

District Grand Lodge of India S.C. & Grand Chapter of U.S.R.A.F.I.C

FREEMASONS' HALL, SUKHADWALLA MARG, FORT, MUMBAI 400 001.



NEWSLETTER

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The views expressed in this Newsletter are solely that of the Editor.

PREFACE

In deference to the suggestion of some of our Brethren at Pune during our Half yearly Communication, the first issue of our Newsletter published in July drew a good response from the Brethren. After all, to enlarge the sphere of social happiness is worthy of the benevolent design of a Masonic institution; and it is most fervently to be wished, that the conduct of every member of the fraternity, as well as those publications, that discover the principles which actuate them, may tend to convince that the grand object of Masonry is to promote happiness and contentment.

There is no telling how many miles one has to run while chasing a dream, a dream to strengthen the bondage we share. Yet, persistence and perseverance is the key - I may not be there yet, but I'm closer than I was yesterday.

The true Mason is not creed-bound. He realizes with the divine illumination of his Lodge that as a Mason his religion must be universal: Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Sikh, the name means little, for he recognizes only the light and not the bearer. He worships at every shrine, bows before every altar, realizing with his truer understanding the oneness of all spiritual truth. They know that all religions are but one story told in diverse ways for people whose ideals differ but whose great purpose is in harmony with Masonic ideals. North, east, south and west stretch the diversities of human thought, and while the ideals of man apparently differ, when all is said and the crystallization of form with its false concepts is swept away, one basic truth remains: No true Mason can be narrow, for his Lodge is the divine expression of all broadness. There is no place for little minds in our cherished Order.

The great wisdom of ageing is to be as forthcoming as a Freemason when people ask how old you are.

EDITORIAL

Masonic labour is purely a labour of love. As we tread on the steps of Masonry, he who seeks to draw wages in terms of gold, silver or cash will be purely disappointed. The wages of a Mason are paid purely in terms of their dealings with one another. Sympathy that begets sympathy; kindness begets kindness; helpfulness begets helpfulness: these are the real wages of a true Freemason.

Masonry, it is said, makes good men better. But to improve ourselves as men, we tend to learn only in three ways – One, by reading our inexhaustible treasure of literature; the other, by our association with good men; the third, by understanding the inner depth of our rituals.

Elaborating on rituals, they are the words and actions that are spoken or performed during our degree work. Rituals are the essence of Masonry. They may not be the be-all and end-all of Masonry, but without rituals, there can be no Freemasonry. Rituals are a practicing of rites and performance of certain acts in such a way that they highlight certain truths and mysteries. The tenets, principles and ideals of Masonry as a whole system, are transmitted to initiates through the medium of Masonic ritual, which consists of lectures and allegorical plays.

Ritual is something Masons can recognise happening, but cannot really explain. It is not confined to Freemasonry. Ritual is probably an essential part of all human experience. The symbolism of freemasonry is found throughout the Masonic Ritual, and encompasses many of the working tools of a medieval stonemason.

Similarly, Masonic symbolism is that which is used to illustrate the principles which Freemasonry espouses. Freemasonry seeks to demonstrate the truths of life itself. It is a man-made organisation and seeks to reveal to all who join those things which cannot be put clearly into words, those truths which underpin society. It realises the inadequacy of words and understanding.

The words and actions of a Masonic Degree are both essential. Words require understanding intellectually, actions can often be appreciated more immediately. We shall illustrate and elaborate further at a future date at a future time in our forthcoming issues.

CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

How true it is to say, “We can make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give”.

Freemasonry enforces the utmost importance to the aspect of Charity, amongst other virtues like Brotherhood, Relief and Truth. Donating to charity is a major mood-booster. The knowledge that you’re helping others is hugely empowering and, in turn, can make you feel happier and more fulfilled. Research has identified a link between making a donation to charity and increased activity in the area of the brain that registers pleasure - proving that as the old adage goes, it really is far better to give than to receive.

I am reminded about the famous words of Winston Churchill which say “*We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give*”. While donating for social causes like amelioration of poverty, extending our hand towards succour to the distressed or the infirm or the destitute, satiating the pangs of hunger amongst the starving, providing timely medical assistance to the ailing, etc. motivates the generous donors to give regularly to charity for the sheer enjoyment they receive from giving as a key influence.

