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An anguished mother's cry of pain – *wish I'd been there when my daughter was discovering herself*

It was a cry from the heart, the heart of a loving mother who was totally shattered by the fact that she wasn't there when her daughter needed her the most. It was the agony of a woman who, despite being present right next to her daughter physically, could not understand what was going on in the mind of her little girl.

While it took the girl some years to come out of the closet and to tell her mother that she was a lesbian and for their respective lives to move on, the mother cries in frustration even today, regretting that she did not know a thing, that she did not have a clue, that she could not share in her daughter's distress.

And no, her anguish has nothing to do with the fact that her daughter is a lesbian, but everything to do with the fact that when her daughter was discovering herself and her sexual orientation, she had to do it all by herself and could not even turn to her own mother for help.

That, more than anything else, brings tears of anguish to the eyes of Ms Chitra Palekar, a well-known film, stage and television personality, who was speaking at the last meeting on "LGBT parenting – coming out".



Coping with reality is not a problem; the greatest difficulty is conceding this in a society that is traditionally heterosexual, says Ms Chitra Palekar at the last meeting while speaking on 'LGBT parenting – coming out'

Accepting the fact that her daughter was a lesbian was easy; what was more difficult was conceding this in a society that was – and continued to be – traditionally heterosexual. But she had to confront her own hypocrisy, accept it, overcome it and then come out into the open – and to state that her daughter's "friend" was actually her "partner": and "partner" as in spouse.

That Ms Palekar had overcome those hurdles and got over those gut-wrenching moments when, as a popular member of society, she had to fend off queries about her daughter's marriage, her fiancée, her children and so on, became evident at the last meeting.

Although she was extremely nervous as she spoke, she did not hide her state of mind and gallantly pressed on with what she had to say, never mind the stupid tears that seemed to appear from nowhere and had the audacity to flow down her cheeks.

Ms Palekar was introduced by Dolly Thakore as a veteran who had made a name for herself in most of her endeavours. A post-graduate in economics, she had been a leading actor/

director in *avant garde* theatre in Bombay since 1967.

The films and television serials she had been associated with as writer, producer or actor included *Aakriet*, *Thodasa Roomani Ho Jaaye*, *Kairee*, *Kal Ka Aadmi*, *Dhyaas Parv*, *Bangarwadi* and *Daayra*. She wrote and produced TV serials such as *Kachchi Dhoop* and *Naqab*. These were directed by Amol Palekar (her then spouse; the couple separated later).

Recently, she made her debut as a film director with *Maati Maay* (A grave-keeper's tale) which she also wrote and produced. Premiered at Toronto, the film was screened at 14 international festivals all over the world, was selected in the Indian Panorama and won several awards in India as well as abroad. At present she was working on a film about the delicate relationship between a mother and a daughter in the shadow of an irreversible disease, Alzheimer's disease.

Dolly added that Ms Palekar was one of the signatories of the parents' petition in the Supreme Court in support of the Delhi High Court ruling of 2009 that favoured decriminalisation

of homosexuality. Not only was she fighting for equal rights for LGBTs, she also supported other parents in resolving their concerns about their LGBT children.

It surprised her, Dolly added, that despite the historic Delhi High Court ruling, many members had not yet understood that the acronym LGBT stood for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

Ms Palekar started by introducing her daughter in absentia. "My daughter's name is Shalmalee; at present she is an associate professor in post-colonial studies at the University of Western Australia in Perth. She is an up and coming international academic. When she came out to me, she had just completed her B.A., around 18 years ago, in the early 1990s."

Recounting the conversation that changed her life forever, she said her daughter had expressed a desire to speak to her and when led to the bedroom, she had been straightforward: "Amma (mother), I must tell you that I am a lesbian."

She was taken aback because she had not been prepared for it, having never imagined that her daughter would not be heterosexual like everybody else. She had very little knowledge about homosexuality and had never thought about it seriously.

"I was taken aback, but I was not shocked or upset. People always ask me this question – why was I not shocked or upset? Perhaps, they thought that I was showing off. No. At that moment, I felt, okay, she's saying something, but what she's saying has not changed anything. First of all, she's still my daughter. Secondly, she's the same that she was till three minutes ago, a sweet, good-natured child who had grown into a very intelligent, rational and compassionate woman.

(Continued on Page 2)

Forthcoming meetings

October 11, 2011

Dr. Girdhar J. Gyani to speak on "Driving quality for national well-being".

