

May 2018

ROTARY NEWS



Learning
with dignity

Rassin meets Raje

On his recent visit to India, Rotary International President Elect Barry Rassin, accompanied by RI Director C Basker, called upon Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje Scindia. Later, in an interview to *Rotary News*, Rassin said he found Raje to be a “very dynamic and very strong woman who knows what she wants to do and the changes she wants to bring about.” Most of all, he added, she “really wants to partner with Rotary, and I was very happy to hear that because these are exactly the kind of partnerships that we are looking for”.





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On the cover: Students enjoy their schooling with better seating facilities provided by RC Sonkatch, D 3040.

Picture by: Rasheeda Bhagat



The remarkable Renutai

I was very moved by the story of Renutai in the April issue. She is a remarkable woman with the resolve to overcome obstacles in her journey. The future of this country is in bringing the underprivileged children into mainstream. The story had some gut-wrenching descriptions like the eight-year-old wanting a beer instead of milk.

Hope she continues to save more children in the years to come. As a Rotarian, I am very proud that we are working with people like Renutai and Kailash Satyarthi. I hope we find more such gems in our society.

*N Gopinath, RC Bangalore
Indiranagar — D 3190*

Some people by their sheer hard work and talent acquire wealth and become rich. Others have the wealth of experience. The metaphorical use of wealth in respect to Renutai of Pune is an example of sheer grit and bravery and she is no less significant than today's billionaires. Of late, women are working in different vocations and waging a real war against social injustice and violence. Your valued Editorial



and the realistic cover page story are beautiful delineation of facts regarding a bold and emancipated womanhood.

*Arun Kumar Dash
RC Baripada — D 3262*

I was delighted to see Renutai (Asha Shetye) and her stupendous work being covered in *Rotary News*. Asha Shetye and I studied in the same class at Sane Guruji Vidyalaya in Dadar, Mumbai, and she was a brilliant student. We together participated in many school and inter-school events. The cover story brought back all nostalgic moments.

She is an outstanding person, a great human being and her work for children speaks volumes. She was a good orator and storyteller

since school days and now her speeches are flavoured with the great experiences of her humanitarian work.

I congratulate Rotarians Sadanand, Deepa Bhagwat and members of RC Pune Laxmi Road for associating with Renutai's noble work and supporting her in her mission.

I must thank Editor Rasheeda Bhagat and her team for giving a good coverage of Renutai's work and featuring her on the cover. I am sure this cover story will inspire other Rotary clubs to do a lot more in the area of mother and child care, one of the six focus areas of Rotary International.

*IPDG Prashant
Bhushan — D 3131*

The cover story on Renutai's work in preventing child trafficking was an eyeopener. Rtn Sadanand Bhagwat, past president, RC Pune Laxmi Road, is trying his best, but I feel other Rotary clubs too need to help out such an outstanding work being done in Pune. Hats off to Renutai.

*Group Capt V G Deodhar
RC Nasik — D 3030*

A project inspired by an editorial

I am president-elect of RC Ahmedabad West (District 3054).

I like your call to implement the Four-Way Test in its true sense in the March Editorial. I appreciate your attempt to provoke our conscience. Inspired from this write-up of yours, I wish to take up projects to promote the Four-Way Test during my tenure.

I look forward to your suggestions to take this ahead.

*Sandesh Mundra
RC Ahmedabad — D 3054*

More space for projects please

Congratulations for making *Rotary News* a very engaging publication. Through the magazine, we get to know about many events

happening in the Rotary world. While we expect to know about interesting service projects around the country, we only get to know about national and international events through the magazine. But there are too many pictures of Rotary leaders and at least 7-8 pages of 'general content'. Please give more space for Rotary projects.

*Prof Dinesh H Soni
RC Latur Midtown — D 3132*

LETTERS

The article *A helping hand* (March issue) is excellent and proves that Rotarians are very active and generous to help the needy, especially children suffering from cancer. RC Bombay Midcity deserves a big round of applause for this noble project. Thanks for publishing such excellent articles with details as these stories will motivate other clubs to initiate similar work.

T D Bhatia
RC Delhi Mayur Vihar — D 3012

Thank you for publishing the Brazilian team's visit to District 3000 in the April issue — *Tamil Nadu enchants Brazilian visitors* — by Jaishree.

The team members from Brazil express their thanks and feel the article is written well and captures their real feelings about the trip. We also thank you for the good work you are doing to promote Rotary's image.

DG P Gopalakrishnan — D 3000

Innovate for creativity

The article *Vision Quest* presents a document of suggestions and conclusions which will benefit RI. RI President-elect Barry Rassin gives us solutions in an innovative and creative manner. He says Rotary should be a better communicator and catalytic agent between disaster areas and potential donors and provide a long-term recovery effort and every club should take up one high-impact service project. Rassin wishes to explore new ways of starting Rotary clubs and says that Rotaractors are the life insurance of Rotary and we should ensure their smooth transition into Rotary. His views on quicker changes in Rotary's governing policies through the CoL is appreciated.

V K Bansal
RC Delhi Uptown — D 3012

A model Rotary school

I was at Moodabidri a few years ago for a state-level Abacus competition and offered to do a workshop for teachers at the Rotary School. Within a few hours, I was able to hold the event at this school. The school buses and classrooms were in good shape and I learnt that they had a system in which one student will lead the class when the teacher is away. It was an amazing school to visit.

Vasanthi Ranganathan
TRF cadre — D 3232

An interesting issue

The April issue has come out with interesting topics and a suitable photo for the cover page. In the *Editor's Note*, the contrasting stories of two women were narrated; the first being the rags-to-riches story of Hong Kong's Zhou Qunfei, and the second is a different kind of wealth, brimming with the richness of love, compassion and caring in Pune, namely Renutai. She looks after street children in Pune.

Vision Quest on RIPE Barry Rassin is notable. His idea of getting better coverage for Rotary activities through social media is great as it will help communities understand what Rotary stands for. The importance of Vision Statement, his amusing story about his first public appearance and speech are worth reading. His view on cutting short the time taken for making important decisions on Rotary's governing policies will find ready acceptance.

The beautiful pictures of Varanasi are quite attractive. Glad to learn that a new Rotary club has been started in Bengaluru exclusively for the differently-abled. Keep up the good standard of *Rotary News* with such worthy topics.

MT Philip
RC Trivandrum Suburban — D 3211



RID's meaningful messages

In the March issue, the RI Director C Basker's message helps Rotarians to understand the dos and don'ts to ensure clean water and sanitation. As pointed out by him, the successful WinS programmes in D 3262 over the last three years has shown positive results in changing behaviour in students. We have to reach out to more schools to improve hygiene and health.

R Murali Krishna
RC Berhampur — D 3262

The message meticulously spells out the importance of clean water and sanitation, along with the role of Rotary. He has aptly explained the need for maintaining clean water and sanitation, and its effects on the health of children and the role of WinS.

It's true that we Rotarians have fought a long and successful battle against polio and now the time has come to embark on a new venture to ensure clean water and sanitation to the community.

Vijay Hattiholi
RC Hubli North — D 3170

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

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Increasing incidence of rape... a challenge to Indian women

The anguish and outrage that have erupted across India over two recent rape cases, in Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir and Unnao in Uttar Pradesh, are almost unprecedented. The last time we saw such outrage, protests and candlelight marches, was over the rape of Nirbhaya in 2012. The sheer brutality of that crime, and that too on the streets of Delhi, was mind-numbing. This time around, we have an eight-year-old child, Asifa Banu, drugged, kidnapped, sedated and raped repeatedly by eight men, two of them policemen, and another teenager raped by a legislator who she used to call “bhaiya”. As usual, the politicians have started the blame game, which does not, or should not, fool anybody.

Yes, it is disgraceful that we have around us men without a shred of humanity in them. Raping an unsuspecting teenager due to lust is terrible enough; but to use an innocent, fragile child’s body to settle scores, of whatever nature, is revolting and disgusting. That an entire bunch of men, and shamefully women too, tried to shield the accused, is shocking. In 2012, and after Nirbhaya’s rape, at an international event in Switzerland that had journalists from 140-odd countries, I had to face many bullets such as “what is wrong with Indian men?”, or “are women really safe in India?”

While the stunned brain grapples with questions on how low we have sunk as a society, and if there is something deeply wrong with the way we bring up our sons, the heart knows that Indian women are special in so many ways — bright, vibrant, passionate, energetic... just like women elsewhere in the world. Or else the seniormost RI leadership would not have been relentless

in its pursuit of getting qualified women into Rotary. Every incoming RI President that I have interviewed, including Barry Rassin, has said in no uncertain terms that Rotary has no future worth the name without setting right its skewed gender ratio... which is barely 22 per cent for women. In India, it is half that figure, and Rotary leadership in India is working hard to correct the gender imbalance. More women members will mean more meaningful projects, is the mantra. So what does this tell us? That there are enough number of amazing women out there in Indian society... women of worth and substance... and Rotarians just have to find them.

If this is true, as it indeed is, it is time that women in Indian society take the onus upon themselves to instill in their daughters, and much more, their sons, that a daughter is much more than a mere body that has to be embellished with fancy clothes or jewellery. That she is as valuable, if not more, as a son and has to be treated so. She deserves neither to be killed in the womb nor considered an unwanted “burden” on the parents, to be “married off” (gosh, how I hate these two words!) at the first opportunity. Of course things are changing, but not fast enough. But Indian women, especially the young, are angry and are expressing their outrage every time a gruesome rape happens. Fortunately, many Indian men feel the same way. We women need to lead the way to shout from rooftops that rape is unacceptable, and we will not tolerate it and demand justice every time it happens. Let’s not depend on the empty promises of our politicians or law keepers to protect our daughters/sisters/mothers from this heinous crime. So let’s harness the power of Durga and Shakti.

Rasheeda Bhagat



A vision that unites us

Dear Fellow Rotarians,

Rotary is a massive, and massively complex, organisation. We have 1.2 million members in 35,633 clubs in nearly every country of the world. Hundreds of thousands of participants are involved in Rotary programmes such as Rotaract, Interact, Youth Exchange, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, Rotary Community Corps, Rotary Peace Centres, and a host of local and Foundation-supported projects and programmes at the national, district, and local levels. The name of Rotary is attached to countless projects every year, from blood banks to food banks, school sanitation to polio eradication. One hundred thirteen years after the first Rotary club was founded, Rotary service reaches literally around the globe.

What that service looks like on a daily and weekly basis can vary enormously by region, country and club. Each club has its own history, priorities and identity. It follows that the identity of Rotarians, and the purpose each Rotarian sees in his or her service, similarly has a great deal of variation. There's nothing wrong with that, as Rotary is by design a decentralised organisation, intended to enable each Rotarian and each Rotary club to serve in the ways that suit them best.

Yet the diversity that makes us so strong can also pose challenges to our identity as an organisation. It is no surprise that many people who have heard of Rotary still have little idea of what Rotary does, how we are organised, or why we exist at all. Even within Rotary, many members have an incomplete understanding of our larger organisation, our goals, or the scope and breadth of our programmes. These challenges have significant implications, not only for our ability to serve most effectively, but also for the public image that is so essential to our ability to build our membership, partnerships and service.

Several years ago, Rotary launched a serious effort across the organisation to address these issues, developing tools to strengthen our visual and brand identity. Today, we are using those tools to develop our People of Action public image campaign, which showcases the ability that Rotary grants each of us to make a difference in our communities and beyond. Last June, your Rotary International Board of Directors voted to adopt a new vision statement, reflecting our identity and the single purpose that unites the diversity of our work.

Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change — across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.

Wherever we live, whatever language we speak, whatever work our clubs are involved in, our vision is the same. We all see a world that could be better and that we can help to make better. We are here because Rotary gives us the opportunity to build the world we want to see — to unite and take action through *Rotary: Making a Difference*.



Ian H S Riseley
President, Rotary International

Message from the RI Director



Youth Power

Dear Rotarians,

“The power of youth is common wealth for the entire world. The faces of young people are the faces of our past, our present and our future. No other age group matches the power, idealism, enthusiasm and courage of our young people,” said Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi.

This year marks 50 years since the founding of the first Rotaract club chartered on March 13, 1968. The origins go back in time. Much earlier in 1935, Paul Harris engaged with a youth organisation based on Rotary principles in Australia. In the 1950s many youth clubs were sponsored by Rotary clubs under various names. These included the “Paul Harris Circles” in Europe and the “Rotors” clubs created in some American Universities. By 1965, these organisations experienced significant growth — in part due to the Interact programme created by Rotary International in 1962. Many Interactors, having reached the age limit of that programme, were starting new clubs called ‘Senior Interact’. The new programme’s name, Rotaract, was created by Rotary International and its aim was “to develop leadership and responsible citizenship through service to the community.”

Rotary encourages young leaders to take responsibility for their own learning on leadership skills and commitment to serve the community. This involvement helps them grow their leadership, planning and organisational skills, helping them develop a sense of responsibility and engendering in them a positive outlook. Positive leadership opportunities support responsible transition

into adulthood and promotes social and emotional well-being. In short, today’s youth will be the next generation of leaders.

Rotaractors are the key members of the Rotary family who work in tandem with Rotarians as true “partners in service”. Explaining leadership to young people is not easy and there is little literature to learn from. So it’s important for our organisations such as Interact and Rotaract to develop and promote leadership skills in young people. Rotary strongly believes that leadership is about learning to lead.

Rotary clubs can support Rotaract by helping them to promote membership through their business associates, community groups, neighbours and their own families.

Let us celebrate this year by encouraging youth and providing support to Rotary to reach the six focus areas for the benefit of the community. Clubs can join together to plan and promote projects to highlight the golden jubilee of Rotaract.

It is high time to reconnect and rope in Rotaract alumni to your clubs and strengthen your membership base. Rotary truly believes in the power of youth to transform the world. Rotary can achieve its dream of serving the world if every Rotarian contributes to the best of his or her ability in supporting programmes for the youth. Youth is wholly experimental and with the full utilisation of their talent and capabilities, Rotary will become stronger and more meaningful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Basker'.

C Basker
Director, Rotary International

Message from the Foundation Chair



Invite Rotaractors to join a Rotary club

Fifty per cent of the world's population is under age 30. So it is important that we ask: What do young people want? Of course, every generation must ask this question. But it is also an important question for Rotary today, because our clubs must evolve if we are to best serve communities that, themselves, are evolving and changing all the time.

The World Economic Forum's recent Global Shapers Survey of more than 30,000 people under 30 from 186 countries offers some useful insights.

A majority of the respondents view climate change and conflict as the most critical issues we face. They also value a "start-up ecosystem and entrepreneurship" as vital to youth empowerment. However, they are less optimistic about having their voices heard. Over half the survey respondents do not think "young people's views" are considered before important decisions are made in their countries. (Some good news: During my travels to several dozen countries this year, many Rotaractors shared that they believe their voices are being heard by Rotary leaders!)

It is clear that young people want to make a difference on the issues that matter to our world and their communities. Above all, they want to

see results when they commit to a project. A good example is the father-and-son team of Tulsi and Anil Maharjan, members of the Rotary Club of Branchburg Township, New Jersey. With the help of grants from our Foundation, Tulsi and Anil are implementing microcredit, scholarship and homebuilding projects in Nepal to help survivors of the 2015 earthquake.

Thanks to changes made at the 2016 Council on Legislation, clubs now have flexibility to operate as they think best. This means a broader selection of club models in terms of how meetings take place.

By embracing this flexibility, we can create more examples like Anil — a former e-club member who joined his father's Rotary club. Further, I urge you to personally encourage Rotaractors to take advantage of the option now available to join a Rotary club while they are still members of Rotaract. And help them learn how our Foundation can help them achieve their dreams of doing good in the world!

By taking action today, we can pave the way for more than 200,000 of Rotary's future leaders to leave their own legacy of making a real difference for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul A. Netzel".

Paul A Netzel
Foundation Trustee Chair

How can we better engage youth in Rotary? I want to hear your thoughts. Email me at paul.netzel@rotary.org



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Where schoolchildren no longer sit on floor

Rasheeda Bhagat

It is not Delhi, Mumbai or Chennai, but just the small town of Sonkatch in a relatively underdeveloped State of Madhya Pradesh with a population of barely 20,000.

It is only a tehsil and not a district headquarter. A small but extremely vibrant Rotary Club of Sonkatch (D 3040), with just 40 members, has supplied furniture — welded benches and desks — to a whopping number

of 1,000 schools in the region. The total furniture project cost — ₹3 crore!

“You go to any school in this region and its surroundings and the chances are that the furniture



has been given by Rotary,” says PDG S N Lathi, a member of this club.

Both he and Dr Zamin Hussain, the present DG, give me a touching and ceremonial welcome in the tiny place, about 75 km from Indore, and we set off to see the school furniture. Our first stop is the government higher secondary school in Sonkatch, where over 1,000 students, both boys and girls, study.

The children immediately recognise the Rotarians, and greet us with huge smiles. I interact with the boys and girls from Classes 7 and 8 and their dreams are the same as



Dinesh Rathore

Rotarians from D 1880, Germany, laying the foundation stone for a toilet block in Chayanmaina village. DG Zamin Hussain (fourth from left) is also in the picture.

those of children of their age anywhere in India... to become teachers, doctors, engineers. An odd girl wants to become a *fauji* (soldier), another a pilot and so on.

Dr Hussain says proudly, “I studied in this school from Class 6 to 11. In those days everybody studied in government schools... the children of top officers, politicians,

businessmen and ordinary people. I must say I got very good education.” That he became a doctor after that, is testimonial enough.

Former president of the club, Sowbhag Singh Thakur, recalls a touching story in one particular school where they had given the first set of furniture. “Initially the benches could not accommodate all the children. So to sit on a bench, the children used to come

to school much earlier... as early as 6.30 a.m for classes that begin at 7.30 a.m!"

The furniture here has been given in 2012–13. So what difference has this Rotary project made, I ask the class teacher Mahesh Samaria. "A very big difference," he says. "Earlier the children found it very laborious to sit on the ground and take down their notes. Now they don't feel so tired and are very comfortable."

In many schools, the Rotarians have also put up water tanks and the one I see in a school looks almost new, even though it was put up in 2002.

So what more do they want from Rotary? Pat comes the answer from the teacher: "We need a water cooler; actually two. We have a borewell and a water tank and good water supply, but in summer the water is so hot. Water coolers will make the children very happy."



