

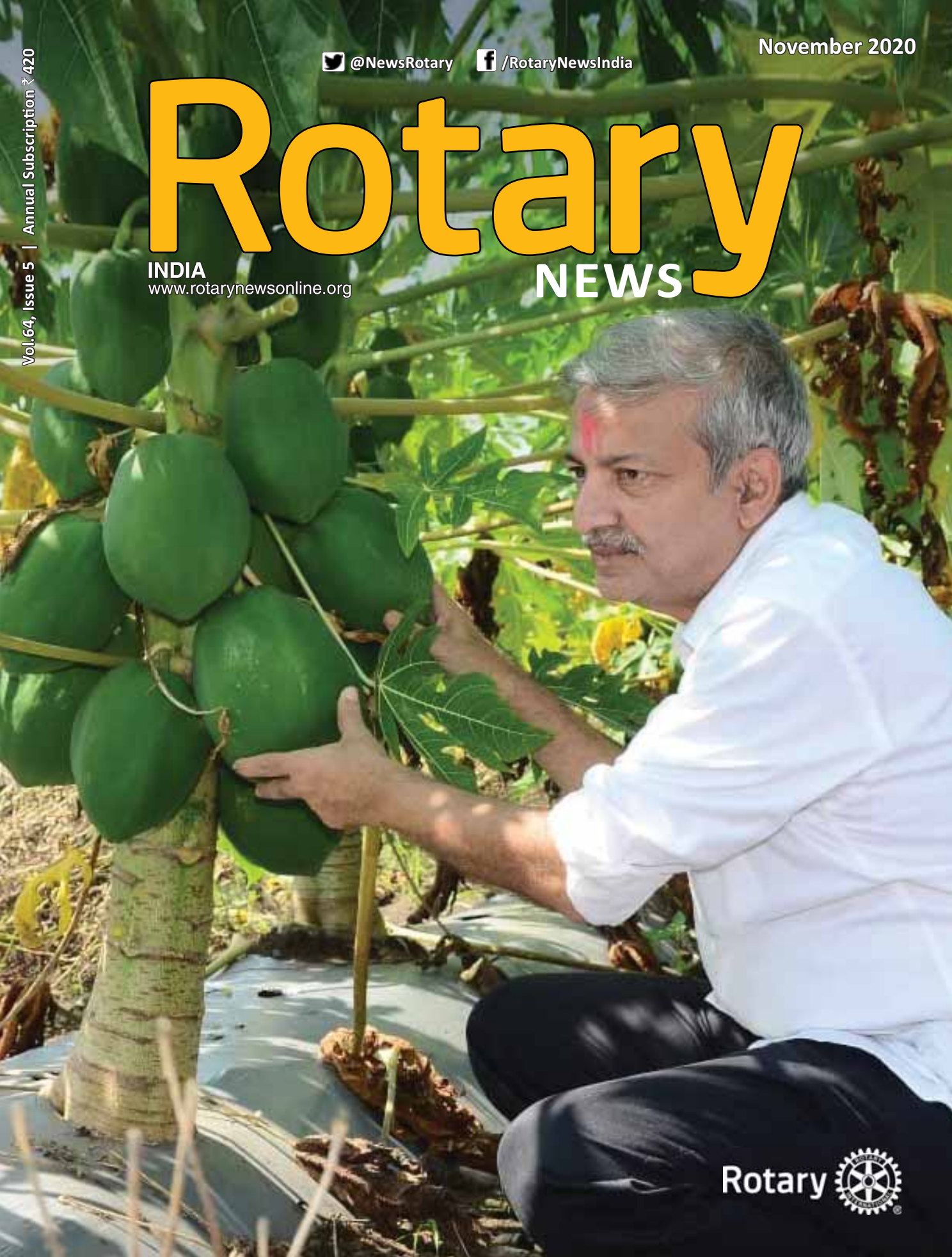


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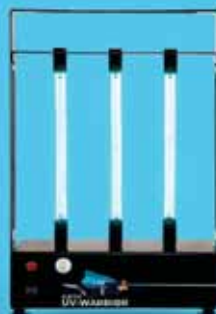


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On the cover: Social activist Mayank Gandhi at a farm in Parli village in Maharashtra.



The genius called Muhammad Yunus

Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus' vision of society is astounding. Job opportunities for migrant and informal workers, microcredit and a vaccine for the larger public good are some of the interesting issues he touched upon. RIPE Shekhar Mehta rightly asked what more Rotary could do for the underprivileged.

G R Baskaran, RC Virudhunagar
Elite — D 3212



their bereavement. The *Sakhsham Bharat* project aimed to create skills for jobless is admirable. The article on OP Khanna's service proves there are still good people in the world. Happy to read the article on Kishore Kumar.

Kudos to Hari Kishan Valmiki for supplying five lakhs eggs through his egg bank to underprivileged children. It is a pity that India is ranked 102 among 117 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2019.

I am happy to note that Africa being certified polio-free and Jennifer Jones will be RI president for 2022–23. Articles on Lata Mangeshkar and RID 3211 inducting a record 361 members are noteworthy.

Philip Mulappone M T, RC Trivandrum
Suburban — D 3211

The October cover story, where Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus rightly states that "returning to the pre-pandemic world would be committing suicide," is worth reading. PRIP Rajendra Saboo's tribute to the late PRID Yash Pal Das, saying that "commitment was his religion" is apt. He was a leader of integrity and charisma. I was touched by your statement in the edit that he would always greet the RNT staff at the Board meets.

Nan Narayenen, RC Madurai West — D 3000

Muhammad Yunus has given noble ideas, including the need for a vaccine for common good, eradication of poverty and unemployment post-Covid. RI President Holger Knaack's message is meaningful. The editor has shown adorable interest on the plight of millions of migrant workers. Condolences to the late Yashpal Das family on

Muhammad Yunus has advised us not to return to a pre-corona world, and his suggestions on treating migrants as mini entrepreneurs wonderful. This genius with his compassion and rich experience deserves our congratulations. The October issue, with features such as *Club Hop*, *News in Brief* and RID messages, is interesting. All the articles are presented excellently giving me joy while reading. Keep up this style.

S Mohan, RC Madurai West — RID 3000

The first RI woman president

It was heartening to read about the nomination of Jennifer Jones as the first ever RI woman president for 2022–23. The article *When the mouse roared* was impressive and Indian Rotarians' journey to the Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara was heartwarming. The series on great Indian singers by SR Madhu is a gift for music lovers.

Santosh Tiwari, RC Jalna — D 3132



I loved two articles — the election of PDG Jennifer Jones as RIPN (2022–23); great news that Rotary is finally going to have a woman president. The role of PDG Sylvia Whitlock has been well covered. Her courage to challenge Rotary is commendable. My club too is going to have the first woman president after 53 years.

The second article, on the Rotary Hooghly Eye Hospital founded 20 years back, was well-written. A new retina specialty unit was inaugurated

by RIPE Shekhar Mehta through a zoom meet recently.

R K Bubna, RC Belur — D 3291

A delightful piece on Kishore Kumar

It gave me deep pleasure to read the article on legendary Kishore Kumar. In Rotary, we respect and honour talent from different fields like music. Words like sensuality, raw desire and Kishore tsunami embellish the narration. With no classical training, he could reach the peak.

Sunil Kayal, RC Rourkela
Central — D 3261

I read the September issue from beginning to end in one sitting.

LETTERS

The article on Kishore Kumar was informative and interesting. Apart from other Rotary articles, it's a pleasure to read such articles. Keep up the good work.

Brij Khandelwal, RC Madras Central — D 3232

Kishore Kumar, the delightful yodeller, was interesting. We're happy he was from Khandwa and never forgot to mention the place of his birth at every music programme. To honour him an auditorium was built in his name here.

*Anil Baheti
RC Khandwa — D 3040*

Thank you for the article *Tribal students get opportunity to interact with top tech professionals*. The content was impressively written. This motivates us to do more work.

*Anil Kumar S
RC Secunderabad West — D 3150*

Admirable egg banks project

Rtn Hari Kishan of RC Secunderabad has mooted the amazing idea of creating egg banks for underprivileged children. The legal fight of RC Duarte and the progress of women in Rotary was captured well. The warning by RI general secretary John Hewko on declining membership in the US, UK, Canada, Australia causes concern.

When an eye hospital rejuvenated a Rotary club by Jaishree is motivational and depicts the determination of the club to survive. *Rotary News Plus* is indeed a great concept. It allows us to read about many projects that different clubs undertake successfully.

*Capt V G Deodhar
RC Nasik — D 3030*

Rasheeda Bhagat's cover story *Reaching eggs to the nutritionally deficient* was inspiring. Rtn Hari Kishan

Valmiki's work is admirable. Congrats to RC Hooghly for taking up a great eye care project. Kiran Zehra's article, *Rotary paints India green...* was superb. *The Empress of Melodies* by SR Madhu was fantastic. Thanks to Team Rotary News for the good work which has elevated the magazine to global standards.

*Daniel Chittilappilly
RC Kaloor — D 3201*

I was astonished to see Indian Rotarians travelling to Kartarpur, Lahore, with great interest, as it set aside animosity and hatred. Only Rotary can take up such initiatives, overcoming barriers of boundaries. Jai Rotary!

Tomi Eapen, RC Alleppey — D 3211

Rotary News has become a magazine par excellence, and I have become an addict as I keep waiting to receive a copy every month. My compliments to Rotarians for taking up the Covid challenge head-on; RID Kamal Sanghvi has rightly said "if you want to empower societies and reduce poverty, educate girls."

The global figures on illiterate children is alarming and Rotarians have rolled up their sleeves to educate them. True service can be seen through *Project Saksham* of RC Nagpur Fort, that gives hope to underprivileged children. The magazine is studded with beautiful articles.

*Raj Kumar Kapoor
RC Roopnagar — D 3080*

Covid warrior Dr Chandrashekar Kolvekar, a PDG from RID 3142,

who treats patients and helps front-line workers by distributing PPE kits deserves congratulations.

N Jagatheesan, RC Eluru — D 3020

RID Kamal Sanghvi has stressed on child literacy and adult education under RILM. This is a tremendous effort of Rotary as education plays a key role in developing the personality of a human being. The Asha Kiran programme will help to make India literate.

*Naveen R Garg
RC Sunam — D 3090*

RI President Holger Knaack has rightly turned his focus on Rotaract clubs. In RID 3000, there are more than 50 Rotaract clubs and many more will be opened in colleges and institutions. I am happy that Jennifer Jones is nominated as RI president; more women will follow in the coming years I am sure. She has rightly placed emphasis on women's membership and we will all join hands with her in fulfilling our common goals.

S Muniandi, RC Dindigul Fort — D 3000

Kudos to the editor and her team for bringing out excellent news and photographs every month. I look forward to the Editor's Note which is timely and informative. The articles on Indian Rotarians' travel to Pakistan and the induction of 361 Rotarians were great to read. Kudos to Africa for being certified polio-free.

*Bharat Merchant
RC Bombay Seaface — D 3141*

We welcome your feedback. Write to the Editor:
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Mail your project details, along with hi-res photos,
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Click on **Rotary News Plus** in our website
www.rotarynewsonline.org to read about more Rotary projects.



Diversity, equity must drive clubs

We all know Rotary's tremendous power to transform our communities and ourselves. However, in every community, people have been left out, and we have not made a strong enough effort to reach them.

The RI Board of Directors is taking action to make Rotary more welcoming and diverse. We formed a task force to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion to help clubs attract new members regardless of gender, race, religion, age, or other factors. This will help us speed up the change we all want and need. The selection of Jennifer E Jones as Rotary president for 2022–23 — the first woman to lead our organisation — is another step in this direction.

At the grassroots level, clubs drive inclusion and diversity. Alia Ali — who serves on the board of directors at the Big West Rotaract Multidistrict Information Organisation and is a Rotary Youth Leadership Awards alumna and past president of the Rotaract Club of Surrey-Newton, British Columbia — offers her perspective.

I still remember the relief I felt as a RYLA participant four years ago. I had finally found my people: people who cared as much as I did. All over the world, Rotary has the same heart. We serve our communities and take action where others feel paralysed by the size and scope of a problem.

Let's continue that spirit, especially when the conversation is difficult. Racism, prejudice and discrimination take on different forms but exist in every country, in every city, and in every person. How do we root it out?

As a diversity, equity, and inclusion consultant, I help organisations create a culture that empowers

and attracts everyone using the power of empathy. When we feel with others as if they were ourselves, we cannot hold prejudice in our hearts. When every child reminds you of your own child, when every woman or man reminds you of your mother or brother, you start seeing the world differently.

We can apply The Four-Way Test through the lens of empathy. Are we building goodwill and friendship with everyone in our area, including women? Are things fair and beneficial to people of all ages? Who has to make choices that you don't have to make?

I made a heartbreaking choice between Rotary and my religion when a Rotary convention was held during Ramadan. I wondered: When we ask if this is fair and beneficial to all concerned, did that not include me as a Muslim? Would the convention ever be held over Easter? Only by asking difficult questions can we begin the work of creating a more inclusive and diverse Rotary.

We already connect so many people across the world. Imagine the possibilities when we bring even more people along for the ride. That's the future of Rotary I want to see: one where we are unstoppable in our service, relentless in our kindness, and intentional in the change we want to see.

Rotary has a big enough heart. If we open our door wider, we might find a lot of interesting people with new voices and new perspectives. We already have a variety of clubs offering different styles, cultures and opportunities — and those who do not feel welcome in any particular club might be great candidates for new clubs created on different models. It's important that we make sure every new Rotary member is a good fit for their club. *Rotary Opens Opportunities* through diversity.



Alia Ali
Big West
Rotaract
Multidistrict
Information
Organisation



Holger Knaack
President, Rotary International



Our farmers and women need your help

Amidst all the hue and cry, confusion and controversy, and genuine concern about the likely adverse impact of the recent Farm laws enacted by the Government of India on India's small farmers, it was like a breath of fresh air to attend the webinar on agriculture organised by RI District 3141 PDG Rahul Timbadia. The webinar had two very reassuring takeaways. One was recounting the journey of social activist and former Aam Aadmi Party national executive member Mayank Gandhi, who has ushered in an agro-revolution in several villages in the Parli block of Beed district in the drought-stricken Marathwada region of Maharashtra. He chose Parli, he says, because farm distress here was phenomenal causing the highest number of farmers' suicides. Thanks to his relentless work during the last four years, and intervention through his management and organisational skills, the water table, once at 300–500 ft, has come up to 50–70 ft. By sourcing sturdy and best quality fruit saplings from the best nurseries of India, and advising farmers to plant fruit trees such as papaya, banana, *mosambi*, etc and adopting intercropping patterns for other crops, there has been an exponential growth in the income of farmers... from some ₹10,000–15,000 an acre to between ₹2 to 4 lakh an acre, and even more. Reverse migration from Mumbai and Pune is the result.

The second takeaway, in keeping with Rotary's seventh area of focus, greening our planet and conserving the environment is the passion of Timbadia. He wants to bring together like-minded urban affluent people

interested in agriculture, but with no time or expertise to pursue it, in community farming. This would enhance both their and local people's income and be good for India too. Read a detailed account of this wonderful initiative in our cover story this month.

While this is cheerful news indeed, what is gut-wrenching is the continued violence and sexual assaults against girls and women in India. Gang rapes are getting more brazen as well as common. What shook the entire nation last month was the brutal gang rape of a Dalit teenager — she was only 19 — in the Hathras village of Uttar Pradesh. Just like Nirbhaya, the brutally assaulted woman fought for her life for several days, first in an Aligarh hospital and then in Delhi, but finally succumbed to the grievous injuries. That her body was cremated without either the presence or consent of her parents and other relatives is a new low in suppression of and injustice against the weak and downtrodden. Now that Rotary, both internationally and in India, is in dogged pursuit of increasing its membership of women, and with Jennifer Jones nominated as the first ever RI woman president, there is little doubt that gender equity in India, and across the world, will get a big push in the community service work that Rotarians do. Add to this Rotary's central credo of zero tolerance for discrimination based on gender, caste, class, community or religion, hopefully Rotary clubs in India will give a little more thrust to projects that aim to educate, skill and empower underprivileged Dalit girls and women.

Just like our farmers, Indian women too need your help... to get educated and empowered.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Rasheeda Bhagat'.

Rasheeda Bhagat

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Message from

One-to-One



The Covid pandemic has changed everything — the way we have our Rotary meetings, our project implementation and fellowship activities. It has brought unique challenges to Rotary. In all this change, one thing remains

constant — our commitment to The Rotary Foundation (TRF), the backbone of Rotary. Much of the good work in Rotary is possible because of TRF. It is our investment for the future. Giving to TRF is a truly ‘effective giving’. Rotarians give to the Foundation because we know that our money is used wisely and well by our fellow Rotarians, and that together through TRF we can do much more than we could ever do alone.

The Foundation is the shining jewel in Rotary’s crown. It is the means, the instrument to work towards goodwill, understanding and peace. Global grants allow us to do large-scale, impactful projects across the world. The proactive and timely response of TRF in disbursing grants in this pandemic has further fuelled the demand on the world fund. And hence supporting the Annual Fund is critical and it depends on contributions from every Rotarian, every year.

Support to the Polio Fund is vital to fulfill our promise of a polio-free world. The End Polio Now campaign is not just about raising money; it is about saving our children. I request all Rotarians to open their hearts and support the Annual and Polio Funds. Remember, what you give may be a drop in the ocean; but without your drop the ocean will be incomplete. Your support today is vital for keeping TRF strong tomorrow.

There are three kinds of givers — one, like the flint which gives only when hammered and then yields only a small spark; those like a sponge that gives when squeezed but soon runs dry; and the third, like a honeycomb that gives freely and keeps giving. Rotarians are like a honeycomb. They give freely again and again.

Emerson has said, “To know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived, that is the meaning of success.” The Rotary Foundation is that Power of One — one Rotarian, one club and one district — multiplied several times.

We Rotarians can help rebuild, reshape and restore our communities. And a good way to do that is through TRF. As we connect with one another and as new opportunities open up before us, let us continue to support our Foundation. Together we can and we will change the world.

Dr Bharat Pandya
RI Director, 2019–21

RI Directors

The Rotary Foundation makes us proud

The needs in the world are greater and more diverse than ever before. Rotarians in our zones, and the entire Rotary world, can be proud that The Rotary Foundation, built through your contributions, is helping improve the lives of thousands of people across the globe. We should be proud that in the last few years our zones have emerged No 2 in giving to TRF. After “receiving” for years, India is now a “giving” country; last year we gave more than we received!

It is a matter of joy that Indian Rotarians are now teaming up with clubs overseas to do global grants in their countries. Pause to think of the phenomenal work made possible in so many communities in Rotary’s focus areas such as health and nutrition, water and sanitation, increased economic activity, promotion of peace, and best of all, literacy and education, because of the work that Rotarians do through Foundation grants. We have reached emergency aid to victims of natural disasters, through our immediate and generous contribution, done so many Covid projects, giving equipment to hospitals, the PM CARES Fund, etc.

In 2019–20, TRF sanctioned 339 grants worth \$29.71 million. While zone 4 got 104 grants worth \$12.21 million, zone 5 got 110 (\$8.17 million), zone 6,45 grants (\$2.76 million) and zone 7,80 grants (\$6.57 million).

By your generosity and the thousands of volunteer hours you have put in over the years, the Rotary wheel, our logo, stands proudly embedded in entire colonies we have built in Gujarat, Nepal, Uttarakhand etc. Through our numerous projects we have made a dent in reducing poverty and disease, improving sanitation, reducing conflict and giving lasting peace a better chance. And we have helped make India polio-free!

Consider the impact you can make; for as little as 60 cents, a child can be protected from polio; \$50 can provide clean water to help fight waterborne illness; \$500 can launch an anti-bullying campaign and create a safe environment for children. By giving to the Annual Fund, you make these life-changing projects possible so that together, we can keep doing good in the world.

For the 11th consecutive year, TRF has received the highest rating — four stars — from Charity Navigator, an independent evaluator of charities in US, for demonstrating strong financial health, accountability and transparency. Thank you.



Kamal Sanghvi
RI Director, 2019–21



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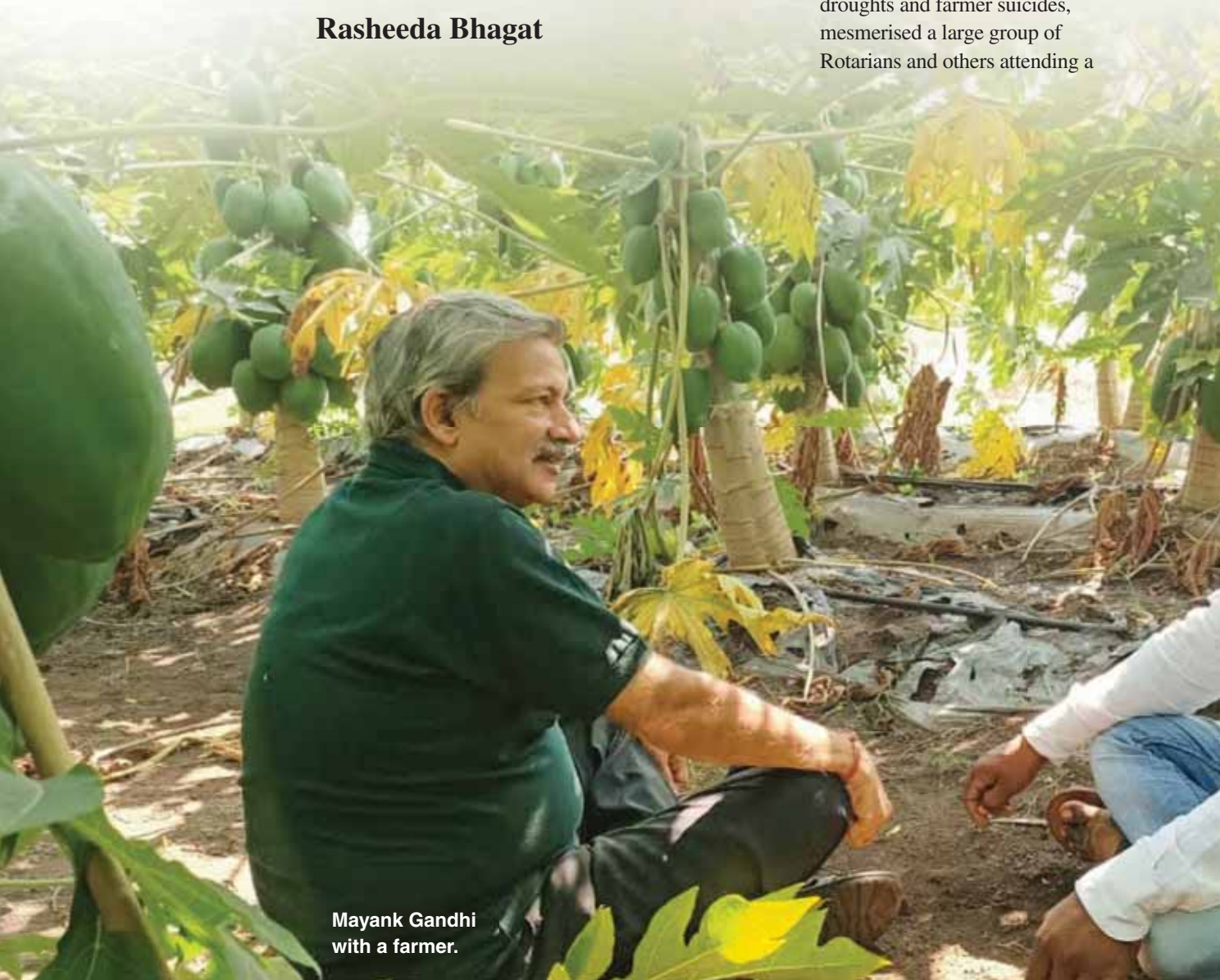
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Community Farming for a prosperous India

Rasheeda Bhagat

Any Indian village is like a multiple organ thing... if you work on the liver, the heart will, fail, if you work on the heart, the lung will fail. The life of the farmer who lives in that village is unpredictable. If I was a farmer, I would have got 10 heart attacks till now."

