

# THE GATEWAY



**Rotary Club  
of Bombay**



Volume 65  
Issue No.32  
March 12, 2024  
For private  
circulation

Bulletin of the Rotary Club of Bombay  
<http://rotaryclubofbombay.org/>



## **Vaishali Shadangule, designer and founder of the label Vaishali S, recipient of the Uma Jain Award for Young Woman Achiever**

Thank you for this honour; I'm particularly happy because this is happening close to Women's Day and we all know it's not easy when you come from a humble background.

I would like to share my story. I feel it's not just my story, I think it's the story of every little girl or woman who comes from a small village or town. So, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1996, I left my house in the middle of the night, around 3 am, without thinking, without planning, without money. Just one pair of clothes, following my little voice. No plans: I never thought I wanted to become something or do something really big. Just that call was there, and I left.

I started running towards the station in the middle of the night in a place where I had not been allowed to step out after 6.30 pm; I was not allowed to speak; I was not allowed to express my feelings and I

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Rotary  
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hardly spoke any language. All the conversations were happening only inside me. I went to the station that day and I jumped on the first train which happened to land in big city of Bhopal.

Bhopal was really big for me because I did not have exposure to any city. I was clueless about what to do but determined to finish my education in order to explore the world. I knew that if I finished my graduation, I would be able to do something good. I started with random small jobs; I remember my first was just for Rs 500 and all I wanted was to complete my studies.

I did whatever I could do that time, all random jobs, and I managed to finish my graduation. But it was not that easy. We Indians like to think that if you become an engineer or doctor you have arrived, but I soon realised that that was not my cup of tea. Engineering is not me and I can't do anything with engineering.

While I was working in these offices, I realised that I used to style people without knowing I was heading towards fashion or design. I did not have any exposure of fashion or design or fabric, anything, but I loved it. Meanwhile, I met someone, and she told me I should learn fashion.



I asked, what is this fashion? So, she took me to a fashion institute and introduced me to its owner. I said I wanted to do designing. Of course, he said yes, but I had to leave the place in a few days because I did not have money to complete my course. But that was the turning point; I had stumbled upon fashion, and I realised this is it, I love it, and I want to make it happen. I'm talking about '96-'97 in Bhopal where fashion was not at all a subject, you know. But again, my little voice, I followed my call and I said, I want to do fashion.

Cutting it short, I landed in Mumbai in '99 and I began working as a fashion designer in an export house. That was the start in Mumbai. But soon I had an accident and I hurt my back very badly and six months later, I was in bed and I lost my job, again back to zero. But I never gave up. After six months, I got a new job in a gym, as a gym instructor. I felt, oh my God, I was doing fashion, how would I manage gym, but again, that little voice said, let's do it.

So, for my survival, I did that gym instructor job but I used to take my portfolios, my designs to the gym and I used to ask everyone, saying, this is my passion and I really want to do something in fashion. Then I met a bank manager's wife who loved my work and she suggested that I take a loan. I said, I don't have any support, anything, who will give me a loan? She said she would help me and she helped me take that Rs 50,000 loan in 2001.

With that loan, I opened a very, very small boutique in Malad suburbs, which was just 100 square feet, but that was a good start. And without knowing fashion, not being a trained designer, it was not easy for a 19-year-old girl to run that boutique. But I learned a lot. From that one store, I started one, two, three and the fourth one was a really big one in Juhu where 60 people were working for me and everything was good. I was earning well.

But again, that little voice said I wanted to study fashion and people said you are mad. Everything is going so well; 60 people working with you; you have a huge store; you are doing what you wanted to do. But I felt I was missing something somewhere and I was confused and again I followed my little voice and I enrolled for post-graduation in fashion in Delhi.

While I was working full-time in Mumbai, my full-time course was in Delhi. So, I used to travel. I did my studies in Delhi from Monday to Friday, and, of course, handling my business in Mumbai on weekends. I wanted to study but that did not mean my workers should suffer. So, that responsibility was there but again I managed, and I did it.

