



FROM WHERE I AM

A View of Rotary



Rtn. Ashok Mahajan

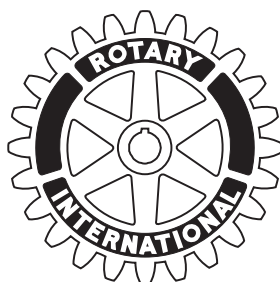
Trustee, The Rotary Foundation, 2009–13

Director, Rotary International, 2007–09

Member, International PolioPlus Committee

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by

Rtn. ASHOK MAHAJAN

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From Where I Am - A View of Rotary

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Rtn. Ashok Mulkraj Mahajan

Trustee, The Rotary Foundation, 2009–13

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Member, International PolioPlus Committee

1001, Marathon Galaxy

LBS Marg, Mulund

Mumbai 400 080

Ph: 022 25668929

e-mail: nayan729@yahoo.com

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e-mail: nayan729@yahoo.com

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Foreword



Rotary is a way of life. That's something we have often heard and perhaps said so ourselves. But there are those amongst us for whom Rotary is life. They breathe, think and of course, live Rotary. They go by the vision of Rotary, they follow the mission of Rotary and Rotary principles are what they live by.

Rare enough though they are, it has been my privilege to have known one such person from close quarters. I have known him for about 20 years now, live close enough to him in Mumbai and have had the privilege to have connected with him over all these years, temperamentally and philosophically as well.

A person of great faith, but also a pragmatic down to earth business person, an out and out family man, Ashok Mahajan displayed an unknown talent once he was elected to serve as Rotary's Director from India some years back — the talent to be communicator *extraordinaire*.

Leaders communicate with others in different ways. Some lead by example, some inspire through their speeches. And still others change lives with their pen, through their thoughts expressed in writing. Ashok belongs to this last category. He has turned out to be a phenomenal writer, with a remarkable way to express himself, through words which literally set up new thought processes. At first he was a revelation, then he was an inspiration. The depth and width of his interest and involvement are as impressive as the splendour of his ability to express them.

It's been a joy to have received, read and reviewed all that he has penned over the past six years. I am glad he has compiled his presentations together because it will not only be a collector's item but, I'm sure, will provide much food for thought and inspiration to action. Thank you Ashok, for adding so much to the way we live by.

Kalyan Banerjee

RI President, 2011–2012

In my Defence

I consider everyday of my life in Rotary as the greatest day. Like any other member I took an active interest in the affairs of my club. I tried to be of use to the club as best I could. From the day I became the President of my club, the world I saw was not the same world. I had lived many years thinking that life just happens. But as the President of the club I could see the truth.



I understood that we could change the way things happen in our life and for others. I learnt innumerable ways in which Rotary can be of help to humanity. Many top leaders of Rotary shared amazing stories with me and I received insights into what exactly we are supposed to do in this organisation.

This knowledge changed my life instantly. As I went along the paths Rotary took me, I realised that there was so much for me to know and do. The leaders of Rotary International from all over the world have been my greatest teachers and they have lit up my life. The unconditional support given by the Rotarians of India made the difference. I was able to raise the bar and work more in areas such as polio eradication which is close to my heart.

I owe a deep sense of gratitude to my parents, my brothers, my wife and children and all the members of our family who pushed me to dedicate a major portion of my life in service through Rotary. They were willing to open their minds and hearts and share my thoughts and assist me in newer ways so that I could work with Rotarians world over to bring joy to thousands of people.

As I set out to share my thoughts through my column *From Where I Am* in the *Rotary News* magazine every month, it was my desire to present my thoughts to the principle-centred thinkers and leaders in this organisation throughout the world. That includes every Rotarian in the world. I value their timeless wisdom and cherish their feedback which has helped me to bridge the gap between the theoretical and the practical ways in which to serve the community.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to read 'Ashok' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that curves upwards at the end.

Ashok Mahajan

Trustee, The Rotary Foundation, 2009–2013

Director, Rotary International, 2007–2009

Member, International PolioPlus Committee

Smile - Serve - Sacrifice - Satisfy

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River of Service

Service is the work involving the use of the head, the heart and the hand for the welfare of others, irrespective of their status, caste or creed. It relieves the economically underprivileged through personal commitment to selfless service. It contributes to the works of development through physical labour. Service explores the potentials lying dormant in persons through education.