The District Grand Lodge India S. C. in conjunction with the Grand Chapter USRAFIC, in its own humble way, has always adhered to this axiom of extending a helping hand to the socially deprived sector of the diaspora by optimising the deployment of its Charitable funds towards this end. One thing is certain when you set your sights to a Charitable disposition; identify the genuine beneficiary for deployment and the sources will ensue.

In the current year during the onset of winter, apart from the regular grants and doles dispensed to the aged and the infirm for various purposes, the District Office had contributed its mite for the distribution of 1,000 Blankets to the roadside dwellers throughout the different areas in the city of Mumbai. This activity was supervised by none other but our District Grand Master. As is also known, on Universal Brotherhood day, we had joined hands with the Masonic Fraternity of Mumbai towards their charitable activities including monetary donation to the Cancer Patients’ Aid Association.

Freemasonry, inter-alia, behoves one to adhere to the axiom:-

“Silence will create respect and dignity, Justice and fair play will bring more friends, generosity and charity will enhance prestige and position, courtesy will draw benevolence, service of mankind will secure leadership, and good words will overcome powerful enemies”.

TRIBAL STUDENTS’ AID

At a distance of ninety kilometres from the bustling city of Mumbai ahead of Ganeshpuri and Vajreshwari, lie ensconced amongst the wilderness, some tribal villages with unmotorable roads. In these forsaken places, for the educational progress of the tribal children there are primitive schools imparting academic training.



As a part of Masonic Social service, a few Brethren from the Irish Constitution had organised a Camp in those pristine surroundings on 17th July 2022, where nearly 250 children were the beneficiaries of the largesse of our Brethren. As a part of the drive, a hundred dozen notebooks were distributed to the children of the school together with nearly 250 umbrellas for them to brave the fury of the monsoon.

Brotherhood knows no bounds of discrimination, and in living up to that maxim, our District Grand Master Bro. Kersi J. Limathwalla had accompanied the Charitably inclined volunteers by visiting the site. The project was co-ordinated by a local resident who attended to the needs of both the visiting team and also the beneficiaries.



The joy and satisfaction on the faces of the children and the gratitude in their hearts rejuvenated the charitable disposition of our District Grand Master, who instantaneously decided to donate a two horsepower Water Pump, which was the immediate dire need at the site.

Finally, it is not about how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving, which matters.

HOST MEETINGS

With the abatement of the pandemic in the current year, all routine activities of human endeavor witnessed a limping back to near-normalcy as essential services like public transport, office routine, trade and commerce, as also medical, legal and other professionals resumed their routine chores.

Masonic Bodies, which hitherto were also in a state of limbo, have been no exception. Lodges and Chapters also commenced convening their physical meetings with due mandatory precautions like proper sanitization, social distancing, and statutory donning of masks.

Nevertheless, even with the recommencement of Masonic activities, it was observed that some degree of complacency had crept in amongst the Brethren, due to prolonged abstinence during the pandemic's tenure. Some amongst them, were still wary of attending the meetings lest they be infected by the dreaded virus. Others - in a few exceptional cases - were besotted with an aura of complacency, which had percolated into their personae due to protracted abstinence in the recent past which culminated in giving way to an indifferent attitude and loss of interest in Masonic activities.

The difference between mere management and leadership is communication. It is with this element of concern that our District Grand Master has mooted the idea of re-introducing the concept of 'Host Meeting' with a view to making the visits to Masonic Lodges more attractive for all our Brethren. This is essentially to regenerate a feeling of loyalty and belonging to the Order by finding the proceedings interesting at the meetings.

The criteria for the Host Meeting being mooted is that at least once in a year, every Lodge shall play the role of hosting such an event, where Brethren from other Lodges - including those from sister Constitutions and from other advanced Masonic Orders – as also families and friends are welcome to attend. By way of generating interest at that meeting, any Social or Cultural event could be organized including some talk on a non-Masonic subject by a specialist.

The session could be followed by cocktails and dinner, charges for which can be fixed by the individual members.

It is the fervent desire of our District Grand Master that several such meetings could be organised by all our Scottish Masonic bodies where talks/workshops could be arranged on any topic of general interest. This could create an atmosphere of bondages amongst the Brethren while at the same time proving to be an attraction for attending the regular meetings. Do remember, 'Attitude' is a little thing that makes a big difference.