With these words, Mayank Gandhi, a social activist, who had brought a revolution of prosperity in the Parli region of Marathwada in Maharashtra, infamous for droughts and farmer suicides, mesmerised a large group of Rotarians and others attending a



Mayank Gandhi
with a farmer.

webinar titled ‘Shifting Paradigm: Agriculture, a great opportunity’, organised by RI District 3141 PDG Rahul Timbadia’s LaTim group.

Gandhi added that farmers face such a plethora of problems and challenges “that we, the town people, can’t even imagine.” These challenges are from the weather... too much rain or lack of it, insects attacking their crops, problems with the soil, and so on.

Let’s cut to the beginning of this social activist’s foray into agriculture and organising farmers, which has enabled many Parli farmers’ income jumping up from ₹10,000–15,000 a month

from 1–3 acres of land to ₹2–4 lakh, and sometimes even ₹6 lakh, from a bumper crop. Gandhi, who describes himself as “a madman who wants to change the country”, first worked with Anna Hazare, was a core committee member of the India Against Corruption movement and a national executive member of the Aam Aadmi Party.

In 2015 AAP won the Delhi elections with a thumping majority but slowly Gandhi realised that he was not suitable for the compromises and the internal fights that are inevitable in electoral politics, and quit politics.



A management expert thinks he knows everything, but I needed to go to a village to realise I don’t know anything, including Marathi, and first have to unlearn.

Mayank Gandhi

It was the summer of 2016, “and I still had the passion to change the country, but realised that I can’t change the whole country as I have no structure, no political party.” He always kept in mind Gandhiji’s words that the soul of India lives in its villages. “But there was so much poverty and pain in villages, and the villagers’ backbone was broken. The question that troubled him was that if the village and the villagers are not successful and strong, how will the country become so.”

He admits that wanting to change a country with 6.4 lakh villages was “total madness, so I thought let me take an area where maximum farmer suicides are reported. This was Marathwada in Maharashtra, with Beed district being the worst for farm distress... it is called Maharashtra’s Bihar.”

Again, in Beed, the worst hit area vis-à-vis farmer suicides was Parli taluk with 106 villages. “I also thought that against India’s irrigated area of 40 per cent, Parli’s area was only 1.72 per cent.” So he picked up the gauntlet. But the first block was



his being a “management consultant, who normally thinks he knows everything and just needs to change a little here and there. But I needed to go to a village to realise I don’t know anything, including Marathi, and first have to unlearn.”

It took him two years to get a grip over the way the economy of a village and farming works. “I didn’t know a village apart from the one I had seen in the film *Lagaan!*” The area used to get water through tankers, and he found here youngsters who hadn’t even tasted milk, and the monthly income of most villagers was ₹3,500. “I found that people were living because they had not died. That’s all.”

Realising that if you want to change a village, you require a





360 degree turnaround, Gandhi started, along with the local community by taking the bull by its horns. But first the villagers had to be convinced “why this man has come here from 530km away. He wants neither notes or votes, so why is he here was the suspicion. So first I had to convince them that I was a madman.”

A movement was required to transform Parli taluk, the way farming was done there and increase multifold the farmers’ income. But it couldn’t be a negative, confrontationist or destructive movement... and it couldn’t be like going to demolish a building without having a plan for the new building.

Thus was born his organisation Global Parli, and he started work in 15 villages. Gandhi explains that in the previous eight years, Parli had seen five famines. “Our first challenge was to provide water to these drought-hit villages and bring them back to their feet.”

When the drought situation in Marathwada hit the worst patch in 40 years with stored water going below eight per cent, and people faced a fourth consecutive drought, “we ended up supplying over one crore litres of water to the thirsty villagers of Beed.” After supplying water through tankers, the focus turned towards water utilisation and conservation, which was the primary and main challenge. A detailed survey of the Paapnaashi River was conducted and through persistent efforts, labour and



Mayank Gandhi riding on a bullock cart with a farmer.



Mayank Gandhi addressing the local community.

money, “we created 70km of the Paapnaashi river... perhaps that washed away my sins,” chuckles Gandhi. Along with that, 162 ponds and five big dams were created and as a result of these water conservation and augmentation, “the barren land started becoming green, water came, trees flourished and became a source of income and people got hope.”

Earlier they had no hope but water gave them hope and they felt we can do something. It became a people’s army, corrupt leadership at the gram panchayat level was replaced by young and women leaders. Earlier the villagers had to go down 300–500 ft to get water; but now got water at 50–70 ft.

Gandhi hastens to explain that there was neither donation nor charity. “We got money from the farmers and villagers who gave ₹13.5 lakh, the remaining came from government and friends.

The message was clear. We are not giving charity but just lending a shoulder.”

Soon his support base swelled to an army of people with the mantra ‘Let’s change lives’. “People started returning from Mumbai

Thanks to water augmentation, the barren land started becoming green, water came, trees flourished and became a source of income and people got hope.

Mayank Gandhi

and Pune where they had gone as labourers. They said that if we can get such a beautiful life in a clean and green village why live a gutter-like life in Mumbai’s slums.”

“In 2018 there was a big famine. And we were all depressed and thought we’d have to get tankers once again for drinking water, which is like applying band aid for the red spots caused by cancer.” But the tremendous amount of water augmentation work that had been done saw them through this crisis.

But even though water gives life “the challenge is to go beyond that and increase income; you just can’t drink water and live.” Next, he and his group set about the task of growing the agro economy by forging partnerships with the agro industry, universities and KVKs (Kisan Vikas Kendra), and MoUs were signed, and a technical team was made.

After soil testing, studying weather patterns etc, the fruit trees to be planted were chosen, the entire capital expenditure, initial investment plan and other details were worked out. His team would take projectors to villages night after night and talk to farmers about profit and loss, and told them they would have to undergo at least six training sessions, all related to profitable farming, before being given quality saplings.

In the first year 12 lakh mango, sitafal, papaya, *mosambi* (sweet lime), drumstick and banana saplings were planted, depending on the condition of the soil, weather patterns and the farmer's preference. Typically, each farmer was getting an income of ₹15,000 a month from the cotton and soya they had been planting, which was negligible. "Planting fruit trees is not rocket science but we did a gap analysis and found three gaps."

The first gap was quality saplings. "Just like you look at pedigree when you buy a horse or a dog, plants too have pedigree and the mother plant should be of good health and great quality," says Gandhi.

Meticulously, nurseries which could give the best quality saplings from all over India were identified. Next the cropping patterns were changed and intensive training given. While a farmer doesn't need lessons on how to grow a tree,

A rejuvenated water body.



Community farming can work for urban people

At the webinar, responding to keen inquires from people living in cities possessing agricultural land in their native places and wanting to pursue farming, or buy some land and venture into agriculture, Timbadia had a simple message — absentee farming doesn't work for individuals. First of all, buying land with clear title was difficult and then there were problems of getting electricity, water supply, and agri expertise which is not viable for a one or two-acre plot. "So I feel the way forward is community farming; 100–200 people getting together, buying 200 acres, forming a society, and getting in place a management committee that can take decisions on what trees to plant and other issues because in farming too, as in corporates, professional management is required." Once the produce is significant, big companies would come and buy directly.

Intervening, Mayank Gandhi said that when the landholding is small — the average size of a farm in Parli is three acres, it important to have a system which allows sharing of resources such as a tractor, technical expertise, raw materials etc. He was afraid that the recent farm bills would adversely affect the small farmers, "because the big food factories and dealers would like to deal with a larger body and not individual small farmers. The government says make FPOs (farmer producer organisation); call them FPOs or co-operatives, the future is for community farming. That is why Timbadia's endeavour to organise interested people into a kind of collective is praiseworthy."

Answering a question on giving guidelines to people who have idle vacant agricultural land in their native villages, Timbadia said if these people live in cities and don't have a well-organised network to take care of their farms, "it won't work, because plants and trees are living things and they need to be looked after. People who want to do farming and yet continue with city life... can't do both on their own." The advantage of living in India was that there was enough agri knowledge and expertise from agricultural universities, but it had to be sourced collectively to be affordable.

Land parcels were available, "and you can get land cheap, unlike Gujarat or Punjab, in Maharashtra, 100–150km from Mumbai at ₹12–15 lakh an acre." If a group of like-minded people can jointly invest some ₹50 crore or so, and do community farming, they would have the advantage of hiring the best brains in India for technical. "But if you want to do farming individually on a plot of land 500km away and get results, it won't happen. You can plant mango trees, *lekin aam nahi ayenge, sirf ped hi reh jayegey* (you won't get mangoes only the trees will remain). In short, community farming is good for you, the local people and the nation."



PDG Rahul Timbadia

he does on forward linkage, processing, value addition and marketing.

Till now, in Parli only two varieties — the drumstick and papaya have started yielding fruit. The quality of the papaya fruit is such that while last year these farmers were getting ₹10–15 per kg, now they get ₹22–28 a kg. “Some farmers who were getting ₹10,000 per acre, are now getting an income of ₹5 lakh; that is a 50-fold increase. “When such farmers started strutting around proudly, and bought a two-wheeler, others got converted.”

Rtn Sandeep Ohri, who moderated the webinar, showed two videos of farmers who vouched for their “*acche din*”. Said Sandeep Gitte, a farmer, “in one acre, I have planted 900 papaya trees and per acre, I get 40 to 50 tonnes of

fruit, and my income has gone up from the earlier ₹20,000, to ₹3–4 lakh after expenses for papaya. Through intercropping and under the papaya trees, I have planted watermelon, and from one acre, after expenses, I get an income of

People started returning from Mumbai and Pune, saying that if we can get such a beautiful life in a clean and green village, why live a gutter-like life in Mumbai’s slums!

Mayank Gandhi

around ₹1.25 lakh. Earlier I was planting cotton, and I didn’t ever dream that I could ever make so much money through farming. Now from a tin roof house I have moved into a concrete house... *mere liye toh acche din aa gaye!*”

Another farmer, Mukteshwar, said earlier he had to go down 400–500 ft for water, “but now we get water at 50–70 ft and are very happy”.

Let’s switch over here to the passion that PDG Rahul Timbadia has for agriculture, particularly community farming, the primary reason for his organising this webinar, to tell Rotarians and other affluent urban people that even



though they may be passionate about farming, if they live away from their land/farm, they can make a profitable venture of it only through community farming.

When asked by moderator Lohri how a science and law graduate like him became passionate about farming, Timbadia said that he was always interested in agriculture. In 1987 he first bought some agricultural land. He would visit Israel and Japan and in Japan “when I saw the packaged food products and their macadamia nut facilities, I realised that there is a good future in agriculture and agri-tourism.” Thus began his experiments in agriculture.

In 1991 he entered the hotel industry and “today we have three

You can easily grow 100 kg of *bhindi*. But then what do you do with it, you can’t eat 100 kg, and how much can you give to friends.

PDG **Rahul Timbadia**

hotels, five restaurants and some agricultural activities, “where I didn’t meet with much success, but even today I firmly believe there is a huge potential in agriculture and agri-tourism.”

Later he went to Israel and studied drip irrigation and planted

tomatoes and *bhindi*. He grew tomatoes through the hydroponics system (a type of horticulture where plants are grown without soil, by using mineral nutrient solutions in an aqueous solvent) and got a fantastic crop. But the price of tomato in 1989–90 was ₹3 a kg, “so it wasn’t really viable.”

Next he went to Mehsana, studied eucalyptus farming, and planted papaya, teak and cashew trees. This was in 2005. “I got a great papaya crop, but the 2005 rains flooded my farm for five days and all the papaya trees died. I was very dejected and thought agriculture is not for me.” But in 2019–20, the cashews and teak trees he had planted, gave results. The teak trees grew to 35–40 ft and the cashew

A successful farmer in Parli.





had started yielding good crop. One cashew tree gives him 32 kg with skin. But he is stuck in processing and sales network.

Earlier I planted cotton, and didn't ever dream that I could make so much money through farming. From a tin roof house I have moved to a concrete house... *mere liye toh acche din aa gaye!*

Sandeep Gitte
a Parli farmer

Giving another example, Timbadia said *bhindi* (okra) grows so well that if you have the space you can easily get 100kg of *bhindi*. "But then what do you do with it, you can't eat 100kg, even if you want to give it to friends, you have to drive to their homes and distribute it and how many times can you give it? After a while friends will get tired and say this guy keeps giving *bhindi* all the time!"

While the frustrated Timbadia was in this dilemma, "a friend told me about Mayank Gandhi, and that he has helped farmers in Beed district to get ₹4–6 lakh per acre. Frankly, I couldn't believe it, so I went there and saw for myself farmers with such happy

faces, growing drumstick, papaya, banana and so many other fruits.

Finally, I was convinced that there is money in agriculture."

Timbadia says that from 1997 he has seen that there is money in tourism industry from personal experience, and now he feels that if agri-tourism can be promoted, our farmers can benefit too.

Later, speaking to *Rotary News*, Timbadia described what Global Parli has done in Beed is akin to community farming. "Gandhi brought farmers together and gave them success, similarly, if untapped resources of affluent people in urban areas are diverted to rural areas, especially in agriculture, thousands of acres of barren land can be converted into orchards with fruit-laden trees, and lakhs of poor people, both tribal and non-tribal, can lead a happy and thriving life."

Adds Timbadia, "If we pursue permaculture (development of sustainable and self-sufficient agricultural ecosystems) in huge way across the country, this could be one of the permanent solutions to combat farm distress and lift people out of poverty. Mayank Gandhi has already proved it in Beed and that can act as a beacon of hopes for millions.

He has touched a magic lamp and an organisation like Rotary, having an extraordinary network and people with great focus and motivational skills, can bring in the cascading effect throughout our country.

More details at www.globalparli.org.

Picture courtesy: Global Parli

Designed by Krishnapratheesh

When RID 3070 Rotarians helped a Rotaractor get a hi-end laptop

Rasheeda Bhagat

This is a wonderful story that illustrates the presidential themes of both PRIP Mark Maloney (*Rotary connects the world*) and the present RI President Holger Knaack (*Rotary opens opportunities*). And it also proves to the younger members of Rotary — Rotaractors — how the

parent organisation can help them in myriad ways.

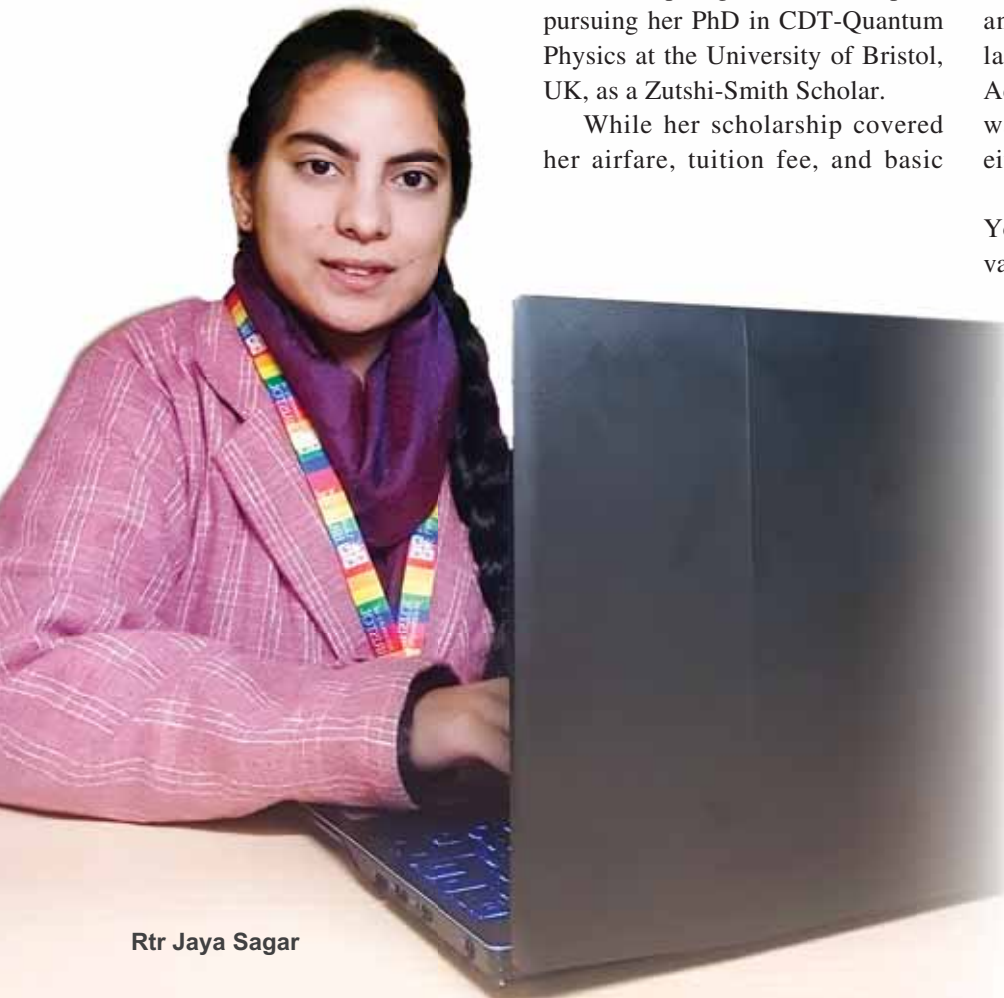
Recently, the Rotary-Rotaract synergy came to the fore when Jaya Sagar, general secretary of the Rotaract Club of Manali, RID 3070, a graduate who had completed her BTech in Electronics and Communication Engineering from NIT Hamirpur, got a scholarship for pursuing her PhD in CDT-Quantum Physics at the University of Bristol, UK, as a Zutshi-Smith Scholar.

While her scholarship covered her airfare, tuition fee, and basic

living expenses in the UK, it could not help her buy an expensive laptop that was required to do research in this “very advanced and complicated stream of quantum physics, which requires a lot of mathematical modelling, simulations and programming capabilities.” Jaya’s mother is a single parent “trying to make ends meet for my and my brother’s education,” and could not afford to buy this laptop which cost around ₹1 lakh. According to university rules, Jaya was not allowed to work part time either to raise this amount.

Jaya, a recipient of the National Youth Award for research and innovation and the only Asian to qualify for this PhD programme from the University of Bristol, sent a mail to RID 3070 DG CA Davinder Singh, appealing for financial help to get such a laptop. She said she was a capable engineer and has worked on various useful projects for Indian defence, 5G communication, quantum computing, apple farmers, people living in the remote regions of the Himalayas and other projects in science.

Responding to the Rotaractor’s mail, DG Singh put her in touch with GC Thakur, president of RC Manali, and her appeal was shared with other Rotarians. Both RC Manali and Rotarians across the district pitched in and arranged the money, which was sent to Jaya.



Rtr Jaya Sagar

The DG also offered to put her in touch with some of his Rotary friends in Bristol if she required any further assistance in the city.

Having bought the laptop of her choice, Jaya says this has given her “more confidence and power to continue my complex research work and experiments with quicker results.” More important, she adds, that when she got admission to this prestigious PhD programme, “I got greetings from thousands of people across India and overseas, but it was only the Rotarians who offered a hand to help and ease my path. Your help has not only boosted my efficiency but also my morale. It is also a ray of hope for many brilliant minds in our region to work more diligently towards their dreams as they know they can look up to someone for support.”

Jaya reached Bristol on Sep 15 for her course, was in self-isolation till the stipulated period but could begin

It was only the Rotarians who offered a hand to help and ease my path. Your help has not only boosted my efficiency but also my morale.

her online induction and attend classes which began on Sep 21. “The change in weather, the altitude and the different kinds of food made me sick initially, but now I am in good health and excited to join the university physically.”

As promised by Singh, she has also got an email from the Rotary Club of Bristol, and looks forward to connecting with the club members soon.

Jaya adds that her mother, who was very grateful to Rotary for helping out

her daughter with a laptop, was even more delighted and very relieved to know that RC Bristol Rotarians had reached out to her. “She was really worried about me, as I was going so far away from home for so long, but now she feels reassured.”

On the interaction between Rotary and Rotaract clubs in his district, DG Singh says, “a few Rotary clubs in our district actively support Rotaract club activities through both logistic and financial support. Rotarians of our district have been regularly hosting Rotaractors across India for travel within the district for Rotary activities and programmes.”

The icing on the cake for both the DG and members of RC Manali is her parting line: “When I joined the Rotaract club of Manali last year, I had no clue it will play such an important role in my life. Thanks for your wonderful leadership and your help,” she adds. ■

Dr Mahesh Kotbagi elected RI Director 2021–23

Team Rotary News

Dr Mahesh Kotbagi, RC Pune Sports City, RID 3131, has been elected RI director for 2021–23 for zones 4 and 7. Kotbagi is a professional hospital administrator and chairman of the Kotbagi Hospital in Pune, Maharashtra. He is a fourth-generation medical practitioner; his grandfather was the physician of Mahatma Gandhi. Kotbagi is a post-graduate with a gold medal for his thesis on gynaecology from the University of Pune. In 1991, he established a 10-bed hospital which soon grew into a multi-specialty hospital. He also established a low-cost dialysis centre and has a presence in healthcare,



hospitality, petroleum and construction industries.

Kotbagi served as DG (2005–06), international training leader (2014), chairman – South Asia

Literacy Summit (2014), ARFC (2017–18) and GETS chairman (2020). He has been honoured with Service Above Self Award by RI and the Citation of Meritorious Service Award by TRF. He has volunteered at the Rotary medical mission to Lesotho, Africa.

The Chinmayi Charitable Trust run by Kotbagi supports low-cost healthcare and education for rural children. He has led more than 100 service projects in literacy, polio surgery, rubella vaccination, cow banks for rural women and welfare of special children.

Kotbagi and his wife Dr Amita are third-level major donors and benefactors of TRF. ■

Measles, rubella can be eradicated by 2023: Jacob John

Jaishree

By eradicating polio from India we are contributing ₹600 crore per annum for our national wealth. If we eradicate measles and rubella (MR), though I have not calculated the health economics, I can assure you that our nation will become healthier and wealthier,” said virologist Dr Jacob John. Health is not only a measure of a nation’s development but a means to its development, he said, addressing Rotarians, Inner Wheel members, Rotaractors and Interactors from 30 Rotary districts at a multi-district virtual seminar titled ‘Battle against Rubella’

organised by RID 3232. Dr John heads the government’s India Experts Advisory Group (IEAG) for eliminating MR and is member of RC Vellore, RID 3231.

Rubella or German measles, as it is also known, is harmless. But if a pregnant woman contracts the virus in the first trimester of her pregnancy there is 90 per cent chance that the child will be born with multiple birth defects.