Service is concerned about the needs of others. It offers ample opportunities for the development of one's character and personality. Service prompts us to give selflessly without expecting anything in return.

The river of service should flow freely, steadily, unhinderingly. As any river, there may be scums, blocks, stagnancy and eddies — but ultimately overpowering all hindrances, the river will reach its destination.

What keeps service flowing is commitment. A firm resolve to conquer the problem will help us remove the road blocks. In order to generate commitment, we need a road plan and total dedication.

Service is easy to spell out but not so easy to execute. Execution of a well laid game plan needs finances, inspirational involvement and faith. Many of our service projects fail because we did not plan properly, execute expeditiously or neglected to navigate with co-operation of all our members. All members cannot and will not be actively involved in the area of service but there should be none to put spokes into the wheel of service.

Rotary may claim to be the saviour of the needy but the needy recognise not the wheel of Rotary but the will of the individual Rotarians who are seen actively engaging themselves in the acts of helpfulness. It is, therefore, imperative that Rotarians should have a close rapport with the communities and even if the credit of success is laid at the door of individual Rotarians, Rotary benefits because Rotary has gained an access to the communities for further acts of service.

The river of service should be navigated by being completely good and helpful. This will fulfill a sense of permanency in our mutual relations with the community which will stimulate permanent action and permanent co-operation. No Rotary club can then, find it difficult to work with the communities that need help.

The vitality and beauty of service depend on our journey along the river of service.

We have done it

We have achieved the improbable. We have surpassed our expectations. During 2009–10, India has contributed almost US \$12 million to The Rotary Foundation — thanks due to the generosity and compassion of around 1,07,000 Rotarians and their faith in the programmes of The Rotary Foundation. Of course, motivation by club leaders, district leaders, Foundation coordinators and all the stalwarts of the districts made this possible and these fine Rotarians need sincere appreciation and kudos for making India proud in the Rotary world.

The information about the achievements of The Rotary Foundation and the successful implementation of The Rotary Foundation's objectives must be spread throughout Rotary in India. This will result in better support to The Rotary Foundation and greater resources to implement our plans.

The success story of The Rotary Foundation in 2009–10 has been due to the united efforts of many Rotarians. They put their hands into their pockets and generously contributed in spite of adverse conditions of economic slowdown, inflation and similar negative happenings and they must be lauded in glowing versions. They are the authors of the success story. The club leaders including The Rotary Foundation Chairman of the club must have motivated club members to chip in and they deserve credit and recognition.

The District leadership including the District Rotary Foundation Chairman and Regional Rotary Foundation coordinators are responsible for guiding and motivating club leadership and it is because of the coordination and action by all these Rotarians that The Rotary Foundation has reached great heights.

The objectives of The Rotary Foundation centre around two major target areas—polio eradication programme and promotion of Peace through better understanding and friendship.

In the year 2010–11, let us demonstrate the Rotary world that we can excel in our efforts to promote The Rotary Foundation and collect more than US \$12 million. Our continued commitment to The Rotary Foundation must be reflected in crossing hitherto unconquered peaks and this can be possible only when all of us do not let our guards down, do not rest on our past laurels and toil hard to achieve our goal.

The Rotary Foundation depends on you. The Rotary Foundation trusts you, The Rotary Foundation has faith in the ability of Rotarians to rise to all challenges. Let us not fail The Rotary Foundation by failing to meet the expectations.

The ball is in your court.

Improve Ethics

Alas! We have forgotten the meaning of the word — Ethics. Spell we can and understand we do, but practice, we may not. To be honest and ethical needs your skills to balance the forces that are working in our lives. A grossly dishonest act we understand and even stay away from. However, when two relatively “right ” things are in front of us, we have the conflict that needs resolution. A thing may be “right” from someone’s point of view but “wrong” from someone else’s view-point. What does your heart say? You can seek help from others but ultimately from deep within you, the answer will come. Some things are “acceptable” but not “right.” Some things may be “legal” but not ethical. The balancing act must be put into action to arrive at a solution. People around us, our friends, our colleagues, our mentors may give us an insight into the line of action to be taken. Would you be happy if someone else in your shoes acts in a particular manner, towards you? Would you accept this as honourable?

