



R. I. President: Gordon R. McNally

District Governor: Jeetender Gupta

ROTARY CLUB OF DELHI SOUTH NEWSLETTER "ASHOKA" August, 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO THE CLUB



Dear Members,

What an amazing August. In 1947 we got independence and in 2023 our Chandrayaan 3 landed on the south pole of the moon, a first by any nation. We salute the women and men of ISRO for bringing glory to India.

We as a club are set out to do projects targeted to help the underprivileged sections of the society. In all we had over two dozen activities but just to mention a few. Planting of mango trees at Buddha garden was deeply satisfying, and it will be even more fun in two years time when we have picnic under the shade of our mango trees. Health camp, in collaboration with Sankalp and BLK at Munirka community centre benefitted over 150 people. Nari shakti

and Atmanirbhar program in partnership with Etasha Society got off to a great start at Arya Samaj GK1 with 14 students enrolling for the first batch. We donated 100 litres of pesticide to MCD, which will cover a span of over 1 crore people in Delhi and protect them from water borne diseases.

The installation of women Presidents at BVN Interact club, Gyan Bharti Interact club and Rotract Club was immensely satisfying. We have a great female talent pool and this has to be leveraged for service above self. It also inspires us at RCDS to handover the reins of this club to a female President to bring diversity and fresh thinking. I am confident that in the coming years if not months, several female leaders will STEP UP to be our President.

I am excited to have signed the MOU with Earth Savors to build homes for the elderly and homeless. Suffering amongst the elderly and homeless is beyond words and we must do everything in our power to help this section of the society. I am excited with the prospect of Rotary Skill development centre

at Arya Samaj Vasant Vihar and enter into partnerships with renowned training companies and multinationals to support high quality technical skills and placement of the youth in meaningful jobs. I am also excited to support the infrastructure at Shroff Charitable hospital to look after the eyes of underprivileged sections in society. The three CSR projects were approved by the RCDS board and soon we will see the immense impact created by these CSR projects once implemented.

We had two outstanding speaker sessions. Wing Commander Baljit ji, President Rotary Club Qutab Enclave inspired us with his stories of bravery and that of our fellow countrymen in uniform. Ms. Mannu Dosaj gave a talk on appreciation of Indian art and the unknown personal side of artists be it MF Hussain or an average street artist. She kept the members spell bound and truly brought Indian art to life.

Thanks to all of you for participating in various events. Your participation encourages us to do more and to do better.

Pramod Agarwal
President, 2023-24

From the desk of the **EDITOR**



The month of August was a child born of the frailty of one of the greatest shortcomings of human weakness - egoism. It's a well established fact of Roman history that since the month of July derived its name from Julius Caesar, a powerful general and a statesman, Augustus Caesar

the first Roman Emperor named the month of August after himself. The history of calendar months is replete with Roman names. The month of January and the beginning of the new year is dedicated to Janus the God of beginnings and transitions. Janus was depicted with two heads placed in opposite directions, one looking at the past and the other at the future. The influence and impact of Roman history on the Gregorian Calendar is evident. August has emerged as a very important and landmark month in the history of the subcontinent. It was in August, when the two nations India and Pakistan were carved out of a vast Indian territory extending from Afghanistan in the north west to Burma in the East. This surgical division was carried out by a British civil servant Sir Cyril Radcliffe who performed this Herculean task in five short weeks without ever visiting India prior to this assignment. His surgical scalpel brutalised the land forever, leaving it infested by the bacteria of terrorism, boundary disputes an ailing economy and an impoverished country. Almost two hundred years of the British rule scarred the psyche of generations of Indians, forced into emotional slavery and segregation. Two centuries of surrender of personal identity to the aberrations of British superiority and living as second rate citizens in one's own country was the fate of the 'natives' as the Indians were referred to with disdain.

We, in this land of ours, woke to the dawn of freedom and independence on August 15, 1947. The history of a hard fought independence was a struggle that carries with it galling memories of displacement of millions of people on both sides of the freshly demarcated borders. Millions were brutalised and slaughtered on both sides as the British military sailed out of India to the fading tunes of the Last Post!! Last year we celebrated 75 years of freedom and members may recall the newsletter, which was substantially devoted to the saga of independence viewed through the eyes of a dozen of our members who were born prior to the event, albeit some still in the cradle, and others not yet double figures in age, including the Editor who was all of five years two months and eighteen days when we first breathed the air of a free country!! I would urge you to revisit that newsletter which is contained in the 'Ashoka, Now and Forever...!! It makes for interesting reading.

Looking back 76 years at the creation of Pakistan and of the hiving off of India, it's not difficult to observe and compare that soon after independence, the spirit of the

uprooted refugees from Western Punjab never waned, and they rose like the proverbial phoenix from the ashes with renewed vigour and an indomitable spirit, to grab and create opportunities for themselves in a new India. Seven decades later we have emerged as a power feted by the world for the power of its money, its market, vast business opportunities and the strength and size of its demography. On the other hand Pakistan is a country under seize by its own contradictions and the feudal mindset. Compare: India soon after independence brought about land reforms curtailing land holdings, thereby, in one fell stroke, eliminating the zamindari system and freeing a vast acreage of tillable land for tilling by the real sons of the soil, the peasants. This act created a vast population of such tiller tenants who became landowners by this act of parliament. On the other hand Pakistan's feudal landlords have a stranglehold on its power and politics and a myopic view of the world and opportunities through the prism of Islam and Jihad!! They threatened India with a thousand cuts ending up brutalising themselves with a million cuts!! It's a failed and an extremely dangerous state hurtling towards self annihilation. The Madrasah education only preaches hatred and Jihad, whereas, we in India boast of the IIT's and the IIM's whose alumni lord the corporate corner offices around the world. It is this land of ours that today proudly straddles space as the first ever nation by landing on the South Pole's surface of the moon.

The sun had started to set on the once haughty and the mighty British Empire!! Seventy six years since that eventful day in 1947, the British Empire is tottering as though by an act of divine retribution, and whose governance is now presided over by a 'native'!! Its once famous stiff upper lip is quavering, and many an institution of British pride has new ownership that has shifted to citizens mainly of Indian, Middle Eastern and Chinese descent!! The British pride is obtusely at odds with the realities of the changing levers of power. Britain and much of Europe is in disarray. The divine interventions of Karma are in evidence. Our dharma teaches us to be kind even to the vanquished, and it's in this spirit of magnanimity that we wish them peace and harmony.

The story of the Indian independence is a history of non violent perseverance, notwithstanding some aberrations of violent protests, successful and abortive assassination attempts, as well as calls for a planned uprising, by the Indian National Army of Subhash Chandra Bose exhorting the Indian Military to revolt, and which in no small measure played a substantive role in the struggle for independence. Clement Attlee, the British Prime Minister who presided over the decision to handover power to the Indians, conceded that it was the aggressive stance of Subhash Chander Bose which accelerated the British government's decision to quit India, and not as much, as the nonviolent movement.

We celebrated the 77th Independence Day, or if you may, 76 years of freedom with the usual annual address to the nation by the Prime Minister from the Red Fort. It's akin to the State of the Union address, an annual report with plans for the emerging year, all encapsulated in an almost ninety minutes of speech on a sweltering, muggy morning. It's a day of stocktaking of the hits and misses after independence. Much has been gained and much has been missed too.

RCDS celebrated the Independence Day on August 9, at our usual venue, The Viceroy Room, at the Claridges. It's a joy that's experienced by every Indian, as it must be, and which reignites the verve and fervour of a country which is at peace with itself, and progressing across all formats of development- health, education, habitat, business, in-fact across every facet which determines a country's status, and it's standing amongst the comity of nations. I am, however, of the view that we still need to prioritise education and health care and scale up the budgetary allocations, to ensure the last mile benefit of education as well as healthcare to every citizen, regardless of caste, religion, gender and other affiliations.

The independence celebrations were preceded by a talk by Wing Commander(Rtd) Baljit Singh Ahluwalia. It was crisp with interesting snippets of a military life, and of some little peeps into the lives of military legends like FM Cariappa, FM Sam Manekshaw, and the only Marshal of the Air Force, Arjan Singh. The talk also dwelt on heroics of men in combat, like rifleman Yadav all of 18 years of age and Flt Lt Nirmal Singh Sekhon(Posthumously) earning the highest military award, the Param Vir Chakra. It must be said to the credit of the speaker that it was a fluent presentation, with elan and confidence of a man in command of his facts. The talk was followed by cocktails and a wazwan of delicacies owing their origin to Kashmir, whose beauty elicited this famous couplet 'Agar Firdaus Bar Roo-e Zameen Ast, Hameen Ast-o, Hameen Ast-o, Hameen Ast', translated into English 'If there's a paradise on earth, it's this, it's this, it's this' !! I never tire of singing peans of the delightful repast served at the club meetings courtesy Rajiv, whose curating of the menu to fit the occasion, is a painstaking labour of love. Did I hear it, or is my imagination running riot, the wazwan Kashmiri meal was styled and titled - 370!! The cocktail hour when it happens does scale up the bonhomie, and in evidence is a zest and liveliness that is absent on days, we meet sans the tittle that cheers!! It must be said to the credit of the club and the club services, that despite a very tight budget we have a fairly vast repertoire of cuisines to enjoy, but in case we need the extra tittle we would need to revisit our contributions towards club meetings at the Claridges. Personally, my vote is in favour.

RCDS has instituted laudable initiatives, both in education and healthcare. Sankalp, very appropriately and cogently coalesces a programme for the development of children who have remained on the fringe, and have been denied comprehensive exposure to a qualitative education which is not only

linked to literacy but age and grade competencies in diverse activities. It's a well tuned programme which involves an all round exposure essential for the child's overall personality development.

Our club is also engaged in several healthcare initiatives, like the Gift of Live, Leprosy, Clubfoot, Polio eradication and some small onetime programmes. I mention all these, since these glove fit with the national consciousness to provide healthcare and quality education to all. Our effort may just be a drop in the ocean, but it's a support to the government's endeavours in the same direction, and many such similar initiatives by organisations like Rotary, act as a bolster to the efforts. What the Governments or philanthropic organisations do is never enough. Nature always has a curve ball, and memories of covid and of its large scale impact on the life, health and economic meltdown are still fresh from which many countries are still limping back to normalcy.