To a question from an Interactor of the TNPL Public School, Karur, on the dangers of rubella, Dr John explained that rubella and zika are the only two viruses that will cross the

placenta and infect the foetus, consequently affecting its ears, eyes, bones and marrow. The child will be born with birth defects such as hearing impairment, cataract, heart abnormalities and mental retardation.

“What can be the greatest pleasure in life will turn out to be a trauma for the child and the parents. Unlike polio, the task here is easy,” said RIPE Shekhar Mehta. “All we have to do is create awareness and identify young girls who have not been vaccinated.” Recalling how deeply involved the late PRID YP Das was in this programme, he added,

“eradicating MR will be our best tribute to him.”

Dr John said the WHO deadline of 2023 for MR eradication is achievable because 95 per cent of the work is already done. MR vaccine is part of the routine Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP). “If all Rotary districts gear up social mobilisation for routine immunisation in their regional areas, we can eradicate the disease in three years.”

Sri Lanka had already eradicated MR, he said and “we could learn from this island country.” The MR vaccine was safe, if properly handled, Dr John said, dismissing reports



A screenshot of participants at the Battle against Rubella webinar.

that people had fallen ill after being given the MR vaccine. “Even if you inject water children will fall ill. MR vaccines will never cause illnesses. The child might have mild fever for a couple of days as that is the body’s response to the vaccine.”

The meet emphasised the need for Rotary to spread awareness about rubella in a committed manner as Rotarians did for polio eradication, said PRID PT Prabhakar, who moderated the seminar. He said RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi, who participated, has done measles vaccination for 100,000 rural girls through a global grant.

INPPC chair and member of the IEAG Deepak Kapur detailed Rotary’s action plan for MR elimination by 2023, and said Prabhakar wouldn’t have been able to put together “this wonderful programme without being prodded by his wife Nalini” who had done a lot of work on rubella eradication.

Vaccines against diseases like measles and rubella are sometimes languishing in government storage and PHCs while 90,000 people, mostly children, die of measles every year. Thousands of vials are being destroyed because their expiry dates have passed. There is not enough demand from the community, he rued.

Kapur recalled Dr John’s initiative that led to Rotary’s participation in the programme. “I remember how he convinced past RI presidents Rajendra Saboo, Kalyan Banerjee, past director Sushil Gupta and me that MR elimination was a ‘low-hanging fruit and tailor-made fit for Rotary.’ Given the extreme recognition that Rotary has garnered due to its proactive role in the fight against polio, this programme would be right up Rotary’s ally, with its 3,400-plus Rotary clubs and 150,000 Rotarians.”

When Rotary proposed this action plan to the then Union Health Minister JP Nadda, he welcomed it. On Dec 6, 2017, an MoU was signed between the health ministry and Rotary to promote ‘Mission Indradhanush’ or routine immunisation with special focus on MR. “We proposed advocacy, assisting the government in operations and basically helping to fire up people’s movement. We were certain that the programme will be successful if people demanded the vaccine instead of the government imposing it on them,” he added.

Rotary’s structure against the fight

RI’s National PolioPlus Committee in India has two tasks — to ensure that India remains polio-free and to fight MR. INPPC has a district coordinator (DC) in each Rotary district. Nalini Prabhakar is the DC in RID 3232. The DCs should set up a committee of Rotarians, their spouses, Rotaractors and Interactors to coordinate the efforts of Rotary clubs in the district.

Rotarians can visit the district chief medical officer (CMO) or the immunisation officer, get a list of the PHCs that carry out MR vaccinations and ensure the task is done on the designated days. Rotarians can check if the centres have adequate stock of the vaccine and its efficacy.

The target was tantalisingly close but the deadline had already passed, the Covid pandemic, inflicting a 30 per cent drop in immunisations across the country. “But the process has restarted. It is time to put our shoulder to the wheel once again.



RIPE Shekhar Mehta

You are on the cusp of creating history by eradicating polio, and now MR,” urged Kapur.

Open house

DGE N Sridhar, RID 3232, wanted to know if oral polio vaccine and injectable MR immunisation can be made simultaneously on the NIDs. Dr John replied that oral polio vaccine can be given the same day along with the MR injectable vaccine but cannot be linked with the polio NIDs as MR vaccine must be given in a routine manner.

Nalini said, “our advocacy should reach girls until their child-bearing age. Even now many parents and girls are not aware of this. It is a one-time vaccine that should be given to girls before they conceive their first child.” She urged Rotarians to visit colleges and create awareness among girls. Prabhakar suggested that marriage halls should insist on rubella certificate from the bride. “This practice is in vogue in several marriage halls in South India.”

Dr Nalini Ramamurthy, deputy director, Department of Virology, Kings Institute, explained about rubella and its debilitating effects. DG S Muthupalaniappan welcomed the participants. ■

Youth must get skilled for excellence:

RIPE Shekhar Mehta

V Muthukumaran

At a time when thousands of people are losing their jobs due to the corona pandemic and other reasons, holding webinars on skilling students and youth is the need of the hour and in tune with the National Education Policy 2020, said RIPE Shekhar Mehta. “We have to make them understand the need to enhance their skills and bring excellence in their work,” he said at the valedictory session of Enterprise Education webinars, a series of online programmes hosted by RID 3131, for school students and young professionals. The valedictory session was co-hosted by RID 3292’s Rotary Nepal Literacy Mission.

But in India, lack of dignity of labour is a big concern that needs to be addressed by Rotary, he said and quoted Gandhiji who said “everyone’s role in the community must be respected.” Despite our huge population and demand for skilled services, only five per cent of students get vocational training whereas in Korea, a small but more developed country, 90 per cent of students undergo skill training. Even in a well-developed country such as Germany, over 50 per of youth get vocational training, he noted. “If I need an accountant, there are over 100 applicants for the job. But not even 10 of them would have updated their knowledge with the right skills needed for the job,” he rued.

There is a huge potential for small scale industries to thrive in India if right skilling is given to the youth who must be made to understand the value they bring to the table with such



RIPE Shekhar Mehta



Rtn Pradeep Wagh

updated skills, Mehta explained. “We need to have a passion for excellence. Rotary India has taken up skill development programmes for 30,000 widows and single mothers. Of which, 6,000 women are being trained now by Apollo Medskills through a two-month online course followed by a one-month hands-on programme, after which they will be absorbed by the trainer.”

Rotary Nepal Literacy Mission under PDG Tirth Man Sakya and IPDG Kiran Lal Shrestha has come a long way in its journey to achieve total literacy in the Himalayan country, he said, adding, “PDG Muhammad Faiz Kidwai has single-handedly taken up literacy projects in Pakistan.”

Webinar series

Four webinars were hosted by RID 3131 since July with over 400 participants including Rotaractors, Interactors and teachers from government schools across Maharashtra. “A study of the school education system in western countries shows that they give importance to enterprise education right from elementary schools. We identify

the skills that can be developed among students through webinars that boost self-confidence, ability to collect information and sharpen the decision-making process. Teachers are also given appropriate modules to develop enterprising skills among students,” said Pradeep Wagh, district mentor, International Service, RID 3131.

A Preliminary Business Plan Competition was held for Rotaractors and Interactors in which 23 presentations were received by the jury panel. RAC Mhow Community, RID 3040, bagged the top prize with a certificate and cash prize of ₹10,000 for its urban plan, *An initiative towards ‘No waste city’* which was presented by a four-member Rotaract team. Rtr Mala Dhital (RAC Itahari, RID 3292) and Intr Swarali Vaidya (Interact Club of City Pride Junior College) were runners-up.

RID 3131-DLCC Subodh Malpani, District Literacy director Deepa Bhagwat, IPDG Dhiran Datta, RID 3040, PDGs Pramod Jejurikar, Chandu Agarwal, Muhammad Kidwai and Rtn Nitin Naik, chairman, Cubix Tech, participated. ■

Invest in the future through the Foundation



In the early 1870s, a genius toiled in his laboratory, driven by a vision to improve life through technology. After many failed attempts, by 1880 Thomas Edison had perfected a new light bulb that could be produced on a mass scale.

When someone pointed out to him that he had tried and failed 10,000 times before succeeding, he responded that he had merely found 10,000 ways it wouldn't work! Just like Edison, The Rotary Foundation is driven by a vision for a better world. And we, too, remain determined and creative in the face of setbacks.

Earlier this year, our vital polio immunisation activities had to be temporarily paused to ensure that the polio eradication programme did not contribute to the Covid-19 pandemic. And so we adapted: The polio-fighting infrastructure that Rotary helped build was enlisted to assist in the response to Covid-19 in many vulnerable countries, as we had done before during outbreaks of Ebola, yellow fever, and avian flu.

Thankfully, we resumed polio immunisation activities in July, having first taken all precautions to protect frontline workers and communities. During these challenging days, our business — reaching out to people in distress — is not business as usual. The way we prepare and deliver projects and the methodology we use need to change. And the way we communicate what we do also must change.

The success of our global grants model is unmistakable. At its introduction in 2013–14, the Foundation awarded 868 grants worth over \$47 million. By 2019–20, the number of approved grants had risen to 1,350, worth over \$100 million. While the number of grants shot up by more than 50 per cent, and funding by 123 per cent, corresponding Annual Fund contributions showed only a five per cent increase, and that's troubling.

To reach those who need us, to spread the love that our Foundation brings, we will need to rise to this challenge and work together to meet our funding needs. Mother Teresa once said that if we want a message of love to be heard, it has to be sent out. To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it. TRF offers the best opportunity I know for us to invest in a better future for communities around the world. Your generosity today and throughout this year is the oil that keeps our grants burning bright, reaching the ones who need us most.

KR Ravindran
Foundation Trustee Chair



When in Rome

Hank Sartin

Taiwanese people pride themselves on their hospitality and friendliness. When you are in Taipei for the Rotary International Convention from June 12 to 16, you may receive invitations to socialise with local Rotarians. To make a good impression and avoid giving offense unintentionally, here are some etiquette tips to keep in mind.

Though shaking hands has become customary in business settings in Taiwan, you can also adopt the more traditional greeting, a slight inclination of the head. Exchanging business cards is a very common practice, and there is a specific protocol for doing it: Be sure to present your card with both hands. When you receive a card from someone, don't just slip it in your pocket; hold it with both hands and take a moment to read it. You are giving this person, and their card, your full attention.

Food is so important in Taiwanese culture that a common greeting is "*Chi bao le ma?*" which means "Have you eaten?" When entertaining, your host might put food on your plate for you to try. The same principle that you were taught as a child applies: Eat what is offered to you.

Taiwanese people are enthusiastic about exchanging toasts. A traditional toast is performed holding your glass with both hands. You invite your friend to drink, they hold up their glass, and looking each other in the eye, you drink together. If someone approaches you with a glass in hand and says "*Ganbei!*" or "*Hodala!*" that is the equivalent of saying "Bottoms up!" You should drain your glass. And if you prefer not to drink alcohol, it's perfectly fine to do your toasting with a soft drink or tea. Your hosts want you to feel welcome.

Learn more and register at
convention.rotary.org.



Covid or monsoon floods, **RC Bombay Rotarians** overcome both challenges

Rasheeda Bhagat

When Rotarians set their eyes on a target they will achieve it, come what may. This was proved yet again when Rotarians from the Rotary Club of Bombay, RID 3141, were

fighting against all odds bang in the midst of the corona pandemic to execute a mega WinS project they had undertaken along with a few other clubs in Mumbai.

The project, planned and undertaken by the district's WinS committee in 2018 was challenging

by itself — setting up handwash stations (HWS) in 752 zilla parishad schools in Palghar district of Maharashtra. The total number of HWSs to be provided through the project titled *Dhaal* was 1,142, and RC Bombay was given the task to cover 600 of the 752 schools. The



vintage club got cracking through a global grant of \$264,465 (₹1.93 crore), and their commitment was to put up 775 HWSs. The other clubs involved were Bombay Seacoast, Bombay West, Mumbai Ghatkopar and Mumbai Divas, “together with the invaluable logistical support being provided by RC Palghar,” says RID 3141 DG Nominee Sandip Agarwalla. With additional money of ₹34.5 lakh raised by RC Bombay, the total cost of the project was over ₹2.27 crore.

He says when the project was planned for inauguration by RIPE Shekhar Mehta in June 2020, who could have imagined that a virus would derail the entire timeline and make it so difficult to even fabricate and transport the handwash stations to the schools. “As the Covid cases started rising, we had severe restrictions placed on our movement and

that of the workers to complete the project in the zilla parishad schools. We continued with the work getting the necessary permissions. But then came the monsoon and the floods, making our job that much more daunting,” he chuckles.

But it was here that the never-say-die spirit of Rotarians came to the fore and boats were pressed into service to defy the floods and reach the handwash stations as well as water tanks to a few schools.

Agarwalla explains that even prior to this project, RC Bombay’s signature project has been *Jaljeewan*, whose objective has been providing safe drinking water to the underprivileged. Under this project the club has served nearly 50 villages, making available water ATMs to self-help groups, panchayats etc, to be given at a marginal cost to the end users.

A boat used to ferry a handwash facility to a school defying the floods.



As Covid cases rose, we had severe restrictions on movement, but we continued with the work. But then came the monsoon and the floods, so we used boats.

**DGN Sandip Agarwalla
RID 3141**

This WinS project was undertaken in association with UNICEF. “They had already completed some 2,000 zilla parishad schools with the help of CSR funds, and 752 more schools remained to be done. That is where our district and club got involved.” When the costing was done, it was decided that providing stainless steel HWSs is an “over-kill as schools do not really require wash stations made of steel, which is open to theft by desperate elements who then sell it by weight. So the search was on for an alternate, lighter and more economic component,” says the DGN.

Past president of RC Bombay Vijay Jatia said that the WinS committee of 2019–20 collaborated with the hardware supplier Nilkamal Industries and their local implementation partner, Sacred, to defy all odds and complete the project. “The course curriculum has been designed by UNICEF and not only will we be training the students, teachers and parents on the necessity and advantages of HWS but also giving vital information on menstrual hygiene management

(MHM) to adolescent girls when the schools reopen after this pandemic.”

Adds Agarwalla, “After consultation with UNICEF and our other partners, the HSW was specially designed by RC Bombay in consultation with Nilkamal, which came out with a unique low-cost, pilfer proof, lightweight and durable solution. At the same time, it is ergonomically designed, which proved to be a real hit among users.”

Also, UNICEF stipulates that there should be one tap for 25 students and this has been more than ensured. As many of the schools did not have safe drinking water, the Rotarians have decided to undertake that component of the project too.

As the ultimate aim of WinS is to bring about a behavioural change, “we have been imparting training and advocacy on usage and advantages of handwashing to school management councils despite the schools being closed. The principals of these schools were extremely receptive and

Using stainless steel for handwash stations for schools is an overkill as this can be pilfered and sold for weight. So we provided a lighter and more economic but durable component.

DGN Sandip Agarwalla

eager to have the HWSs installed, and hence have opened their school and even mobilised teachers for the training,” he says.

Jatia adds that the project was conceived much before the Covid situation but has now “assumed extraordinary importance in view of

the corona pandemic when constantly washing hands is so important for everybody.” He gives credit for completion of this project to Rtns Siddharth Bhimrajka, Abhinav Aggarwal and Abhishek Saraf, and acknowledges the logistic support provided by RC Palghar to transport the HWSs and water tanks, and the NGO Sacred for installing them.

Agarwalla adds that special mention should be made of the generous contribution from Rtn Dilip Piramal and VIP Industries, so that work at over 70 schools, which were entrusted to another club, but could not implement due to various challenges, could also be completed.

RC Bombay has now undertaken the task of providing safe drinking water under its *Jal Jeevan* programme to 146 of these schools which have a student population of more than 60,000 students. A GG application has been submitted for review and the project cost is around ₹1.5 crore, says the DGN.



A specially designed handwash station conceptualised by RC Bombay in consultation with Nilkamal Industries.



Covid relief worth ₹4.5 crore

A single club, the vintage and 91-year-old RC Mumbai, the second oldest in India, after RC Calcutta, has managed to collect and execute Covid-related relief measures for over ₹4.5 crore, raised by the club's Rotarians.

We have trained the principals and teachers on the importance of handwashing, and will do so for students and parents when the schools reopen. Menstrual hygiene management will also be taught to adolescent girls.

Vijay Jatia
past president, RC Bombay

- 58 ventilators given to hospitals run by the Maharashtra government and Central Hospital, Dhanbad
- 11 dialysis machines to Palghar and Mumbai hospitals
- 5 HFNC (high flow nasal cannula) machines to various hospitals. A global grant for an additional 20 HFNCs is under way
- 11,250 PPEs to various hospitals in Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru
- Distribution of free cooked and packed meals to over 16.5 lakh persons (till September), at 30,000 meals every day from kitchens operated and supervised by the club's Rotarians to the homeless, migrant workers and daily wage earners
- Setting up coffee/tea vending machines to various police stations
- 2,500 Covid-19 testing kits costing over ₹20 lakh to the Tata Memorial Hospital
- The club has set up an all-India toll-free counselling helpline with over 600 trained volunteers and counsellors helping anxious or distressed callers for mental health counselling. This helpline also strives to help persons who need dry rations anywhere in India
- Supply of 40,000 packets of ready-to-eat food packets of *upma* and *poha* to the curfew-stricken people of Malegaon (four hours from Mumbai). In addition, 1,000 free cooked and packed meals were distributed till May 25
- 1,150 N95 respiratory masks, contactless digital thermometers and Oximeter pulse machines to various hospitals in Mumbai
- 1,200 face shields given to sanitation workers who maintain various community toilets in the slums of Mumbai, and 5,000 hand sanitisers to various agencies. ■

A Rotarian doctor recalls his brush with coronavirus

Ranjan Deshpande



Dr Ranjan Deshpande
examining a child in his clinic.

In the background of the shocking demise and loss of our beloved PRID Y P Das, and my batchmate, PDG V Nagaraj from RID 2981, both due to Covid-related complications, I am sharing my frightening brush with the dangerous coronavirus. And I urge you all to be very careful and protect yourselves and your families.

On April 6, on All India Radio, I spoke about corona and children, where I said this virus was going to stay with us for a long period. I lost a personal friend, a classmate right from MBBS, a simple man who continued his practice in a rented small building and became a victim, getting complications and dying despite the best of treatment.

In my wildest imagination, I never thought I will fall prey to coronavirus. Being a senior paediatrician, I followed all precautions of social distancing, wearing full PPE and regular hand hygiene for all. I was careful keeping kids' parents away by two metres, and examining the children.

I was told by family members not to go to the hospital because of my age. But I did go, spending only four hours in the OPD, taking a lot of care.

On the evening of July 8, my wife complained of sore throat. Next morning, she was running temperature and had body ache. We got her tested immediately; she was positive. Two days later, I developed mild symptoms of headache and body ache. I too tested positive and we were admitted in our own hospital, a designated Covid hospital. In my 42-year career I had not taken a single day's leave for any illness, and would tell my younger doctors and nurses that youngsters should never fall sick. "Look at me, I never take leave", used to be my words.

Treatment was immediately initiated by my son Dr Kavan, who is a paediatric intensivist and my daughter-in-law Dr Pallavi, a clinical

microbiologist. They were closely monitoring our health and discussing the mode of treatment with Covid experts from Hubli and Bengaluru. It seemed as though both of us had a mild infection and we were recovering with all the normal clinical and laboratory parameters. As both of us were improving, we were to be discharged on Day 10.

The next morning my wife was very happy that we were going back home. But fate had different plans. That afternoon, I felt extremely tired and was unable to talk or walk. My oxygen saturation started dropping and I started getting breathless. Immediately my son took an appointment for an HRCT scan and ECG. At the scan centre, I was not able to walk even a few steps to the scan machine and breathing was getting difficult.

The CT scan of the chest and laboratory parameters showed changes warranting admission to a higher centre at Hubli for observation and further course of treatment. The same evening my wife and I were driven from our hospital; she was dropped home and I called my two grandchildren to the gate. Along with my daughter-in-law they waved goodbye from a distance. In my heart, I wondered if I was seeing them for the last time.

I was further investigated, put on various medication and continuous oxygen and was monitored meticulously. After three days my oxygen saturation further dropped and I wondered if I would be shifted to the ICU and prayed that I shouldn't be put on a ventilator.

Some of the medicines used in Covid treatment were difficult to

Take corona pandemic seriously

Guard yourselves and opt for virtual meetings and avoid unnecessary in person meetings.

Never ever forget to wear masks and also remind others talking to you to put on the mask, covering face and nose.

Avoid courtesy visits.

Remember the only person who can help you is yourself.

procure and not available easily. In anticipation of the worst, my son had procured injections, each costing ₹40,000. Oxygen was continued with increased quantum.

The entire team of physicians, pulmonologists and intensivists, along with Covid experts, discussed and decided to give me plasma therapy. Two Covid experts explained to me that this would not create complications and I would get better the very next day.

It was procured and I was transfused the plasma. As stated by the consultants, plasma really made all the difference! My parameters started improving, including the oxygen saturation. But the earlier 3–4 days were a total nightmare for me. It was difficult to comprehend in which direction I was moving; while on one hand I was trying to have positive thoughts, negative thoughts kept overtaking them as age and comorbidity were not in my favour. Moreover, being a doctor myself, the worst scenario and complications kept playing in my head. But by god's grace, I started improving.

I don't know the nice person who donated his plasma; I am truly grateful



to him. There are definitely good human beings in this world. My heart-felt gratitude to him.

As there was improvement, I continued sleeping in the prone position... lying on my stomach, and on either side, did my breathing exercises and a typical six-minute walk and checking my oxygen levels regularly, as this virus really attacks the lungs, and most problems are centred around it.

Timely treatment, good dedicated doctors and medical staff, right investigations and medicines at the right time, along with constant monitoring, are all important. On the patient's part, it is important to have confidence in doctors and the hospital, and follow their instructions properly. I was fortunate to be in good hands of the team of doctors at Hubli who took care of me.

I lost 7–8 kg and found myself pretty weak. Consultants advised me to continue a nutritious diet along with

Even if social norms are being relaxed, stay alert, cautious and vigilant as if it is still an emergency situation, because it really is.

medicines, regular breathing exercises and *pranayama*.

I was lucky, I touched the death pole and returned. There are few who have been ventilated and stayed in ICUs and have come back. I would say they passed through the mouth of death and escaped. My parents are no more but their blessings definitely were there with me. It is certainly the good wishes of family, friends, relatives, and my patients that saved me, I believe.

My son Kavan and his wife, who I consider my second daughter, slogged a lot and gave me precious life again.

I feel this is my second life which has taught me a few lessons; have the right priorities in life, look after yourself, give some time to yourself, there is no point in working continuously neglecting your family enjoy quality time with family and enjoy your hobbies. Fulfil your dreams.

So, even if social norms are being relaxed, stay alert, cautious and vigilant as if it is still an emergency situation, because it really is. Stay safe, go outside only if it is a must, and follow all the precautions without fail. Take extreme care.

Learn to serve but at the same time discover yourself and live for your family and leave this world without regrets and with your dreams unfulfilled.

The writer is a PDG from RID 3170.



Covid ambulance drivers, paramedics feted by RID 3190

Team Rotary News



Rotary Sidderabetta, one of the sponsoring clubs, honours the ambulance special staff.

