

Hill Echoes

Bulletin of Rotary Club of Thane Hills

Issue # 10 - April 2023

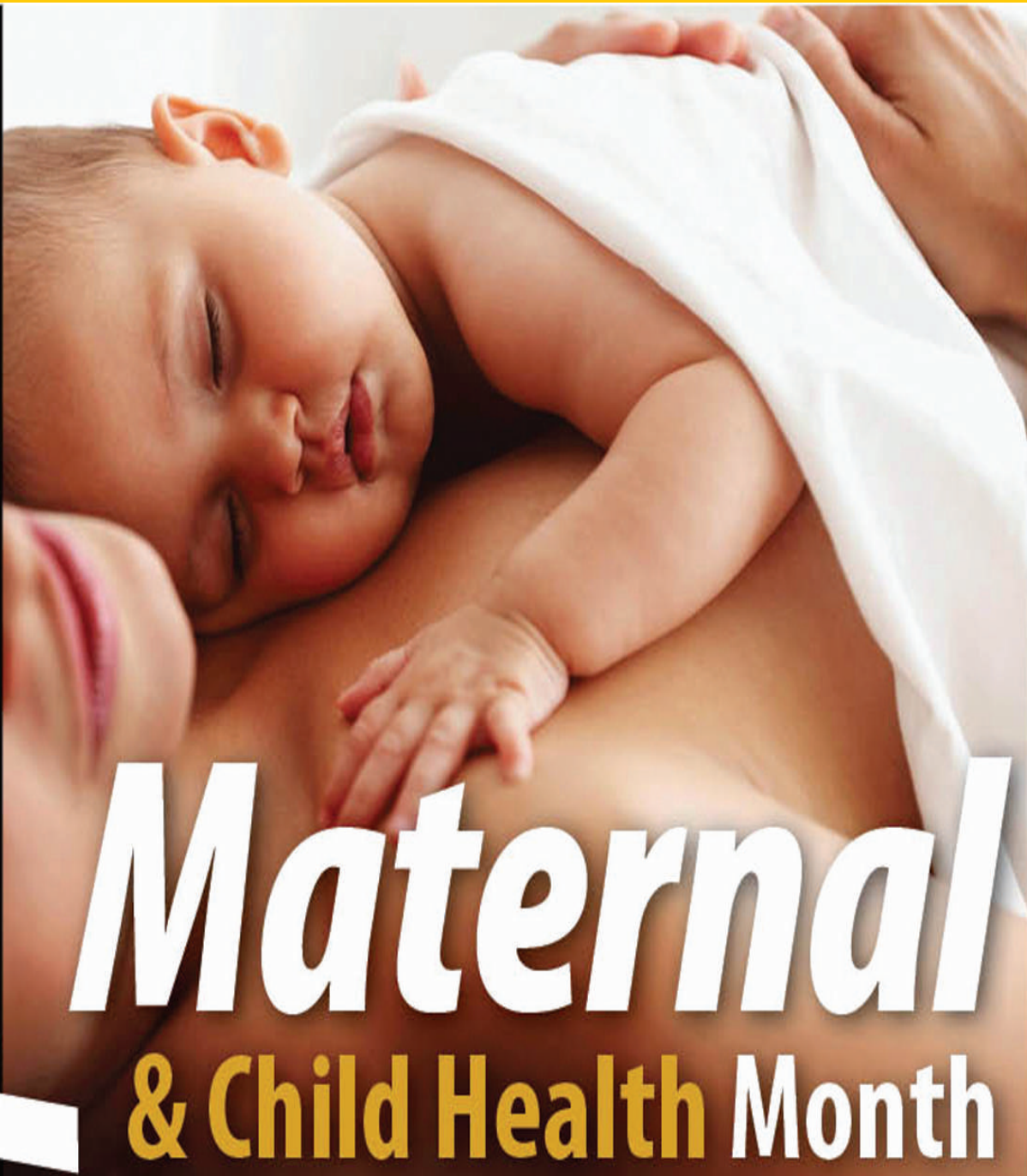
RI President: Jennifer Jones

Club President: Jayaram Mendon

Club Secretary: Samir Limaye

DG: Kailash Jethani

April



Maternal & Child Health Month

Rotary



*“It is health that is real wealth
and not pieces of silver.”
Mahatma Gandhi*



President's Message

Rotary Pranam to All Hillers...

Month of March Kick started with Vocation Excellence Award and Women's Day celebration. More than 125 Hillers and family members joined the celebration. PP Rajeev Tipnis along with his committee members did a fantastic job. The event was a great success. And the month ended with a panel discussion of Annets, thanks to Sunil Gwalani. Second time a regular meet has seen 60+ Hillers this year. We will be definitely doing one more panel discussion with Annets before the end of this year.

India is blessed with so many rivers and approximately 50% of its boundary is surrounded by water. Looking at the rainfall and statistics it is very hard to believe that we are heading towards a dire situation. State of Maharashtra and our own district Thane is not spared of this. Water level is continuously depleting and groundwater is getting polluted at an alarming rate. We as Rotary Club of Thane Hills are doing our bit for the society. In the past we have built dams, check dams etc. With the efforts PP Anindya Dasgupta, we will be getting funds from M/s. Solar Turbine for check dams this year. Minimum 6 to 7 check dams can be built with the Solar Turbine donation. PP Nilesh Likhite has been working on the project. Some more projects are underway in new ways of generating water in rural & urban areas.

The Month of March is Water and Hygiene Month. We are working on both fronts. Thanks to PP Atul Bhide, RC Thane Hills has completed and handed over 1000+ toilet blocks in the past at rural areas of Thane district and it will continue this project in future as well. Club Secretary Samir Limaye brought 4.25 lacs from M/s. Luna Technologies for building toilet blocks at Zilla parishad schools. We have identified four schools, where we will be building toilet blocks for school children.

