

# the gateway

Rotary Club  
of Bombay



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## TODAY

**SOCIAL ACTIVIST  
DURGA GUDILU,  
RECIPIENT OF THE UMA  
JAIN YOUNG ACHIEVER  
AWARD AND IMTIAZ  
ANEES, EQUESTRIAN &  
EDUCATOR**

**AT C.K. NAYUDU  
HALL, CCI, AT 1 PM**

**& ON ZOOM AT 1.45 PM  
MEETING ID: 883 2518 8279**

## NOTE FROM PRESIDENT SHERNAZ VAKIL



### BECAUSE WE ARE RCB

Last week, as we left the Mokhada fields and watched the grateful farmers and their families wave goodbye, it occurred to me that it was so easy to actually transform their lives; so why could we not do more?

Every Rotarian could feel the joy of impacting and improving the life and livelihood of a single family.

So, why not have a model RCB village totally invested in by our Rotarians where each of us could feel we had participated in this life-altering change?

A quick back-of-the-envelope calculation showed that just Rs. 25,000 invested by each member would give us what we needed to start the process.

And, as I pitched the idea to our Environment team, each one said they would love to participate. And the ideas kept coming: a medical centre, a special school... Project Chirag confirmed they would identify a needy village and complete the transformation of providing water and light and whatever else was needed to impact the farmers lives and livelihoods.

And they would complete it by our Founder's Day in March, when we could inaugurate the project.

Our driver put it aptly when he said: "The farmers bless you all; you have done what the Government could not do all these years."

So, PP Ramesh Narayan threw it all together and we got the blessings of both the Board and the Trustees soon after. Trustee PP Arun Sanghi said he would be the first investor at Rs 1 lakh. We would have a meeting early January to ask our members how they felt about improving the lives of our forgotten rural folk and providing equity or even sweat equity towards the project.

Nothing comes close to the joy you feel when you can impact the life of another even in the smallest way.

Let's be part of this transformation and support rural India one village at a time!

**~ President Shernaz Vakil**

# NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES ASK RCB FOR HELP



30. LAST  
11. TUESDAY'S  
21. SPEAKER

AN EVENING WITH DR. SHASHI THAROOR,  
AUTHOR, POLITICIAN, AND FORMER  
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANT



When I was Chairman of Parliament's External Affairs Ministry, the position from which I was defenestrated after five years in 2019, I always proudly articulated our tradition, that political differences stop at the water's edge. That **there isn't a Congress foreign policy or BJP foreign policy, only an Indian foreign policy and Indian national interest.**

Although, I think the BJP undermined this principle by abandoning the permanent convention under which the committee was always chaired by Member of Parliament from the Opposition by deciding to replace me with the BJP MP, I still hold to this conviction even though there are aspects of Modi-governed foreign policy in the last six years that are not easy for many to swallow as Indians, rather, as his and the BJP's foreign policy report has largely been a tale of much activity and few results. But that is a different topic, and we can get to that if interested.

You asked me to speak about India's image in the world today. India's stature in the world has never been lower. It gives me no joy to say this. Even as an Opposition MP **I would like my country to be held in high regard globally as a thriving democracy and as an example to the world how to manage diversity in a free and open society.**

Instead, I knew that for some time now the world is troubled by the image of an India that it is seemed increasingly bigoted and intolerant, one that is wilfully driving sectarian wedges between its people particularly as I said with one minority and being overtaken by intolerant majoritarianism that has no appeal to the world outside.

Every major newspaper abroad whether on the right like *The Wall Street Journal* or *The Financial Times* or on the left like *The Guardian* or *Washington Post* has published critical editorial about India in the last couple of years. And the drumbeat of daily reporting as well as the columns is relentlessly negative about India.

**India, as I have often said, derives a lot of strength from its soft power from being seen as an attractive country in the world, a country that countries admire.**

I still remember travelling through the Gulf countries as a UN official in 2004 and seeing the astonishment and admiration of the Arab Ministers, the officials I was meeting, at the site of an election being won by a party headed by a woman political leader of Italian descent and Roman-catholic faith, who then made way for a Sikh to be sworn in as Prime Minister by Muslim President in a country with 80% Hindu. I was able to say to them that this is not India trying to impress the world, this is just the way India is. That sort of admiration that we got, the soft power we gained from that kind of celebration of diversity is lost to us today.