RID 3190 felicitated 250 ambulance drivers and paramedics in appreciation of their service during the Covid crisis in Karnataka. The district's Disease Prevention and Treatment team found out that 65 Covid ambulances were operating in the region and decided to hand over a 'Warrior on Wheels' citation along with a cheque for ₹1,000 each to all the drivers. Around 33 clubs raised ₹375,000 for the cause and each club recognised these Warrior on Wheels in their respective areas. ■

Homage to PDGs

Contributing to the development of Rotary as a potent force in enacting community service projects has been the vision and hard work of district governors. Our condolences to the families of PDGs who passed away this year.



V Nagaraj
(1998–99)
RI District 2981



Annamalai Muthuraman
(1992–93)
RI District 3000



G Jaya Rao
(1983–84)
RI District 3020



Suresh Kasliwal
(1984–85)
RI District 3040



Sharad Phatak
(1999–2000)
RI District 3040



Naresh Chand Jain
(2003–04)
RI District 3040



Dr Satpal Singla
(1992–93)
RI District 3090



U Surya Prakash Bhat
(2003–04)
RI District 3181



M Ramaswamy Iyer
(1988–89)
RI District 3211



Rangaswami Raja
Ramakrishnan (1986–87)
RI District 3232



Dr D K Gupta
(1980–81)
RI District 3261



Narayan Nayak
(2016–17)
RI District 3262



Ajay Kumar Dutta
(1985–86)
RI District 3291

In the next two years, Rotary clubs across India have been told to do at least five per cent of their global grant projects outside India and “a major chunk of it will come to Africa,” said RIPE Shekhar Mehta. Speaking at a webinar on Rotary Family Health Days (RFHD) hosted by the Rotarians for Family Health and AIDS Prevention (RFHA), South Africa, in partnership with the South African government, he said after he takes charge as RI president next year, “at least 10 per cent of GG projects will be done outside the country.”

Rotary is ready to play a bigger role in South Africa along with its government, NGOs and corporates, Mehta said and underlined the excellent partnership RFHA has forged with the health department over the years. “Unfortunately, this year, we will not be able to hold RFHD events as we are struggling with the greatest health issue that has afflicted mankind. Covid has brought the world down to its knees and we really don’t know how long this will continue. While many of our health programmes are

disrupted, it is time for us to rethink our strategies and sharpen our axes,” he said.

RFHD is a signature programme of the RFHA being carried out in nine countries in Africa during October each year in which three-day free health camps are held to screen people for a host of preventable diseases, HIV/AIDS and vaccinate children against viruses and infections. Since 2011, over 2.5 million people have benefited from around 11 million free health camps offered through a public-private partnership model by RFHA.

Complimenting RFHA founder Marion Bunch and its present CEO Sue

Paget for taking the programme from strength to strength, he said Rotary is not only committed to end polio, it will also deal with Covid, tackle HIV/AIDS and other health issues.

A corporate legacy

Polio eradication has been the corporate programme of Rotary over the last 35 years. From 350,000 cases a year in 125 countries then, to 150 children afflicted with polio in two countries so far this year, “Rotary has saved more than five million children either from death or being crippled.” Africa being declared polio-free with Nigeria getting

RIPE Mehta urges Indian Rotarians to do more projects in Africa

V Muthukumaran



A screenshot of the Rotary Family Health Days webinar.

certified by the WHO this September is a major milestone. Polio is only the second vaccine preventable disease to be almost eradicated from the world, and Rotary can take justifiable pride in this work, said Mehta.

The Indian government takes Rotary seriously given its polio legacy and many successful projects being done in literacy, water and sanitation across the districts. “Around 100 million children are learning through the e-curriculum designed by Rotary and beamed on 12 TV channels during the lockdown. And this will scale up to 250 million children after normalcy,” he pointed out. This mission would not have been possible, but for the partnership with GoI. In literacy, Rotary India’s target is to make India over 95 per cent literate compared to the current 76 per cent.

Mission Africa

Mehta called upon Rotary clubs in Africa to increase their membership

as “there is a great potential for growth in this region. We are an excellent organisation with tremendous reach, network, outstanding legacy, and passionate Rotarians with unmatched focus as shown in their commitment to end polio over the last 35 years.” RFHA is doing meaningful work in Africa which can be replicated in other parts of the world including South Asia, he said.

RFHD was conducted in India for two years; it can be revived now and taken to Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in a gradual manner. RI has sanctioned \$20 million as global grants for Covid projects around the world, besides one time disaster response fund (\$25,000), he said, and noted Indian Rotarians have done projects worth \$30 million for setting up Covid centres, donating equipment, PPE kits, masks and sanitisers at the grassroots level. “There is no disease we cannot overcome

and no problem that we cannot take head on,” he added.

Addressing the RFHD webinar, South African Health Minister Dr Zwelini Mkhize said this health initiative by Rotary “achieves the goals of primary healthcare through an enabling environment for communities to proactively seek health care and be afforded the opportunity to practise preventative healthcare.”

The timeliness of this year’s programme could not be more critical, he noted, as “we emerge out of the Covid surge and refocus our energy on universal health coverage.” Health experts and Rotarians, including Centers for Disease Control and Prevention country director Dr John Blanford, Global Rotary CEO Dr Ian Burton, Action Group for Family Health and AIDS Prevention CEO Sue Paget and government officials, including Deputy Health Minister Dr Joe Phaahla, spoke at the webinar. ■



Sanitiser tunnels installed at Pune police stations

Team Rotary News

As part of its Covid-relief efforts, RC Pune Ganeshkhind, RID 3131, donated two sanitising tunnels to the Chakan and Mhalunge police stations in the city.

The sanitising facilities offer a full body spraying with a skin-friendly liquid for the staff and visitors. Located in the vicinity of an industrial belt, the Chakan police station is frequented by hundreds of visitors daily and has



RC Pune Ganeshkhind president Rajesh Joshi felicitating a police officer.

a 70-member police team. Each tunnel cost ₹150,000. The tunnels manufactured by Kotkar Energy Dynamics, a local company in Chakan, consist of a metallic fabricated body covered with polyvinyl screens and spray fountains inside the chamber. The entry and exit into the tunnel are easy and quick as the screen folders are plastic. “This is a very

useful and thoughtful donation made by Rotary,” said a senior police officer.

The club felicitated the police officers at the stations for their service during the pandemic. Club president Rajesh Joshi and his wife Gauri were present along with Kotkar Energy managing director Atul Kotkar and his wife Archana, a club member. ■

Rotary's global operations in 'fine shape' and financials 'strong': **John Hewko**

V Muthukumaran



A screenshot of the webinar.

Amid the corona gloom and dark predictions for the world, “I can see a few silver linings that Rotary has shown to rest of the world. Rotary’s global operations are in good shape and our financials are strong. Our 1.2 million Rotarians have adopted virtual technologies and are experimenting with new means of doing service projects, fundraisers and fellowship events. We need to recalibrate, step back and think out-of-the-box to provide innovative club experience to new members to sustain growth,” said RI general secretary John Hewko. He was addressing a webinar hosted by RC Madras, RID 3232, on the current state of Rotary in the world.

But he was quick to flag off six issues of concern or challenges which need to be addressed urgently before it is too late. “We need to bring Rotaractors close to Rotary as they are our future assets. But the reality is that 95 per cent of Rotaractors never become Rotarians. Secondly, in membership retention, we observe that those who are 2–3 years in Rotary, are most likely to quit. While the growth is robust in India, Korea, Taiwan, Africa and Eastern Europe, there is a steep membership decline in the US, Canada, Australia and UK where the average age of Rotarians is also going up steadily,” he said. Thirdly, Rotarians need to unleash their creativity in doing community

projects in a virtual environment in a post-corona world.

When the going gets tougher, Hewko said, “fundraisers need to be organised in unique ways through virtual platforms” and it is here that Rotaractors can chip in with their ideas. Due to current situation, weak clubs may find it difficult to survive and hence strong, robust clubs must help them out with technology and advisory services, he said. Finally, “the world needs Rotary more than ever. This is our Rotary moment as Covid will open up new opportunities for us.”

Global overview

Between January and March, “I was invited to many workshops and

seminars on the pandemic and I came out with a strong feeling that the world is not ready to deal with this crisis and tackle the challenges.” Soon after attending the Davos forum, he realised the Covid crisis is not going to end soon and “I set up the pandemic response task force to make us ready for the new normal through a seamless transition of our operating systems to a new virtual environment.”

He told the RI staff — 575 at the RI headquarters, Evanston, and 200 in EU and Delhi — to get ready the systems for virtual work. RI also has its IT and back office work being done at Pune, Sydney, Tokyo and Brazil, he added.

Rotary had the largest drop of five per cent in membership just three years after the Great Depression of 1930s. But in the great tragedies from the Spanish flu (1918) to World Wars and the financial crises in global economies, the membership loss varied in a bandwidth of only 1–2 per cent. “Just a one per cent membership decline will cause annual loss of \$800,000 to Rotary and a five per cent negative growth \$4 million loss a year,” he said. But Rotary is on sound financial footing which will enable it to weather the Covid storm, he assured.

So far, the Foundation has disbursed \$30 million to Rotary clubs through global grants, DDFs and

Fundraisers need to be
organised in unique ways
through virtual platforms and
it is here that Rotaractors can
chip in with their ideas.



RI general secretary John Hewko

disaster response fund for executing Covid-related projects and activities across the world. He noted that the polio infrastructure is being used for Covid surveillance and contact tracing in most affected countries. The polio vaccination in Pakistan and Afghanistan (the two had reported 125 cases this year) had resumed after a brief suspension, with the health workers taking adequate Covid precautions.

Legacy projects

RC Madras president Kapil S Chitale recalled the Red Measles eradication programme the club had pioneered jointly with RC Whitby, RID 7070, Canada in 1979. “The success of this project led us to the beginning of the polio eradication programme in 1985 and the then RI President MAT Caparas approved a grant of \$2.6 million to India’s PolioPlus campaign in 1987.” Since 1944, the club is providing a range of vocational training in computer education, tailoring and other skilled jobs for children and women at Rotary Nagar, an urban slum adopted by the club.

The 93-year-old club has built 1,500 toilets in rural areas over the last

five years. “A technical training centre will be opened at the 35-acre Boy’s Town Society which has 200 students enjoying free boarding, lodging and schooling with medical facilities,” said Chitale. The centre is built under a GG project worth \$268,000. Over the years, the club has given over \$2 million to TRF with one AKS donor (PDG JB Kamdar and Marlene) and 40 major donors. It has sponsored 21 Rotary clubs, 26 Interact clubs and 10 Rotaract clubs.

Past presidents AK Gopinath, K Gopal Ratnam, club secretary PB Prasad and PDG Kamdar spoke on the occasion. Around 275 Rotarians and 200 Rotaractors from 17 countries including the US, UK, Canada, Sweden, Austria, Philippines, Malaysia, Egypt, Nigeria, Israel, Pakistan and Bangladesh took part in the virtual meet.

DG S Muthupalaniappan, DGE J Sridhar, PRIDs PT Prabhakar, Mikael Ahlberg (Sweden), PDGs Krishnan V Chari, ISAK Nazar, Babu Peram, Manjit Sawhney, Rajendra Rai, Chandra Bob, S Krishnawamy, PT Ramkumar, Olivannan, A Subramaniam and AP Kanna participated. ■

Rotary Quilon looks back at 70 eventful years

Humayun Thaj

On a balmy summer evening in 1949, a few dozens of industry and a dozen professionals in Kollam got together to discuss an idea. The country had just got independence from British rule. Among the men who gathered, a few came to know of this service and fellowship organisation that had originated in the West and was now gaining traction in India. It was called Rotary. They knew

that Rotary was involved in helping build hospitals and schools and brokering peace in a strife-torn world.

These 'Rotarians' were men of substance, integrity and character, who took the oath of community service together with friendship and fellowship. It seemed that these men were enjoying themselves, while helping others. This appealed to our gentlemen, and the Rotary Club of

Quilon was born. After brainstorming sessions and fervent communication, the club was formally chartered in Sep 1949, with JEA Pereira, an industrialist, who owned the erstwhile India Rare Earths Ltd, becoming the charter president.

Very soon, the founding fathers embarked on community service, taking up big and challenging projects and executing them with enthusiasm. The

first project, done in 1949 itself, was to collect funds for donation to the Quilon Municipality, to buy a bus for the Quilon Poor Home. Funds were also donated to the government district hospital for the setting up of a blood bank and acquiring an electro cardiograph.

In 1962, with Raja Sankaralingam as club president, an all-India arts, science, industrial and agricultural exhibition was organised, attended by the then Kerala and Madras state governors V V Giri and Bishnuram Medhi and the state chief minister Pattom Thanu Pillai. The funds collected from the 40-day exhibition were donated to the Quilon Municipality for the construction of the Lal Bahadur Stadium in Kollam. Even today it stands as a tall icon of the city.

In the late sixties, the government district hospital in Kollam was woefully in need of more rooms and beds. Those days private healthcare was marginal and in its infancy. The club decided to help. They



PDG Shirish Kesavan, a member of RC Quilon, is being greeted by Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan at the 70th anniversary celebration.



Bollywood stars Dilip Kumar and Waheeda Rahman with RC Quilon president A Abdul Rahim (centre) and Rtn C V Balachandran (extreme right).

met, discussed and came up with a plan. A two-storey Rotary Pay Ward consisting of twelve suites was constructed and handed over to the hospital administration. The then President of India V V Giri inaugurated the complex. The complex generates a sizeable amount every year which is again used for buying medicines for the poor and maintenance of the Rotary Pay Ward.

The first Interact club was formed in 1963 in St Aloysious High School. The Inner Wheel Club of Quilon was formed in 1967. In 1966, Peer Mohammed from the club was elected as the governor of the erstwhile RID 320 (comprising Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Ceylon). A matching grant project was completed in 1999 in

partnership with the Indian Medical Association to establish the IMA blood bank in Kollam that caters to the requirements of the city and suburbs. In subsequent years, matching grant projects were again undertaken for various other projects including the building of kitchen and drinking water facilities for the SS Samithy Abaya Kendra.

A long-cherished dream of the club was to have its own premises for meetings and fellowship. A two-storey building was constructed in the land purchased by the club. It was inaugurated by the Kerala Governor B Rachiah in 1994. A Rotary Community Centre with an auditorium was provided in the ground floor.

In 2011–12, the club received the Change Maker Award for RI Zone 5 comprising about 1,500 clubs for outstanding service projects during the presidency of Krishnan G Nair. The same year an international project for solar lighting facility in three villages in the Gambia, the west African country, was undertaken and completed with aplomb. The club also attained EREY status, that is, each member has contributed at least \$25 to TRF's Annual Fund in that year.

The club has embarked on a major Covid-relief project. The district hospital, Kollam, will be equipped with two ventilators and four kidney dialysis machines at a cost of ₹60 lakh,

aided by a matching grant from the Foundation. All members are multiple Paul Harris Fellows and four are major donors at various levels. The club has contributed six district governors including DG Shirish Kesavan. The past governors from the club are S Peer Mohammed, Dr Paul Christian, P Gopinatha Pillai, Prof K Udayakumar and Dr G A George.

In Feb 2020, the club celebrated 70 years of its existence with the Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan as the chief guest. As times fly, this club is continuing with myriad projects with an indomitable spirit, thus inspiring younger clubs and Rotarians.

The writer is secretary of RC Quilon.

A Zomato delivery woman, a mother, a hero

Kiran Zehra

Uma Devi was in the middle of an order delivery when she declined my interview call and immediately sent a WhatsApp voice note requesting a call back at 10pm when her shift ends. Six days a week, for 10 hours a day, she delivers food for Zomato. The job helps her pay bills, her son's school fee "and live a dignified life," she says confidently.

But riding 300km a day for ₹4,000 a week wasn't enough to pay for her son's college and cricket coaching fees. "Until yesterday I had no idea from where I was going to arrange ₹28,000 for his fees but by god's grace everything has been taken care of. And this, thanks to R K Raaja, the CEO of *chapattikings.com*, who shared my story on social media."

Her story took the internet by storm after Raaja posted on LinkedIn about his meeting with "a real-life

hero. She came to my kitchen to pick up an order and I remarked that being so young she shouldn't be tired to climb the stairs to the first floor." The two began talking and when "I learned about how hard she is working to make her son's life better

without worrying about the struggle, and sleeping as little as five hours, I was taken aback," he says. Within minutes of his post, the son's college enrolment fee was collected!

On the choice of becoming a Zomato delivery person, Uma says,

I have had zero cancellation
or complaints of late
delivery and not once have
I spilled any food.



Uma Devi with her son.

They have called me 'Lady Zomato,' clapped for me, taken selfies, and expressed how proud they feel that a woman has delivered their food.

"I could only study up to Class 3 because of my family's financial situation and when I lost my husband ten years ago my life was thrown off balance. What jobs could I apply for?" Luckily her husband had taught her to ride a two-wheeler and the job description said "anyone who has a bike can apply. So I applied for it".

Soon after her husband's death she got a taste of life's grim reality when as a young widow "I asked for financial assistance from a close relative, and he demanded a physical favour in return... if you know what I mean," she says. Uma wasn't able to get a job and the responsibility of paying house rent and school fees loomed before her. "I was willing to struggle and do what it takes to provide for my son but I wasn't going to compromise on my self-respect and dignity," she adds.

Her first job was collecting cash for a battery dealer for a salary of ₹7,000 a month. She remained in that job for close to 10 years and moved to Zomato about two years ago "for a better pay so that I could help my son get into a good college," she says. The new job not just offered her better pay but also recognition. Uma is a diamond star employee of Zomato. She explains humbly "I have had zero cancellation or complaints of late delivery and not once have I spilled any food."



Lady Zomato at work.

People have looked at her in surprise, shock and in awe, she says, and in many instances "they have called me 'Lady Zomato,' clapped for me, taken selfies, and expressed how proud they feel that a woman has delivered their food." But her best moment on the job was when she stopped at a traffic signal and a few young men on bikes saluted me. I was so happy and proud," she smiles.

As far as Chennai is concerned she says "working women are respected and treated well at the same time; if we behave in a dignified way nothing can go wrong." So does she feel exhausted by the end of the day? "Of course I do but compared to my duties as a mother, I feel the commuting is not a problem. I make sure I get five hours of sleep every day and do my job with dedication. I want my son to be proud of me." ■

Transforming a rural community

A Arshiya

Rotary Club of Madras North has been associated with government schools in Napalayam village for over three decades. From the inception of the Old Napalayam Government School, our club members have contributed significantly in the construction of the school, setting up of infrastructure — computer lab, library, recreation centre, renovation of restrooms,

organising tuitions for students, and many more such services.

Our senior members have always taken a special interest in the welfare of the school and students through the years, with members visiting the school on all major occasions like Independence Day, Republic Day, and festivals, spending time with students and teachers.

Last August, our team visited this as well as another government

school, at Subbareddypalayam. We partnered with the College Dekho organisation to conduct a career guidance session, psychometric test and assessment of students. This was later followed by a 1–1 counselling session with Class 10 students. The College Dekho team had trained volunteers from Dr MGR Janaki College, who were pursuing a degree in psychology, and they supported us in conducting these counselling sessions with the students. It was a wonderful experience for both Rotarians and the students to identify their personality traits, interests and career aspirations. Many students expressed their interest in setting up their own businesses, taking up government jobs, joining the police force, pursuing degrees in engineering and arts, and diplomas

A career guidance session in progress.





in technical and various other courses.

Through this process, 30 students from three schools in Napalayam were identified for higher education. The process involved a series of interviews, evaluation and suggestions from the school principal and teachers.

Of these our club has shortlisted 11 students, all

talented and high scorers, and will be sponsoring their higher education.

Five students who have completed Class 10, have been successfully enrolled in CPCL (Chennai Petroleum Corporation) Polytechnic College. Six students who have completed Class 12 have been admitted to Dr MGR Janaki College and started online classes.

A core committee formed under Special Projects - Napalayam was spearheaded by Durai Pandian and Arshiya along with president Venkataraman, Suresh Krishn and Kumar Rajendran.

We thank our club members for their generous contribution to make this wonderful journey, which will bring a positive change in so many families in this village. Our ultimate goal is to have more students from these schools pursuing higher studies, helped by our career awareness programmes and support for higher education. We welcome sponsors and partners.

Kindly reach out to us on rotaryclubofmadrasnorth@gmail.com.

The writer is a member of RC Madras North, RID 3232.

A dream comes true



During our visit to one of the government schools in Napalayam village, we met Asha, 17, a student of Class 12. She was excited and thrilled to meet us, as we were from the city. With all curiosity, she went on asking questions about places in Chennai, city life and our experiences. She later shared with us how her whole life revolved around her village and she hardly got a chance to visit any other place. When she was young, she used to visit Chennai during Pongal festival, and go to the beach. She really enjoyed her visits to the city. In later years, everyone got so busy with their work that they no longer visited Chennai. Despite formidable

challenges in her family, this very hard-working student excelled in her studies. From childhood, Asha had a dream, which was to pursue higher education in the city of Chennai. But she thought this would remain a dream forever. To her surprise, after she took part in a career guidance programme which was conducted in her school by us, where she said she wanted to get a degree in commerce and become a bank manager, things came together. In due course, she was selected as part of a sponsorship programme and got admission in a prestigious arts college in Chennai. Now, she is happily attending the degree programme of her choice.

Rotary clubs take **tree plantation** to new heights

Kiran Zehra

PDG Ganesh Bhat, RID 3170, recalls an incident at Yellapur near Karwar, Karnataka, where a young boy bitten by a snake was given herbal treatment by an

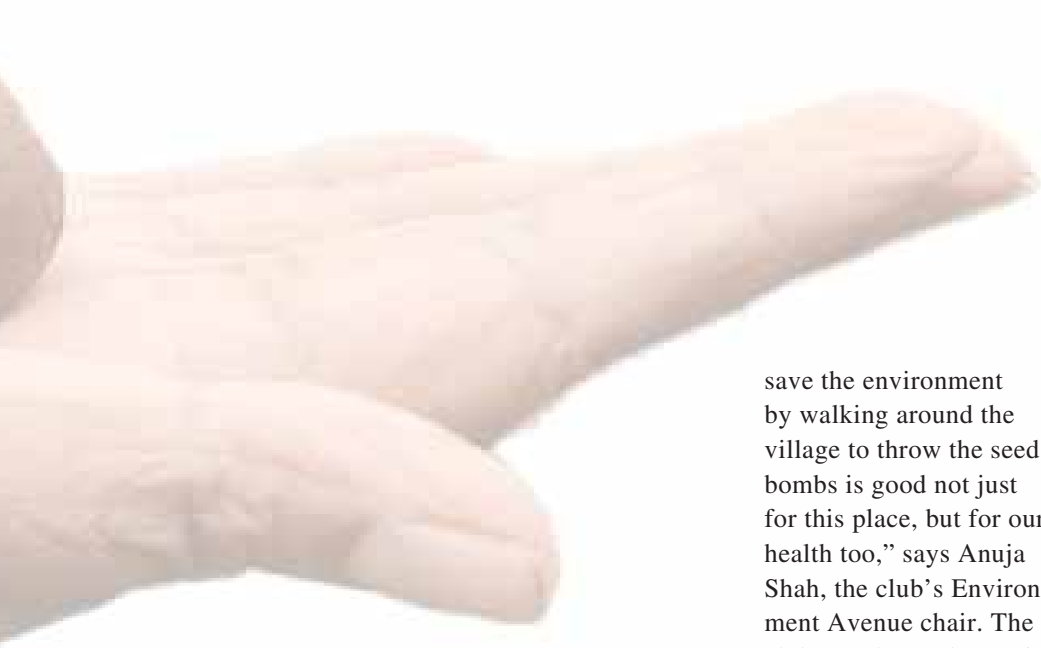
82-year-old man. “He simply plucked a leaf from his backyard and placed it on the spot in the boy’s leg where he was bitten.” Within few minutes, the boy was back on his feet; the old

man did not charge a penny for the service. A surprised Bhat quizzed him about the leaf. The old man replied that if he disclosed its secret the effect will be lost. “I had to persuade him to reveal

the herbal secret for the benefit of future generations,” says the PDG.