We have already spent 3 quarters of Rotary year 22/23. We will be pushing last quarter on completing the projects. Toilet blocks, Eye check up camps & surgeries, Knee implants, Check dams and Autism center will be on focus. Thanks to Dr. Raju & Dr. Sita Raju for donating 40k USD for the autism project through Rotary India CSR. This will add to the club's TRF contribution as well. Thanks to PP Vijay Shetty completing the required documentation.

April is Maternal and Child Health month. We will be doing various camps in the coming month. We got our first camp on the 7th of April. The project is supported by Dr Uday Gadgil along with our Deodhar Interact Club.

Thank you all for your continuous support....

Jayaram Mendon



Editorial

Friends March was also a very eventful month for Hillers. The vocational awards and women's day celebrations were huge success with record attendance. Panel discussion with our young annets was another program that was big success, we enjoyed the interaction. We had attendance of sixty two for the meeting. Hillers do want to know about what the young generation thinks. Then there were many activities like our cataract surgeries score crossing twenty and our successes in garnering CSR funds.

April is Maternal and child health focus area for Rotary. In our country, we have made big strides in health sector. The life expectancy has increased from 34 years to 69 years since independence. Another important achievement is of reduction of maternal mortality to five percent of what it was at the time of Independence. Still a lot needs to be done. You will get more info on the subject in PP Dr. Suhas's article.

The maternal and child mortality is definitely the most important aspect of our health initiative, be it government or any NGO like ours. Pregnancy-related complications are the number one cause of death among girls between 15 and 19 years of age. Because adolescent girls are still growing themselves, they are at greater risk of complications if they become pregnant. Moreover, child brides are less likely to receive proper medical care while pregnant or to deliver in a health facility, compared to women married as adults.

Maternal mortality ratio also vary across social conditions, with the large North Indian states contributing a disproportionately-large proportion of deaths. Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, for example, have high rates of fertility and maternal mortality while Kerala and Tamil Nadu have rates comparable with middle-income countries.

The status of women is generally low in India, except in the southern and eastern states. Female literacy is only 54%, and women lack the empowerment to take decisions, including decision to use reproductive health services. Rotary or any other NGO has very big scope to work in this area.

Rajesh Salaskar



Maternal and Child Health - A focus area of Rotary!

April is Maternal and Child Health month, a significant focus area of our esteemed organization. This is therefore a good time to review the indices of Maternal and Child care and to see what we as Rotarians and members of Society can do to improve the situation.

In recent decades, the world in general - and India in particular - has made significant progress reducing newborn and maternal deaths. Between 1990 and 2020, global newborn mortality rate was almost halved.



But newborns and mothers are still dying in unacceptably large numbers, mostly from preventable or treatable causes, such as infectious diseases and complications during pregnancy or childbirth.

Uneven access to affordable, high-quality health care and services impedes many countries from improving maternal and newborn survival and reducing stillbirths.

A significant proportion of maternal and newborn deaths occurs in settings of conflict or displacement!

In 2020, an estimated 2.4 million newborns died worldwide, in the first month of life.

If current trends continue, 48 million children under the age of 5 are projected to die between 2020 and 2030, half of them newborns.

Globally, every two minutes, a woman dies during pregnancy or childbirth. In 2020, there were an estimated 287,000 deaths worldwide. About 70 per cent of those maternal deaths were in sub-Saharan Africa.



Severe bleeding, high blood pressure, pregnancy-related infections and complications from unsafe abortions are the leading causes of maternal deaths. These are all largely preventable with access to high-quality healthcare. If this trend isn't reversed, the lives of over 1 million more women are at risk by 2030.

The Indian story:

At the time of independence in 1947, India had a Maternal Mortality rate (MMR) of 2000 per 100,000 live births, meaning that 2 out of every 100 mothers were dying during childbirth! Our Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) was 150. Today, due to various factors, we have reduced MMR to 103 and IMR to less than 28 (2021 figures).

Let us look at some of these factors:

1. Policy changes and Government Schemes: The launch of several schemes such as National Health Mission (NHM), National Rural Health Mission (NHRM) focus on providing direct access to improve Maternal and Child Health. Within these, Janani Surakshit Yojana (JSY) enables direct cash transfer to pregnant mothers, and



Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK) enables deliveries in Government hospitals for free. Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matrutva Abhiyan (PMSMA) focuses on antenatal care and identification and management of high risk pregnancies. Peripheral policies such as constructing toilets, enhancing women safety and facilitating girl child education have helped tremendously.

2. Enhancing Supply strength and developing skilled manpower: A three tier healthcare model was launched, with PHCs at rural level, secondary care at district level and tertiary care at regional level. To facilitate a better ratio of doctors to general population, number of medical colleges were started over the years. Creation of Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) and Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers helped in improving care to pregnant mothers. Today we have over a million ASHA workers who aid the Government in immunizing children across the country!

3. Technological advances: We are leveraging technology in every aspect of mother and child care. Foetal ultrasonography tremendously improved antenatal care. Detection and management of Gestational Diabetes, Hypertension in antenatal stage, pneumonia in newborns, availability of newborn intensive care units – these are some of the developments that even I have

personally seen coming up in the 4 decades that I have been practising pediatrics!

While there has been great improvement, there are several challenges in our country yet to be fully addressed:

1. Urban rural imbalance in available healthcare infrastructure
2. Varying seriousness accorded to the key goals of MMR and IMR across different states



3. Inadequate maternal nutrition
4. Religious and cultural practices as against standard scientific practices
5. Inconsistent immunization practices

What is Rotary's role help in reducing MMR and IMR across the country?

