

BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF BOMBAY



From the President's Desk



I have had an opportunity to work with a lot of young people. Young minds are full of ideas. When they come together, they bring strong opinions to the table and are ready to face even the most difficult of all challenges. With the massive reach of social media, our youth have the power to speak their mind fearlessly. They are impatient and critical. They

want to see a quick transformation in society and in their lives. The restlessness of youth brings to the fore a rebellious streak against the establishment. We therefore need to engage our youth at every level.

India has more than 50 per cent of its population below the age of 25 and more than 65 per cent below the age of 35. However, a majority of the young population in India has inadequate access to quality education and healthcare.

Only 10 per cent of students have access to higher education in India and just 2 per cent of the rural population is educated beyond higher secondary level. The Rotary Club of Bombay through its initiatives like Bhavishya Yaan and night study centers is providing an opportunity to many underprivileged students to get quality education.

Around 50 per cent people in India travel at least 5 kilometers to access a healthcare center. Therefore, projects of the Rotary Club of Bombay like Rotary Cotton Green diagnostic center, IWA clinic, Ajit Deshpande Medical Center and Hasanali Tobaccowala Eye Center play an important role in making healthcare accessible to the young and underprivileged.

Unemployment is another serious issue crippling the development of this country. There are around 1.78 crore unemployed people in India. Providing students vocational skill training can be an effective tool in reducing unemployment. Emphasis on skilled based education may provide a skillful workforce not only for many existing jobs but for new jobs as well. RCB in association with YMCA is providing such vocational skill based training to around 40,000 students, thereby preparing them for the future.

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Empowering Women Breaking the Cycle of Poverty with Dr. Asavari Herwadkar



On Tuesday 13th June, the weekly meeting began with more excitement than usual. As a group of unassuming, young girls approached the familiar stage, the audience wondered what kind of business these youngsters - who must have been at least a third of their own age - had at one of the most esteemed meetings in the city.

Today's Speaker

Varun Gandhi : The Path to Political Reform: From Revolution to Evolution



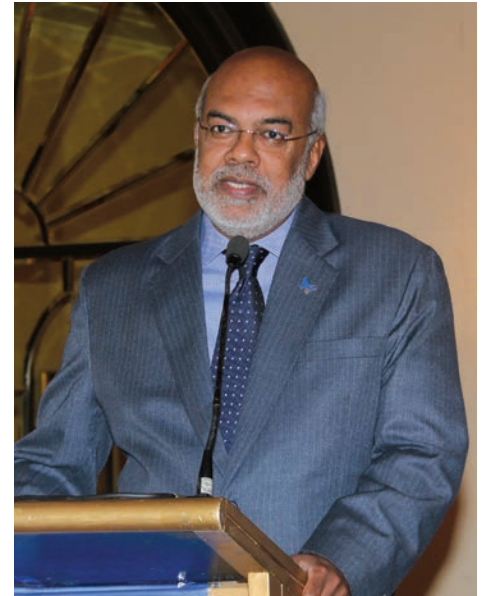
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When it was announced that the group was a collection of students who had spent the last few months studying hard and learning at the RCB's Vocational Training Centres, the audience eagerly awaited to see the fruits of their donations bloom before their eyes. A comical yet touching skit followed, with a theme that seemed fitting with the upcoming speaker's topic of choice: women empowerment. As an issue that our Rotarians care deeply about, it was fascinating to observe what was only once known as a distant fact, finally come to life through performance.

After the well-received skit, Dr. Asavari Herwadkar graced the podium. A director at the Ojus Medical Institute by profession, she took to Mumbai's slums to improve maternal health and medical awareness through a foundation called 'Damini,' for which she was presented the prestigious Anita Parekh Award for Women Empowerment. Once she thanked the Rotarians and dignitaries present, she began with a few fundamental truths, most strikingly that "no woman should die without getting a single opportunity in her life; no woman should be deprived



of the empowerment that she deserves."

Then, she highlighted the alarming challenges that faced, slum-dwelling women, and more importantly, first-time mothers in these poverty-stricken areas. "Since the proceedings of this event, five women have died in our country, due to complications in pregnancy and childbirth... That means 45,000 dead mothers everyday," she stated.

She continued with a few more statistics that drastically grew in seriousness. The audience, stunned when confronted with the gravity of the situation, sat shocked. One could assume that their thoughts in the moment would have been unanimous, echoing in unison: how do we solve this grave problem plaguing our societies?