The old man asked Bhat to stay back for two more days with him. From curing a cough to an ulcer and treating a





Below: PDG Ganesh Bhat and Rotarians from RC Dharwad Central, RID 3170, planting saplings at the Rotary Ayee Garden.



snake bite, the old man had close to 40 varieties of herbal plants right in his garden. “That inspired me to start a medicinal garden in Dharwad,” says Bhat. The Rotary Ayees Garden being nurtured to perpetuate the memory of his mother and mother-in-law has more than 160 medicinal shrubs and plants. The garden is maintained by the Walchandnagar Industries headed by Rtn Suresh Babu of RC Dharwad Central. The club will expand this garden under the leadership of its president Anand Nayak and secretary Karan Doddwad.

Green grenades

Rotarians from RC Pune Kothrud, RID 3131, are bombarding the village of Aarey, near Pune, with ‘green grenades’ aka seed bombs. “As the saying goes *ek pathar, do aam* (one stone, two mangoes), our effort to

save the environment by walking around the village to throw the seed bombs is good not just for this place, but for our health too,” says Anuja Shah, the club’s Environment Avenue chair. The club members, along with their families, participated in the seed bombing activity which was cosponsored by Naata Foundation, an NGO. “The Annettes loved it and we are planning to do more seed bombing soon,” she adds.

In partnership with RC Mumbai and Naata Foundation, the club had earlier installed solar lamps in and outside every house in the village and also planted 5,000 fruit-bearing saplings. “The solar lamps help the villagers work extra hours and the children can study until late evening. The fruit trees will be an additional source of livelihood, while also restoring the green cover of the village,” she says.

Rotary Wheel Park

“Imagine taking a stroll in a lush green park in the middle of a concrete jungle. Not just fresh oxygen for the lungs and ecological

balance for the city, but this will also be a grand public image initiative of our club. The park is being constructed in the shape of the Rotary Wheel,” says president Kshitij Choudhari, RC Aurangabad East, RID 3132.

On a request from the Sports Authority of India, the two-acre spacious park is coming up on the BAMU campus in Aurangabad where the club had already constructed two check dams in association with TRF. The monsoon has filled the dams over five times this year and this has improved the groundwater level in this area, he points out. This Rotary Wheel Park will be visible from a distance with its signature design, he says.

In the first phase, the club has planted native banyan, peepal and neem trees that have a lifespan of 500 years and laid out a 1,000 metre-jogging track.

Going green the new mantra

RC Ahmedgarh, RID 3090, implemented roadside plantation drives in the city. The club is roping in educational and private institutions to take the plantation drive forward and will felicitate students and staff members who pledge to adopt a sapling.

RCs Calcutta East Central and Calcutta Sun City, RID 3291, distributed flower and



Rotarians at RID 3190's Project Vruksha Chetana.

fruit-bearing saplings to 100 farmers of Rajarampur gram panchayat affected by Cyclone Amphan. The club was assisted by its RCC and Sonartori Women and Child Welfare Institution.

RC Ahmedabad Asmita, RID 3054, an all-women's club, has planted 67,000 trees at a resort in the city.

RCs Bangalore Lakeside, Bangalore Central and RC Kolar,

RID 3190, under project *Vruksha Chetana*, planted 410 mango tree saplings in the land of eight farmers. The club will plant fruit saplings over eight acres of land and estimates that this will increase the income of farmers by ₹80,000 annually.

RC Mayiladuthurai, RID 2981, launched a tree plantation drive at Parasalur Veerateeswarar temple in the presence of DG R Balaji Babu. The club will plant around 3,000 saplings at a cost of ₹1.25 lakh.

Along with the Interactors of Little Scholars School, RC Thanjavur South, RID 2981, planted over 50 saplings of *Terminalia Mantaly*, an exotic variety of trees, to enhance the look of the school campus at a cost of ₹1 lakh. The club also set up a drip irrigation unit for watering the saplings regularly. To mark I-Day, RC Tirunelveli Town, RID 3212, planted saplings at the Sri Satya Sai Bala Gurukulam Matric School.



A mega tree plantation drive by RC Mayiladuthurai, RID 2981, in the presence of DG Balaji Babu.

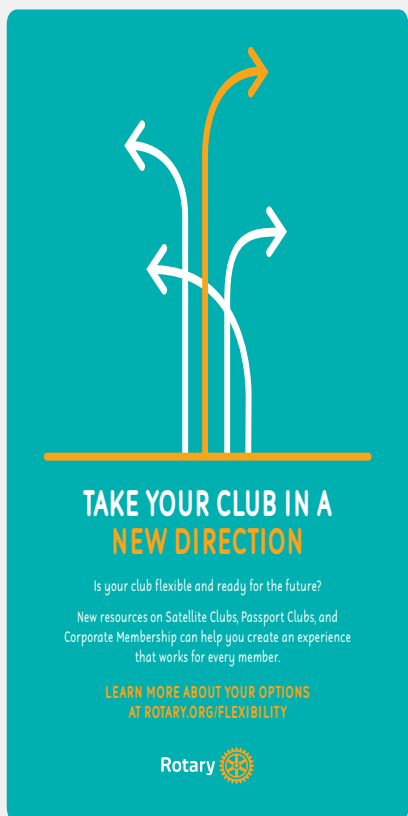
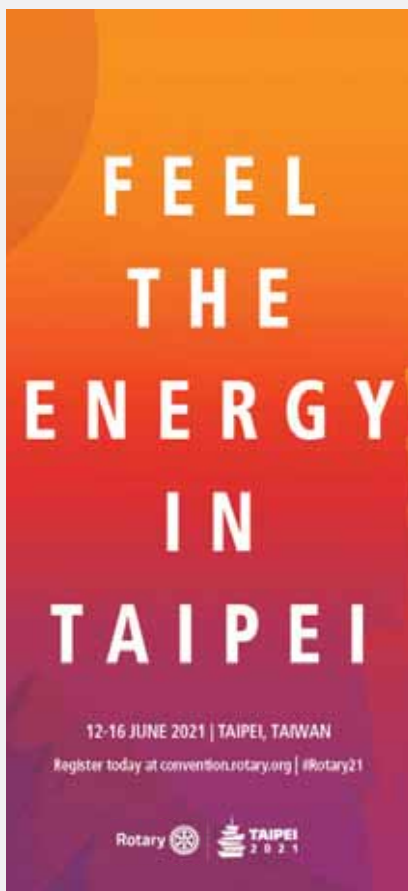
Designed by N Krishnamurthy

District Wise TRF Contributions as on September 2020

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other funds	Total Contributions
India					
2981	15,842	1,943	5,000	0	22,785
2982	12,228	1,379	15,703	14,615	43,925
3000	5,297	0	10	10,800	16,107
3011	(12,658)	100	40,450	96,368	124,261
3012	10,225	0	0	3,079	13,304
3020	42,219	5,645	0	2,625	50,490
3030	625	1,030	0	73,418	75,072
3040	522	67	0	50	639
3053	6,581	303	0	60,668	67,552
3054	60,325	140	0	77,844	138,310
3060	21,523	(966)	7,077	54,567	82,200
3070	2,094	0	0	11,108	13,203
3080	12,021	8,958	0	0	20,978
3090	13,723	0	0	(736)	12,987
3100	1,565	0	0	6,411	7,976
3110	8,849	0	0	0	8,849
3120	0	1,769	0	(1,769)	0
3131	26,371	4,850	9,000	78,206	118,427
3132	3,557	85	0	3,903	7,545
3141	159,812	200	15,865	250,683	426,560
3142	77,641	5,061	0	4,793	87,494
3150	7,300	300	17,667	22,021	47,287
3160	4,496	5,442	0	0	9,938
3170	3,806	2,470	125	73,012	79,414
3181	8,536	347	0	7,050	15,933
3182	10,475	0	0	1,581	12,056
3190	19,869	753	25,000	105,540	151,162
3201	6,346	1,583	0	54,712	62,642
3202	27,285	1,568	135	10,167	39,155
3211	934	1,899	0	37,439	40,272
3212	10,418	8,023	14	44,327	62,783
3231	(513)	27	0	1,167	680
3232	(723)	900	1,000	86,190	87,368
3240	14,847	6,950	0	1,000	22,797
3250	2,087	187	0	93	2,367
3261	(750)	0	0	1,833	1,083
3262	1,629	1,168	0	0	2,797
3291	5,088	185	0	17,650	22,923
India Total	589,490	62,368	137,046	1,210,415	1,999,319
3220 Sri Lanka	11,582	5,121	0	8,919	25,623
3271 Pakistan	1,006	1,000	0	22,100	24,106
3272 Pakistan	5,240	7,446	0	0	12,686
3281 Bangladesh	32,989	500	1,000	32,941	67,430
3282 Bangladesh	5,300	300	0	8,396	13,996
3292 Nepal	12,351	7,409	0	75,246	95,006
South Asia Total	657,959	84,144	138,046	1,358,017	2,238,166
World Total	20,790,668	3,581,457	5,801,230	7,462,148	37,635,502

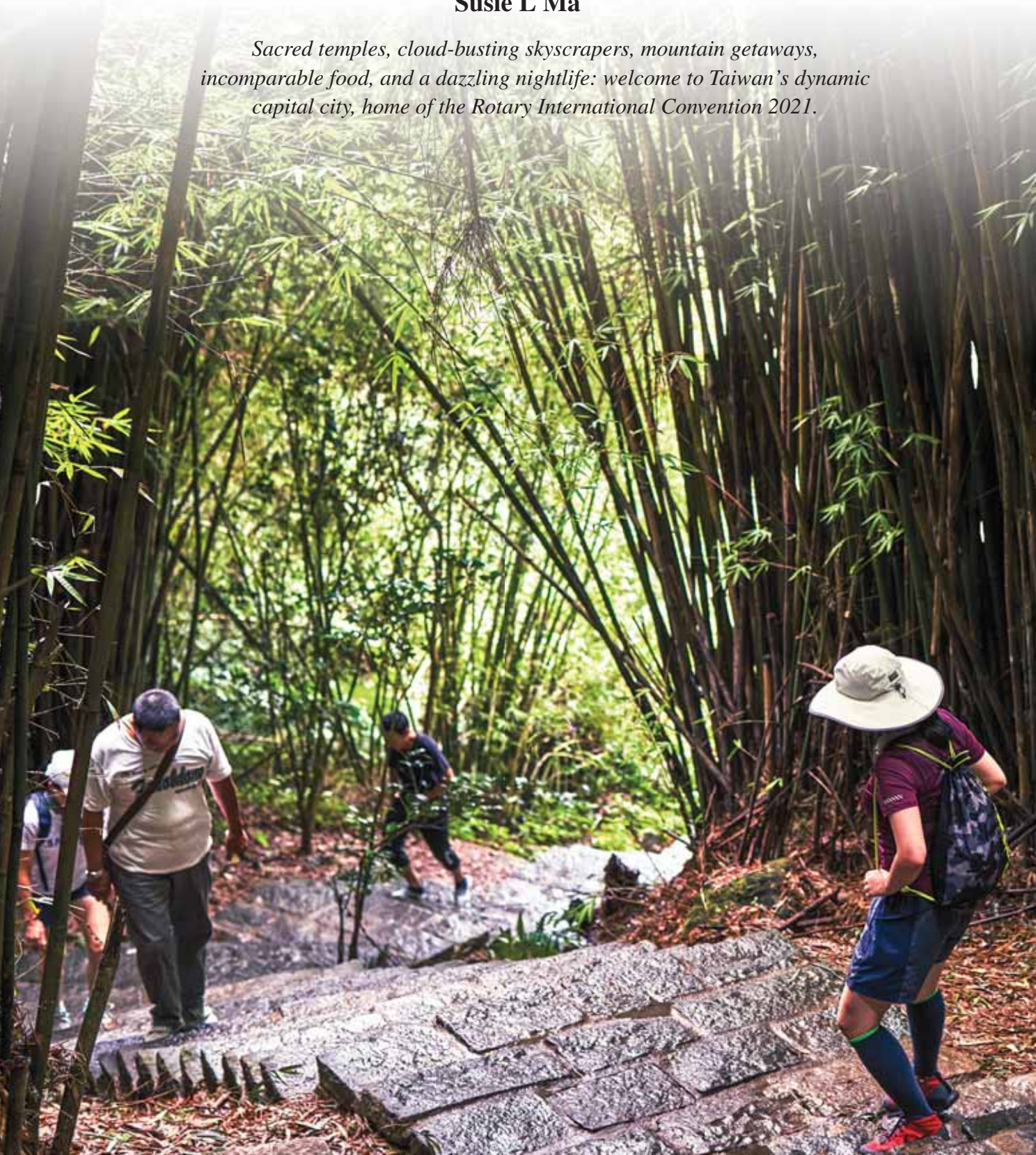
Source: RI South Asia Office



Taipei Rising

Susie L Ma

Sacred temples, cloud-busting skyscrapers, mountain getaways, incomparable food, and a dazzling nightlife: welcome to Taiwan's dynamic capital city, home of the Rotary International Convention 2021.



It emerged from the ocean mists nearly 500 years ago, a lush Asian isle covered in green forests and punctuated by tall mountains. No matter that it had a civilisation and a culture already centuries old. To the Portuguese sailors exploring uncharted seas, it was something entirely new, and it looked like a paradise. They gave it a name that soon began to appear on mariners' maps: Ilha Formosa — beautiful island.

The name stuck, though the island of Formosa, about 100 miles east of the coast of China, is known today as Taiwan. It is also considered one of the Four Asian Tigers, a quartet of Far East economies that took off in the late 20th century and continue to expand in the 21st. For Taiwan, the seat and symbol of that miraculous growth is its capital, Taipei, a city that blazes 24x7 with an inextinguishable vitality — making it a perfect setting for the Rotary International Convention 2021, whose theme is *Feel the Energy*.

This is a long-awaited moment for Taiwanese Rotarians, who established their first club, the Rotary Club of Taipei, in 1948. Seventy-two years later, Taiwan has nearly 900 clubs and about 35,000 Rotarians. Its 12 districts will serve as hosts for the 2021 convention from June 12 to 16. “The Taiwanese Rotarians have been preparing to put on this convention for five years,” says Kenneth M Schuppert Jr, the convention chair. “They have a

great deal of pride, and they’re intent on making the convention a showcase for their city and their country.”

A member of the Rotary Club of Decatur, Alabama, Schuppert served as the aide to past RI President Gary CK Huang, a member of the Rotary Club of Taipei since 1976. Schuppert and his wife, Lynn, a member of the Decatur club who served as the aide to Huang’s wife, Corinna, have visited Taipei several times. They are eager to return. “The city of Taipei is so interesting,” Schuppert says. “You’ve got all these modern buildings, with beautiful, ancient temples interspersed among them.” He extols the city’s vibrancy (as epitomised by its night markets), its cleanliness, and its many natural wonders, from its “pocket parks” to its nearby mountain trails.

Schuppert also raves about the food — and in doing so, he’s far from alone among visitors to Taiwan. Even the simplest meal is an occasion — a time for friends, old and new, to enjoy one another’s company and the island’s varied cuisine. Schuppert has some advice for Rotarians who are invited to dine as the guest of a Taiwanese host. “Don’t empty your plate unless you really want more,” he says. “When you think the meal is over, it’s probably not. More will come.”

Schuppert also touts the friendliness of the Taiwanese people and recommends that visitors attending the 2021 convention rely on local Rotary members to introduce them to

The tallest building in the world when it was completed in 2004, Taipei 101 is an engineering marvel, built to withstand magnitude 9.0 earthquakes.

Left: An extinct, 2,021-foot-tall volcano, Guanyinshan offers well-maintained hiking trails. After a rigorous climb, enjoy stunning views of the Tamsui River and the Taipei skyline.



the wonders of Taipei. In the following pages, you'll see that we've done exactly that. We gathered tips from nearly a dozen Rotarians and Rotaractors who are well-acquainted with the city. Our tour begins with an unlikely must-see destination that was also near the top of Schuppert's list: the subway.

Take the MRT

In any new city, a visitor's first order of business is to figure out the best way to get around. In Taipei, the answer to that question is the mass rapid transit system. As Rotarian and Rotaractor Julie Chu explains, the MRT is more than just a means of getting from one spot on the map to another.

Chu was born in Taipei, but she spent most of her youth living abroad. When she returned as a 25-year-old, she knew little of her native city. "I had to explore Taipei as a foreigner," Chu explains. "I spoke the language, but a lot of things were alien to me. The MRT was how I relearned my home city." She rode the MRT into different ethnic neighbourhoods, such as Little Manila. She rode it to the ocean in one direction and to the mountains in the other. She took it to the end of the Red Line where the Tamsui River opens into the sea so she could catch the sunset, hear live music, and walk along the coast. She took it to the Maokong Gondola, the cable car she rode up to the teahouses and plantations in the village of Maokong. The trains run underground in the city centre, but some of them travel above ground outside of downtown, giving Chu a chance to get reacquainted with the Taiwanese countryside.

Chu also appreciated the MRT for more practical reasons. Stations have special waiting zones for women riding at night, and those areas have extra security. The system also accommodates passengers with special needs: When Chu was travelling with a fellow

Rotarian who had a broken leg, the MRT offered a special escort to help. As Chu and Schuppert both note, the hallmark of the MRT is its cleanliness. No eating or drinking is allowed in the stations or on the trains. Even the bathrooms are spotless — the one at the MRT station near Chu's home boasts fresh flowers. Chu passes along a great tip: She sometimes pops into MRT stations to use the restroom, and the station attendant will often let you in for free if you say that's all you're there for.

The MRT is easy to navigate, with maps available in English and help desks in each station staffed by attendants who speak English. Trains are frequent and run on time. Convention goers will receive a free pass to travel on the trains as part of their convention packet, making it simple and convenient to get to the Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center, the home of the Taipei convention, which has its own MRT station.

Take an elevator up

One sight you literally cannot miss is Taipei 101, the skyscraper that dominates the city's skyline. Named for its 101 floors, it was the tallest building in the world from 2004 until it was surpassed by Dubai's Burj Khalifa, which was completed in 2009. At 1,667-feet-tall, it towers above the rest of the city — and nearly every Rotary member we spoke with mentioned it as an essential stop on any tour of Taipei.

Some say the tower resembles a pagoda, while others think it looks more like a stalk of bamboo. Taiwan is prone to earthquakes and typhoons, so Taipei 101 was designed to withstand a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and boasts an enormous, 728-ton tuned mass pendulum-style damper shaped like a gold ball that helps stabilise the building in high winds (the damper is visible from the 87th to 92nd floors).

The elevator ride from the fifth to the 89th floor takes only 37 seconds. There is an indoor observatory on the 89th and an outdoor one on the 91st. Last year the building management opened the 101st floor, previously reserved for VIPs, to the public; entry to the outdoor viewing platform requires wearing a safety harness. Tickets to the observatory decks are sold online or at the tower for about \$20.

Before or after you visit the top floor, stop on the lower floors to shop at the high-end stores or grab a bite



(Din Tai Fung, Taipei's legendary dumpling house, has an outpost here; its smaller, original restaurant is on Xinyi Road). If you prefer your meal with a view, there are also restaurants on the 85th and 86th floors.

Take a hike

While a trip to the top of Taipei 101 is the best way to catch 360-degree views of the city, Rotaractor Vickie Tso likes taking in the skyline from the top of Elephant Mountain (one stop from Taipei 101 on the MRT), particularly at night. The climb to the summit involves 600 steep but well-maintained steps.

Taiwan is a mountainous island, and hiking is a popular pastime among locals. Tso also recommends Yangmingshan National Park at the northern tip of the island, easily accessible via bus, taxi or car. The park has numerous hiking trails, waterfalls, meadows of calla lilies, dense forests, and open grassy plains dotted with cows. Tso says to plan to stop for a meal or a snack while at Yangmingshan; there are cafes and restaurants in and around the park, some offering panoramic views of the city.

Rotarian Koji Fukuhara prefers to hike a smaller mountain called

Guanyinshan, whose summit can be reached in about an hour or less. At the end of a rigorous hike, Fukuhara rewards himself at one of the restaurants near the mountain with a meal of urn chicken. A popular dish in Taiwan, it's so named because whole chickens are basted, then roasted in clay urns, once to cook the chicken and then again at a higher temperature to crisp the skin. "It's very juicy and salty," Fukuhara says, "and you eat it with side dishes, soup, and beer."

Take a Dip

The sulphur hot springs in Taipei are popular with tourists, but for locals, they

A sensory and religious experience, Lungshan Temple honours folk deities and three systems of belief.



Dumplings to doughnuts

A gastronomic tour of Taipei

Night markets: Raucous, energetic, and endless fun, Taipei's night markets are a feast for the eyes and ears as well as the stomach. While food is the main draw, the markets also sell clothing, shoes, souvenirs and toys, as well as provide entertainment, such as carnival-style attractions, video games, and fortunetelling. The markets open as early as 4pm — and stay open as late as 1am. The destinations mentioned most often by our Rotary tour guides were the Shilin and Raohe night markets.

The food, mostly small dishes, is casual, but that doesn't mean it's not first-rate: Several dozen vendors in Taipei's night markets were recognised by the *Michelin Guide* in 2020. The lines can be long at the most popular stalls — but that's a sure way to find the best food. Some stands have tables and stools for diners, but most people eat while walking through the market (or take it to go and eat at home). The dumplings, noodles and buns will be familiar to foreigners, as will other edibles, such as fried foods and foods on sticks — though often with a Taiwanese twist, like flattened fried chicken cutlets as big as your face and skewered fried milk balls. Try the soft, steamed white buns called *gua bao*, which are filled with braised pork belly; flaky savoury scalion pancakes that can also be turned into sandwiches with egg or meat; and oven-baked buns filled with juicy pepper steak. There are fresh fruit juices; papaya milk and other creamy concoctions; and, of course, bubble



Sharing hot pot is a culinary adventure — and a great way to make new friends.

teas of all flavours filled with chewy tapioca balls. For a sweet ending, look for *mochi*, a sweet, chewy rice cake that is served boiled or grilled and sometimes with shaved ice.

Paul Kuo's favourite night market food is an oyster omelette, a crispy egg pancake filled with oysters and topped with a sweet and sour sauce. Rotarian and Rotaractor Elyse (Yi-Chun) Lin recommends stinky tofu, a fermented bean curd with a strong smell that is beloved by Taiwanese people. Another unique night market dish favoured by locals is called pig blood cake, made of, yes, pig blood and sticky rice that's formed into rectangular shapes, dipped in a pork soy broth, and rolled in peanut flour with cilantro and served on a stick. Lin describes it as a chewy, sticky, salty treat — and her absolute favourite night market delicacy.

