



ROTARIANS

AGAINST CHILD SLAVERY



Injustice Anywhere Is A Threat To Justice Everywhere (Dr.Martin Luthar King) Our Website : www.racsrag.org

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There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way it treats its children

(Nelson Mandela)

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EDITORIAL

Many of us labour under the comforting myth that slavery is a thing of the past. After all, the laws allowing slavery have been repealed everywhere. Yet people around the world are still brutalized and broken and reduced to slavery through deception and violence.

Last month I suggested that if we adhere to the principles enshrined in our Code of Policies and Ethics and believe in the equality of all human beings and in the fairness in their treatment, we should not be afraid a) to declare our abhorrence for the practice of slavery and b) to fight for the rights of all those who are enslaved.

Subsequently I received a copy of an email which made me realize that not everyone would agree with direct and immediate action on this issue.

The email was written by a current District Governor who wrote *“politically if we take an unpopular stand on an issue, we would never have the opportunity to promote change”*. He went on to say *“All I can say is sometimes we must look the other (sleep with the devil) way as we enter various cultures throughout the world so we can start to “eat the elephant a bite at a time.”*

Now this DG does have a point. To affect meaningful change we do need to move slowly, to be patient, to plan carefully, just as we are doing with the eradication of the polio virus.

But should we accept his advice that *“we must look the other way as we enter various cultures”*? Should we accept a world where one individual can be held as the property of

another ? If opponents of apartheid had looked the other way, would we not still have racial discrimination in South Africa ? If civil rights campaigners had turned a blind eye to the treatment metered out to Rosa Parks because she stood up for her rights on an Alabama bus in 1955, might not segregation still be an issue in the USA ?

In my view it is unacceptable that today Rotary International does not show the same audacity of ambition in trying to end the practice of slavery which men like Clarkson and Wilberforce began over 200 years ago. In 1787 they voiced their abhorrence of the trade in human flesh and 20 years later they achieved their goal of ending the transatlantic slave trade which had been in existence for over 400 years. At the same time they helped to establish a human rights paradigm upon which all subsequent struggles for justice have been built.

What do members of the Action Group think ? Is the DG right ? Should we turn a blind eye ? Should we only battle against killer diseases and forget about human rights issues for the time being ? Is our Action Group biting off more than it can chew ?

On the other hand should we not have started a long, long time ago to take a chunk out of our DG's elephant ? Should we not throw caution to the wind and act as advised earlier this year by RI President Elect Kalyan Banerjee to change whatever is not right about the world ?

Whatever your views, let's please share them with other members of the Action Group through the Newsletter

Why are we Rotarians ?

Why are we all in Rotary ? Last May RI President Elect Kalyan Banerjee provided a good answer when he told the Convention delegates in New Orleans in May 2011 "*I believe we are here because we care, and because we see both what's wrong in the world, and what's right*". He stressed that we should take a hard look at what needs to be changed and then do our best to change it.

In reminding us of his favourite Gandhi quote, "*you must be the change you wish to see in the world*", the RI President Elect stated "*I believe we are in Rotary to change the world — for why else would we be Rotarians? We are not here to listen to the naysayers, the doom-mongers, those who say the world can be no better than it is, so why even try to change? We are here because we believe in change*"

So what can we change ? As a starter, how about the minds of some of our Rotary leaders who appear to believe that attempting to eliminate child slavery is a political objective and not a humanitarian one or that Rotarians taking a moral stance on slavery, will definitely offend certain governments

Let's face facts. Slavery is an abomination and it is illegal everywhere. All governments in the world now support the principles enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including Article 4 which states "*No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms*"

Did President Bush consider whether or not he might offend other governments when he addressed the United Nations General Assembly in September 2003 on the subject of "human trafficking" ?

On that occasion he stated "*Each year eight hundred thousand to nine hundred thousand human beings are bought, sold, or forced across the world's borders. The trade in human beings for any purpose must not be allowed to thrive in our time*"

If a Government can declare its opposition to the practice, can we as a global organization which serves the world's communities, not do the same ?

Slavery is not on RI's radar because.....