Dinesh Rathore, an RCC member and photographer, in front of a Rotary toilet.

A school sans electricity

I am both saddened and shocked to know that the government middle school in Chayanmaina village, about 100-odd km from Indore, has no electricity. One of the teachers, Nandalal Rathore, says he would love to ask Rotarians from RC Sonkatch to give them computers. "I am sure they will accept our request, but then since we don't have power supply, we won't be able to use Internet. As I have a laptop, I charge it at home and give the students some idea of the wonders that exist on the Internet."

That this school has no electricity is surprising given that Rotary has virtually adopted the village and built toilets in every home. All the children nod their heads in affirmation when asked about electricity in their homes.

This is strange; how can all homes in the village have electricity and not a government school? Answers PDG Lathi, "*Bill ka chakkar hei...* who will pay the electricity charges." To my question why RC Sonkatch can't do this, DG Zamin Hussain, a member of this club, says that already several Rotary clubs in the district do pay the electricity bills of several schools. "If the school gets a pass percentage of 60 to 70 per cent, our club can think of doing this as an incentive," he agrees.

Also, he adds, "There are so many such schools without electricity in our district. I have some donors, and will ask them if they can pay the electricity bills. For each school, the amount will be only around ₹500."

But how do the children manage to sit inside the scorching room in the summer, because the classrooms have fans but without a power connection, they are useless, I ask. "We go out and sit in the open for our lessons," says Durga, a Class 8 student. But then that means back to the floor once again, despite the "school furniture" given by Rotary! And that is such a pity!

At the next school too, which is an all-girls school, the same request comes for water coolers. In this school there are 800 girls and DG Hussain says that Rotarians have distributed sanitary napkins and have also put up vending machines where a sanitary pad is dispensed at ₹5 a piece. Incinerators have also been provided for

hygienic disposal of soiled napkins.

It feels really great to learn from Anil Tiwari, a class teacher, that though the girls come from disadvantaged families, many of them go for higher education. "They really work hard and we get 70 to 80 per cent pass in higher secondary exams. From that group, about 60 per cent go



Rtn Dave Diffendal from RC Cleveland, USA, when he visited the computer training centre at Chayanmaina village.

to college, while around 40 per cent get married as this is a semi-rural area and the parents are always in a hurry.” He proudly talks about one student who went to IIT Kharagpur and got a ₹15 lakh annual package.

As we drive on to other places, a wall poster catches the eye: *Beti hei toh kal hei*. (Your tomorrow depends on girls.) Who can deny that?

So what is the secret behind a small club with barely 40 members in a semi-rural part of India doing not only a financially impressive, but also a sustainable project, long before TRF started using the sustainability

mantra, I ask DG Hussain. “Ma’am it is very simple,” he responds. “First of all, there is no politics in our club. And we always keep our partners fully informed about the project and how their money is being spent by giving them prompt and detailed accounts. We invite them to come and see for themselves how judiciously we have used their money. Actually, we often send them the list of schools where we have put up furniture, and ask them to choose which school they would like to visit, so there is transparency.”

The club has done several TRF matching grants and is now

executing a global grant. He himself joined the club in 1988 and was its president for two consecutive years (1998–2000).

But surely this is not common, and is it allowed? “Generally it is not allowed, but it was in that year, because I had started many projects and

my club members insisted that I should continue.”

On how the furniture project started, Hussain says, “About 20 years ago, our club decided that since most of the government schools don’t have furniture (desks and benches), the children sat on the floor and got two

In one school, the furniture we gave could not accommodate all the children. So to sit on a bench, the children used to come to school much earlier... as early as 6.30 am for classes that begin at 7.30 am.

Sowbhag Singh Thakur
Past President, RC Sonkatch



DG Zamin Hussain, his spouse Rashida and PDG SN Lathi with Rotarians of RC Sonkatch at a beneficiary school site.

major health problems. One, they had to bend down to write and that bent their spines; and two, the distance between the eye and the book, which should be about 25 cm, could not be maintained and that put a lot of pressure on their eyes and was bound to affect their vision.”

Asked why his Rotary club doesn’t give benches and desks made from wood or other material, rather than steel, and that too in sets which

are welded together, he says that is for durability. Each set costs ₹2,000; “we have got a very good vendor and have bargained hard with him to maintain this price and he obliges because he knows the furniture is for the children from government schools.”

And there is a good reason for welding the benches to the desks; “we make it into one unit because very often for school or even government events, they take away the

benches or chairs, and who knows if they would come back or not! This unit is so big that nobody will carry it! And it is also too heavy for children to move or throw it around.”

I note that care is taken to ensure that the welding is done smoothly and there are no rough edges or sharp corners that would hurt the children. In one school I see benches that date back to 1999–2000 and they are in good shape; the inscription is intact and says the project

was done with a TRF grant, jointly with RC Cleveland, D 6630, US; RC Milano, D 2040, Italy; and RC Sonkatch, D 3040.

The governor explains that actually their club was earlier doing several “very small projects and we were not aware of the matching grants available from TRF for a couple of years. We got our first grant in 1978 when we made furniture for a *balwadi*.”

The project picked up steam from 1998 and till date these Rotarians have reached out to 1,000 schools with different grants and the project cost has crossed ₹3 crore. Hussain adds, “We have done over 20 grants, and one global grant of ₹40 lakh is currently on.” Interestingly, so earnestly have these Rotarians been working that the “Sonkatch block is totally saturated, and we are now providing furniture to other schools in Madhya Pradesh through other Rotary clubs. This is our signature project and in this area Rotary is known for its school furniture.”

Now, he adds, if any club in D 3040 wants to give furniture to a school, “we tell them you contribute only ₹25,000 to TRF and we will give the furniture free of cost to that school.”

Another reason why this project is continuing and has gathered strength is that “our partners have a lot of faith in us because we constantly share



information and accounts with them on the progress of the project and how the money was spent. There is transparency, accountability and credibility, and when our foreign partners, be it from Italy, US, or Germany — the present RI Director Peter Iblher from the Rotary Club of Nürnberg-Reichswald, Germany, has also visited a project — come, we make them inaugurate the project, give them a great reception with garlands,

rose petals, drums etc. They see what has been done and report to their partners,” says the DG.

PDG Lathi recalls that once when a Rotarian from Italy came to see their furniture project “we gave him such a royal and colourful welcome with a *safa*, garlands, etc, that when he described it to his club members they wouldn’t believe him. So next time he came with 20 of them and we gave them the same welcome. They

were thrilled and became our permanent partners.”

We next drive to the village Chayanmaina, which these Rotarians have virtually adopted and transformed with help from enthusiastic members of the RCC (Rotary Community Corps) such as Dinesh Rathore, all of 30, who goes into raptures when he talks about Rotary. The young man runs a computer coaching centre, and doubles up as a photographer at Rotary events, by which he makes his livelihood.

Lathi points to at least three schools on the route that have “Rotary furniture. In the interior parts of this block, *jaha government school hei waha Rotary zinda hei* (where there is a government school,

Rotary is alive there). From Sonkatch to Chayanmaina village, you will find five schools with our furniture. Even smaller places with 20 to 50 families where there are schools, we have given furniture as we don’t want any child to sit on the floor in school,” he says proudly.

Hussain adds, “The district (Dewas) education officer has told all the schools to apply to our Rotary club for furniture.” Lathi adds, “Locals politicians, even MPs and MLAs, call us to say: We’ve made the announcement that Rotary will provide the school furniture so please send so many sets to such and such school!”

Hussain recalls that when he was president in

The Sonkatch block is totally saturated, and we’re now giving furniture to other schools in Madhya Pradesh through other Rotary clubs. This is our signature project and in this area Rotary is known for its school furniture.

DG **Zamin Hussain**

1998, TRF had announced a Children's Opportunity Grant, and applications were invited from clubs. "Ours was the only club in the district to send the application promptly and we sought funds to provide books and uniforms to 1,200 students. But we negotiated with the vendor and told him bluntly that nobody needs any commission but give us a good price; we managed to accommodate 2,100 children!"

Lathi says he vividly remembers that particular project because "there are lots of *adivasis* (tribals) in this area. And in Bagli, about 60 km from here, when we gave the children new uniforms, the mother of one child had tears in her eyes and told us: My child has worn new clothes for the first time in his life."

At Chayanmaina, the Rotarians once again get a warm welcome. They have been working here since the 1990s; in this area, says Hussain, "under the 3H grant, we did 200 toilets. The GoI is now talking about the need for toilets but long ago we ensured that in this village every home has a toilet.



And each one is a Rotary toilet, complete with the wheel!"

It is a typical Indian village with a population of barely 2,000; the streets are narrow and dusty and our SUV struggles to negotiate them. An elderly man is having a siesta on the *khatiya* under a tree; cow dung cakes are drying, a tractor is parked a little distance from the school and along with a couple of motorised two wheelers, makes up the vehicle count of the village. "This is the real India and where Rotary is needed the most," says Lathi.

The homes are part thatch and part concrete, but each of them has a toilet. Dinesh Rathore points

to the Rotary wheel that is inbuilt into every toilet, and Lathi says, "We made 180 toilets in 2011, and each one cost us around ₹16,000 in those days."

In this village we visit the Government Middle School which has 110 children. Durga Varma, the daughter of a doctor, and her friends Ranjana and Sakshi all want to become teachers. Their classmate in Class 8, Harshvardhan, wants to become an engineer, but Aayush, the son of a teacher, wants to become a policeman. Medha and Nisha both want to become doctors, and Rupali wants to join the army. It comes as a pleasant surprise to find the girls saying firmly that all of them want to go to college and complete their higher education and that they will not allow their families to force them into an early marriage!

When asked what more do they want from Rotary, class teacher Nandalal

Rathore says; "a projector. I have a laptop and I want to show the children so many interesting things from the Internet."

The final word has to go to DG Hussain. Seeing his passion and focus on the projects he has been doing for Rotary through his club, I wonder aloud how a doctor like him finds the time to do all this. Scratching his head, he smiles, "Good question. I often ask myself that... I suppose it is the passion that Rotary infuses in you."

He adds candidly: "Election is the biggest project in our district." So how did he get elected? "I was very candid and said *mei daru nahi pilaoonga* (I will not bribe you with liquor); if you think I am capable and worthy of your trust, elect me or else I don't want to become your leader."

Pictures by
Rasheeda Bhagat
Designed by
Krishnapratheesh S

In 1998, through a TRF project, when we gave the children new uniforms, the mother of one child had tears in her eyes and told us: My child has worn new clothes for the first time in his life.

PDG **S N Lathi**

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Celebrating generosity

Jaishree

Districts 3141 and 3232 hosted TRF Dinners, in honour of RIPE Barry Rassin's visit to India, and felicitated the bounteousness of Indian donors in Mumbai and Chennai.

A special thanks to all of you. Your leadership and support have helped the Foundation do so much for humanity around the world," said RI President Elect Barry Rassin, speaking at an event in Mumbai to felicitate the AKS members and major donors to TRF. RC Bombay, D 3141, hosted this special event to induct Rtn Arvind G Jolly and spouse Rashmi to the Arch Klumph Society. Titled *Naman*, it was a thanksgiving for the philanthropists of the district, said DG Prafull Sharma in his welcome address. The district

has several Major Donors and five AKS members — "still more are on the pipeline," he added.

"I am not one to ask anybody for money. I believe that if you really understand what the Foundation does with the donations you give, there is no need to ask," said Rassin. Highlighting in his address each of Rotary's core areas of focus, he reiterated: "That's what your donation does to the world and that's why I support the Foundation."

Rassin said Bill Gates passionately supports Rotary, particularly the polio

eradication programme, "because he knows that every dollar he gives us is spent appropriately to ensure that we fulfil our promise to children of the world. We have totally raised \$1.7 billion and immunised 2.5 billion children. Very soon the world will be rid of polio, all thanks to the generosity of people like you. You make it happen."

The contributions of Rotarians to TRF support peace and conflict resolution, through over 1,300 peace scholars who can make a difference in conflict-ridden areas. He related an incident about how a Peace Fellow

RIPE Barry Rassin (left) and RID C Basker (right), along with DG Prafull Sharma, felicitate AKS Member Arvind G Jolly and spouse Rashmi in Mumbai.





From L: Preeti Shah, DG Prafull Sharma, DGE (3142) Ashes Ganguly, DGE (3232) Babu Peram, PRID Ashok Mahajan, DGE (3141) Shashi Sharma, PDG Lata Subraidu, RRFC Vijay Jalan, RIDN Bharat Pandya, DGND Sunnil Mehra, District Secretary Girish Mittal and Ashok Ajmera with RIPE Barry Rassin.

from Israel, who stayed with a family in Palestine as part of his internship programme, got accepted by the family despite the initial hostility. When he left, the grandmother told him that she did not accept Israel, but he was always welcome in their home.

Rassin added that earlier that week, he had visited a few schools in Delhi where WinS has been implemented. “You should be proud of your WASH in Schools programme. Wherever I go, I use this programme as a model to encourage water and sanitation in schools. It’s not just about giving sanitation; it’s about changing behaviour.”

Referring to Rotary’s work after the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, the President Elect related how a Jeep provided to the local club through a matching grant could reduce maternal-child mortality by 50 per cent. “While the local club contributed

\$100, the Foundation supported the project with \$70,000. Of the many projects that we supported in Haiti, for nearly a million dollars, people spoke more about the jeep.”

Referring to D 3141’s track record of being one of the top contributors with \$1.2 million to TRF, he urged the incoming governor Shashikumar Sharma to set the bar at \$7 million.

Open up your wallets. Not
because it’s your goal or you
need to make a donation, but
because we need your help.
People out there need you.

“I am confident you will reach it,” he said. To the Rotarians he added, “Open up your wallets. Not because it’s your goal or you need to make a donation, but because we need your help. People out there need you.”

RI Director C Basker appreciated the fact that this was the first time an AKS induction ceremony was being held outside Evanston. “It will showcase the generosity of our Rotarians and inspire many more people,” he said. He highlighted Indian Rotarians’ philanthropic mindset which has put India in the second position in TRF giving. “We are No 1 in giving Major Gifts, No 2 in Endowment and No 3 in AKS giving. There are 800 AKS members world over, and it is because of people like them the world is a better place today”. He urged the incoming presidents to impress upon non Rotarians about the good work of TRF and



From L: DG R Srinivasan, EMGA Sam Patibandla, RIDN Floyd Lancia, RID C Basker, RIPE Barry Rassin. PRID P T Prabhakar, RPIC Rajadurai Michael and PDG ISAK Nazar.

Rotary so that they may channelise their donations to the organisation.

Rassin and Basker presented the AKS certificate to Rtn Arvind Jolly and his spouse Rashmi. Jolly is a member of RC Bombay since 1982, while Rashmi is Honorary Consul General of the Czech Republic for Maharashtra and Goa. “I wanted to stay anonymous and keep contributing to the Foundation, but if my action can be an inspiration, then I’m happy to lead by example,” said Jolly in his acceptance speech. He recalled how Rashmi set the trend by attending club meetings. “Today it is nothing new. But back then, women were not welcome. We’ve come a long way since then. Now women are more proactive than us,” he added.

PRID Ashok Mahajan said Rotarians and non Rotarians had been supporting the Foundation with small or large contributions in the confidence that the

Foundation was in capable and trustworthy hands. This trust should become a bigger force. In spite of recessions, wars, conflicts and calamities, TRF is growing. “There are many Rotarians who do not have a clear understanding of the specific programmes and projects sponsored by the Foundation, yet they contribute because they understand that the Foundation is accomplishing good in the world.”

RIDN Bharat Pandya, DGN Harjit Singh Talwar, TRF Manager from RISAO Shakuntala Raha, RRFC Vijay Jalan, past governors and other AKS members and Major Donors were also present. Preeti Shah of RC Mumbai Downtown Sealand was the convener. DGE Prafull Sharma proposed the vote of thanks.

Over to Chennai

Next, Rassin and Basker attended a TRF dinner in Chennai to felicitate

donors from Districts 3000, 3231 and 3232. RIDN Floyd Lancia and spouse Betty from Atlanta were also present.

DG R Srinivasan welcomed the delegates and DRFC Sagar highlighted the district’s service projects. With \$750,000 in its kitty, D 3232 is well on its way to meet the \$1 million target, he said.

Rassin and Basker felicitated the AKS members and Major Donors. While DGND Muthu Palaniappan joined the AKS league, PDG J B Kamdar and spouse Marlene are preparing to step into the second level — the Chair Circle — having made a total contribution of \$410,000 so far, PDG Raja Seenivasan added another \$10,000 to his earlier donation of \$281,000. PDG ISAK Nazar became a second level Major Donor, and Rtn Ambalavanan of RC Madras Midtown, a Major Donor Level III.



Because of your good work people could get a comprehensive blood profile for just \$11. Back in my country, the same would cost \$400–500.

Rassin said he was impressed by the participation and passion of the Rotarians across the four cities — Delhi, Jaipur, Mumbai and Chennai — that he visited during his week-long programme in India. He appreciated the “incredible job” that Indian Rotarians have done in polio eradication. “When the world thought that your country will be the last to eradicate polio, you proved them all wrong. Thank you for the marvellous work you all have

done to make this country polio-free. From a high-receiving country, you’ve evolved into a top-giving country. Congratulations.”

Referring to his visit to the VHS Hospital earlier in the day, he said that he was amazed with the work Rotary has done there through its 3H grant. “Because of your good work people can get a comprehensive blood profile for just \$11. In my country, it costs \$400–500.”

He was touched when a 12-year-old girl who was undergoing transfusion at the VHS Blood Bank, got up from the bed and “with a big smile, shook hands with me. She goes to the blood bank every four weeks for transfusion and Rotary provided her, and 20 such people every day, that facility. This touches you. All this can be done because you give to the Foundation.”

On how TRF disburses funds to the districts, Rassin explained that 50 per cent of \$100,000 donated to TRF comes back to the district. “I don’t know of

any other charity that gives back 50 per cent of my donation and says you spend it three years later on projects of your choice. And to top it, we have the global grants to help us as well. Is there any other organisation that does that? No. That makes us unique.”

Director Basker appreciated D 3232 for focusing on health and treatment through most of the global grant projects and said that Chennai is a major hub for medical treatment for people from various parts of the country. “It’s surprising to note that a majority of passengers travelling to Chennai from the North East come here to avail medical help and Rotary is supporting most of these hospitals with sophisticated life-saving equipment. Club presidents should highlight such instances to your acquaintances to inspire them to contribute to the Foundation,” he said. Also, every member must donate at least \$100 to TRF, he added.