Dumplings: In Taipei, dumplings are everywhere. For the absolute best, Past District 3500 Governor Hong Shue Chen and his wife, Rita, who is also a Rotarian, recommend Din Tai Fung (Taipei has a number of locations, but expect a wait; check wait times at dintai fung.com.tw/eng). It's famous for its *xiao long bao*, or soup dumplings — when you bite into one, flavourful broth seeps out of the delicate skin. Pork is the most common *xiao long bao* filling, but Din Tai Fung offers other variations, such as pork and crab roe or green squash and shrimp. The menu features other types of dumplings, pot stickers, and wontons as well, along with steamed buns, noodles, soups, rice dishes, vegetables, and even dessert such as *xiao long bao* filled with sweet red bean paste or chocolate. "If you come to Taipei and don't go to Din Tai Fung,"

says Pauline Leung, “then you haven’t really been here.”

Hot pot: Sharing food in Taiwan is a bonding experience, and one of the best ways to do this is hot pot — typically an all-you-can-eat affair with hundreds of choices. It starts with a kettle of broth that’s kept simmering on burners at the table. Vegetables, thinly sliced meats, seafood, noodles, tofu, and dumplings arrive in separate dishes; diners make their selections and cook them in the broth, creating a flavourful soup. Diners eat straight from the pot, dipping the cooked ingredients into a variety of offerings and garnishes, such as soy sauce, sesame oil, hot sauce, peanut sauce, barbecue sauce, cilantro and garlic. Many Taiwanese like to add a raw egg. Some restaurants offer individual pots, while others feature a big communal pot, often split in half, with one side for spicy broth and the other

for a milder brew. There’s a beauty to sharing hot pot. “Even if we did not know each other before, after we share hot pot we become friends,” explains Paul Kuo’s wife, Cecilia.

Breakfast: Taiwanese breakfasts can range from a sit-down meal with steamed rice and hot soup to coffee and a roll from a bakery. “Our food has so many influences from different Chinese regions, even at breakfast,” says Julie Chu. “We have buns or doughnuts from the northern part of China, and rice and porridge from the south.” Morning cuisine also shows the influence of the West: You may see pasta with black pepper sauce or even hamburgers on the menu at some breakfast joints. Chu’s favourite breakfast is *dan bing*, a crepe with a thin layer of egg that’s served rolled up. “You can get it anywhere, anytime; it’s fast, and you can add toppings like tuna, ham and veggies.” Another of

her favourites is a baked scallion bun, with the scallions incorporated into the dough or sprinkled on top. Finish breakfast with a cup of lightly sweetened milk tea, served hot or cold. Milk tea was the basis for the first bubble teas, which originated in Taiwan.

Food courts: That’s right: Department store food courts in Taipei are legitimate food destinations, offering groceries, packaged specialty foods, hot meals and desserts. Leung recommends heading to the Xinyi district, which has a number of high-end shopping malls with excellent food courts (including one in Taipei 101). She also says to check out Sogo, a department store chain popular in Taiwan (the food courts are on the lower level). At the Sogo location in Taipei’s Daan district, you can slurp a bowl of ramen, eat your fill of Chinese *dim sum*, ruin your diet with fancy cakes, or simply stop at a bakery for a bun and coffee or tea.



Life in Taipei revolves around eating, from pan-fried buns for breakfast to a food court meal.

Convenience store food: Rotaractor Vickie Tso, a French-trained pastry chef and a graduate of the International Culinary Center in New York City, is a big fan of Taiwan’s convenience stores. She often pops into a 7-Eleven to buy postage stamps or concert tickets, send and receive packages and pay her electricity bill. But, she says, it’s also a great place to pick up breakfast, lunch, coffee, or a snack. Tso enjoys the savoury tea eggs, which have been steeped in a soy sauce and tea mixture. One of her childhood favourites is dried ramen noodles that are broken into pieces, seasoned with a flavour packet, and eaten uncooked, like crunchy chips. For breakfast she often chooses *fan tuan* — a sticky rice roll traditionally filled with pickled radish and greens, egg and pork — and *mi jiang*, a peanut-flavoured rice milk. ■

are a way of life. “Some of my friends like to go every day, in the morning or evening,” says Tony Chang, past governor of RI District 3500 (which has since split into districts 3501 and 3502). “It’s a social activity.”

The hot springs range from around 95 to 115 degrees Fahrenheit. Chang explains that there are springs for every preference and budget, from public bathhouses that are inexpensive or free to luxury spa resorts. Some facilities have open-air bathing, while others offer indoor pools. You can go all in with a swimsuit or merely dangle your feet in the warm water.

In Taipei, among the best known are the Beitou Hot Springs and the springs within and around Yangmingshan, which is home to dormant and active volcanoes. Chang’s favourites are about an hour from Taipei in Jiaoxi: “It’s a small town close to the eastern coast,” he says. “You can go to the open-air hot springs at the resorts and hotels

there, where you will be surrounded by mountains and forests and can see the ocean. It’s very beautiful.”

Take in 7,000 years of Chinese culture

“We have so many places to go in Taipei,” says Catherine Hsieh, the wife of Yen-Shen Hsieh, past governor of RI District 3480 (which has since split into districts 3481 and 3482). “There’s the beach, the mountains — but the National Palace Museum is a treasure.”

The museum contains nearly 700,000 Chinese artifacts dating as far back as 5,000 BCE. With so many things to see, Hsieh — a member and former president of the museum’s docents association — recommends starting with the jade collection, which includes delicate carvings of animals, figurines, vases and jewellery. Its most famous piece, and arguably the most valued item in the museum, is a

priceless depiction of a head of bok choy (Chinese cabbage) carved from a single piece of green and white jade and known as the Jadeite Cabbage. In a city celebrated for its food, it’s no surprise that another popular piece in the museum’s collection is a rendering of braised pork belly carved from jasper. That one is called the Meat-Shaped Stone.

The museum’s renowned bronze-ware collection includes a set of bells from as early as the 13th century BCE and ritual vessels inscribed to commemorate military actions, marriages, and land grants from as far back as the ninth century BCE. You can also see the Emperor’s Treasure Chests, a collection of items for the exclusive use and entertainment of the imperial family and court; it includes an elaborately carved hollow ivory sphere with other carved spheres nestled within.

The museum also contains paintings, calligraphy and clothing, and



The National Palace Museum.



Inside the Lungshan Temple.

beautiful celadon and Ding ware pottery. Hsieh recommends planning for three hours to see the main attractions. There is an admission fee (about \$12), but tours are free and offered in English.

Take time to act like a tourist

Though our Rotaractor and Rotarian tour guides highlighted unexpected destinations, they didn't overlook some of Taipei's better-known sites. Past District 3450 Governor Eric Chin, who lives in Hong Kong but visits Taiwan often, recommends a visit to Lungshan Temple. In a city dotted with temples, he says, "this one is special." Founded in 1738, it's one of Taipei's oldest temples, and it acknowledges various folk deities and three belief systems: Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. In the courtyard, people toss red crescent-shaped pieces of wood as they seek to foretell their futures.

Paul Kuo, past governor of District 3522, says not to miss the Taipei Zoo, especially if you've brought your kids to the convention. His favourite spot is the Formosan animal area, which features animals indigenous to Taiwan. One of them, the Formosan black bear, is a symbol of pride for the Taiwanese. From the zoo, catch the gondola to Maokong, where you can enjoy scenic views and a respite from the city below.

Pauline Leung, secretary general of the Host Organisation Committee for the 2021 convention, recommends taking a stroll down Dihua Street, a historic trading district filled with markets, teahouses, art galleries and traditional architecture. The Xiahai Chenghuang (City God) Temple houses more than 600 statues of Chinese deities.

Vickie Tso recommends the bike paths along the Tamsui and Keelung

rivers. Renting a bike is easy: You will find rental kiosks for the Taipei Bike Sharing System, informally known as YouBike, near MRT stations, tourist attractions, and elsewhere throughout the city. Credit cards are accepted — and renting a bike costs a mere 30 cents for 30 minutes.

In many ways, a bicycle is the ideal transport to explore Taipei and its environs. As you pedal around this vibrant city and the verdant countryside, you will see for yourself why those awe-struck Portuguese sailors dubbed this unexpected apparition in the South China Sea Ilha Formosa. After five days — or more — in Taipei, feeling the energy of the Rotary convention and the city, you may even come up with a new name for this island paradise: Isle Be Back.

© Rotary

Ravishankar Dakoju announces four Indo-Pak Rotary projects

V Muthukumaran

Giving a big push to India-Pakistan relations at the non-governmental level, Rtn Ravishankar Dakoju from RC Bangalore Orchards, RID 3190, who has donated ₹100-crore to TRF, announced four joint programmes that will promote fellowship and cultural bonding with Rotarians from our neighbouring country. Delivering his speech on *Borderless World and Peace* at a webinar hosted by RID 3272, Pakistan, he called for Rotarians to come together for a “peaceful planet by connecting the world instead of spending huge money on defence when it can be used for better education, healthcare and infrastructure.”

“DG Nagendra Prasad and IPDG Dr Sameer Hariani are leading me in my cross-border initiatives. I am assisted by my Rotary mentor PDG Suresh Hari, who is coordinating with PDG Mir Arif Ali from RID 3272,” said Dakoju.

On Dakoju’s suggestion to help TRF get more PHFs from Pakistan by donating points accumulated in RID 3190, PDG Suresh Hari agreed to donate points from his and his friends’ personal accounts totalling 100,000. These points can be used as matching contribution for Rotarians in RID 3272 to become PHFs, through part giving and part point transfer. “This gesture will establish a wonderful bond between the two countries, and strengthen both TRF and Rotary brotherhood,” said Dakoju.

Also, from the Paola Dakoju Ravishankar Foundation a sum of \$10,000 will be donated to RID 3272 for the purchase of 100 mobile carts for selling fruits and vegetables to help Covid-affected families in Lahore and surrounding areas. “Arif Ali has prepared the list of beneficiaries and this programme will help those who have lost their jobs or are struggling due to the Covid impact,” he said.

Thirdly, his district team is making efforts to extend the stay at Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur for Indian pilgrims in the morning and evening, so that “Rotarians have an opportunity to interact more with their counterparts in Pakistan.” At present, there are restrictions in the number of Indian pilgrims visiting the Sikh temple in a day and they are allowed to stay there only for specified hours.

A Rotary peace rally is slated on October 24 to proceed from Bengaluru to Amritsar and then reach the border for exchanging flags and ideas with Pakistani Rotarians. DG Prasad is coordinating with RID 3272 and also Indian officials for undertaking the peace rally without any hitch. Recalling his boyhood days, Ravishankar said, “I used to sleep when other students were taking notes in the class and failed in Class 10

exams three times, before passing with a bare minimum of 32 per cent.”

But he used to dream big, “I even dreamt of climbing Mount Everest, but ended up climbing a mountain. But I see many people on foothills as they don’t have the ability to dream big. Without dreaming, I would be a dead man.”

For Ravishankar, religion is “something very personal and though born a Hindu, I married Paola Rodriguez, a Roman Catholic, and feel blessed. I pray to God that I can marry her in my next birth too.” His philosophy is *Sarva dharma samanatta* (give respect to all religions) as “I live in a multireligious house and till now, there is no argument or fight among us. On the contrary, we enjoy celebrating different festivals.” Citing Vinoba Bhave, he said the concept of nation states is outdated as “we will be moving towards a borderless state.” He decried the huge amount of spending on defence, “around 15.5 per cent of our GDP, when resources are scarce,” and can be better used for improving our living conditions. “I feel ashamed that in the name of country, we fight and kill each



other. Is this civilisation, when we are no better than animals?"

Zakat, the father of CSR

While India passed the CSR Act in April 2014 and Pakistan followed suit in May 2017, making it compulsory for companies to allot at least two per cent of their annual profits to charity and philanthropic activities, Zakat, a 1,400 year-old edict in Islam, orders Muslims to donate 2.5 per cent of their annual wealth for noble causes. "This Zakat obligation purifies the heart and soul and has socio-economic benefits for mankind," said Ravishankar. In a way, what Zakat does for Muslims, the Rotary Foundation does for Rotarians, by urging them to give a small percentage of their wealth for community welfare projects, he said.

Rotary SAARC webinar

At the peace webinar on the topic 'United South Asia for better future' hosted by RC Aurangabad Metro, RID 3132, DG Harish Motwani called upon Rotary leaders "to develop a system for countries in this region to come together at the non-governmental

In a way, what Zakat does for Muslims, the Rotary Foundation does for Rotarians, by urging them to give a small percentage of their wealth for community welfare projects.

level." With over 1.75 lakh Rotarians from 4,850 clubs and having large resources and knowledge, "we can change the entire scenario in South Asia," he said. With polio almost being eradicated, people have developed faith in Rotary and "this SAARC peace conference fulfils one of the main objectives of International Service of Rotary, that is, peace building and conflict resolution."

He emphasised taking up RYE, New Generation Service Exchange and Rotary Friendship Exchange among SAARC countries to promote mutual trust and goodwill. DG Dr Farhan Essa Abdullah, RID 3271, said "there is a need to clear the misconceptions about Pakistan as we are peace-loving people and I invite Rotarians to stay as our guests, enjoy our hospitality and take back fond memories of your stay here."

Regional cooperation, trade and medical exchange programmes will build bridges of friendship and trust among South Asian neighbours, said Abdullah.

PDG George Jesuthasan, RID 3220, from Sri Lanka, said the 1.8 billion people from South Asia, constituting 23 per cent of

world population, have only 4.3 per cent of global GDP. "Since independence, the countries are beset with different kinds of conflict, either at war with each other, civil strife or community unrest due to religion, caste or ethnicity," he said.

Addressing the meet, PDGs Tirtha Man Sakya and Keshav Kunwar, RID 3292, stressed on the need for South Asians to promote global peace through cultural exchange and mutual cooperation. "We need an understanding to implement giant community projects that will meet the basic needs of hunger, healthcare, education and development goals," said Sakya. Listing out areas of cooperation, PDG Salim Reza, RID 3281, from Bangladesh said cultural outreach, a SAARC sports meet for Rotarians, WinS programmes and medical missions are some of the Rotary projects that will unite the people of the subcontinent.

Free trade, the key

Echoing the views of Reza, PDG Alok Billore, RID 3131, said, "we are at a sad state of affairs as superpowers sell their arms in a cut-throat competition which results in geopolitical tension and rivalry. Rotarians as peace brokers and goodwill ambassadors can prevent conflicts." South Asian Free Trade Area, SAFTA in short, is a good concept that will promote trade and commerce between countries. Billore mooted the idea of RSAARC (R for Rotary) through which Rotarians can have an annual summit for exchange of ideas for joint projects. "A SAARC platform for Rotarians will strive to promote peace in the region, encourage trade and build a strong bond of fellowship across borders," he said.

Around 500 Rotarians and Rotaractors from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh took part in the webinar moderated by Chandrakant Chaudhari, past president, RC Aurangabad Metro. ■



Clockwise from top left:

DG Tazeem Ahmad, RID 3272, PDG Mir Arif Ali, IPDG Sameer Hariani, RID 3190 and Rtn Ravishankar Dakoju and his wife Paola.



SPB, the natural music wizard

S R Madhu

His was a wonder voice. It could soar like Mohammad Rafi, intoxicate like Kishore Kumar, caress like AM Raja or energise like TM Soundarrajan. “Whenever I felt low, his voice would rejuvenate me,” said Suhasini Mani Ratnam, referring to the music legend SP Balasubrahmanyam.

His record as playback singer was staggering. He sang some 45,000 songs in 16 languages over 54 years. Besides, he composed music for 40 films, acted in 45 films, and dubbed in Telugu for several top actors; he was also variously the voice of Ben Kingsley (for the Telugu version of *Gandhi*), Anil Kapoor, Rajinikanth and Girish Karnad. He won six National Awards, six Filmfare, 25 Andhra Pradesh Nandi, four Tamil Nadu State and three Karnataka State Awards. He was honoured



with the Padma Shri in 2001, the Padma Bhushan in 2011. He recorded 21 songs on a single day for a Kannada film, 19 Tamil songs on a single day and 16 Hindi songs on a single day. He performed thousands of live shows around the world, and was a huge draw each time — demonstrating that the SPB mania was as potent in the US or UK, Singapore or Malaysia, as in India. SPB was the first singer from the south to achieve national stardom. He went on to become the voice of Salman Khan.

Prolific singer

The Telugu film *Sankarabharanam* (1980) epitomised both the majesty of classical music and the power and wizardry of SPB. All of SPB's nine songs in the film (including six duets) were enthralling — the film got the lay public hooked to classical

SPB offered to donate money for a ₹7-crore state-of-the-art government school that was set up last year in Perumbakkam by the Rotary Club of Madras.

music. Intriguingly, SPB had no classical training himself. How did he manage this feat?

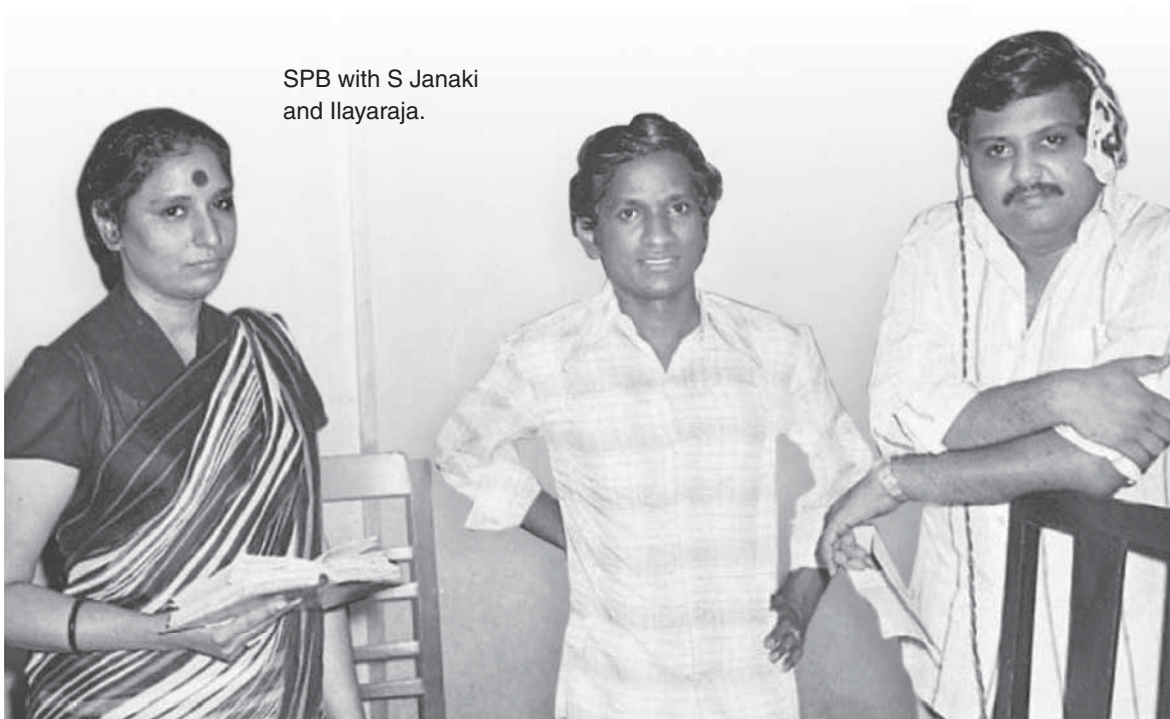
Says lyricist Vairamuthu: "A dictionary does not make you a good writer; tutors and classes don't make you a good singer; even talent alone won't do. But SPB combined natural musical talent with expressiveness, astonishing grasping power and memory." Vairamuthu added that just as Sivaji Ganesan could memorise text very fast, SPB could memorise tunes at remarkable speed. "He learned a

tune in 15 minutes and sang it in 10 minutes," says AR Rahman.

"Your song can impact a listener only if you transform your personality," says Vairamuthu. "You must become a lover, a warrior, a philosopher, a bird flying in the sky. SPB achieved such transformation with remarkable acumen."

The Rafi touch

He says SPB was the king of romantic songs. "He sang between his nose and throat for such songs, to give his voice a young feeling." For philosophical songs, he would modulate his voice, giving it greater maturity. Singer Surendran Menon says that the script of SPB's songs sometimes had the word "Rafi" written above particular words — a reminder to himself that he should impart a Rafi touch when converting those words to song.



SPB with S Janaki and Ilayaraja.





SPB with Salman Khan.

that SPB offered to donate money for a ₹7-crore state-of-the-art government school that was set up last year in Perumbakkam by the Rotary Club of Madras. It was meant for children of a community affected by the 2015 floods. “I helped raise ₹2 crore through my contacts in the US. Hearing about this, SPB contacted me and made a donation.”

He adds that the SPB Fans Association has rendered some splendid community service very silently, donating crores of rupees for good causes.

Pianist Anil Srinivasan said SPB’s voice demonstrated the multidimensionality of emotion. “Even happiness is sometimes tinged with sorrow — something his voice conveyed brilliantly.”

SPB used to say that a good singer should be a good human being as well. He himself had a heart of gold — as young singers like Mano whose career he boosted have pointed out — and a sweet tongue. Pianist and also a Rotarian, Anil Srinivasan says

Even happiness is sometimes tinged with sorrow —
something his voice conveyed brilliantly.

Anil Srinivasan, pianist



From left: KV Mahadevan, P Susheela and SPB.

Early days

He was born in Konetammapeta village of Nellore district in 1946 into an orthodox Brahmin family, and a musical environment as his father was a Harikatha artist. His childhood ambition was to be an engineer — “I had in mind a gazetted officer’s job on a salary of ₹250 per month, going about in a chauffeur-driven jeep.” But failure in PUC aborted his ambition, and he moved to Madras to try his luck with AMIE, a professional certificate course.

At 18, he won an amateur singing competition in Chennai. This led to his first film song in Telugu. In 1969, MGR (who had some differences with his regular singer TM Soundararajan) was most impressed by a Telugu song by SPB, then an unknown youngster. Result: he was asked to render *Aayiram nilave vaa* composed by KV Mahadevan for the MGR-Jayalalitha starrer *Adimai Penn* (1969). SPB fell ill with typhoid before the recording but MGR waited for him to recover, and sing that song.



At the recording of a song in Sivaji Ganesan's starrer *Sumathi en sundari*.

This became one of the best Tamil hits of all time, and MGR gifted SPB with a gold ring as a gesture of appreciation. Earlier, legendary composer MS Viswanathan got him to sing the duet *Iyarkai ennum ilaya kanni* to be filmed on Gemini Ganes and Kanchana for the film *Shanti Nilayam* (1935). This was a massive hit too.

SPB's career zoomed. *Sankarabharanam* (1980), on the life of a great Carnatic *vidwan*,

SPB fell ill with typhoid before the recording but MGR waited for him to recover, and sing that song.

was a landmark of Indian cinema.

Carnatic stalwart Balamurali Krishna was to sing the songs, but composer KV Mahadevan wanted SPB. This was a masterstroke. The film became a thundering musical and cinematic triumph. SPB won the first of his several national awards for the sublime and stately rendering of the song *Onkara nadanu*. The following year, he won his second national award for the song *Tere mere beech mein* from the film *Ek duuje ke liye* (1981).

Thus began a glorious achievement-studded journey as singer, composer, voice-over



With AR Rahman.





me when I listen to him.” And SPB sang Rafi songs so much like the master that Rafi’s own family was thrilled! When composers tried him out, he always came out with Rafi songs. He said heroines on screen were in love not with the heroes but with Mohammad Rafi, their voice! SPB’s ambition was to sing with Rafi, but he only managed to greet his idol and touch his feet at a recording studio once.