1. We can provide education to prospective mothers – how to successfully breast feed, how to prevent mother to child HIV transmission, how to protect themselves and their children from disease



2. We can provide birth kits to facilitate safe motherhood in remote and underprivileged communities

3. Immunization support to government and municipal authorities, which we have done so admirably for polio and have also formed a superb Club to Health Centre network

4. Mobile health clinics will go a long way in addressing these issues.

So, to conclude, a reduction of MMR by 95% (2000 to 105 per 100000) and an equally commendable reduction in IMR is indeed laudable. But to address the remaining 5% will demand changes in our approach, and if we are to stand next to countries like Finland, (which has an MMR of 3 per 100000), we will have to make all round, concerted efforts!!

Rotarians are never lacking in determination, resources, and efforts!! Let's do all we can for a bright future!!

PP Dr Suhas Kulkarni

District Chair, Community Service (Medical)

"There never was a time in our history when ignorance of current affairs could be so dangerous."

Friends, I am sure you all have consumed a lot of news in the last year and a quarter...

...and now it is time to check your **News Quotient (NQ).**

Come, join us for another engaging and enlightening quiz show



Come and let people know all the time you spent on Newspapers, TV and Social Media was worthwhile.

PDG Dr. Ashes Ganguly completes full circle by winning “Service Above Self” award

PDG Dr. Ashes Ganguly has been recognized with prestigious “Service above Self” award for Rotary year 2022-2023.

“Service above self” award is given to Rotarians and Rotractors who demonstrate their commitment to helping others by volunteering their time and talents.

He completes full circle of highest Rotary awards by winning all three:

- 1) Service Above Self
- 2) Rotary Foundation Distinguished Service Award
- 3) Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service

This makes him the only Rotarian to receive all three awards in district 3142 till date .

Let's congratulate PDG Dr Ashes Ganguly, for his extraordinary achievement.



Vocational Awards and Women's Day celebration

Fiends, combining the Vocational Awards and Women's Day celebration was excellent idea. Getting so many accomplished women who have contributed so much to the society was a task. We feel proud that such personalities are among us. It's also the Rotarians duty to recognize good work in society through "Vocational awards". We also learn new ways and avenues how society can be benefitted.



Here's the information about the great work being done by this year's awardees.

Sister Ancy took up the responsibility of Holy Cross Convent Special School as a Principal in the year 2006. Her dedicated and committed services to the poor and needy are remarkable! Her



exemplary and disciplinary life has brought out the best in many people. Her vision for the future is so high that she started the Career Training Centre to impart vocational training for special children to prepare them for employment opportunities.

Bharathy Tahiliani has worked for the past 20 years, in various areas like child protection, gender, women & violence, HIV/AIDS and WASH (Water Sanitation & Hygiene). She has been a consultant with UNICEF on Child Protection and later with WASH. She has been instrumental in designing training modules on a range of topics dealing with communication and behavioural change, media and communication effectiveness, Life Skills Development amongst Adolescent girls, Human trafficking, Gender and Gender based Violence; and WASH.

Bharathy is the founder & managing trustee of Kshamata, a registered trust, whose mission is to transform lives and bring



liberation by unshackling women and adolescent girls faced with vulnerable and exploitative situations. Kshamata empowers them to become respected, productive and makes them earning citizens by providing on-going care and support, soft skills and life skills, vocational training and placement.

A science post graduate, **Dr Madhura Phadke** completed her Doctorate in Analytical Chemistry from Mumbai University and has worked on anti-arthritis & anti jaundice herbal medicines for her doctoral studies.

She is the first Principal of Pawar Public School, Bhandup and Principal of Pawar Public school, Chandivali. Both the schools today are extremely reputed ICSE schools in Mumbai. Under her leadership Pawar Public Schools were adjudged amongst the top 50 schools in Mumbai for 5 consecutive years.

She has held various prestigious positions including Convener for ICSE Examination for the schools affiliated to the CISCE, Secretary of the Managing committee of EUMIND - India (Europe Meets India - an educational exchange programme).

She has published several papers in international and national journals on super conductivity & herbal medicines and has also co-authored a book on education systems around the globe.

Ms. Meena Naik is a versatile personality. She has been a theatre actor, a TV artiste, a puppeteer, a film actress, a social worker, and an activist.

She has used puppetry and theatre techniques in the education, orientation, and motivation of children especially the girl child in the field of trafficking, abduction, molestation, abuse, sexual harassment and rape.



Her main activity for the past 45 years has been the use of puppetry and theatre techniques in Agit-Prop productions in the field of Tobacco Control, AIDS Awareness with sex workers, Child Sexual abuse, child trafficking, Leptospirosis prevention, Swachha Bharat Abhiyan, and POCSO Act.

Her greatest success in the field of child education and awareness has been her epoch-making productions of वाटेवरती काचा ग....., ये बेनकाब चेहरे and the latest अभया on child sex abuse, child exploitation, and the POCSO Act respectively.

Ms. Mubarakka Lokhandwala Ghadiyali is Dynamic Entrepreneur. She has successfully proven her track record in several Industries such as Travel, Real Estate and the Medical Tour.



Ms. Mubarakka is a founding member of Commission for Peace of the United Nations University for peace and an Ambassador to the United Nations University for Peace globally. She has also been appointed as Ambassador to the Delphic games Globally. She has been Awarded the LCGI Award from city and Guilds UK.

Ms. Mubarakka runs an online portal www.getinvestment.com which helps provide Investments to women in the Rural Areas to get support for their home-based cottage and small scale Industries in the form of Investments. She is also a pilot and an international lawyer. She also is the Chief Trustee of Meri Saheli India foundation which focuses on women empowerment.

Brahma Kumari Rekha Didi

completed Masters in Commerce and taught the school children as her passion. Deep love for spiritual knowledge and meditation brought her in contact with Brahma Kumaris. Their philosophy and meditative lifestyle attracted her to such an extent that she surrendered her complete life in the year 1995 to serve for humanity.