Himachal and Uttarakhand have attracted the malefic gaze of a galaxy of planets, and both the States continue to face unprecedented challenges. The habitats have been ripped apart, roads lie dismembered as mountains, trees, buildings, bridges et al come crashing down wiping out villages and little hamlets. Railway tracks have been torn asunder in the aftermath of unprecedented rainstorms and floods, highways have disappeared or severely damaged and normal life completely disrupted. There's a trust deficit between man and nature and man's greed and disdain for the laws of nature have collectively ripped the balance. Nature is reclaiming its resurgence as is evident from its infuriating impact on the mountainous regions of the two states. The ravage continues, and there's no let in the yellow or red weather advisories of heavy rains and cloudbursts, which continue to batter the two hill states. The weather in the year 2023 will be remembered for its irrationality, and in its drift from its logical and expected direction!! We fervently hope that the weather during the balance of the year follows its normal trajectory and avoids its fury on heaping further pain and destruction.

August is readying for its farewell, till it returns in 2024, but not before leaving the country on a joyous note of national pride. The world is agog at the news of India joining an exclusive club of three other nations, who have hoisted their flags on the surface of the moon. However, the Indian effort has left the world breathless and aghast, that not only did we succeed in landing on the more difficult South Pole of the moon, but that this was achieved on a shoestring budget defying the incredulity and scepticism of western logic!! News from the sporting arena that India has won gold in javelin, and have qualified in the competitive 4X400 metres relay finals at the world games, has spread further joy.

Till we touch base next month, cheers and god bless.

Inderjeet Singh
Editor

INTERACT CLUB OF BIRLA VIDYA NIKETAN INAYAT INSTALLATION CEREMONY

4th August, 2023



Change of guard is a quintessential act for the continued progress of any institution. The Installation of the new Interact council of Birla Vidya Niketan held on 4th August 2023 was one such momentous moment as the leadership baton passed from the Council lead by Itr. Kaavya Behl to Itr. Suhani Bafna.

The event was held in the presence of President of the Rotary Club of Delhi South (RCDS) including Rotary Club Rtn. Pramod Agarwal, Secretary Rtn. Sarvapreet Singh, Director of New Generation Services Rtn. Mr. Naman Agarwal & Priyanka Agarwal, Rtn. Som Dua and Rajni Dua and Rtn. Amarnath Goyal.

The event began with a warm welcome from the Vice Principal Mrs. Gayatri Kapur, who reemphasized the motto of Service before Self. A graceful dance performance was prepared by the students of Birla Vidya Niketan, themed "Women Empowerment".

Outgoing Interact President, Kaavya Behl, and outgoing Vice president, Yojasvi Jagirdar presented the report for the Interact year 2022-23, inspiring the new interactors to maximize their potential for making all Inayat's future endeavors a success.

This was followed by the formal change of guard with Kaavya passing on the Presidential collar to the incoming President Suhani Bafna a quite a significant moment where both the outgoing and incoming Presidents were women.

The new president, Suhani Bafna, described her plans and for the upcoming year 2023-2024, including project Paryavaran, Project Indra Dhanush, a mental health program, cervical cancer awareness and many others.

The new Inayat council was then formally installed with the Rotarians pinning them with Council badges. It was quite a nostalgic moment for Naman Agarwal one of the founding members of this Interact Club, as he pinned his daughter Varnika who was joining Interact Council.

All the members took the Interact oath, pledging that they will participate in Inayat's activities with all their determination.

President Pramod Agarwal blessed the new council and motivated the Interactors through his empowering speech, and encouraged them to give their utmost best to accomplish several milestones in this club. He encouraged the Interactors to partner with their parent club especially in areas of Cervical awareness and prevention, old age home visits etc.

As a token of appreciation certificates were awarded to the previous council of Inayat and a memento was given to the school for its cooperation and support to Rotary. The event was concluded with a vote of thanks by the new vice president.

Varnika Agarwal

SPEAKER MEETING AND INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION

9th August, 2023

Welcome to the Viceroy Hall buzzing with friendly chatter and smiles with everyone proudly showing their flag coloured attires. The vibrant hues along with hot cups of tea and coffee set the mood for the Fellowship.

President Pramod Agarwal commenced by welcoming everyone, and after the national anthem began to talk about his action plan. The Nari Shakti program at the Arya Samaj mandir, Greater Kailash 2 was the highlight and he urged maximum participation from members.

Rtn Rajeev Seoni introduced the guest speaker for the evening, Wing Commander Rtn Baljit Singh to share his thoughts. He took us through his journey of the armed forces from his commission till he joined the corporate world. Sharing his experiences, he spoke about the significance of the date, on which 81 years back, The Quit India movement was launched. He went on to talk about General Manekshaw. The heroic rescue of 11 passengers

trapped in the cable car due to a snapped cable at Timber Trail gave us goosebumps. As an army kid, I felt a huge sense of pride just listening about the tedious selfless act of bravery followed by a sense of relief as all were safe.

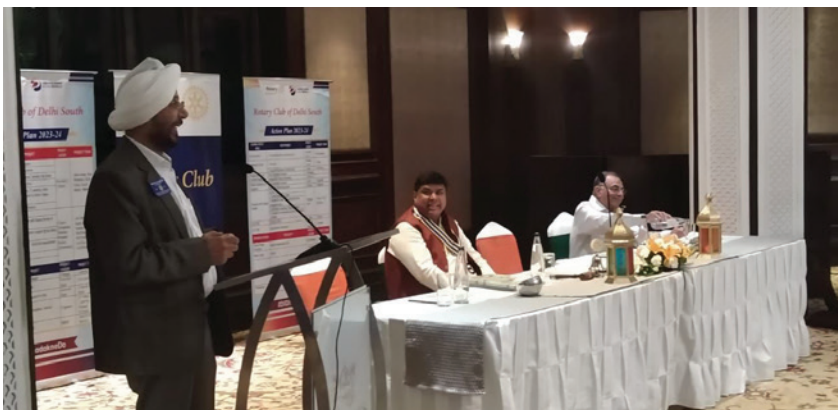
He briefly talked about his transition into the corporate world discussing managerial and leadership abilities. The floor was then opened for interaction and further discussions.

President Pramod felicitated the commander with a memento and Honorary Secretary Sarvpreet Singh made up for his absence by delivering a recorded vote of thanks.

Lucky Draw rewarded a few members and the rest settled for an evening of bonhomie with a drink of their choice.

A fitting start to Independence week celebrations...
Jai Hind !

- Monika Krishan





ROTARACT INSTALLATION

15th August, 2023



15 August 2023, the joyous occasion of the 77th independence day, witnessed our Rotaract Club celebrating the change of guard ceremony with Rtr Jyotsana Rijhwani collaring President Rtr Niharika Phogaat as the 52nd President of the Rotaract club. This was quite a memorable day as for the first an outgoing woman President had the opportunity of installing a new woman President.... Something RCDS could learn.

It is quite intriguing that the club is 51 year old and not a single member is over the age of 30 years. Keeping the club going despite a very high turnover of members is a commendable job.

The installation ceremony was held at the India Habitat Centre which began with an invocation to the almighty as the ceremonial lamp was being lit. The outgoing President presented an excellent report which touched on the Rotary avenues of fellowship, community welfare in spheres

of women health and sanitation, environment and child education.

Our illustrious PDG Hemant ji graciously blessed the audience with his pearls of wisdom while President Pramod Agarwal highlighted the role and importance of youth for a better future. He assured the Rotactors of his support and invited them to partner with RCDS in the coming year. The newly anointed President Rtr Niharika Phogaat spelled out the plans for the coming year wherein she highlighted her priorities in areas of plastic management, recycling of wastes, ensuring quality education and women empower. She also unveiled her theme for the year Anant... the endless

The youth were inspired by the present of three past Presidents of RCDS PP Arvinder Brara and Dolly ji, PP Som Dua and Rajni ji and PP Anil Agarwal ji. Distinguished Rotarians Rajeev and Vandana Seoni and Pomela Prasad also encouraged students with their gracious presence.

INTERACT INSTALLATION AND TREE PLANTATION GYAN BHARATI SCHOOL

18th August, 2023



The Installation Ceremony of Gyan Bharati School's Interact Club and MUN society unfolded on Friday, 18th August, 2023 radiating an aura of responsibility, leadership, and commitment. This event marked the transition of authority to a new batch of student leaders. The ceremony was an amalgamation of tradition, artistic expression, and inspiration. The event was preceded by planting of 50 trees which were sponsored by PP Rtn Anil Agarwal

The ceremony commenced with a warm welcome being extended by the students to RCDS President Mr. Pramod Agarwal, President, IPP Mr. Lalit Sawhney and Director Youth Services Naman Agarwal. who then joined the School Director Mrs. Lata Vaidyanathan, Principal Dr. (Mrs.) Mudita Sharma and Vice Principal Mr. Sanjay Bhardawaj for the ceremonial Lamp Lighting. Its essence was enhanced by the choir singing "Shubham Kurutwam Kalyanam" as an invocation to Maa Saraswati.

The ceremony featured a comprehensive report highlighting the accomplishments and endeavours of the Interact Club and MUN Society of the academic year 2022-23. The report showcased the remarkable impact these clubs have had on fostering leadership skills, global awareness, and community engagement among the students. It was quite satisfying to see how our future generations were ready to shoulder new responsibilities.

The students gave a heart rendering performance of Michael Jackson's "Heal the World." The song's message of kindness, unity,

and positive change fit perfectly with the idea of responsible leadership. The musical rendition was followed by a message on global peace and harmony through a skit prepared by the students on the theme of Article 370.

The highlight of the event was the installation of new leaders as the baton of responsibility was passed on to them by the old leaders. This showed how important it is to take on responsibilities with honesty and a commitment to grow. The ceremony saw insightful addresses by RCDS President Mr. Pramod Agarwal who welcomed students to partner with their parent club, IPP Mr. Lalit Sawhney who recalled his last visit on the first installation ceremony of the Club and Director Youth Services Mr. Naman Agarwal who mooted the idea of a large scale MUN to be instituted by the Interact Club of Gyan Bharati school

The ceremony left an indelible mark, reiterating the transformative potential of leadership. As the newly appointed badge holders embark on their journey, they embody the institution's hopes and aspirations.