After that, I went for my Master's in Milan. But it was just a small thing and then, of course, when I started my first boutique, the question was how to go about it. I was not aware of anything, which fabric I should start working with... I remembered that my mother used to wear chanderi and Chanderi is a village very close to my hometown.

That was the introduction of hand-woven fabrics for me and that's how I stumbled upon weavers.

My encounter with the weavers was really amazing; I saw how they tied 10,000 threads on the loom just to prepare the loom. After that, the process of fabric and then how many hours, months and how much time energy they put into that one piece of cloth, and we don't even realise it.

That was a very emotional and inspiring moment and I felt I had found my purpose and that became my mission: to take Indian weaves to a global platform. I did not have exposure, support, or plan; of course these things are not easy. And my background, my language, I was a different person from such a humble background, village or town.

One is not that fashionable or that bold, to go around and ask and do things. But again, I managed. After completing my post-graduation in 2011, the call was how to go out with this hand-woven fabric and then I got exposure of Fashion Week. My little voice said go ahead and do Fashion Week.

So, 2011, I managed to do my first show in Lakme Fashion Week with chanderi fabric and of course it was a very unconventional language to present fashion because it was not following any trend or any kind of forecast. I just did what I imagined and, of course, the result was that nobody accepted it and I got all kind of rejections and bad reviews. But I did not give up; people said handloom is not glamorous,

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it's not fashionable.

Of course, my belief in handlooms was so strong that I could not understand why people could not understand. So, I realised I needed to give these beautiful weaves innovation, design and, of course, quality improvement. I travelled across India, I worked with different weavers in different villages, I lived with them, I learned from them.

I started in the village of Chanderi with four families, and now I work across 7-8 different states, with 3000-4000 families. That brought me a sense of doing something, but something was still missing. I showcased 16-17 collections in India in Lakme Fashion Week, Delhi Fashion Week everywhere, but that satisfaction was still not there because we were still not appreciating and, at that time, I felt we have so much in India so maybe you know we don't realise what we have, and I decided to go to New York.

It was random how I left my house; I packed my bag, and I went to New York. Not having any kind of exposure in New York, I did random shows, random exhibitions while I was a well-known designer in India but that was my way of doing things. Finally, in 2017, I managed my first New York Fashion Week and that was the first global exposure for me, for my business and of course New York has given me business and confidence.

Of course, business was important as so many families were working for me, so I had to do business and support them. But New York was not the only first platform. After that, COVID happened. I was sitting at home, everyone was sitting at home, and I felt like Paris Haute Couture Week is the biggest platform, and again, everyone said it's impossible. People said, it's a huge platform and from whole world, only the top 20 brands showcase there, like Chanel, Dior, etc.

But, of course, I felt India has everything, skill, craft, design, which is good. We get a lot of support... for all the international brands, we are always behind the scene, and all international brands use our skill, our fabric, our craft, our design. So why can't we do that? That was a very strong call for me, and I decided what I wanted to do with Indian design, Indian craft, Indian heritage, and I managed to do that at the first go, and that was a big achievement for me in 2021.



I think I was able to do all this because I feel so blessed and lucky to have my roots, my Indian roots, my small town roots, where the way of life was always very simple, very easy, very sustainable. The sustainable word is now so fashionable and so famous. That time I was not even aware that it was so important. These practices are so important; my mother used to shout and say, don't waste things, don't throw water in the kitchen, or try to reuse things, or try to redesign things.

There is one example I always give. My mother, when a saree was new, she would wear it outside. When the saree was a little bit torn, she would wear it at home. Or next, maybe I would see a frock made out of that saree, or a curtain on the window, or tablecloth, and last could be the cleaning cloth. So that way, a very simple way, I learned sustainability.

