta Sinha, CLCC of Inner Wheel Club of Patna and Club President Priyanka Kumar, conducted an adult literacy programme for the inmates of Beyur Jail. There were 80 women and 15 children. Though they were initially skeptical about learning they later found the classes informative and engaging. While some of them enrolled for the adult literacy classes, others took up the vocational courses. ■

A child rights crusader

G Singh

Anoyara Khatun (20) of Chhoto Askara village in North 24 Parganas of West Bengal dreams of a world where every child is aware of his or her rights and fights hard to safeguard them. She is better described by the villagers and her friends as their “own Malala”, and her achievements are considerable indeed. On International Women’s Day this year, she was honoured with the *Nari Shakti Puraskar* by President Pranab Mukherjee for her contribution towards women’s empowerment.

A second-year college student, Anoyara has visited the United Nations in New York twice, where

she spoke about child rights and girls’ education at the UN General Assembly, and is thrilled to have met UN General Secretary Ban Ki Moon, Microsoft co-founder Bill and Melinda Gates. But she regrets that she could not interact with Malala Yousafzai, although she too was at the UN office.

She heads around 100 child groups in 80 villages of Sandeshkhali and Minakhan blocks that work

to create awareness among children about their rights, and who take prompt action whenever a child is being trafficked or child marriages are being conducted.

She has managed to foil over 200 trafficking attempts, helped rescue and unite over 300 children with their families and got several drop-outs back into school.

Referring to her dream of a world where children are aware of their rights and know whom to approach for violation of their rights, Anoyara

I understand the
plight of trafficked
children better
because I have been
a victim like them.



Anoyara Khatun receiving the *Nari Shakti Puraskar* from the President of India Pranab Mukherjee.

Anoyara has managed to foil over 200 trafficking attempts, helped rescue and unite over 300 children with their families and got several dropouts back into school.

says, “I don’t want to keep my work confined to the boundaries of my village. I want to take it across the globe. It’s impossible for me to do everything alone as I need the help and support of hundreds of children to achieve my goal.” Her child committees are proactive in the villages and keep a tab on every new visitor. Each time a new visitor enters a village, news of his/her activities is circulated among the child groups who then keep a tab on that person. Any suspicious activity is reported to the village head. “In this way, we have stopped hundreds of children from being trafficked. It is difficult for any fresh visitor to escape the watchful eyes of our activists,” she says with a sense of pride.

But the stark poverty in her village makes her work challenging. “We often face resistance from families who are bent on sending their children with traffickers because of poverty. It is difficult to save the children from their clutches. In such cases, we try to connect their families with different employment schemes run by the government.”

The proximity of her block with the porous Bangladesh border makes her work even more challenging. “The Sandeshkhali block is just a few kilometers away from the traffic-prone Bangladesh’s border. Several girls are trafficked every year to West Bengal and other States through this



Anoyara (sitting - right) at a soccer fundraiser for the NGO Global Goals in New York.

route. We try our best to nab the traffickers and rescue the girls, despite numerous threats, and we celebrate with a feast whenever a child is rescued or saved from the clutches of traffickers,” she smiles.

Anoyara is internationally recognised for her work. She was nominated for the International Children’s Peace Prize in 2012, an award that went to Malala the next year. In 2013, she represented India at the ‘Save the Children’ educational conference at Brussels. In 2014, the West Bengal government felicitated her. Her journey as an international child rights crusader has been a bumpy ride full of vitriolic attacks.

Born in 1996, Anoyara is the youngest of four siblings. She lost her father when she was only five. Her mother, employed as a cook in a local school, raised the family but life was hard. At 12, Anoyara was trafficked to Delhi where she was forced into

domestic labour. It took a year for her to return home.

She was 13 when she came in contact with the Dhagagia Social Welfare Society-run multi-activity centre that worked against human trafficking and decided to join them. “I thought that I would understand the plight of the trafficked children better because I had been a victim like them,” she says.

But it was easier said than done. She faced severe resistance and verbal assaults from the villagers who thought she had some ulterior motive behind her efforts.

Anoyara, however, refuses to talk much about her past. “The brickbats have now turned into flowers. People compliment me for my work and I have received recognition across the globe.”

