



THE GATEWAY

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She's serene, stoic and sincere; she's also simple, straightforward and self-effacing – that's Rajashree Birla up close

Stoic, sincere and serene. These are some of the adjectives used to describe Ms Rajashree Birla, an Honorary member of the Rotary Club of Bombay and the leading light of one of India's biggest industrial houses.

But is she really like that? Or is there another facet to her personality? One that shows her in a different light?

Yes, there is, and it was on display at the last meeting of the Club when she sat on a sofa that replaced the head table in the Crystal Room of the Taj Mahal Hotel. What emerged was a totally different person. One, who was simple, straightforward and, above all, self-effacing...

Steeped in the Indian milieu, the much-feted Ms Birla spent the after-

noon with the members of the Club even though it was her birthday. (Another celebrated Indian, *Bharat Ratna* Lata Mangeshkar, celebrated hers just a day before, on September 28).

And it was while "chatting" (live, and not on the net) with two women of letters that the simplicity and humility of Ms Birla emerged as if from a cocoon, much to the delight and surprise of the members who packed the Crystal Room.

Dr. Swati Piramal, author and well-known medicine-woman (she's not only a doctor but also associated with a leading pharmaceutical firm), and Ms Tavleen Singh, also an author and a popular newspaper columnist, made an attempt to draw out Ms Birla



Many happy returns of the day. President Nandan Damani presents a bouquet to Ms Rajashree Birla, who is an Honorary member of the Club. Ms Birla, who celebrated her birthday last Tuesday, September 29, was the key speaker at the meeting when she took part in an informal 'chat' session



This is a vote with a difference. The vote of thanks to the main speaker, Honorary member Ms Rajashree Birla, at the last meeting was proposed by another Honorary member, Mr. Ajay Piramal. A rare event indeed. Others in this picture are (from right), Ms Birla, President Nandan Damani and Hon. Joint Secretary Nirav Shah

with some gentle, probing questions about her life.

In the words of Mr. Ajay Piramal, another Honorary member of the Club who proposed the vote of thanks, Ms Birla came across as such an unassuming person that despite the evidence of the mounds of social work that she had been doing, she was hesitant to speak about it and preferred to give credit to others and not corner all glory for herself.

This quality was most loved by the Lord, as mentioned in the *Gita*, said Mr. Piramal, quoting the lines, "Those people are dear to Him, the people who bring humility first".

And Ms Birla epitomised humility, he pointed out.

(Please see Mr. Ajay Piramal's vote of thanks on Page 5.)

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Forthcoming meetings

October 6, 2009

The Chief Election Commissioner of India, Mr. Navin Chawla, to speak on "Making of election".

October 13, 2009

No meeting. Public holiday on account of elections to the Maharashtra State Assembly.

October 20, 2009

Mr. Bharatkumar Raut, Shiv Sena Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and Editorial Consultant to the Times Group, to address "Issues before Maharashtra".

October 27, 2009

The Mumbai Police Commissioner, Mr. D. Sivanandhan, to speak.

Rajashree Birla's work touches seven million people; she looks after 3,700 villages, 41 schools and 18 hospitals

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To return to the afternoon's programme, Ms Birla was introduced by Dr. Swati Piramal, who is Mr. Ajay Piramal's spouse, as a simple girl who was born in Bikaner, brought up in Madurai and married into the Birla family at an early age.

Deeply interested in Carnatic music as a little girl (although she was never trained in it), music became her abiding passion and helped in healing her when tough times loomed, such as when she lost her husband, Mr. Aditya Birla, who was an industrial icon of his times.

Just as, first, her father-in-law and then her husband were top industrialists of their times, her son, Mr. Kumar Mangalam Birla, was today recognised as a leading industrialist.

Dr. Piramal said that the Birla family imbibed the great Indian values of liberty and freedom from the legendary G.D. Birla and from Mahatma Gandhi himself.

Ms Birla was a director of the Aditya Birla Group, a \$28 billion group with over 100,000 employees, and was on the board of all major group companies such as Grasim, Hindalco, Aditya Birla Nuvo, Ultratech and so on.

Fifty per cent of the Group's revenues come from abroad and Ms Birla was also a director on the board of the international companies in 25 countries, including Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Egypt.

However, away from all the accolades and encomiums earned by the group companies, Ms Birla found the time to fulfil her responsibilities as Chairperson of the Aditya Birla Centre for Community Initiatives and Rural Development through which she oversaw its social and welfare-driven work across 30 companies.

She had a strong sense of purpose because of which she could find fulfilment and meaning. "As the sage Patanjali said, 'When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, your mind transcends all limitations'."

Ms Birla's work touched seven million people through company or community initiatives. She looked after 3,700 villages and the 41 schools and 18 hospitals with which the group was associated.