October 18, 2011

The Ramakrishna Bajaj Award for Good Governance to be presented to Mr. J.J. Irani.

October 25, 2011

Dr. Alwyn Didar Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, to speak on "NRI – Not Required Indians to Now Returning Indians".

After her daughter came out, Chitra and Shalmalee grew closer and became more intimate than before

(Continued from Page 1)

“And I was very proud of her. That hadn’t changed because of that one sentence. Her achievements... she was an actor (she acted in *Kachchi Dhoop*, a children’s TV serial), she also played badminton at the national level. She was the captain of the women’s Combined Universities team at the same time as P. Gopichand was captain of the men’s team.

“Gopichand continued (he went on to win the All-England Badminton Championship; at present he is the trainer of Saina Nehwal), but Shalmalee left badminton for academics. She was a Dorab Tata Scholar and her name appeared on the merit list in English in her B.A.”

Ms Palekar said she was very proud of her daughter, so much so that her family and friends used to joke and ask how Shalmalee had turned out to be so talented despite being Chitra’s daughter.

And now, just because she had said that she was a lesbian, she was not going to become another, different person.

These and other thoughts rushed through her mind at that moment of revelation. But she got a grip on herself; she said she was completely ignorant about these matters; when she said that she was a lesbian, did she mean to say that she was a homosexual?

Yes, said her daughter. So the mother said, “Okay, then I must know everything about it, how do I go about it? I must know”. The daughter said she would give her some books and literature. But would she read it?

“I said, I will. And that journey has continued till today. But before that, I had to know, how did she come to know that she was a lesbian? And when did she come to know? I had a curious mother’s mind.”

Shalmalee told her that she was about 13 or 14 years old, when most children became aware of their sexuality, when she realised that the way her girl friends used to talk about boys and giggle, and the way her boyfriends used to talk about girls and giggle (she had friends among both sexes), she did not have any similar feeling.

“Initially, the poor thing must have thought that giggling was not her forte. But she realised that she did not have those sensations or feelings that the other girls had about the opposite sex.”

Continuing her story, the daughter said that wherever she looked, everything was heterosexual, whether it was the fiction that she read, the advertisements she saw, the television programmes, the movies, everything but everything was heterosexual. She knew nobody in her circle of friends or among her relatives who was a homosexual.

In her badminton group, she had heard people passing derogatory remarks about boys who looked “delicate”, though they might not have been homosexuals. At family functions, she had heard people talking in whispers about a certain celebrity who was supposedly gay.

When she heard all this, she felt very anxious. She started feeling confused and upset, she didn’t know whether it (homosexuality) was something that was terribly wrong – and yet she never

felt that there was anything that was wrong with her.

“Just see the dilemma, just try and imagine the dilemma of a child who was so good in so many activities, she was so... she felt everything was okay with her and yet she didn’t know (she wondered) whether there was anything wrong with her. She was torn between those feelings. She just didn’t know where to turn.

“As she was telling me all this, I was feeling very upset, listening to her, because I could imagine her loneliness, her isolation... as a mother... (pauses)... I’m sorry, I feel upset even now, after so many years, because at the time when she really needed help I was not able to give it. By the time she told me, she was almost 20, she was a grown-up and could handle things herself.”

Ms Palekar said that she asked Shalmalee why she had not spoken to her parents. And the reply that she received was like a slap in her face.

She told her mother that at the regular gatherings of family members and friends in their house, people talked about every subject under the sun – “but not once did I hear you people mention homosexuality, not once! How could I know whether you were indifferent or against it; and if I came out and told you, would you be so shocked that you would just reject me? And our relationship would just break? How could I (come out and tell you)?”

Thankfully, she used to visit a counsellor at St. Xavier’s College (her mother was aware that she was going

to see a counsellor, but had not delved deep into it, deciding to give her her space). It was those visits that gave her some courage.

She realised that her parents had brought her up to be honest; they had told her to live with integrity and to never live a false life. Those were the values that she had been taught and had grown up with.

Shalmalee told her mother: “Those values stood by me and I said to myself, I cannot live a false life; so I came to you, with trust, that you will love me always...”

And then, said Ms Palekar, started her own journey. Although things had changed in her family and in a few other families, the pace of change in society was extremely slow. As a result, many children still went through very difficult times.

However, she and her daughter grew close after she stated that she was a lesbian. They became more intimate and there were no longer any barriers between them.