Presently, she renders her services as the centre in-charge of Brahma Kumaris, Thane. Some of the major projects conducted by the centre are in the areas of Women Empowerment; Spirituality for prisoners in Thane Central Jail; "Touch the Light" value education program in various schools in Thane; and Value-based Administration for Government officials.

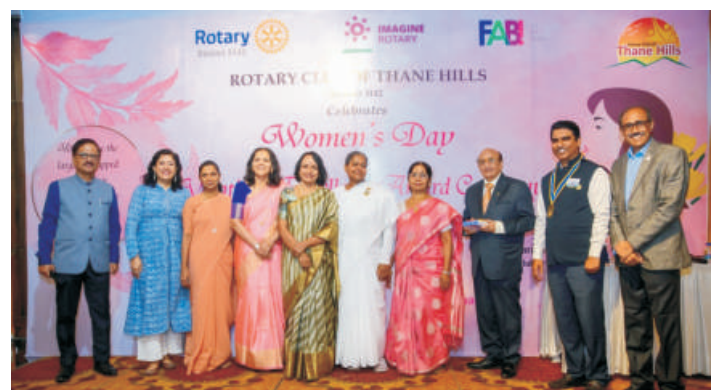
Revathi Srinivasan brings more than three decades of experience in the management of schools. She is Principal of



Smt Sulochanadevi Singhania School, Thane. She also holds the post of the Director of Singhania School.

As an educationist, she specialises in curriculum design, creative assessment and teacher training. As an educationist, her innovation, creativity and thought leadership have helped Singhania School to feature in the top schools in the country for the last 12 consecutive years.

Besides grooming the young minds as an educationist, Revathi is also involved in running two full-fledged rural schools as service to children. She is a much sought-after speaker on many forums, both in India and internationally.



Humane Humans

When RCTH planned to help Holy Cross Convent Special School to raise funds for upgrading its facilities for its students, A.M. Naik School, a new and upcoming educational institutions located in Powai, was approached. This school granted permission to set up a stall on 25th February and 26th February, 2023 - two days on which parents would visit the school to purchase books for the new academic year.



On the above said days, Ann Radhika Padmanabhan (on behalf of RCTH) and four teachers from the Holy Cross Convent special school requested the parents visiting the school to make donations for a good cause. When the details of the special school were given and pamphlets distributed, donations started pouring in.



At the end of the two days, a sum of Rupees One lakh, ninety four thousand and four hundred and fifteen (Rs.1,94,415) was collected from the parents. This amount would be utilized by Holy Cross towards the procurement of gadgets / equipments which would help the special students to learn in a better manner.



On 23rd March 2023, President Jayaram Mendon and Ann Radhika Padmanabhan along with a teacher and two students from the Holy Cross Convent Special School visited A. M. Naik School to present them with a certificate for their large hearted help.



The philanthropic bent of mind shown by the parents is praiseworthy. So are the efforts of the school in granting the permission for the stall and the related arrangements.

The 'New Me'

Feeling up, feeling down trying so hard, just to 'be'
Rising & shining every coming day, I meet the new 'me'

Is this my delusion, a mirage, a life that I dream?
Yet sometimes in the dead of the night, I effortlessly scream

Learning on the way, so many things that I am not,
Success, achievement & an urge to prove is always sought

Through the years, day by day, they say people change
I say they get bitter or better, simply they seem so strange

A wife, a daughter, a sister, so many roles to play,
There's beauty in a working woman, she's here to slay.

Today I am so proud of what I've become,
Yes there are challenges, with a smart smile I overcome... ..

By Inda Nagavkar

Inner Wheel Projects

Our inner wheel club has been active all along and carried out following projects apart from many other activities.

Women's Day Celebration at Kshamata

(NGO in support and empowerment of exploited young girls/women)



Date: Thursday 9th March 2023

Total beneficiaries: 30

Dr Uma Bansal educated on Menstrual Hygiene

Club Secretary PP Naina Kalyan gave the girls information about healthy eating and taught them to prepare the salad. We also donated Saris and dupattas.

Donation of Wheel Chairs to Special children at Palliative Ward Kalwa Hospital

Date: Monday 13th March 2023

Total beneficiaries: 10

Project - Jal Sanchit

Donation of Water Dispenser at Municipal Library, Wagle Estate



Date: Monday 13th March

Also, 500 children had a special mid-day meal at the Ashramshala wakdi.

Project: Distribution of groceries under Pradhan Mantri TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan

These groceries will be provided to 10 patients for 6 months

Venue: Narendra Ballal Hall, 1st Floor, Thane Municipal Bhavan, Panchpachadi

Date: Friday 24th March 2023

It was our pleasure to share the Dias with Shri. Sandeep Malvi (Additional Commissioner 1) and Dr. Prasad Patil (City TB officer) Thane Municipal Commission.



Received a Certificate on being a part of "Nikshay Mitra" from TMC and were fortunate to release their Souvenir



Project : District Urban Project

Donation of Water Cooler at Thane Railway Station, Platform Number 1

Date: Monday 27th March 2023



Hit the road.....



We all like to travel and visit new places. From selecting the place as per the season, booking hotels and booking tickets, the entire experience is thrilling but somewhat stressful as plans get changed and tickets have to be cancelled. Reaching airport on time and also arranging vehicle for sightseeing becomes a hassle. So, the best solution is to go for a road trip.

Last year, in the month of September, we did a road trip to Coorg. The weather was just perfect. Cloudy and cool with lush greenery all along. Believe me this is the best season for a road trip anywhere in India. Distance of around 1100 kilometres covered with two halts. Vikram was at the wheel and the entire travel along with the sightseeing was completed smoothly without any fatigue.

Actually, this *keeda* of doing road trips began in the 90s when we were at Indore. As both grandparents were settled at Pune every vacation we would do a road trip there with the kids. The roads were not as good as they are now. Four lane highways didn't exist then. We should definitely be proud of the highways and express ways which have been built post 2000 and maintained so well.



