

The City of Giving

Philanthropy is not just about donating money, it is about making an impact with your money, improving someone's life, and Bangaloreans seem to understand this only too well

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The Garden City aka Silicon Valley just earned itself a new sobriquet — the City of Giving. To be more precise, three of our citizens have earned our city its new title. A title we can cite with pride, perhaps more pride than Garden City as reports of green cover reduction cloud our thoughts.

When Forbes decided to choose four of the heroes of philanthropy from India, guess where three of them came from? Our own Bengaluru, of course! Anil Agarwal, chairman of Vedanta Resources; Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, chairman and managing director of Biocon; Rohini Nilekani, wife of Infosys Technologies co-founder Nandan Nilekani; and Azim Premji, chairman and managing director of Wipro — these four have been listed by Forbes as heroes of philanthropy.

As Forbes states it, they are not necessarily the largest donors, or the most successful ones. Rather, they have been chosen because they 'put a hefty share of their money into

the number of start-ups in the narrow alleys of our farthest-flung suburbs and the stream of angel investors on our clogged roads testify, innovation is rather rife in our soil. It stands to reason that we would also donate our money innovatively and meaningfully.

Let's take the example of Kiran Mazumdar Shaw. The lady made her money in the business of medicines and heralded the sunrise industry of bio-technology. And typically, she has put her money in the same place: Health. Access to health care for the rural and urban poor has been her focus and a chain of low-cost medical shops, micro health insurance programme for the rural poor called Arogya Raksha Yojana Clinic, and other projects, all through strategic alliances with other non-governmental organisations working in the field.

Azim Premji Foundation has changed the concept of primary education in government schools. Their CDs not only teach numbers, songs and the alphabet to tiny tots in a number of languages, it also



FOR THE JOY OF LEARNING

A well-known philanthropist and author, Rohini Nilekani has been associated with Akshara Foundation since its inception in 2000. Passionate about development issues, she is associated with a number of not-for-profit initiatives. She is the chairperson and co-founder of

Arghyam, which promotes equity and sustainability in access to water. She is on the Board of Trustees and is chairperson of Akshara Foundation, a Bangalore-based public charitable trust with a mission to ensure that every child is in school and learning well. It was established in 2000 and has a range of programmes to universalise ele-

trained young women to become 'edupreneurs' and have helped them to start their own preschools by providing training and teaching, learning material. It is partnering with the Department of Women and Child Development's Integrated Child Development Scheme by providing volunteers to government-run *anganwadis* to impart education to children between the ages of four and six years.

The Foundation has accelerated programmes that teach children reading and math through short, intensive remedial interventions. These are aimed at children who are in school but not learning well.

It has a network of libraries in schools and communities to encourage and sustain a reading habit among children. In Bangalore, it has 52 libraries, 37 are in schools, the rest are community libraries. In North Karnataka, the Foundation runs 370 libraries.

The Karnataka Learning Partnership, a partnership between the