Further, a whole new world opened up before her, a world about which she would have never bothered otherwise. She realised that there were people who were unnecessarily being treated as criminals and who were rejected by society for no fault of theirs. “Therefore, I am very thankful for that conversation that afternoon and her coming out.”

But, that was not all, said Ms Palekar. She started introspecting on all that had happened and started asking some basic questions: What was the meaning of being modern and of being educated?

“I was highly educated, I considered myself exceedingly progressive, liberal and everything else – and yet, I had not been sensitive enough to know this particular thing. So it was like a real slap in my face. But it has also helped me to grow.”

Her daughter gave her all kinds of books, some of them written by Indians but not easily available. After she went abroad for further studies, she started sending even more books. And she read them all in order to become better informed.

Ms Palekar recalled that although she had reassured her daughter, she had been sceptical, wondering whether her mother was disturbed deep down in her heart but did not show it because she was a consummate actress.

(Continued on Page 6)



Paying attention to what the speaker is saying. Ms Chitra Palekar emphasises a point in the course of her talk. (Second picture) While Shiv Dev Gorowara and Ravindra Fotedar are all ears, Dr. Shailesh Raina goes through the latest issue of ‘The Gateway’



Two centurions. Dinshaw Pandole (first picture) and Hormazdiyaar Vakil are presented with gift hampers as a special award for recording 100% attendance during the month of August. While Dinshaw's name was picked from among those exempted from attendance requirements, Hormazdiyaar was chosen from among the Active members. At President Paul George's request, PP Arvind Jolly picked the names from a box held by President-Nominee Nirav Shah and also presented the gifts to the winners

Two awards for 100% attendance in August

Dinshaw Pandole and Hormazdiyaar Vakil were the winners of the award for 100% attendance during the month of August

President-Nominee Nirav Shah said that nine members who had been permanently excused from attendance

requirements had attended all the meetings held during the month under review. And the number of active members (belonging to the non-excused category) was a healthy 16.

In a departure from the norm, President Paul George requested PP Arvind Jolly to draw the names of the winners – one each from the two categories – from bowls containing the names of all those who had registered perfect attendance during the month.

As Nirav held out the bowls, Arvind picked the name of PP Dr. Adi Dastur, who was not present at the exact moment when his name was announced. Taking the sense of the house, Paul requested Arvind to pick another name.

This time, it was the veteran Dinshaw Pandole whose name was picked. He walked up amidst loud applause to receive a gift hamper from Arvind.

As for the Active members, the name that Arvind drew out was that of

Hormazdiyaar Vakil who had to be quickly separated from his dessert to be presented with the award for 100% attendance during the month of August.

Register for the Marathon

As members are aware, the Rotary Club of Bombay has registered as an NGO for the forthcoming Mumbai Marathon, scheduled to be held on Sunday, January 15, 2012.

Hon. Secretary Jagdish Malkani reminded members at the last meeting that since the Club would be in a position to send only about 25 participants, it would be in their interest to register as early as possible for what is now known as the **Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon**.

The requisite application forms were available with the Rotary Secretariat, he added. The forms had to be filled and submitted by October 15.

PP Arvind Jolly gives \$25,000 to Foundation

Yet another Foundation donation of \$25,000 – his seventh annual contribution in a row – has been announced by PP Arvind Jolly.

With this, his giving to The Rotary Foundation Endowment Fund of Rotary International touches the \$175,000 mark.

President Paul George informed members at the last meeting that the generous Arvind had already sent a cheque for the equivalent of \$15,000 and the balance was likely to be received very soon.

Keep it up, Arvind! And may your tribe increase.

Corpus donation for HTEC

President Paul George announced at the last meeting that a corpus donation of Rs. 1 lakh had been received for the Hasanali Tobaccowala Eye Centre at Talwada.

He said that Mrs. Rita Sanghavi, niece of the late Mr. Kantilal Dalal, who was closely attached to the centre, had made the kind-hearted contribution.

Members present at the meeting were generous in their applause for the thoughtful donation made by Mrs. Sanghavi.

Birthday donations

Birthday donations were received from several members during the week gone by.

President Paul George said at the last meeting that while Ram Murti Mehra had sent Rs. 20,000, PP Dr. Zerkis Umrigar had given Rs. 12,000 and Rohit Dhoot Rs. 5,000.

He thanked them for their generosity.

At the last meeting

(Held on October 4, 2011)

PRESIDENT Paul George called the meeting to order and welcomed the guest speaker, the Visiting Rotarians, Rotaryans, guests and others.