So, in March 2023, when we ventured for trip to Kanha Tiger reserve, the Samriddhi Mahamarg was all set to welcome us. The 565-kilometre stretch from Shirdi to Nagpur was covered in 4 and a half hours with one halt of 15 minutes. No traffic and most importantly no cameras and speed guns yet, so one can steadily drive at an average of 130 kph.

Highlight of the Coorg trip was visit to coffee plantations and savouring the taste of world's best coffee right in the middle of the plantations. From Madikeri to Hassan was a drive through dense forests. We were looking for a good place for breakfast and suddenly out of nowhere appeared the board of Hoysala village

resort. This place was just out of the world. It's traditional interiors, shining copper utensils, soft delicious *idli* and crispy *vada* and *dosa* served on banana leaf with tasty *chutney* and *sambar*! The whole experience was just mind blowing. Take it from me, if you happen to visit North Karnataka, do not forget to visit one of the Hoysala village resorts.



At Kanha, we were lucky to spot a tiger right in our first visit. Later at the resort we met many people who were not able to spot a tiger even after as many as 10 visits. It was nice to see many foreigners there. The safari jeep which took us inside the forest, also had one couple from Australia. With great enthusiasm they showed us the photos of tiger which they had spotted during their Bandhavgarh trip. It is certainly a proud feeling to experience the awe and respect the foreigners have for India's rich natural resources and cultural diversity.



This trip was to mark our journey of 40 years together! 17th March 2022 was our 40th wedding anniversary! Of course, this journey was not as smooth as the express way or Mahamarg... like any other couple we had our ups and downs! Looking forward to many more trips singing "*raahbani khud manzil, picche rah gayi mushkil, saath jo aaye tum*"

Jayashree Mane

Comeback

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall"

....Nelson Mandela

Sometimes life hits you hard and you feel that your world is flipped upside down. In such times what counts is the perseverance, the will power and courage to bounce back and get on with life, with the blessings of the almighty reinforced by love and support from family and close friends.

The year 2022 has been a year of comebacks for me of all sorts after a freak accident that literally stopped me from doing the things that I love the most. In the past for me all the happiness and growth happened when I was trekking or climbing the mountains.

Today I am happy that my trust in the divine providence, support of my family and close friends helped me to make a strong comeback after almost two years in hibernation.

Here is a short account of my comeback journey.

My real come back started with an opportunity to join a bunch of enthusiastic trekking friends for the Kashmir great Lakes trek and since I had almost recovered (though not confident) I grabbed the opportunity with some trepidation.



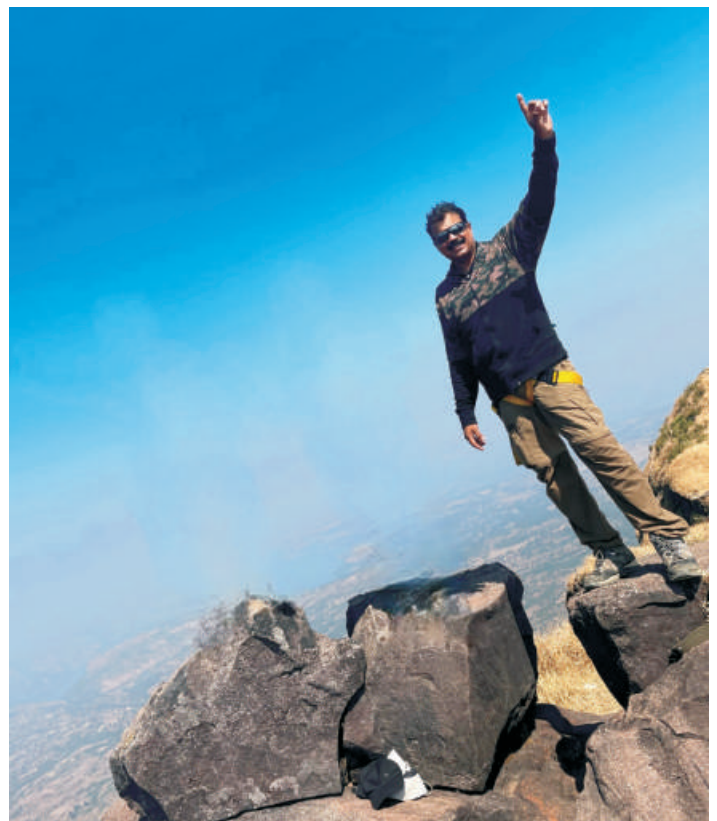
through three high altitude passes (Nichnai pass, Gadsar pass and Zaj pass). The highest pass is Gadsar pass (13800 feet). Everyday you encounter some steep climbs and some equally steep descents, five river valley crossings and seven most beautiful glacier fed alpine lakes, each an astonishing shade of green, blue, and turquoise, all within an impressive span of 6 days. For once I was lost in a dream world full of bliss and ecstasy and I was on a sure path of self discovery. A great reset happened and all the memories of the ordeal were lost in the mighty Himalayas and a new stronger me emerged.



With my confidence now restored (can't say that I was at my peak fitness) another opportunity presented before me to join one of the most formidable and demanding trek of the Sahaydris, the Alang, Madan and Kulang Fort trek popularly known as the AMK trek. Having done this trek twice already I started preparing for an absolute challenge.



The Kashmir great lakes trek (KGL) offers you an experience of a life time, of a wonderful journey filled with memories that are so wonderfully tiring. A formidable Himalayan trek which takes you





The trio forts provide you with some of the great landscapes and scenes along with Kalsubai which is the highest peak of Maharashtra. Alang and Madan Forts require climbing equipment as both have steep rock walls.