SPB was close to Kamal Haasan. For several years, the singer helped organise an annual live show, *Kamalum naanum*. He was Kamal’s Telugu voice for as many as 110 films. Said Kamal: “SPB has been a part of my life, my romance, my melancholy, part of my first love and marriage.”

It was Kamal who arm-twisted his friend and coaxed him to become an actor.

SPB’s friendship with composing wizard Ilayaraja was more than five decades old. He sang some 2,000 songs under the baton of Ilayaraja for films such as *Payanangal mudivathillai*, *Nenjathai killadhae*, *Rajaparvai*, *Vetri vizha*, *Salangai oli*, *Thalapathy*. The two friends fell out three years ago on the question of royalties for Ilayaraja’s compositions. Ilayaraja even sent SPB a legal notice. However, they made up later. Their respective sons are close friends and collaborators in film ventures.

SPB regarded KJ Yesudas as his guru. They often sang together

SPB sang Rafi songs
so much like the master
that Rafi’s own family
was thrilled!

at live shows, in India and abroad. “Today he looks like a sadhu, a yogi,” said SPB recently. Before SPB embarked on an international tour in 2017 to celebrate his 50 years in cinema, he washed Yesudas’s feet and did a *pada puja* ceremony. Yesudas recalls an occasion in Paris when he and SPB returned to the hotel late in the evening. He was famished and there was nothing to eat. In came SPB with a cup of rice, saying “room service”. It was eaten with home-made *podi* and yoghurt. “It was divine, and I’ll never forget that little dinner,” said Yesudas.

Lyricist Vairamuthu wrote the lyrics for some 1,500 SPB songs, and the two often traded compliments and light-hearted barbs. At a live show some years ago, SPB said of a Vairamuthu lyric “You couldn’t have written this unless you had failed in love at least once.” SPB sang the song based on the lyric, and Vairamuthu remarked “You couldn’t have sung like this unless you had failed in love at least twice.”

The *paadum nila* (singing moon, a title given to SPB by MGR) has fallen silent, but its radiance will live forever.

Designed by Krishnapratheesh S



SPB and his wife doing *pada puja* for KJ Yesudas.



A priceless voice

Usha Kumar

When music legend SP Balasubrahmanyam passed away, leaving behind him a legacy of 42,000-odd songs, different people digested news of this huge loss differently. While some rushed to his house despite the pandemic, others stayed home glued to television to hear the beautiful songs that made up his repertoire. It appeared that there wasn't a single soul that he hadn't touched! His greatness lay in his simplicity. A soft-spoken giant who had achieved what would take a normal mortal at least five births to do so.

I first heard the name Sripathi Panditaradhyula Balasubrahmanyam

in the late 1960s much before most of the world had heard it. It was a musical evening at the Madras Kerala Samajam where the greats of the time, KJ Yesudas, P Jayachandran, P Susheela, S Janaki and B Vasantha were singing. I think the orchestra was led by R K Shekhar (AR Rahman's father). All the greats sang first and after the interval, it was announced that a new singer would sing a couple of numbers of AM Raja. He was introduced as Balasubrahmanyam, a student of engineering. A mention was also made of his having recorded a song for the one and only MGR.

I learnt later how discerning MGR was when he decided on who would sing for him. His songs played an important role in the success of his movies and there was no way he would allow anyone of lesser calibre to sing for him. The newcomer's singing was flawless and everyone in the hall predicted a great future for him. To the girl who was just 12, it was a beautiful evening of music where all the songs were those she had heard on the 33 RPM at home. But in the crevices of her grey matter, the name of the new entrant was imprinted.

Within six months of that evening, two movies and two songs were released and a sensation was born. The Tamil music enthusiasts the world over got to know SPB. If *Aayirum nilave vaa* had MGR serenading a young and vivacious Jayalalithaa, *Iyarkai ennum ilaiyya kanni* had Gemini Ganesan romancing the stylish and beautiful Kanchana. The 23-year-old SPB had made his mark in the world of Indian playback singing. KV Mahadevan gave the music for the first and MS Viswanathan for the second. With two greats having used him, there was no looking back for this youngster.

No expert in music, I can share that my working week starts with the *Siva Stuthi* rendered so soulfully and with immense devotion by him. The *bhaavam* and *bhakthi* when he sings song in this genre is unmatched. No god can resist it!

In the 54 years he straddled the music industry, the world as well as the film industry changed. But as far as SPB goes, his voice had remained almost the same. He had the capability to modulate his voice to suit the hero for whom he was singing. We had been in awe



SP Balasubrahmanyam and music director Ilayaraja, a legendary duo.

The *bhaavam* and *bhakthi*
when he sings song in this
genre is unmatched.
No god can resist it!

of TMS when he could change his voice for the two heroes of that era, MGR and Shivaji Ganesan. However when it came to SPB, it didn't stop with that generation, he continued his skills further down the line to Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan and then Vijay, Ajith and the rest. These are few of the names from the Tamil film industry and then there are the innumerable

heroes in all the other industries that he sang for. This kind of versatility is indeed a god given gift.

Forget SPB being a benefactor to others, or philanthropist. Just think of the number of ordinary mortals who became heroes thanks to the beautiful songs he sung for them. There was a period in the late 1980s and early '90s when songs played a major role in lifting a movie. It was while watching a video that I got to know the important part SPB played in bringing to the industry the likes of Ilayaraja and his brothers, and veteran director Bharathiraja as well. Of course, they were very talented and proved their mettle. But getting that first break was always the most difficult. When chess wizard Viswanathan Anand acknowledged SPB's role as the

first sponsor for his Chennai Colts team, I was amazed. Here was a man who had gone around quietly encouraging all those in whom he saw the will to perform and excel.

What we will miss is not only a great singer who had earned the moniker *Paadum Nila*, but also a fine human being who traversed this planet. We are indeed lucky to have lived in his times. He knew how blessed he was when he said "I sing the notes as they are written but it is the Almighty who comes out as my voice."

As long as there is music in this world, SPB's voice will be there to enthrall us.

*The writer is a member of
RC Madras Midtown, RID 3232.*

Doing good with TRF help

Rotary extends haemodialysis facilities in Kallianpura

Team Rotary News



PDG Sadananda Chatra inaugurating a haemodialysis machine at the hospital in the presence of (from L) AG Devdas Shetty, PDG Abhinandan Shetty, RC Kallianpura President Desmond H Vaz and DG Rajarama Bhat.

RC Kallianpura, RID 3182, handed over three haemodialysis machines to the Goretti Hospital in Kallianpura, a village 6-km from Udupi, Karnataka.

The ₹29 lakh (\$40,871) worth project was supported through a global grant from TRF, RC Chester County, RID 7450, and RC Smithfield, RID 7410, US, said club president Desmond H Vaz. DG Rajarama Bhat, along with PDGs Sadananda Chatra and Abhinandan Shetty, handed over the machines, genset, RO water purifier, air conditioners and hospital beds to the chief medical officer Dr Joyce James and nephrologist Dr Raghavendra Nayak in the presence of the club members and district officials. ■



Aiming big in membership growth, global grant projects

Rajesh Agarwal

Engineering equipment
RC Kota, RID 3054

He is banking on membership growth that will help his district to raise more funds and take up high-profile projects. At present, the district has 139 clubs with 6,389 Rotarians. “We will be starting 32 clubs and inducting over 1,500 new members with five per cent net growth in women’s membership. At present, women constitute 19 per cent of our total members,” says Rajesh Agarwal. He is confident of opening 50 new Rotaract, over 30 new Interact clubs and 30 new RCCs in the district

All the clubs were instructed to conduct RYLA in a grand manner. Happy Schools will be taken up in 100 government schools, 500 handwash stations will be installed and e-learning classrooms will be set up at senior secondary schools (up to Class 12). In addition, 50 gender-segregated toilets will be built in these schools. He has applied for a global grant to set up a skin bank at the Sawai Man Singh Hospital, Jaipur. “The clubs will hold menstrual hygiene seminars and awareness sessions and sanitary vending machines will be installed at the gram panchayats and primary health centres,” he explains. A dialysis centre with ten machines will come up at the New Medical College Hospital, Kota.

While GG projects worth \$150,000 are waiting for approval, “we will be submitting more such projects worth \$500,000 in the coming months seeking global grants.” On TRF giving, his target is \$1 million, of which \$200,000 will be for the Annual Fund. In 2000, he joined RC Kota inspired by the then club president Chandrakanta Mehta who mentored him in his initial days in Rotary.

Meet your Governors

V Muthukumaran

Covid has given a divine year for us to excel in Rotary projects

Sandeep Kadam

Paediatrician, RC Thane North End, RID 3142



With a robust sense of optimism, he calls his tenure as district governor ‘divine year’ for the Covid pandemic has “taught us how to think differently, in the face of adversity, to plan and do projects. There are many challenges, but we are unstoppable, with our thinking and service patterns having changed forever,” says Dr Sandeep Kadam. He has labelled his clubs and Rotarians ‘Josh’ — joy of serving humanity.

Kadam has taken up the prevention of drug addiction in a big way through webinars. In the presence of RI President Holger Knaack and RIPE Shekhar Mehta, the first leg titled *Disconnect* was held that had a session with former cricketer Kapil Dev. Through social media, the webinar reached out to 79,000 people. In the next phase, the district reached out to 16,000

healthcare professionals.

“A volunteer force will engage one lakh school and college students on de-addiction.”

A Rotary helpline will also offer counselling.

A village adoption programme will cover 60 villages to begin with. When he took over as DG on July 1, the district had 90 clubs with membership at 3,206, and he wants to “achieve a sizeable growth” during his tenure. In TRF giving too, he is hopeful of exceeding the previous year’s figure.

He joined Rotary after successfully treating a patient, an employee of a Rotarian, who had a crushed right lower ankle and “was on the verge of dying due to heavy blood loss.” Seeing his selfless service, he was invited to become a Rotarian as and he joined RC Thane North End in April 1996.

He wants to add 25,000 Rotaractors

Nalla Venkata Hanmanth Reddy

Business, RC Armour, RID 3150



Emphasis is being given to the Friendship Pairing Project in which a strong club partners with a weak club for joint execution of projects. “I have identified the pairing clubs for exchanging ideas and culture. This project is a must for clubs to get the DG citation,” says Hanmanth Reddy.

Reddy’s dream project is setting up breastfeeding kiosks at public places. “Eight kiosks were installed and 57 clubs have taken up this maternity project in right earnest.” He wants to induct 700 new members, taking the total membership beyond 4,000 from the present 3,311. He wants to add 25 new clubs to the existing 88; 250 new Rotaract clubs to the existing 33 clubs, thus adding an additional 25,000 Rotaractors by June 2021.

Fifty Rotarians monitor the newly-opened Covid Plasma Bank at the Challa Rotary Blood Bank. RC Guntur will be supplying blood components to a mobile Rotary Blood Bank through a global grant. The Rotary Dialysis Centre in Secunderabad will get six new machines through a GG project worth \$1,44,000. “We will be completing 26 Happy Schools projects through a GG this year,” says Reddy. On TRF giving, he is targeting \$1 million. Back in 2002, when the then DG Ravi Vadlamani was visiting RC Armour, Reddy was inspired by the governor to join Rotary.

A Rotary Nagar for migrant families planned at Siliguri

Subhasish Chatterjee

Software development, RC Siliguri, RID 3240



If things go as planned, a Rotary Nagar will come up at Siliguri, a vital junction linking the northeast to the mainland, and it will have over 1,000 houses for migrant families. “We are in talk with the West Bengal government to acquire land. It will have residential space, a school, a primary healthcare centre and a skill development centre,” explains Subhasish Chatterjee.

In a touching gesture, Rotarians visited the houses of 1,217 teachers to present them with Shiksha Samman Awards, as “most of them are aged and can’t move out during the pandemic.” A blood bank at Silchar will benefit the people of Mizoram, the Barak Valley of Assam, and the Sylhet district of Bangladesh. “This GG project worth \$150,000

was implemented by four Silchar clubs in partnership with a Bangladesh club. The four Silchar clubs had contributed \$50,000 for the project.” The district is setting up Covid ICUs in Dibrugarh (Assam) and Shillong through a GG project. Next, he plans to do a cervical vaccination project through a GG. For TRF giving, his target is \$400,000; in membership, he targets 25 per cent growth, with women doubling to 20 per cent. The district will also have 12 new clubs, six satellite clubs and 20 Rotaract clubs during his tenure. He was introduced to Rotary through a family friend, a Rotarian, who invited him to a DG’s event in Jalpaiguri and “I was made a charter president of a Rotaract club in 1988.”

He will focus on Happy Schools

Fakir Charan Mohanty

Chemical manufacturing

RC Rourkela Midtown, RID 3261



Despite challenges, he is pushing for membership growth this Rotary year. From 2,620 Rotarians across 72 clubs on July 1, his target is 3,500 Rotarians and 87 clubs. Rotaract will grow from 250 at present to 350-plus across 25 Rotaract clubs, up from 11 clubs the previous year. “The focus will be on attracting more youth and institution-based Rotaract clubs,” he says.

Three global grant projects worth \$110,000 for installing Covid equipment at Raipur and Jabalpur government hospitals are under implementation. “We are waiting for the sanction of GGs worth \$300,000 and a few more projects under GG worth \$250,000 are in the pipeline.” Having a vast tribal belt spread across Chhattisgarh, parts of Madhya

Pradesh and Odisha, Mohanty has requested the clubs to take up sanitation projects in government schools.

First, the district will take up WinS programmes in 10 government schools in a backward area near Rourkela. “We will follow this up with 100 Happy Schools, 20 in tribal areas,” says Mohanty.

In TRF giving, he has set a target of \$200,000, of which \$100,000 will go to the Annual Fund. In 1992, as a non-Rotarian, he used to sell donation tickets for a fundraiser at RC Rourkela Midtown, his home club, for meeting the expenses of its children’s hospital. “Inspired by its service motto, I joined Rotary,” he recalls.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

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Rotary at a glance

Rotarians : 1,194,505

Clubs : 36,350

Districts : 525

Rotaractors : 208,599

Clubs : 10,985

Interactors : 349,761

Clubs : 15,207

RCC : 11,361

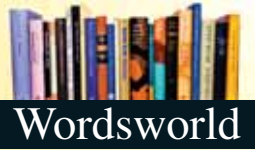
As on October 19, 2020

Membership Summary

As on October 1, 2020

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians %	Rotaract Clubs	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	119	5,064	5.94	51	39	225
2982	72	3,155	6.56	86	96	56
3000	131	5,274	8.25	188	256	211
3011	107	4,164	25.86	59	100	35
3012	110	3,919	24.85	57	71	59
3020	73	4,495	6.45	56	155	351
3030	95	5,167	14.75	119	180	304
3040	92	2,248	11.97	43	52	147
3053	64	2,789	16.57	22	39	111
3054	138	6,371	19.67	94	144	524
3060	101	4,663	14.80	60	63	145
3070	115	3,446	17.30	48	22	59
3080	84	3,367	9.15	103	146	116
3090	80	2,297	6.01	43	9	122
3100	100	2,333	8.32	14	14	146
3110	135	3,738	8.91	29	7	105
3120	83	3,347	14.31	50	21	53
3131	138	5,285	21.40	114	192	119
3132	87	3,463	10.02	40	95	164
3141	104	5,669	24.55	130	144	94
3142	91	3,318	20.89	83	118	68
3150	88	3,475	10.65	63	122	117
3160	78	2,581	6.82	28	3	83
3170	133	5,756	13.66	84	204	169
3181	82	3,381	8.96	63	192	118
3182	83	3,192	8.18	50	103	98
3190	143	6,081	16.13	156	165	65
3201	145	5,675	8.37	109	73	52
3202	141	5,878	6.92	101	251	47
3211	144	4,676	7.14	8	24	132
3212	107	4,297	8.63	104	187	149
3231	100	4,014	12.31	53	81	419
3232	128	5,883	19.41	135	199	93
3240	92	3,201	13.56	57	393	198
3250	101	3,802	18.28	72	65	185
3261	76	2,743	16.04	20	21	43
3262	107	3,776	12.95	52	39	78
3291	159	3,830	20.97	98	88	623
India Total	4,026	155,813		2,742	4,173	5,883
3220	71	1,947	14.74	86	125	74
3271	114	1,804	17.85	69	19	22
3272	158	1,878	17.84	58	15	44
3281	240	7,181	17.27	248	50	200
3282	160	4,131	10.87	179	39	46
3292	136	5,312	15.68	144	120	119
S Asia Total	4,905	178,066		3,526	4,541	6,388

Source: RI South Asia Office



A little of this, a little of that

Sandhya Rao

Truly random thoughts such as a bit of Babel, the way of words, the lilt of languages, the comfort of courier packages and so on.

I recently listened to a podcast called ‘Puliyabaazi’, courtesy a link forwarded by an affectionate nephew. This was an interview with Dr Abhishek Avtans, a Hindi language scholar, who teaches at Leiden University in the Netherlands. He talked about the growth and development of the Hindi language, its relationship with dialects (‘boli’ versus ‘bhasha’), the evolution of Urdu and the somewhat controversial connection to Sanskrit that’s been imposed upon it. In the course of this lively conversation with the podcast’s two moderators, the professor drew listeners’ attention to an important aspect of ‘being Indian’: multilingualism.

I was thrilled because I believe that one of the biggest strengths we have as a people is our ability, generally speaking, to negotiate ‘foreign’ or ‘unfamiliar’ languages. Is it that our tongues are different or that our left hemispheres are so designed or an environment of plurality that exists or that we are less inhibited or that we are more ready to reach out...? Whatever the reason,

most Indians ‘have’ two languages, if not more, and are usually ready to take a shot at anything else that comes along. Shukraan. Nanri. Dhonnobad. Sabaykhor thabay. Zdrastvitye. Merci. Danke. Tesekkular. Even if an individual cannot read and write, s/he can certainly speak — or at least attempt to speak — and will sort of understand more than their own mother tongues. Some laugh at the accent or the literal translation or the syntax but they all have to admit: we own our tongues and others too.

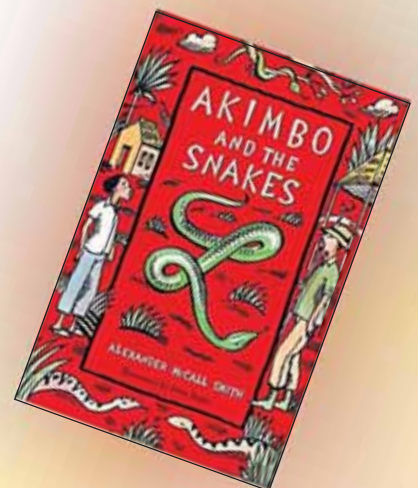
A mythological story talks about the tower of Babel where people suddenly started speaking in multifarious languages. This confused them and prevented them from communicating with each other, leading to clashes and chaos. India’s many languages and dialects, *bhashas* and *bolis*, are threads that weave a vibrant tapestry of culture, identity and harmony. The warmth and energy this generates is among the many things that animate and inspire the subcontinent. Which is why, any effort

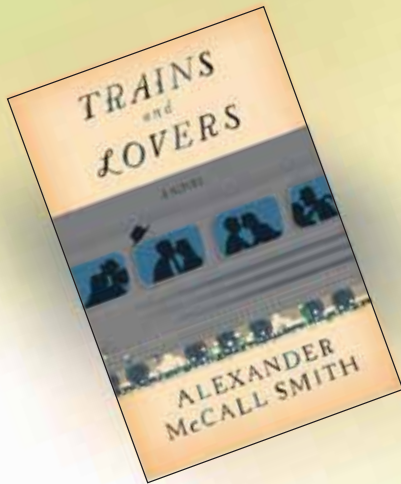
to undermine some languages in order to prop up others is an affront to our existence because every little thread counts.

A corollary to this characteristic is the widespread ability most Indians have to incorporate ‘other’ words and phrases into their private and professional parlance. And that’s a great thing. Of course, I have shared these ideas regarding languages and language acquisition in this column before, but it bears repetition — over and over again. Acquire new tongues, but nurture what you already have. Add, don’t subtract.

Interestingly, the idea of Babel exists in other cultures as well, according to my dear friend, Ms Internet and her progeny, the various Peditas. The Sumerians, the Mexicans, the American Indians — all of them apparently have mythologies that tell of people united by language building towers or testaments to either praise or appease their gods and then see those structures destroyed and find themselves speaking different languages. After this, the linguistic groups separate to seek out homes in different directions.

I like to think of the Babel idea as a proactive process. It celebrates variety: just look at the zillion kinds of noses people turn up at others! Look at the number of words. They say an





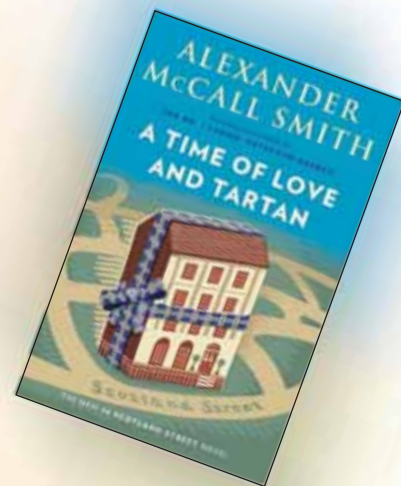
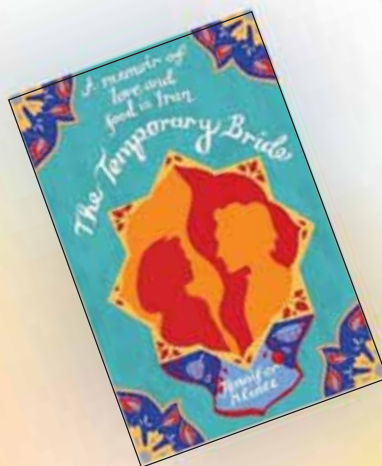
average native speaker of a language has a vocabulary of about 20,000 to 35,000 words. Listen to the cadences of voices. Colours. Trees. They say there are hundreds of kinds of eucalyptus trees. They say there are hundreds of kinds of rajma. Name anything. And not just in nature. And if we don't recognise the value of this rich and enriching tapestry called life, it will only start showing holes until only one big, all-engulfing hole remains through which all of life will tumble into nothingness.

As the long months of lockdown close in on a year, we have all experienced times of desperation that cuts through whatever privileges we enjoy. And here, we're talking about the lucky few. So, for moral support, I turned to my current writer of refuge, Alexander McCall Smith, someone who has appeared in these columns before. I ordered four books online: *My Italian Bulldozer*, *Trains and Lovers*, *The Peppermint Tea Chronicles*, and *One City*. Truly, his books are a comfort. Such a comfort, that I have — guiltily, I must admit, and brazenly, too — ordered eight — yes, eight! — more titles, this time mostly from the 'No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency' series. One of them is a children's book called *Akimbo and the Snakes*. Three of the books in the

second consignment have arrived, and I eagerly await the arrival of the next courier guy.