Pictures by Jaishree

Both Rotary and writing are his passion

Rasheeda Bhagat

He is not only a committed and passionate Rotarian but an avid writer as well, having under his belt nearly 50 published books, ranging from his maiden work with the intriguing title *A handbook for the housewife*, published by Orient Paperbacks way back in 1972.

Other books followed in quick succession, with PDG (District 3080) Prem Bhalla's writing journey meandering around a myriad of themes ranging from motivational book series such as "way to..." and "how to succeed in..." as also one on cookery, to his present deep interest in writing on religious themes.

PDG Prem Bhalla with students at a Garhwal school.



To the question why a handbook for housewives, which by the way, “did very well”, he says, “The main reason was that I saw a lot of highly educated women, including within our own family, who were very good in academics but needed some guidance on how to run the house, take care of the children, the husband and maintain good relations with the in-laws, who are an important part of the family in Indian homes. I thought then, and still think now, that a housekeeper’s work is endless. And she needs to be smart in a lot of things to make the home run smoothly.” Interestingly, the first chapter is on happiness and it asserts that every woman has the right to be happy.

Once he wrote this book, and it became successful, many people asked why not a handbook for men, “so I wrote one for men — *A handbook for the progressive man*”. Next came *A handbook for young people* published by Jaico Books, Bombay, followed by the one titled *A complete guide to careers*.

Ask Bhalla from where he gets the inspiration or energy to write so many books, and in a flash he connects it with his 56 years in Rotary. “Rotary has played a great part in inspiring me to write, as in Rotary we were always providing service and I thought giving knowledge and writing for young people is also service.”

Rotary journey begins

Bhalla is the only surviving founding member of RC Haridwar, which was started in 1962. He was only 26 years old, and joined as “I thought it was a good opportunity to serve and a great platform to learn. Frankly, I think I’ve learnt more from Rotary than I could have from any college or university.”

His is truly what can be called a “Rotary family”; both he and his father were founding members of RC Haridwar, with his father being the founding president. His son too imbibed the passion for Rotary and is a founder member of RC Ranipur. “Earlier he was a Rotaractor; they invited him to become a Rotarian and he is very active in Rotary. He in turn



I have learnt more from Rotary
than I could have from any
college or university.

passed on the passion for Rotary to his children,” he adds.

Bhalla became club president at 34 and district governor at 42. Always an active and passionate Rotarian, he has played a very active and crucial role in developing the Him Jyoti School for disadvantaged girls that was started by Past RI Director Sudarshan Agarwal into a fine institution. “I worked there since the beginning and we did three TRF grants totalling some ₹62 lakh, which included giving furniture for the school, the dining hall, etc, getting a bus and a van and putting up a solar system for heating water.”

He served for nine years as treasurer of the trust that runs the school. “Since inception, all our girls have passed out in the first division, with 8 to 10 of them scoring above 90 per cent every year.”

Another mega project where his passion, experience and hard work helped is in the rebuilding of schools in the devastated areas of the Garhwal Himalayas after the 2013 flash floods in Kedarnath. “We built 32 schools there and Yash (Past RI Director Y P Das) and I were totally involved; I dealt with the contractors, suppliers and oversaw the construction, along with him.”

On his long association with PDG Bhalla, Past RI President Rajendra Saboo recalls that both of them were presidents of their clubs during the same year (1970–71) “under the leadership of the great district governor Som Dhingra. My journey with Prem (Bhalla) has continued for all these years and I respect him for his total dedication to Rotary and serving humanity, as much as for his flair for writing. He has always upheld Rotary’s strong ethics and I have tremendous regard for his value-based life journey with his very supporting wife Uma.”

Writing on Hinduism

Returning to Bhalla the writer, he writes only in English, though some of his books have been translated and are available on Flipkart and Amazon.



PDG Prem Bhalla with PRID Y P Das at a school site in the Garhwal Himalayas.

“The book on housewives was sponsored by the Government of India and is there in all government libraries,” he adds.

Over the years and after he had done a couple of series on *7 steps to success*; time management; effective communications, leadership, team building, better relationships, etc, his foray into spiritual and religious writing began, resulting in books on Hinduism.

It all happened when after a break, he resumed his writing in 2003, and did a series of books for Pustak Mahal, New Delhi, including *The portrait of a Complete Man* and *The book of Etiquette and Manners*.

With his background being from Haridwar, this publisher was keen that Bhalla should write some books on



Past RI President Carl Stenhammer with senior Rotary leaders from India. (From right: PRIP Rajendra K Saboo, PRID Sudarshan Agarwal, and PRID Y P Das). PDG Prem Bhalla can be seen standing behind the dignitaries.

Hinduism. But he was initially reluctant because “of lack of sufficient knowledge on the subject”. One fine evening, the Editor sent him some material on Hinduism in Hindi and requested him to write a book in English.

But there was a hurdle; “in 1947, I was in Class 5 when India became independent, and prior to that we used to study Urdu, and not Hindi, in our schools, along with English. So only from Class 5 to 10, I started learning Hindi but my knowledge of Hindi was rather dismal.” His lack of knowledge in Hindi held him back but she requested him to at least give it a try.

So like a true warrior he ploughed on, also taking it as a signal from god and within six months put together the book *Hindu Rites, Rituals, Customs*

and *Traditions*, “which has become a real money spinner for the publisher!” First published in 2006, it has had several reprints and multiple editions and is selling across the world. “The publisher has really made it big on this book, which has sold tens of thousands of copies and has become a reference point on Hinduism for many people,” says Bhalla.

This was a trigger that led to a few more books on Hinduism; “and I thought this was also service... to bring knowledge that is available in Hindi to English readers”.

Translating the Mahabharat

His writing journey continues; at present he is translating the *Mahabharat* and “trying to highlight those aspects

of the epic that provide knowledge. I believe the *Mahabharat* is a complete book on living well and on hope. I am weaving in several stories so that it makes for easy reading and easier grasp of the message in each story.”

Bhalla is halfway through this venture, and hopes to complete it in a “year’s time.” On advice to aspiring writers and the discipline required to churn out nearly 50 books, Bhalla says he has made it a point to write about 500 words a day and most of the time he’s followed this routine religiously. But, he hastens to add, “writing is only a spare time activity for me. I have to take care of my work in Rotary and then my own work in farming. Basically I am a farmer, and get my bread from there.”



At the International Assembly in April 1978 at Boca Raton with the then incoming RI President Clem Renouf (left).

Originally, his family held a very big farm but “after the two land ceilings that I have seen in my lifetime which have been tortuous for people like me, we had to dispose of land and divide it.” He is now left with a 15-acre farm where he grows rice, wheat and has a small mango orchard too. As the land is bang on the main road from Rishikesh to Haridwar, he has plans to convert a part of it into facility for pilgrims.

Meanwhile, even after 55 years, Bhalla’s involvement and active participation in Rotary and its projects continues. For instance, after building

the 32 schools in Rudraprayag, “we still had some money left and I suggested to Yash (Das) that let’s do up a Public Health Centre (PHC) for the government in Phata, the place through which all the pilgrims to Kedarnath pass and from where a 7-minute helicopter ride is available to Kedarnath.” This PHC was functioning from a totally run down building; “we didn’t build a new building but fortified it with a steel structure and ensured it will remain good for use for another 25 years. About 32 deliveries are done in this centre every month. We spent

I am a very disciplined eater
and even if the best of dishes
are placed before me, I take
just one helping and stop.

₹12.5 lakh on this as we thought let’s leave one more mark of Rotary in the area where we did so much work after the 2013 devastation.”

A disciplined eater

On the secret behind his sprightly and trim frame, the PDG says categorically: “Let me tell you that I have never done any yoga in my life or gone for morning walks, but I have been a farmer all my life. Whenever I am at the farm, I walk all over the place. And if I have to go to the bank or nearby places, I don’t take my car and prefer to walk, as you also meet people when you walk.”

Another secret is that he is very disciplined about his meals. “I have always eaten on time and eaten right, and that has kept me going all this time. Even if the best of dishes are placed before me, I will take just one helping and then stop. A very disciplined eater, I prefer to under-eat rather than overeat.” He adds that normally food is a weakness with most people, as he sees it in most of his friends. “But with my disciplined eating I’ve been able to maintain my weight between 65 to 70 kg!”

While concluding the interview, I ask him for some good pictures, and get a response that could have knocked me down with a feather. Bhalla says even though he is a good photographer himself, “I have very few pictures of myself. When I was DG, for all the 12 issues of GML, you will not find any pictures of mine or my wife. Because I’ve always believed that people want to see their pictures and not yours!”

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

District Wise TRF Contributions as on March 2018

(in US Dollars)

District Number	APF	PolioPlus	Other Restricted	Endowment Fund	Total Contributions	EREY Donors (in numbers)	EREY %
India							
2981	32,710	4,598	0	0	37,307	186	4.3%
2982	53,630	720	2,725	0	57,075	347	12.8%
3000	73,402	7,267	288,541	29,154	398,363	1947	38.5%
3011	79,968	414	89,068	15,000	184,450	217	7.1%
3012	39,251	6,693	112,590	3,016	161,549	213	6.1%
3020	37,923	18,914	49,950	42,478	149,266	87	2.0%
3030	923	22,724	1,050	0	24,697	3	0.1%
3040	8,585	15	47,538	0	56,138	35	1.6%
3053	7,883	78	22,129	0	30,090	22	0.8%
3054	6,978	203	275,317	1,000	283,499	24	0.4%
3060	100,531	1,365	39,133	22,492	163,520	815	21.4%
3070	36,104	198	25,794	789	62,886	188	6.3%
3080	104,713	15,301	21,078	92	141,185	174	5.3%
3090	608	0	2,500	0	3,108	3	0.1%
3100*	12,229	0	0	0	12,229	48	3.0%
3110	64,752	2,848	60,631	0	128,231	163	4.2%
3120	81,367	508	50,000	0	131,875	111	3.8%
3131	317,748	103	350,951	76,297	745,099	990	19.4%
3132	61,742	1,306	7,875	16,000	86,923	171	3.9%
3141	516,762	21,267	620,191	97,247	1,255,467	990	19.4%
3142	263,599	4,315	350	(1,000)	267,264	583	21.6%
3150	55,436	12,557	9,050	62,000	139,043	314	8.8%
3160	122,213	1,000	0	8,338	131,552	161	6.9%
3170	33,333	7,904	20,073	0	61,310	308	5.8%
3181	81,102	1,091	0	78	82,271	537	17.8%
3182	76,181	0	36,263	0	112,443	610	19.4%
3190	85,140	18,371	105,539	24,708	233,758	77	1.5%
3201	125,508	10,599	206,098	4,938	347,143	184	3.6%
3202	43,837	7,719	0	2,773	54,329	102	2.1%
3211	81,739	0	0	53,846	135,585	96	2.2%
3212	243,343	35,120	32,500	2,000	312,963	537	14.5%
3231	119,110	7,692	121,250	30,914	278,966	81	3.2%
3232	208,845	33,795	104,882	600	348,122	239	6.5%
3240	76,275	1,692	0	8,367	86,334	289	9.9%
3250	50,941	100	8,723	10,000	69,764	177	5.0%
3261	38,670	100	13,615	0	52,386	128	5.5%
3262	72,482	227	0	0	72,709	250	7.6%
3291	52,761	25,475	58,789	7,740	144,765	51	1.3%
India Total	3,468,326	272,278	2,784,193	518,869	7,043,666	11,458	8.0%
3220 Sri Lanka	106,475	10,293	6,840	1,217	124,826	508	26.7%
3271 Pakistan	39,401	70,699	2,100	0	112,199	84	5.9%
3272 Pakistan	16,677	1,595	0	1,000	19,272	52	1.9%
3281 Bangladesh	376,356	14,055	208,628	85,543	684,582	597	10.6%
3282 Bangladesh	93,382	1,816	0	1,000	96,197	415	11.0%
3292 Nepal	128,019	21,764	250,918	0	400,701	573	13.1%
South Asia Total	4,228,635	392,499	3,252,680	607,629	8,481,443	13,687	8.0%
World Total	86,872,326	26,093,399	12,772,623	18,182,140	143,920,488		

* Non-districted

Source: RI South Asia Office

Thank you for what you do: **Barry Rassin**

Kiran Zehra



The drums and *Nadaswaram* played on as incoming presidents and Rotarians of D 3231, dressed in grey and white suits, with their spouses in *pattu* sarees, stood in the corridor of the hall to extend a traditional welcome to RIPE Barry Rassin and RI Director C Basker. This was Rassin's "sixth PETS session in India and 74th PETS worldwide in six weeks but his enthusiasm makes me wonder if this is the first PETS he is addressing. Barry is here because he wants to boost your (president-elects) confidence and ensure that the Rotary year 2018–19 will be executed efficiently," said Basker.

An AV presentation chronicled the journey of the district after it was bifurcated last year, followed by highlights of the TRF Contribution Commitment session. "The Presidents of 2018–19 have committed a contribution \$4 million, 120 major donors and eight AKS members next year," said DG Jawarilal Jain, amidst loud applause.

Happy to have the incoming RI President in their midst, the incoming DG C R Chandra Bob said, "Ours is a

new district and as most of our clubs are in small towns and villages, our priority for 2018–19 is to strengthen our clubs." He also wants to increase the Rotaract clubs in the region from 55 to 100.

Basker reminded the incoming presidents that the best quality of a leader was to listen to his members, "giving each of them a chance to express themselves." He said he was constantly getting different answers to the question "What is Rotary?", and added, "we should all be able to define Rotary in the same way. The next time

when you are asked, please give this answer: Rotary is bringing leaders together to exchange ideas and take action to improve the community."

Appreciating DG Jain for his perseverance, the RID added that as his \$2 million TRF target came from "not Delhi or Mumbai", but a region that is semi-rural, "it has stunned many Rotarians in India." He added that the next 52 weeks will be transformational for the presidents, and urged them to make the best use of this opportunity. "Listen, learn and polish your skills. You should be recognised within your community as a good leader."

Applause filled the room as RIPE Rassin greeted the presidents with a "Vanakkam." He asked them to be enthusiastic "as enthusiasm is contagious and your members will want to do more." In the first year of the newly formed district "you want to give the foundation \$4 million. That is audacious but, achievable. We have to be audacious. Good luck to you."

Rassin asked the assembled Rotarians to reflect on why Rotarians were leaving Rotary, and if "we are doing something wrong". The same question

We have to share pictures of
the children we are helping,
the schools we are building,
the disabled we are assisting
and not about the where and
how we are meeting.

Barry Rassin
RI President Elect



RIPE Barry Rassin and RID C Basker with DG K Jawarilal Jain, DGE C R Chandra Bob, DGN Sridhar Balaraman, PDG A Sampath Kumar and club presidents and secretaries of D 3231.

should apply to less than five percent Rotaractors joining Rotary. Explaining the need to bring in “active and vibrant Rotaractors,” he said, “these young professionals are the future of Rotary and if we are calling ourselves

leaders then we should step up and ensure these Rotaractors are comfortable joining Rotary. I am glad your district plans to start 100 Rotaract clubs.”

CSR, he said, is “a great opportunity in your country, and what better

partners than Rotary for Indian companies!” He urged the presidents to take advantage of this opportunity. “I wish I could take this law to every country in the world. Then we will be able to do more service than we have ever done before.”

He added that during his year he will focus on developing leadership skills in Rotarians. “Too many people across communities think of us as a lunch club. We need to change that. We have to build a strong presence on the social media and talk about the projects we are doing. We have to share pictures of the children we are helping, the schools we are building, the disabled we are assisting and not about the where and how we are meeting.”

Recalling an incident when a small boy in a school built by Rotary in Africa thanked him, the RIPE said, “The boy thanked Rotary for his classroom, toilet and water. Today I want to take this opportunity and on behalf of the children you have helped and will never meet and on behalf of those people who rely on Rotary, I thank each of you for your contribution towards creating a better world.” ■



RIPE Barry Rassin and RID C Basker being given a traditional welcome.

A conference of colour and substance

Rasheeda Bhagat

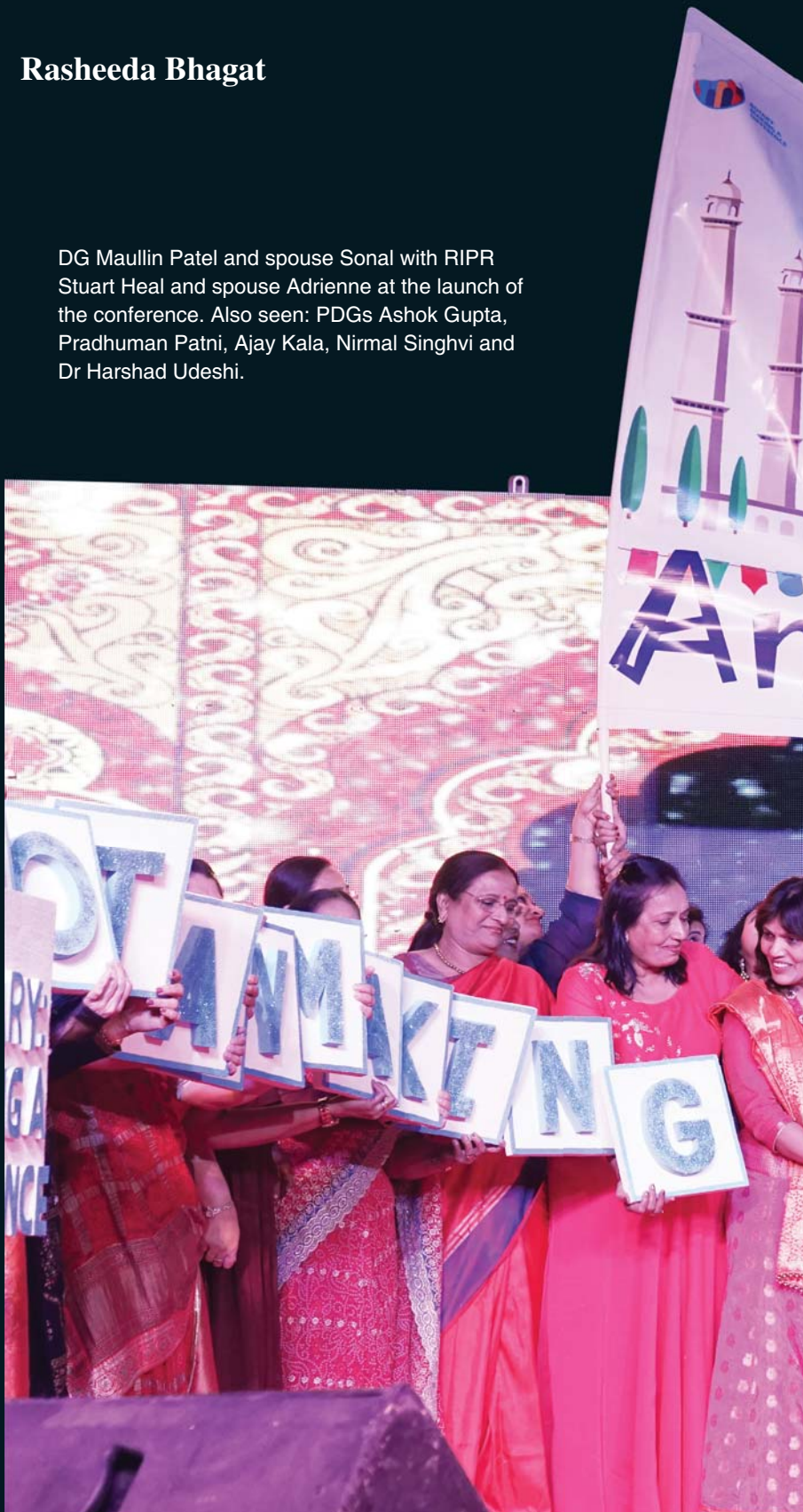
Anandotsav, the district conference of the newly formed 3054, hosted by RC Jaipur South, at the historic city of Agra was a mix of serious talk and colourful extravaganza, complete with *garba* and *bhangra*, a grand procession in a buggy carrying the chief guest RI Director Brian Stoyel from England and RIPR Stuart Heal, a Past RI Director from New Zealand and their spouses, and a catwalk in which the DG, DGE, PDGs and their spouses participated.