Recently, she was awarded the Rajiv Gandhi Award, the FICCI Golden Laurel Award, the ET Corporate Citizen award, the "Citizen of Bombay" award and so on.

Ms Birla's commitment to Rotary was equally noteworthy. Her photograph, along with one of her husband, was recently put up in the Rotary Hall of Fame at the R.I. headquarters in the USA. She had made what was called a "million dollar speech" and had made liberal donations to help eradicate polio from the world.

Dr. Piramal recalled that when she was a young, just married bride, she was taking part in a fund-raising *Mela* but had no idea about how to go about the work at hand. Just then, Ms Birla and her husband, the late Mr. Aditya Birla, walked into the hall and helped her in "pricing" the goods. Most of them were tagged for Rs. 2 or Rs. 3.

She had found herself wondering, "What is he (Mr. Aditya Birla), among India's greatest industrialists, doing here, sitting with us women and teaching us how to sell, how to market?" She had found that to be a truly endearing quality in the Birla couple.

Recently, while taking part in an IMC exhibition to raise funds for charity, she found herself doing something similar, that is, helping in the sale and marketing of many little

things for a good cause. She believed that this was the best way of returning the favour that had been bestowed on her 30 years ago by the late Mr. Aditya Birla.

Dr. Piramal recalled that Mr. Birla used to love Gujarati food and her mother would often cook his favourite dishes. But in spite of her busy schedule Ms Rajashree Birla never forgot to thank her mother.

"This is such a small thing, but most of us forget because of our busy schedules. But she (Ms Rajashree Birla) never forgets."

She then recited a poem in praise of belief and as a tribute to the human spirit of perseverance.

And all our hopes and dreams are within reach

Dr. Piramal then commenced the "chat" with Ms Rajashree Birla.

Dr. Swati Piramal: What are the values that you saw in your in-laws when you first came as a *bahu* (daughter-in-law) into a Marwari family? What are the values that you feel should be eternal and that you can pass on to your daughter and to your daughter-in-law so that they will last generations?

Ms Birla: I was married at a very young age. I was engaged when I was ten and married when I was 17. I was just a kid; therefore there were lots of



Did we get it right? Dr. Swati Piramal and Ms Tavleen Singh (centre), who conducted the 'chat', snapped with Ms Rajashree Birla after its conclusion

*To believe is to know that every day is a new beginning
To trust that miracles happen and dreams do really come true*

*To believe is to see the angels dancing among the clouds
To know the wonder of a starlit sky and the wisdom of the man on the moon*

*To believe is to know the value of a nurturing heart
The innocence of a child's eye
And the beauty of an ageing hand
For it is through their teachings we learn to live*

*To believe is to find strength and courage that lies within us
When it's time to pick up the pieces and begin again*

*To believe is to know that we are not alone
That life is a gift and it is our time to cherish it
To believe is to know that wonderful surprises are just waiting to happen*

things to learn. Every moment, every small thing was a learning opportunity for me.

I never knew that a family could be so active. My parents-in-law are really commendable. They are so active, full of energy and disciplined.

My mother-in-law gets up at 2.30 in the morning; she does her *puja* and other necessary things for the house and then she herself makes *rotis* for beggars. There were many such things and I learnt a lot from them.

Ms Tavleen Singh: I'm going to ask you about your involvement with corporate social responsibility. What saddened you the most when you started to work in this area and which you would have liked to change?

Ms Birla: When we worked in the villages, it was a very touching scene. Some of the villages did not even have basic amenities like water and electricity; many people did not have enough food. But now things have started picking up and I see that there is change. But there is still a long, long way to go. We really need to work for them.

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*And this is a poem that I recite in praise of belief and of perseverance.
Dr. Swati Piramal introduces Ms Rajashree Birla to the members*

'Oberoi Melting Pot' on October 25

The annual international cultural event, the "Oberoi Melting Pot", will be held in the Regal Room of The Trident Hotel on Sunday, October 25, 2009.

Making an announcement to this effect at the last meeting, President Nandan Damani said that the donor passes were priced at Rs. 3,000 each and were available at the Rotary Secretariat.

As members are aware, the "Oberoi Melting Pot" is organised by the diplomatic community in Bombay in association with the Oberoi Group of Hotels and the Rotary Club of Bombay. It features an assortment of food, drinks, music, dance and a few other forms of entertainment from the countries that form the diplomatic corps in the city.

It is a unique opportunity for fellowship and the proceeds from the event are earmarked for a noble cause.

PP Gul Kripalani, who has been handling the "Oberoi Melting Pot" for several years with great zeal and enthusiasm, has also appealed to

members to participate in the event with their usual fervour and to contribute to a noble cause.