A couple of weeks after successfully completing the AMK, the next challenge was Harishchandragad. A beautiful hill fort in the Ahmednagar region, it's a very popular trekking destination of the Sahyadris. There are 3 routes to reach Harishchandragad fort one via Naalichi Vaat (most difficult one), second via Khireswar village and third via Pachnai village (easiest one). Trekking through Nalichi Vaat is defined as a nerve wrecking trek to the top. After 9 hours of

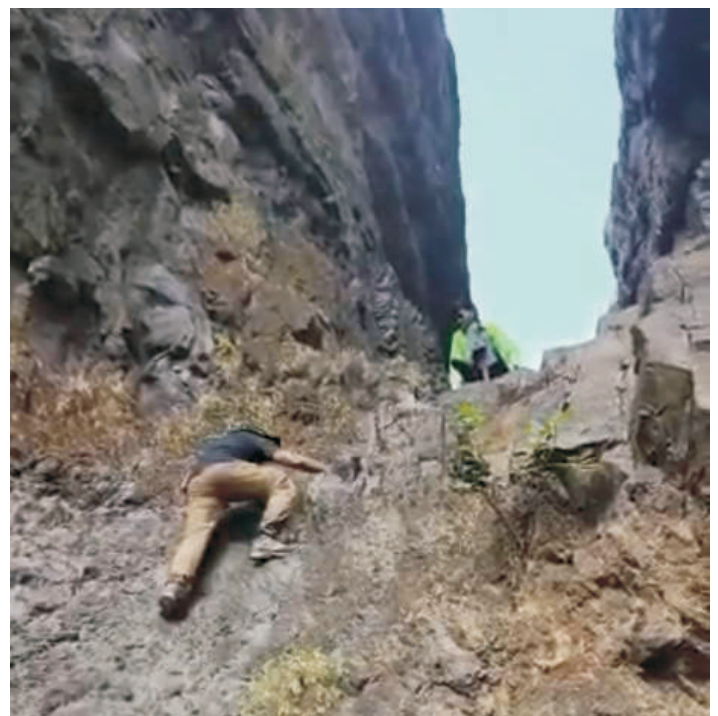


climbing through a hostile terrain one reaches the top of the magnificent Kokankada which gives you a surreal view of the surrounding peaks and valleys. I was determined to do this trek free solo without the aid of any ropes or climbing equipment. With my confidence and trekking abilities finally restored, the trek was completed without any hitch.

The year 2022 will be cherished by me forever, where my trust in the almighty, a conspiracy by the universe to provide me with unwavering support, encouragement and support by family and a



few close friends helped me over come all the odds while a new self emerged. It was also a time to rekindle old friendships and reinforce them.



Looking forward to 2023 for an adventurous and rocking year ahead, with hope of peace and prosperity for all.

Author

Needle tales

While in school, I loved Chemistry and also had a liking for English and Geography too. But what I detested most was the subject which many of my friends loved 'Art and Craft'.

I could barely push a thread into the tiny hole of a needle without huffing and puffing. There was an undercurrent of hatred between me and the art teacher; she knew I was disinterested in her lecture and guidance.

We were taught 'basic' embroidery but my apathy had turned 'advanced'. The 'stem' stitch was a 'gem' to many; to me, it was just a tedious and monotonous exercise. I was too 'lazy' to do the 'Lacy Daisy' stitch. I did try out the stitch named 'Chain' but in vain.

On one occasion, when the teacher wanted us to submit a handkerchief after completing a pattern in 'back stitch', I was deeply perturbed. My homework in a tough chapter of math or a difficult *doha* in Hindi did not bother me as much. What would I do? What punishment is awaiting me? These thoughts nagged me a lot. But I got saved. A friend in need is a friend indeed! A dear friend bailed me out by completing the embroidery for me in no time. I thanked her profusely for her timely help, in the absence of which I would have earned the teacher's wrath.

When I was in Grade 8, we were instructed to make a sponge doll; that was in vogue those days. Actually it involved the making of sponge gown around the doll. We were asked to get sponge, scissors and other paraphernalia needed to make the doll. I did pester my mother to procure these things and promptly did I carry them to school. After all, I was a contentious student. But to my horror, I did not understand a word of the teacher's instructions and so, as the lecture proceeded, I switched off completely. Consequently, I was clueless while my friends were so excited about the sponge doll making, much to my chagrin. We were given a month's time to complete the doll and submit it to the teacher.

In the subsequent classes, when the teacher questioned about the progress as far as the doll making was concerned, many of my dear friends would respond enthusiastically that only a small portion remained. I tried evading; at times, I would pretend that work was in progress. But at home, I spent sleepless nights wondering what would befall me on the day of submission. My mother would also ask me now and then about what I did with the sponge (after all, she spent her hard earned money to buy the stuff). I would dodge her cleverly by digressing; often, I succeeded. As the day drew closer, I was tension personified. I prayed fervently and soon enough, my prayers were answered. My angel came in the form of my aunt who travelled from Jamshedpur to meet us. Lo and behold! She gifted me a lovely doll clothed in a sponge gown exactly like the one we were asked to put together!

I was ecstatic and felt like I was brought home back from the gallows!! The next day, as quiet as a church mouse, I submitted my sponge doll to my class monitor. My issues with art and craft mercifully came to an end after Grade 8.

My mother, however, believed that I 'must' get acquainted with stitching and when I was pursuing graduation, she hired a tailoring tutor, even though I did not buy the idea at all. The teacher came home and patiently taught me to measure, cut, stitch etc. A brand new tailoring machine was duly purchased. The teacher used it more than me and that annoyed my mother as I wouldn't stitch anything at all after the teacher left home. Sometimes, to appease my mom, I would hem and that was all I did. The sewing machine started gathering dust and once in a while, I would do the honours of wiping it half heartedly with a rag.