Apart from the political or cultural stance, there are other reasons put forward for the RI Board's past inaction on the issue of child slavery. Following the submission of the Norwich Memorial in 2008, the General Secretary of Rotary International, Ed Futa, wrote to the President of the Rotary Club of Norwich St Edmund and explained that the primary reason why the Board had not approved the campaign to stop the practice of child slavery was because of "*RI's commitment to PolioPlus as the association's only corporate project*"

A similar reason was given as an explanation for refusing to accept one of the requests in the Norwich Memorial relating to the support for anti-slavery organizations such as Anti-Slavery

International and Free the Slaves. Whilst the RI letter does not deal specifically with this issue, one of the RI Board members written explanation was that "*the Board did not agree to actively encourage clubs to support organizations whose mission is the elimination of slavery as they felt we need to focus completely on the conclusion of the Polio Eradication initiative at present*"

The suggestion by the Board that it can only concentrate on one significant cause at a time is astonishing and illogical. First, no one has ever suggested that "Child Slavery" should be a major focus of the RI Board. All that has been requested of the Board is that it should give **some encouragement** to those Rotarians and Clubs which do want to help stamp out the evil practice. Second, Rotarians have been battling on many fronts against killer diseases, low literacy levels, poverty, lack of water and non-existent sanitation. So we can multi-task, can't we ? The alternative scenario is for the Board to ask all clubs to suspend their activities on all other fronts until the polio virus is eradicated....which would be a nonsense

Other issues now have priority

Another slant offered recently by a current RI Director for the Board's inaction on the issue of slavery is *"the reality that we cannot be all things to all people, and we cannot spread ourselves so thin as an organization that we don't do anything well or finish what we start..... if Rotary takes a stand or position on an issue, it must be prepared to follow through. We cannot take on much more right now while we struggle to maintain focus on polio eradication and develop both a new Strategic Plan and Future Vision"*

This comment is a perfectly valid one but no one expects the RI Board to kick start everything. All Management Boards delegate some responsibility for new initiatives. We must not forget that Rotarian Action Groups exist not only to provide assistance and support to clubs and district for planning and implementing service projects but also to provide

information and sometimes advice to the Board itself on relevant issues. From time to time Rotary International produces Position Statements on a number of subjects such as Hunger and Malnutrition, Population Growth & Sustainable Development et al. It is not the Board which does all of the background work to these Statements but bodies appointed by the Board, like the Rotarian Action Groups.

Our DG referred to in the Editorial, talks about starting to eat the elephant a bite at a time. Sadly Rotarians are not even encouraged to be in the game reserve leaving the few anti-slavery bodies to do the biting. The main groups working against slavery are Free the Slaves in America and Anti-Slavery International (ASI) in Britain. Both groups work hard to expose and combat slavery. But Free the Slaves and ASI together have fewer than 20,000 supporters and member. They are like mice fighting a herd of elephants!

Are we really an Action Group ?

The same helpful RI Director referred to above, also explained why our application for approval as a RAG was declined. Here is an extract from his email.

"I was on the committee that declined that application, and I must acknowledge I supported (as did everyone unanimously) not endorsing a Child Slavery RAG. The reason was clear and straightforward: the application as submitted to us was clearly an ADVOCACY group not an ACTION group."

So we do need to prove to the RI Board that we are also an Action Group. The best way to achieve that aim is to increase our participation in the anti-slavery projects which are highlighted and proposed in this Newsletter from time to time. To that end, certain Action Group members are now exploring the possibilities of relevant projects in Haiti, Ghana, the USA, the UK and in northern Thailand.

Apart from clubs participating directly with projects outlined in this Newsletter it is also possible for individual members to make donations directly to anti-slavery organizations via their website to help them with their work. Anti-slavery activists are like emergency aid workers fighting an epidemic. We Rotarians can make sure that they have the tools they need by giving our time, effort and money.

Today there are millions of child slaves waiting to be freed. The organizations that liberate the slaves know how to set slaves free and they know how to help freed slaves achieve rehabilitation and reintegration back into their homes. What they struggle to do is to mobilize funds that will help extend their work further. This is where Rotarians can make a contribution.

On the next page, the list of completed projects in India during the last 18 months will give the lie to the claim that we are not an Action Group. Some of these projects have been initiated as a result of personal visits by members, others have been completed as a result of dialogues between anti-slavery activists and Action Group members. One item which was funded with the help of a RF Matching Grant was personally collected from a car dealership in India and driven to the benefiting organization, ie a Child Slave Rehabilitation Centre, near Allahabad, India.

Projects completed in the last 18 months

Purchase of a motorcycle for Bal Vikas Ashram – a Child Slave Rehabilitation Centre, near Allahabad, India. The motorcycle is being used to enable staff to monitor the continued health, well being and freedom of the children who had been rescued from slavery and who have since left the Ashram. The participating clubs were the Rotary Clubs of West Chester Downtown, USA and Norwich St Edmund, England

Purchase of a 6/8 seater vehicle for Bal Vikas Ashram. The vehicle which was purchased with the help of a RF Matching Grant, is being used, amongst other things, to provide transportation for children during rescue operations. The participating clubs were the Rotary Clubs of West Chester Downtown, Norwich St Edmund, Reims St Remi, France, Mainz 50 Nord, Germany, Exton Frazer, USA and Pratapgarh, India.