Last year, the event had helped collect a sum of Rs. 23 lakhs (net) which was given to the NGO "Childline" which works for children in need of care and protection.

Donations for good causes

Two members, Madhusudan Daga and Manoj Kumar Patodia, have donated Rs. 44,000 each to sponsor the teachers at the Club's second *Bhavishya-Yaan* project which has been started at the Colaba Municipal School.

President Nandan Damani, while announcing this at the last meeting, said that PP Dr. Zerxis Umrigar had donated Rs. 10,000 for the Oral Health Committee of the Club.

Nandan also thanked all those members who had made contributions to The Rotary Foundation and whose names had appeared in the latest issue of *The Gateway*.

He said that several members had contributed Rs. 12,000 each to sponsor the Club's Fellowship events for the current Rotary year. (*See list on this page.*)

Those who wished to make contributions for this particular activity were welcome to send their cheques as early as possible, Nandan added.



An honour from an honourable man. Hoshang Gotla, former President of the Rotaract Club of H.R. College, receives the 'Golden Alumnus Award' from the former President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. In the centre is H.R. College Principal (Dr.) Indu Shahani

A down-to-earth former Rotaractor, he is waiting to fly, to become a Rotarian

He was the youngest Rotaract President in 2003-2004 and did such an outstanding job that he won for his Club, the Rotaract Club of H.R. College, awards for best Rotaract Club from both the Rotary Club of Bombay, its sponsor, and from R.I. District 3140.

To top it all, he was also adjudged the "Best President" from among 150 Rotaract Clubs.

That simple student has since metamorphosed into a strapping

young man going by the name of Hoshang Gotla. And apart from the B.Com. degree that he earned with distinction and with a major in management, he is now a commercial pilot, trained in the USA and holding a CPL (commercial pilot's licence).

Awaiting a job of his choice since June this year, he is at present pursuing another pet pursuit, viz., event management.

It was his company, "Check-mate", which organised the Michael Jackson Nite for the Rotary Club of Bombay and its Fellowship Committee on August 28.

Later, it also organised the golden jubilee celebrations of his alma mater, the H.R. College of Commerce and Economics. These celebrations involved a series of events, culminating in a stirring address delivered by India's favourite former President, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

In what can be called the high point of a brief career marked by several outstanding achievements, Hoshang Gotla was presented with the "Golden Alumnus Award" of H.R. College by Dr. Abdul Kalam.

Hoshang was a student of H.R. College from 2001 to 2006 and served the Rotaract Club in various capacities before becoming President. He became a Paul Harris Fellow in 2004.

Acknowledging the role played by H.R. College, the Rotaract Club and the Rotary Club of Bombay, especially Rotaract President Deepak Kapadia, in moulding his life and career, Hoshang says that the latter always pushed him to pursue and to achieve his goals. He looks forward to becoming a Rotarian some day.

Birthday donations

President Nandan Damani has thanked the two members who made birthday donations in the week gone by.

While Rohit Dhoot has contributed Rs. 5,000, Dilip Dalal has given a sum of Rs. 2,000, he added.

At the last meeting

(Held on September 29, 2009)

PRESIDENT Nandan called the meeting to order and welcomed the Honorary members, Ms Rajashree Birla and Mr. Ajay Piramal, Dr. Swati Piramal and Ms Tavleen Singh, the two guests who conducted the live "chat" with her, the visiting Rotarians, Rotaryans, guests and others.

BANNERS EXCHANGED

With Charlie Murphy and John Dotson, Visiting Rotarians from the Rotary Club of West Point (Highland Falls), New York, USA.

BIRTHDAYS

Members and Rotaryans celebrating their birthday during the week were felicitated.

ATTENDANCE

Members	169
Visiting Rotarians	6
Spouses/Rotaryans	11
Guests	32
Total	218
Svc. box collection	Rs. 5,050

They're all in favour of Fellowship

The following members have made individual contributions of Rs. 12,000 each to sponsor the Fellowship events to be arranged during the current Rotary year. Those who wish to make contributions for this particular activity are welcome to send their cheques to the Rotary Secretariat as early as possible.

Name of member	Amount in Rs.
Honorary Member Hon'ble Mr. S.C. Jamir	12,000
Arvind Agarwal	12,000
Homji Colah	12,000
Madhusudan Daga	12,000
Nanu Daruvala	12,000
Rajas Doshi	12,000
Dr. Ashok Kriplani	12,000
Arin Master	12,000
Dara Mehta	12,000
Framroze Mehta	12,000
Ramesh Narayan	12,000
Gaurav Nevatia	12,000
PP Vithal Palekar	12,000
PP Nalin Parikh	12,000
Trilochan Sahney	12,000
PP Arun Sanghi	12,000
Alok Sekhsaria	12,000
Nirav Shah	12,000
Sitaram Shah	12,000
Ghanshyam Sheth	12,000
Akhtarali Tobaccowala	12,000

Rajashree Birla says corporates can take over or help run primary health centres to provide real medical help

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Dr. Piramal: I remember you and Adityaji used to take part in the Sangeet Kala Kendra. Although such a big industrialist, he went to plays and music programmes... I once saw him making a painting. What was your vision? Were you doing it for relaxation? Was it your culture?