SPEAKER MEETING

26th August – Ms. Mannu Dosaj

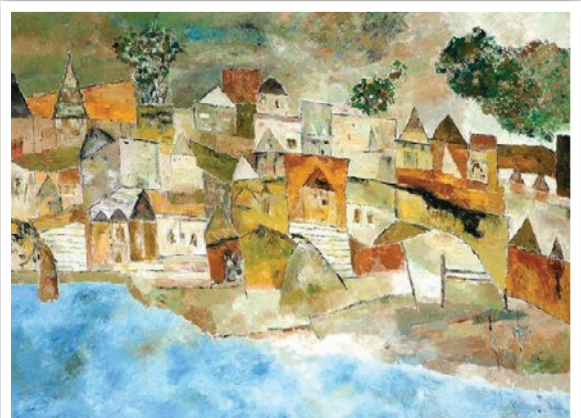


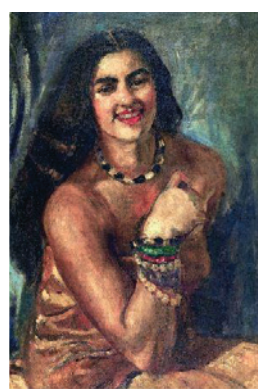
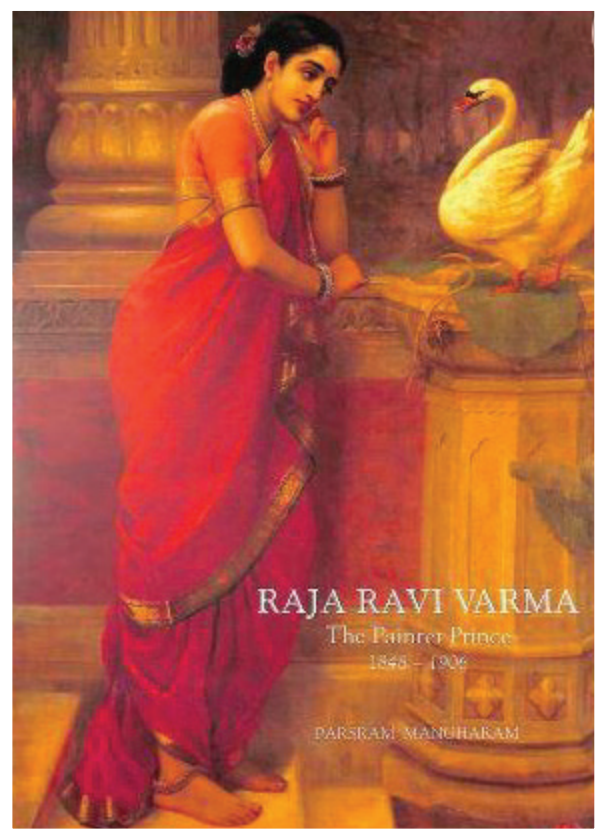
We had a very interesting speaker for our Club meeting on 26th Aug. Art Historian Mannu Dosaj has been in the business of hosting Art from a large variety of artistes, from very well-known names to budding artistes. She has a popular Art Gallery at a Gurgaon Mall and has been curating collections at different galleries in Delhi, hotels and residential buildings in Gurgaon, apart from building collections for private collectors and business houses.



She shared her 25+ years of experience, personal relationships and detailed knowledge of art and artistes, from well-known names like M.F. Hussain, Tyeb Mehta, Krishen Khanna, Raja Ravi Verma, Amrita Sher-gil, Ram Kumar, to the budding artists.

She told us about Hussain's fascination with horses, Amrita Shergil's early demise at the young age of 28 years (without being able to sell a single painting in her lifetime), different painters' support to their contemporaries and the camaraderie between the different artists, Krishen Khanna's activities at his late age of 98 years, personal stories about Francis Souza, Paresh Maity, SH Raza, etc., etc. And she showed us the famous artworks of some of these legendary names.





The best part of her presentation was her personal insights into these painters' lives and times, these individual artistes' favourite subjects, and some of their well-known artworks. All this made the presentation into an educative, interesting and most enjoyable talk on the recent history of Indian art.

- Jayshree Sawhney

FOOD AND BASIC ESSENTIALS TO FLOOD AFFECTED A FAMILIES

With great pride and sense of satisfaction, I am reporting back that as RCDS family, we have been able make an impact in the lives of 74 families (and counting) in the flood effected areas of Delhi.

Floods in parts of Delhi in early July have left numerous families displaced and some severely impacted - with no food and also with impact on their means of livelihood. RCDS with support from SOS Children Villages of India has helped some of the families in dire need of basic essentials by distribution of food and other essential items to these families

Your contributions have facilitated distribution of essential items including food/ ration, hand wash and detergents, toothpastes, mosquito repellants etc. for the families impacted by flood situation in low lying areas near Mayur Vihar between July 24 to July 27, 2023.

Thank you to each of the RCDS family members who supported this project- each of your donation helped a family get the basic resources and reinforced the solidarity of our community.



RCDS COMBATting VECTOR BORNE DISEASES

100 litres of spray will perish mosquitos that could adversely make upto 1 crore people sick just in Delhi. Super high impact project. Thanks to PDG Hemant ji for inspiring us, Sumit for raising funds and PP Anil ji and his Shankar Foundation in making it happen in record time , just when mosquitoes were ready for exponential breeding. Thanks to Dr Lalan ji from MCD and his team for helping us to help others. Thanks to all the generous donors for chipping in at a super fast speed.



TREE PLANTATION

Tree plantation at Buddha garden. PP Anil Agarwal organized tree plantation drive. Several members came to do the honors. Gul organize sumptuous breakfast after tiring work hour planting trees.



ARYA SAMAJ AND RCDS TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT AND PLACEMENT CENTRE

Start of the Arya Samaj Rotary Club of Delhi South Training Development and Placement Centre operated by Etasha Society. Thanks to Seonis, Duas, Rajiv Gural ji , Rita ji and the Braras for gracing the opening ceremony. 14 students have been admitted so training will start in a day or two. Big thanks to Arya Samaj and Etasha for a win win partnership. Thanks to all donors who generously contributed. Life of 90 youngsters including atleast 50 girls will change for better. Thank you



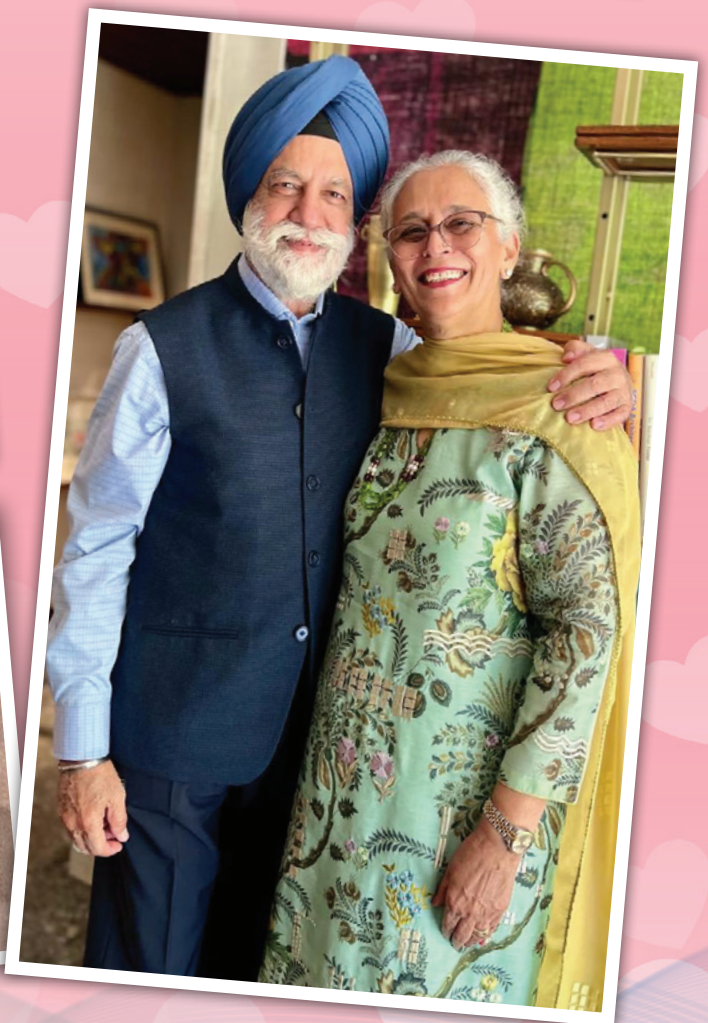
SIGNING OF MOU BETWEEN RCDS SAND EARTH SAVIOURS



Momentous Monday! DG Rtn. Jeetendra Gupta at the GOV said, " we need to have more visibility for Rotary. We need to have Rotary branded for posterity". And we said, 'Amen to that' & today we signed the MOU for the 'Rotary Block' supported by Rotary club of Delhi South at Earth Saviours! RCDS has contributed 27 lakhs for this project which will house more than 150 homeless people in a home like environment with full care and medical facilities along with a toilet block. A big thank you to President Pramod, PP Anil, Agarwal, and all the kind donors who made this happen. We still need around 10 lakhs for the project..... donation & support requested... Please reach out to me for any details.

...and they lived happily thereafter!!

by popular request we are creating a theatre of the newlyweds then,
and happily ensconced now with each other



Dimple-Amarjit, Archana- Ganesh and Kausy-Madhavan exchanged marital vows!! We wish them a long and happy life together, and a growing clan of grand, great, and great great grandchildren!! God bless them.

ENTICING EUROPE



Town Square, Tall Cathedral, Imposing Castles and Cafes spilling out on the streets... This pretty much sums up a European city for a tourist. On my recent trip, I decided to explore further and deeper.

Lake Como has been made famous for the many celebrity weddings recently and the sheer beauty of the lake against the backdrop of the Swiss Alps is simply stunning. It took considerable effort to take my eyes away from this breathtaking view and look beyond.

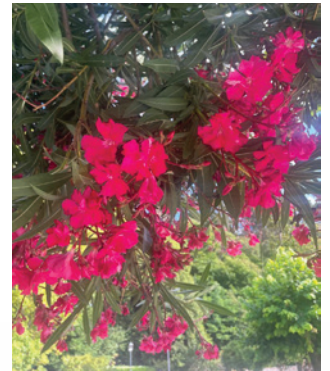
Ditching the tourist towns, I made a beeline for the lesser known towns on the lake. Extremely narrow lanes lead to a tiny family run shop where I was pleasantly greeted by the matriarchal head of the family. She proudly showed me a colourful handmade bag which she had herself designed and seemed reluctant to part with. I expressed the right amount of praise and respect while she lovingly wrapped it for me. All this while, her granddaughter watched the exchange patiently. It reminded me of my "nani" who would knit sweaters for us and then beam with pride and love when we wore them.

Our next stop was a tiny eating joint where pasta was being made from scratch. The process was fascinating and when served with fresh basil pesto, simply delicious. No fancy menus or servers, just wholesome healthy food. No meal is complete without the traditional dessert, Tiramisu, which was so light and flavoursome. No fancy chef twist or take on this, just pure taste with each bite.

We were greeted with local wares and delights at every nook and corner and experienced the Italian hospitality over warm conversations and hot espressos. Italians enjoy a hearty meal with laughter and noise, just like back home where family mealtimes are sacred and always pure joy and fun. Time wasn't a constraint as few tourists visited this charming town which was yet to find a place on the trip advisor list.