And, of course, the second lesson was always nature. We used to have *aadha aangan, aadha ghar*, which is half garden and half house. That was so important for us.

We always treated nature as our extended body. My mother used to say, you always breathe from nature, you exchange your breath from nature; then how can you treat nature badly? It's your extended body. That's how I learned to treat nature as part of my body.

And simple things like you have to respect people, and do good for all humans and nature. These were lessons I learned from my roots and I have followed these rules unknowingly with my brand which was, I think, a really, really important thing. And, because of all these things, I managed to become the only woman designer from India to showcase in Paris Haute Couture week, Milan Fashion Week and New York Fashion Week. That was the dream to take to the global stage.

Recently, I launched my home decor collection; the label is 100% sustainable and it came from the pain of throwing all the leftovers of my hand-woven fabric. One day, I just started rolling them in buttons, cords, different textures, and created a panel.

And, of course, I got an award for that panel, and I realised, oh my God, something can be done with



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these leftovers and launched the home decor line. There is one thing I have learned: You will have all kinds of situations in your life; you choose an easy path and live a safe life, or you listen to that call and have the courage to follow your voice. Believe me, that voice has so much power and that voice knows better than you and that voice can open all impossible doors for you.

### **ROTARIANS ASK**

**You have mostly designed for women; is there anything available for men?**

I always say menswear is simple, but it's still not easy. So, I'm preparing for that. I need a lot of preparation to launch my menswear, but it will be soon.

**What about the aspiring designers in India – what are your thoughts on helping them?**

If you decide to do something, no one can stop you. I have suggestions for them: we have so much in India but we always look outside. My request is to please look inside because India is the most fashionable country. We have so many skills, we have so many beautiful weaves. We used to have 400 different weaves, but now we have only 160 weaves, which is still incredible. 160 different weaves. We have everything in India, even design, if you see fashion history, top to bottom is design. Forget about only female-male. If you notice from head to toe, even male used to be so fashionable. So, I always say we are the most fashionable country. If you travel across India, every 25 kilometres, you will see different colours, different fabric, different motifs, different designs; there is so much to take in. And for young designers, I think this is the best thing we have. If they can take it forward with this heritage, I think no one can stop them. And I think this is the time for India. If they talk about India, I don't think anyone can stop them.

**Vaishali, will you tell us a little more about what kind of clothes you do?**

Sure. My mission is taking Indian weaves to the global platform and create one language where people can wear it in India, Europe, US, or any



country. So, I always say that what I create is very unconventional. Of course I have saris, and, I have Indian wear also, but I just follow nature and nature has just one language. If you travel anywhere, nature is one. You can't say nature is different in Europe and different in India. So, I'm trying to create one language. All the silhouettes are inspired by Indian silhouettes like saree, dhoti, etc., but they are still modern. I have, I would say, modernised the Indian silhouette using Indian traditional textile, and I'm happy the world is wearing it. I was so happy when a Hollywood actress recently wore my short saree dress which was, for her, modern, but for me it was a saree. And that was the first time any Hollywood star wore Indian textile, hand-woven textile, on the red carpet. So, it's one language I'm trying to create where the whole world can wear Indian textiles through that language.

**You've been working with 4,000 family weavers. Could you tell us more about this? Because at Rotary, we are deeply involved in kind-of impacting the lives of the underprivileged.**

When I started with 4 families, they were not ready to work with me at first, because they were so scared. They were scared because they felt like somebody was coming from outside and taking something from them. But I saw they were struggling for their basic livelihood. So, I'm not saying I managed to do something very extraordinary, but I still felt I needed to educate young weavers and tell them not to leave this tradition because if you leave this tradition, we will lose this art. And it was not an easy job to convince them to learn because for them, it was not a very respectful job. So, of course, we try to give them more money, try to convince them and this is a precious thing you are doing. And it was really tough, but now more and more young weavers are coming. Still, the condition of weavers honestly is not very good because so many things are happening around. I don't want to go into detail, but weavers are still struggling for their basic livelihood. So, I think more and more people should come forward and try to do something because I strongly believe, that what we have in India, especially the textile, is really precious. No other country has any different