**I have often said that India needs to strike a balance between its hard power and soft power because it is not the country with a bigger army that wins anymore but it is the country that tells that better story.** At the moment, the story that Mr. Modi and his colleagues in the Government are pitching to the world looks less and less convincing with every passing path. *Rotarians question Dr. Shashi Tharoor, on the next page*

30. LAST  
11. TUESDAY'S  
21. SPEAKER

DR. SHASHI THAROOR, AUTHOR, POLITICIAN,  
AND FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANT,  
INTERACTED WITH RCB MEMBERS ON  
DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



**ROTARIANS ASK:** Last weekend our Club visited three villages that we supported by providing light and water through solar lamps. The farmers told us, jo sarkaar nahi kar paaya woh aap log ne kiya. So, what has happened, why are our villages forgotten? Why are we not able to lift them up?

Rural areas are where the votes are and logically that is where you have to devote your resources. I come from Kerala where villages are given special attention from governments of all parties and as a result there is a very less visible difference in the standard of living between the villages and cities. I have actually seen this because my parents come from villages. I have been able to see transformations in rural India. But I accept the proposition that you just advanced; there are many parts in India where the villages are neglected and it partially maybe the perception that because the villagers are less educated and less demanding that the politicians feel a lesser obligation to satisfy their wants. It may partially be that **we may have a bias in our politics to be keeping people poor and building hoax in the name of their poverty** rather than delivering services to them that could make them aspirational. That is changing but that may be part of our historical legacy and there is finally, of course, the cynical argument that one hears from people that politicians are all for corruption and the tax payers' money is not reaching the beneficiaries. All these reasons are partially true.

**ROTARIANS ASK:** It just makes sense that instead of running around in rallies and the money spent on election times, if the same money is spent to bring up the village, they will 100% vote for you.

Quite possibly. In Kerala, I am proud to say that my majority has come from the rural parts of my constituency which I have paid a lot of attention to.

**ROTARIANS ASK:** Why has the relationship between PM Modi and President Xi Jinping unravelled so spectacularly that we now have a hostile boundary between India and China for first time since the 1962 War?

There are no good answers to this question. In all fairness to Mr. Modi, he started off with Chinese relationships; it is the country that he visited three times as CM of Gujarat, he may even had some illusions about China's willingness to be friendly with India, so he actually invited President Xi Jinping very early in his tenure and gave him a lavish welcome in Ahmedabad. And, as we know, promises were made of billions of dollars in 2014 but they were never received. Not only was that amount watered down but there was an embarrassing sight over there of impressions by the PLA audaciously while Xi was on Indian soil. So, I think it is difficult to blame Mr. Modi or the Indian Government for this.

I think the Chinese clearly had begun a more assertive phase in their policies in the overall

# 30. LAST 11. TUESDAY'S 21. SPEAKER

## DR. SHASHI THAROOR, AUTHOR, POLITICIAN, AND FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANT, INTERACTED WITH RCB MEMBERS ON DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



region, they had been quite aggressive to many of their neighbours and tough on their domestic areas. So, we have not done very well on our end of the bargain either because of the mismanagement of the military stand-off in 2017 where, unfortunately, the Chinese consolidated their presence in the Himalayan Plateau that overlooked our Siliguri corridor but also as a position to use that part to attack India in the event of war. Then we, of course, have the ongoing Chinese encroachments across the LAC, deaths of 20 Indian soldiers. So, have we failed to safeguard the bilateral relationship, I am afraid we really have to say that. Because in his election campaigns in 2014, Mr. Modi had constantly berated the GOI for not being to do anything about the Chinese incursions on the frontier. Two years later not only has he the same failure but also has unfortunately misrepresented the nation by claiming that there were no Chinese incursions. This has not been a good example. In hindsight, it was made clear that the Congress had actually managed to preserve a working agreement with the Chinese which has now collapsed sadly. I still would blame China for this state of India, so, China's actions have not been friendly at the same time we have not shown any great aptitude in dealing with them effectively and denial is no answer at all.

