

THE MIDTOWNER

BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF CALCUTTA MIDTOWN

President: Rtn. Mayuri Mody Doshi | Secretary: Rtn. Shalini Agarwal | Editor: Rtn. Radhika Sahni
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 Guest Editor - Special Edition

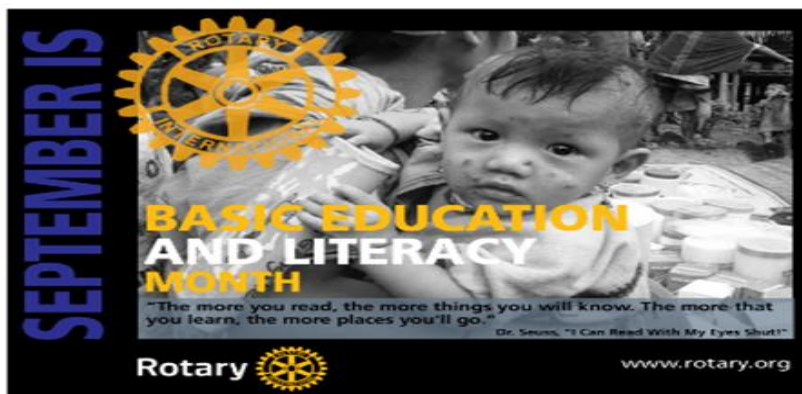
Paving the way for Education

India's Literacy Rate is estimated to be about 78% in 2022. While we have been celebrating the rise in literacy from an abysmal 12% in 1947 when we gained independence, I believe a greater worry is the fact that we are ignoring education parameters.

Every literate person cannot be called an educated person. Education is a much broader concept- it changes the person, enabling them to understand the world around them, make sense of information, acquire skills, values, morals, knowledge, and fulfil their responsibility towards the society and country. Literacy cannot make a person wise, but education can. Education is thus not limited to the ability to read texts and books, or getting degrees, but caters to the overall development of an individual.

According to the **2005 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report**, which incorporates the 2001 census, India ranked 106 out of 127 countries surveyed in terms of literacy. Our country is trying hard to make all her citizens literate but is not focussing on education in that process. Some steps in this regard have been taken with the new National Education Policy introduced in 2020 but there is still a long way to go for its proper implementation across the country.

I am happy to see the focus Rotary has given on both by labelling September as "Basic Education and Literacy Month", and I suggest we all read the suggestions the Foundation has given in this regard. Additionally, I hope the topics covered in this issue will open your eyes to the educational needs in our country and give you ideas on how you, as responsible citizens and Rotarians, can contribute towards this cause.



[Click Here](#)

Nirmal Agarwal



Guest editor

Rural Education - The Key to India's Century

87% of the schools in India are in the country's villages. Government statistics and independent surveys have revealed that over 90% of elementary level schools here are run by the government.

Right to Education is the primary right of every citizen, whether a child resides in a high profile urban area or in an underdeveloped village. While the condition of rural education is improving, the conditions at most of these rural schools are still very poor.

There are very few schools in the rural areas and children often travel long distances to avail these facilities.

Problems And Bottlenecks exist

Most schools in these locations do not provide hygienic washrooms or even drinking water.

The quality of education is also very poor. The teachers are not well paid and often resort to moonlighting resulting in their absence from school or lack of interest in teaching. Lets make this in info graphics.

What needs to be done

Upgrading Educational Infrastructure

Most government schools are in dire need of well-resourced classrooms, clean and functional toilets, libraries with diverse books, adequate play areas, and smart classes.



Training of Teachers

However, just building infrastructure is only one step. We have seen the lack of teachers, and even where there are teachers, they are often not trained to handle the curriculum nor have the motivation to make a difference for their students. A massive effort is needed to increase the motivation level of teachers and training them to augment their skills of observation, facilitation, content knowledge, and pedagogy.



Innovative Teaching Methods

Internet is available across most of our country now and should be used to bring information and better content into rural classrooms as well. Why must students depend only on the knowledge of their own teachers when they have the combined expertise of the world to learn from. Teachers should use external content to facilitate and augment their deliberations.