kind of breathable fabric, organic fabric. Everyone is talking about slow fashion, everyone is talking about sustainability. And I think this is the best thing if we think about the handmade fabric. So, we can change if we can go back to our roots. We understand our roots like how we used to be and how important it is to make things by hand. And why that life was so sustainable. So, I feel this is very precious and we are losing it. I think our weavers should get more money, more respect, more facilities, just like how people doing other jobs get all kinds of facilities.





## TUESDAYS WITH THE ROTARY CLUB OF BOMBAY







# SHAKTI AWARDS

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MARCH 15, 2024

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# RCB's wild Kanha adventure

The Fellowship Committee organised a very special fellowship trip to Kanha National Park from March 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Our group of 30 Rotarians and their partners, consisting of safari enthusiasts as well as first-time safari travellers, embarked upon a unique journey to Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh. We stayed at the fabulous Taj Banjaar Tola in luxury tent suites modelled on African safari camps.

The first day saw us going for a nature trail walk in the 90-acre hotel property and an orientation on the national parks and tiger conservation in India as well as on our upcoming safaris. There was a gala welcome dinner organised especially for us in the bush with lanterns, bonfires, and a lovely tribal dance performance by tribals from the nearby village. Many from our group joined in the dancing as well and sang for the group. We enjoyed a fabulous evening with drinks and dinner in the jungle setting under a starlit night. It was truly a

magical experience.

The next 2 days were packed with safaris with a naturalist in each jeep. The enchanted forest beckoned us... tall Sal trees, a wide range of vegetation ranging from grasslands to many different types of trees. The wildlife ranged from beautiful dancing peacocks and many species of birds to several species of deer including the famed Barasingha deer which is only found in Kanha, baboons, wild boar, and more. The highlight was the king of the jungle... the majestic tiger! We were awestruck to get a fabulous sighting of Pattawala, the famous male tiger in Kanha. Some of the group also had a sighting of a male cub and a leopard.

The hospitality of Taj Banjaar Tola was superb... from the breakfast in the jungle to the fabulous daily high tea and the special dinners organised for us as well as personalised attention. President





Manoj Patodia and the entire group thanked the Fellowship Committee for meticulously planning this trip. Special thanks to Rtn. Arvind Agarwal, co-chair Fellowship Committee, who led this trip and had a personal rapport with Taj Safaris which contributed to this being a memorable experience for our group and Rtn. Anar Shah, chair Fellowship Committee, and First Lady Nandita Patodia for working over months to ensure that the trip goes off flawlessly. Many from the group were generous in their appreciation and said it was one of the most memorable fellowship trips which even rivalled African safaris.

As a parting gift, we had a glimpse of Pattawala who entered the hotel property which is pretty rare... maybe he enjoyed our company as well! The group left with wonderful memories of the captivating jungle.













# RCB hosts health camp for Garware Club



On February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the Rotary Club of Bombay organised a comprehensive health camp tailored specifically for the beneficiaries of Garware Club, extending vital healthcare services to those in need. This noteworthy initiative witnessed the active participation of dedicated medical professionals and volunteers, committed to enhancing the well-being of the community.

A total of 182 beneficiaries were attended to during the event, receiving essential medical assistance and guidance. Among the services provided, 40 patients underwent ECG examinations, ensuring timely detection and monitoring of cardiac health. Additionally, 70 beneficiaries were equipped with free reading glasses, promoting improved vision and quality of life.

Moreover, the Camp identified 16 individuals in need of specialised eye treatment and surgical interventions, underscoring the commitment to addressing diverse healthcare needs comprehensively. These referrals signify a proactive approach towards ensuring access to advanced medical interventions for those requiring further attention.