But then life came a full circle after some years. I was now married with a kid and was playing the multiple roles of a wife, mom and daughter-in-law. My son started going to school. During the time he was in school, I enrolled in a tailoring class near my home. I purchased a new sewing machine, a box with needles, coloured threads, measuring tape, bobbins, marker chalk, canvas etc. With the enthusiasm of a beaver, I embarked on a new journey in sewing. My teacher was diligent and so was I.... I soon started stitching my mother-in-law's and my own blouses. I had allocated afternoon time for my stitching activities at home.

Some years later, I took up a part time job and therefore, my stitching sessions got curtailed a bit.... but not the one to give it up completely, I would steal time to stitch whenever I could.

Then came my B. Ed course and I had to go to college, study, complete assignments and visit schools for practice teaching. With this, my tailoring machine became an ornamental piece at home. Very soon, I took up a job as a full time teacher and the situation worsened. I forgot about the very existence of the device.... and I forgot the art of stitching blouses. Nevertheless, I had no guilt or remorse about it. I got busy with managing home and the job. Thus I had severed all ties with needle, thread and sewing.

This was exactly the state of affairs my dear husband and son were waiting for! Like an eagle swooping on its prey, they would corner me as to why the poor machine existed in the house. Their constant nagging gave me headaches frequently. So I thought I would give it away and soon made offers to tailors in the locality, maids etc etc. But the machine remained. So I thought of getting it overhauled. Now our newly hired cook offered to take it for 1000Rs. But my husband was very generous and gifted it to her for free. He was just waiting to give it a decent burial (his keyboard was lying unused for years...but that was fine, you know).

The maid happily took the machine and offered to mend our clothes when required; as expected, she didn't keep her self proclaimed promise. Never mind, the machine exited our house and the episode bestowed untold satisfaction upon my husband and son.

My divorce with tailoring and the sewing machine was complete without my being impacted by it at all. But after some years, I now feel guilty about having quit the art totally. After all, I loved embroidery; should I not restart? Will I be able to do justice? Will I be able to devote time for it? As someone said, "Life is a constant oscillation between the sharp horns of dilemmas". At the moment my life, certainly, is!



Radhika Padmanabhan

Forgiveness: Letting go of grudges and bitterness

When someone you care about hurts you, you can hold on to anger and resentment - or embrace forgiveness and move forward.

Who hasn't been hurt by the actions or words of another? Perhaps a parent constantly criticized you growing up, a colleague sabotaged a project or your partner had an affair. Or maybe you've had a traumatic experience, such as being physically or emotionally abused by someone close to you. These wounds can leave lasting feelings of resentment, bitterness and anger - sometimes even hatred.

But if you hold on to that pain, you might be the one who pays most dearly. By embracing forgiveness, you also can embrace peace and hope. Consider how forgiveness can lead you down the path of physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

What is forgiveness?

Forgiveness means different things to different people. But in general, it involves an intentional decision to let go of resentment and anger.

The act that hurt or offended you might always be with you. But working on forgiveness can lessen that act's grip on you. It can help free you from the control of the person who harmed you. Sometimes, forgiveness might even lead to feelings of understanding, empathy and compassion for the one who hurt you.

Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting or excusing the harm done to you. It also doesn't necessarily mean making up with the person who caused the harm. Forgiveness brings a kind of peace that allows you to focus on yourself and helps you go on with life.

What are the benefits of forgiving someone?

Letting go of grudges and bitterness can make way for improved health and peace of mind. Forgiveness can lead to:

- Healthier relationships.
- Improved mental health.
- Less anxiety, stress and hostility.
- Fewer symptoms of depression.
- Lower blood pressure.
- A stronger immune system.
- Improved heart health.
- Improved self-esteem.

Why is it so easy to hold a grudge?

Being hurt by someone, particularly someone you love and trust, can cause anger, sadness and confusion. If you dwell on hurtful events or situations, grudges filled with resentment and hostility can take root. If you allow negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you might find yourself swallowed up by bitterness or a sense of injustice.

Some people are naturally more forgiving than others. But even if you tend to hold a grudge, almost anyone can learn to be more forgiving.

What are the effects of holding a grudge?

If you struggle with finding forgiveness, you might:

- Bring anger and bitterness into new relationships and experiences.
- Become so wrapped up in the wrong that you can't enjoy the present.
- Become depressed, irritable or anxious.
- Feel at odds with your spiritual beliefs.
- Lose valuable and enriching connections with others.

How do I move toward a state of forgiveness?

Forgiveness is a commitment to change. It takes practice. To move toward forgiveness, you might:

- Recognize the value of forgiveness and how it can improve your life.
- Identify what needs healing and who you want to forgive.
- Join a support group or see a counselor.

Acknowledge your emotions about the harm done to you, recognize how those emotions affect your behavior, and work to release them.

Choose to forgive the person who's offended you

Release the control and power that the offending person and situation have had in your life.

What happens if I can't forgive someone?

Forgiveness can be hard, especially if the person who hurt you doesn't admit wrongdoing. If you find yourself stuck:

Practice empathy. Try seeing the situation from the other person's point of view.

Ask yourself about the circumstances that may have led the other person to behave in such a way. Perhaps you would have reacted similarly if you faced the same situation.

Reflect on times when others have forgiven you.

Write in a journal, pray or use guided meditation. Or talk with a person you've found to be wise and compassionate, such as a spiritual leader, a mental health provider, or an impartial loved one or friend.

Be aware that forgiveness is a process. Even small hurts may need to be revisited and forgiven again and again.

Does forgiveness guarantee reconciliation?

If the hurtful event involved someone whose relationship you value, forgiveness may lead to reconciliation. But that isn't always the case.

Reconciliation might be impossible if the offender has died or is unwilling to communicate with you. In other cases, reconciliation might not be appropriate. Still, forgiveness is possible - even if reconciliation isn't.

What if the person I'm forgiving doesn't change?

Getting another person to change isn't the point of forgiveness. It's about focusing on what you can control in the here and now. Think of forgiveness more about how it can change your life by bringing you peace, happiness, and emotional and spiritual healing. Forgiveness can take away the power the other person continues to have in your life.