Ms Birla: I think he had imbibed a lot of qualities from his parents; they were also very fond of art and culture and had set up an institute called Sangeet Kala Mandir in Calcutta. It was my father-in-law who motivated us to do something similar here. Once you get into such things, you start enjoying it. So we got more and more involved.

My husband was a multi-faceted person. He would paint well, he would write well, he would sing well and even take part in dramas – in which he wasn't good at all, but he would still do it!

Ms Singh: Many people say that in India conditions are bad because we as citizens, and not just corporate India, do not have a sense of social responsibility; we can walk by and not look. Do you think that's true? Do you think there's more that corporate India has to do?

Ms Birla: I think all the stakeholders have to take part, because although the government has a lot of schemes for the poor, they don't reach the real beneficiaries. A lot of it leaks by the time it reaches the poor. I think if everything really goes to the beneficiaries, then India will be a very happy country.

I hope the new, unique ID scheme really makes a difference. Let's hope for the best.

Dr. Piramal: You mentioned leakages. I think the one thing that the Rotary Club has been doing well is ensuring that help reaches those who need it the most. Their polio campaign has attracted you and you have contributed so much to it. Why did you choose polio? What did it mean to you?

Ms Birla: Actually, I didn't know much about it. It was (my daughter-in-law) Neerja's father, Mr. Shambhukumar Kasliwal, who introduced me to Rotary. But slowly I got involved. I think polio can be eliminated if it's done with perseverance and sincerity and if everyone joins hands. It's something we can do; we can make the world free of polio.

Ms Singh: Next week you will become Chairperson of Assocham. There are some very simple things

that corporate India can do, for example, in the case of women's health. We now have very good marketing skills available in India. Why has corporate India not done more to spread information?

For instance, you could spread information that if a woman takes one iodine pill worth 50 paise every day, India can be rid of anaemia. Why is corporate India not more involved in doing something as simple as saying that if a child has diarrhoea, he will be cured if given *nimbu-pani*? Would you like to get more involved in this?

Ms Birla: Yes, certainly, a lot can be done. There are many primary health centres. Corporates can take them over or help in running them. The structure of the primary health centres is there, but no real medical help is available. If we can guide them or get involved, it will be a really useful thing.

Dr. Piramal: We come from Rajasthan where one of the biggest problems is dowry and remarriage of widows. Are you trying to do something against these two evils?

Ms Birla: In Renukoot, where Hindalco is located, we had two to three mass marriages. Our social workers went to people and told them about the ills of the dowry system. They told them not to expect any dowry. And we did have mass marriages of about 150 couples. Some of them were widows.

Ms Singh: You said earlier that when you now go to villages you have noticed change. What change have you seen that has come about as a direct result of something you have done?

Ms Birla: I think the self-help groups are really picking up. They

would use for you. And they said, "serenity". How do you achieve that? You have had to face many difficulties. I remember some of your struggles and also the courage with which you faced them. How do you get that serenity? What tools do you use? Prayers? Yoga? Music?

Ms Birla: Actually, I am not as serene as I look. Just before coming here, I was quite nervous!

But I think when you get into something, when you have to perform, when you have to do (something), then nervousness goes away; and if you get fully involved in what you're doing, then you're just doing that and enjoying it.

Ms Singh: When I was in New York recently for the Clinton Global Initiative, an American journalist said to Mr. Ajit Gulabchand, the industrialist, who was with me, "Under your nose, in the city of Bombay, there is child trafficking into prostitution... it's right there, just two minutes from the Taj Hotel! Why does corporate India not make more noise about this?"

I ask you the question, doesn't it upset you that we are known as the country with the largest number of little girls that are sold into prostitution? They are trafficked as sex slaves. Is there anything you would like to do about this?

Ms Birla: Actually, I have never got into this, so I can't say much. But it has to be taken care of.

Dr. Piramal: A few personal questions. Yesterday was the 80th birthday of Lata Mangeshkar. Maybe you grew up with that kind of music. What are your favourite songs? What kind of music do you like to hear? To sing?

Ms Birla: I like to listen to light music. I have not trained in Carnatic (or any other) music. But I do like light music which gives some happiness and keeps you calm.

Dr. Piramal: Which song appeals most to you?

Ms Birla: There are many songs that I like... there is *Hum ko man ki shakti dena*.