Promoting Digital Literacy

Despite the proliferation of the internet, there is still a visible digital divide between most urban vs rural areas of our country. We must educate all children on basic computer and internet literacy to enable everyone to harness the power of modern technological resources.



Integrating Vocational Education

Fortunately, the National Education Policy 2020 has already taken steps in this direction and aims to provide access to vocational education to at least 50 per cent of all learners by 2025. The close integration of Vocational learning with learning outcomes and performance will lead to strategic career path planning once the students reach the secondary education phase.



Social Entrepreneurship in Education

Social entrepreneurship, unlike business entrepreneurship, is seen as a way to innovate and help resolve the problems of society by building up strong and sustainable organisations that choose to put their mission before profits. We have a vibrant entrepreneurial culture in our country and fortunately, several entrepreneurs are looking towards augmenting government efforts to solve India's educational needs. I have been impressed with a few ventures that are addressing these needs across spectrums and wish to highlight the work they are doing as a motivation for more ideas from our side.

Bharat Calling tries to address the appalling dropout rates and increase awareness amongst rural students about the kinds of opportunities that are available to them by way of higher education. They conduct a simple orientation in rural government schools, sharing the various career options, followed by a camp of 30 days that enables students to apply for admission to higher education institutes of their choice.



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To address the fundamental right of every visually challenged child to listen to stories, **The Kahani Project** started creating a repository of audio stories which are available free of cost for anyone to download and use. They also conduct story telling sessions at various schools for visually challenged children. Their plans include conducting similar sessions across a variety of places including orphanages, old age homes, juvenile detention centres, among others.

Experifun addresses the gaps in communication between curriculum and the student by creating a platform where children can interact with real objects in real time. Experifun provides teaching material and gadgets that are hands-on & interactive, and equipped to answer the millions of questions that the children will invariably come up with.





Classle connects teachers and students from institutions across the world through a platform where most of the educational content is common. The curriculum is based on undergraduate subjects in engineering, pure sciences and management, made available to students through an online library, quizzes, workshops and other interactive elements.

The site is designed in a manner that attracts several students from tier two and tier three cities, especially those with a socioeconomic divide.

Hippocampus helps schools run and maintain libraries, train teachers on how to get students involved in library activities and the organisation is currently [establishing low-cost, community-focused education centres with a unique curriculum](#), in different places across the country.

The Rotary Club of Dar es Salaam Oyster Bay brings you the Rotary Four-Way Test as a song.



[Click here](#)



Open air Library at Ruurlo in Netherlands. The books are in bookcases in a century - old Chestnut tree trunk, made by carpenter Rene Bruns.



Editor-Speak

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Rtn. Nirmal Agarwal for coming on board as the Guest Editor for this special issue of 'The Midtownier' focusing on Basic Education. Nirmal, your insightful and informative articles on how we as individuals or as an organisation can help our immediate environment and society in turn by driving positive change through education is much appreciated. I am sure all of us at RCCM will imbibe positively from this maiden guest-editor issue.

Rtn. Radhika Sahni

Anniversary



Ravi & Renu Dhawan
11th October



Preeti & Neeraj Agarwal
20th October

Birthday

"Cheers to another wonderful year"



08-October Hitesh Dani



16-October Atul Makharia



17-October Suchi Narula



18-October Sreekant Pasari



23-October Yugal Sikri

Minutes of the Meeting

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DISTRICT 3291

Club No. 16155 II Charter Date: 16/06/1975



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Minutes of the 2105th Continuous and 6th Meeting for the year 2022-2023 of Rotary Club of Calcutta Midtown, held on Thursday, 6th October 2022 at 6.30 pm in Small Phoenix Hall at Saturday Club.

Meeting called to order: President Mayuri Mody Doshi called the 2105th continuous and 6th meeting of 2022-2023 to order.

National Anthem: The National Anthem was sung by all.