When asked if she wants to marry and start her family, she says, “Well, I never had time to think about it.” ■

The rise of the super-agers

Bharat and Shalan Savur

Move over anti-agers, hello super-agers! It's about carrying your years, experience, wisdom and insight lightly, luminously, laughingly. Super-agers are those lovely, healthy, silver-haired folk, who blend beautifully with their surroundings yet stand out because they are so poised in their patience, exuding calm and acceptance as they wait for the traffic to stop or the last vehicle to vanish from the horizon to step across the road with sure steps.

My wish for you all... whether you've seen 50 summers or innumerable winters: be fit, be healthy. Let your body, mind, spirit be in concert. Be a super-ager. Dr Miriam Stoppard, 79, columnist and TV presenter, inspires when she says: "All through my life, each decade has been better than the last. As one of the oldies who trekked to India to see if retirement is better than the UK for the new BBC1 series *The Real Marigold Hotel*, I was struck by how fit you have to be to travel."

It's huge, this hurrah to living, this magnificent statement of intent — make every year healthier, every decade

better. Come rain, come shine, get fitter and fitter. Even more so in these climate-changing times. For, according to a study conducted by psychology students Esther Sukita and Ashwini K, climatic changes can lead to stress, anxiety, depression or a post-traumatic stress disorder, whatever be our age.

The study rates the vagaries of weather as one of the major causes for farmers' suicides: "Any climate-change-related disaster will lead to a trauma which affects their (farmers') normal conditions of living. It also leads to depression when unable to cope with the trauma, which, in turn, affects their performance level. When farmers don't know how to cope, they end up committing suicide."

Weather the weather.

Climate changes affect seniors too — with aches, pains, stiffness, even near-disability, at times. And this trauma often leads to low spirits, helplessness and depression. Helplessness stems from feeling conditions that are not in your control. In school, we were taught this bracing chant: "*Whether the weather be hot/Or whether the weather be cold/Whether the weather be fine/Or whether the weather be not/We'll weather the weather/Whatever the weather/Whether we like it or not!*"

It's an anthem for these times. Sure, we can't control the climate. But we can weather it by being aware that climates are changing with the times. Be ready with warmers when the chill blasts in, light cottons when the heat blazes, dry talcs and towels in humidity, water



and creams in dry conditions. Take it in your stride literally by walking briskly, purposefully, powerfully, regularly. Life eases when you move. As my grandmother often said, "When blood circulates, bliss circulates." And as a Chinese proverb exhorts: "Don't be afraid of going slowly, only of standing still." Be pro-active. Don't get shaken, just awoken.

Have calcium

Reach out for remedies. Deal with aches by taking one calcium tablet a day, and a Vitamin D3 tablet every fortnight. By the third day, you'll be ache-free. Please note: aches can be psychosomatic — felt but having no underlying physiological cause for them to exist. Wisdom does not say, "You are old, so it hurts"; it urges, "Do body-stretches to iron out those kinks in the muscles. It whispers, "Let the mind rise high above this 'attitude ache'." No medical technology can detect it, yet it exists for sure.

Climate changes affect seniors too — with aches, pains, stiffness, even near-disability at times. And this trauma often leads to low spirits, helplessness and depression.



The cleaner the gut, the happier and more anxiety-free we are because the serotonin has space to weave its magic.

teaspoon of unroasted cumin seeds to prevent gas, acidity and discomfort. Avoid or eat sparingly meat, paneer, cheese, cabbage, white flour, chips and sugar. These are gut-unfriendly. Increase water intake and take carrot juice which is better absorbed than even water by the body's membranes.

One exercise effectively helps gut-cleansing. Abdominal crunches strengthen stomach muscles which then squeeze the food with greater force and make both digesting nutrients as well as discarding wastes easier.

Freshen the brain

The brain regenerates too in the healthy living climate you've created. The regions ruled by emotions remain thick, young, resilient, not thinned by age, negativity or neglect. Continue to freshen it with beautiful words like Peace, Harmony, Quietness, Beauty, Order and Serenity. Walk in the sun — it pours golden optimism into you. Don't lose yourself in loneliness but in loving, listening, learning. Gift yourself quiet, nourishing moments. A new study suggests watching birds as an excellent healing afternoon activity. Feel all the tension drain out of you as you watch the flight in grace, the skilful swoop, the wings undulating in the air... As Bryant McGill says, "You came to this world to grow and to explore and to touch the miracles and marvels of life." Allow yourself to be overtaken by joy as Nature composes her loveliest poems for you.

The writers are authors of the book 'Fitness for Life' and teachers of the Fitness for Life programme.