Giving a report card on his hitherto journey of 224 days as DG, Maullin Patel said that his target for the year was to get 500 new members; 480 had already come in and five new clubs had been added. From the TRF target of \$500,000, nearly half has been contributed, and “I think we might reach the \$600,000 mark by the end of this Rotary year. Also, the district has received the highest ever grants amount of \$1.6 million, and this might cross the \$3 million mark by June end.”

On service projects, he said clubs had undertaken tree plantation, WinS, blood donation, literacy, youth exchange and distribution of relief material in flood-hit areas, as also several health projects.

Addressing the meet, RIPR Stuart Heal said, “I am in complete awe of the work Rotary does in India. We need Rotarians across the world to realise how fortunate they are to be a part of Rotary and that they are in Rotary to make a difference locally and internationally.” He added that while Rotary

DG Maullin Patel and spouse Sonal with RIPR Stuart Heal and spouse Adrienne at the launch of the conference. Also seen: PDGs Ashok Gupta, Pradhuman Patni, Ajay Kala, Nirmal Singhvi and Dr Harshad Udeshi.



I am in complete awe of the work Rotary does in India. We are fortunate to be Rotarians and now is the time for innovation in Rotary.

RIPR Stuart Heal

should be evolutionary at all times, sometimes it had to be revolutionary too and advocated the decentralisation of Rotary's operations.

He urged the assembled Rotarians to "review the role of regional offices and empower them more. Now is the time for innovation in Rotary. We should target community services on a global scale as you are the champions of change." RI Director Brian Stoyel said he had joined Rotary to "make a difference to myself" and spoke of the service opportunities Rotary had provided him. "In Rotary you are continually learning for the benefit of those around you," he added.

Addressing the meet PRID Manoj Desai said, "A ship is safe in the harbour but it is meant to sail. So Rotarians also have to go beyond the confines of their homes and take up the journey of Rotary." As usual, he regaled the audience with his penchant for Urdu poetry by reciting





From L: RID Brian Stoyel, spouse Maxine, RIPP Stuart Heal, spouse Adrienne, DG Maullin Patel, spouse Sonal, RC Jaipur South President Vandana Prakkash and Conference Chairman Rajendra Prakkash.

the verse: “Zindagi di hai to jeene ka hunar bhi dena. Paañv bakshe hei toh taufiq-e-safar bhi dena (If you’ve given me life, teach me to live it well, and let my legs carry me to the right destination).”

The dignitaries recognised Arch Klumph Society members and those

who had made significant contributions to TRF, including Suresh Poddar and spouse Kiran, who have contributed \$50,000 this year and are on their way to becoming double AKS members. PDG Ashok Gupta and Vijaya, who have contributed \$250,000, and PDG Ramesh Agarwal ₹1.65 crore;

DG Patel and Sonam, who have become AKS members and PDG Anurag Banthia and Rtn Mahendra Banthia who have contributed \$70,000, were all honoured.

The International Youth Exchange team comprising 26 youth from 16 countries participated and the youngsters shared their experience of travelling through the district, and said they found India to be both “spicy and sweet. It is all about love, generosity and faith”. PDG Anil Agarwal was recognised for getting the ‘Meritorious Service Award’ for Polio from TRF.

Rtn Manu Paliwal gave a presentation of the car rally in which he had driven with his brother across 23 countries over 161 days, during which they promoted the PolioPlus programme.

DGE Neeraj Sogani spoke about his wonderful experience at the International Assembly. Conference Chairman Rajendra Prakkash welcomed the delegates from 80 clubs in Gujarat and Rajasthan, and Joint Secretary Rajesh Khatri delivered the vote of thanks. ■



RIPP Stuart Heal and Adrienne being honoured by DG Maullin Patel and Sonal.

Rotary-VHS changing lives: Barry Rassin

V Muthukumaran

In Chennai, RIPE Barry Rassin, accompanied by PRID PT Prabhakar and D 3232 DG R Srinivasan and other Rotary leaders, visited the Rotary Blood Bank at the VHS Hospital. He was taken around the various facilities at the blood bank by its Chief Medical Officer Dr V Mythily. The CMO explained in detail the process of separation, testing and storage of blood and blood components at the state-of-the-art facility which was a joint endeavour between the VHS Hospital, Rotary Club of Madras Central and the TTK group of companies.

Rassin interacted with children being treated at the thalassaemia block

of the blood bank and went on to see the newly opened Abhimanyu Block for maternal and child healthcare. A healthcare professional himself, Rassin inspected each and every special ward, clinic and cubicle and asked question about the care being provided.

At the laboratory and diagnostic block too, Rassin interacted with technicians and biochemists with pointed questions.

At home in hospitals

Later, addressing select Rotarians at KS Sanjivi Hall, he noted that the VHS Hospital was helped by Rotary for providing affordable healthcare.

Rotarians can be proud of what they have achieved in partnership with the VHS, he said.

Having grown up at hospitals in the Bahamas where his father was a surgeon and mother a nurse, he said, "It is a true pleasure to be at the VHS and wonderful to go and see the lab facilities." There is nothing like putting the smile back on the faces of children who are getting blood transfusion, he added.

When compared to the cost of medical services in the Bahamas — where the lowest x-ray would cost anywhere around \$200 and CBC test \$50-\$60 — healthcare is really affordable in Chennai, he noted. ■

RIPE Barry Rassin greeting a girl at the thalassaemia block of the Rotary Blood Bank at the VHS Hospital. Also seen are (from left) RPIC Rajadurai Michael (Zone 5), Rtn Dr P Srinivasan, PRID PT Prabhakar, DG R Srinivasan and DGE Babu Peram.



A late bloomer in Rotary

Rasheeda Bhagat

He disarms you with his simplicity, easy manner and friendly disposition and the light touch with which he wears the mantle and handles the power of being a Rotary International Director. Add to this his impressive credentials — a Commander of the US Navy which he served for 20 years and a Vice President of the US giant retailer Costco, an expert in HR and risk management and now a senior Rotary leader. John Matthews, from Mercer Island Rotary Club, California, is not only a fun, but a great subject for an interview.

I meet and chat up with Matthews at the Kuala Lumpur Institute and he candidly admits that he is a “late bloomer in Rotary”. And that happened, obviously, because his long years in the US Navy hardly left him enough time to join Rotary, and more important, engage with his club or district’s activities.

Matthews joined the US Navy in 1969; when asked why he says, “I was going to college and at that time in the US, if you were a youth, the idea was that every male citizen would go into military service. I had it in my mind that I would go into service,” just as his father and brother had done before him.

So after finishing college, he joined the Navy and had a three-year commission, and had no intention of staying on and continuing because he had already been accepted at the graduate school in Columbia, where he was planning to study banking. But as his three-year commission was ending, “I looked around me and thought I really respect the people I work with and I’ve been given a challenge. And then the detailer (the person who helps to move you around) asked me how would you like to go to Sydney in an exchange with the Australian Navy. So I rode my bike home and asked Mary Ellen (his wife) how would you like to go to Sydney and she was fine with it.”

They didn’t have any children then so the decision was easier, and they went to Sydney, “travelled all over and had a wonderful exchange

experience.” On his return, this time the detailer asked him if he’d like to go to graduate school. He was game and they decided on a course in financial management. He explains that the US Navy has an arrangement with several universities and he was supposed to do his graduate course in the George Washington University in Washington DC. “But at that time, the Vietnam war was still going on and there was a lot of social unrest on the campus. So the Navy pulled the programme from the campus and said we aren’t sending you there anymore. So I took a left turn and went to the Naval post graduate school.”

Matthews says his various stints with the US Navy “were always fun and the people were fun too. It wasn’t as though I had planned or intended to

It was wonderful to see the kind of Rotary projects that were going on in Ethiopia. And I thought gosh, this organisation is really powerful and it can do some amazing things.



go and stay there for so many years! In fact, my mother kept asking when are you going to quit and come home?"

Home was in Rochester, New York State, and it was in New York that he met Mary and "we started dating at 15; so we've been together for a while!"

In the Navy, he did several jobs, including that of a Commander at the supply office of the famous USS Kitty Hawk, an aircraft carrier. Later he had a chance to be involved in running the logistics for the Navy from Washington DC.

But while he enjoyed his stint in the US Navy, he also moved 13 times in 20 years and "noticed that my kids weren't making any close relationships knowing that anyway they would leave within 18 months so why bother." So he opted for what is known in the naval parlance as a "twilight tour", which is your last assignment before retirement. This was in San Diego; "I went into the Navy at 22 and came out at 42!"

Enter Rotary!

So how did he become a Rotarian? "Well my dad was a Rotarian, and my uncle a past governor, so I knew about Rotary and that I'd eventually join, but couldn't do it when in service."

Matthews clarifies that though the US military rules allow its personnel to join Rotary, the fact remained that "you're never there. So when I went for the twilight tour in San Diego, I joined the Coronado Club in California. It's a very good club and I made a lot of friends, but I never

really connected to a whole lot of things Rotary did because I would go to work, and then lunch and then work again. I was showing up, but wasn't really connected," he says.

A few years later, in 1995, he moved to Seattle with Costco, which he had joined after leaving the Navy and a friend of his said he was going to Ethiopia for an immunisation campaign, "and I decided to go too. I was just telling (Trustee Chair) Paul Netzel here that this was a life-changing experience as it was wonderful to see the kind of Rotary projects that were going on in Ethiopia. And I thought gosh, this organisation is really powerful and it can do some amazing things."

This was in 2002, by which time he had joined the Mercer Island

One of the biggest challenges was understanding how Rotary works. I thought I had a pretty good idea but I am continually surprised by the stuff I learn every day.

RI Director John
C Matthews



Let's put sustainability in our membership conversation too



As a member of the RI Board, one of its directors, John Matthews feels that, “though there are a lot of conversations happening right now around things we need to tweak here and there, one of the big challenges we face is that in our 112 years, we’ve added structures but never taken anything away.”

While membership is one of the “easiest things

to talk about, I think it’s deeper than that and has to do with sustainability. We operated The Rotary Foundation for 80-odd years but did not have sustainability in our vocabulary! So we did a lot of wonderful projects but many of them failed. When we think of the time, energy, money and other resources that have gone waste because we didn’t build in some

idea of sustainability, it sounds crazy. It is crazy that you’ve provided something as wonderful as a clean drinking water facility and it comes apart because something broke and the locals don’t know how to fix it or they are not involved in it. So what TRF is doing right now to build sustainability is absolutely wonderful.”

But the problem, adds Matthews, is that “as happens in most large organisations, what works in one part of the organisation is not transferred to another. So if I take this idea of sustainability and move it into the membership conversation, we are lousy at it. We don’t do a great job of retaining members. People join and leave and we’ve been at around 1.2 million for 23 years. So something is very wrong somewhere. Because you have a core business which is the club and it is not growing. In fact, it is shrinking. We are adding more clubs but in the last 10 years the average size of the club has shrunk by 8, and has come down from 42 to 34.”

Not only are the numbers static in clubs, most clubs are not

chartering new clubs. “So we’ve got to change the conversation. In TRF, we set an expectation that every Rotarian will contribute something every year. But there is no such expectation in membership. We just say membership growth is important and we’ve got to grow. But we have to set an expectation that you not only grow, but register growth year-on-year. Because if your business grows and shrinks again, it is not growing. So unless we put ‘sustainability’ in our membership conversation, there is no guarantee we’ll be here 50 years from now.”

Matthews adds that every club should be asked to set up an expectation on membership, and “when we train them in PETS and SETS, we have to look them in the eye and say the expectation is that you will grow this year and the next, and the year after that. And if you can’t grow, then charter a new club.”

He comes out with a shocking statement when he says, “We have thousands of Rotary clubs that have never chartered a new club in years.”

If we move the idea of sustainability into the membership conversation, we are lousy at it. We don't do a great job of retaining members. People join and leave and we've been at around 1.2 million for 23 years!

Rotary Club and soon after he returned from Ethiopia, "my DG Rosemary called up and said: 'Hey John, I've got this \$10,000 grant for new opportunities. Are you interested in putting it to use?' And I said give it to me." Even though he had never done a grant till then, he thought he'd "figure it out" and the money went for a hospital project in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital.

Leadership positions

Next, he became the Foundation Chair for his club, and in 2006–07 the club president, then assistant governor immediately and then the DG in 2010–11. "So as you can see I am a late bloomer in Rotary!"

On the highlights of his as the district governor, Matthews says, "We did a lot of fun things, but the highlight was the relationship I had with my club presidents. They were a wonderful group, and we continued to be connected. And, also a million-dollar dinner!"

Also, as he was then the vice president of Costco, he managed to publish an article on "Polio and what Rotary is doing to move the needle" in the Costco magazine which reaches 70 million people around the world!

Matthews gives an excellent example of the positive energy a really good boss can transmit as he recalls an incident with him. When Matthews assured his boss that he would work really hard — Costco was then on its way to becoming a \$100 billion company — and not allow his Rotary responsibilities to get in the way of his day job, "he stopped me, put his hand on my shoulder and said: 'John, I don't want you to worry about it. We'll figure it out. What you are doing for the community is important. And we've got to contribute.' It was a blessing and I've never forgotten that."

He retired from Costco a couple of years ago, after working there for 25 years.

Constantly surprised by Rotary

On the challenges he faces as an RI Director, Matthews says that since he's travelled globally, "fitting into different cultures and communities around the world wasn't much of a challenge. But I think one of the biggest challenges was understanding how Rotary works. I thought I had

a pretty good idea but I am continually surprised by the stuff I learn every day. As I enjoy learning, it's a fun job. But it's also like... are you kidding me... how could I not know that?"

On whether his experience in both the US Navy and Costco has helped his Rotary journey, Matthews says, "Sure, and vice versa. There are also things that Rotary

does that I could take into Costco."

One of these related to the kind of orientation that Rotary clubs in the US do for their new members so that they really engage with Rotary. This was used to retain the members in Costco.

On what kind of leadership qualities are required to take up a Rotarian from a DG to the RI Director's level,





From R: RI Director John Matthews with spouse Mary Ellen and Past RI President Rajendra K Saboo.

Matthew says, “I believe that Rotary runs on encouragement. Most Rotarians in leadership positions are there because

someone said to them you will be good at doing this; go and do it. I had no plans to become a director, and was happy doing work for

Rotary till friends came along and planted that idea in my head!”

The last word has to go to the spouse and

her/his contribution in a Rotarian’s climb to the pinnacle. So what has been Mary’s role in his success in Rotary, I ask. “I think we make a nice team because she is very approachable and down to earth and everybody, both Rotarians and non-Rotarians, find it easy to come up to her.”

She is a Rotarian too and “do you know her classification? She is a skiing and snow board instructor... one of the better classifications. She has taught skiing for 15 years!”

Pictures by
Rasheeda Bhagat

Designed by
Krishnapratheesh

Snap Shots



D 3052 PDG and INPPC Member Anil Agarwal has been chosen by the International PolioPlus Committee of TRF for the International Service Award for a Polio-free World. He will receive the award at the Rotary Convention to be held in June in Toronto, Canada.



D 3131 PDG Deepak Shikarpur received the Service Above Self award from RIPE Barry Rassin, in the presence of RID C Basker and DG Abhay Gadgil, during the RIPE’s recent visit to Pune.



Rajashree Birla, Chairperson of the Aditya Birla Foundation for Community Initiatives and Rural Development, presented a cheque for ₹50 lakh to PRID Ashok Mahajan to be used for the Measles and Rubella programme undertaken by Rotary in India.



A successful RAHAT camp at Dhamtari

Rasheeda Bhagat

Yet another Rotary medical mission, organised jointly by RC Yamuna Nagar (D 3080), RC Raipur Greater and RC Raipur Millennium, D 3261, with support from the Chhattisgarh Government, was held

in Dhamtari, about 80 km from Raipur, Chhattisgarh, in March under the leadership of PRIP Rajendra Saboo.

PDG Subhash Garg, director of the mission, said a team comprising 21 specialists and surgeons from the specialities of ophthalmology,





plastic surgery, general surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, orthopaedics, anaesthesiology, dermatology, ENT and dental surgery, 10 interns and 10 volunteers participated in the 10-day-long mission. The volunteers included PRIP Saboo and spouse Usha.

After being received at the Raipur airport, the team of Rotarians were given a reception by the State government and left for Dhamtari the same day.