President Mayuri Mody Doshi welcomed Ms. Lalita Seth, Rtn Sanjeev Seth, Mr. Sanjeev Fogla, PDGs Rtns Rajani Mukerji, Ajay Agarwal, Sudip Mukherjee, Inner Wheel President Pratibha Jaan, all the members, Annes other guests. She thanked everyone for coming on the solemn occasion to pay their homage and tribute to late PDG Rtn Kamal Seth. She informed the floor that that only the last meeting minutes would be passed, and all other matters would be deferred.

Confirmation of previous meeting minutes: The 2104th continuous and 5th meeting minutes for the year 2022-2023 were passed and seconded by Rtn Dr. Biman Chakraborty and Rtn Bhupesh Kapoor respectively.

President Mayuri Mody Doshi address: President Mayuri thanked all the members and guests to have come on this solemn occasion to pay respect and homage to our beloved PDG Rtn Late Kamal Seth. She went on to add that she was sure that Late Kamalji had touched the lives of each one of us at some point or other. Her first impression of him was a soft spoken, jovial, and kind person. She recalled as to how after Rtn Samir Doshi and she were inducted he very patiently explained them nuances about Rotary. She always thought of him as the guiding light for Midtown and now that he was no more, each Midtowner would miss his guidance and that he would always be in our thoughts. She requested Kamalji 's son Rtn Sanjeev Seth to say a few words about his late father.

Rtn Sanjeev Seth: He thanked everyone for organizing the memorial on behalf of his family. He went on to say that if there was anything that his dad loved more than anything in the world, it was Rotary. Until his last moments whenever possible he would attend the Rotary meetings. He recounted how even if he called him to speak from Oman, he would be asked

to call back later as his father was busy with a virtual Rotary meeting. He recalled how his father joined Midtown in 1975 and how would attend the meetings and come talk to him and his sister about it and on several Sundays, would be made to accompany their father to Narendrapur Blind Boys academy. Although they were unwilling to go but once they were there and saw what Rotary was doing, they realized what it was all about. He recalled how his dad's colleagues at that point of time, including PD uncle, Ranjit uncle, Biman Uncle, Dr. Vijay Mehta, would be passionate about the project. That's what inspired him to join Rotary later in life and joined as the Charter Secretary of Calcutta Cosmopolitan in 1990. He recalled how his father would always say they must do social service and give back to society which had given them so much. That lesson had stayed with both him and his sister. He went on to reiterate how his dad had a lot of success in his Rotary career, even becoming District Governor, but the humanitarian part of him never left him. He never bothered about what people said and did it all from his heart. That's a lesson they want to remember and follow. Their father always told them "Do it because you believe in it" and he felt fortunate that both he and his sister had imbibed that quality. For his mother it's a very difficult time but she was in good hands with the Midtowners who were dear friends.

PDG Rtn Rajani Mukerji: He said that late PDG Rtn Kamal Seth was a fantastic human being and recalled the kind of support and guidance he received from Kamal when he became the district governor. Kamalji was an inspiration to him, and anytime he needed guidance on any matter Kamalji was just a call away. He and his wife were very close to Kamal and Lalitaji. As he was not in town when it happened, he was thankful to the club and President for giving him the opportunity to pay his homage. Kamal was one person who always did good for the world, and never misused his position. He was a simple Rotarian and a great person, always there to help wherever needed irrespective of his designation. It's a real loss to Rotary Dist. 3291 and to him as well.

PDG Rtn Sudip Mukherjee: He started off by telling how two generations of his family had known Late PDG Rtn Kamal Seth. Both he and his father had been in close contact with Kamal sir. When he had become the Governor for Dist. 3291, Kamalji had been a guiding force for him. And his father would remember Kamalji fondly amongst all the PDGs he had known. Kamalji always had kind words for the new Governors and would be the guiding factor for them. He recalled how he along with his wife had spent memorable times with Lalitaji and Kamalji.

PDG Rtn Ajay Agarwal: It was indeed a tragic and sad moment for Rotary Club of Calcutta Midtown as it had lost its most memorable and respected pillar in the passing of Late PDG Rtn Kamal Seth. He offered his condolences to the Rotary Club of Midtown family as a whole and Kamal bhai sahab's family, Lalitaji, and son Sanjeev at the irreparable loss they have suffered. He recalled joining Rotary in 1988 and in 1989 when he was the secretary of his club, he had the opportunity to observe Kamalji as the governor.