BIRTHDAYS

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

ATTENDANCE

Members	117
Visiting Rotarians	3
Rotaryans	3
Total	123
Svc. box collection	Rs. 4,410



Who's common in these two pictures? None other than the popular Sitaram Shah, who is also the Club's Joint Hon. Secretary. In the first picture he is seen with PP Arun Sanghi, Shyamniwas Somani and Kiran Nanda, while in the second he is surrounded by (from left) Anand Dalal, Vikram Daiya, 'Marathon Man' Ashwin Didwania, Manish Reshamwala and Meera Alreja



Lighting a lamp to conquer the darkness. The Sheriff of Bombay, (Dr.) Indu Shahani, lights a lamp to inaugurate the fourth 'Bhavishya-Yaan' centre at the N.M. Joshi Marg Municipal School, Parel. Principal Nanda Traimbakesh welcomes Indu with a shawl and President Paul George with a bouquet



Will you teach me Marathi? asks Indu. And 'Ho!' screams the audience. Indu Shahani spoke in Marathi. At right is President Paul who spoke in Hindi



'Bhavishya-Yaan' Chairman Manoj Patodia and Co-Chair Manish Reshamwala take the mike, explaining salient features of the innovative programme



And this is a special gift for you. PP Arun Sanghi presents a painting to Paul. At right, Paul welcomes Ms Pratibha Pai of H.R. College with a bouquet

FOURTH 'BHAVISHYA-YAAN' CENTRE OPEN

We are going to teach you English. But will you teach me Marathi? Indu Shahani bellowed into the mike. "Ho!" the children roared back. She had posed the question in Marathi. And the children replied in the same language.

That set the scene at the inauguration of the fourth *Bhavishya-Yaan* centre of the Rotary Club of Bombay at the N.M. Joshi Marg Municipal School, Delisle Road, Parel, on Friday, September 23.

In her role as chief guest, (Dr.) Indu Shahani, who is the Sheriff of Bombay, had lit a traditional lamp in the school premises in the presence of over a hundred and fifty cheering children and parents to mark the launch of the centre.

And the roar that she elicited from the gathering showed, among other things, why she is regarded as one of the leading educationists in the city, nay country; for, it is no mean task to connect so quickly with the non-English-speaking children of a Marathi-medium municipal school in Bombay. That Indu and the Rotary Club of Bombay were able to make that connect so rapidly was seen even earlier, when President Paul George took the mike to welcome the gathering and to acknowledge the school Principal, the municipal authorities and the Rotarians, spouses, NGOs and others who had assembled to add another link to the saga of service being rendered by the Club ever since its inception.

Paul, who spoke in Hindi, confessed that he was stumped when the children's welcoming party spoke to him in impeccable English. And there he was, wondering about the language in which he should communicate with them.

The inaugural function saw a variety of cultural items presented by students of the *Bhavishya-Yaan* project conducted by the Club in three other municipal schools (at Worli, Colaba and Byculla). These included an invocation song, a skit and a group dance which featured students of the Colaba centre swaying to a rhythmic patriotic song.

Ms Nanda Traimbakesh, the school's Principal, welcomed Indu as she arrived at the venue and led her and other guests to their seats. The children



Convincing a student and persuading him to attend a 'Bhavishya-Yaan' class. A humorous skit by former students drew loud applause. (Centre) Students of the Colaba school present a colourful group dance. (Right) Mr. Joy Fernandes, an accomplished theatre personality who has been coaching the children

BHAVISHYA-YAAN' CENTRES AT PAREL

chosen for the course were there, but they were so well-behaved that they achieved the feat of being seen but not heard.

Once the gathering settled down, the traditional lamp placed before a pretty painting of the goddess of learning, Saraswati, was lit by all the dignitaries present, Indu, Principal Traimbakesh, President Paul, Ms Rashmi Mishra, the Chairperson of the NGO Vidya, and *Bhavishya-Yaan* Chairman Manoj Patodia.

And then the programme got underway. The invocation was sung by a group of young girls. Paul took the mike and welcomed the gathering, promising on behalf of the Club to do its best for the upliftment of the children. The computers in the special room set aside for the *Bhavishya-Yaan* project would help them to take off to a brighter, better future, he said.