"These figures are huge aren't they?" She questioned, "Something difficult to comprehend by human terms." As she once again highlighted the concerns that run rampant right in front of our doorsteps, such as anaemia, malnourishment, female foeticide, and asymmetrical access to medical information, a common underlying cause quickly became





clear - "Discrimination; The women and children in our slum areas face neglect and bigotry."

"Such attitudes tolerate the inadequacies in overall female healthcare," she explained. "India," she said, "is currently 131st, out of a total 180 countries when comparing standards of gender equality. Therefore, it is not just the government, but we too have to put in an effort to add it in the top fifteen," she claimed.

Finally paralleling the audience's concerns, she asked, "What can we do to reach there?"

Many Rotarians may have had their own answers, but Dr. Herwadkar noted "a simple point is knowledge. If one can access

knowledge, they will not be far from empowerment."

For example, though the Indian government has put in an "equitable effort" to plan schemes for the benefit of women, such as twenty six weeks of maternity leave and a six thousand rupee pay-out for maternal healthcare, it is often difficult for women, and mothers in specific, to access this data. "It is this lack of information and awareness that is not lifting them from the baggage of poverty," she stated.

She then narrated the story of Sindhu, a slum-dweller turned community health-worker, who was trained by Damini in basic maternal healthcare. Once a shy and reserved individual, she is now a "bold and confident" woman, who helps her peers achieve the same attitude towards life through door-to-door information provision. Sindhu has helped hundreds of mothers birth children across her community, and continues to be the "eyes, ears, and voice"

of government-provided health services.

"By providing skills training along with formal education, and utilising the opportunities around them," Dr. Herwadkar has been able to change the lives of numerous women around the city.

But she claims that once needs-based skills training sessions have been completed, digitisation should be the next step forward. "More than 65% of people in slums have smartphones," she noted. "If only we could educate communities, and teach how to use technology, they could then pass on the information to their native peers."

As plans for a Damini app move ahead in the pipeline, she called for everyone to help break the "desperate poverty cycle" that continues to be perpetuated today. "By just simply giving them information to access healthcare," we can terminate the cycle - instead of pregnancies.

Ending her speech, Dr. Herwadkar called for everyone to "make our world a better place for our women, for everyone." She stated, "Empowerment is to increase the level of autonomy and self-determination, so let's all move forward towards empowerment, and take everyone along with us."



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Email : rotaryclubbombay1@gmail.com

NEXT WEEK'S MEETING

Friday, 30th June, 2017

Installation Meeting of Rtn. Ramesh Narayan with Chief Guest Rtn. Prafull Sharma.
Meeting will commence at 6:30 pm at the Taj Mahal Ballroom.



President Dr. Mukesh Batra

and the Board of Directors of the Rotary Club of Bombay
request the pleasure of your company at the
Installation Ceremony of Incoming President

Ramesh Narayan and his team (2017-18)

on Friday, 30th June 2017 at 6.30 p.m.
at the Crystal Room of the Taj Mahal Hotel
Apollo Bunder, Mumbai

DG Rtn. Prafull Sharma will be the Chief Guest.

Programme: 6.30 p.m. Fellowship | 7.15 p.m. Meeting commences

8.30 p.m. Fellowship & Music | 9.00 p.m. Dinner

Dress Formal

Contribution for Members' guest: Rs. 4000/- per head

RSVP Rashmi Kottan - Phone 2288 2495



Birthdays & Anniversary Greetings



Rtn. Sudarshan Chokhane
22nd June



Rtn. Raj Ajmera
23rd June



Rtn. Vandan Shah
23rd June



Rtn. Dr. Rajeev Narvekar
24th June



Rtn. Ajai Kumar
26th June



Rtn. Karl Divecha
26th June



Rtn. Ashok Chinai
28th June

Partners

21st June - Ptn. Gopi Vaid
22nd June - Ptn. Neeta Kapadia
Ptn. Panchali Rakshit
24th June - Ptn. Amita Sheth
25th June - Ptn. Shirin Katgara
26th June - Ptn. Manek Guzder
28th June - Ptn. Brinda Somaya
29th June - Ptn. Sudha Mahindra

Anniversaries

20th June - Rtn. Ramesh & Ptn. Devi Narayan
21st June - Rtn. Sudarshan & Ptn. Renu Chokhane
26th June - Rtn. Vikram & Ptn. Gauri Daiya
Rtn. Sushil & Ptn. Rekha Jalan

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Ph: 23705200 / 01 / 02 / 03.

Email: indigopress@gmail.com.

Statistics for last week's meeting

Rotary Club Bombay Members	94
Partners	03
Visiting Rotarians	03
Guests	01
Rotractors	07
Total attendance	108
Community Service Box Collection	₹ 500/-