Rotary has many “case study” debates that bring out the finer points of ethics. It is surprising that when a case study is being discussed, there are divergent views on ethics and morality. It is therefore, clear that there can not be a universal acceptance of the definition of ethics. As stated earlier, gross dishonesty or immoralities are not posing a problem of a dilemma. Some finer nuances of action may be part of the debate.

Let us, now, look at The 4-Way Test. It is essential to understand that we cannot reach total success overnight. We may never reach total success, but try we must. It is essential to realise that whereas, we expect total honesty, fairplay and truth from all those with whom we deal, we are sadly lacking in offering the same to others. What is stopping us? Greed? Perhaps so. We try to take solace in proclaiming that “Everybody else is doing so.” We try to find excuses and even try to justify our actions. The “voice within” may, however, tell you the truth. Alas, today, many of us have even stifled the “voice within” and are therefore, not even ashamed.

Let us start doing the right thing slowly, but regularly. I am reminded of an incident, when Maharashtra’s Governor, Shri Prakash was discussing a point on ethics. He said “I have started on the path towards honesty and have resolved that I may give a bribe, but will never take a bribe. If my son is critically ill and I want to reach his bedside and I cannot get a train ticket, I will pay a bribe to obtain a ticket. I know it is as bad to give a bribe as to take one — but circumstances may force me to give but no circumstances will force me to take a bribe.”

This story illustrates a desire to be ethical and we should realise that we can not all become honest overnight. Let us however, take one step at a time to be more ethical in future dealings and a time might come when as we look at our face in the mornings in the mirror on the wall, we will feel happy that we are better today than we were yesterday. Ethics don’t come cheap and we have to pay a price. Let us start paying a price. The end is splendidous.

Truthfulness is Godliness

The misused fact of Vocational Service is The 4-Way Test. Rotarians may not be able to recite it, Rotarians may frame the Test and hang it on the walls of their offices or the clinics or the drawing rooms. Rotary club's bulletins print it in their issues. Some club meetings have The 4-Way Test displayed as a banner. Some clubs have the practice of somebody reciting The 4-Way Test before the guest speaker takes the podium.

All these practices hardly serve any purpose. Mere "lip service" is useless.

It does not matter that you can not recite it verbatim. What's essential is to understand the message behind and practice what is preached. The underlying thrust is on Honesty, Ethics and Truthfulness.

This part of Vocational Service is to be performed by yourself. Nobody else can do it for you. You may be motivated, you may be encouraged, you may be inclined to be honest and ethical, but the buck stops at you.

In this world of today, we may feel that practicing 4-Way Test is impossible, but I urge you to give a little thought to this truth. You do not want to be cheated, you do not want to be betrayed, you do not want to suffer inferior services, you expect a fair deal from others. If these are your expectations, can you not offer the same to others? Total adherence to the 4-Way Test, may seem far-fetched, impossible or not practicable, but a couple of steps in this direction can one day turn into a march of many steps.

If all of us take a pledge to adhere to truthfulness and honesty, come what may, we would be travelling in the right direction.

Past Rotary International President Robert R. Barth once said "I suspect that for many Rotarians, The 4-Way Test is little more than a bit of Rotary legend, one more item of throw-away information. My friends, please do not disregard this simple slice of wisdom.

The Test remains highly valuable, ethical yardstick, still applicable in today's often confusing world. Using the Test as a guideline, we can all be better persons, better citizens, better business and professional people and better Rotarians."

The place to put The 4-Way Test, is not on the walls, but if necessary put it on the ceiling of your bedroom so that at night when you pray to God, your eyes will fall on The 4-Way Test and remind you that truthfulness and honesty are next to Godliness.

Promote Service

Small acts of service do not hamper you to think big and act big — in fact, these small acts of service train you to do big and give you confidence to achieve your goal.

