

Find a need and fill it

Every leader has a unique style. To Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation, Mrs. Rajashree Birla is the undisputed benchmark for philanthropy. She defines today in the field of human development what others will strive for tomorrow. She is undoubtedly in the seat of power and is an icon, inspiration and legend. It is said that those who define excellence in community welfare are driven by it. Mrs. Rajashree Birla's concern for the weaker sections of the community is seen when she generously contributes to The Rotary Foundation, year after year. A few days ago, she contributed an additional US \$10,00,000 towards polio eradication efforts of The Rotary Foundation. With this, her personal contribution is nearly US \$6 million.

Dr. An Wang, the Chinese American computer engineer and inventor, founder of the computer company Wang Laboratories said, "My theme for philanthropy is the same approach I used with technology, to find a need and fill it." People value the sun, not for where it is, but for its uses. Similarly, people who are rich are valued not for their wealth, but for their philanthropy. It is the dream of Mrs. Rajashree Birla, that India should be polio-free and children should be saved. In addition to doing yeoman service through the various charitable wings in the Birla empire, she chooses to support The Rotary Foundation for this scheme. She knows that it is not enough to be just precise when you can be the most precise in addressing specific needs of the community. The Rotary Foundation's polio eradication drive spread over the past two decades, was precise and eliminated the dreaded disease from the world except in four nations. Today with the same precision, The Rotary Foundation has nearly eradicated polio from India and seems to be on target to bring the other three countries into the fold of being polio-free countries. Those who have worked with The



Rotary Foundation in this venture, such as Mrs. Rajashree Birla, Mr. Bill Gates, Mr. Lakshmi Mittal, Mr. Harshad Mehta and few other corporates know that there is and always will be, only one agency, The Rotary Foundation, that can ever dream of tackling a worldwide disease such as polio. The Rotary Foundation is the organisation where dreams come alive.

Philanthropy is an attitude. The people at the helm of affairs in India's largest corporations have social responsibility in their hearts and most organisations have their own programmes. It is seen that the sales in the major corporations in India has grown by 21.5 percent. There are Indian companies in the Fortune Global 500 list. The top Indian companies that figure in the Fortune India 500 are shaping the world's opinion of India. Businesspersons are discussed on national TV today and the profit statements of big organisations are barometers of the growth that India is seeing during this liberalisation era. A corporate leader has a little bit of everything in addition to exclusive club membership, fancy cars and palatial houses. Charity and spirituality is in-built in nearly all the corporate honchos. A report in a reputed magazine estimates that annual private giving in

India is around US \$5.5 billion! The most popular schemes that were supported by the charities of big corporates included education, housing and food. It is just that a negligible amount of this is flowing through Rotary.

Building a strong public image and asking for the right cause will surely bring the industrial giants closer to Rotary. Melinda Gates said, "We started our foundation because we believe we have a real opportunity to help advance equity around the world; to help make sure that, no matter where a person is born, he or she has the chance to live a healthy, productive life." I am sure that most business leaders in India share similar thoughts especially when the concept of Dharma has been around them since birth. Why can't we just do what is to be done to bring them on our side?



*Rtn. Ashok Mahajan
Trustee, The Rotary Foundation
Director, Rotary International
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Member, International PolioPlus
Committee*