Our next halt was Croatia, a country which has been on my bucket list for some time now. Its raw and rugged beauty simply took my breath away. We

eagerly started exploring the myriad lanes and streets laden with shops and restaurants in the Old town only to realise much later that it was all part of a castle. We simply lost ourselves in it and my quota of 10000 steps was filled so fast that I was amazed. Every little turn took us to either steps or a courtyard with arches or a dead end where we had to simply turn back. Tiny stores actually poured out on the lanes causing us to bump into all. Our tired feet then took us to the waterfront where the Adriatic Sea beckoned.

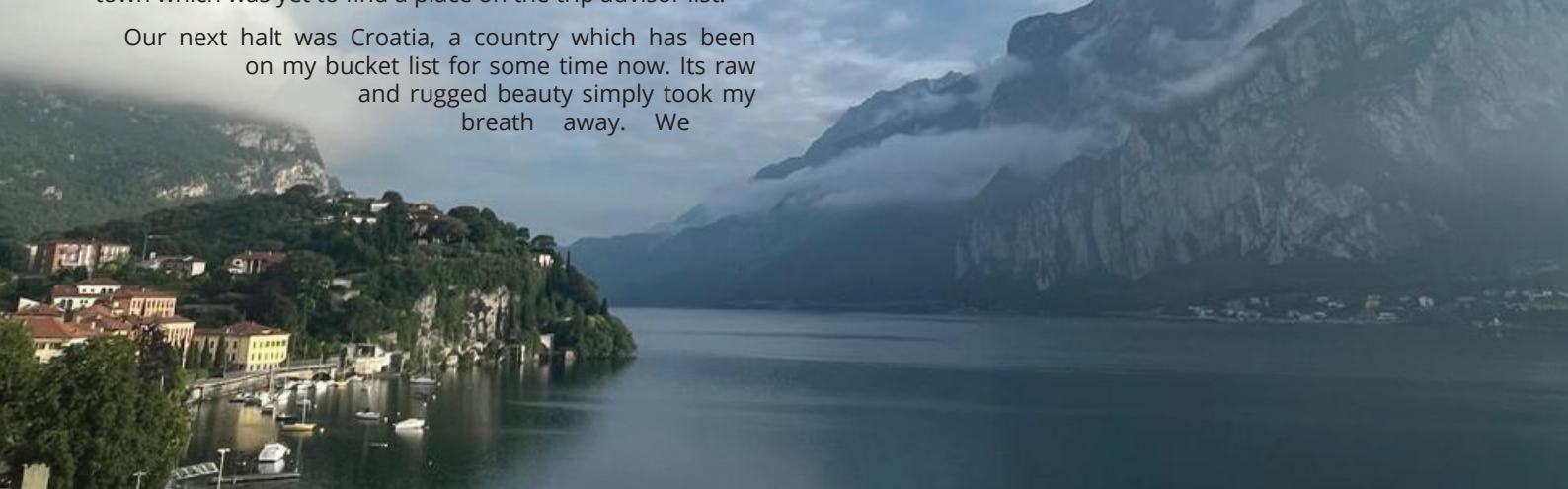


Benches spilled on the promenade allowed us to soak in the local vibe. This country sells its magnificent natural beauty as a tourist attraction, nothing man made. The Blue cave was a surreal experience where we entered the narrow opening in customised boats which then opened up to the translucent cave emitting blue light. Despite the constant passage of boats, there was pin drop silence inside the cave as we were all awestruck.

Gorgeous lagoons, tiny coastal towns bustling with activities, stunning islands against the backdrop of the mountains, we simply couldn't get enough.

Our days would end with a refreshing glass of local Croatian wine which I believe is truly underrated. Loaded with memories in our hearts and phones, we bid adieu to this stunning country for now.

Monika Krishan



MEMORABLE CANADIAN TRIP



We had a memorable trip to Canada earlier this month. A breathtaking train journey on the Canadian Rocky Mountaineer, from Vancouver to Banff, which gave us spectacular views of the mountains, rivers, waterfalls and deep forests. A Must do for Seniors; to see the natural beauty of this region, at least once in a lifetime. Enjoyed great service and a variety of food and beverages on our two-day train journey. Experienced excellent hospitality and meticulous organisation by the train company and staff.



Our Rocky Mountaineer Train journey ended at Banff, the small town within the Banff National Park limits. Loved the Banff Avenue area, with its numerous boutique hotels. The downtown area was very lively with a lot of touristy shops and a large variety of cafes, serving different cuisines. And, at this time we had a large number of tourists and locals present, because of vacation time in the US and Europe.



We also visited the world famous Butchart Gardens in Victoria. These were absolutely beautiful - landscaped gardens with a large variety of flowers and plants. The colourful flowers in hanging baskets and large potholders, were a treat to the eyes. Another must see tourist attraction in Canada. Our only regret was that we had too little time to do justice to these magnificent gardens.



From Banff, we went to the two beautiful lakes - Lake Louise and Lake Moraine. The unparalleled beauty of these huge lakes, with mountains in the background, near Banff in Alberta, Canada, is to be seen to be believed. Yet another must see tourist attraction. The lakes were more than 25 miles in length and 15 miles wide, more like oceans. And, we had perfect sunny weather, which added to our enjoyment. All in all, an amazing trip.

Lalit Sawhney



FREEDOM AT MIDNIGHT

by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre

These true events were choreographed hundreds of miles apart in what was one country, but which at the strike of the midnight hour, created two dismembered countries. These farewell scenarios reflect the camaraderie of soldiers of two religions, two recently divided countries, but the resultant inflection is a storyline that was cast in the cunningly twisted minds of the Pakistani leaders, for whom stealth and trickery was par for the course. Its publication in the month of our independence is opportune and is culled from the book 'Freedom at Midnight' authored by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre.

Inderjeet Singh

In barracks, cantonments, along Military Lines, Hindu, Sikh and Moslem soldiers of the great army being sliced in two along with the sub-continent it had served paid a last homage to one another. In Delhi, the troopers of the Sikh and Dogra squadrons of Probyn's Horse, one of the army's legendary old cavalry regiments, offered a gigantic banquet to the men of the departing Moslem squadron. They savoured together on an open parade ground a final feast of mountains of steaming rice, chicken curry, lamb kebab and the regiment's traditional pudding, rice baked with caramel, cinnamon and almonds. When it was over, Sikh, Moslem and Hindu joined hands and danced a last bhanga, a wild, swirling farandole climaxing the most moving evening in their regiment's history.

The Moslem regiments in the areas which would fall to Pakistan offered similar banquets to their Sikh and Hindu comrades leaving for India. In Rawalpindi, the Second Cavalry gave an enormous barakana, a 'good luck' banquet to their former comrades. Every Sikh and Hindu officer spoke, often with tears in their eyes, to bid farewell to the Moslem colonel, Mohammed Idriss, who'd led them through some of the bitterest fighting of World War II. 'Wherever you go,' said Idriss in reply, 'we shall always remain brothers because we spilled our blood together.'

Idriss then cancelled the order he'd received from the headquarters of the future Pakistan Army insisting that all departing Indian troops turn in their weapons before leaving. 'These men are soldiers,' he said, 'they came here with their arms. They will leave with them.' The next morning those soldiers who'd served under his command owed their lives to his last intervention on their behalf. An hour out of Rawalpindi, the train bearing the Sikhs and Hindus of the 2nd Cavalry was ambushed by Moslem League National Guardsmen. Without their arms they would have been massacred.

The most touching farewell of all took place on the lawns and in the grand ballroom of an institution that once had been one of the most privileged sanctuaries of India's British rulers, the Imperial Delhi Gymkhana Club. Invitation was by engraved cards sent by 'The Officers of the Armed Forces of the Dominion of India' inviting guests to a 'Farewell to Old Comrades Reception in honour of the Officers of the Armed Forces of the Dominion of Pakistan.' An air of 'overwhelming sadness and unreality' overlaid the evening, one Indian remembered. With their well-trimmed moustaches, their Sam Browne belts, their British uniforms and the rows of decorations they had won risking their lives in the service of India's British rulers, the men mingling under the lantern chains all seemed to have been pressed from the same mould. In the ballroom the flashing rainbow colours of their women's saris sparkled through the dim lights.

Above all, they talked and drank in the bar, telling the old stories one last time; the stories of the mess, of the desert, of the jungles of Burma, of the raids against their own countrymen on the frontier, the ordeals and pleasures of entire careers spent together in that special fraternity of the uniform and shared danger. None of those men could envisage on that nostalgic evening the tragic role into which they would soon be cast. Instead, it was arms around each other's shoulders and boisterous cries of: 'we'll be down for pig-sticking in September', and 'don't forget the polo in Lahore', and 'we must go after that ibex we missed in Kashmir last year'.

When the time came to end the evening, Brigadier Cariappa, a Hindu of the 1st-7th Rajputs, climbed to the raised dance platform and called for silence. 'We are here to say au revoir and only au revoir, because we shall meet again in the same spirit of friendship that has always bound us together,' he said. 'We have shared a common destiny so long that our history is inseparable.' He reviewed their experience together, then concluded: 'We have been brothers. We will always remain brothers. And we shall never forget the great years we have lived together.' When he'd finished, the Hindu brigadier stepped to the rear of the bandstand and picked up a heavy silver trophy draped with a cloth shroud. He offered it to the senior Moslem officer present, Brigadier Aga Raza, as a parting gift from the Hindu officers to their Moslem comrades in arms. Raza plucked the protective cloth from the trophy and held it up to the crowd. Fashioned by a silversmith in Old Delhi, it represented two sepoy, one Hindu, one Moslem, standing side by side, rifles at their shoulders trained upon some common foe.

After Raza on behalf of all the Moslems present had thanked Cariappa for the gift, the orchestra struck up 'Auld Lang Syne'. Instinctively, spontaneously, the officers reached for each other's hands. In seconds, arm in arm, they had formed a circle, Hindu and Moslem scattered indiscriminately along its rim, swaying in unison together, their booming voices filling the damp and sweltering Delhi night with the words of that old Scottish dirge. A long silence followed its last chorus. Then the Indian officers went to the ballroom door and, glasses in hand, formed an aisle down its steps and out on to the lawn leading towards India's sleeping capital. One by one, their Pakistani comrades walked down the passage formed by their ranks into the night. As they did so, on either side, the Indians raised their glasses in a final, silent toast to their departing comrades. They would, as they had promised each other, meet again, far sooner and in far more tragic circumstances than any of them might have imagined that night. It was not on the polo fields of Lahore that those former comrades in arms would have their next rendezvous but on a battlefield in Kashmir.

SNIPPETS HISTORICAL AND INTERESTING...