Through this collaborative effort, the Rotary Club of Bombay reaffirmed its commitment to serving the community by delivering impactful healthcare interventions, ultimately fostering a healthier and more resilient society.







## Healthcare and medical support for seniors

A dedicated team of doctors has been diligently visiting all three Ananda Yaan senior citizens centres twice a week, ensuring the health and well-being of our members. This exemplary initiative stands out as the highlight of our efforts this year, contributing significantly to the overall quality of care provided. Our heartfelt gratitude extends to Rtn. Alok Sekhsaria for his unwavering support and commitment to this noble cause.

Furthermore, in conjunction with these essential doctor visits, Dignity Foundation has stepped forward to provide vital medication support. This invaluable assistance, amounting to Rs 5000 per month altogether for the three centres, ensures that our seniors have access to the necessary medications for their continued health and comfort. Together, these initiatives underscore our collective dedication to the welfare of our senior community members.



**Members, please note that we have tied up with Masina Hospital for a great discount for our members, family, and friends.**

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[vkj.rotary@modernindia.co.in](mailto:vkj.rotary@modernindia.co.in)



# RCB-YMCA hold certificate distribution event for VTCE



The Bombay YMCA and the Rotary Club of Bombay collaborated once again for the annual certificate distribution programme for Vocational Training Centre of Excellence (VTCE) students. This event, held on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at the Bombay YMCA International House from 4 pm to 5:30 pm, aimed to honour students who successfully completed their courses.

The distinguished guests included President Manoj Patodia, Rtn. Anand Parikh, Co-chair of Vocational Training and Night Study Centre, Rtn. Leonard Salins, Chairman of Vocational Training and Night Study Centre, and Mr. Philip Kassey, Chairman of the Outreach and Development Department at Bombay YMCA.

The programme showcased the talents of the vocational class students through dance performances, drama, and solo singing. Three students shared compelling testimonies about their learning journeys at the YMCA. President

Manoj, the chief guest, delivered a short and impactful motivational speech, encouraging the students to pursue their goals and highlighting that age is no barrier.

The highlight of the event was the certificate distribution, with the chief guest and our distinguished guests personally handing out certificates to a total of 65 students. Saurav Sachin Kamble scored 100% in Advanced Excel, Aaliya Rizwan Valiyani scored 93% in MS-CIT, and 56 students scored an A grade out of 65 students.

The programme concluded on a positive note with a vote of thanks by Sheetal Gupta, Secretary of the ORD department of Bombay YMCA. This certificate distribution programme not only celebrated academic achievements but also provided an inspirational platform for students to share their stories and receive encouragement from esteemed guests.



# The Annual Jain Phoolon ki Holi !

*Dear Rotarians,  
We look forward to your presence*



*On Monday, 25th March 2024,  
10 am - 1 pm*

*Venue : 44 Ashok Bhavan, 14th Rd Khar,  
Behind Satguru on Linking Road.*

*Live music, flavours of Dilli ki chaat,  
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*Rtn. Naresh Jain, Rtn. Mohit Jain, Radhika Jain  
R.S.V.P. Sarita - 9867803058*



# RC Bombay at RC Madras' 95<sup>th</sup> birthday bash



President Manoj Patodia and 5 other RCB Rotarians attended the RC Madras weekend celebrations on February 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The first evening was a night with international Clubs and JWD Clubs.

The second night was about RC Madras's own 95<sup>th</sup> birthday and the excellent work they have done over the years.

In between, things were spiced with meaningful projects and local culture and cuisine.

Madras, as Chennai was previously known, was the shortened name of the fishing village Madraspatnam, where the British East India Company built a fort and factory (trading post) in 1639–40. Tamil Nadu officially changed the name of the city to Chennai in 1996.

Much before 1996, a visionary Rotarian gentleman by the name of James Wheeler Davidson founded yet another Club. The now iconic RC Madras. RC Madras over the years founded practically all other south Indian Rotary Clubs.