Construction of a Bio Gas Oven at Punarnawa Ashram – a Shelter for Trafficked Women in Bihar, India. The Bio Gas Oven will provide energy for the kitchen at Punanawa Ashram. The participating club was the Rotary Club of West Chester Downtown, USA.

Purchase of seven sewing machines and candle making equipment for Punarnawa Ashram. The sewing machines and the candle making equipment will be given to the girls who have completed their time at the Rehabilitation Centre and who will require the equipment to help them to earn a living as they reintegrate back into their own villages. The participating clubs were the Rotary Clubs of Wiveliscombe & District, England and Hluboka nad Vltavou, Czech Republic.

Purchase of high quality cameras for each of the anti-slavery activists who work in 12 districts in the States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and a video recorder for each of the two States. The technology will enable a record to be made of each rescue operation, victim statements and follow up actions for case testifications. The participating club was the RC of Norwich St Edmund in conjunction with a local church in Norfolk, England.

Purchase and installation of 12 solar lamps at Punarnawa Ashram for improving security at the Centre to prevent traffickers and pimps from trying to recover their former charges. Funding was achieved with the help of a District Simplified Grant from District 1080 and from the Rotary Clubs of Norwich St Edmund, Littleport and Stevenage Grange in England, and personal donations from Rotarians in Central Chester County, USA, Mumbai Boravali East, India and Peterborough, England.

Projects soon to be completed



The construction of a large round brick and concrete structure at Punarnawa Ashram to allow open-air gatherings and training sessions at the Rehabilitation Centre for Girls rescued from sex slavery. Funding has been agreed from the Rotary Clubs of Norwich St Edmund, Sudbury Talbot and Ipswich in England, from the Rotary Club of West Chester Downtown in Pennsylvania and individual contributions from Rotarians in the USA.

Purchase and installation of solar panels on the roof of each dormitory at Punarnawa Ashram to be funded by the RC of Norwich St Edmund, England.

Ways to support abolition

(By Michael Beavers, President of the provisional Rotary Club of Twin Peaks in District 5330, California.)

Have you read the book **Not for Sale** (by David Batstone)? This is an amazing read as an introduction to the world of human trafficking and what can be done to fight it. The most significant part of the book is at the end where he argues that **anyone** can make a contribution to the work of abolition.

Here are a few of the contributions I make (or plan to make*) to the abolition movement:

- raising awareness in our community through the sponsorship of selling “free trade” items through our local Rotary club
- encouraging community leaders to attend “Not For Sale”’s “Global Forum on Human Trafficking” (next one held October 21-22 in Sunnyvale, California)
- encouraging our church to host a “Freedom Sunday” event at which human trafficking is explained
- Showing abolition films (e.g. “Not for Sale:the movie”) to interested community members*
- Establishing a recovery center in the mountain community for those rescued out of sex trafficking*

The real “takeaway”, as Batstone argues so

compellingly, is that each of us have a contribution to make (Batstone is a college ethics professor, which some would say is an unlikely source for an abolitionist. I'm a therapist and a life coach). Some other ideas (from Batstone's book) include:

- Launch a second career where your skills can be used in the abolition movement
- Impact a government policy which could impact thousands of lives (e.g. child labor)
- Connect with any of the many abolition organizations (www.freetheslaves.net; www.childrenofthenight.org; www.catwinternational.org (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women International).

For more ideas, check out: <http://www.notforsalecampaign.org/action/>

There's clearly more to be done and I'm excited about the possibility of Rotarians playing a major role.

Note: Michael Beavers is one of the latest Rotarians to join the Action Group. He is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and leadership/life coach in the San Bernardino mountains (Southern California), where he lives with his wife, Becky and loyal therapy dog, Zari.

Editorial Note: Suman

I started my education into the consequences of child slavery when I met Suman in 2001 at Mukti Ashram – a Child Slave Rehabilitation Centre for Boys near Delhi, India. Suman was then Head and Founder of the Ashram as well as Balika Ashram – A Rehabilitation Centre for Girls nearby. Since then I have visited the Ashrams on several occasions and talking to the rescued children have learnt more and more about the evils of slavery and how activists like Suman help to rehabilitate the freed slaves.