Dr. Piramal: How do you maintain your long friendships? I have seen you with friends for 30 years.

Ms Birla: I have been lucky in that. But friendship is always nurtured by both parties, not just one. I'm fortunate to have many friends, some of them for 30 to 40 years. I must say that I'm very fortunate.

Dr. Piramal: What does being a Marwari mean to you?

Ms Birla: Whether Marwaris, Gujaratis or others, I think nowadays



Fielding all questions with poise and equanimity. The eager audience at the live 'chat' session with Ms Rajashree Birla lapped up every word that she uttered

there isn't much difference in a globalised world. I think one can pick up a good point from any community. It can be an eclectic one.

Ms Singh: Why is it that Rajasthani women, including Marwari women, are among the most backward in India? Why has education not been emphasised, why have they not been allowed to come forward? Have things changed in the last few years?

Ms Birla: I think a lot has changed. Recently, I was in Kota and I heard women giving speeches like never before and they were very forward-looking.

But in the interiors we do have such (backward) women... I have seen them, wearing heavy *kadas* (chunky metal bangles), covering their heads and working in the fields. We can see both types of women there. But I'm sure with the Internet and with TV all this will vanish very fast.

That ended the "chat" session. The floor was then thrown open for questions but there was time only for a few.

Ms Birla told Sitaram Shah that whenever she heard talk about "bridging the gap" between the haves and the have-nots, she always wondered why only some people could go up. It was not that Indian had only a certain (restricted) quantum for distribution amongst everyone.

"The country is very resourceful; everyone can make progress and move up. I feel that if the government schemes for the poor are followed properly, it will give them a better chance."

Dr. Swati Piramal asked what advice she gave her grandchildren as future Indians.

Ms Birla said that she always told them to give priority to their studies. Gaining knowledge was "such a joy" and it was best that they put all their efforts in that direction.

"Secondly, I like to tell them never to get too dejected, because nothing is permanent in this world. Take it as it comes and just flow with the situation."

She told PDG Manibhai Doshi that education was the most important aspect that had to be given priority because it could empower people and enable them to do a lot of things.

Ms Birla nearly brought the house down when a query from Chander Alimchandani led neither here nor there. After consultation with Dr. Swati Piramal and Ms Tavleen Singh, she asked, "What's the question?!"

To a question from Nanu Daruvala she said that in some schemes her team acted as a catalyst between the villagers and the government.

"We go to the villages and explain the various schemes and how they can benefit from them. We also take them to the banks, help them in filling forms and in getting loans, subsidies and so on. That has been very successful. To give you an idea, last year we mobilised nearly Rs. 90 crores in this manner."

When the President of the Rotaract Club of H.R. College asked for a message, Ms Birla said, "I think students should study hard... but they should also enjoy because when you are young you don't have too many worries. At the same time, don't say, oh, we have to study, just look at the elders, they don't have exams. But they have many other problems. You should study and also have some holistic developments, what you are interested in".

After this question-answer session, a 15-minute film on Ms Rajashree Birla was screened.

Finally, it was time for the vote of thanks. And for perhaps the first time, it was an Honorary member of the Club, Mr. Ajay Piramal, who was requested to take the mike.

MR. AJAY PIRAMAL'S VOTE OF THANKS

The image that I have always had of Rajashreeji is of a very dignified, humble, unassuming and quiet, though very purposeful and sincere, person. The interaction that we had today, I think, brought that out, especially her humility.

From the film that was screened we could see the tremendous amount of work that she has been doing. But in all her conversations here she was really hesitant to speak about what she has been doing. In fact, she gave a lot of credit to Neerja.

This shows how difficult it is to draw out a person who is truly unassuming.

That is probably one of the qualities about which the Lord says in the *Gita*, "Those people are dear to Him, the people who bring humility first", and that is what Rajashreeji epitomises.

Coming from one of the most distinguished, wealthiest, most powerful families in the country and yet giving so much back to society, has truly been an inspiration for all of us; the way Rajashreeji conducts herself, the way she is giving back to those people who are less privileged than us, is an inspiration.

What is the definition of a leader? Again, as it is said in the *Gita*,

"How behaves the best of men, so behaves the rest of men".

Seeing her example, people will say, she did so, so we did so; she has, indeed, been an example for all of us.

Rotary is all about service and we as members of Rotary have great pride. We say with a lot of pride that "I am a member of a Rotary Club". If you are a member of the Rotary Club of Bombay, you have even greater pride, because this is the most important Club in the country. And if some of us are luckier to be Honorary Rotarians, we say it with even greater pride!

But in Rajashreeji's case I think the honour goes to Rotary that she has agreed to be your member, because what she has done is a true example of what all of us Rotarians should do.