STORY OF TWO KHANS

Sahibzada Yaqub Khan left this world at 95 with a smile on his face. Very few people knew about the pain hidden behind his smile. He was a soldier tuned diplomat and never liked wars. Few years back he talked about Sullivan brothers killed in 2nd World War. He narrated the story of five brothers in a gathering at a university in Islamabad. These brothers were serving US Navy together as Sailors on a ship called USS Juneau. Japanese attacked their ship in 1942 and all five were killed. Sahibzada Yaqub Khan said brothers were unlucky because they were killed together. After a brief pause he said but they were lucky because they were serving in a same Army to fight a common enemy.

He never shared his personal war experiences which always haunted him till his death. Sahibzada Yaqub Khan and his brother Sahibzada Yunus Khan served together in British Army as young officers during 2nd World War. Both earned Indian General Service Medal(IGMS). Yaqub was captured by Italian and German Army near Egypt-Libya border in 1942. He learned Italian and German languages during his captivity. He was released after the war was over. The year 1947 separated the two brothers who belonged to the royal family of Rampur. Major Sahibzada Yaqub Khan opted for Pakistan Army and his elder brother Major Sahibzada Yunus Khan decided to serve Indian Army.

Within one year both Khans were leading their battalions from opposite sides in 1948 in the mountains of Kashmir. The two brothers met face-to-face with guns in their hands spitting out bullets in rapid fire. A bullet fired from the gun of Major Yunus Khan injured Major Yaqub Khan. When elder brother realized that he injured his younger brother he shouted "don't grieve Chotey. We are soldiers and we did our duty". Later on Colonel Maneckshaw and Colonel Jasbir Singh of Indian Army commended Major Yunus Khan but also said sorry for his brother Yaqub. The two brothers never contacted each other again because they were serving in opposite Armies until 1960 when Yaqub married an Indian girl Tuba Khaleeli from Kolkata. Yunus sent greetings to his younger brother in Pakistan on his marriage. Yaqub commanded an Armored division of Pak Army during India-Pakistan war of 1965 but at that time his brother Colonel Yunus was retired from Indian Army.

Same Sahibzada Yaqub Khan became a three star General in Pakistan Army in 1971. He was appointed Commander of Eastern Command in Dhaka. In the first week of March 1971 he was ordered to launch a military operation against Awami League lead by Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. Lt. Gen Sahibzada Yaqub Khan advised military dictator General Yahya Khan to avoid using gun power against democratically elected leaders. He informed military dictator in writing that transfer of power to Sheikh Mujib was the only solution of the crises. When Yahya refused to listen his Commander on ground Sahibzada Yaqub Khan resigned. Initially he became target of dictator's anger but later on he was proved right. Pakistan was divided but he got respect due to his

refusal and resignation. At least he was not part of any crime.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto knew that Sahibzada Yaqub Khan had command on more than 10 languages including French, German, Italian, Russian, Persian and Arabic. He appointed him Ambassador in France in 1972. When General Ziaul Haq toppled the government of Bhutto in 1977 Sahibzada was serving as Ambassador in Moscow. He once again decided to act courageously. He advised military dictator General Zia not to hang a politician but Zia never listened to him and hanged Bhutto. General Zia appointed Sahibzada Yaqub Khan as his Foreign Minister in 1982. Same year Sahibzada Yaqub Khan travelled to Delhi in his official capacity and met his brother after 36 years. They embraced each other with tears in their eyes and never discussed what happened in 1948.

Next few years Sahibzada Yaqub Khan was the smiling face of Pakistan's foreign policy which was actually controlled by a military dictator who created private militias to fight Soviet troops in Afghanistan. It was in 1986 when general Zia shared a plan of capturing Kargil with his foreign minister. This plan created by some military commanders of Pakistan Army was totally rejected by Sahibzada Yaqub Khan. Luckily General Zia agreed with his foreign minister and this operation was abandoned. After few years Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto informed his cabinet ministers including Sahibzada Yaqub Khan that Army want to capture some strategic heights in Kargil. Again it was Sahibzada who militantly opposed the idea and forced Benazir Bhutto to say a big no to that adventure. Unfortunately third time this plan was not shared with the political government in 1999 and Pakistan faced lot of problems due to that misadventure.

Sahibzada Yaqub Khan was the longest serving foreign minister of Pakistan. He served with Dictator Zia and also served with elected leader like Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. He negotiated the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Pakistan very successfully. He was a legend in diplomacy. He knew nearly a dozen languages and Henry Kissinger once told him that he had an unfair advantage in the arena of diplomacy. He was not a perfect man but he always chased perfection and attained excellence. In his last days he was quietly advising the government of Nawaz Sharif to remove misunderstandings with neighbors' asked him many times to write his memoirs. Once he said that "I don't want to make tamasha of my personal pains and gains". He said I cannot tell my story without mentioning my brother who served India. He did his job. I did my job but we fired bullets on each other. I can't write all this. He started from Rampur in 1920 and finished in Islamabad on January 26th 2016. He always wanted to have peace with his brothers and sisters in India. He never believed in wars. I must say that it's not the story of two brothers or two Khans. It's a story of two countries that need peace.

Written by Hamid Mir.

SNIPPETS HISTORICAL AND INTERESTING...

HOW A MISTAKEN OBITUARY LED TO... THE NOBEL PRIZES!*

Can you imagine reading your own obituary in the newspaper?

What would people say about you?

Alfred Nobel got the chance to read his own death notice, and he didn't like what he saw.

Alfred Nobel was a very wealthy and successful man. He had become an expert in chemistry and invented three of the most commonly used explosives in the world - dynamite, gelignite (used in mining) and ballistite, which is still used as a rocket propellant today.

With the huge fortune he made from these inventions, Nobel bought an engineering company called Bofors and turned it into an arms manufacturer. He made another enormous fortune designing cannons and guns and selling them around the world.

Then, in 1888, Alfred's brother died while visiting France.

A French newspaper thought it was Alfred who had died and they published an obituary that began like this: THE MERCHANT OF DEATH IS DEAD. Dr. Alfred Nobel, who became rich by finding ways to kill more people faster than ever before, died yesterday....

Alfred Nobel was shocked. Was this what people thought of him? Was this the legacy he would leave to the world?

That's when he decided to use his vast wealth to make a positive difference. Nobel set up a foundation with \$250 million dollars in funding. Every year the foundation would consult the leading experts in the world and hand out prizes to people who had made great contributions to humanity. There would be prizes for sciences, for literature, and for promoting peace.

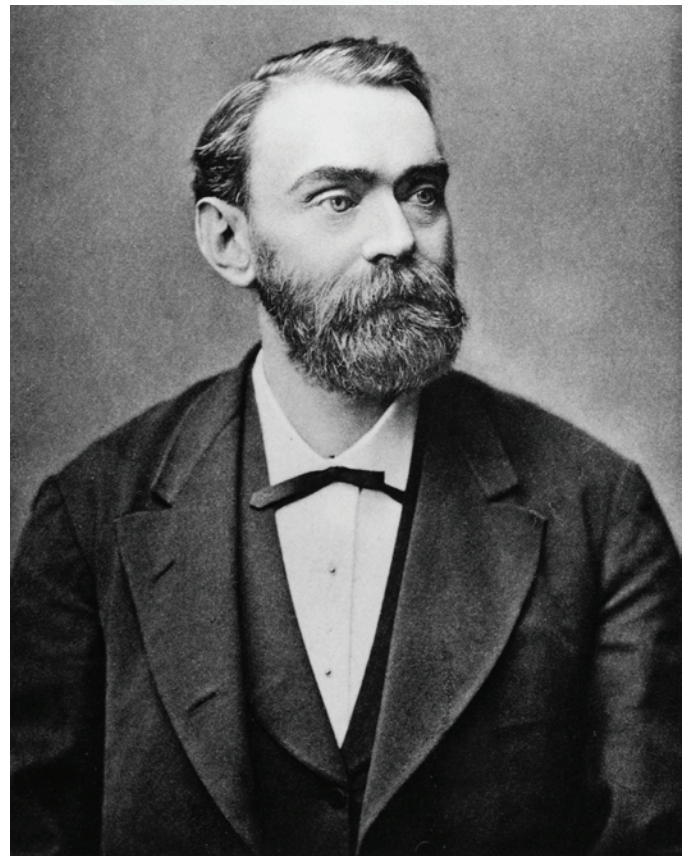
Today the Nobel Prizes are probably the best known and most prestigious awards in the world. They have been awarded to great scientists, authors and activists and helped draw attention to many outstanding works and worthy causes.

Nobel set up his foundation in 1895: just in time to influence his own obituary. He died only a year later. The Nobel Prizes accomplished his wish; they created a very different legacy for him than a reputation as *The Merchant of Death.*

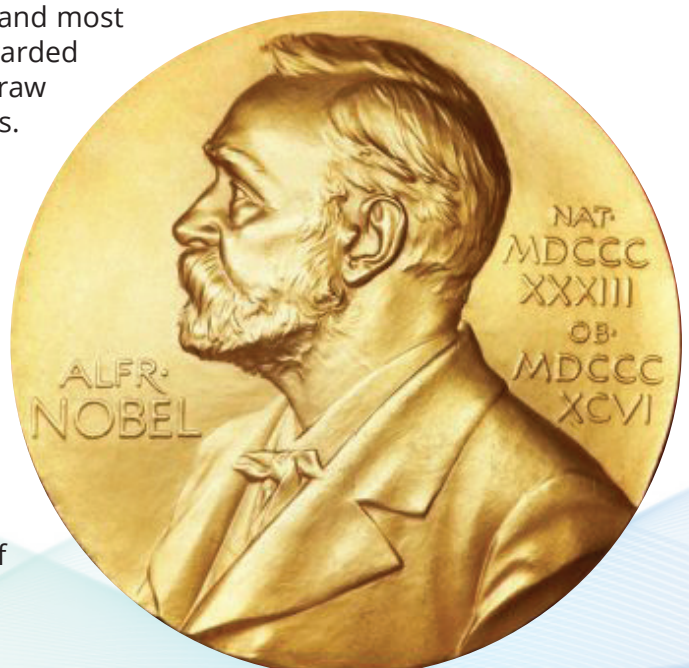
He is not remembered as an explosives inventor or arms dealer, but as one of the greatest philanthropists of all time. He is also a great example of how it is never too late to change your life and help make the world a better place.

That is the story of *Alfred Nobel and the legacy of *Nobel Prizes*.

Contributed by **Inderjeet Singh**



Alfred Bernhard Nobel



SNIPPETS HISTORICAL AND INTERESTING...

Precious Recollections of Connaught Place and Connaught Circus in the 40's and 50's. Contrast the laid back life then and the traffic whirlwind of today.