He appreciated Kamalji's jovial and amiable personality and remembered how Kamalji would always pull his leg once he became the Governor Elect. His going away was a big shock to him. Since he was away when it all happened, he thanked Midtown for giving him the opportunity to pay his tribute. He also appreciated the way Kamalji as a PDG had mentored Midtown.

Rtn Dr. Biman Chakraborty: He recalled working together with Late PDG Rtn Kamal Seth for the last 47 years. To him Kamalji was a person who could handle all sorts of problems. People would come to him with their problems, and he would always have solutions for them. He urged the members to cherish the memories rather than mourn the passing on. Kamalji's contribution to society has been exemplary and he was very closely associated with the tube well project in the Sundarbans. Bimanda also recounted how Kamalji convinced four farmers in 24 Parganas (south) to cultivate capsicum in 5 cottas of land each and gave them the incentive that if they did not earn profits, Rotary Midtown would compensate them. It was so successful that the entire village took it up. This is what rotary means, make a change in the society. That's the kind of person he was who with his original ideas would try and make a change. A handsome man with an ever-smiling face, his contribution to his club, District and Rotary International are all very remarkable. It's sad he is no more, and we must remember his achievements.

Rtn Ranjit Sen: He said that he would like to remember late PDG Rtn Kamal Seth in totally different ways. Everyone had spoken about his achievements. There is no doubt about them and would admire him always. He and Rtn Dr Biman Chakraborty had known him since the inception of the club. He had known Late PDG Rtn Kamal to always enjoy life and recalled the various parties and other Rotary programs that they attended together; and he would like to remember him in those fun times. Kamal was an active Rotarian while he was a passive one. He suggested the Midtown should look at a meaningful project and dedicate to him.

Rtn Dr. Kalyan Sarkar: He recalled his days when he had joined about two decades back. Being a younger member of the club, he felt privileged to have come close to Late PDG Rtn Kamal Seth. He quickly realized that he was a model for the Rotary spirit. The devotion with which he addressed the Rotary activities was admirable. He was the source of advice and inspiration to all. He recalled how Kamalji and Lalitaji extended their full support to the medical camps in the Sundarbans. He went on to say how he was honored to be blessed with all his good wishes at the different stages of his association with Rotary. For him Rotary was a way of life, and it was admirable how he had inspired his family, children, and grandchildren to be a part of Rotary.

Rtn Dr. Surinder Kapoor: He started by saying how sad it was to be here paying homage to a great person like Kamalji. He had joined Rotary approximately fourteen years back that's when he met Kamalji. He recalled how he had imbibed the ethos and values of Rotary amongst all gathered here. He was a true gentleman and always practiced the ethos of Rotary. As a person he was always ready to help anyone anytime. He was always ready to discuss matters and they came very close to his family also. The kind of value system he has imbibed in his children speaks volume for the kind of person he was. He spoke about a time when his wife Kiran was not keeping well and were in Chandigarh. He called up to inquire about her and told him that all would be well, and they would chant to create a healing effect for her.

Rtn Bhupesh Kapoor: He described him as a philanthropist, a true Rotarian, living by the ethos and values of Rotary. He had known him for the last 23/24 years. During this time, he had come close to him and his family. Lalitaji and he made a wonderful couple, did good for the people and their children have imbibed the same values. He further added that Kamalji was a tall personality, a stalwart of Rotary, and at the same time, a very unassuming person always willing to help and support. During his presidentship Kamalji guided him and has been mentoring Midtowners as well as other Rotarians too. He was an excellent conversationalist. As a human being he enjoyed life and it was commendable how being a family man he was also the guiding force to a lot of people. He lovingly would call him Bisham Pitamah of Midtown. He also recalled how the Midtown project Parishkar Kolkata was conceived by him. It's a sad moment but we should rejoice the company we have enjoyed with him and to honor him try and follow the things he has taught us. Lalitaji had stood by him shoulder to shoulder in all his endeavors. She should further continue to carry on his legacy.