You have heard about the story of the mongoose and the snake. The mongoose was a pet of the family and entertained the kids with its antics. The mongoose continued to do these small acts of service for the entire family. Once, when the adults of the family were out for some work, the children were left alone in the house when a deadly snake entered the house through an open window. The mongoose realised the danger the kids faced and attacked the snake. After a fierce and bloody battle, the snake was killed thus saving the children. Starting with small acts of service, entertaining children and even adults, the mongoose got an opportunity to do big.

Man is exposed to service, early in life and it is only when small acts of helpfulness give you satisfaction, recognition and happiness, that one ventures into larger areas of service. “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Service of greater magnitude starts with one step. These small acts of service not only trains us to do big but also motivates us for greater things. Success stories are initially written on a blank page. The first line on that blank page is very vital for more lines to follow. A paragraph or even a chapter can be written but the beginning is with a single line. When Mother Teresa was asked how she entered into the field of service, she is reputed to have said, “Begin with a modest beginning. Do not lose hope or faith. Greater achievements will follow.”

Let’s promote small acts of service and dream of mega projects later.

An act of helpfulness, however, insignificant it may seem is not only fondly appreciated but produces one more friend of Rotary — No person is so rich that he (or she) has a friend too many.

Service is measured not by the amount of money spent or the number of people it benefits or the efforts put in by Rotarians. It is measured by the satisfaction gained, relief provided and burden eased. When a major project is undertaken, it will benefit many and a small project will benefit only a few but the goodwill gained is going to be translated into co-operation in our future ventures and without co-operation of the community, no project will be deemed worthy or successful.

We can always begin with small acts of service, build up a relationship and ultimately venture into bigger challenges. The community will be ‘with’ you and it is equally important to have the community with you as also your Rotarian.

Mother Teresa for the Needy

Rotary's compassion, vigour and faith are responsible for bringing light into the lives of many depressed, deprived and demoralised people. These people perhaps have not known what it means to have a helping hand or a tender touch or an encouraging smile or a comforting grace.

Mother Teresa was one such person whose ideals and ideas matched those of Rotary. Rotary must create a society of totally committed and devoted Rotarians and their families who would play the role of Mother Teresa. Let Rotary be the "Mother Teresa" for the needy. This will elevate Rotary to the heights and enable it to win the Nobel Prize.

You must give some time for your fellow men. Even if it is a little thing, do something for those who are in need of help, something for which you get no pay, but the privilege of doing it. For remember, "You don't live in a world all alone. Your brothers and sisters are there too," says Albert Schweitzer.

Doing good and being good are both important. Service is the key that opens the door of divinity. Being good in doing good brings us closer to God.

When humility and service are your goal, you cannot fail. A tree bends a little as it bears fruits. A cloud descends a little when filled with water. Bending a little with humility brings intense responses from those whom you serve. Service was never meant for those who know not how to be humble. Humility is the first lesson in service and knowledge of what to do is the second.

Rotary thrives because of two reasons — the need for service and the army of Rotarians ready to provide service. When the first reason disappears — perhaps never — the second will become redundant — never, again. In this world, as in the past so also in future — Rotary will remain necessary and therefore Rotary will grow. Whereas the need for Rotary is not in our hands, the growth of Rotary is. It is very fortunate for Rotary that young people are available for service. It is also very fortunate that women — who have more compassion and more tenderness — are making Rotary more acceptable, more loving and more effective.

Rotary's foray in service will be an epic one day and motivate many to put in their efforts to make this world not only liveable but also lively.

Let us share our philosophy, action and commitment, with everyone around us. Let us build Heaven. It is possible.

Passion and Vision

There is in all of us, an energy that propels us to move beyond — a passion that has the power to turn our dreams, desires and visions into reality. This urges us to look for opportunities, to fight against the concepts of fate and luck, and to gain experience and expertise needed to conquer heights in spite of the many hurdles that may come on the way.

Passion is the ability to focus on your aim, the capacity to relentlessly direct yourself to the goal you have set and to be creative in achieving it. It provides you with a vision so vivid that you are inspired to go beyond the horizons and to courageously pursue your vision. Life will be bright and beautiful when you have found your passion because it brings along the desire to excel and no matter what, you will find yourself doing things that you have always dreamt of.