70 साल पहले कुछ ऐसा दिखता था 'कनॉट प्लेस'.



इस रैली को देखने हजारों लोग 'कनॉट प्लेस' पहुंचे थे.



1955 में जब 'सोवियत संघ' के प्रधानमंत्री, निकोलाई बुलगनिन ने भारत दौरा किया था.



इस लग्जरी कार में सवार थे प्रधानमंत्री, निकोलाई बुलगनिन.



उस दौर में कितना सुकून था, काश! आज भी ऐसा होता.



कभी दोबारा देख पाएंगे 'कनॉट प्लेस' का ऐसा नज़ारा?



महंगी गाड़ियों में नहीं, लोग बैलगाड़ी से पहुंचते थे 'कनॉट प्लेस'.



साइकिल से दोस्तों के साथ 'कनॉट प्लेस' की सैर.



कनॉट प्लेस में कभी 'Madras Cafe' हुआ करता था.



SNIPPETS HISTORICAL AND INTERESTING...

उस दौर की इस सवारी को भला कौन भूल सकता है?



'कनॉट प्लेस' की ये शांति दिल को सुकून देती है.



भीड़ के नाम पर कुछ ऐसा दृश्य होता था 'कनॉट प्लेस' का.



क्या अब भी 'Pitmans Commercial College' कनॉट प्लेस में है?



'कनॉट प्लेस' में 'Madhoram & Sons' की दुकान अब भी है क्या?



किसी को याद है 'Murphy Radio'?



'कनॉट प्लेस' की पार्किंग का नाज़ारा.



ये तस्वीर देख उस दौर की कल्पनाओं में खो जाओगे.

ये रहा 'कनॉट प्लेस' का खूबसूरत स्काई शॉट.



GROWING UP IN CP

This piece is contributed by Geeta Gujral and it's coincidental that last week, I became privy to a phalanx of photos of Connaught Place and Connaught Circus depicting the laid back life of a Delhiwala in the 40's and 50's, which too are published alongside. I have personally experienced those times with retentive memories of the mid late 40's and sharply from the 50's. Lalit Narula who has penned this riveting narrative of a young and New Delhi shared his early schooling with me at the same institution but before it was christened DPS it went by the moniker Free Church School and was located opposite the Rashtrapati Bhavan (Viceregal Lodge then), to quickly acquire another Navin Bharat to celebrate independence finally settling with Delhi Public School.

Inderjeet Singh

Lalit Nirula

Dilliwallahs was a term used for people whose families had been living in Old Delhi – or Purani Dilli – for generations. My family migrated to Delhi in the 1920s and settled in a brand new, still-under-construction, 20,000 inhabitant-strong, New Delhi. And that, I guess, would technically make us Nai Dilliwalas! My folks were one of the few Punjabi families who lived in Delhi in the '20s and I, the Nai Dilliwala or CP wallah, was born at Lady Hardinge Hospital, just a stone's throw from Connaught Place. The first four years of my life were spent at Hanuman Road, right next to CP and from then on, for the next 58 years, I lived and worked in CP.

My father remembered seeing a train track passing through the not-yet-completed Connaught Place complex, en-route to Raisina Hill, carrying building material for the under-construction Rashtrapati Bhavan, North and South Blocks and Parliament House. While the whole complex of the inner and outer circle is popularly known as Connaught Place, or CP, the outer ring of buildings was called Connaught Circus and the inner ring was called Connaught Place. Most of the buildings came up in the '20s and '30s and the last buildings to come up were as late as the '50s.

There was a big divide between the old parts of Delhi and the new, culturally and physically. I remember an aunt telling me how in the late '20s, she returned to Delhi by train with her brother and got off at the main Delhi station which was in Old Delhi. As her husband lived and worked in New Delhi, she wanted to go there immediately. However, it was winter and dark when she alighted from the train, and she was advised not to venture towards New Delhi until the next morning, as in the area between the walls of Old Delhi (where Asaf Ali Road and Ramlila grounds are now located) and Connaught Place, there was a jungle and it was not safe to travel at night!

CP was not a favoured shopping centre in the early days and there were very few people who wanted to open retail outlets there. While the ground and mezzanine floors were commercial space, the upper floors were residential and till the '70s, continued to be primarily residential.

My father and uncle were young bachelors running a photo studio in D-Block and, being fond of good food, had to travel to Chandni Chowk or Kashmiri Gate in Old Delhi to get a proper meal. So was born the idea of starting a small hotel with a restaurant on half the upper floor of D-Block so they could be assured of good food! Encouraged by their neighbour, Mr Beaty of S.M.G. Beaty, they opened Hotel India in 1934. Hotel India became popular, as the only other hotel that existed in New Delhi at that time was a luxury hotel, The Imperial. Marina Hotel in G-Block came up a little later.

While CP was still developing, my father and uncle discovered a large ground floor location being used for charpai storage on the corner of L-Block in the outer circle. They negotiated with the four owners and took it on rent and opened a first class restaurant and bar serving continental and Indian food and named it Nirulas Corner House in early 1942.

During the War years, business improved substantially and the restaurant became well-known for its food and entertainment which included cabarets, flamenco dancers, magicians, and performance ballroom dancing. A friend's father told me that as a young cavalry officer in the early '40s, posted in Delhi Cantonment during the war, he would motorcycle down to our restaurant once a week to have 'desi khana', as all he got in his very pukka British Army Mess was insipid British food! An Englishman who met me in the '90s showed me one of our table d'hote menus from the early '40s that offered two 5 course meals, for two rupees each! His father had picked up the menu when he was posted in India.

Gol Dakhana (GPO), New Delhi

I remember being told of a legendary gourmand, a very eminent tall and rotund lawyer who was a regular at our restaurant for lunch. He would sit at his favourite table and ask the butler, Jameel, what was being offered. He would select one of the full meals and many times, after finishing it, would proceed to enquire about what else was available as he was still a little hungry. He would then order the second meal and proceed to finish that as well.

Christmas and New Year's eve were magical times for me. The restaurant would be decorated for the festive season on the evening of 22 December, the eve of my birthday. I would go there on the 23rd and be delighted to see all the decorations which I thought had been done specially for me! Imagine my delight at seeing a sparkly, brightly festooned Connaught Place done up just to wish me a happy birthday.

Besides our establishment, there were two other restaurants in CP by then, both owned and run by foreigners – Davico's, the present Standard Restaurant in Regal Building and Wengers. In the '40s and '50s many more restaurants opened – Kwality, Gaylord, Volga, Alps, United Coffee House, York, and more.

Post 1947, my family realized that with the British leaving, market requirements had changed. They closed down the existing restaurant and in 1950 started three new restaurants in the same space.

The first one was a 150-seat modern cafeteria which catered to the large new middle class, and soon became very popular. It introduced into India – what is now commonplace – clean hygienic food cooked to order in front of the customer, with payment at the end of the cafeteria line. It also introduced the long milk shake spoon which would often be in short supply as it became a great souvenir item!

The second restaurant was a 'brasserie' modelled on the ones in France, but the concept was 50 years before its time and not very successful. The third restaurant, the Chinese Room, was the first de luxe Chinese restaurant in India owned by non-Chinese people. It ran successfully for over 55 years.

The Chinese Room's first chef, Li Wo Po, was introduced to us by the interior designer, Edwin Chan. Li Wo Po had come to India in '42 with Chiang Kai Shek and decided to stay on. He was very happily married to a South Indian lady. They had an ideal relationship, as he did not speak English or any Indian

language and she only spoke her mother tongue! How they communicated remains a mystery.

He came to work wearing a suit, but without a tie and was a great chef in the classical sense of the word. While communicating with him was difficult without an interpreter, he did manage to get his requirements across. I remember being in the office when he arrived all upset about something and started going red in the face as he tried explaining something he wanted and which my father was not able to understand. He then rushed off and returned with an egg which he placed on a chair, half sat on it and then said 'no no!' It subsequently transpired that for his soup stock, he was getting hens while he wanted old male chickens.

In the '40s and early '50s, it was quite common for the well-off to go out for dinner and dance as all restaurants had a live band, many with crooners. As the '50s and '60s progressed, this became more and more expensive and by the early '70s few restaurants had a band.

In 1958, we had opened the first modern fully air conditioned 3-star hotel in India at L-Block, above the restaurant complex. By the late '50s, my family had seen the trend and in 1960, shut down the cafeteria and brasserie and opened two speciality restaurants without any live music. One was for Indian food and was called Gufa, with the interiors done by a close family friend, the artist, M.R. Acharekar, who had won Filmfare's best art director award three times. He got his team of set designers from Bombay to do the work, and the restaurant was unique in its presentation. Created like the Ajanta Ellora caves, the entire service was silver and the waiters were dressed in white and red with high pugdees. The restaurant had three different chefs – one for vegetarian cuisine, one for meat, chicken and fish curries, and one for tandoori dishes.

I had by then started working part-time in the restaurants and was present in the office when the meat chef was being interviewed. He was a burly Sikh who had worked with the Maharaja of Patiala and when asked what his food was like, his reply was that it was of such good quality that our customers would taste it in their burp's 24 hours later! He was hired but his rich food was toned down substantially to meet the digestive requirements of mere mortals.

The second restaurant was called 'La Boheme' and was designed by Luc Durant, a Swiss architect based in Delhi. La Boheme was avant garde and set a trend in food, concept and design. It had a wood beamed ceiling with the beams set at different heights. Jute fabric runners in black and white ran over and under these beams and lights in cylindrical lampshades with a switch, hung low over every table. Specializing in Austro-Hungarian cuisine, La Boheme served continental food. It was the first restaurant to serve a large variety of coffee and boasted of the second espresso machine in India, a chrome beauty by Gaggia. Heading the kitchen was the Hungarian Mrs. Messinger, a professional chef who made the best apple strudel I have ever eaten.

The restaurant was a novel concept and became popular with artists and writers and the regular business and shopping crowd who visited CP. It also became a favourite haunt of young couples as at that time there was a dearth of places for the young to hang out. After a few months we had to remove the light switches from the lamps that hung on top of the tables, so that the lights were always on, particularly in the quiet corners that had become very popular with them! In the '50s and '60s, Sunday noon saw the college going trendsetters at jam sessions hosted by restaurants. These sessions served two purposes; first, the crowd got to hang out and meet new people and second, the dancing was considered quite trendy. These were times that saw the birth of the chacha cha and the twist.

Most of the corporate offices in Delhi in the '50s and '60s were located either at CP or Asaf Ali Road. It was the done thing among the managerial class, the shop owners and the local

politicians to go to a restaurant for a mid-morning and early evening break. In the early 1960s, a very popular large India Coffee House was started by the Coffee Board in the area where the underground Palika parking is today, opening onto the inner circle. It soon became a favourite among politicians, the press and the 'intellectuals'. When Palika Bazaar was planned in the late '70s, it was removed to an upper floor of a building on Baba Kharak Singh Marg where it currently languishes.