JWD, as they call him, formed several still existing other Rotary Clubs. Before and after Bombay and Madras: Athens, Greece (late 1928); Cairo, Egypt (early 1929); Jerusalem, Israel (early 1929); Damascus, Syria (defunct); Bombay (19.3.1929); Delhi (defunct and now re-constituted); and Madras (19.7.1929).

JWD after RCB and RCM continued his journey to Burma and Malaysia and Singapore and beyond and formed another 15 plus Clubs. Two of those JWD Clubs were present during the night.

All this heritage was captioned superbly by RC Madras under the able guidance of President S. Ravi and PP Gopi. RCB exchanged during the celebration's flags along with the intent of joined projects with 5 other international Clubs: RC Nairobi Peponi, Kenya; RC Seremban (JWD), Malaysia; RC Kuala Lumpur die Raja (JWD), Malaysia; RC Canyon City, Colorado, USA; RC Kandy, Sri Lanka.

As a new feature, we will keep you updated with self-introductory reports of all Clubs.





# NMJ BY students enjoy trip to CSMVS

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, students from Bhavishya Yaan's grades 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> of the NMJ School embarked on a captivating field trip to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS), as part of an extension of Ms. Marina Datta's earlier session at the school.

The visit commenced with an engaging overview of the historical significance behind the sculptures, providing students with valuable insights into the rich cultural heritage preserved within the museum's walls. Led by knowledgeable museum guides, the students were taken on an enlightening tour of the diverse collection, spanning Greek, Indian, and various other sculptures depicting gods and goddesses.

Following this immersive exploration, students had the opportunity to unleash their creativity by crafting sculptures from clay, a hands-on activity that sparked joy and creativity among the children.

The day concluded with the distribution of snack boxes to all attendees, marking the end of a fulfilling and enlightening experience. The students returned to school with hearts full of knowledge and memories, cherishing the informative yet enjoyable day spent at CSMVS.



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Dental Clinic / दाताचा दवाखाना	9 to 5 / ९ ते ५	9 to 5 / ९ ते ५
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Blood Tests / रक्ताची तपासणी	9 to 12 / ९ ते १२	9 to 12 / ९ ते १२





Rotary Club  
of Bombay



SPEAKER SESSIONS



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3RD GENERATION ENTREPRENEUR &  
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF  
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## NEXT WEEK

### AJAY VORA, HEAD - EQUITIES NUVAMA ASSET MANAGEMENT LTD

Ajay has over a 16 years of investment management experience specialising in long only and long short equity strategies consistently generating alpha returns.

Prior to joining Investment Manager he was heading Equity Investment team at Reliance Industries' Treasury managing approx. USD \$1 billion portfolio. With the help of an efficient team he managed to scale the portfolio from USD \$200 million to USD \$1 billion over 5 years. He started his career at Morgan Stanley as a materials sector analyst and then moved to ENAM Asset Management Company Private Limited (ENAM AMC). Over 6 years at ENAM AMC he managed to graduate from an analyst to Head of Research of fund with AUM of USD \$1 billion. He was instrumental and part of core team to have managed to raise institutional money at ENAM AMC.

He holds an MBA degree in Finance from MET University, Mumbai and graduated with Bachelor of Commerce from Narsee Monjee College of Commerce and Economics.