Giving the background of this particular medical mission, PDG Shashi Varvandkar, who was the chairman-coordination for this mission said, "Dhamtari has only one Government District Hospital without specialists for major operations and only eye surgery and some other minor surgery can be performed here. Taking into consideration the paucity of surgeons in this hospital, the State Health Minister requested





Meals being served at the campsite for the registrants.

us to organise a medial mission in Dhamtari.”

At the Mission School ground, a large dome (90 ft by 240 ft) was set up, with eight different work stations for registration and 20 cabins for screening patients, selection and segregation of those to undergo immediate surgery or other procedures and those to be treated as out-patients.

A whopping number of 1,883 surgical procedures, including 149 major operations, 393 eye surgeries, 106 plastic surgeries, 880 dental procedures, 35 spine-related procedures and other operations were performed at two different venues — the Dhamtari District Hospital and the Christian Hospital Dhamtari. The mission was inaugurated by Chhattisgarh Health Minister Ajay Chandrakar on March 4.

Doctors from AIIMS, Government Medical College, Raipur, Ram Krishna Care Hospital, Chhattisgarh, as also some local doctors, helped the visiting team to screen and treat the large turnout of out-patients.

All the patients who attended the medical mission were given free medicines, and food was served to all the patients and their attendants during the mission days. Volunteers from the Nursing College and the

Florence College of Nursing, Art of Living Foundation and the local chamber of commerce, were there in full force to help in OPD booth management and distribution of food.

PDG Varvankar said in all over 22,700 patients came for the mission, and of these about 100 patients were referred to AIIMS and the Raipur Medical College for further investigation and advance surgeries. RC Raipur Millennium and RC Raipur Greater took this additional responsibility and got them admitted at AIIMS and Medical College at Raipur, arranging free transportation and food.

PDG Garg said, “The credit for this mission goes to PRIP Saboo and Usha Saboo, PDG Dr R S Parmar (Medical Mission Chair) from Rotary Yamuna Nagar (D 3080), D 3261 DG Harjit Singh Hura, PDGs Vivek Tankha (Member of Parliament), Shashi Varvankar, Rakesh Chaturvedi (Chairman Administration), Dr R S Sharma and many Rotarians of D 3261, particularly those from RC Dhamtari led by their President Amit Jaiswal, who worked very hard.”

The local media carried several reports on the Mission, enhancing Rotary’s public image. ■



Awaken the soul of Rotarians: Barry Rassin

V Muthukumaran

Step back for a moment and perceive how an outsider views Rotary. If he or she evinces interest in joining your club, then as president of your club, you are on the right path. But on the other hand, if there is no outward show of enthusiasm in club activities, then there is something wrong and we need course-correction,” said RIPE Barry

Rassin, addressing the PETS and SETS of Districts 3000 and 3232 in Chennai.

However, he was all praise for Rotary in India as the members had impacted their communities in both direct and indirect ways. “Now that CSR funds have opened new opportunities for Rotary clubs in India, you need to coordinate with your districts

and chart out joint programmes,” he said. The WASH projects done in Indian schools that he had posted on his Facebook page had received tremendous responses from all over the world. “Many Rotarians have asked for details and how Indian clubs are implementing these projects.”

Every Rotarian must feel there is an inherent value in belonging to this global voluntary organisation. “Ask your members what they love, what they are passionate about and how they can bring value to your club. For ultimately, Rotary is all about ‘people in action’ who do transformational projects,” he added.

Inspiring leadership

Listing out important leadership qualities, Rassin said these would help them do “transformational projects that leave a lasting change” in the community. Rotary leaders have only two options; “either continue in their jobs for the sake of survival or step up to become the best-ever presidents of their clubs by inspiring their members



Seated from L: Rtn Sridhar, PDG C R Raju, A S Venkatesh, S Krishnaswami, DG R Srinivasan, PDG J B Kamdar, RID C Basker, RIPE Barry Rassin, DGE Babu Peram, his spouse Anita, Nalini and PRID P T Prabhakar and RPIC Rajadurai Michael, along with Rotarians and Anns at the D 3232 PETS.



D 3000 DGE R V N Kannan honours RIPE Barry Rassin with a memento in the presence of RID C Basker, PETS Chairman R Anandtha Jothi and SETS Chairman J Aravindan.

through personal example.” To do so, the leader must pay individual attention to all members and “let them know that you love them intensely.” One must

have that energy and drive that are contagious and set “audacious goals” for the club.

Rassin called upon the Presidents-elect to start leadership programmes to incubate young talent which can take up onerous responsibilities. Rotaractors in the Bahamas have joined hands with members of the Toastmasters clubs to leverage the enthusiasm of youth and develop their leadership skills. “But we need to address the issue of how to captivate Rotaractors and motivate them to continue their journey in Rotary clubs later.”

Rotarians are not just dreamers, “but we act to make lasting change in the community through sustainable projects. Through social media, tell people, of the amazing work we do and the transformational projects that have changed the world,” Rassin said. He

is hopeful that 2018–19 will see the last of the few polio cases, and from then on “the world has to be polio-free for the next three years to be certified so by the WHO.”

Don’t ever underestimate the power of working together as Rotarians, as the 1.2 million-strong organisation with presence in over 200 countries has undertaken community projects, including rescue efforts, for global welfare. Whether it is bringing relief to a distraught father in New Zealand whose daughter was buried under the debris in the Haiti earthquake (January 2010) or an African child in Malawi who came with a smile and “thanked me for new school buildings, toilets, fresh water and sanitation facilities”, Rotary is forever making the world a better place.

However, he emphasised the need to “awaken

the soul of Rotarians” and work towards creating strong clubs which can do impactful projects. Hence, the vision statement — *Be the Inspiration* — for 2018–19, displays on its logo the image of a wave, a force of nature which ushers in lasting change, he added.

As club leaders they would have to do a reality-check to ensure whether their members’ heart and direction were on the right path. If not, they would have to effect course correction.

In an interactive talk, RI Director C Basker urged the future leaders to take learning and training seriously as “only through this process you get information on what you don’t know. Life is all about what and how you learn and then put it into practice.”

On some Rotarians showing anxiety over mounting expenses while conducting training courses,



he advised them to consider “money spent on training as an investment to progress as it will offer opportunities to hone your skills to better implement projects.”

PETS is a unique training programme that empowers an ordinary man with leadership skills, he noted and urged the presidents-elect to inspire their club members. “The 365 days will fly away like 365 minutes if you don’t have a master plan to implement. First, create a good team which will work with you by sharing your vision and ideas.”

Merit should be the only criterion for the selection of club officers who also need adequate training at the DTA (District Training Assembly). “Club presidents will begin with 70 per cent chance of success, if they select their officers on merit, and remove those

unwilling to attend the DTA workshops,” he said.

Recalling the growth of District 3000 since the days it was bifurcated from Sri Lanka with just 32 clubs, the RID said his home district “has grown in strength, is more organised now and performance levels have reached new heights, for which the credit goes to the PDGs and past presidents who had sacrificed their time and energy to nurture their clubs.”

RIPE Rassin was pleasantly surprised to see a large assemblage of Rotarians in uniforms, “which only points to the discipline followed by the new office-bearers,” Basker noted. He congratulated DGE RVN Kannan for executing the PETS after meticulous planning.

Speaking at the PETS of D 3232, RID Basker said the zone would

henceforth be represented by more directors at the RI Board given the spike in membership. The district is expected to double its membership from its current strength of 4,200 in the next two years. “In Rotary, the biggest challenge is to lead the club as its president. A club leader must speak less, allow others to participate in meetings and projects and encourage them to bring out innovative ideas for growth.” Innovative projects will ensure Rotary the public image it deserves.

Gender disparity

Expressing concern over the lower number of women Rotarians in India, Basker said that we have only 11 per cent women Rotarians compared to 49 per cent in Africa. “Pakistan has a woman governor and Bangladesh has



RIPE Barry Rassin and RID C Basker with DG P Gopalakrishnan, spouse Neelavathi, DGE R V N Kannan, his spouse Sarala, DGN Zameer Pasha, PETS Chairman Anandtha Jothi, SETS Chairman J Aravindan and other past governors and incoming club leaders at the D 3000 PETS in Chennai.



RIPE Barry Rassin and RID C Basker with D 3232 DGE Babu Peram, PDG Sv Rm Ramanathan and spouse Nallammai.



a woman DGE; we need more women governors in our zone. We need to invite and induct more women members and encourage them to take leadership roles as they are better service-minded with an uncanny knack for fund management,” he said.

He urged the Rotarians to give ₹1,000 each for a corpus towards End Polio, and DGE Babu Peram said this would be implemented.

Addressing the D 3000 meet, DGE Kannan said the 27-year-old district has an energetic team, and “we will be going to the villages to empower people and enrich them with the support of Rotary so that they can be transformed into Happy Villages.” The district has 104 Rotary clubs with over 5,000 members.

Addressing the training session, DG R Srinivasan said the first year after bifurcation has been really good for D 3232 with all its 104 clubs taking up service projects with enthusiasm and vigour. “Our district is the first in membership in Zone 5 with 500 Rotarians being inducted this year so far. All club members will rally behind a president who is inspiring and leads from the front.” In his district in

three clubs the average age was less than 30 years and “in some clubs the waiting period for new members is three years.”

DGE Peram recalled the Vision Statement at the Dubai Institute and said his membership growth target for the next year is 15 per cent and he plans to start Rotary clubs for Rotaractors. “We will be doing projects along with Rotaractors and past DRRs as we have 150 Rotaract clubs and new ones will be chartered by our clubs next year.”

Every club will take up one high-impact project worth \$15,000–20,000 next year with the help of CSR funding which will usher in positive change in the community, he said. For the coming year, the DGE has set a target of \$2 million in TRF giving while implementing service and community projects worth \$5 million. PDG Sv Rm Ramanathan was honoured by Rassin for announcing a donation of \$500,000 to TRF over the next two years. PDG J B Kamdar was also honoured for announcing a donation of another \$250,000 to the Foundation to reach AKS-Level 2.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran



A Rotary initiative for thirsty birds

Rasheeda Bhagat

One of the worst States to be affected by the rising mercury each summer is Rajasthan, and who would know the value of water better than the citizens of this desert state of India?

But the 58 members of the Rotary Club of Bikaner Marudhara have come out with an initiative that goes beyond thinking of quenching the thirst

of human beings in the summer. For the fourth year in a row, this year too, as the summer has set in, the Rotarians have been distributing small terracotta containers, known in Rajasthan as *mitti ke palasia* to Bikaner's residents with an appeal. To fill up these containers with fresh water and keep them out in their balconies, verandahs, terraces or gardens, so

that birds can quench their thirst from these, as the mercury soars during the summer months.

"We began this project in 2015 by distributing just 400 such containers to different sections of society, and it has really caught on. This year our club has already distributed 4,000 such containers to people," says Rajesh Baweja, incoming secretary of

the club. Being a big animal and bird lover, this project was his brain child to do "something for the *bezuban pakshi* (voiceless birds) of our city. We commission the local potters to make these terracotta containers, each of which costs around Rs 20, including the distribution cost, and ensure that while these are being given out in the streets or

Rotarians distribute terracotta containers to the public to provide water for the birds.



traffic junctions, we take along with us schoolchildren, including our own children.”

The idea, he says, is not only to “sensitise the younger generation about taking care of birds and animals, but also to instill in them a sense of service. We want them to realise that we should think not only of ourselves, but also the other living beings around us.”

In the last four years, adds Baweja, around 10,000 such containers have been distributed in the city. He is happy that the recipients make good use of these and keep them clean and filled with water. “Some people hang them on the trees to make it easier for the birds to quench their thirst.”

So do all the members of his club keep out these little containers filled with water?



The Rotarians distribute the *palasias* at the mosques at the time of *iftar* in Ramzan because those who are fasting realise much more the importance and value of water.

“Of course, it is compulsory for every member to do so.” The other benefit, he adds, is generating a livelihood, however seasonal, for the potters. The Rotarians watch out for every opportunity to distribute the *palasias*, including at places of worship. “Particularly at the mosques at the time of *iftar* in Ramzan, because those who are fasting realise much more the importance and value of water,” says Baweja.

The local media has appreciated and publicised this project, and “recently we took along with us the RJ of 92.7 Big FM, and they gave us very good coverage”. The audio clip he sends me has an appealing message to the people of the city — to collect such *palasias* from the Rotary club and welcome the winged creatures visiting their homes with some water kept in the container, and “get the blessings of the birds”.

For after all, adds the RJ, everybody should remember that it is all about “*parindo ki zindagani; thodisi chhav, thodasa pani* (Most of all a bird needs some shade... and some water).” ■



Message from RI South Asia Office

Please note our new address: There is no change in telephone and fax numbers.
Rotary International South Asia Office, Pullman / Novotel Commercial Tower,
First Floor, Asset No.2, Hospitality District, Aerocity (Near IGI Airport), New Delhi 110037

We are happy to inform that there is a dedicated meeting room (35 seating capacity) exclusively for Rotarians for their meetings/workshops. We will shortly inform you of the process for reserving your meeting room. Additionally, a dedicated corner 'The Rotarian Tech Center' with internet connectivity will provide visiting Rotarians a facility to access "My Rotary" accounts and other associated applications through RI website www.rotary.org. You can also pay membership dues and/or contribute to Rotary Foundation (India) using online tools.

★ Payment Instructions for donations/contributions

a) Online giving by Indian donors

Rupee-enabled online giving is available to donors in India both through the Rotary Foundation (India) [RF(I)] website www.rotaryfoundationindia.org and Rotary International website www.rotary.org. This will allow Rotarians/Non-Rotarians to contribute online and also avail benefits under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act.

b) Donation/contribution through Cheque/Demand Draft

- Draw a cheque/demand draft in favour of 'Rotary Foundation (India)' payable at New Delhi and send it to our new office address.
- Please mention the donor's name clearly (i.e. drawer of the cheque/remitter of bank draft), donor address and donor's PAN Number in the contribution form/letter.
- A single receipt per cheque will be issued in favour of the drawer of the cheque.
- A single receipt for each demand draft/pay order will be issued in favour of the remitter, if mentioned in demand draft/pay order.

★ The Rotary Foundation guidelines for the reclassing (correction) contributions:

- ★ The Foundation no longer accepts or processes reclassifications [corrections] to contributions made in previous Rotary year(s) from one gift designation or restriction to another [e.g. Annual Giving to Endowment etc.]. Effective July 1, 2018, corrections can only be made within 90 calendar days of the gift receipt date and must be made within the same Rotary fiscal year. Adherence to these guidelines will maintain the integrity of the



annual audited financial report as well as the District Designated Funds.

- Tree Planting Challenge - It is the perhaps the best time to plant your club's trees. Not only planting trees one of the best things you can do for the environment, it also brings you one step closer to your Rotary Citation. Be sure to take care of them until they're thriving on their own. President Ian Riseley looks forward to learning how many Rotarians have come together through this challenge, Making A Difference, for a better planet Earth. Please enter the details on Rotary Showcase to report the trees you have planted.
- Rotary is proud to be associated with many corporate partners to implement global grant projects through our districts/clubs.

Attention to Approaching Deadlines:

- Grant Reporting Deadline – Kindly submit interim report of activities up to March 31, 2018, of all open grants positively by May 31, 2018; otherwise the Grant will become overdue on reporting effective June 01, 2018. New grant applications will not be accepted by the Foundation if a grant sponsor has an overdue report for any Foundation grant. To know more about reporting requirements and the requisite formats, click on link <http://www.rotaryfoundation-india.org/reporting/>
- Applications for the 2019-20 Rotary Peace Fellowship programme are now being accepted. To learn more about Peace Fellowship application, click on link <https://my.rotary.org/en/peace-fellowship-application>. The deadline for applicants to submit applications to their district is **May 31, 2018**. Districts must submit endorsed applications to The Rotary Foundation by **July 1**. For queries, please write to rotarypeacecenters@rotary.org ■

Fun moments at DisCon 3090

Team Rotary News



Punjab Forest and Wildlife Preservation Minister Sadhu Singh Dharamsot being honoured at the District Conference.

Fun and fellowship along with interesting sessions on women's empowerment, organ donation, service to humanity and environmental issues dominated the three-day District Conference of 3090, titled *Abode of Peace*, and held at the Tarika Jungle Resorts on a scenic hilltop at Chail in Himachal Pradesh.

DG Bagh Singh Pannu led the conference and the glitzy event was hosted by RC Nabha, in partnership with the Rotary Clubs of Barwala, Patran Midtown and Samana. The Punjab Forest and Wildlife Preservation Minister Sadhu Singh Dharamsot was the chief guest at the inaugural session.

The highlight of the first day was the launch of the e-version of the book, *34 years Reminiscences*, designed and created by Rtn Dharam Pal of RC

Rajpura. The e-version displayed the clippings of the book showing all the memories of the past governors of the district and their service to society.

Rtn Dr Sandeep Chauhan gave a lecture on organ donation, its importance and the formalities associated with it. Addressing the gathering, Minister Dharamsot lauded Rotary for its "selfless service in uplifting society".

Day-2 covered some key topics such as membership, significant aspects of TRF and WinS projects in the district. Rtn Gulbahar Singh spoke on Rotary Leadership Institute, while DG Pannu, in his speech, pointed out that a Paul Harris bust is being distributed to all clubs having their own land or building.

A Spouses Session was held for the district Anns which dwelt on

the importance of grooming and personality development. Rtn Dr Vanita Ahuja gave an inspiring speech on women's empowerment which was followed by a talk on RYLA and ethics by AG Devinder Singh. A mind relaxing session with focus on stress management was conducted by a member of the Brahma Kumari Ishwariya Trust.

On the final day, PDG SR Passey read out the conference resolutions which were unanimously accepted by all the Rotarians. The host club members were felicitated by DG Pannu who also presented the Paul Harris bust to RC Shimla, to be exhibited on the Mall Road.

Over 400 Rotarians, along with their spouses, participated in the conference held in the midst of natural beauty. ■

Over fairy chimneys



When you plan a holiday in Turkey,

a must is of course the historic city of Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire (renamed from Constantinople). But having seen, over the years, glorious pictures of hot air balloon rides over the steep, slender and naturally eroded rock formations in Cappadocia in the Anatolian region of south west Turkey, a balloon experience was a

must on our itinerary. In Turkish Cappadocia means “the land of beautiful horses.”

