

Leaders

Extraordinaire

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."



CENTURIES have passed since Dickens penned this, but societal dichotomy exists even today. There are the haves and the have-nots; some live in the lap of luxury while others do not make two square meals. This chasm forms the bedrock of Rotary community service - an endeavour to alleviate suffering and instil hope in the less privileged. But when Rotarians come together to resurrect lives, there is always a polestar who sets their roadmap to the destination. A Leader who knows the way goes the way, and shows the way. Our cover story profiles a few such leaders from our District, distinctive in style but united in purpose, their oeuvre making them the toast of the Rotary world and inspiring Rotarians across generations.

DR. BHARAT PANDYA

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR 2019-21

THE ROTARY FOUNDATION TRUSTEE-ELECT 2022-26



"To know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived, that is the meaning of Success."

Relevant and inspirational quotes like these abound in addresses by TRF Trustee-Elect Rtn. Dr. Bharat Pandya. Fluency and erudition, coupled with his paperless style, take his oratory to a different level, and every anecdote appears to be the best-fitted piece in the jigsaw of his speech. The language is never grandiloquent; even profound thoughts are communicated simply to connect with the audience and become actionable. He recalls that before taking up the presidentship of his club if he were asked to make a speech: in front of five people, his legs would tremble. His club was going through a tough phase, and he was unsure of taking on the mantle. But his father advised him to concentrate on the job, put in his best efforts, and never worry about the result. So he accepted the challenge and went on to lead his club successfully and become one of

the most articulate speakers and admired leaders in the Rotary world.

His milestone year as the Governor of District 3140 was 2006-07. The record for TRF contributions at that time was a little over half a million dollars. He took up the challenge to raise 1 million dollars from Rotarians apart from the large donors. He eventually crossed 2 million dollars with the District achieving the numero uno status in Rotary worldwide.

His vision and commitment have seen him enjoy a glorious international innings with Rotary. He has served as:

- 🦁 Regional RI Membership Coordinator (RRIMC)
- 🦁 Rotary International Training Leader (Twice)

- 🦁 GETS Chair (Twice)
- 🦁 Member, India National Polio Plus Committee (2011-15)
- 🦁 GETS Trainer (Nine times)
- 🦁 Member, RI Membership Committee
- 🦁 Member, RI Finance Committee
- 🦁 Member, RI Strategic Planning Committee
- 🦁 Member, RI Leadership Development Committee
- 🦁 Member, RI-USAID Committee
- 🦁 Member, RI Sydney Convention Promotion Committee
- 🦁 District 3140 COL Representative in 2013
- 🦁 RI President's Representative at District conferences in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Philippines
- 🦁 Rotary International Director for 2019-21



- 🦁 RI Treasurer 2020-21
- 🦁 TRF Trustee 2022-26

He is currently on the TRF Stewardship Committee, TRF Awards Committee, and is the Vice-chair of the TRF Finance Committee.

A Level II Major Donor, he has been conferred Citation of Meritorious Service and the Distinguished Service Award by The Rotary Foundation and Rotary's highest award, 'Service Above Self.'

The inspiration to serve humanity runs in his family, and his wife, Dr. Madhavi, has had a distinguished stint with Inner Wheel, serving as District Chairman for IW District 314 in 2017-18. They are blessed with two loving daughters, Dr. Nidhi and Dr. Sashmi. Dr. Bharat Pandya graduated from the prestigious Seth GS Medical College, KEM hospital, Mumbai, and has been a practicing General and Laparoscopic surgeon for nearly four decades. He is a Fellow of The International College of Surgeons and has been conferred a fellowship by The Association

of Surgeons of India. In addition, he has served for six years on the board of management of Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), a Government of India-sponsored vocational training institute. Dr. Pandya said, "As a medical practitioner, charity is a part of my profession, but Rotary allows me to expand my horizons and make an impact in diverse fields and on a larger canvas."

Rotary, for Rtn. Pandya, is 'Hope' and 'Opportunity.' The 'Hope' the community has that a group of Samaritans called 'Rotarians' can make their world a better place, 'Hope' that parents of a newborn have that the child will be able to walk, run and play because Rotary ensured this by putting two drops of polio, 'Hope' that a school dropout has that he/she will not become a social outcast because Rotary will help with his/ her skill development helping them to stand on their own feet; and the 'Opportunities' that all of us have as Rotarians to fulfil these hopes and aspirations. He asserts that the community needs might have changed over the years, but they still exist and Rotary, especially in our part of the world, has a

pivotal role in addressing them. He believes that India, the second largest Rotary country in the world, is destined to occupy the top slot in the future. He says Rotary in India is the epitome of thinking and dreaming big, with some of the best Rotary projects being done here. He also foresees more and more Indians taking up leadership positions in Rotary worldwide.