The Rotary Foundation solely depends upon Rotarians to turn its objectives to realities. We Rotarians, must demonstrate our passion for service and our visions of a strife-free world to turn this world into a liveable, lovable and luminous place to enjoy.

Rotarians have the energy to turn vision into reality. Mother Teresa has amply demonstrated what passion and commitment can achieve.

If we have the energy, we must be passionate for service. The ultimate goal of service is world peace. All our programmes of The Rotary Foundation aim at achieving a more peaceful world. Our multiple programmes of The Rotary Foundation — and a very important programme is polio eradication — aim at securing a happier world which can ensure peace.

If peace is our objective and service acts are the roads leading to peace, we must ensure that we have funds to attain our objectives. We need more funds. We have many opportunities. We need to join these two with a strong bond that can survive upheavals.

Rotarians have earned the respect of communities. Now if we have enough financial support, we can earn success. In order to succeed, we will need extra commitment, brighter visions and unwavering passions to utilise our financial resources to the maximum.

There is no doubt that we have that commitment, that passion, that vision. We therefore must provide more food for energy and this food is financial strength.

Find your passion, let it become part of you and you will find great things happen for you, to you and because of you.

Search Ahead with Serenity

The achievement oriented world of today has made life quite fast paced. People seek instant results in all their endeavours, and many setbacks are seen as the end of their road to success. In their quest to outdo everyone else and to be the best, many lose their sense of serenity. Achievers, they sure are! Yet, their achievements often fail to bring contentment in their life because in their pursuit to reach where no one else has reached, many could easily become agitated, selfish and even moody.

The ability to stay calm and collected, yet focused is the hallmark of a truly successful person. When you look at some of the very successful sports personalities like Rahul Dravid, Vishwanathan Anand, Saina Nehwal, Sachin Tendulkar and Sunil Gavaskar, you realise that in spite of the temporary setbacks, they always stood calm and focused and thus they were able to rise above the defeats and soar higher. It does not mean that they were unaffected by their failures. But they knew how to learn from their mistakes and move ahead with confidence, trying even harder.

Serenity is an evidence of peace. It denotes a calm atmosphere and a placid environment. The Rotary Foundation is totally dependent upon Rotarians who want to build a strong fortress. Have you realised that for every Rotarian, who financially contributes to The Rotary Foundation, there are many more who have neither supported it nor do they know exactly what TRF stands for? If we promote The Rotary Foundation to these members, they may be motivated to render assistance. There are many programmes of The Rotary Foundation — Scholarships, G.S.E, Peace Scholarship Grants and PolioPlus to name a few. A Rotarian may not be interested in one such arm of service but when exposed to the multiple activities of The Rotary Foundation, he may be motivated to help.

As Rotarians we have the obligation to spread the message of peace amongst all our members. Those in the clubs, who are given the responsibility of promoting The Rotary Foundation, must make all efforts to garner support of all those who are relatively unaware of the colossal work done by the Foundation. This will help TRF succeed in collecting handsome resources and will help Rotary become more meaningful, more viable and more effective.

It is never too soon or too late to build your TRF. Let us prove our ethical leadership by ethical steps we take to eradicate polio, for example. We must chart our journey in such a way that we can all join in the crusade for a polio-free world. Our crusade is also towards achieving peace and serenity. We need to strategise for a successful tomorrow by acting today.

Let us open the doors of The Rotary Foundation to all those who are relatively ignorant of the massive war we are waging against some deadly enemies.

Then you will find that your achievements are more worthwhile and your life a lot more interesting and enjoyable.

Let's Achieve Peace

At this crucial period, when nations are in a grip of global terrorism, tension and warring attitude, friendship and brotherhood have become empty words. Warmth in human relations and power of goodwill seems to be almost non-existent. Under the shadow of such extreme conditions, peace seems to be as elusive as a three-leaf clover.

Is there a solution? You may be disheartened and say "No." But if we have to save the planet from widespread miseries, irreparable destruction and almost total extinction, we should look for a solution and convert the "No" to "Yes."

It is just a matter of bringing people together. Politicians, fanatics and extremists may be a very strong hurdle to the solution, but by bringing people together, barriers may crumble and bridges of understanding and brotherhood can be built. A stranger becomes a friend and hostility dies as warmth surfaces.