KUDOS TO THE PRADHAN FAMILY OF SOLAPUR

The Medical fraternity, it is said, is a Royal sodality providing succor to the sufferings of the ailing, and of late, we witnessed the services rendered by the COVID warriors during the recent pandemic, oblivious to the perils encountered to their own health in their line of duty. On reminiscing, one such name that comes to mind for having provided medical services is that of the **Pradhan family** of Solapur. I carry in my mind pleasant Memories of Dr. Madhukar Pradhan during my first visit to Lodge Royal Jubilee - Solapur many years back. A noble Soul indeed, who was not only devoted to his profession but also held Freemasonry dear to his heart.



His legacy is now carried forward by his next of kin i.e. the duo of his Son Bro. Dr. Rajiv Pradhan and his better half Dr. Uma Rajiv Pradhan. Not to be outdone, their progeny Dr. Viraj and his better half Dr. Mrs. Swati have been carrying on the family profession too.

Bro. Dr. Rajiv, a Freemason and a Rotarian, has had a checkered record of social service for the last forty years at various hospitals. During the infamous Latur earthquake, he headed the Red Cross Committee that toiled for nearly a month and a half. He was the consultant in the foundation of three primary health centers and was instrumental in introducing a mobile vaccination center during the Covid pandemic. He has tendered his services at various Medical Camps in India and Africa. He has visited the African continent nearly 29 times attending to the needs of the deprived in Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zambia, Malawi, Madagascar and Zimbabwe and performed between 1200 to 1500 operations. He has also attended medical camps in Kashmir and performed nearly 1300 operations.

His better half, Dr. Uma Pradhan runs an eye hospital at Solapur which is well known amongst the local populace. Following the family tradition of social service, she has performed 350/450 eye operations not only in Solapur but also in the nearby Districts and also in Karnataka. Under the auspices of the Rotary Club, she has participated in Medical Camps in nine African countries.

The duo of medical professionals have also dug into their own coiffeur by donating a Solar Heater at a local girl's hostel. They have also donated 100 kgs. of rice during the unfortunate Covid pandemic and also provided rations to sex workers.

We, at the District salute the endeavours of the Pradhan family and wish that may others emulate their feat.

HONOUR FOR OUR COMPANION FROM CHAPTER DALHOUSIE



MEC Anthony Nihal Fonseka, a member of Chapter Dalhousie, Colombo, a constituent of our Grand Chapter USRAFIC, has been re-appointed as a member of the Monetary Board of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) with effect from 27 July 2022 for a period of six years. Previously, he served on the Monetary Board from July, 2016 to May 2020 and from May 2022 to July 2022.

He obtained his BSc Degree from the University of Ceylon, Colombo and Securities and Investments, UK. He is a Senior Independent Director and Chairman of the Group Audit Committee of John Keells Holdings PLC, Chairman of Phoenix Industries Ltd., Non-Executive Director and Chairman of the Audit Committee of Brandix Lanka Ltd., Non-Executive Director and Chairman of Investment Committee of Phoenix Ventures Ltd..

A Banker by profession, Mr. Fonseka has held several key positions in the local and international banking and financial sector. He was the Chief Executive Officer of the DFCC Bank for over 13 years and prior to that was the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of HSBC Sri Lanka for 10 years. He has also served as the Chairman of the Colombo Stock Exchange and the Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and Pacific, Manila and as a director of Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC, and DFCC Vardhana Bank PLC. He was the President of the Sri Lanka National Advisory Council of the Chartered Institute of Securities & Investments, UK for over 10 years and is a Member of the US-Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission.

Mr Fonseka has held many positions in the public sector as well. He was a member of the 2009 Presidential Commission on Taxation and a member of the National Procurement Commission established under the Constitution. He has served as a Director of the Credit Information Bureau and the Employees' Trust Fund and has been the Co-Chairman of the national Council for Economic Development (NCED) – Capital Market Cluster.

Mr. Fonseka has authored many articles and made many presentations at seminars and conferences locally and internationally.

WEALTH MANAGEMENT – A PERSPECTIVE

In the wake of the uncertainties of both the Global and local Economic and Financial scenario due to the confluence of the Global situation and the Socio-Political upheavals, the interest rates were, in the recent past, bound southwards. Resultantly, the yield on investments had perhaps reached its nadir. Coupled with the galloping inflationary trends - despite the controlling measures introduced by the Reserve Bank of India - the elderly pensioners had experienced utmost discomfort in eking out their sustenance. Though, the situation has now improved very marginally, yet, we have a long way to go for recovery.