Chairman Manoj Patodia added that attempts would be made to provide the children with other skills and information, too, such as conversational English; seminars and workshops in art by professional artists; introduction to careers and courses; development of self-confidence and poise; and other attempts to enhance their latent talent and skills.

Principal Traimbakesh was not done yet. She offered a *shreephala* (a coconut), bouquets and a shawl to Indu, Paul and Ms Mishra. In a touching gesture, she draped the shawl around Indu's shoulder and then applied vermilion paste on the foreheads of her three special guests.

Paul returned to centre stage, this time to recognise all those who had been associated with the *Bhavishya-Yaan* project since it was launched about three years ago. He offered a carnation each to Ms Neeta Pradhan of Vidya and Ms Pratibha Pai of H.R. College. And then it was the turn of Priyasri Patodia, Freyaz Shroff, Nandita Patodia, Bijal Kara, Ms Aparna Venkatswamy, Mr. Rajesh Shah and Vandana Daga.

A special bouquet was presented to Principal Traimbakesh and all the representatives of the education department of the municipal corporation.



It was a full house. There was no empty chair in the courtyard of the N.M. Joshi Municipal School when the fourth 'Bhavishya-Yaan' centre was inaugurated in the presence of a galaxy of special guests

There followed a skit in which the children talked about the benefits of participating in a *Bhavishya-Yaan* course and convinced a loiterer to join them. It was directed by Mr. Joy Fernandes, an accomplished theatre personality who has been coaching the children as a labour of love.

Ms Rubina Sheikh, a student from the first batch of the first *Bhavishya-Yaan* project at Dr. Ambedkar Municipal School at Worli was the surprise package of the evening. Called to make a brief presentation, she impressed everybody with her erudition and her command over the language.

Such was the confidence that she had gained over the years that she requested Indu Shahani to join her on the stage to sing the popular song *Hum honge kaamyab*. Indu happily obliged her.

The singing was followed by an excellent dance. This was a number put up by students of the Colaba centre who were attired in some brilliantly-coloured traditional clothes. Freyaz shepherded them like her own flock.

PP Arun Sanghi was then requested to present mounted paintings as mementoes to the guests. The works of art had been created by children of the *Bhavishya-Yaan* project at the other schools and were presented, among others, to Indu, Paul and Principal Traimbakesh.

As the formal programme came to an end, *Bhavishya-Yaan* Co-Chair Manish Reshamwala proposed the vote of thanks. He requested the children to pick up a packet of snacks and sweetmeats on their way out.

But the unveiling of plaques at two places remained to be done. Indu was joined by Paul and the others as she unveiled one of these at the entrance of the school and the second one outside the computer classroom. Snacks and cold drinks were served to all the guests.

Among those who were spotted at the inaugural function were IPP Pradeep Saxena, PPs Rajnikant Reshamwala, Arun Sanghi and Nandan Damani, President-Nominee Nirav Shah, Hon. Secretary Jagdish Malkani, Joint Hon. Secretary Sitaram Shah and others.

District Chairman Alok Sekhsaria, Ramesh Narayan (the "brain" behind the project) and many others, including Anand Dalal, Madhusudan Daga, Suresh Jagtiani, Sheila Bulchandani, Preeti Mehta, Dilip Dalal, Damini Kamdar, Devina Shah and Rakhee Reshamwala were also in attendance.

The *Bhavishya-Yaan* Committee has thanked President-Nominee Nirav Shah who donated a TV set and a DVD player to the school at the time of the new centre's inauguration.

The coordinators for this *Bhavishya-Yaan* centre are Rotaryann Vandana Daga, Ms Aparna Venkatswamy and Mr. Rajesh Shah.

Interestingly, both Ms Venkatswamy and Mr. Shah, having learnt of the work being done under the *Bhavishya-Yaan* project, had made a special request to the Committee to give them an opportunity to serve as Coordinators at this centre.

That's what is called the spirit of service. Clearly, this is another feather in the cap of the Rotary Club of Bombay.

Chitra Palekar was shocked at her own hypocrisy; she couldn't admit that her daughter's 'friend' was actually her 'partner'

(Continued from Page 2)

"Amma," her daughter had said, "it's natural; I can show proof, I can show you articles, doctors' views. It's not a mental disease, it's not something for which you have to be given shock treatment, it's not a physical disease, it's just that it's different... it's like being left-handed, you don't beat your children and tell them to eat with their right hand."