Now, the Foreign Minister is saying that there is a problem and the Chinese will have to look at the consequences of their actions unless they reverse them and the Chinese

are showing no signs of reversing them. So,

**I see a rather sinister process by the Chinese where they are undertaking minor military incursions in order to create small-scale military setbacks in India:**

take a few square kilometres of territory from here and there, from locals for tactical purposes, then declare peace, both sides will announce mutual disengagement, but the Chinese will not withdraw; the Chinese will always end in a better position than the time it began. That is what's been happening and that is what is going to happen next time. With several episodes as such, none of the episodes will get out of hand totally. China will consolidate the LAC where it wants it so, that it is more in its favour. That is their long-term plan. The Chinese always say that the border should be left to the future generations to settle; this increases China's relative economic military and geo-political strength vis-a-vis India. So, all these instances are keeping India off-balance presently.

**ROTARIANS ASK: How India is going to meet China's threat, particularly when China has become more powerful than USA; Afghanistan is ruled by Taliban, where should India go from here?**

We are not in a good place with China. So, when talking objectively about taking the country forward, it seems to me that we would need a mixture of fairly tough and uncompromising stands on India's side on things that are non-negotiable for us.

# Committee News



Members shared that they felt like they were artists and liked the experience of being able to perform live on a stage.

**Noteworthy event for AY:** The Rotary Club of Bombay, in association with Dignity Foundation, organised a musical event for our Ananda Yaan centres on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021. V.G. Abraham and Minakshi Adsule, volunteers from Entertainment for Senior Citizens, conducted live performances for our Dr. E Moses Road and Byculla centres.

As it was live, members were able to request the singers, V.G. Abraham and Minakshi Adsule, to sing their favourite songs. Seniors also had fun joining in on the microphone at times and during the chorus at others. They shared that they felt like artists and liked the experience of performing live on a stage. Old songs of Kishor Kumar, Kumar Sanu, Asha Bhosale, and Lata Mangeshkar drew in waves of nostalgia as everyone enjoyed themselves.

**Rotary**  
Club of Bombay



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the festive fellowship!*

**DECEMBER 17TH**

**7.30 PM**

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# ROTARIAN BIRTHDAYS



DECEMBER 7  
Rtn. Abhinav  
Aggarwal



DECEMBER 9  
Rtn. Huzaifah  
Bagasrawala



DECEMBER 9  
Rtn. Tara  
Deshpande



DECEMBER 10  
PP Vikram  
Kamdar



DECEMBER 12  
Rtn. Hiranmay  
Biswas



DECEMBER 12  
Rtn. Nanik  
Rupani



## ROTARIAN PARTNER BIRTHDAYS

DECEMBER 8  
Rtn. Ptn. Rakhee Reshamwala

DECEMBER 9  
Rtn. Ptn. Subhabrata Basu

DECEMBER 10  
Rtn. Ptn. Shreelekha Damani

DECEMBER 10  
Rtn. Ptn. Niti Desai

DECEMBER 10  
Rtn. Ptn. Shailaja Mogul



## ANNIVERSARIES



DECEMBER 7: Rtn. Ptn. Amita & PP Shailesh Haribhakti

DECEMBER 8: Rtn. Ptn. Rekha & Ravindrakumar Ruia

DECEMBER 9: Rtn. Ptn. Miloni & Rtn. Mehul Sampat

DECEMBER 9: Rtn. Ptn. Akshay & Rtn. Ujjwala Singhania

DECEMBER 11: Rtn. Ptn. Khorshed & Rtn. Nanu Daruvala

DECEMBER 11: Rtn. Ptn. Honey & Rtn. Anil Harish

DECEMBER 12: Rtn. Ptn. Sarmistha & Rtn. Pravinchandra Bhansali

DECEMBER 12: Rtn. Ptn. Kanan & Rtn. Ravindra Fotedar

DECEMBER 12: Rtn. Ptn. Divyaa & Rtn. Mayank Kummar

DECEMBER 12: Rtn. Ptn. Poonam & Rtn. Ajit Surana

DECEMBER 13: Rtn. Ptn. Sudesh & Rtn. Ramesh Dhir

DECEMBER 13: Rtn. Ptn. Kusum & Rtn. Chandra Singh Lodha

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