To obviate any misgivings under these circumstances, Lodge Zoroaster No. 800 S.C., sequel to their regular meeting on 5th August 2022, had invited a panel of experts in the field of Wealth Management and advisory services, to give a presentation on the subject. The event was open to

all and it was a pleasure to see the hall packed to capacity by Masons hailing across all four functional Constitutions in Mumbai, as also a few Ladies and a motley number of guests.



After a very brief welcome note by Bro. Vispi Marolia, RWM of the Lodge, Bro. Kersi Limathwalla, DGM, in his address, covered the Global and Indian scenario. He elaborated upon the retarded economic growth and the causative factors thereof, mainly touching upon the rising oil prices, the Soviet-Ukrainian conflict, the aggressive posture adopted by the Chinese, depleting world trade resulting in imbalance, etc.



The three speakers from NVS Wealth Management gave an enlightening presentation on the current financial situation and the influence on the pecuniary market, the Political turmoil, the uncertainties of oil supply, Hike in interest rates by Central Banks globally, commodity prices heading northbound, Profit-booking by FPIs in Indian market, etc., etc.

On an advisory note, it was their contention that the present conditions warranted that an individual investor should split one's investment under three different categories to have a balanced approach and to bifurcate from the routine investments in Fixed Deposits, Debentures and Mutual funds. They advised that the three categories should split the tenure of one's investments into the categories of short term, long term and also partly perennial. The non-customary suggestions were to patronise in a reasonable and cautious way the Bonds market, unlisted shares of reputed bodies and to a safe extent in the Equity Capital Market.

Various queries (including some bouncers) hurled from the audience were fielded by them with tact and professional expertise to the satisfaction of all. Their preponderant counsel was that now is an opportune time for smart money to flow and investors can safely balance their portfolio. Their parting prediction was that the Financial, fiscal and pecuniary markets would continue to be volatile till the end of the year, after which it may see an upturn.

IN MEMORIUM

One of the major ills faced by our District is the declining numbers which can on one hand be attributed to the Senior Brethren being incapacitated by failing health and on the other hand by the less than adequate initiation of youngsters in to our fold. The GAOTU, in his infinite wisdom, has been summoning quite a number of the aged and the infirm into His keeping, and our Scottish Constitution is resultantly rendered poorer by their loss.

On 4th August 2022, our Dear Bro. & M.E.C. Adi M. Choksi was recalled to the Grand Lodge above after succumbing to physical frailty. Born on 30.07.1937, he was initiated in Lodge Beaman # 1069 S.C. on 17.04.1976 and raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason on 01.11.1976. He served the Eastern Chair twice in the years 1992/93 & 2002/03. He was also the Rt. Wor. Master of Lodge

Barton # 475 in the year 2003/04 and of Lodge Light of Iran # 1498 in 1983/84. A soft spoken Brother with an amicable disposition and always ready to assist the District in any capacity, not only the District Office but the three Lodges where he was their member shall sincerely miss his services.

Bro. Rustom Jal Patell, Ruling Master of Lodge Rising Sun No. 506 S.C. and Past Master of Lodge Zoroaster No. 800 S.C. and Lodge Beaman No. 1069 S.C. was summoned to his Heavenly abode on 23rd August 2022. He was, prior to his failing health, a very active Mason and also a member of other advanced degrees. He was the First Principal of Chapter Zoroaster No. 138 S.C. and also Conclave Zoroaster. He was meticulous when it came to performing degree working and a lover of Freemasonry.

We mourn the passing away of both the Brethren and shall sincerely miss them at our meetings.

*May the Noble Souls of both our Brethren reside in extreme Peace and Tranquility
in the in the realms above under the care of our Heavenly Father Amen.*

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR COMPANION

We are pleased to inform our Companions that MEC Ardeshir Sarosh Vakil from Chapter Asoka & Madras No. 651 S.C. has been appointed as the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council 33^o of the Ancient and Accepted Rite for India. We congratulate him on this singular honour.



I need to add that our dear MEC Bharat Epur – Scribe Ezra of Chapter Asoka and Madras at Chennai - who is widely recognised as a Masonic Scholar in our fraternity, is now elected as the Lieutenant Grand Commander of that Order. Incidentally, our Past District Grand Master Bro. Bomi Mehta is also the Grand Chancellor of the Supreme Council 33^o of the Ancient and Accepted Rite for India.