And there's a postscript to this: In an effort to break out of the doom-gloom clouds hanging low over my apartment, I decided to visit my cousin who lives nearby. Suitably masked, and correctly ensconced in chairs, socially accepted distance from each other in the veranda of her home, I gifted her *An Italian Bulldozer* in the hope that she would find it as entertaining as I had. She's not much of a fiction reader and this is part of an ongoing effort to convert her to the healthy habits of reading fiction. She was delighted. Of all the gifts she could hope to receive, she said, this was the best. But what do I do after I finish the book, she asked. Keep it if you like it, I responded. Return it if you don't. She is reading a couple of pages a night and, from all accounts, enjoying it.

Meanwhile, I am still reading several books at one time, including the ones mentioned in earlier columns. McCall Smith seems to have distracted me, or, should I say, extracted me from the clutches of a Los Angeles library fire, the story of the first Muslim and accounts from a Turkish prison. I admit these range from serious to grim themes and, given the prevailing



climate, possibly the reason why I have returned to ACS. Back back in the day, comfort came from Enid Blyton, Angela Brazil, WE Johns, Edgar Wallace, Agatha Christie, PG Wodehouse, Richard Gordon, Louis L'Amour, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Lobsang Rampa, Allen Drury, Leon Uris, Chaim Potok, RK Narayan, and others. More recently, it's been Stieg Larsson, Amitav Ghosh, Pico Iyer, Anuja Chauhan, and Henning Mankell... the list goes on. Over the years they have fed my hunger for stories and exploring unknown worlds. At the moment that's exactly what *The Temporary Bride* is doing. This slim book by Jennifer Klinec is a memoir of love and food in Iran. I've got to the bit where she's just arrived in Yazd in central Iran and met up with a young, stern-looking Yazdi who, in response to her reason for visiting Iran — to learn to cook, and of course taste, Iranian dishes — simply says, 'My mother is a good cook.' Now this is where Jennifer Klinec's story really begins. Yum!

Further PS: I just received a message saying *A Time of Love and Tartan* is arriving early. That's the fourth!

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

Designed by Krishnapratheesh

Post-covid, WinS programmes critical for schools:

RIPE Shekhar Mehta

Kiran Zehra

A tree plantation drive was underway at a government school in Dharwad when PDG Ganesh Bhat, RID 3170, casually asked the principal about the reopening of the school and the preparation for it. “I was shocked when he said ‘we are not prepared.’ We have to strengthen the hygiene and sanitation efforts in our schools for the safety of our children. They are going to be at greater risk of contracting corona if we don’t take proper measures.” He said in his opening remarks at the multidistrict WinS seminar, hosted by RC Dharwad Central, RID 3170.

WASH in Schools projects have become even more critical now after the Covid pandemic. WinS volunteers will have to work even harder to bring behavioural change among students once the schools reopen, said RIPE Shekhar Mehta. The importance of handwash needs to be inculcated among students

and in this regard, he urged the clubs to rope in Interactors for helping the programmes in government schools.

Mehta asked Rotarians to visit the schools where WinS programmes are being implemented and check if “the toilets are in good condition; water supply lines are clean and the quality of drinking water is good. Without proper upkeep of sanitation facilities, the hygiene conditions may deteriorate.” While inspecting the sanitation facilities and their repair works, some of which may be expensive, “it will be better if we partner with the local governments,” he said.

We have to strengthen the hygiene and sanitation in our schools for the safety of our children, or else they will be at a greater risk of contracting corona.

Appreciating the WinS leadership in India, Mehta said, “when they talk about literacy, they talk about me. When they talk about WinS, they immediately mention Ramesh Aggarwal. That is how you create your niche and I am sure that you will do everything it takes to gear up for the reopening of schools.” To a suggestion from WinS Target Challenge global chair PRID P T Prabhakar on the need to continue with this pilot programme that ends in June 2021 as a shield against Covid till a vaccine is found for the virus, Mehta said, “you have done a wonderful job with WinS, but the global success rate of its implementation will determine its extension.”

In his address, Prabhakar explained the importance of WinS programmes to ensure hygiene among school students and the change this project has brought in 40,000 government schools across the country since 2016. The figure is poised to touch one lakh schools by 2025. “We don’t stop with just building toilets and providing handwash stations, but also make sure these are maintained for two years,” he said.

WinS national chair Ramesh Aggarwal said his team is also training school faculties and managements on the new safety measures to tackle the new hygiene challenges posed by the Covid outbreak. “Let us also focus on reducing the school dropouts due to ill-health and lack of toilet facilities in schools,” he said. DG Sangram Patel appreciated the efforts of RC Dharwad Central for hosting “this much needed and necessary seminar which offered a platform for district leaders to share experiences and learn good WinS practices.”

Rethi Bhora from RISAO presented the WinS Target Challenge framework, TRF’s process for review and approval of the global grant applications for this programme.

Close to 400 participants from 17 countries attended the webinar. ■

Students washing hands at a handwash station installed under WinS programme.





K S Venkatesan

Dist. Governor
RID 2982

வாசிக்க நேசிக்க ரோட்டரி நூலகங்கள்

கற்றதை பெற்றதை ஆற்றல் ஆக்கி ஒவ்வொரு குடும்பத்திலும்
மகிழ்ச்சியை கூட்டுவோம். நம் இலக்கு 1000 கிராமப்புற
அரசு தொடக்க பள்ளிகளை ஒருங்கிணைப்போம்.
நம் பகுதியில் உள்ள வருங்கால மாணவச்
செல்வங்களை கற்றவர்களாக மாற்றி நம் நாட்டின்
வளர்ச்சியில் பங்கு கொள்வோம்.



**A Venkateswara
Gupta**

Dist. Literacy
Committee Chairman



Rotary Libraries



Towards a Literate India by 2025

- Our **DG K S Venkatesan** congratulates the clubs for creating 150 Happy Schools, 500 Rotary Libraries in rural government primary schools.
- Congratulations to **RC Hosur** President A G Pratheep Krisnan, Secretary R Balaji, Treasurer T Vijay, AG K Anandakumar and Project Chair R Ravi for setting up libraries in 62 government primary schools to benefit over 8,000 children.
- **DLCC A Venkateswara Gupta**, along with Happy Schools Chairman NP Ramaswamy and the literacy team, has been instrumental in setting up Rotary libraries across RI District 2982 since 2019 to inculcate reading habit in young children and enhance their knowledge in various spheres.
- Our thanks to **IPDG AKS AK Natesan** for motivating the district to create 265 libraries last year.
- Sixteen Rotarians sponsored book shelves for schools to store the books.
- The books were distributed to the school heads in the presence of the DEOs of Hosur and Denkanikota on Oct 15, coinciding with former President of India Abdul Kalam's birth anniversary.
- "Our vision: We want to see every Indian village to have a library." – DLCC A Venkateswara Gupta.

RC Chinnasalem, Krishnagiri, Hosur Midtown, Salem South, Salem North, Namakkal Poultry Town, Sankagiri, Rasipuram, Salem Young Town, Salem Elite, Idappadi, Hosur Sipcot, Attur, Villupuram, Sankarapuram, Mohanur, Omalur, Jalakandapuram, Salem Junction, Salem Rupavathy and Hosur Angels have also initiated the library creation in the district and the other Rotary clubs are planning to create more libraries in the coming months to reach the **1000-libraries** goal.

உங்களின் நூலக அன்பளிப்பு, கிராமங்களின் ஒளிவிளக்கு!

Rotary reaches out to flood victims

Jaishree



Tirupur Rotarians give relief material to a flood victim in Gudalur.

The beginning of August saw heavy rainfall and severe floods in parts of Kerala. Wayanad, Kozhikode and Idukki were on red alert and five other districts on orange. To top it all, an Air India aircraft from Dubai made a disastrous

landing at Kozhikode due to a flooded runway and poor visibility caused by heavy rains; 18 died and many were wounded. Landslides in the Munnar and Rajamala hills in Idukki district killed over 70 people and injured several more.

Around the same time, heavy rains lashed the Niligiri hills in Tamil Nadu too. Overflowing dams flooded several villages. Gudalur and Pandalur were the worst hit and hundreds of tribal families lost their belongings. Fire-fighters had to move them to safer locations.

In both the regions, Rotarians rose to the occasion to help the flood victims. Forty-seven Rotary clubs of Tirupur, led by RC Tirupur West, RID 3202, coordinated to help 400 families in the Gudalur valley. “We packed sets of 24 items, including clothes, groceries and toiletries, a bedsheet and pillow, some candles and a torchlight in carton boxes, and loaded them in a van,” says assistant governor PS Prakash. A total of ₹800,000 was crowdfunded by the clubs to meet the cost.

Ten Rotarians drove up to the village braving the Covid lockdown. “We could not get the mandatory e-passes. The RTO revenue inspector and the Gudalur DSP Jeysingh helped us reach the village without hiccups and helped us in the distribution for two days.” Throughout the journey



RC Kottayam president Susann Koshy gives a bag of basic essentials to a family in a village.

they could see fallen trees, landslides and eroded roads.

Prakash adds that later the team sent 25 bags of rice, 300 bedsheets and 25 sets of mattresses and pillows to an orphanage in Coonoor at Jeysingh's request. "With little financial support owing to the pandemic and lockdown, the orphanage was in dire straits and we were glad to be of help." They sent 400 bedspreads to Kochi where RID 3201 has set up a Covid care centre and 200 face

With little financial support
owing to the pandemic and
lockdown, the orphanage was
in dire straits and we were
glad to be of help.

P S Prakash
Assistant governor, RID 3202

shields were provided to the Tirupur General Hospital for the protection of the frontline staff.

In Kerala, members of RC Kottayam, RID 3211, distributed essential items such as rice, wheat flour, dal, cooking oil, sugar, onions and toiletries to 70 flood-hit families in Chengalam and Velloor hamlets near Kottayam. "Some areas were still inundated and we could access the homes only on country boats," says club secretary Sarat Valsraj. ■

Saviours of the departed

Team Rotary News

At a time when family members are forced to stay away from their deceased relatives for fear of contracting the coronavirus, the Ekta Trust in Surat has performed the last rites and buried more than 1,200 patients who died of Covid-19 since March this year. RC Surat Riverside, RID 3060, recognised the organisation with the Vocational Excellence Award "for their exemplary humanitarian endeavour, devotion and contribution to mankind during these difficult times," said the club's past president Dr Prashant Kariya.

Abdul Rehman Malbari, president of the Trust, said that in the last three decades he and his team had disposed of over 70,000 unclaimed bodies of people who lost their lives in accidents, natural disasters such as the Kutch earthquake, tsunami and the floods in Surat, J&K and Uttarakhand, in addition to reaching out to the impoverished who could not afford a decent farewell for their loved ones.



Abdul Rehman Malbari, president, Ekta Trust, receives the Vocational Excellence Award from Anand Acharya, president, RC Surat Riverside.

Recalling the first Covid death he handled, Malbari said, "in March, as I was cremating the body of a beggar, I got a call from the Surat municipal office. 'Abdulbhai, a person has died of Covid at the Mahavir hospital. We need you to perform the last rites.'" He carried out the service in accordance with the dead person's faith. Yousuf Barad, a team member added, "We do not fear Covid; but the way people ostracised us during the initial days was discouraging. Their mindset has now reversed after seeing us healthy despite handling so many dead

bodies." Another member, Mustaq said, "Our work gives us peace and solace. We are ready to sacrifice our lives for this noble work."

Malbari appealed to the public not to discriminate against Covid patients and frontline workers and to shower them with more love and care.

The award presentation was telecast online for the club members. While club president Anand Acharya delivered the welcome address, secretary Jugal Shinglot thanked the audience. ■

CLUB HOP

RC Tiruvarur – RID 2981



A vocational training centre was started for widows and underprivileged women to provide free training in tailoring and help them get self-employed.

RC Delhi Manthan – RID 3011



The club, along with NGO Sankalp, held awareness session on hygiene for underprivileged women at Jasola village. Sanitary pads were distributed to them.

RC Salem Young Town – RID 2982



Annapurna Day was celebrated with the elderly at the Nirai Vazhvu old age home. Rotarians served food to around 100 people.

RC Achalpur – RID 3030



The club took initiative to reconstruct broken huts of destitute women under its Rotary Helpline Kit project chaired by Santosh Agrawal.

RC Srirangam – RID 3000



Under Super 66 project, the district's signature programme, the club installed a rainwater harvesting system on the premises of its building to conserve water.

RC Indore Meghdoot – RID 3040



D G Gajendra Narang, along with district Rotarians, presented equipment for treatment of Covid patients to various hospitals through a global grant project worth \$35,000.

CLUB HOP

RC Jodhpur Sanskar – RID 3053



The club donated groceries to Vatsalyapuram orphanage. Also, drinking water bottles were given to 1,500 Covid patients at the MGH Hospital.

RC Nabha Greater – RID 3090



The club distributed groceries to needy families in Nabha. The beneficiaries thanked Rotary for this thoughtful gesture during the lockdown.

RC Udaipur Vasudha – RID 3054



The club members joined hands with the forest officials and Rotaractors to drop 2,500 seed balls in two jungles. Club advisor Madhu Sareen gave 500 herbal saplings for plantations.

RC Moradabad Achievers - RID 3100



DG Manish Sharda donated a sewing machine to a needy woman. Covid awareness stickers were pasted on autos and banners were erected at busy junctions.

RC Wadhwan City – RID 3060



The club pasted stickers on autorickshaws and erected billboards at busy junctions to create awareness on Covid pandemic.

RC Solapur North – RID 3132



A Rotary Club Solapur North Garden was created in the city with several plants to provide greenery. The garden will enhance Rotary's public image.

CLUB HOP

RC Bhadrachalam – RID 3150



A statue of Rotary founder Paul Harris was installed at a prominent spot in the city. PDGs T Vijendra Rao and J Abraham inaugurated the bust in a simple ceremony.

RC Mangalore Central – RID 3181



Fifty saplings were planted on the premises of Urwa police station to mark *Vanamahotsava*. Club president K Prakashchandra and PDG B Devdas Rai were present on the occasion.

RC Sullurpet – RID 3160



DG Chinnappa Reddy inaugurated a renovated burial ground with a waiting hall, bathrooms and new technology for disposing corpses. The project cost ₹28 lakh.

RC Koteswar – RID 3182



In a joint programme with the government, study material and food kits were given to 20 tribal students in a village. Monthly salary for a teacher was arranged.

RC Hubli Vidyanagar – RID 3170



Twenty-five cement benches with Rotary logo and club name were donated to a garden. PDG Mahesh Raikar presided over the handing-over event.

RC Kolar – RID 3190



A motorised wheelchair was donated to Kavitha, a multiple sclerosis warrior, in remembrance of the mother of the sponsor Jaisimha.

CLUB HOP

RC Perumbavoor Central – RID 3201



The club donated two bicycles for needy students under the district Project YES. Also, two TV sets were given to schoolchildren for attending online classes.

RC Keonjharhargah, RID 3262



The club opened a swabhimaan centre in a village and enrolled 20 illiterate adults. Evening classes are being conducted for them.

RC Nileshwar – RID 3202



A mobile Covid stall with an audio message creating awareness was flagged off by a police station officer in the presence of club president Sujith Kumar.

RC Chandannagar – RID 3291



Twenty-five umbrellas were provided to cobblers to protect them from sun and rain. Masks were distributed to the public as a preventive step against Covid.

RC Bolpur Rangamati – RID 3240



The local police were honoured with Covid Warrior citations for their selfless service towards society and as an expression of thanksgiving during the lockdown.

RC Lekhnath – RID 3292



A Rotary photo booth was inaugurated by IPDG Kiran Lal Shrestha at the Begnas lake, Pokhara, which gets around 700,000 visitors a year. The club is beautifying a number of lakes.

Compiled by V Muthukumar

From RI South Asia Office desk

PAN requirement for RF(I) contributions

Effective April 1, 2020, it is mandatory to provide PAN numbers for all contributions made online/offline towards RF(I), irrespective of value or the donor's intention to claim tax exemption under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act 1961. Contributions received without PAN details will not be processed by RI South Asia Office.

Rotary's privacy and security policy for personal data

Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation (individually and collectively, "Rotary") have adopted the Privacy Policy ("Policy") governing collection, access and retention to personal data. Maintaining the privacy and security of personal data is of the utmost importance to Rotary.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- define what constitutes personal data for the purposes of this policy
- establish the various classifications of data based upon its sensitivity
- establish minimum requirements for collecting, accessing, sharing and storing personal data
- establish the process for reporting a personal data security breach
- identify who is responsible for protecting personal data

This policy applies to Rotary employees, contractors, vendors, contingent workers, volunteers, officers,

consultants, and other parties who have or are granted access to personal data. It is the responsibility of all to help maintain the confidentiality, integrity, and security of personal data. Those with access to this data are expected to be familiar with and comply with this policy. More information on Rotary's privacy policy can be found at <https://my.rotary.org/en/privacy-policy>.

2019–20 Foundation banners

Foundation banners for Rotary Year 2019–20 and "End Polio Now" certificates will be shipped to district governors by late October to early November from RI headquarters for distribution to eligible clubs.

List of winning clubs will be included in the shipments to district governors.

New leadership development courses now available in Rotary's Learning Center

As part of Rotary International's alliance with Toastmasters, two courses in the new leadership and communication series are now available in the Learning Center (www.rotary.org/learn) and focus on building skills and tactics required towards public speaking. These courses are:

- **Develop a speech** — Learn how to organise a speech that leaves a lasting impression on your audience.

- **Deliver a speech** — Explore and practise the effect your voice and body language can have when giving a speech.

These courses, developed by Toastmasters International, include assignments to help put new skills into practice and peer evaluations to help grow through collaboration. Rotary members are encouraged to take these courses. Also, watch a video available at <https://my.rotary.org/en/toastmasters-alliance> to learn more about alliance between Rotary and Toastmasters.

Show how your Interact club takes action

This is a great opportunity to share how your Interact club members are taking action across the globe, in your community and in yourselves in the 2020 Interact Awards. Interact clubs are invited to submit a video, photos, and/or an essay showcasing their club's service projects or leadership development activities.

Submit your nomination by December 1, 2020, for a chance to be named "Best Video," "Best Photo," or "Best Essay" and receive funds to support your Interact club's next project. Comprehensive details available through <https://xd.wayin.com/display/container/dc/2fa0bd36-e918-4e7f-9608-c4711043c77b/details>. ■

On the racks



Across the Winding River

Author : **Aimie K Runyan**

Publisher : **Lake Union**

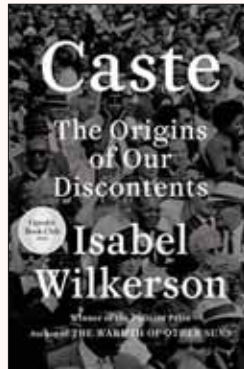
Publishing

Pages : **301; ₹967**

In her father's World War-II memory box, Beth Cohen finds the picture of her father with a pretty pregnant woman. If it wasn't her mother, who was she?

What follows next is a recap of her father — Max, stationed in Germany in 1944, who meets a young married woman named Margarethe. He falls in love with her and after the war ended, he tried to find her, but could not.

Max who knows his time is running out, wants closure and asks Beth to find Margarethe and her baby. But he isn't alone in seeking closure. In a private care facility, next to him, is a dying German-born woman who meets Beth and shares a heartbreaking story. The story takes place from 1937 to 2007 and talks about war, love, loss and sacrifice.



Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents

Author : **Isabel Wilkerson**

Publisher : **Random House**

Pages : **496; ₹2,350**

The author describes the social hierarchy in the US which is similar to the caste system in India and the racial divide in Nazi Germany, an idea she worked on while researching for her Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Warmth of Other Suns*. She draws eight similarities between these three countries.

She describes the origins of the caste system in America and portrays the struggles of African Americans from the 1600s with multiple examples of cruel treatment of slaves. The book is not just about the past. It is very current and discusses the 2016 American Presidential election and some of the current administration's policies. Isabel urges readers to think of all the talent wasted, the innovation lost to humanity by pushing people behind based on skin colour or physical features.



The Book of Lost Friends

Author : **Lisa Wingate**

Publisher : **Ballantine Booksaa**

Pages : **388; ₹2,003**

Louisiana 1875: Hanie Gossett stands behind a log fence where slaves are being held for auction. The young girl watches as her family is sold to different owners. She remembers the promise she made to her mother — never to forget her family and guards safely one of the 15 tiny sacks with three blue glass beads, from her grandmother's special neck chain.

The dual time frame novel cuts to 1987 where Benny Silva comes to teach in Augustine, Louisiana. She seeks to make an impact on her unruly students, get them to read, to learn. Benny asks her students to undertake a project to understand their legacy and ancestors. She shares with them *The Book of Lost Friends*, a compilation of the ads placed in the Lost Friends column in a newspaper. These ads were placed to find people who were sold in human trade.

Based on true facts and records, this story is a combination of history and humanity.

Compiled by Kiran Zehra

Does a writer read her own writing?



TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

One evening many years ago, I had walked across to the park in our colony with a book in my hand. There was no one there except a little boy of about 6–7 years. We knew each other because he lives opposite mine. His mother works as a maid there. He had come over when he saw me sitting on the bench and asked what I had in my hand. It's a book, I had told him. He wanted to know what a book was. I told him as best as I could (I suggest you try it, too, with a six year old). He was a sharpish child and seemed to understand what I was describing even though I had to explain writing and reading first. Then he got bored and ran off to play.

The same thing happened again a few days ago. But this time, in the usual display of narcissism that all writers have, I was carrying my own book. It had been published earlier this year. I have no idea why I wanted to read it. The same boy was there once again but older now, maybe 10 years old. He came over when he saw me. Have you read this book, he asked. I told him I had written it. Yes, he said, but have you read it? He wasn't playing the fool. He was dead serious. I changed the subject and asked him about his school. That was clearly a banned topic and he quickly ran off. That night I told my wife what the boy had asked and she said over

the 40 years we had been married I had asked the same thing of her many times — about her cooking. I tried to tell her it wasn't the same thing. But I knew it was. The only difference was that the boy hadn't meant to insult me.

So for the past few days I have been wondering how many writers actually read their own books in the way others do. Having written a few books now, I know that when I re-read one of them, it is only to admire my skill at writing and my deep insights. These are invisible to others, however. But I never read them the way, say, my wife would, let alone my sons who take a free copy and use it for propping up broken furniture.

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As to my friends, I honestly don't know whether they read them because no one ever says anything. They remain, as the character in *Pickwick Papers* says, as silent as a drum with a hole in it. But I mustn't complain. I do the same thing with the books they or their wives and children write.

But such embarrassing confessions aside, that little boy has asked a very important question: when a writer writes, who is he or she writing for? Himself, herself or the reader? I was an editor for 40 years in different newspapers and in academic and other institutions. I was always telling the writers to think of the poor reader who had not only paid for the paper or the book or the report and now was having to plough through a mass of turgid prose. Sadly, very few of them understood what my colleagues and I were saying. But those of them that did, I am happy to report, have done well in their chosen professions, partly because they haven't written for themselves alone. Indeed, writing is lot like singing or playing an instrument or painting: successful musicians and painters always keep the listener or viewer in mind. It is the only key to success.

So, to get back to what the boy had asked, namely, if I had read my own book, the answer is now clear to me. I haven't. I had written it, no doubt. But read it? I hang my head in shame. ■

Towards a Polio-free world



"We are 'this close' to ending polio," say RIPE Shekhar Mehta and Rashi.



Street children in Belur display flags on a Polio-free India. RC Belur, RID 3291 undertook this activity to spread awareness about the importance of polio immunisation, particularly in vulnerable sections of society. Picture by Rakesh Bhatia.

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