If over 1.2 million Rotarians and its 2.1 million family members with over 100 times this number of friends, associates, employees and community workers can promote this concept, peace can not be far behind.

When peace is keenly desired, fanatics and politicians will have no option but to work for peace. Public opinion will force the opponents to change their stance. Rotary has many programmes in International Service to promote, propagate and enhance peace. Goodwill and understanding form the basis of peace and Rotary works towards this goal. The results of all these progress may not come immediately but let me confidently aver that the benefits of all our programmes will surely surface slowly but steadily to improve the peace building process of Rotary and we will be, then regarded as a force that brought about this change.

Even if Rotary is not given the credit it may deserve, desire and is entitled to, if peace prevails, Rotary will always be proud of our role. The task may be gigantic and our opponents too powerful but I am convinced that ultimately, every person wants peace to be happy and enjoy life and it is in this direction that Rotary works for peace. Let Rotary prevail. Let peace descend on this planet. Let brotherhood and universal love ensure a life full of friendship and contentment.

Don't React but Respond

When confronted with a problem, do we respond to the whole situation or react to it from our narrow experience? It is a reality that we have no control over people we meet or events that happen in our life. Thus we are often quick to react without realising that we do have control over our response.

Reacting and responding are not the same. A reaction is an action based on an awareness of a “narrow slice” of the situation. It implies that we have given charge of the situation to someone or something else. In reacting, we don't really think about what we are doing. We resort to certain negative patterns of thought and behaviour out of habit or in response to an emotional trigger. It results in tension and creates bitterness in people and thus relationships suffer.

J R D Tata used to say “To handle yourself you should use your head and to handle others, you should use your heart.”

You know anger is only one letter short of danger. We have to learn from the mistakes of others as we can't live long enough to make them all ourselves.

A response is an action that accomplishes goals based on a more thorough understanding of the whole situation. In such response, we have a command over how the situation and people influence us. Here we are taking responsibility for what has been said or done, why, as well as taking a moment to set aside our own emotional or historically learned content and try to respond in a way that will be constructive for both parties involved.

In any organisation such as Rotary, independence is equal, dependence is mutual and the obligations reciprocal. What this great organisation has done is to canalise individual compassion into a mighty river that flows for the benefit of a larger section of humanity which wants help. This is the key. Being together for common good is the objective. A Rotarian is one who responds authentically by being credible, trustworthy, responsive and genuine both as an individual and as a member of his club. If you react in haste, chances are that you might lose a friend and the charm of life. He who loses money, loses much; he who loses a friend, loses much more and he who loses faith, loses all.

Next time you find yourself emotionally hijacked make sure not to react. Respond positively and make a difference.

The Power of One

Life is a mystery which unfolds gradually. There are times we are confused and puzzled. But there are also definite moments of illumination and enlightenment. The mystery of life cannot be fully comprehended by one in isolation. Hence each of us needs to be assisted by those around us to understand and appreciate the mystery of life.

We often tend to belittle our strength when we come across problems that seem gigantic. Individuals can do commendable work when they put in their efforts to ease misery. It is aptly said “Do what you can. You may not be able to do everything but you can do something.”

We don't need to give up because of the size of the problem. If we don't ignore what we can do, we take a step towards solution of the problem. Opportunities to do small acts of service come daily. Problems of a gigantic nature come infrequently. We should, therefore, attend to our daily commitments and not concentrate only on major problems.

A smile on a face, happiness of even one individual, gratitude from the recipient can boost our morale and give us the satisfaction of doing something even for a few. Small acts of service are better appreciated when we do service with dedication and selflessness. The community recognises Rotary not because we are fighting for Peace. The community recognises Rotary not because we are involved neck deep in polio prevention. The community recognises Rotary not because we fight for environment. The simple fact is that the community recognises Rotary because it is seen in the midst of local needs and tends to cater to their needs. Healthcare, drinking water, adoption of villages and many such locally confined problems give the community a reason to believe in Rotary. It is the faith of the community in Rotary that can eventually build up a relationship where Rotary together with the co-operation of the community can fight major problems. It is but one Rotarian who can multiply the efforts of many more to help the needy.