Rtn Hardeep Singh: It's a sad moment but we must look at it as a celebration of life. A tall personality and a person who is so well loved, a true Rotarian and a great human being who went through each phase of life beautifully. He and Bilan had fond memories with both. They were a unique couple who were not trying to compete neither professionally nor personally. Both had a standing on their own and were always working hand in hand. In a lot of ways, he was like a child pure at heart who would smile and laugh at the same time, he was a non-political kind of person. He went on to convey that he always looked up to him.

Mrs. Sumi: She had found memories of him and had known them even before the Rotary club was formed. Despite all his achievements in Rotary, Kamal was just a friend to her. She still visualized him as this tall handsome man with his bell bottom pants, his lovely hair style. She recalled the fantastic fellowships where they would all dance and laugh and have fun. He had this distinct laughter and a distinct walk which she could never forget. She would always remember him as a very good friend.

Rtn Narendra Gulati: Although he had joined Rotary just a few months back, he had known Kamalji for more than 50 years. He recalled what a good listener Kamal ji was and when he met him for the pre-induction meeting to give him the rundown on Rotary, but instead Kamalji just kept listening to him talk. He had got to know them well in the last few years and Kamalji will be missed.

Rtn Rakesh Sahni: He first met him in at a very early age in a forum called communication workshop, something very close to Kamalji's heart. He recalled how Kamalji had explained that empathy, communication, and the understanding of each other as human beings can be a corner stone of one's life. This explains what Kamalji was all about. Being a mentor to a 55-member club and then being mentor to the district at large is a not easy. Age was just a number to him. He would not push as a mentor can never have an agenda. It takes a lot of courage to say what you think is right. He walked the talk. It was a pleasure to know him as a Rotarian as a human being. He was thankful for that workshop which had shaped his life He felt privileged to have known him.

Rtn Sanjay Choudhury: He recalled how he met him at Saturday club for the pre induction meeting. Later during his tenure as President, Sanjay was appreciative of how Kamalji had anonymously donated Rupees 5 lakhs to the trust account and did not want his name to be disclosed. Kamalji would be missed and Sanjay offered his condolences to the family.

Rtn Yogesh Gupta: Rtn Yogesh said that Kamalji was one of the most honored Rotarian in the club and our district. When he became the president of the club and met other Rotarians in the district the only name he heard from everyone was of Late PDG Rtn Kamal Seth. He was the mentor of our club for so many years. Late Rtn Parez Razda had introduced him in to the movement and his Pre induction meeting was with Late PDG Rtn Kamal Seth. There were no talks of Rotary and he made the new inductees feel very comfortable by saying that just understand what rotary was all about, what makes a Rotarian, and that there are no compulsions. When he took over as the president of Midtown, he was probably the youngest to take over and was really worried that the seniors would impose their thoughts on him. But nothing like that happened. They were all supportive of him and let him do as he wanted and Kamalji was always encouraging.

Mrs. Lalita Seth: She started by thanking Rotary Midtown. She further added that Late PDG Rtn Kamal Seth's life's big integral part was Rotary Club of Midtown and he had been very devoted to Rotary all his life. She spoke about the downturn in the club which had affected him very badly he was very upset for a long time and then some Round Tablers joined, and he was so happy as he felt that these young people would take the legacy of Midtown to greater heights. She spoke about Midtowns glorious days, the fellowships, and the bonding between all of them. Lalitaji thanked all for saying such kind words about Kamalji and promised that she would try to be part of Rotary as and when she could.

Attendance: 25 Members / 46% attended the meeting.

President Rtn Mayuri Mody Doshi thanked everyone for their kind words. It was also an eye opener for all of us as they were so many things which was shared by the members which none of us knew about. She also mentioned that Kamalji will always be missed and She requested Lalitaji to stay in touch and attend Midtown meetings and fellowships.

The meeting was then closed on this note.

Rtn. Shalini Agarwal
Secretary
2022-2023