But an added incentive was the opportunity to stay in a “cave hotel”, of which there are plenty in the region. These are actually cut out of caves, and provide a combination of modern comforts with a feeling of living in a bygone era.

A flight to the Sabiha Gokche airport in Istanbul and then a short hour-long domestic flight to Kayseri

Cappadocia gives you an opportunity to stay in cave hotels, which are actually cut out of caves. These provide modern comforts with a feeling of living in a bygone era.

brought us close to the town of Urgup, which we reached after a 60-minute coach ride. But as it was almost close to midnight, and after a gruelling six-hour wait at the Sabiha airport, as we got dropped

to the Best Western Premium Hotel, we had no idea of our magical surroundings — the beautiful landscape and the rocky formations done over millions of years of volcanic activity.



in hot air balloons

🎈 Pervez Bhagat

The towns of Kayseri, Nevsehir, Urgup and Ortahisar are the main ones in this region. Kayseri is located at the foot of the extinct volcano Mount Erciyes, soaring 3,900 metres above the town and is topped with snow in April.

Our main attraction is the hot air balloon ride, which can cost between \$175 to 250, depending on your tour operator and the number of people who are put into the

wicker basket, attached to the bottom at the balloon.

Crack of dawn

Sleepy-eyed, we are up at 4 a.m. to be picked up from our hotel at the crack of 4.30 a.m.; it is biting

cold with the temperature being 8 deg Celsius. A 30-minute ride to the balloon operator's office — there are several in this area — where we are given a light breakfast and taken to the take-off region. The sun

has already come up and we can see in the horizon at least 100-odd balloons that are either up in the air, or preparing to take off.

We march towards our balloon, having

already been briefed to keep a good five-metre distance from the huge contraption as a fan blows air (propane gas) into the balloon. Simultaneously the gas is being heated by a burner; it is the heated propane which makes the balloon rise. But flying the balloon is a tricky and intricate job, and our Pilot Mehmet confidently and skillfully steers his “spaceship” in the air. But not before we have been briefed to be very careful when the balloon lands. “Hold on to the braces fixed to the sides in the

basket, crouch on your knees because the basket will land sideways and only after that it will be turned upright”, we are told.

It sounds easy enough, and more than anything else, we are all eager to begin our 60-minute ride. Soon the balloon starts rising, with the liftoff being unimaginably gentle, and within 15 minutes we are towering above the steep-edged rocks in the huge valley. By now the sky is dotted with a couple of hundred balloons and the

The balloon starts rising, with the liftoff being unimaginably gentle, and within 15 minutes we are towering above the steep-edged rocks in the huge valley.

landscape below is a sight to die for! The golden glow of the morning sun lights up the entire valley with its rock formations, pigeon-holed caves, and the mushroom-shaped fairy chimneys.

Fairy chimneys

There is an interesting story behind the formation of the fairy chimneys, though nothing supernatural is involved! The chimneys are a result of a geologic process



Propane gas is blown into the balloon and heated to make it rise.





The underground cities were made by troglodytes (cave dwellers) during the Bronze age and later occupied by the Christians in the third century when they fled from the Roman rulers.

that began millions of years ago, when volcanic eruptions rained ash across the region and this gradually hardened into a soft, porous rock covered by a layer of basalt. Over millennia of erosion, the softer portion wore off, leaving behind pillars of different shapes and sizes, many of them as tall as 130 ft. The harder basalt eroded more slowly,

forming a mushroom-shaped cap over each one. As they appear nothing less than magical, they are called fairy chimneys.

The balloon gently made its way over the valley, every now and then starting to descend slowly, when the pilot infused short spells of heat into the balloon to make it rise up once again. By skillfully

tugging onto the ropes provided inside, Mehmet expertly steered the balloon forward and thus we flew, aided by the gentle wind — we were really lucky to have a calm day, as a rough patch of weather can give you some unpleasant bumps and jerks. On a real rough and windy day the balloon rides are cancelled and the money is refunded.

With a whacky sense of humour, the pilot announced that we were now nearly 1,500 ft above the ground level, adding in the next breath, “Have you heard of the Titanic?” As the women giggled nervously, he added, “Is this your first flight?”. As we nodded, he added, “Mine is second!”

A few times he allowed the balloon to descend nearly 20–50 ft above the top of the chimneys, and often took us down to the depths of the valley. But at no time did we feel frightened, probably because the weather gods decided to play fair.

Gentle landing

Soon, too soon, it is time to touch terra firma, and the landing is quite a process for the organisers. A long pick up truck appears as the balloon comes down, follows it for a few minutes, and four strong-armed men hang on to the ropes dangling from the basket, and gently pull the balloon down, guiding it to make a perfect landing on the carriage of the pick up truck. There is no need to brace or squat and we make a gentle landing standing up and are helped out of the basket one after another.

As promised, the champagne toast ceremony begins. Popping the bottle open ceremoniously, the Captain dampens the spirits by announcing that the champagne is non-alcoholic! But we all make a toast and gulp it down. There is another surprise for us; there is a honeymooning couple in our basket and a cake is brought to the table, cut and devoured. The experience is concluded with each of us being given a medal!

Underground cities

The next day we make a trip to the underground

The wicker basket makes a gentle landing on the pick-up truck and passengers are helped to alight.

Facing page: Pick up trucks follow the balloons a few minutes before they come in to land.





Captain Mehmet opens the bubbly to celebrate the completion of a successful ride.



A narrow opening in an underground city.

cities Kaymakli and Derinkuyu, which were made by the troglodytes (cave dwellers) during the Bronze age and later occupied by the Christians in the third century when they fled from the Roman rulers. We crouch and weave our way around the low and narrow tunnels, minding the head all the time and discover the details of the dwelling, such as the kitchens, bedrooms, stables as well as churches.

In Derinkuyu, around 200 small 'villages' are spread over 160 sq km, complete with tunnels, hidden passageways, secret rooms etc. This city was at one time home to 20,000 residents living underground and was 11 levels deep.

As the rest of Turkey, Cappadocia too is a gourmand's delight. We opt for different kinds of kebabs, prawns and fish, but for vegetarians too there is plenty of choice. And the good news for Indians, particularly South Indians, is that along with their delicious peta breads, the accompaniment of every dish is rice which is cooked with some kind of seed or the other.

As promised, Cappadocia proved to be a great destination, providing a great food experience too!

Pictures by
Pervez Bhagat

Designed by
Krishnapratheesh S



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RID C. Basker
& Malathi Basker

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Chairman - PDG R. Theenachandran
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Alleppey promotes soil-less cultivation

Jaishree



Rotarians distribute grow bags to the residents in a locality in Alleppey.

Households in our city are growing healthy vegetables in their backyard or terrace. The practice is catching up quite fast. More than anything, these vegetables are free from chemical pesticides or fertilisers,” says Oomen Thomas, a member of RC Alleppey, D 3211.

The club is passionately promoting the district’s signature project — REAP (Rotary’s Empowerment of Agricultural Production) — launched at the beginning of the year by DG Suresh Mathew. The club has distributed grow bags for organic vegetable cultivation to the residents of the city. These grow bags are unique in many ways — they are filled with manure-enriched coco pith; are lightweight and consumes less water. There is no soil. So people can even keep them on their terrace. The manure is naturally processed with mushrooms and ‘asola’, a kind of fern, among other things.

This idea was the brainchild of the Club President Kumaraswamy Pillai who retired from the Coir Board, Kochi, after 40 years of service. “C P Radhakrishnan, Chairman, Coir Board, presided over my installation function and I discussed with him about promoting grow bags for vegetable cultivation. He agreed to support us,” says Pillai. Coir pith is a by-product obtained during the extraction of coir fibre. The Central Coir Research Institute (CCRI) conducted a field study on the feasibility of the project and subsequently, the club launched the programme last December by distributing 1,000 grow bags and it had a tremendous response. So far, 2,500 bags have been given to the residents.

In Europe, especially in the Netherlands, coir pith is largely used for growing ornamental plants and also for vegetable cultivation, he said. It is highly porous and can hold water thrice its weight and release it slowly for the growth of plants. In India, use

of coir pith for cultivation is rather limited. Every year around three lakh tonnes of coir pith get accumulated in the coastal belts of Kerala and this was earlier considered a waste, says the president. Of late it has become a money spinner in the export market and coir pith worth ₹1,000 crore has been exported last year.

The club distributes 10 grow bags to each beneficiary with seeds and saplings sourced from the Vegetable and Fruits Promotion Council of Kerala, an R&D unit of the Government of Kerala at Kochi. The club collects ₹15 for each bag to ensure that the beneficiaries take good care of the saplings.

Narrating their experience with the grow bags, Meera and Jayalakshmy, residents of Alleppey, say that they got around four kg of yield from their cultivation of tomatoes, brinjal and chillies. Growth of plants is faster in this medium with the use of organic manure, they add. ■



Rotary **blood bank** holds **BP-diabetes** camps

V Muthukumaran

Seven years ago, Rotary Club of Rajapalayam, D 3212, set up the PACR Rotary Blood Bank in Rajapalayam near Madurai in Tamil Nadu. The town is popular for its special breed of hounds — the formidable Rajapalayam dogs.

The entire equipment, costing ₹15,00,000, needed for the blood bank, was donated by the charter president of the club, PR Ramasubrahmaneya Rajha. The facility was christened PACR Rotary Blood Bank in memory of his father P A C Ramasamy Raja.

Following the growing demand for blood from hospitals and nursing homes, the club recently added a fully-equipped ambulance to the blood bank through a global grant for \$35,000 with support from 10 clubs of D 5580, US and Canada, including its sister club — RC Fargo Moorhead AM, North Dakota and TRF.

When the ambulance is not being used for blood collection and distribution, it is utilised in BP and diabetes detection camps across the district. Explaining the details of this project, Dr N

Gopalakrishnan, District Grants Sub-Committee Chairman, said, “Last year we had organised a couple of such screening camps in the rural areas and it was shocking to find that the villagers were not even aware that they were diabetic or that their blood pressure was very high.” Some of them had a blood sugar level of 500–600, while the BP readings in quite a few was as high as 200/120. “The then DG, Dr K Vijayakumar, suggested the idea of expanding the use of the vehicle to address the health issues of the poor,” he added.

The club included the survey results, while applying for the global grant, and sought more number of mercury and digital BP apparatus, glucometers and the test strips in their budgeted list of items, with an assurance to hold 50 BP and diabetes camps for the villagers. “The GG was sanctioned in a short time with no questions asked,” says Gopalakrishnan.

Promise kept

The club kept up its promise and completed 50 BP and diabetes detection camps in five months, screening over 7,500 persons in various villages. The region is an industrial belt with a majority of the residents employed in the factories.

Enthused with the success of this project, the club is all set to expand its service to address the silent killers — blood pressure and diabetes — through regular camps and provide timely treatment for the villagers. “The vehicle can be used by other clubs of the district to hold medical camps throughout the year,” he added. ■



A BP and diabetes screening camp being held for industrial employees.

She matters

Team Rotary News

An inter-club women's summit titled *Sakhi Sindhu*, sponsored by RC Senoras Jamnagar and RC Devbhumi Dwarka was held in Dwarka to promote women's membership in D 3060 and lay stress on the two key words that were constantly promoted during the conference — 'She matters'.

A brain child of DG Ruchir Jani and spouse Sohangi, the conference was well attended as the DG had sent out a request that all the women associated with Rotary in D 3060 should attend this conference, accompanied, of course, by male Rotarians.



DG Ruchir Jani with women Rotarians of the district at the inter-club summit.

The underlining message was that a woman can achieve anything if she sets her heart and mind to it.

To lay emphasis on his vision to get more women members, DG Jani had created within the membership committee a special post to focus on women's membership and this responsibility was given to Dr Kalpana Khandheria. She was asked to organise an inter club women's summit to focus attention on the need to get more women into Rotary.

The conference included motivational talk by Rotary and other leaders highlighting the successful lives of prominent Indian women from history. The underlining message was that a woman can achieve anything if she sets her heart and mind to it. ■





Cycling for a cause & Promoting Peace

Rasheeda Bhagat

The fourth edition of a very colourful *Tour de Rotary*, a cycle rally with 800 enthusiastic participants, spreading out into a sea of orange safety jackets down the streets of Chennai, was flagged off from the Phoenix Market City by ADGP C Sylendra Babu.

The rally was divided into three categories — 10, 50 and 100 km and Babu opted for the 100 km slot.

“The enthusiastic cyclists gathered at the venue by 5 am and we had 150 NCC cadets from the Army, Navy and Air Force wings participating. We also had 30 schoolchildren taking part in the event,” says Usha Kumar, President of RC Madras Midtown, D3232, that organised the event, where the chief guest was DG R Srinivasan.

Adding to the colourful and vibrant activity were warming up and Zumba sessions conducted by

Anytime Fitness. Every participant received a medal, a goodies bag and a gift voucher worth ₹750 from Reebok, apart from a sumptuous breakfast before they undertook this rigorous activity.

This year the cause was Cancer Care and the rally coincided with World Cancer Day. The club gave a token donation of ₹1 lakh to the Jeevan Stem Cell Foundation, which also works in the area of cancer. The rest of the money raised will be used for a good cancer project.

Peace and understanding

Usha added that the club has done another project which has got them a letter of appreciation from PRIP Gary Huang. She said promoting peace is one of the core objectives of Rotary. Each year, the birthday of Rotary is celebrated by Rotarians and Rotary

families as the World Peace and Understanding Day. As our world is afflicted by “little skirmishes, misunderstandings, communal clashes, regional differences, factionalism”, all of which have the potential to shatter world peace, her club decided to launch a project to promote world peace and understanding.

Believing that global peace begins with each one of us, Usha and past president Ambalavanan of RC Madras Midtown teamed up to conceive a project of having Rotarians take a pledge to promote peace and rededicate themselves to the Four Way Test. It was decided to take such a pledge on the day the first Rotary meet was held in Chicago, Feb 23, 1905.

The project was launched by RI Director C Basker at the 3232 district conference in Chennai on Feb 18. ■



₹30 lakh in 90 days for End Polio Now

V Muthukumaran



TRF Trustee Chair Paul Netzel and Trustee Sushil Gupta receive the cheques from PDG Madhura Chatrapathy, DG Asha Prasanna Kumar, Rtn Prasanna Kumar and Srikanth M Chatrapathy at the CSR Conclave. Also seen: DGN Sameer Hariani (far left), PRID Manoj Desai, PDG (D 3131) Vinay Kulkarni, Rotarians Illavarasan, Prashanth, Shoba and PP Ramdas.

A special kind of magic that is unique to Rotary helped a dedicated team of Rotarians, Rotaractors and Interactors from RC Bangalore Down Town, D 3190, to mobilise around ₹30 lakh in just three months for the *End Polio Now* campaign.

Kicking off the collection drive in November 2017, the club members roped in Rotaractors from RVCE, an engineering college, and Interactors at MES Kishore Kendra and the Police Public School who trudged far and wide to mobilise funds and get the End Polio Pledge signed by the contributors. “We created an awareness on Rotary’s global efforts to end polio in and around Bengaluru. And the results are just unbelievable,” says Club President Raghu Allam. The End Polio Pledge Champion PDG Madhura Chatrapathy, along with her colleague PDG Srikanth Chatrapathy, started an online crowdfunding initiative on the

social media platform Ketto which netted ₹1 lakh for the cause.

Multiprong approach

Following an appeal from Allam to “contribute whatever amount possible”, club members pitched in for the *End Polio Now* funding drive. “While Rotarians gave ₹1.5 lakh, we were able to add another ₹50,000 from Rotaractors

and Interactors who went around shopping malls, college hostels and housing societies with enthusiasm to collect the money,” explains Allam. From the industrial sector, workers from four garment factories had pooled in ₹1.5 lakh and the real estate promoter Prestige Group donated ₹5 lakh for this cause. The balance amount of ₹50,000 was received from non Rotarians, thus making up the grand total of ₹10 lakh.

This was donated to TRF Trustee Chair Paul Netzel at the Rotary-CSR conclave in Bengaluru. DG Asha Prasanna Kumar presented a cheque for ₹20 lakh — twice the club’s contribution — for the Polio Fund at the same podium.

Allam added that juxtaposed against the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s commitment to match \$2 for every dollar raised, this fund will swell to an impressive ₹90 lakh.

The club members are jubilant that they were able to pull off this massive fund collection drive. ■

If you consider the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s commitment to match \$2 for every dollar raised, this fund will swell to an impressive ₹90 lakh.

Raghu Allam
President
RC Bangalore Down Town

A synergy of the stars

Team Rotary News



Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan being honoured by DG B M Sivarraj (second from right), RIPP Rajendra Rai, PDG Ulhas Kolhatkar and Manonmani Sivarraj.

A mega convention centre, erected on a 60,000 sq ft space at Raymond Grounds in Thane with a fully air-conditioned auditorium and exhibit area with 60 stalls, made the District Conference 3142 titled *Tarangan* one of the most talked about Rotary conclaves in the Greater Mumbai region.

While conferences under the combined District 3140 would be always held in Mumbai, representations from this region used to be thin due to the distance. Now the two-day DisCon hosted by RC Thane North End, the home club of DG B M Sivarraj, saw a participation of over 2,400 delegates.

Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan, the chief guest, lighted the ceremonial lamp, accompanied by DG Sivarraj, his spouse Manonmani, RIPP and PDG (3190) Rajendra Rai and his wife Rekha. Conference Chair Sandeep Salvi, host Club President Hemant Arora and spouse Sangeeta were also present.

Sumitra Mahajan dwelt on the concept of 'Service above Self' which compels Rotarians to look after the wellbeing and comfort of others in the community. "Many individuals may be doing this in some way or the other, but when you unite as an organisation, the service to society has much more impact, gets a different kind of strength and is holistic," she said. Acknowledging the presence of a large number of women, she said, "For building a strong society, women should always stand beside men; gone are the days of the maxim that says, 'Behind every successful man, there's a woman'. The time now is to walk together and the word 'behind' should be replaced with 'beside'. When you do things together, there is an extra bonding and you go the extra mile."

Focus on priority areas

Conveying the RI President's message, PDG Rajendra Rai said strengthening of the clubs, humanitarian projects and enhancing the public image of Rotary are the priority areas. He appreciated

the district clubs for taking up a number of community projects such as check dams, water and sanitation, toilet blocks, green initiatives, a blood transfusion and a limb centre. "Continue to work on your strengths; innovate and improve these projects," he said.