Having served on the RI Board with distinction, Dr. Bharat Pandya makes us proud as he takes up his spot on the 15-member Board of Trustees of The Rotary Foundation. However, the humble leader remarks that for him, every position in Rotary is a position of responsibility and not of power. Onwards and upwards for this worthy leader is all we can say!

Acknowledgments:

1. Interview with Rasheeda Bhagat, Rotary News
2. Youtube Interview with Rotary Club of Deonar, August 22
3. Youtube talk on Gujarat Sahitya Forum, April 2021
4. Material courtesy of Rtn. Dr. Bharat Pandya



RAJU SUBRAMANIAN

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR 2023-25



“A leader is the best when people barely know he exists; when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.”
—Lao Tzu

If such a leader appears to be a myth, look no further than PDG Rtn. T.N. Subramanian, fondly addressed as 'Raju' by his friends. "I've never believed that as I have a position, I need to be superior to others. Every position in Rotary is one of service. If the fellowship is the foundation of our organization, we must meet and greet each one at the same level," says the humble leader elected as the Rotary International Director 2023-25.

This is how he has been since his college days; friendly, fun-loving, approachable, and someone who has done it all, from television hosting to student politics, not to mention his exceptional oratory skills that won him intercollegiate and intervarsity competitions. He

has been the General Secretary, Jai Hind College, Government College Students Council, the Bombay University Students Council, and the Senate's first Bombay University student member. Professionally, he practices as a Senior Counsel in the Supreme Court, various High Courts, Tribunals and Arbitrations.

His journey with Rotary is studded with achievements and accolades.

- ✿ Charter Member, Rotary Club of Deonar
- ✿ Club President 1996-1997
- ✿ Assistant Governor, District Secretary, Chief Coordinator, Avenue Chair in all Avenues of Service, and other District positions
- ✿ District Governor 2009-2010
- ✿ District Trainer 2011-2012
- ✿ DRFC 2013-2016
- ✿ Member, RI Constitution, and By-laws Committee 2015-

- 2018
- ✿ Member, COL Organizing Committee 2006 and 2019
- ✿ Chairman, RI Constitution, and Bye-laws Committee 2018-19
- ✿ Training Leader, International Assembly 2019
- ✿ Chairman, Rotary Institute 2019
- ✿ Member, RI Election Review Committee 2019- 2021
- ✿ RRFC, Zone 4, 2020 to 2023
- ✿ Support Training Leader, International Assembly 2021
- ✿ Director, International Fellowship of Past District Governors
- ✿ Rotary International Director 2023-2025
- ✿ Arch Klumph Society Member, Paul Harris Society Member, and Benefactor

He has been a speaker at various training programs and conferences in India and abroad. In addition, he has been featured on the RI website for the Polio Program and



Governorship. While always willing to advise, he never curbs opinions from fellow club members. This non-interfering approach has encouraged new leadership and helped his club prosper over the years.

Alongside a successful man, there stands a woman offering a shoulder and a hand. His wife Vidya has been his most significant support, trustworthy critic, and constant guiding force. A special educator by profession, Vidya is an AKS member and was the Inner Wheel Chair of District 314 in 2018-19. In addition, Rtn. Raju is blessed with a happy family of two brilliant daughters, Ashwita and Rohita, who are settled abroad, and a loving grandson Nikhil.

Success, power, and glory could never impact Rtn. Raju Subramanian's intrinsic human qualities that make him one of the most endearing and respected leaders in RID 3141.

Acknowledgments:
Material courtesy of Rtn. Dr. Raju Subramanian and personal interview

in the EREY pamphlet of TRF.

During his illustrious journey, his vision for Rotary has been the growth and dissemination of knowledge among Rotarians for greater participation in Grants and other projects, and improvement in the public image of Rotary. He believes that every potential leader in Rotary must possess rock-solid character and be bereft of arrogance. Furthermore, he needs to make his people a part of his journey; his actions, deeds, and words must ensure that he earns their trust. And lastly, financial transparency is paramount as he is working with someone else's money. Rtn. Rajendra Datye from his Club feels Rtn. Raju is the older brother he never had. He shares, "His ascent in the Rotary world is a result of his sharp analytical mind, sincerity, transparent dealings, and ethical leadership style. There are very few Rotarians who have given their heart, mind, and time to Rotary and can endear themselves across all age groups." "He is as passionate about family, friends, work, travel and giving as he is about Rotary! He is a true professional who provides humanitarian service, encourages

high ethical standards, and works hard towards building goodwill and peace in the world," adds Rtn. Shobhana Iyer, his sister and a member of his club.