Suman is now involved with an organization called “Movement for Child Rights to Childhood” (MCRC) which includes as one of its objectives the prevention of child trafficking in north east India. For example Jharkhand State has emerged as one of the largest suppliers of children for forced labour to many other parts of India. Over the last several years MCRC has also been successful in rescuing hundreds of children from their places of enslavement and servitude. The photo below was sent to me by Suman. It was taken



last July and shows a mother's joy when she meets her rescued daughter, one of four girls, who had previously been trafficked into Delhi from Jharkhand State

in June 2009.

On the next page of this Newsletter is an article written by Suman which provides an insight into the trafficking situation in Jharkhand.

PLEASE ENCOURAGE FELLOW ROTARIANS TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE AND SIGN ON AS A MEMBER. THE WEBSITE IS: www.racsrag.org.

Web Master: Stephen Sypula, RC of Stevenage Grange, England

Human trafficking in Jharkhand, India

(By Suman, Formerly Head of Mukti and Balika Ashram – Child Slave Rehabilitation Centres near Delhi, India. Now Activist with MCRC **)

The basic human rights and child rights are violated when children live in bondage and are grossly violated when States and civil society fail to respect, protect and promote their rights.

In many cases, children are regarded as part of the deal of debt or advance taken by parents or in their earlier generations and are thus entrapped in debt bondage. Other reasons are kidnappings and also by virtue of being born in the particular lower caste, the child is bound to enslave the higher castes. The parents of these children are also illiterate and many of them send their children along with middleman with the hope that they would learn to read and write as well as acquire some skill to make a decent living. When children do not come back, parents realized their mistake but by that time damage is done. Sometimes children work along with their families, like in agricultural situation or in brick kilns, but their conditions are no better than the children working as individual bonded labourers.

However, due to household poverty and social conditions, millions of children in India work in deplorable conditions in which their basic rights and dignity are violated. Children (esp. girls) from the economically and socially weaker section have been the worst victims. Commercialisation of this process has resulted in women and children being trafficked increasingly for forced labour, sexual exploitation, adoption; entertainment & sports (for example, acrobatics in circus, dance troupes, beer bars; as camel jockeys); marriage; labour; begging, organ trade (though only anecdotal evidence of this is available); drug peddling and smuggling. NGOs sources indicate that the incidence of trafficking of women and girls over the years in Jharkhand has escalated considerably. 80% are trafficked into force labour.

Absence of effective laws and a multi –pronged strategy, results in perpetuation of the malady. The laws and schemes with regard to trafficking and forced labour have rarely been even monitored, and much less enforced. Corruption and generalized social apathy are cited as the primary cause of such flouting of rules. Child trafficking is a violation of fundamental human right.

Jharkhand is one of the most poverty stricken state (second only to Orissa) in north eastern India. It is also a predominantly tribal state with total of 91.7 per cent of ST population in Jharkhand inhabits in rural areas.

Jharkhand has emerged as one of the largest suppliers of women and children and their destination are various unorganised industries like sari weaving industry in Varanasi, Carpet industry in Sonebhadra, Bhadohi and Allahabad, stone breaking, bricks kilns, domestic labour and various other activates both in formal and non-formal sectors of the economy. Although most of this is meant for interstate trafficking, some of it also finds way to international markets.

Approx more than 40, 000 tribal girls from all districts in Jharkand are trafficked primarily to supply domestic labour in urban centres including Delhi, Surat, Ahmedabad, Bombay and Banglore.

Migration and trafficking: overlapping but different

Migration implies movement of people from one place to another. There could be many kinds of migrants, ranging across different purposes and thereby experiencing different migrating conditions. Trafficking if a kind of migration where the consent of the migrant is forcibly or falsely sought, s/he has little control over place, purpose or nature of migration.

'Exploitation' is the key component of trafficking, while it may not be the chief characteristic of migration. Trafficked people are the most vulnerable and powerless people in their source region, and most exploited ones in the destination and face gross violation of their human rights.

Keeping the aforementioned situational analysis there is need to protect and promote the rights of the child (particularly girls) and human rights of the victims (mostly girls) in following manner:

- Direct relief through identification, raid and rescue of trafficked children
- Rehabilitation of rescued children and provision of services like transitory homes, trauma counselling, vocational training and setting up of a reporting centre
- Increasing public awareness on the issues concerned
- Sensitizing government officials and community members and making various Government schemes accessible for marginalized sections
- Advocacy in the corridors of powers to amend/enrich the existing laws on trafficking and providing special protection to children

** Movement for Child Rights to Childhood