

Love Begins at Home

Where we live shapes us and we shape where we live. In every city in India, the wealthy are closeted inside posh houses and now inside what is known as 'gated communities.' They shut out the squalor, filth, stink and dirt that are outside their compound walls and think that they are living in green, clean and safe surroundings. In this process they are also shutting out millions of people who are known as homeless people or unsheltered people. Those living in these houses are separated from the reality that is just outside their walls when they drive out in their luxury cars. While believing that such gated communities offer a 'global living' inside the fortresses, they are far removed from the ordinary life outside.

There is no doubt that people have to create a pristine environment to live. The large housing complexes provide the residents with all the amenities they want and reduce their need to venture out to buy things needed for daily existence. But just outside there is a vast majority of people living on the sidewalks. In many cities where there are no platforms they just live on the road.

But this is not the state of affairs that our RI President Kalyan Banerjee wants to see in future. Rotarians are successful people. But the secession of these service minded people from the stark and bleak reality of modern India is worrying our leader. Our overburdened cities are not equipped to keep up with the growing population. RI President Kalyan Banerjee wants Rotarians to provide these denizens what the government is unable and unwilling to provide. He wants to build 'Low Cost Shelters' for the poor.

The Trustees of The Rotary Foundation have approved the Low Cost Shelter scheme during the meeting held in September 2011. The way this will function will be similar to any matching grant programme of The Rotary



Low Cost Shelter being built.

Foundation. This pilot programme, which will be in force for two years starting 2011–2012, can be utilised by all clubs in a district that is not covered by the Future Vision Plan. RI President Kalyan Banerjee challenges the belief of society that some people are destined to be born, live and die on the streets. The implications of keeping a huge section of the population in the streets and in sub-human conditions must be worrying President Kalyan Banerjee who knows that home is where love begins and that is the basis of world peace.

People long to go home. That's why we say 'Home Sweet Home' and in our home we find ourselves. People learn to live together when there is a home. Rotary clubs are encouraged to find international partners and take up projects which can fall under the 'Low Cost Shelter Schemes.' It is said that the strength of a nation is derived from the integrity of the home. T. S. Eliot, the famous playwright, who was born in America but was naturalised as a British said, "Home is where one starts from." Home is where a real sense of security comes to youngsters. The English novelist Charles Dickens said, "Home is a name, a word, it is a strong one; stronger than magician

ever spoke, or spirit ever answered to, in the strongest conjuration. Charity begins at home."

The low cost shelter project of a Rotary club will reshape the way private bodies and governments view city development. The state has failed to provide a shelter and other basic amenities to the public. The government will always fall short on its civic responsibilities. Government will do things slowly. But human life, peace on earth and community development cannot be dependent on the inaction of a few who run the machinery. But the few Rotarians in a community can start changing the scenario. Very soon TRF would like to see the skyline dotted with scaffolding and very soon there must be homes where a family can begin a new life.



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