## Rotarian Member Birthdays



**MARCH 12**

PP Shailesh  
Haribhakti



**MARCH 14**

Rtn. Swati  
Mayekar



**MARCH 15**

Rtn. Ram  
Gandhi



**MARCH 15**

Hon. Rtn. Uday  
Kotak



**MARCH 16**

Rtn. Siddarth  
Mehta



**MARCH 17**

PE Satyan  
Israni



**MARCH 17**

Rtn. Rajendra  
Shah



**MARCH 18**

Rtn. Pradeep  
Mafatlal

## Rotarian Partner Birthdays

**MARCH 14**

Rtn. Ptn. Nasreen Contractor

**MARCH 16**

Rtn. Ptn. Meenal Patodia

**MARCH 18**

Rtn. Ptn. Bhavani Piniseti

## Anniversaries

**MARCH 13**

Rtn. Ptn. Rashna & Rtn. Soli Cooper

**MARCH 14**

Rtn. Ptn. Jita & Rtn. Bipin Kapadia

**MARCH 17**

Rtn. Ptn. Hemlata & Rtn. Dr. Devendra  
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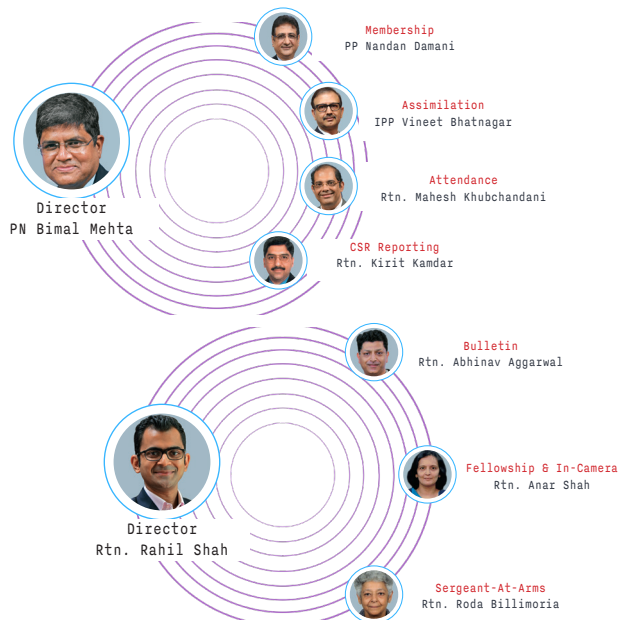
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Damani



Special Director  
IPDG Sandip Agarwalla

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Manoj Patodia



IPP Vineet  
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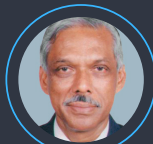
President-Elect  
Satyan Israni



