

Reach the Unreached

When I say 'Reach the Unreached' I am proposing to define the unfinished task. The unfinished task is the total eradication of polio from our country. Feeling a bit lost or overwhelmed? A good place to start might be to select the city you are living in and see the profile of the people living there. Polio is the greatest challenge facing us at this time in India. Failure to meet the challenge and eradicate the disease raises the spectre of unprecedented reversal in human development.

Great publicity about the success of the polio eradication campaign is confused with real progress. The great emphasis in many parts of India, especially in the last ten years, on the success of polio eradication has led the Rotarians to believe that great progress has been made. Yes, great progress has been made. Yet, 4 to 5 percent of the population still has little access to the immunisation programme. And this puts all the others at risk.

The emphasis on 'unreached people' seems to have resulted in boredom for many of the clubs. They want to find the next idea. Rotarians seem to have developed 'attention deficit disorder' and want to do something new. The answer simply is that money and other resources are being spent to find and reach the unreached people. These are not only tribals living in difficult hilly terrain, or nomads and gypsies but also the affluent or middle class citizen living next to you who does not want to take his or her child out on the NID to give those two precious drops of vaccine.

Admittedly, a variety of strategies are needed to reach the variety of strata in the country. The formation of the Ulema Committee was one strategy to reach the household of Muslims. This



A Child being immunised in the train at the Railway Station

is paying rich dividends now. Different groups of Rotarians with varied skills are needed to form a movement that can penetrate even the stubborn or the just lazy section in the society.

One major factor earlier which blocked the Government and Rotary in reaching groups of people was religion. This barricade has been removed and if it exists in select pockets, it is our duty to embark on a pilgrimage to such areas and remove the remnants of such hurdles. Why do people undertake pilgrimages? It is to become energised, healed, finding solace and peace or even accruing credit for the next birth. When saints undertook extensive travels it was for connecting with the ultimate source. Pilgrimage is then a progressive awakening of the mind, body and soul. A journey to do or find something great will be torturous. That is why some people give up half way. It is only the determined few who make it to the destination and find what they wanted or achieve their goals. Finding people who have not been reached by the polio eradication campaign is a

pilgrimage to Rotarians. It is not just about taking a joy ride to a distant location or even a hazardous journey. It is taking a journey inside your heart and feeling for the children, born to ignorant parents and probably living in remote areas, but who must and have the right to live like your own children — polio free. There may be many issues which combine to create a powerful deterrent to step forward. A renewed energy and a call for a sacrificial work among those who continue to be ignored by the polio eradication programme is critical for achieving total progress that the world demands of us.

If Rotary's promise to the millions of children in the world has to be met, then each one of you must undertake a pilgrimage and reach the unreached.



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