The mother realised that it was as natural as someone having brown eyes, others having blue eyes and still others grey eyes. She knew that her daughter was going to become an academic and an extremely rational person; in fact, she was already showing it... and she needed no further reassurance because she believed that her daughter was living proof that she was all right.

"And later I read about a priest say when his son told him that he was gay, 'Oh, if my son is gay, then being gay is okay'."

Before going abroad, Shalmalee talked to all her friends, relatives and those whom she considered close. As far as the people that really mattered were concerned, they had no problem with her not being a heterosexual.

Her mother thought that that was the end of the problem and everything would be hunky-dory. Life went on and she started writing a script on the experience; but she soon realised that no one wrote scripts for catharsis, so she dropped it.

But she was in for another surprise. When she returned, Shalmalee stayed with her and started teaching at Sophia College and at St. Xavier's. But she had brought along her partner, a woman named Christine, and they were a couple. The mother then became aware of many things that she had never thought about before.

The people who knew, those who were close and who had accepted her, they accepted Christine immediately; but few people talked about her; they treated her as a member of the family and "I always gave a justification – do we talk about our heterosexual children's sexuality with everybody? We don't. So why should we discuss this?" But she knew that that wasn't entirely true.

"I started realising that I was nervous... nervous about talking to outsiders. I was shocked once more – at my own hypocrisy, especially when we went out and people said, 'Oh, is this Sha-

October 11 to October 17, 2011

Imalee's friend? Has she come with you?" And I would say 'Yes', and I would never correct them. I, who was always known for my frankness, I would always keep quiet. She was not Shalmalee's friend, she was her partner.

"And soon, when people started asking about her marriage, I would reply that she didn't want to get married. Later, when I got divorced, they again said, why isn't she getting married? So, depending upon the people, depending upon the circumstances, I would just crack jokes.

"But I realised how unauthentic it all was, how false I was... And that awareness started suffocating me... my conscience kept pinching me. It wasn't fair... my close friends and others would talk about their children's fiancés, boyfriends and girl friends and so on... I also wanted to say something about Shalmalee and her wonderful life. But..."

Therefore, the mother went back to her daughter and told her that she could not handle it any longer. Would she mind if her mother started talking about her "partner"? No, she wouldn't mind, said Shalmalee.

She had grown up by that time and reassured her mother that in many parts of the world, "partners" were invited even on formal occasions, such as Rotary meetings. In Australia, if two persons lived together for two years, they were treated as a couple and each was given the rights of a spouse, including life and medical insurance and so on.

Ms Palekar said that once she felt reassured and confident, she started talking more freely. At first she chose

those who were close to her so that they would understand what she was saying. For, all said and done, she was a mother and still felt protective about Shalmalee and her feelings.

Slowly, she started mixing with people who were agitated over the label of criminality on homosexuals and had signed a petition addressed to the Supreme Court pleading that the Delhi High Court order be upheld. She had seen children going through some really difficult times.

She also talked to psychiatrists to reconfirm what she had already read and so that when she talked to people, she could do so with confidence. She talked to parents and had even started answering queries confidentially on a website, queer-inc.com.

"I end by making an appeal to you... please don't take it for granted that your children, or your grandchildren, are heterosexual because anyone can be homosexual. Just as we realise that a child is a leftie (a left-hander) when he starts writing or picking things with the left hand, in the same way, this (homosexuality) usually happens around puberty. Before that they are children and they don't really know. It's not their fault, it's natural. Medical experiments being conducted now show that this is formulated in the womb itself.

"Secondly, I want to say that when people are successful, they must come out if they are gay or lesbians. There is no point in living a false life. And if you're a parent, then you must also come out and accept it. Of course, this is not a dictatorship; anyone can do what they want.



With the woman of courage, steely determination and fortitude. From left in this photograph taken at the last meeting are Dolly Thakore, Ms Chitra Palekar, Rotaryans Pervin Jehangir and Bijal Kara and the Interact Coordinator, Mrs. Cymbeline Pereira

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"But when we accept it, our children flower and are happy – and that's what we all want, isn't it? And if we don't, then they are really miserable and a lot of things happen that we read in the newspapers," she concluded.

Dr. Shailesh Raina congratulated Ms Palekar for speaking from the heart. The part he had liked most was that she was shocked by her own hypocrisy. "I think this is what the country needs in all spheres of life. The moment we are all shocked by our own hypocrisy, that's when things are going to improve."

But what was the right time to start tackling the issue? Was sex education in schools the answer?

Ms Palekar said she was touched by the positive response she had evoked in the audience.