Rtn. Raju finds his inspiration in many international personalities. Closer home, he speaks of PRIP Rtn. Kalyan Banerjee, Rtn. Ravindran, Rtn. Dr. Bharat Pandya, and his mentor and teacher, Late Dr. R.M Bhat, as leaders of great integrity he looks up to.

So, how does he groom leaders-to-be? Here too, he stands apart from the crowd. He has never attended a Club Assembly or a closed-door meeting since his



ASHOK MAHAJAN

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR 2007-2009
TRUSTEE OF THE ROTARY FOUNDATION 2009-2013



"Eradicate Polio and save the children of the world," is what PRID Rtn. Ashok Mahajan lives by. A man who believes every day brings in new sunshine has gifted sunshine to thousands of children in the country and beyond. As RIDE Rtn. Raju Subramanian says about him, "He is a man who has built such trust and transparency that when he asks for money, there are no questions asked. The donor knows the money has gone to safe hands and will serve the cause to its best."

PRID Rtn. Ashok Mahajan is among the torchbearers for eradicating the scourge of polio from India. His commitment to the cause has seen corporates opening up purses and communities, their hearts, helping him achieve the 'Mission Impossible'. So, while the generous Smt. Rajashree Birla donated 16 million USD to the cause, Muslim religious leaders

supported the program despite community resistance - actions that made a crucial difference to the campaign's success.

Born in the year of India's independence, serving the country was possibly part of his destiny. Equipped with an electrical engineering degree and post graduate diplomas in Operation Management and Business Management from Bombay University, this meritorious student continued to excel in his professional life as a Senior Partner at Raj Industries till he felt something was amiss. After joining the Rotary Club of Mulund in 1973, he found his true calling. He led the club as the President in 1982-83 and District 3140 as District Governor in

1993-94, setting new standards for outreach and service during his tenures. As PDG Rtn. Dr. Jayant Kulkarni fondly recalls, "He was my senior in the club. He took the club programs to an unprecedented level by inviting personalities like Vijay Merchant, Julio Rebeiro, Subramanian Swamy, and Jayawantiben Mehta to the club's weekly meetings. He continued the trend when he was the District Governor, and his District Conference got coverage on BBC because of the dignitaries who spoke there. He led the District with distinction forming a record 20 new clubs, boosting TRF contributions, and collecting enormous funds for the victims of the Latur earthquake. He has always encouraged and guided juniors to take up leadership



challenges and helped Rotarians by arranging funds for their projects."

His commitment, compassion, and consistency did not go unnoticed by Rotary International as he rose through the ranks to occupy the coveted positions of RI Director (2007-09) and the Trustee of The Rotary Foundation (2009-13). He was elected as a Trustee of the Rotary Foundation while serving as a Director of Rotary International, a rare privilege.

A snapshot of his Rotary milestones tells the story:

- ❁ Zonal Coordinator-Membership Task Force (1995-96) and (1998-99)
- ❁ Member India National Polio Plus Committee (1996-2006)
- ❁ Zonal Coordinator-Avoidable Blindness Task Force (2000-02)
- ❁ Campaign Associate Rotary UNF private sector campaign (2001-02)
- ❁ Member World Affair Committee-Asian (2003-05)
- ❁ Vice Chair Polio Summit in 2011 and 2014

- ❁ Chairman of Rotary International's Membership Development and Retention Committee (2012-13)
- ❁ Member of The Fund Development Committee of The Rotary Foundation (2014-17)
- ❁ Chairman, Rotary India's National Covid Task Force since 2020
- ❁ Member, International Covid-19 Task Force 2021-22
- ❁ Part of the National Polio Plus Committee for over a decade
- ❁ Member of the International Polio Plus Committee from 2009-13

Awards have been showered on him in his journey of service, and he has been felicitated with The Rotary Foundation's highest awards, namely Distinguished Service Award, Service Above Self Award, Regional Service Award for a Polio Free World, International Service Award for Polio Free World, and Polio Plus Pioneer Award, besides innumerable others from the District.

A staunch devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba, Rtn. Mahajan is blessed with a loving wife, Nayantara,

a Past President of the Inner Wheel Club of Mulund, children Nikhil with Monica and Namrata with Nitin, and three doting grandchildren.

As life unfolded its challenges, Rtn. Mahajan surmounted all with humility, selflessly creating sunshine moments for the children of a lesser God.