By the time my generation reached college, we started visiting restaurants to listen to the music, and there were some good bands playing jazz. Of course, we could not afford to eat anything and had to make do with a coffee or a cold drink. As we wanted to spend the maximum time possible in the restaurant, and there were free coffee refills, this was not an issue. However, if one did not like coffee, bottles of coke were ordered and drunk with a paper straw pinched in the middle to reduce the flow of the cola to make it last for at least an hour.

Nirulas Corner House, L-Block, Connaught Circus

By the mid '60s, restaurants in CP wised-up to our money saving techniques and put a limit of two cups of coffee per person. They had discovered that even with a full house in the evenings, their sales were minimal and constituted primarily of coke and coffee.

In the early '70s, with maximum income tax levels being 97.5 per cent along with managerial salary restrictions, the CP restaurants, including ours, found business dwindling. This prompted our experiment in '71 with a new style of restaurant in CP, where food offered was very reasonably priced, cooked to order and picked up from counters. It had a variety of Indian and Anglo-Indian food items as well as soft drinks, soft ice cream and selected bakery products. It became very popular, with both maharajah's and taxi drivers visiting it and even ending up sharing tables, where they ate the food standing.

In '48, our residence moved to D-Block in the inner circle of buildings from Gokul Niwas in M-Block where we had lived for a couple of years. It was one of the few upper floors in CP which had an entrance from the inner circle verandah while most others had their entrance from the back of the building. As our building had only one upper floor, the ceilings were almost 18 feet high and we had internal courtyards for air and light besides a huge 12 foot wide verandah running the full length of the building and facing the park. We slept in it during the summer or on the roof with mosquito netting and it was magical in summer at night watching the stars and seeing the clouds move over the moon. Of course, any rain would cause much scrambling to remove the beds to safety. One of summer's compensations was the fragrant motia (jasmine) strung into a small mala (necklace), available from the vendors roaming the corridors. Women would wear these malas in their hair or on their wrists. The men would buy them for the women and I would wrap one in a wet handkerchief to keep it fresh, and go to sleep with it next to my pillow.

The road on which D-Block was located abutted the building with a narrow pavement and cars (the few that were there) parked perpendicular to the building. The central park was much larger in those days as it included the area which is now the road, whilst the road was where today's parking lots are located. During summer, a water tanker with a spray at the back would make a round of the CP roads in the morning, spraying water to keep the dust down. This continued until the '60s. The Central Park was divided into four parts with a small circular raised section in the middle like a bandstand where the Police Band would play every Friday. In the '60s, a fountain was unsuccessfully installed in its place and the pavement surrounding it sometimes had impromptu art shows and other such happenings. This area now houses the metro station. The park primarily had gulmohar trees and beds of canna lilies

while the circumference was lined with jamun trees. As children we would throw stones at the trees to bring the fruit down, albeit unsuccessfully! And during the jamun season, fruit contractors would lay down large sheets onto which they harvested the ripe fruit by vigorously shaking the branches. We played cricket in the park in the 1950s using a gulmohar tree as the wicket. Its end came only recently when the Metro station was built.

I distinctly remember August 1947. We were not allowed to go outside after sundown. Late evenings were pitch dark, the shops were closed and one could clearly hear the sound of sirens. Sleeping on the roof, I remember looking towards Old Delhi and seeing a reddish glow in the sky and being told that there were fires burning in that area. What I remember most distinctly after that was probably the second half of '47 and '48 when the inner circle was more crowded than it had ever been. The verandahs were full of people and walking space was limited as the refugees had opened little stalls with gas lanterns on the covered corridor floor. These people were initially shifted to Irwin Road (Baba Kharak Singh Marg) and Panchkuian Road where they opened kiosks and then some were later shifted to what became Mohan Singh Market. Many other pavement vendors were also shifted to Queensway (Janpath), as well as across the outer circle near Shankar Market, and are still there. Though Oriental Fruit Mart in E-Block was supposed to be the best fruit shop in New Delhi, the new Irwin Road fruit shops, opposite Rivoli cinema, soon became popular as they sold the best in terms of quality and price.

One of the most frequented dhabas in New Delhi in the '50s and '60s, Kake da Hotel, opened across the road from our restaurants and continues to be popular. It was then run by two brothers, each one doing either lunch or dinner with their own raw material and freshly cooked meals. Hence the food served was always freshly cooked and not leftover from the previous meal.

We were also taken for dinner to Moti Mahal in Daryaganj by the parents for tandoori food which was still a rare treat in the Delhi of that era. Kundan Lal, the owner of Moti Mahal, introduced Delhi to the delights of tandoori chicken as normally meats were cooked on horizontal skewers on a charcoal grill and the tandoor was used for cooking rotis and naans. I remember him as a large, smiling man with a large moustache, wearing a pathan suit with a pathani topi, who always greeted his regular customers at the entrance. I think he was also the inventor of 'butter chicken' which I was told came about when his chicken curry finished and to provide a gravy chicken dish, he took a half-done tandoori chicken, added butter, tomatoes and spices and cooked it in a frying pan. It has now become so popular that it has replaced the traditional chicken curry in popularity and is synonymous with Delhi cuisine! CP was a very quiet place at night in the '40s and early '50s and I remember going for a family picnic in the inner park as it was absolutely deserted by 8 pm. I learned to cycle in the Central Park in the solitude of the early mornings. We often went for picnics to Qutab Minar and Okhla, which really seemed to be in the countryside, a long way away from CP. And the long distance made a visit to them into day trips. The area around Qutab Minar, including Mehrauli, had mango orchards and had some bungalows, and I remember hearing that the 'Dilliwalla Seth's' who lived in the walled city, had country homes here to house their mistresses! India Gate lawns with King George V at one end and Rashtrapati Bhavan at the other was also a favourite place in the summer evenings and for lunch during winter months up to the early '60s as there were few people there. A favourite activity for us kids was rowing at the Boat Club.

I think most people in Delhi do not realize how the city has grown and that too, relatively recently. One day in 1962, my father and chacha brought me to an area full of fields, just beyond Moti Bagh, and showed a hillock they had bought. From the top of the hillock we could see people farming. This entire area now comprises R.K. Puram, Vasant Vihar, Anand Niketan, Shanti

Niketan and West End!

Going for a picnic with college friends to Hauz Khas in '61 is vivid in my memory and the monuments were then surrounded by a forest! I also remember a small village there, with no other habitation.

Very few cars were seen in the late '40s and '50s. The public transport system was not able to cope with the population growth post-1947. With the spread of Delhi, most people resorted to travel by bicycle. At 9.30 am, we could see hordes of bicycles interspersed with a few cars in CP. The most unusual bicyclist I saw from our first floor wore a dressing gown and was armed with a toothbrush in one hand. I have still not been able to fathom what this person was up to!

As we lived in D-Block, the Republic Day Parade would pass by on the street in front of us every other year and next to us on alternate years. As a matter of routine, this event would see many people visiting us who discovered that they had not met us for a long time and would, coincidentally, lean over the verandah railings to watch the parade pass by!

My schooling started at the age of four in a tent at Delhi Public School (DPS), a new school started by Reverend J.D. Tytler, a big (to me as a little child), smiling and very red-faced bearded man. It was located in the grounds of Cathedral Church of the Redemption in Church Lane near Rashtrapati Bhavan. DPS then moved to its present Mathura Road location and still operated from tents till I left the school in January 1954 to join a boarding school. Tents made for interesting classrooms and, as children, we did not find them unusual at all. In fact, whenever it rained, I had dreams of using my table as a raft and floating home on it! Rains were a delightful and exciting time as CP roads were sure to get flooded at least once, with sometimes even the shops getting flooded. The flooding at Minto Bridge was a yearly event. I would look forward to going with someone older after the rain stopped to walk around CP, as water on the roads would be thigh deep for a 11 year old child. Minto Bridge would always be a great place to visit as normally there would be a bus or two roof deep in water! Ah, the excitement of those days! Connaught Place in the evenings was exotic. There were peacock feather sellers, and people selling caged parrots which were also seen flying around CP in large numbers. Many times the bhaluwallah, the sapers with his 'been' and the bandarwallah would be seen on the open pavements and in the park.

The one person I have never forgotten was a dignified elderly white turbaned man who probably moved to Delhi after partition and who would walk with his bicycle in the verandahs of CP selling chooran of two varieties - 'lakkad hazam' and 'patthar hazam'. He would ring his cycle bell to advertise his presence as he walked the corridors. As a child, I did not appreciate the digestive properties of the choorans, but they were delicious and I would buy a small 'purria' for two annas or if we had more money, a small glass vial of chooran. Edwin Chan lived in CP and was an interior designer who specialized in wood furniture and interiors and as a very young man had worked with his father on the woodwork of the Viceroy's House (Rashtrapati Bhavan). His passion was to invent and develop a perpetual motion machine and till he died sometime in the early '90s, when asked how the project was going, he would optimistically proclaim that it was just a step away from completion.

Another interesting and talented individual was Nishi Nakra, whom I got to know in 1960 when he did the music system for our new restaurant, La Boheme. He was a good engineer and passionate about sound. He developed speakers and amplifiers under the brand name, Enbee, in an era when such items could not be imported. Besides being an inventive engineer, he was also a very talented singer and I would often visit him at his shop in Shankar Market which was just a few minutes from my home and office. There one would often meet or see many of the people who were to become well-known in public life and business.

Looking at it today, it may be difficult to believe that CP was a great place to grow up. For a child and a teenager, it had everything. As children, we were sent to the central park every evening where we had a lot of space to run around and play games. There were vendors selling balloons, toys and sweets, ice-lolly chuskis which were made of shaved ice particles fixed on a stick with a choice of lovely coloured syrups poured onto them! Despite the scolding we knew we would get (the water was not 'safe'), we loved them.

There was also the seller of buddi mai ke baal (candyfloss) who would sell his goods from a glassed in trolley. Delicious aam papad (beaten and dried mango) and soft imli (tamarind) was available at a bania's shop in the middle circle behind M-Block and was another favourite. The aam papad was sour and leathery in feel but was utterly delicious, especially with a sprinkling of kala namak (black salt). The imli was soft, gooey and sour and much appreciated. When we had saved some money, we would go to J.B. Mangaram on the side of F-Block, facing E-Block, which had a great collection of sweets in glass jars on top of the counters which were the same height as we were. D-Block, Connaught Place, located in the inner circle was a fascinating place to grow up in. Our neighbours included Odeon cinema, Snowwhite dry cleaners, S.M.G. Beatty, Ramchander & Sons and Bata, among other well-known shops of the time. One of our favourite treats was to go to Bengali Market to Bhim Sain's shop and stand next to a opening on the side to eat gol gappa's, except during the monsoon when we were forbidden to have any street food. After Shankar Market came up, the best alu tikki's were available from a vendor who made them fresh, sitting in the verandah.