And yes, she sincerely believed that people were too hypocritical in matters of sex and that that led to a lot of problems for heterosexuals as well as for homosexuals. Therefore, the best course was to start sex education at school. Most schools had counsellors, but...

She recalled that during a debate on the subject on a national television programme, a school principal said, "Actually, it's the parents' responsibility and not of the school; we cannot do it". At which stage a girl in the audience said that children could not speak about these things with their parents and so needed to talk to counsellors.

"I believe that that's right, because maybe the parents are too involved, or are dreaming of their grandchildren, great grandchildren and what not... I don't blame them, it's natural. But a counsellor, the school teachers, the principal, if they do it..."

"There are some wonderful documentary films that show what happens to children and how they are bullied if they are slightly different or suspected to be different.

"The prejudice should go at the school level itself. Sex is natural, isn't it? If you hide it, it doesn't mean that it goes away, it comes out in many forms. If that is done, then it will help to remove prejudice from the society," Ms Palekar added.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Alok Sekhsaria but not before President Paul George thanked the speaker for sharing her personal, intimate and emotional journey with the members.

Page 6

Register now for the R.I. Convention in May, 2012

Hon. Secretary Jagdish Malkani informed members at the last meeting that Fellowship Chairperson Shernaz Vakil had worked out two interesting packages for members in association with a reputed travel agent to help them attend the next Rotary International Convention in Bangkok, Thailand, from May 6 to 9, 2012.

Members have been requested to get in touch with Shernaz Vakil for group bookings, hotel accommodation, Convention registration and other formalities.

President Paul George has expressed the hope that a large number of Club members would attend the R.I. Convention to be held in Bangkok.

'Oberoi Melting Pot' on October 16

Hon. Secretary Jagdish Malkani reminded members at the last meeting about the forthcoming international cultural programme, the "Oberoi Melting Pot". The 14th edition of the event would be held in the Regal Room of The Trident Hotel from 6 pm on Sunday, October 16.

This popular fund-raising programme, he said, was organised every year by the diplomatic community based in Bombay in association with the Oberoi Group of Hotels and the Rotary Club of Bombay. It featured an assortment of food, drinks, music, dance and a few other forms of entertainment from 25 countries having their diplomatic offices in the city. It was a unique opportunity for fellowship and the proceeds from the event were earmarked for a noble cause.

Jagdish said that the donor cards were priced at Rs. 3,500 each and were available at the Rotary Secretariat.

Members will recall that PP Gul Kripalani has been handling the "Oberoi Melting Pot" for several years with great zeal and enthusiasm. He has repeatedly appealed to members to participate in the event with their usual fervour and to contribute to a noble cause.

This year, the proceeds would be donated to three charities, viz., the Cancer Patients' Aid Association, an NGO called Pratham and to the Salaam Balak Trust. All three organisations were doing outstanding work in the city of Bombay.

President Paul George also requested members to participate in the "Oberoi Melting Pot" in large numbers and to extend their whole-hearted support to this unique fund-raising drive.

October 11 to October 17, 2011

Bharda New Interactors complete three projects

Members of the Interact Club of Bharda New High School undertook three important activities during September which is designated "Youth Month" by Rotary.

These included a talk on recycling and protecting the environment; a visit to a home for the aged; and a cleanliness drive.

Mr. Dominic, a representative of Vishwas, an NGO working for a greener environment, made an interesting presentation on September 12, showing how recycled paper could be used for various purposes such as manufacturing notebooks and paper honeycombs which were a good substitute for thermocol sheets. He also showed how dried tobacco leaves were used for making plates.

Stressing that the above activities could be a good source of employment for people in rural areas, he revealed that his organisation had been collecting used paper from cities and sending it to villages for conversion into other products.

Giving more information about environment protection activities, Mr. Dominic said that a recent drive at Banganga involved disposal of garbage and another tackled landfills at Deonar. The audio-visual presentation helped create awareness and inspired the Interactors to take up such activities.

Mr. Dominic also revealed that various companies had installed machinery to extract solar energy so that they reduced their consumption of electricity from conventional sources. An intriguing piece of machinery was a compact refrigerator manufactured in Gujarat State that did not run on electricity and yet kept fruits, vegetables and milk fresh for a long time.

The Interactors were so inspired that they pledged to take up the activity of recycling paper. They promised to give away used notebooks and newspapers to Vishwas which would recycle these into notebooks to be donated to a school of their choice in a rural area.