We are really thankful to you, Rajashreeji, for spending the afternoon with us on your birthday. We are very thankful that you have shared your experience with us. And we are very grateful for all the service that you have been doing for the nation, for the world and for honouring Rotary in this way.

Let us extend our very warm, grateful thanks to Rajashreeji by giving her a standing ovation.

Thank you.



This one's for the album. President Nandan is hidden at the back in this group photo that captures (from left) Ms Rajashree Birla's daughter Ms Vasvadatta Bajaj, her daughter-in-law Ms Neerja Birla, Shreelekha, Mr. Ajay Piramal, Ms Birla, Dr. Swati Piramal and Ms Tavleen Singh. In the second picture, Shreelekha and Nandan watch as Ms Birla and her friend, Ms Geeta Loyolka (right), leaf through a photo album

Lots of horsing around on a fun-filled Dassera morning

The latest Fellowship event organised by the Rotary Club of Bombay was as extraordinary as heavy showers at the height of summer.

First of all, it was held on the morning of Dassera Day, which is one of the most important festivals of India signifying the triumph of good over evil.

Secondly, it was held at the unlikelyst of places, viz., the race course.

Third, it was organised not in the evening hours but at 8 o'clock in the morning.

Fourth, it involved a lot of horsing around – literally – because it featured man's favourite friends from the animal kingdom, horses and dogs.

And fifth, the programme required a lot of interaction by the participants, what with a fancy dress competition involving both man and beast.

By dexterously mixing the Amateur Riders' Club's annual ritual of "Ashwa puja" (the worship of horses) with its own ideas of fun and frolic, the Fellowship Committee, in association with the Committee for the Welfare of Animals (which has Framroze Mehta as Chairman), offered members and their families the opportunity to enjoy a rare morning out.

According to Fellowship Chairman Madhusudan Daga, the event was a resounding success and was especially enjoyed by Rotaryans and members' children.

Turning to the awards, he reports that the Amateur Riders' Club selected four pairs of man-horse teams for the final round of the fancy dress competition. And two of the two four awards were bagged by participants of the Rotary Club of Bombay.

While one man-horse team was called "Elegant Princess", the other one was named "Kantibhai and Kantaben".

The sumptuous spread laid out by Muthuswami Caterers was enjoyed by all and so were the rides, magic and jugglery shows and other entertainment programmes arranged by the ARC. The beer and wine on offer helped make it a perfect morning for all those who attended the Fellowship.

In fact, some of the members had a difficult time persuading their children, who were deeply engrossed in the games and fun events that were organised for them, to return home!

Keep up the good work, Madhusudan, Framroze and team.



Leading the way. Fellowship Chairman Madhusudan Daga and Education for All Chairman Alok Sekhsaria lead a horse dressed as 'Bhavishya-Yaan' at the Fellowship held at the Amateur Riders' Club on Dassera Day. In the picture at right, Shyam Mariwala and Framroze Mehta, Chairman of the Committee for Welfare of Animals (which co-hosted the event), share the frame with a horse and its keeper



Silence, the Danis are at work. Jalaj Dani (in the first picture) gets going with fancy accoutrements for some of the horses. Standing just behind him is First Lady Shreelekha Damani. In the photograph at right, Jalaj's children, Mudit and Smriti, snapped with three of the horses that they dressed and that took part in the traditional 'Ashwa puja' (the worship of horses) that marks the celebration of Dassera at the race course every year



And here comes the winner! Pretty Devanshi Bagri rides in on a well-groomed horse. She described her fancy dress theme as 'Elegant Princess' and trotted away with one of the prizes on offer. In the second picture, Avishi, daughter of Manoj Kumar Patodia, and her cousin Dia Agarwal hold placards to display their theme, viz., the dangers of global warming. The scowl on Dia's face says it all – that global warming is not cool!



This is the second team from the Rotary Club of Bombay to win an award at the Fellowship event. The prize was bagged by Mudit and Malti Jain who came dressed as 'Kantibhai and Kantaben'. They are snapped here with (from left), Nirav Shah, Rachna Agarwal, Devina Shah, Ramesh Narayan, Shreelekha and President Nandan Damani. In the picture at right, Malti displays her dancing skills



Snippets of History – XXVI

Film shows, picnics, visits to Aarey, to farms, studios and so on were the high points of Fellowship in the 1950s

The following extracts from the President's personal message convey some idea of the range and quality of the Club's preoccupations at the time:

"The Community Service Committee initiated this year (1955-56) an investigation into the problem of vagrancy among juveniles in Bombay. A beginning has been made and starting with an elaborate questionnaire, carefully devised, the Committee has engaged the services of a social welfare student to go round the city collecting useful data which should form the basis of a valuable report.