DG Sivarraj said the district had targeted 1,000-plus new members and 30 new clubs in this Rotary year. For a TRF he has set a target of \$3 million and plans to expand the reach of the District's service projects.

Swami Sukhabhodonanda, Shiv Khera and BVG India Chairman Hanmant Gaikwad were among the guest speakers. Sand artist Manisha Swarnkar's portrayal of Rotary at the start of the day gave a creative touch to the proceedings.

Among the keynote speakers from within and outside Rotary, were noted Gandhian Palam Kalyanasundaram and Union Minister for Commerce Suresh Prabhu, who made their presence through video messages as they could not make it to the conference. ■

Membership Summary

As on April 1, 2018

FIND A CLUB

ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD!





Get Rotary's free Club Locator app
and find a meeting wherever you go!

www.rotary.org/clublocator



Rotary at a glance

Rotarians	:	12,31,653
Clubs	:	35,748
Districts	:	539
Rotaractors	:	2,52,931*
Clubs	:	10,997*
Interactors	:	5,21,180*
Clubs	:	22,660*
RCC members:		2,24,549*
RCC	:	9,736*

* As on April 2, 2018

RI Zone	RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians	Rotaract Clubs	Interact Clubs	RCC
5	2981	112	4,644	222	60	225	170
5	2982	67	3,008	101	61	112	43
5	3000	126	5,271	453	292	661	195
4	3011	76	3,370	650	57	109	25
4	3012	87	3,425	667	70	129	55
5	3020	92	4,228	210	117	461	351
4	3030	92	5,063	625	81	310	164
4	3040	94	2,070	223	56	123	137
4	3053	73	2,785	425	17	47	94
4	3054	130	6,363	1,007	94	307	469
4	3060	98	4,203	446	61	122	132
4	3070	103	3,055	294	68	157	54
4	3080	77	3,324	224	73	216	108
4	3090	80	2,169	90	32	36	122
4	3100*	74	1,718	73	11	72	146
6	3110	115	4,039	316	51	49	104
6	3120	77	3,304	359	37	58	51
4	3131	131	5,534	1,116	111	279	80
4	3132	105	4,118	428	66	203	140
4	3141	89	5,425	1,165	120	252	81
4	3142	83	3,151	483	69	195	65
5	3150	98	3,630	362	93	229	109
5	3160	70	2,461	131	27	48	81
5	3170	127	5,636	406	59	308	161
5	3181	71	3,135	232	33	179	104
5	3182	83	3,414	258	36	274	91
5	3190	129	5,144	610	150	355	50
5	3201	140	5,231	319	100	131	47
5	3202	128	4,857	242	104	435	46
5	3211	137	4,487	270	12	89	123
5	3212	97	3,964	296	113	277	122
5	3231	68	2,887	120	54	196	237
5	3232	104	4,164	579	145	310	80
6	3240	87	3,038	350	61	147	152
6	3250	98	3,779	672	49	207	180
6	3261	68	2,513	295	16	102	42
6	3262	96	3,325	382	44	69	75
6	3291	146	3,821	716	81	131	590
India Total		3,728	145,753	15,817	2,781	7,610	5,076
5	3220	69	1,938	244	84	200	75
6	3271	81	1,463	254	52	16	13
6	3272	155	3,159	460	43	36	37
6	3281	205	5,854	833	230	85	186
6	3282	140	4,024	388	132	45	39
6	3292	114	4,449	673	122	115	108
S Asia Total		4,492	166,640	18,669	3,444	8,107	5,534

*Non-districted.

Source: RI South Asia Office



Rotary LN-4 camp in Darbhanga

Team Rotary News



A woman being fitted with LN-4 arm.

Rotary Club of Darbhanga, D 3250, organised a LN-4 artificial hand fitment

camp under the Gift of Mobility project. Held in partnership with RC Poona Downtown, D 3131, and S V Hospital,

the one-day camp at Adarsh Madhya Vidyalaya in Laheriasarai was inaugurated by Bihar Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Madan Sahni in the presence of legislator Sanjay Saraogi and DGN Gopal Khemka. “They were all happy that the artificial limb fitment camp is being held in Darbhanga for the first time in the history of Rotary India,” says Club President Dr Gowri Shankar Jha.

Over 100 people were fitted with LN-4 prosthetic hands (from below the elbow). Twenty-five doctor

Rotarians from the club participated in the camp, while two specialists plus a 7-member paramedical staff from the SV Hospital in Laheriasarai took care of the technical process of the LN-4 fitment. “We are pleased to see that the beneficiaries are able to write, drive vehicles and take care of their daily chores after being fitted with LN-4 limbs,” says Jha.

To make the LN-4 project a monthly feature, the club will be signing an MoU with RC Poona Downtown and SV Hospital by the end of April. ■

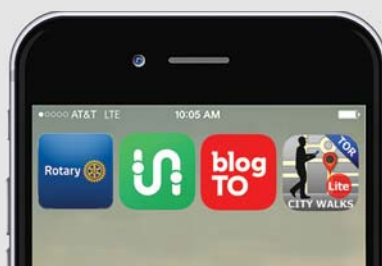
Convention

Whet your app-etite

Randi Druzin

Going to Toronto for the Rotary International Convention June 23–27? Download some useful free apps to help you get the most out of both the convention and the city itself. Here are a few apps to get you started.

Rotary Events is essential for navigating the convention. With it, you can plan your daily schedule, learn about featured speakers, and download session handouts. It can also help you connect with other Rotarians, share photos, rate sessions, and send feedback to convention organisers. The app will



be available for download on May 18; find it in your app store by searching for “Rotary Events”.

The Transit App helps users find their way around cities in 11 countries, including Canada. The app opens to the closest transit stops for buses, subways

and streetcars. Enter a destination address, and the app will provide the most direct transit route.

A Toronto-specific app called BlogTO will help you find the city’s best restaurants, bars and attractions, as well as events you might be interested in attending.

Toronto Maps and Walks takes you through self-guided walks that include world-famous attractions as well as some lesser-known sights.

**To register, go to
riconvention.org**

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Stories about stories

Sandhya Rao

Curious facts regarding the whys and wheres and how-in-heavens of books written and sold

I love the Swedish writer Astrid Lindgren. She wrote primarily for children, but for many years she worked as a books editor, and was also a fearless political commentator. An official Swedish website has an article by David Wiles headlined: “Astrid Lindgren spoke, people listened.”

Curiosity piqued, I scrolled the piece, and found this: “At the age of 68 she submitted an opinion piece to the Swedish daily *Expressen* on the subject of a loophole in the Swedish tax system, which meant that she, as a self-employed writer, had to pay 102 per cent tax on her income. Astrid wrote the piece in the style of a fairytale, and it had an immediate impact. ‘Pomperipossa in Monismania’, published in 1976, became front-page news and led not only to a change in the tax law, but eventually to the fall of the social democratic government that had been in power for 44 years.”

It appears that journalists would often ask her opinion on issues and print what she said. “Indeed,” Wiles writes, “she was so influential that

on the issue of Sweden’s proposed membership of the EU — which she opposed — the pro-EU press made a point of not talking to her.” Sweden, as we know, is part of the EU.

This was the same Astrid Lindgren who shot to fame with a book for children about a nine-year-old, freckle-faced, red-haired little girl called Pippi Longstrump. Translated into some 70 languages, including into Hindi as *Pippi Lambemoze*, when it was first published in the 1940s, the book so outraged ‘proper’ society that some people went to great lengths to have it proscribed. In recent times the third book in the series, *Pippi in the South Seas*, was pulled out of Swedish libraries apparently for its racist content. The interesting thing, though, is that the character, Pippi, was actually born in the imagination of Astrid’s daughter.

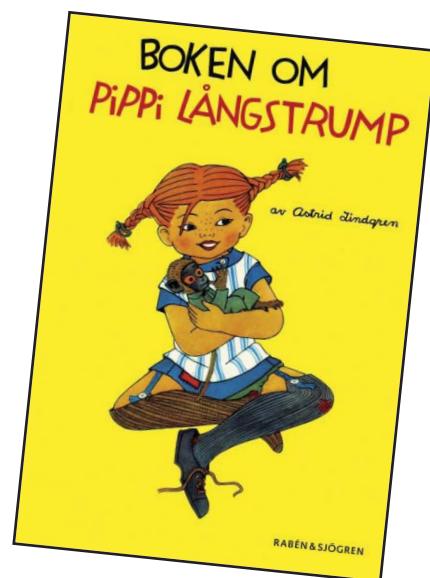
Karin was about 9 or 10, lying in bed sick and bored when she commanded her mother to “tell me a story about Pippi Longstrump”. The rest became history.

Equally dramatic is the story of author Amish Tripathi who shot

to fame with the Shiva trilogy: a re-imagined mythology of Shiva as a human being. Many years ago, I committed the ultimate sacrilege of declaring to a bunch of 14/15-year-olds that I didn’t like the books (*The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas*, *The Oath of the Vayuputras*). Predictably, they were outraged. But for the fact that Indian teenagers (back then, at least) tend to be well behaved, I would have been lynched on many counts.

From all accounts, Amish Tripathi had put in place a terrific marketing strategy, thanks to the efforts of his wife, Preeti. At the launch of his first book, *The Immortals of Meluha*, Preeti suggested that bookstores offer customers free copies of the first chapter. This caught the readers’ fancy; naturally they bought the book, and within a week or so, it became a bestseller. Now, with many more books to his credit, Tripathi is assured both a loyal readership and the sale of his books in millions.

Okay, so these are modern times. How about ancient times? How about *Ramayana*-times, for instance? Dated around 500 BCE, *Ramayana* is attributed primarily to Valmiki who wrote the epic in Sanskrit. Valmiki’s *Ramayana* is popularly regarded as the ‘original’.



I have many writer friends
who get offended when they're
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the story. I don't. Imagination
doesn't fall from the sky; you
have to work with something.

**Chimamanda
Ngozi Adichie**

However, there are records of some 300 versions of Ramayana: in Tamil by Kambar, called *Kamba Ramayana*; *Ramcharitmanas* by Tulsidas in Awadhi; *Bhavartha Ramayana* in Marathi by Eknath; *Krittivasi Ramayana* by Krittibas Ojha in Bengali, and so on. There are folk, tribal and classical versions, as also the Thai *Ramakien*, the Khmer *Reamker*, and the Lao *Phra Lak Phra Lam*, among others.

How Valmiki became Valmiki after having been born Ratnakar is a tale in itself. It appears he was a robber. One day, he was advised by a wise man to turn over a new leaf. Upon introspection, Ratnakar realised that the reason for his becoming a robber was to feed and fend for his family. So, following the meeting with the wise man, he said to his wife and children: Seeing as you are happy to live off what I get by robbing, can I assume that you would be willing to take on a share of my sins too?

His wife and children demurred and Ratnakar was shocked. As the truth sunk in he realised what he needed to do. He found himself a good spot and started to meditate on matters of a more profound nature. He went into a trance and became oblivious to the termites that began to construct an anthill around him. That's how he earned the moniker Valmiki — from 'valmik' which in Sanskrit is the word for termite.

When the 1,037-page *Gone With The Wind* was first published in 1936, it cost all of a princely three dollars. Accounting for annual inflation, internet resources and calculators suggest that its equivalent today would be about \$54! Not exactly a cheap read! According to an article written by Edwin McDowell in the *New York Times* in 1981, at one time it seemed as though the book would not be published because the author herself had given up after working on it for three years. Macmillan editor Harold S Latham recalls a meeting in the lobby of his hotel in Atlanta in 1935: "...there, sitting on a divan, was Margaret Mitchell, and beside her was the biggest manuscript I had ever seen. The pile of sheets reached to her shoulders. She rose and said: 'Here, take the thing before I change my mind.' And guess what? Hidden among those pages was Pansy, not Scarlett O'Hara!

Why was Margaret Mitchell reluctant to show her manuscript? McDonnell says that "she said of her reluctance... 'I just couldn't believe that a Northern publisher would accept a novel about the war between the states from the Southern point of view'."

Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in an interview to *Salon* once said, "I have many writer friends who get offended

There, sitting on a divan, was
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Macmillan Editor
Harold S Latham



when they're asked about the story behind the story. I don't. Imagination doesn't fall from the sky; you have to work with something. My fiction borrows from my life, but even more so from the lives of other people."

Yes, stories behind stories are fascinating. Check out your favourite authors online and I promise you will be pleasantly surprised. Amitav Ghosh is among my favourite writers. Many people find his Ibis trilogy about the opium trade between India and China, and the East India Company, heavy going (*Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, *Flood of Fire*). I agree, it's not easy, but the world he recreates and how he recreates it is amazing. This is what Jash Sen quoted him as saying in *Scroll.in*: "One of the greatest compliments I have ever received is from my friend and wonderful author, the late Sunil Gangopadhyay, who when releasing a novel of mine, said, "*E to dekchhi bangla boi, shudhu ingrijite lekha!* (But this is a Bengali book, only written in English!)"'. It couldn't have been said better.

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

An anti-ageing pill called exercise

Sheela Nambiar

There are two aspects to ageing. Your chronological age is the calculated number of years you have lived. Your biological or “real” age refers to the current condition of your physiological body at its very basic cellular level. These two are not necessarily one and the same. An individual may be chronologically 30, but might have the body and mind of a 55-year-old. He could be overweight, lethargic, with poorly conditioned muscles, poor memory, productivity and low stamina. He may be stressed, depressed, with a laundry list of medical conditions and pills to manage them.

On the contrary, someone could be 50 years old chronologically but have an actual age of a 35-year-old in terms of energy, stamina, strength, and pure *joi de vivre*.

Factors that ascertain your Real or Biological age

These are blood pressure, heart rate and other metabolic parameters such as blood sugar and cholesterol, eyesight, lungs, heart, vocal cords, skin turgor, energy levels, physical appearance, condition and tone of your muscles, mental acuity, memory, level of independence, fat percentage, lean body mass and fitness levels (cardio vascular endurance, flexibility, strength, agility, reflexes, balance, coordination and so on).

Your “real” or biological age

Of course genes set the stage for a good or poor quality body.

But lifestyle choices are the ultimate predictors of the ageing process. However good your genes, if you subject your body to stressors such as tobacco, alcohol, drugs, poor lifestyle choices on a daily basis like unhealthy food and lack of proper exercise, rapid ageing is imperative. It is said that your genes load the gun but your lifestyle pulls the trigger.

Here are some lifestyle measures that can arrest and even reverse the ageing process:

- Eat right – Eat food rich in anti-oxidants, minerals, vitamins and fibre. Fruits, vegetables, berries, nuts, seeds and pulses provide protein and good quality fats. Avoid processed and refined food, tobacco and excessive alcohol.
- Exercise the right way – A well designed fitness routine should include cardio vascular activity such as running, speed walking, cycling or aerobic sessions. It should be balanced with a strength training routine to build muscle and a stretch routine to maintain flexibility of the muscles. Muscles being critical for movement need to be worked against resistance





(either an external weight or one's own body weight) to be maintained at an optimum or improved. They also need to be stretched to maintain elasticity.

Muscle atrophy (decrease) and frailty with age and disuse is the primary cause for lack of mobility. It affects performing even the most rudimentary tasks. Modalities like yoga and total body stretches keep the body limber, prevent pain and addresses poor posture due to muscle imbalance.

Exercise is most definitely the closest we have ever come to an anti-ageing pill. Expensive skin creams that promise wrinkle-free skin, cosmetic surgery, laser ablation, Botox etc. are only solutions to the superficial signs of ageing. They cannot come close to the benefits obtained from a regular heart pumping, well-planned exercise routine.

- Maintain your body weight – Weight gain with age is not inevitable. With the right nutrition and exercise, it is possible to maintain your body weight and in fact even improve the quality of your body.
- Manage stress – Stress is very much a part of our everyday lives. Eliminating it altogether is of course too much to expect. Managing stress effectively however is possible with meditation, relaxing techniques, time management and training the mind to handle situations and stress differently.
- Nurture a hobby/passion – Simple things like developing a hobby or even working on something you love and are passionate about can change one's perspective to ageing.
- Maintain strong relationships – Strong ties with family or close friends can be enormously rewarding experiences that add meaning to life.
- Sleep well – Sleep is not only restive but also restorative. Long-term sleep deprivation has been known to be associated with an increase in Type 2 diabetes, obesity, hypertension, depression and even memory and attention problems. Work related sleep dysfunction (such as in shift workers, doctors and nurses), poor sleep hygiene, stress, obesity, overeating near bedtime, can all lead to poor sleep. Good quality sleep is closely related to a good quality, productive life.

To evaluate your Real age, ask the following questions

- Do you enjoy life? Do you look forward to the new day?
- Do you have strong, nurturing relationships?
- Do you enjoy the work you do?
- Do you exercise regularly, sleep well and eat healthy?
- Are you excited to get out of bed in the morning? (Granted that sometimes some of us are too fatigued to register excitement and just wish for a few more moments of blissful sleep, but that is a different discussion altogether!)
- Do you feel you have purpose and meaning in life or are you drifting along wondering what to do?
- Are you passionate about some cause or hobby?

Evaluate your fitness

- Can you run or even walk up a flight of stairs and not feel like you are dying at the end (or middle) of it?
- Can you touch the floor standing up without bending your knees?
- How fast can you walk a mile and how quickly do you recover from the exertion? (Called the One Mile Walk test, this can be evaluated in a gym setting).
- What is your weight, fat percentage and your waist circumference?
- How many proper pushups and squats can you do?
- How much medication, besides basic supplements, sit on your table waiting to be consumed every day?

Ageing is the most natural process of the human body and certainly cannot be arrested altogether. It can however be done gracefully with every attempt made to remain independent and productive, even if only to oneself.

The author, an Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, is a fitness & lifestyle consultant, and has published two books: Get Size Wise;

Gain to lose.

www.drsheela.nambiar.com

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Dance of Life

Seetha Ratnakar

Have you ever watched the undulating waves of the sea, the gentle swaying of leaves in the breeze, the brilliant fireworks in the sky after a downpour, a resplendent dancing peacock, a flock of birds in flight or even a slithering snake and wondered about the marvelously orchestrated dance of nature? There is animation, rhythm and grace in every living creature and that applies to human beings too. The invisible choreographer has given us all a common beat — the heartbeat — and when we synchronise our thoughts and movements with this rhythm, it transforms into the dance of life. Voltaire's insightful message to the world was, "Let us read and let us dance; these two amusements will never do harm to the world."