Life gives us lot of opportunities to be the change that we want to be in our lives. The problem is that these opportunities are often disguised. Many miss the chance to be a good friend just because he/she has failed to notice a drop of tear or a tinge of pain in the eyes of another or has failed to give a nod of appreciation when the other needed it the most. These things do make a difference in the lives of others. Act as if these things make a difference. They do.

Let us therefore, not belittle the work of one person and forget that no major achievement is possible without that ‘one’ step by ‘one’ Rotarian. As said by the Chinese philosopher, Lao Tzu, “a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

Service Brings Happiness

Service is the work involving the use of the head, the heart and the hands for the welfare of others, irrespective of their status, caste or creed. It relieves the economically underprivileged through personal commitment to selfless service. It contributes to the works of development through physical labour. Service explores the potentials lying dormant in persons through education.

Service is concerned about the needs of others. It offers ample opportunities for the development of one's character and personality. Service prompts us to give selflessly without expecting anything in return.

There are many hues, many shapes, many sizes and many modalities of service. Service is good in whatever guise it may come just as a flower is beautiful in whichever flowering bed it blooms. And when love and dedication with humility work together, Rotary gets a masterpiece.

There are no boundaries, depths or heights for service. A Rotarian should not put conditions for service. A Rotarian who says he/she will work only when the conditions are perfect is as likely to work as the man sitting on the banks of a river and saying: I shall cross the river only when all the water has flown further. There are, therefore, no ideal conditions for service. Any time is service time. Any apt place is your location.

Rotary teaches us that happiness can exist only when those around us are happy. In order to see people around us happy, we must give something to others. We may give money, we can give attention, we can give solace, we can give love and we can give a smile. All that we give to others returns to us in the form of happiness, peace of mind and satisfaction.

Mahatma Gandhiji said, "Consciously or unconsciously, every one of us does render some service to others. If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make, not only for our own happiness, but that of the world at large."

Once we decide to make others happy, we will obtain happiness. Rotary offers us unlimited opportunities and avenues of distributing happiness. Rotarians can forever be happy because they have an inclination and an opportunity to help others.

About the Author



Rtn. Ashok Mahajan

Rtn. Ashok Mulkraj Mahajan, member of Rotary Club of Mulund, RI District 3140, Mumbai, India has been involved in Rotary since 1973 and rose from an ordinary member to the coveted position of RI Director 2007–09 by his commitment to the Rotary movement. He was the President of RC Mulund in 1982–83 and District Governor, RI District 3140 in 1993–94.

Born on July 23, 1947, he graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering degree from the Bombay University with distinction and then took a Diploma in Operations Management and Business Management from the Bombay University. He now runs an industry for manufacturing electrical and electronic components.

He has been RI President's representative to District Conferences many times and was also appointed as the Zonal Coordinator for Membership Task Force in 1995–96 and again in 1998–99. He was a Member of the World Affairs Committee during 2003–05.

He was associated with the National PolioPlus Committee for over 10 years and now he is a member of the International PolioPlus Committee of TRF. He was instrumental in the formation of the Muslim Ulama Committee in India, which supported the polio eradication programme. He also served as the Zonal Coordinator for Avoidable Blindness Task Force during 2000–02 and was a member in the India Presidential PolioPlus Summit 2001–02. He represented RI District 3140 at the 2001 Council on Legislation, Chicago.

Rtn. Ashok Mahajan was conferred with the Distinguished Service Award, Service above Self Award, Regional Service Award for a Polio-free world and the Golden Century Award. He is a major donor to TRF, benefactor and a member of the Paul Harris Society.

Rtn. Ashok Mahajan has been inducted as a Trustee of The Rotary Foundation of RI for the period 2009–13. This assignment has been given to him immediately after he completed his tenure as RI Director in June 2009.

He is the Vice Chairman, fund development of The Rotary Foundation for the year 2011–2012.

His wife Nayantara and all the members of his family ably support him in his work in Rotary. He is blessed by his parents in his quest for service. A deeply religious person, Rtn. Ashok Mahajan enjoys reading, cricket, walking and social service.