

Guiding the Hands

When we joined Rotary we accepted the unconditional duty to support the downtrodden people in this world and make this planet a better place for all to live. Our duty to support mankind was not dependent on economic or other extraneous factors that emerge periodically in the system. In other words, can we say that our love for other human beings will show only when the economy is good and will not be there when there is a meltdown?

The two important words we learnt during our induction into our Rotary clubs were 'Commitment and Follow-through.' Even when our heart is pure and head is clear, we need to guide our hands to give. Rotarians are leaders who struggle daily to produce good results and bring out the best in themselves and others. I am writing this to all my fellow Rotarians now as the recent trend in giving to TRF seems to be declining. The Regional Rotary Foundation Co-ordinators report a drop of over twenty percent in total giving as on February 2009 compared to February 2008. This is alarming.

Dear District Governors, DRFCs, DGEs, DGNs and all senior leaders of Rotary in India, kindly remember that anything Indians do is judged against the claim that they are now big boys out to conquer the world. Rotary in India faced less scrutiny when it was regarded as just a movement in another Third World country. No doubt, the days when Rotary in India figured in the TRF Trustees discussions as just a beneficiary of TRF are behind us thanks to the US \$ 10 million contribution which we gave last year. This year the total contribution so far including a

grant of US \$ 1 million from the Birla family is hovering just around 3.4 million US dollars. Is this bad news? Let us not get back to the typical image of India which has been grinding poverty, creaking public services, illiteracy, female infanticide and bad governance. We have gleaming sky-scrapers, BMW, Jaguars and almost all the goodies one can hope for. Hence all claims that the global economic crisis has had its effect here is not really true.



A recent survey and commentary by a noted economist shows that the seven percent growth in economy is assured and domestic saving will grow by 12 to 15 percent. There are people who are excited about giving and helping and are looking for a leader to guide them. You might be just the right person for the job. You have to guide their hands to give.

To make people give you should not look on the outside. The world and the various developments and changes that constantly take place will continue to take place irrespective of what a person feels or hopes. We cannot change people's behavior towards giving if we look outside

them. Lasting changes take place only with an 'inside job.' An inside job is about the heart. Changing someone's thinking isn't enough. But it is important because, as the saying goes, 'As a man thinks, so he becomes.' The real change requires a transformation of the heart. That is where the core of what a person feels about giving resides. Rotary leaders should zero in on that dimension.

We can and should focus a lot of energy on teaching the people about the joy of giving and how they can help other human beings. There is nothing wrong with this. It is just not sufficiently effective in 'times' like this!

The message from TRF is not just for the mind. It is directed at the heart. Rotary is interested in us becoming different people, not just in our acting differently. For instance, rather than asking us to do good things, TRF wants each of us to become a kind person. When that happens everything we do will be stamped with

kindness and giving will be a part of our daily or annual routine.

Donors look to their leaders for direction. As a Rotarian, the responsibility for establishing vision and direction amongst people falls on you. When we joined Rotary we held the children in our arms and swore to give them a new beginning. This dream will become real only when we contribute liberally to The Rotary Foundation.



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