"Another useful activity has been the library scheme. Grants for the creation of Rotary libraries are restricted to the encouragement of professional, vocational and scientific education and donations for establishing such libraries have been made to the R.A. Poddar College of Commerce, the Secondary Training College, the Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute, the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics, the Bombay College, the Government

Law College and the G.S. Medical College."

Amusing yet tragic were the experiences of the person deputed to interview boys in furtherance of the vagrancy programme. The boys interrogated could not shake off the suspicion that the police were involved and "it was found necessary for the interrogator to chase the boys from place to place, like Victoria Terminus, Bombay Central, Crawford Market, etc."

To allay the fears of the boys, they were offered tea or snacks and even a meal, but such inducements do not appear to have been effective. Yet sustained efforts were made to make the investigation as thorough as possible.

As is normal in any burgeoning organisation such as the Bombay Rotary, there were some members who failed to take their membership seriously enough and the Club Service Committee was obliged to point out caustically that these members were in the habit of sitting out on the verandah while the weekly lunch was being served, thus failing to co-operate in generating the Fellowship spirit.

Another sampling of Fellowship activities is as follows: Film show of "Monsieur Vincent"; visit to the Russian Circus; travel films of India; bu-

fet dance dinner at the Willingdon; children's party at Fazil Manzil; an exhibition of badminton; film show of "Exclusive Suite"; visit to Burmah Shell Refineries; visit to Ajanta-Ellora; a play called "The Little Dictator" put up by an MRA group; a piano recital by Katchen; visit to Premier Automobiles; visit to a farm at Panvel; visit to Ricci concerts; film shooting and dance entertainment at the Central Studios; a moonlight picnic at Aarey.

The attendance at all these affairs was reported to be high and enthusiastic.

A provision was introduced prescribing that all candidates for membership should be introduced at the earliest opportunity to the Officers of the Club, particularly to the Chairman and members of the Membership Committee.

The possibility of starting a provisional Rotary Club in Bandra district was studied bearing in mind, as the Bombay Rotary had always done, the need to bring the benefits of Rotary to as large a number of people as possible in the outlying areas.

By the middle of 1953 the Club, having recovered from the restrictions and difficulties of the War and post-War periods, had begun to consolidate. Its position could not have been

more succinctly summed up than in the words of the then President William Jenkins:

"During the year a vigorous effort was made to bring up the strength of the Club and while it is gratifying to report that 42 new members were elected there was at no time any lowering of the rigid Classification we adopted and I think you will agree that the quality and standing of the new members this year bear comparison with those of any previous year.

"The present membership figure now makes us easily the largest, and the rigid Classification makes us possibly the most influential, Club in India if not in the Middle East."

A significant feature of the carefully conducted recruitment drive was that the majority of new members displayed from the beginning a high level of enthusiasm. This was partly due to the thorough grounding they were given on the history and evolution of Rotary at special functions and to the follow-up when considered necessary by the Rotary Information Committee.

One enthusiastic member, it was reported, met the Chairman after Rotary Information had been imparted and spent two hours at lunch discussing Rotary matters.

(To be continued)

Hinduja Rotaractors launch a new website

The Rotaract Club of Hinduja College reports that it has started its new website.

According to President Pratik Kajaria, who is also the Club's Web Communication Director, the following is the address of the website:

rchc3140.webs.com

He adds that this year the Club's Theme is "Dreamz – Express it... Live it... Achieve it..." and its Motto is "Redefine Your Limits".

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Happy Birthday

ROTARY CLUB OF BOMBAY

FOUNDED 19 MARCH, 1929
 Charter No. 3128, Dated 08 May, 1929
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OFFICE-BEARERS 2009/10

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 Imm. Past President Ashish Vaid
 President-Elect Pradeep Saxena
 Vice-President Paul George
 Honorary Secretary Shivkumar Israni
 Joint Hon. Secretary Nirav Shah
 Honorary Treasurer Ishraq Contractor

DIRECTORS

Roda Billimoria Vikram Daiya
 Rita Dalal S.K. Mitra
 Ramesh Narayan Suhail Nathani
 Pranay Vakil Nowroze Vazifdar
CLUB SERVICE - New Members
 Pradeep Saxena to oversee
 Director Rita Dalal
 Classifications PP Dr. Adi Dastur
 Membership PP Sandip Agarwalla
 Member. Dev. & DisCon Paul George
 Information & Assimilation PP Harry Singh Arora

CLUB SERVICE - Fellowship/Meetings

Director Pranay Vakil
 Fellowship & Sports Madhusudan Daga
 Programme Nanik Rupani
 Sergeant-at-Arms Bipin Kapadia
 Attendance Arvind Agarwal
 Bulletin & Website PP Arun Sanghi
 Public Relations Manoj Patodia