Have you ever clenched your fist so tight that it hurts? A negative attitude works the same way — the body throbs when you hold on tight to a perception. It could be simmering resentment at some perceived injustice done to you. It could be anger so intense that it blinds you to all that's right in your life. It could be envy, an acid corroding your natural tendency to be happy and generous in others' success. These *awful* negative emotions run deep and inflame muscle, bone, joint, nerves and the stomach.

Empty and refill.

Again, don't feel helpless as you feel the familiar emotion and tension build up in you. You've got the power to neutralise the tension. Close your eyes gently and visualise all the unhealthy thoughts that cause tension flow out of your body through the toes and fingers, leaving you empty and clean.

Follow up the emptying procedure with a refilling process. Visualise

thoughts composed of serenity, wholeness, peace and beauty pouring into your body and circulating through your entire being. It's like having cool, crystal-clear water softly kneading muscle and bone, cleansing joints and stomach, soothing and healing nerves and leaving you utterly relaxed and reassured. When stress exits from the mind, it exits from the body. In this beautiful inner environment you've created, your immune system strengthens. You sleep better and feel hopeful and optimistic about life.

The emptying and refilling process should be carried out in the stomach too. A doctor tells me that 95 per cent of the body's serotonin — a hormone that fills us with tranquil well-being — is in the gut. The cleaner the gut, the happier and more anxiety-free we are because the serotonin has space to weave its magic. Keep your meal simple with foods high in soft fibre — peeled fruits, vegetables, whole grains cooked soft. After a meal, chew a



RC Salem Young Town — D 2982

A toilet block worth Rs 50,000 was installed at a Government Higher Secondary School in Sivadhapuram as part of a WinS project. DG T Shanmugasundaram inaugurated the new sanitary facility at the school.



RC Kota — D 3052

The club in association with RC Indore Uptown, D 3040, conducted an artificial limb fitment camp that provided LN-4 prosthetic arms for the physically challenged people in the community. The beneficiaries were also taught to use their new limbs.

Rotaract Club of Rivers — D 2981

The club which was sponsored by RC Pondicherry donated a wheelchair to a 20-year-old cancer patient Kokila who is being treated at JIPMER, the regional cancer centre. The Rotaractors take care of Kokila almost every day by accompanying her for short rounds around the hospital campus, a small gesture to bring a smile on her face.



RC Vijayawada — D 3020

More than 10,000 children took part in a mass drawing competition under the banner, 'Swachh Vidyalaya — WASH in schools'. The event created a national record for being the largest competition for schoolchildren and was entered in the Indian Book of Records. The Municipal Commissioner Veerapandian lauded the efforts of the club.



Matters

RC Bikaner — D 3053

The club conducted eye check-up and lens transplantation camps at Udramsar and Bikaner in which about 200 patients of different age groups were screened and given free medicines after primary treatment. Twenty patients were treated for cataract surgery at Acharya Shree Nanesh Rotary Netra Chikitsalaya.



RC Surat — D 3060

A toilet block and a handwash station were provided for girls at a government school in Ponsra village near Surat, to inculcate the best hygiene practices among the students.



RC Jammu City — D 3070

The club presented wheelchairs to differently-abled inmates of Jigar Rehabilitation Institute, Gangyal, and promised to extend all support to it for the rehabilitation of the disabled in the region.



RC Roopnagar — D 3080

Around 200 children took part in a rally to create awareness on tuberculosis. The rally was flagged off by PDGs Dr R S Parmar and Chetan Aggarwal with the involvement of local interactors from different schools. The participants raised slogans and displayed placards for the prevention of TB.



RC Faridkot — D 3090

A dental camp was organised in association with Surendra Dental College, Sri Ganganagar, in which 113 patients were checked and treated for oral health at MGM Senior Secondary School in Faridkot.





RC Vrindavan — D 3110

Rotarian Lalit Arora celebrated his birthday by donating Rs 51,000 to Kalyanam Karoti Shreeji Baba, Mathura, for conducting cataract surgeries to 51 poor people. The Club President Dr Yaduraj Singh Yadav, along with fellow Rotarians, distributed snacks to the patients.

RC Pune Sahawas — D 3131

A 27-seater van was handed over to Adhar Mandal School for the deaf and dumb children through a global grant partnership with RC Chagrin Valley, USA and TRF. Besides, the club also provided 12 computers, 100 hearing aids, and constructed gender specific toilets in the school. DG Prashant Deshmukh was present at the inaugural event.