President-Nominee  
Bimal Mehta



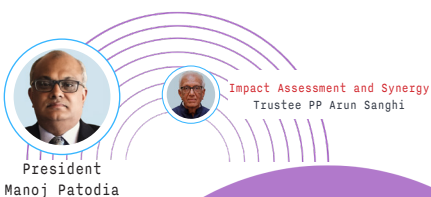
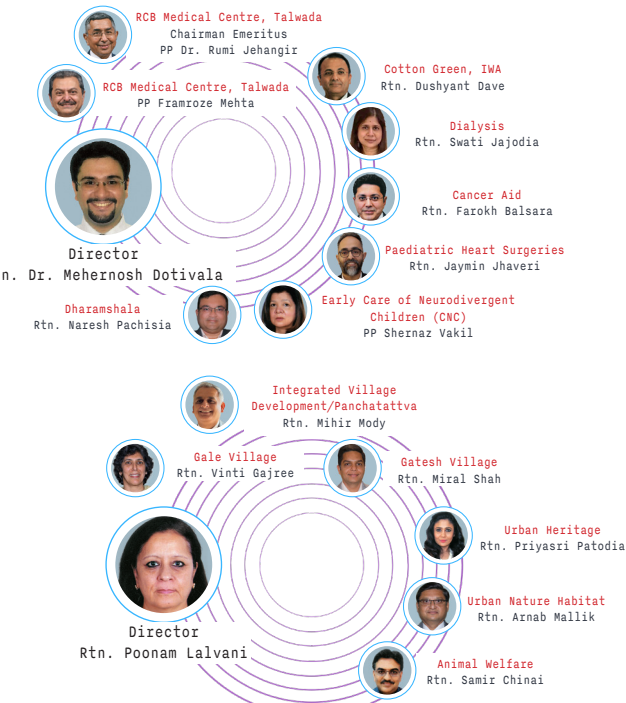
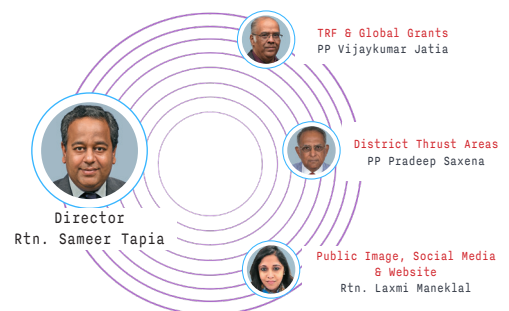
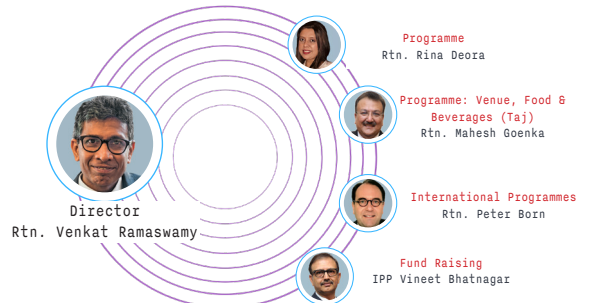
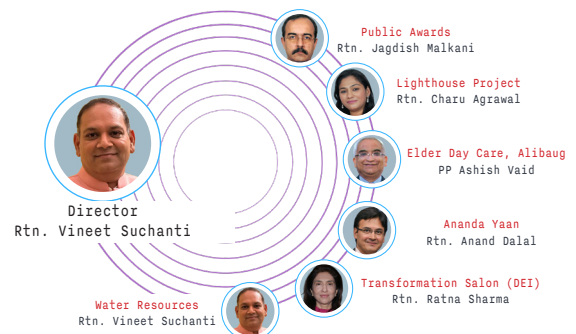
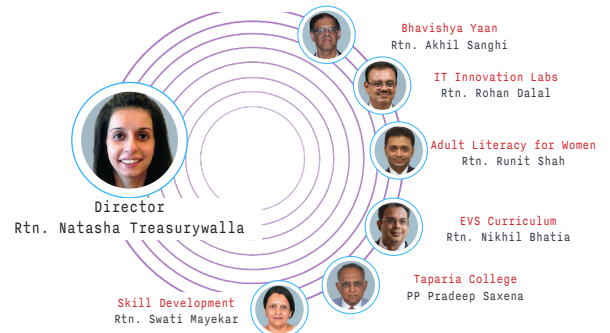
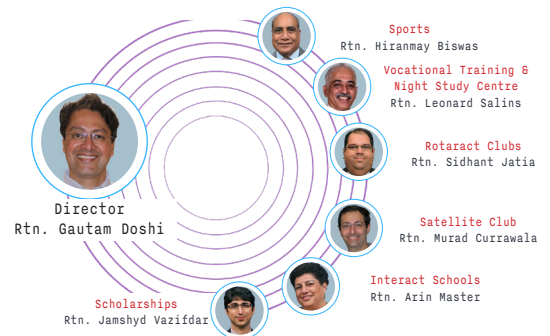
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Pradeep Gupta



Hon. Jt. Secy  
Sunny Pariyaram



Hon. Treasurer  
Kirit Kamdar



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PRESIDENT MANOJ PATODIA  
FOR ROTARY CLUB OF BOMBAY;  
CONTACT@ROTARYCLUBOFBOMBAY.ORG

EDITORIAL CONTENT, DESIGN & LAYOUT BY  
THE NARRATORS (THEWRITEASSOCIATES@GMAIL.COM);

REGD NO. MCS/091/2015-17; R.N.I NO. 14015/60.  
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