From a very young age, Hanuman Mandir was a popular place to go on Tuesdays when there was also a weekly bazaar there. My elder sister would buy bangles and parandis and I would look at the interesting shops and people, including the fortune-teller who used sparrows to select cards which answered your questions. The market had no electric lighting and all the luminescence came from smoky kerosene lamps. It was a magical place with hustle and bustle, lot of colour and textures and glittering products. Another popular place to visit was Jantar Mantar with its astronomy instruments made out of large brick structures set in a park which provided great places for playing hide and seek! My elder sister and I would visit 'Panditji's' bookshop on Irwin Road in the early '50s to borrow books. Later on the shop moved to Shankar Market where it still operates from. The rate was four annas a book, returnable in a week! Panditji's real name was Ram Gopal Sharma and he was a short rotund man who wore a Gandhi topi. He had a quick turn of phrase and would suffer no fools! I continued borrowing books from him till the early '60s and my younger siblings followed the tradition. The three main bookshops in CP that I visited were B.D. Galgotia, Rama Krishna and Sons and New Book Depot, located next to each other in B-Block. Rama Krishna had books not only on shelves but in stacks on the floor. I dealt with more serious stuff which at the time I was not interested in. I had little money and preferred the other two shops as I could read their hard bound comics till I was shooed away by the staff. In my college days, I started visiting another interesting bookshop in Shankar Market called Piccadilly which had fascinating books on sociology, religion and spiritual subjects and was, in the late '60s and '70s, frequented by hippies who were looking to give a new meaning to their lives.

The best movie halls in Delhi were in CP and the favourite recreational activity of many at a time when there was no TV and very few options for entertainment. There were four movie halls – Odeon (right around the corner from my home), Plaza, Regal and Rivoli. As a teenager, my desired quota was one movie a week and that depended on my pocket money. Tickets ranged from a low 12 annas to a high of three rupees and 12 annas. One of the earliest movies I remember seeing was 'Bud Abbot and Lou Costello meet Frankenstein'. All I remember of it is that I spent half the time (which was whenever Frankenstein

appeared on the screen) hiding my face on the seat!

The best dance schools in New Delhi were in the CP area, including one for ballroom dancing. As a little child, I would reluctantly accompany my sister to her school, Sangeet Bharati on the first floor of G-Block, where she learned kathak and I vividly remember the sound of bells on the anklets of the girls. There were three well-known shops for haircare in the CP area – Roy and James, Tawar and Susan, and A.N. John & Co. where people got their hair cut in individual cubicles. Tawar, known as 'Chuttan' to us, came to our home once a fortnight since the late '30s. It was only after he died in the 1960s that I started going to a haircutting salon.

The best shops in Delhi were located in the CP area, such as Empire Stores, Hamiltons, Trevelyan and Clark, Enid's (for western dresses), Cooke and Kelvey, Kanji Mull & Sons, and the two large sports goods shops – Uberoi and Pioneer Sports. Harnarain Gopinath on the side of B-Block sold a large variety of good quality achars (pickles) and morabba's (preserves). Next to it was Keventer's which sold sweet bottled milk and other dairy products, including butter. M.R. Stores on the corner of G-Block was an unusual shop as it sold two very different items – hardware and knitting wool.

Shops selling musical instruments were located on the outer circle on G-Block below Marina Hotel as well as on Parliament Street (Godin & Co). The Cottage Industries Emporium opened in a temporary barracks sort of building on Queensway (Janpath) in the early '50s and became very popular because of its large variety of well-designed and crafted handicrafts and handloom clothing available under one roof for the first time in India. Bata at D-Block and Baluja's at B-Block were there even when I was a child and that's where we went to buy shoes almost every year for school. The biggest toy shop in New Delhi, Ram Chander & Sons, was just about 40 feet away from Bata.

By the time the '50s and '60s came around, CP was the best commercial and retail centre of Delhi with all the new offices of the multinationals and airlines. Later on, when the new high-rise buildings on the connecting roads like Barakhamba Road and Curzon Road (now Kasturba Gandhi Marg) came up, its position as the commercial centre strengthened. In those days, most senior managers working in the CP area who had personal transport, would generally go back home for lunch and a quick siesta and CP would be empty with no one walking around as all shops closed for lunch.

Walking in Connaught Place recently was a strange feeling as I have rarely visited it after I stopped working there just over five years ago. CP now is so changed from the magical world of my childhood and youth, it is like stepping into unknown territory. Instead of the relaxed shopping centre it was until the '70s, it has changed as has Delhi. By the 1980s, a large number of multistorey office buildings had come up both on Barakhamba Road and Curzon Road (K.G. Marg) and as life had got more competitive, all shops now remain open in the afternoons. The state emporiums have been given their own section on Baba Kharak Singh Marg (Irwin Road) and are popular with tourists. With the coming of the metro, CP is now charged with a very different energy and like the city of Delhi, not very sure of what the future holds.

Many old restaurants have disappeared, even as more new ones have opened. Most of the movie houses have long gone and the best shops are no longer in CP. The traffic is horrendous as it has become a transit point for people travelling to different parts of Delhi. The metro has also contributed to the crowds and eventually I see CP becoming the biggest and best market for the growing middle class in India, compared to my childhood years when it was the exclusive shopping ground

'The article above is written by a person who used to live in CP years ago and describes the life then. Brings back memories. His father owned Nirulas. Very interesting reading.'

Contributed by **Geeta Gujral**

RCDS - SANKALP LITERACY CENTRES

AUGUST 2023



also in the abilities to think and acquire habits, skills and attitude. Students are encouraged to embrace other traditions culture just like the way they do their own.

Progress documentation and monitoring is done regularly to set standards for the child's grade level and to develop goal that can be measured and tracked.

- Class tests of all subjects are conducted every month.
- Database of each and every student is maintained which is updated on a regular basis.
- Initial form with basic relevant information is filled up for every child.

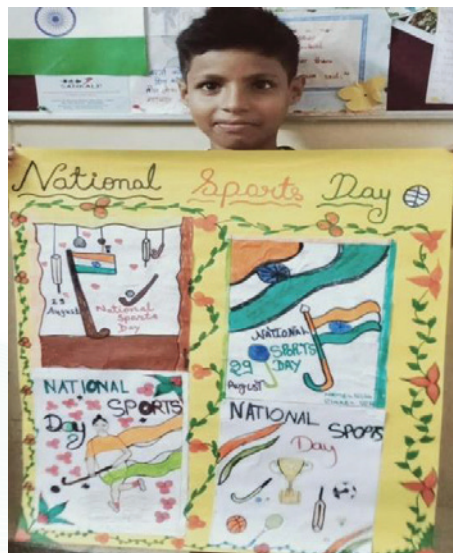
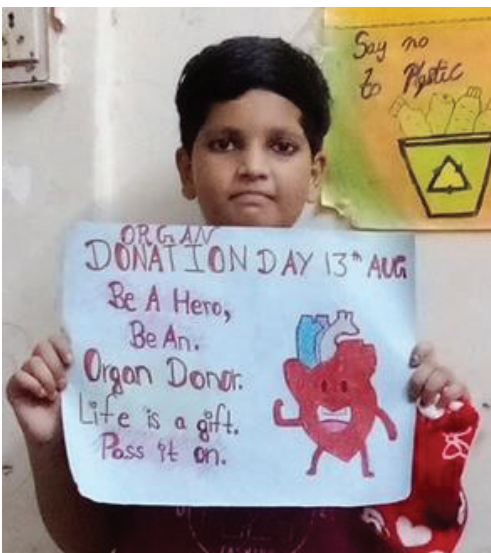
The aim of Sankalp society is to develop in children age and grade appropriate competencies by giving them a wide exposure to diverse activities, both curricular and co curricular. Some of the key features of the literacy centres are learning support program, comprehensive assessment, computer literacy, English speaking program, training and capacity building, regular monitoring and strengthening community linkages. Sankalp believes in equality in education to ensure that no child is left behind. Slums are visited on a regular basis and interaction is done with community people to make them aware of their child's rights, etc.

A total of 422 children are enrolled in Sankalp Literacy centers. Every month in the Centres special days are celebrated to expose children to specific themes. Children take part in regular major events and festival which bring changes not only in the level of knowledge they gain but

Every effort is made to give support to the weak children for their studies. This is an area of concern. Improvement is needed in this area. Some children have shown improvement in their writing and reading levels. Sometimes relevant material which is not in the curriculum is also taught to the children.

The following important days were celebrated in August 2023:

- World Bio fuel Day on 10th August
- World Organ Donation Day on 13th August
- World Humanitarian Day on 19th August
- Independence Day on 15th August
- Annual Day on 27th August – Sankalp celebrated its Annual Day on 21st August. Children from different talents showcased their talents.
- National Sports Day on 29th August



HEALTH CAMP

JULY 2023



Health camp organized by Rotary club of Delhi South in partnership with BLK and Sankalp. Super exciting response from the community. Local MLA Promila ji too came to visit the camp. Rotarians PP Anil Agarwal, Dr Vaneeta Kapur, Dr Neeraj Bhalla, Asst Governor Vandana ji and I were there. RWA President took personal interest in the camp. Over 150 community members registered for health check up within the first hour. Gul Shankar organized the snacks. This was at Munirka Community Hall. Thanks to every for enthusiastically participating in it.

Pramod Agarwal



CLUB NEWS

DGE Mahesh Trikha and President Pramod Agarwal in a meeting to assume responsibility as Assistant Governor 2024-25 for Zone 14.



SEPTEMBER

Kalia, Nishant	01-Sep
Kumar Rita	01-Sep
Poddar, Vinod	02-Sep
Agarwal, Kiran	08-Sep
Indu Mahajan	09-Sep
Kumar Pradeep	11-Sep
Mehta, Chitra	13-Sep
Krishan, Sanjeev	14-Sep
Bhandari, Tarsem Lal	20-Sep
Bahri, Cdr Pradeep	25-Sep
Kapur, Deepak	26-Sep



HAPPY Anniversary

Makhija, Sumit	Kriti	10-Sep
Bhatia Raju	Simi	21-Sep
Kapoor, Deepak	Sarita	21-Sep
Brara, Arvinder S	Dolly	29-Sep
Kapur, Deepak	Vaneeta	30-Sep