Indian classical dance is a living art form that has been handed down orally from guru to sishya or teacher to student. John Ruskin commented, "Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts — the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art." In India we are the proud inheritors of a great encyclopedic treatise on arts, Bharatha's *Natya Shastra*, believed to have been written in 200 BCE, consisting of 6,000 poetic verses describes the performing arts. The ancient text emphasises that the primary goal of entertainment is to transport the audience into a realm where it experiences the essence of its own consciousness and reflects on spiritual and moral questions.

Classical arts enjoyed a highly respectable status in India as most of the rulers were great patrons of the arts. They used to appoint the best artists as court dancers, musicians

and poets and their collaborative work resulted in many great works. During the early 19th century, there were four talented brothers, Chinnaiah, Ponnaiah, Sivanandam and Vadivelu who excelled in the art of Bharatanatyam. Popularly known as the Thanjavur Quartet, they were employed in the courts of the Maratha king, Serfoji II in Thanjavur in the early 19th century and later moved to Travancore to work in the court of the poet/musician King Swati Tirunal. Their dance compositions are performed regularly even today and considered a yardstick to gauge the capability of the artist.

Music and dance were also an important part of temple rituals and worship and the custodians of this art were known as *Devadasis* or servants of God. When the country was invaded by foreign rulers, the court dancers were forced to become courtesans and the art that was once highly respected slipped into disgrace. During the British rule in 1930, the Devadasi Abolition Act was introduced and passed in 1947 and these dancers were banned from dancing in the temples. Many of them went into penury and classical dance almost became extinct. Fortunately, it survived due to the persistence of a few brave individuals and offspring



The Thanjavur Quartet of the 19th century: (clockwise) Chinnaiah, Ponnaiah, Vadivelu and Sivanandam.

Music and dance were also an important part of temple rituals and worship and the custodians of this art were known as *Devadasis* or servants of God.

of the talented devadasis who escaped to cities and became dance teachers and performers. Initially, only a few brave women from respectable families came forward to learn dance but they faced vehement opposition. It took the concerted efforts of stalwarts like T. Balasaraswati and Rukmini Devi Arundale, the Founder-Director of Kalakshetra School of Fine Arts, to garner support and re-establish respectability to this great art form. Thanjavur Balasaraswati is an iconic example of a seventh generation dancer from a traditional matrilineal family of temple dancers and musicians who braved many hardships to perform Bharatanatyam in the early 20th century and restore its lost prestige.

The journey to find acceptance and acclaim for dance has been arduous but today we can proudly say that it is regarded as a great classical art.

The diverse classical dances of India can broadly be divided into eight styles belonging to different regions of the country — Bharatanatyam from Tamilnadu, Kuchipudi from Andhra Pradesh, Kathakali and Mohini Attam from Kerala, Odissi from Odisha, Kathak from Uttar Pradesh, Manipuri from Manipur and Sattriya from Assam. The foundation of all the styles is based on the *Natya Shastra* but each one developed its own distinct identity as it incorporated the cultural ethos of its region. The dances are mostly based on themes from mythology, folklore

and stories of local interest that add to the regional flavour. They describe the customs, architecture, flora and fauna of the region while extolling the deeds and virtues of historical characters and presiding deities in places of worship. The songs range from ancient Sanskrit classics to contemporary writings in local languages and dialects.

The music is from the classical genre of that region and the accompanying instruments are the ones

traditionally used in concerts and rituals. The costumes are made from silks woven in the region and the jewellery and other adornments are also created locally giving an indigenous touch. These traditions have been carefully preserved and handed down from teacher to student for generations and every classical dancer makes a conscious effort to remain true to them.

I was fortunate to learn Bharatanatyam along with my sister,

Rathna (Papa) Kumar under the direct tutelage of 'Kalaimamani' K J Sarasa, who hailed from a Devadasi lineage. She honed our dancing skills in the traditional classical repertoire and we had the privilege of performing all over India and abroad. I had to give up dancing more than four decades ago but my sister continues to dance and teach in the US at her *Anjali Center for Performing Arts* in Houston, Texas, for the past 43 years. She continues to propagate our rich cultural heritage by passing on this great tradition to create a future generation of dancers.

In recent years, more dance forms from different regions are being included in the classical genre, like Vilasini Natyam from Andhra Pradesh, Mayurbhanj Chhau from

Initially, only a few women from respectable families came forward to learn dance but they faced vehement opposition. It took concerted efforts of stalwarts like T Balasaraswati and Rukmini Devi Arundale to give respectability to this great art form.





The foundation of all the styles is based on the Natya Shastra but each one developed its own distinct identity as it incorporated the cultural ethos of its region.



Rukmini Devi Arundale, founder of the Kalakshetra Foundation.

Odisha, Purulia Chhau from West Bengal and Seraikella Chhau from Jharkhand. Adhering to tradition has been the core strength for preserving the pristine beauty of these vibrant dance forms for so many centuries.

As dance spreads from regional to national to global it is evolving to become more inclusive by erasing linguistic and religious borders and finding acceptance with an international audience. Today, every genre of creative expression is respected, and tradition and experimentation can coexist in complete harmony. Osho puts it succinctly, "To be creative means to be in love with life. You can be creative only if you love life enough that you want to enhance its beauty, you want to bring a little more music to it, a little more poetry, a little more dance." Let us strive for a little more understanding of dance and a better appreciation of the aesthetics to become enlightened Rasikas or connoisseurs who enhance the beauty of this world.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



RC Kumbakonam East — D 2981

Over 20,000 seed balls were given to students of Cholapuram Government Higher Secondary School to incite interest in them to grow plants and create environment awareness in them.

RC Salem Cosmos — D 2982

A toilet block was inaugurated at a government primary school in the suburb through a global grant executed with RI District 5330, US, RC Salem Central and TRF. The project cost ₹4 lakh.



RC Indrapuram Pariwar — D 3012

A battery-operated cyclickshaw costing ₹1.40 lakh was donated to Raja Babu who had lost a limb in a rail accident during childhood. Though orthopaedically challenged, he is a successful cricketer who plays for Kanpur.



RC Karur Amaravathi — D 3000

A medical camp was organised for the autorickshaw drivers of Karur town. RI Director C Basker inaugurated the event which benefitted over 200 auto drivers. The project cost ₹65,000.



Matters

RC Kothapeta — D 3020

Hearing and speech therapy was organised at a special camp for the differently-abled persons. Over 100 people took part in the camp with Appatha Speech and Hearing Clinic screening patients. Hearing aids were given for the needy at a subsidised cost.



RC Gwalior Central — D 3053

Benches and desks were donated to the club's adopted government school to help children have proper seating in classrooms. Club President Shyam Agarwal and IPDG Bhupendra Jain and academician Anita Agarwal were present at the occasion.



RC Bundi — D 3054

A multi-specialty medical camp was organised on the occasion of legislator-cum-Rtn Ashok Dongra's birthday in which 21 doctors provided treatment for 3,500 patients. Medicines were also given to the needy.



RC Udhampur — D 3070

An eye camp was organised at Panchayat Ghar in Thathi village in Gurdaspur district. Over 170 patients were screened. Twenty of them were operated at the Rotary Eye and ENT Hospital for cataract.



RC Barabanki — D 3120

The club felicitated Mira Verma, a boutique owner, on International Women's Day for her efforts in training women in tailoring and dress designing.



RC Mumbai Malabar Hill — D 3141

The Rotarians celebrated Makar Sankranti with cancer-affected children at St Jude India Child Care Centres at Cotton Green and Sewri in Mumbai. Last year, the club donated ₹1.80 crore for building two floors to provide accommodation for 24 families.



RC Bidar New Century — D 3160

The club donated 30 umbrellas and water bottles to roadside cobblers to help them combat the summer heat. AG Baswaraj Dhannur sponsored the umbrellas.



RC Puttur Swarna — D 3181

A safe driving campaign was launched in Puttur town, Karnataka, in partnership with Hindustan Petroleum, with the unveiling of a poster. DG Suresh Chengappa and HPCL-DGM Vasant Rao jointly launched the campaign. Pamphlets were distributed at toll booths.



RC Mudigere — D 3182

Smart classes were installed at five government schools in and around the town as part of the Happy Schools project. The teachers expressed their gratitude for the facility as these will encourage children to attend school..



RC Bangalore Whitefield Central — D 3190

A 3-km Peace Walk was organised to mark RI's 113th anniversary and the event was support by nine clubs. DG Asha Prasanna Kumar led this walk with over 200 Rotarians. End Polio placards and banners were carried to enhance Rotary's public image.



Matters



RC Cochin Milan — D 3201

Rotarians joined hands with an NGO Anbodukochi to clean a pond near the Durbar Hall in Cochin. Sewage and accumulated filth were removed and people were sensitised on the need to take care of the water body. District Collector K Mohammed Y Safirulla launched the programme.



RC Sivakasi Sparkler — D 3212

A youth festival titled *Sparklin Star* was organised for school students in Virudhunagar district. Over 600 students from 25 schools took part in events such as clay modelling, flower arrangement, Sudoku, GK test, fancy dress, dance contest and fashion show.



RC Vellore North — D 3231

The club installed a sanitary napkin incinerator at the government higher secondary school in Vennampalli, near Vellore. Over 400 girl students will benefit from this hygiene project.



RC Katwa — D 3240

Benches were donated to Postgram FP School under the club's Happy Schools programme. Each member contributed ₹2,500 to present a bench as students were sitting on the ground till then.



RC Damoh — D 3261

A medical camp was held for children in Damoh at Madhya Pradesh. This thoughtful gesture was much appreciated and the Rotary image got enhanced by the programme.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran
Designed by L Gunasekaran



Creating Good Samaritans

Kiran Zehra

Sneha Thomas instructs her friend to dial 108 for the ambulance, even as she bends over a dummy body, compressing the chest and giving a mouth-to-mouth resuscitation into its inflatable chest cavity. The scene was part of a mock drill in providing basic first aid in case of an emergency which was held at the Bhavans Vidya Mandir school in

Kochi. “Someday, this could be a real-life scene and knowing what to do before the ambulance arrives will make a huge difference between life and death,” says Sneha, a student of the school, who attended the Samaritan Programme — a complete orientation course on how to save lives in traumatic situations. This joint initiative of RC Cochin West, D 3201, VPS Lakeshore Hospital,

Kochi and the Kochi City Police is the brainchild of the Club President Ajith Kumar Gopinath.

Having lost a friend suddenly triggered the need for educating people about emergency trauma care. “My friend choked to death while having dinner at a restaurant. Later the doctors said that she could have been saved if someone had revived her heartbeat and given

A student gets trained in administering mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.





Police personnel getting trained in lifesaving techniques.

a mouth-to-mouth resuscitation immediately. Unfortunately, the majority of us do not know much about this. Knowledge in basic first aid is very important for us to help save precious lives,” says Gopinath, who is now championing the Project Samaritan among school students and the general public in Kochi.

Along with Dr Arun Oomen, a neurosurgeon at the Lakeshore hospital and Dr Nazer Chandy, an orthopaedic surgeon, he designed a three-level course that imparts knowledge on life saving skills that can be done by anybody; it requires no equipment or money. It aims to increase emergency preparedness in schools and public places and enhance people’s support in emergency situations. In short, “this audio/visual class, with the help of a mannequin, inspires participants to

use every opportunity to save a life,” says Gopinath.

The programme has trained 9,000 students in over 40 schools in Level-1 and nearly 500 students in Level-2. “Children take to this skill like ducks to water,” observes Esther Agnes, the Principal of Vidyodaya School at Thevakkal, where the programme was conducted earlier. “They love to learn and pay keen attention. Besides, this programme is encouraging behaviour change.” It will also benefit others at home, in school and the larger community. The programme also trained 50 teachers of the Kendriya Vidyalaya schools across six cities in the country.

Recently, the club extended the programme to the city traffic police, many of whom “did not even know how to check the pulse. and they are among the first to reach an accident/emergency site on a highway,” says Gopinath.

A full day certificate training programme was conducted at the Lakeshore hospital for 102 members comprising

If someone falls sick, and becomes unresponsive, there should be someone who can rise up to the situation and be smart enough to act fast and right.

the police, autorickshaw drivers and construction labourers, which was greatly appreciated by Police Commissioner MP Dinesh.

Says Gopinath, “If a person falls sick and becomes unresponsive, or suffers a heart attack, there should be someone who can rise up to the situation and be smart enough to act fast and right. This programme enables everyone to jump in and respond positively to such emergencies.”

From choking to heart attack, and 19 such situations, the Good Samaritan Programme teaches the proper steps to be executed to save a life. “Saving a life is beautiful. But it has to be done right. That is the key to being a good Samaritan” he concludes. ■



Why should batsmen have all the fun

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

The sight of grown men weeping on TV because they have won or lost a match is very irritating. Cricketers, in particular, seem very prone to it. Vinod Kambli crying in Kolkata, Kapil Dev crying when defending himself about match fixing, Inzamam ul-Haq shedding tears when he got out in his last innings, the entire Bangladesh team breaking down when they lost the final of the Asia Cup, the entire South African team crying when they lost to New Zealand... it is an annoyingly long list.

The latest additions to this Cry Baby Hall of Fame are three Australian cricketers. However, there is a difference: they were weeping not because they had won or lost; they were weeping because they had been caught on camera tampering with the ball. I doubt, though, if they were crying because they had colluded to 'change the condition of the ball' as it is defined. More likely, it was because they had been caught and pilloried. For a similar transgression in England in

The latest additions to this Cry Baby Hall of Fame are three Australian cricketers who were weeping when caught on camera tampering with the ball.

the 18th century they would have been shipped off to, yes, Australia which was a penal island then.

This definition of ball tampering — 'attempt to change the condition of the ball' — has always perplexed me. I mean, if batsmen can tamper with the bat — heavier and more curved ones — why can't bowlers tamper with the ball? Indeed, a batsman, if he is cussed, can change his bat for every ball bowled thus using six bats per over, and even more if there are wides! So why not let the bowler use six different balls per over? Going a step further, there could even be three red ones and three white ones, all of which came in different states and the bowler could choose any combination he likes. That would stop ball tampering for good as the match would be not be tilted in favour of the batsmen.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has, in any case, allowed two balls to be used in the 50 over format, one from each end. So each ball is used only for 25 overs, thus reducing the need to 'change its condition'. I want to add a slight modification to this: why not allow red and white balls, one from each end? That will reduce the disproportionate bias in batsmen's favour and eliminate the fielding side's urge to tamper with the ball.

Some years ago Sachin Tendulkar had suggested that the 50-over game be played in two innings of 25 overs each. Had his suggestion been accepted by the ICC, the match would be played with four balls per team, which too would have reduced the need to scratch it or grease it or spit

Some years ago Sachin Tendulkar had suggested that the 50-over game be played in two innings of 25 overs each. But television didn't buy the idea.

sugar coated saliva on it or rub Vaseline from the eyebrows. But television didn't buy the idea.

There are two other things I don't understand. One is about the restrictions on players altering the state of the pitch — you can't make indentations with your boots near the two creases lest a spinner gets the batsman out, how dare he? But there are none on the way the wicket is prepared in the first place. Result: there is no standardisation in the way there is for the ball whose weight, colour and seam height are all regulated.

Secondly, there is no restriction on the distance of the boundary which, thanks to TV's hunger for big hits, has shrunk over the last 15 years. In the past, it used to be 70 yards on an average; now it is barely 55. This has made it easier for the batsmen to hit sixes. Why can't this also be standardised?

That said, there is no reason to feel very sorry for bowlers. It always evens out in the end. After all, in IPL, even mediocre bowlers earn as much as a lakh per match — for bowling just four overs! ■

In Brief

Royal donations for this NGO

Mumbai-based Myna Mahila Foundation is one of the seven charities that will benefit from donations to mark the wedding of Prince Harry and Megan Markle. The royal couple has requested guests who will be attending their wedding in May, to give aid to charities they support, instead of gifts. The NGO employs women from slums to manufacture and sell low-cost sanitary pads in the communities they hail from, and in the process, it also seeks to break taboos surrounding menstrual hygiene.



For the cause of Siachen soldiers

Sumeedha and Yogesh Chithade have set an example by selling their jewellery to raise ₹1.25 lakh to help set up an oxygen-generation plant at the Siachen glacier for the benefit of Indian soldiers who maintain vigil, braving frosty winds, tough terrain and thin oxygen levels. At 22,000 feet above sea level, it is the world's highest battleground. The plant which will be used by the Army to refill oxygen cylinders will cost around ₹1.1 crore. Sumeedha is the mother of an Army major and has experienced the harsh weather during her brief stay at the Siachen base camp.

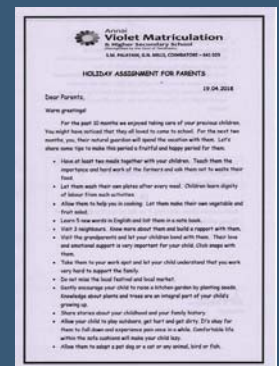
'Third gender' column in PAN card

The Central Board of Direct Taxes has amended the application form for PAN card to include a check-box — the 'Third gender' — besides the 'Male' and 'Female' check-boxes. After the Supreme Court ruling in 2014 to grant equal and legal status to transgenders, Aadhaar application forms included the third category. The ruling came in answer to a petition filed by a transgender Reshma Prasad who could not register her start-up because of the mismatch in the gender mentioned on her PAN and Aadhaar cards.



Holiday homework for parents

While schools generally give holiday homework for students, a Chennai school has sent out a heartwarming list of 17 holiday assignments to parents. This has gone viral on the social media. The list includes activities to encourage better bonding with their wards, teach important values and life lessons that families are losing out while inching towards a more technologically advanced lifestyle. The school has also called for photographs of the activities which the children are required to submit when the school reopens.



Air taxis to beat the road traffic

For those of us whose imagination works overtime to have an air taxi transport us to our destination when we get stuck in traffic, Volocopter, a German company, will soon be providing an answer through flying taxis. The company has tested them out recently in Dubai. There will be rooftop 'Volo-ports' similar to the subway stations. About 1,000 passengers are expected to board and disembark from their own flying taxis every hour. Robots will replace the batteries of the taxis after each ride as the aircraft can fly for a maximum 17 miles, with a flight time of 30 minutes. While the prototype is expected to be ready by 2019, it will take another 10 years for the actual system to be functional.





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