RC Mumbai Greencity — D 3141

The club, in association with Ojas Eye Hospital, Bandra, and Rotary Eye Care Centre at Malad, organised an eye check-up camp where 230 people were screened. A diabetes camp was held at SNTD Women University in Juhu for the staff of all the nine colleges in the campus.



RC Thane

Uptown — D 3142

A Happy School project was accomplished at a Zilla Parishad primary school in Songaon village, Murbad taluk. The school, was given two toilets with overhead tank, a borewell, water purifiers and facilities for indoor, outdoor games, footwear for children, library books and a cupboard to store them. Saplings were also planted at the campus.



RC Nizamabad — D 3150

Notebooks and stationery were distributed to government school students to mark the birth anniversary of Rotary International founder Paul P Harris. The club is involved in providing facilities to children to encourage them to attend school.

Matters



RC Gulbarga Midtown — D 3160

Over 540 patients were screened at an eye and dental check-up camp organised by the club at Gulbarga. Cataract surgeries were performed on 20 patients at Bhoruka hospital in the town.



RC Erode — D 3202

As part of the WinS project, handwashing stations were installed at 23 government schools to inculcate best hygiene practices among students. Chief Education Officer P Ayyannan was the chief guest at the meeting which was graced by present and future District Governors.



RC Silchar — D 3240

As part of WinS outreach, two wash stations were constructed at Tikarbasti Lower Primary School and Sri Ramkrishna Pathsala for the benefit of students. They were tutored on best hygiene practices on the occasion.



RC Samastipur City — D 3250

The club observed World TB Day with an interactive session among students, local representatives, teachers and NGO workers who discussed the ways and means to prevent the occurrence of the disease. A rally was also taken by the students to create awareness among the locals.



RC Calcutta Midsouth — D 3291

The club provided Bhagat Bari Primary School in a remote village of Purulia district with 20 desks and 20 benches. Earlier the students were sitting on the floor. An amount of Rs 21,500 was used on this Happy Schools project.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran
Designed by L Gunasekaran

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In Brief



Brownies replace laddoos

Have you ever thought of getting brownies, burgers or sandwiches as temple *prasad*?

Jaya Durga Peetam temple at Padappai, on the

outskirts of Chennai, offers trendy *prasad* such as brownies, vegetable cutlets, cracker sandwiches, cherry tomato salad, etc. These are certified by FSSAI and come marked with an expiry date. Devotees can insert a token into vending machines to collect boxes of their 'pret-a-prasadam', prepared in the automated temple kitchen. There is also a 'birthday cake *prasadam*' for devotees.



CEOs meet under sea

To draw attention to global warming and marine pollution, five chief executive officers held an underwater

meeting, 150 metres away from Grove Beach in Kovalam, Kerala. They swam deep, five metres down, and pledged to protect the sea and marine life. The underwater conference titled 'Ocean Love' was the first of its kind in India. But it was not a pretty sight underwater. They spotted, not coral or fish, but only plastic bottles and other marine debris.



First-class travel

The all-glass luxury train Shiki-Shima, launched in Japan recently, is set to send travel lovers wild with its marvellous interiors and windows. The train is totally see-through to give holidaymakers an amazing view. With private suites, observation platforms, bars and gourmet restaurants, it is the height of luxury as far as train travel goes. There are 45 seats on the two-carriage service, with one hosting a French restaurant. The seating in the carriages is designed to cater to singles, couples and larger groups. To get this experience will cost you £100, with a meal and £40 without one.



A café for pooches

Puppychino café, located in New Delhi's upmarket Shahpur Jat, is dedicated

to dogs. From celebrating pet birthdays to sharing a meal with your pooches, Puppychino promises to provide the perfect venue. In this, the metro's first dog café, the space is divided into two sections: dining and play. The special menu for dogs boasts of interesting delicacies such as Snoopy Spaghetti, Toothsome Pancakes and even Dog's Beer made of chicken stock and molasses! The dogs are allowed to eat anywhere, even share the table with their owners, if desired. The café also offers a day boarding facility on request.



Jeans go natural

Denim jeans may not be ideal clothing for Indian summers. But how about a pair of jeans made from banana fibre. C Sekar, a weaver from Chennai, has made jeans and skirts from banana fibre, that is styled on the classic blue jeans, but can absorb sweat much better. The fabric is dyed with natural colours and has buttons made from coconut shells, replacing the classic metal rivets and zips found in denim jeans. A pair of these jeans costs around Rs 5,000.

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