What if I'm the one who needs forgiveness?

The first step is to honestly assess and acknowledge the wrongs you've done and how they have affected others. Avoid judging yourself too harshly.

If you're truly sorry for something you've said or done and want forgiveness, consider reaching out to those you've harmed. Speak of your sincere sorrow or regret. Ask for forgiveness without making excuses.

You can't force someone to forgive you. Others need to move to forgiveness in their own time. Remember, forgiveness is a process. Whatever happens, commit to treating others with compassion, empathy and respect.

Using Your Phone Before Bed Hijacks Your Sleep, But Not for the Reason You Think

Tech can be both the problem and the solution to a better night's sleep.

We've all reached for our phones in the middle of the night, only to be pulled into some kind of rabbit hole that keeps us awake. (If you haven't, please share your secrets for self-control.)

A good night's sleep is important for your health. Chronic sleep troubles can lead to cognitive impairments and increase the risk of stroke and heart attack. And getting enough rest is a huge problem for teens, who are facing a sleep crisis due to factors including nighttime technology use, busy schedules and heavy homework loads. American adults also have trouble sleeping, with 70% of adults reporting they get insufficient sleep at least one night a month, according to the American Sleep Apnea Association. Much ado has been made about the blue light our devices emit, but the ways in which tech hijacks our sleep go far deeper than that. It's the content we see that has the biggest impact on our slumber, sleep experts say.

So what should we do about it? Sure, you could leave your phone in another room at night, but that might not be feasible for adults who want to be reached in an emergency. The simplest fix is to eliminate the temptation to scroll altogether. Tools from tech companies can help, including new features from TikTok and Instagram, two oft-cited sources of nighttime distraction.

If we come across alarming news, a scary movie or an annoying work email right before bed or in the middle of the night, the stress hormone cortisol can rise. A spike in cortisol provides an energy boost by moving glucose from a stored state in the body to an active state. "It's like eating a candy bar," says Jamie Zeitzer, co-director of the Stanford Center for Sleep and Circadian Sciences. Coming down from that energy rush can be difficult.

Positive content can be just as disruptive because it can increase the amount of dopamine or norepinephrine in the brain, two neurotransmitters Dr. Zeitzer says can excite the thalamus—the brain's information-relay center—and disrupt the brain-wave oscillations needed for sleep.

Fretting about not sleeping can make things even worse. When we worry about not being able to go back to sleep, Dr. Zeitzer explains, we actually can't go back to sleep because that worry is causing more cortisol to be released.

If any of this sounds familiar, don't despair. Sleep and digital-media experts suggest trying these things:

Know your triggers. Not all screen activities are bad for sleep. Start by assessing what stresses you out or excites you when you look at your phone—and what helps you calm down. You should also be more aware of the time you're spending on your device. We tend to lose track of time when we're on our phones, which can eat into the seven hours of nightly sleep doctors say adults need (teens need eight to 10 hours).

Reconfigure your habits. Once you identify which screen-related activities rile you up, shift those activities earlier in the evening and do more relaxing activities closer to bedtime, says Nitun Verma, a spokesman for the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. Telling patients not to use screens an hour or two before bed is too jarring for some people, he says, and ends up being unsustainable. Instead, he advises people to taper their level of screen-induced

emotion and excitement over the course of an evening so it's "like landing a plane."

Make a list. If you're one to worry at night about what lies ahead the next day, some sleep experts suggest making a to-do list before bed, so you don't keep yourself awake making mental lists. You don't have to get out paper and pen: The notes app on your phone makes it easy, or try one of the note-taking apps I mentioned here.

Use tech to combat tech. You might soon be able to curb late-night TikTok scrolling. The video-sharing app, owned by ByteDance Ltd., is testing a new sleep-reminders feature. When you designate a bedtime in TikTok, the app will mute push notifications for the next seven hours and nudge you to close it. TikTok in 2021 began disabling notifications during nighttime hours for teens.

Thanks to a new feature introduced this week, Instagram users have the ability to set times in the app when they don't want to be bothered. When Quiet Mode is enabled, you won't receive notifications, and the app owned by Meta Platforms Inc. will send an auto-reply to anyone who DMs you to let them know you're offline. The app will prompt teens to turn on Quiet Mode when they're on Instagram between midnight and 4 a.m.

There are even more choices on the phones themselves.

You can turn on Do Not Disturb on an iPhone or an Android phone during the hours you choose, during which time you can allow calls or notifications only from certain people or apps. In the iPhone's Sleep Focus setting, you can set a sleep goal and create bedtime reminders as well as enable Sleep Screen, which dims your lock screen at bedtime.

iPhones also have a Wind Down feature while Android phones have Bedtime Mode, both of which silence your phones at a time of your choosing.

Only glance at the time. Many of us tap our phone screens to check the time in the middle of the night. That can tempt us to unlock our phones and scroll. If you've followed the other steps listed here, you should be able to resist. You can also buy an alarm clock just for that purpose.

Create a family tech plan. Leaving your phone outside the bedroom might not be practical for many adults, but I advise parents to keep all devices out of kids' bedrooms. Andrea Davis, founder of Better Screen Time, a company that educates families about healthy digital habits, suggests parents create a tech plan with their kids, which spells out when, where and how devices can be used. She says parents should follow the rules, too. She didn't trust herself not to look at her phone while in bed, so she agreed, along with her children, to charge her phone in another room at night. Her husband keeps his phone in the bedroom in case of an emergency.

Restart your sleep routine. If you still wake up in the middle of the night and find yourself ruminating, don't continue to toss and turn, says Vijay Ramanan, a neurologist at the Mayo Clinic. He suggests getting up for 15 minutes and restarting the routine that helped you fall asleep in the first place. Only turn to your phone to find a soothing meditation, audiobook or podcast