COMMUNITY SERVICE - I: Medical

Director Nowroze Vazifdar
 Chairman Emeritus, Talwada PP Dr. Rahim Muljiani
 HTEC, Talwada Dr. Mitul Patel
 Ajit Deshpande
 Medical Centre PP Dr. Rumi Jehangir
 Oral Health Dr. Sorab Javeri
 Control of TB Dr. Rohini Chowgule
 Hepatitis & Polio Immu. Ashwin Didwania
 Heart Brigade Dr. Anand Somaya
 Cancer Aid Farokh Balsara

COMMUNITY SERVICE - II: Non-Medical

Director Ramesh Narayan
 RCC Sunny Pariyaram
 Global Warming/(Dist. Thrust) Green Vision Jagdish Malkani
 Differently Abled (Dist. Thrust) Shyyamniwas Soman
 Old Age Home/ Senior Citizens Naresh Kumar Jain
 Women Empowerment Poonam Lavani
 Welfare of Animals Framroze Mehta

COMMUNITY SERVICE - III: Youth

Paul George to oversee
 Director Vikram Daiya
 Interact Mehul Sampat
 Rotaract Deepak Kapadia

COMMUNITY SERVICE - IV: Education

Director Roda Billimoria
 Educational Loans and Scholarships Arjun Jolly
 Management Education Poonam Kumar
 Education - Values & Ethics (Dist. Thrust) Alok Sekhsaria
 TEAC Junior College IPP Ashish Vaid

VOCATIONAL SERVICE

Director Suhail Nathani
 Rotary Public Awards Nelum Gidwani
 Legal Aid Akil Hirani
 Four-Way Test Subash Gogia

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE/DISTRICT THRUST

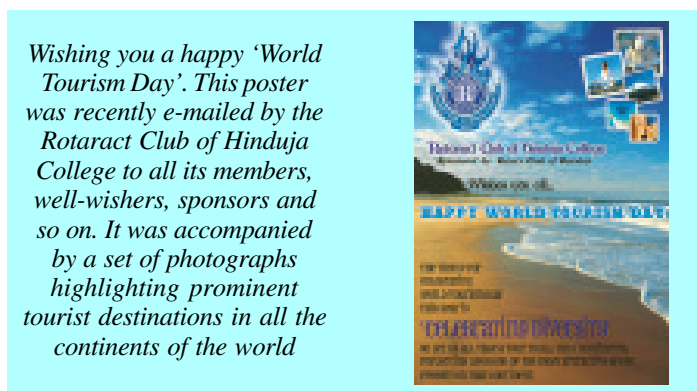
Director S.K. Mitra
 R.I. Programmes PP Rajnikant Reshamwala
 Rotary Foundation PP Arvind Jolly
 Fund-Raising Manoj Israni
 Promotion of Arts, Music and Dance Priyasri Patodia
 Disha (Dist. Thrust) PP Kalpana Munshi
 Water Management (R.I. and Dist. Thrust) Suresh Goklany



President Nandan Damani and Hon. Joint Secretary Nirav Shah pose with Visiting Rotarians Charlie Murphy and John Dotson (right) from the Rotary Club of West Point (Highland Falls), New York. Charlie (in the red T-shirt) is a former Secretary of State of New York State. John, on the other hand, is an engineer



And how do you do? PP Dr. Adi Dastur (left) greets Ms Madhushree Birla, a guest at the last meeting. In the centre is Dr. Swati Pirmal, who introduced Ms Rajashree Birla and engaged in a live 'chat' with her along with Ms Tavleen Singh. Ms Birla, who was visiting from Delhi, is the sister of President Nandan Damani



Visiting Rotarians

Bombay Cuffe Parade: PP Darshana Doshi; **Bombay East:** PDG Manibhai Doshi; **Bombay Harbour:** Ashok Jhaveri; **Bombay Mid-Town:** G.G. Kapadia, Naren Mohatta, Bernhard Steinrucke; **Mumbai Queen's Necklace:** Shilpa R. Mehta; **West Point (Highland Falls), NY, USA:** John Dotson, Charlie Murphy.



Dr. Hemraj Chandalia
October 7



Vikram Daiya
October 7



Ritu Prakash Desai
October 8



Sorabh Jain
October 8



Vijay Kumar Jatia
October 8



Poonam Lavani
October 8



Hon. Rtn. Mr. Keshub Mahindra
October 9



Soheli Shikari
October 10



Ramesh Hariani
October 11



Homi Katgara
October 11



Dr. Asad Karim Khan
October 12

Spouses/Rotaryanns

Sweta Vakil
October 6
 Arwa Tapia
October 7
 Niloufer Vakil
October 7
 Reena Menon
October 9
 Meher Poonawala
October 9
 Faryal Katgara
October 10
 Priti Premnath
October 10

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