Acknowledgments:
1. ashokmahajan.in
2. Material courtesy of Rtn. Mahajan



GULAM A VAHANVATY

TRUSTEE OF THE ROTARY FOUNDATION 2018-22



When Past TRF Trustee Rtn. Gulam A. Vahanvaty was the District Governor for 3140, his manifesto read, "Working together works." And when a fellow Rotarian defines him as, "A great person who makes others feel great," you know his message has percolated into the ethos of the fraternity. Standing tall, literally and figuratively, soft-spoken, Rtn. Gulam A. Vahanvaty is the gentle giant of D 3141 who, possibly, does not need an introduction.

His family hails from Bagasara, a small town near Rajkot in Gujarat. Born to parents who prioritized his education, he is an alumnus of St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, and IIM Kolkata. On graduating, he was selected to join the coveted Tata Administrative Services, which he eventually gave up due to his father's failing health. He took over the reins of the family business, and there was no looking back.

Rtn. Vahanvaty's 'Eureka Moment' in Rotary was in 1978 when he was selected as a District 314 Group Study Exchange team member to RID 656 in Indiana, U.S.A. Goaded by his wife to apply, his selection propelled him on a life-enhancing experience with Rotary. In December 1979, he joined the Rotary Club of Bombay Downtown and went on to lead his club in 1985-86 and the District in 2002-03.

'TRF' could have been a middle name for Rtn. Gulam A Vahanvaty. His contribution to TRF of US\$ 654,000 during his Governorship was a record across Districts till 2007.

Says Rtn. Suresh Hari E/MGA-Zone 7, "His soft prodding in pushing to achieve targets and his energetic interaction with the team set him apart. He was always open to suggestions, which helped the team explore different approaches and yield great results."

In the words of PP Rtn. Ravishankar Dakoju, the single largest donor to TRF after Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, "Gulam ji is an embodiment of humility and gentlemanliness. When my family committed to donating 100 crore to TRF and I gave the first instalment cheque of INR 10 crore, Gulam ji did not show any urgency to encash it. Instead, he came down to meet me in Bangalore to ensure I did not carry any illusions or misconceptions about TRF giving. That day my respect for Gulam ji and the Foundation grew manifold."

Adds PDG Rtn. D. Bharath Kumar Reddy- EPNC Zone 7, "He is a great motivator. He has the ability to spot talented people and then instil in them the confidence to give their best."

Having just completed a successful four-year term as a Trustee of the Rotary Foundation, he has served several international appointments during his Rotary journey:

- 🦁 Training Leader (twice)
- 🦁 Regional Rotary Foundation Coordinator (2004-2007)
- 🦁 Chairman, RI Communications Committee
- 🦁 Chairman, TRF Alumni Advisory Committee
- 🦁 Member, TRF Future Vision Committee
- 🦁 Member, TRF Peace Centres Committee
- 🦁 Chairman Stewardship Committee of Trustees in 2020-21 and 2021-22
- 🦁 Member Executive Committee



of Trustees in 2020-21 and 2021-22

A Major Donor himself, he is a proud recipient of RI's Service Above Self Award, TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service, and Distinguished Service Award. His service life extends beyond the realm of Rotary as a Member of the Governing Board of Mumbai First, a Trustee of the Mohalla Committee Movement Trust, and the Public Concern for Governance Trust.

An accomplished horse rider, equestrian sports have always lent him the adrenaline rush. He is a member of the Royal Western India Turf Club Limited (RWITC) Board of Appeal.

He lost his anchor and companion, wife Haseena, to cancer, but his son Zameer, daughter-in-law Khatija, granddaughter Sumehra, son-in-law Satpal, daughter Zahabia, and grandsons Rishaan and Jaiyaan continue to fill his life with love and happiness.

PRIP Rtn. Kalyan Banerjee is



someone who inspires him, as Rtn. Vahanvaty muses, "What I admire most about him is that he listens. I wish I had that ability to listen, absorb and then speak. He speaks very little, but when he speaks, it is of substance." A life lesson Rtn. Vahanvaty has carried forward, inspiring many in turn.

Acknowledgments:

1. Interview with Rasheeda Bhagat, Rotary News
2. Material courtesy of Rtn. Vahanvaty



These leaders have challenged the status quo, maintained their convictions resolutely, and architected stories of service and giving. As our district stands poised to become the crowning glory of the Rotary world, we, the Rotarians District 3141, humbly acknowledge your invaluable contributions and come together in gratitude.

Thank you!

WRITTEN BY RTN. SREE NANDY