Sweeping the surroundings clean. Members of the Interact Club of Bharda New High School take part in a cleanliness drive outside the school premises and near Capitol cinema at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (earlier VT)

We are with you, both today and tomorrow. President Hammad Bhoira and members of the Interact Club of Bharda New High School snapped with some of the residents of the Our Lady of Piety Home for the Aged at Vijaywadi



In fact, the drive started the very next day and before long a huge quantity of used notebooks and old newspapers was collected. These would be handed over to Vishwas in course of time.

A few days later, the Interactors of Bharda New High School, led by President Hammad Bhoira, visited the Our Lady of Piety Home for the Aged at Vijaywadi near Chami Road.

While interacting with them, they learnt a lot about the residents; among these was the fact that they had been living there for over ten years and that they did their own cooking.

Next, they switched on some tune-fol melodies and presented a few group dances to the delight of the senior residents of the home.

A few simple games that would not cause too much exertion to the elders were then suggested; the latter chose "passing the parcel" and happily played along with the Interactors. Token prizes were given to the winners of this game.

But the Interactors were not done yet. They requested the seniors to step forward and to give a performance, whether a song or a dance. A few of them stepped forward to sing, choosing a ditty of their choice. One of these was the popular Konkani song, *Hi pori konachi?*

Those who had not taken part in the programme so far, also rose to their feet and joined the revelry, dancing along with the Interactors to some of the popular film songs of the day. The music was stopped when it was felt that the residents were fatigued.

Refreshments were served and a gift hamper containing hair oil, soap, toothpaste and so on presented to every one of them. The Interactors left with fond memories of the visit.

On September 27, the Interactors took part in a cleanliness drive outside their school and in the area around Capitol cinema at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (earlier VT).

They swept the pavement, kept garbage bins at strategic places and placed potted plants – which had been planted by them as an Interact activity during the last Rotary year – in order to beautify the area.

The potted plants were watered after school hours every day, in the hope that they would survive and grow into sturdy, shade-giving trees and thus inspire the citizens of Bombay to keep the city clean and green.

Banners exhorting citizens to keep the environment and their surroundings clean, to conserve electricity, to plant more trees and to stop pollution were also put up. A few placards requesting passersby not to litter the area were displayed.

ROTARY CLUB OF BOMBAY

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Slumber Kits	PP Rajnikant Reshamwala

Quality is the driving force for Dr. Girdhar Gyani

Dr. Girdhar J. Gyani, who will address the next meeting of the Club on October 11 on the subject "Driving quality for national well-being", is a recipient of the Rotary Centenary Award in 2004 for Excellence in the field of Quality.

Holding a Master's degree in engineering and a Ph.D. in quality, he has served at various sensitive research and development organisations. He started his career as a lecturer at the Dayalbagh Engineering College (1970-75). Later, he joined the DRDO of the Institute of Armament Technology as scientist/lecturer; and the DRDO of Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL).

At HAL, he worked on the airworthiness assessment and quality certification at the design stage of military aircraft. He worked on modifications that enhanced the operational capability of different variants of the MIG series of planes.

From 1990 to 1993, he served the Standardisation, Testing and Quality Certification Directorate (of the Department of Information Technology, Government of India) as Director of its test and calibration laboratory.

He rose to become the Founder-Director of the Indian Institute of Quality Management (1993 to 2003).

As a consultant, he helped a large number of industries, both in manufacturing as well as in the services sector, covering different facets of TQM such as business excellence models, benchmarking, re-engineering, balance score card, quality management systems and statistical tools.

He developed and introduced indigenous courses such as those for certified quality engineer and certified quality manager. He has also trained a large number of participants from industry, including many from abroad, and a number of scientists as laboratory assessors.

Dr. Gyani is credited with designing and launching the country's first M.S. programme in Quality Management which has been adapted by the premier university, BITS Pilani. He has also developed a diploma programme on industrial quality for the Mauritian Quality Institute. In 2003, he took office as Secretary-General, Quality Council of India (the apex quality body of the country).

Happy Birthday



Homi Katgara
October 11



Dr. Asad Karim Khan
October 12



Farokh Guzder
October 13



Pashupati Advani
October 15



PP Dr. Rumi Jehangir
October 17

Spouses/Rotaryanns

Vandana Kanoria
October 16
Dolly Nanavati
October 17
Hemlata Saksena
October 17

Service Above Self



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