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*Produced and compiled
by the Organization for
the Protection of
Children's Rights,
Mumbai
76 Sabarigiri,
Anushaktinagar,
Mumbai 400 094, India
Tel: 25506046
email: roshni@vsnl.net*

Head Office

*5167 Jean-Talon, Suite
370
Montreal, Quebec,
Canada
H1S 1K8
Tel: (514) 593-4303
Fax: (514) 593-4659
Email:*

pfischer@osde.ca

Editorial Team:

*Riccardo Di Done
Pascal Fischer
Francois Meunier
Roshni Udyavar*

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Children Speak

Vol 2, No. 3, Feb. - March '04

A Newsletter of the Organization for the Protection of Children's Rights

Message from the President

This issue of Children Speak is entirely dedicated to the remembrance of a great and wonderful man, our friend and colleague, Dr. Rashmi Mayur. It is an honor for us at the OPCR to recognize his work and achievements.

I remember Rashmi as a beautiful human being who left no one indifferent: a soul that meant so well, a soul that sincerely endeavored to make a difference, a soul that aspired for equality and justice for all.

In 1998, while organizing our Fourth International Conference on Children and Violence, the name of Dr. Rashmi Mayur was suggested as a keynote speaker. After speaking with him over the phone for a few minutes, he decided to come and meet me in Montreal. Little did I know that I was just about to stumble upon the brother I never had. In fact, after spending less than one hour in my office, we decided to go to my house to prepare a plan of action to help eradicate violence and poverty among the children of the world.

The sky was not the limit, it was just the beginning!

We had decided to join forces for the love of children!

We had decided to join forces for the love of humanity!

It was the beginning of a most fruitful relationship, flowing with boundless energy in the fight against flagrant injustices in our society. Together, we embarked on a path to provide our youth with the necessary values to ensure that they would flourish with love and respect no matter what religion, race or culture they belonged to.

But beyond being an important part of our mission, he had become a strong pillar of our family. The love and care he showered on my five children, just added to the harmony that flowed through our veins.

Rashmi, you shall always be part of our lives, knowing that our passage on earth is only a stepping-stone to the glorious world of love.

Rashmi, we all love you!

Riccardo, Alexandra, Antoni-Vito, Marina, Riccardo Jr. and Samantha.

From the staff and personnel and Board of Directors of the O.P.C.R., we will sorely miss you. □



Riccardo Di Done



From L to R: Alexandra, Riccardo Jr., Antoni, Dr. Rashmi Mayur, Samantha, Riccardo Di Done and Marina

Rashmi Mayur

and the Indispensable Ones

By Douglas Mattern

President, Association of World Citizens, San Francisco

It was a great sadness to learn that our close colleague and friend, Rashmi Mayur, died on February 12 after battling a long illness. This is a big loss for the peace and environmental movement, and for the Association of World Citizens. Dr. Mayur was our roving World Citizens Ambassador and a Vice President.

My first encounter with Rashmi was about five years ago when attending a Peace Conference in New York City. It was by chance that I was walking by a room where Rashmi was making one of his firebrand speeches. I stopped to listen and soon became aware of his passion, his grasp of the facts, and his broad intellectual range.

About a year later we met in person, and this marked the beginning of a close friendship and a working relationship pursuing the imperative, yet still illusive goals of disarmament, lasting peace and justice.

I was amazed by Rashmi's indefatigable energy, which was matched by his dedication as documented in the volume of articles and books he wrote on the serious issues of our time. Rashmi traveled to over



Dr. Rashmi Mayur with Douglas Mattern, John Montgomery and Dr. Charles Merceica at the Global Peace Assembly in Taipei, Taiwan, August 2001

80 countries attending important conferences on disarmament, poverty reduction, and environmental issues where his knowledge as an environmental scientist was so valued.

The lives of great men remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And when departing, leave behind us
Footprints in the sands of time
- Henry Wordsworth Longfellow

Rashmi Mayur was true to this poem and he left his own footprints in the sands of time in somany areas he traveled.

For our 11th World Citizens Assembly we held in Taipei, Taiwan in 2001, I invited Rashmi as one of our keynote speakers. Right from opening day he made a positive and lasting impression on the 400 delegates from 52 countries who attended this event. In

Taipei we had many discussions on the role of world citizenship. We became convinced that this is the only concept capable of overcoming the myriad of issues that divide humanity today, and that world citizenship is the key component to create a world

community of lasting peace and justice.

Although we were usually far apart geographically, I always looked forward to Rashmi's telephone calls, often on a weekly basis, with his usual opening of "Hello - what are we going to do about....." (the urgent issue of the day). I miss these conversations and the challenge and ideas they generated, but I know that Rashmi is with us in spirit and the work continues.

There are those who struggle for a day and they are good;

There are those who struggle for a year and they are better;

There are those who struggle all their lives these are the indispensable ones.

- Bertold Brecht

To the memory of World Citizen Rashmi Mayur, one of the indispensable ones. □

Inspiring Friends

I am too terribly sad and words cannot adequately express the loss of my dear friend for over 30 years, the International Director of our Institute for Cooperation in Space. It was only so recently that Rashmi and I shared an award given by United Societies in Space for our 30 Years of Humanitarian Work for the Peaceful Uses of Space. And I was so looking forward to co-authoring a book with Rashmi when he returned from the World Summit in South Africa. But for all he has done on this planet for us all, and for his vision of what can still be done, I experience this deepest loss.

Carol Rosin, President, Institute for Cooperation in Space



Dr. Rashmi Mayur with members of his delegation at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, August 27, 2003

I first heard Rashmi Mayur speak at a gathering of about 300 people at the Hague Appeal for Peace. It was a gathering to promote global democracy and the cause of a democratically elected global peoples assembly. I was moved to tears and have been working ever since for the cause of global democracy.

To keep alive his hopes and dreams, let's dedicate ourselves to making it happen.

*Sincerely
Mona Lee*

Global Peace Assembly

An Ode to Rashmi Mayur

Alfred de Grazia

3 March 2004, Bergamo, Italy

To a New York Professor there came long ago
a young man neatly dressed in suit and tie,
small, dark, handsome, and alert
to everything said in the classroom.
He wished to learn all about social invention —
discovering new ways to make neighbors
out of Earth's people, uplifting their welfare.

He was faithful, attentive to the latest means
that social science could give to evoke the society
that Gandhi preached and Nehru managed.
Spending little, earning his way, giving
no idea that he wanted more than a career,
that he would go on and on to the limit of his powers
until he had done far more than one man or a hundred
could do to bring about a better world.

No man worked harder than did he,
Professor in an American University ,
a trusted Adviser to its President, and a
World Traveler, circling the globe a hundred times,
alighting everywhere his words were besought —
at home, though, in Mumbai and New York,
for here he had his friends, and drank with them
the heady mix of what was good for the world
like the Indian tea he brewed in all of its spices,
which kept him well. For forty-eight years
he sent me his worldwide works and
called when he could to tell of them,
giving me, too, his heartfelt well-wrought poems.

In the best sense of the word, like St. Francis,
Tom Jefferson, and Sun Yat Sen,
he was a wondrous agitator, who would not
let the slipping world drown in despair.
No one more than he could assess evil, yet excite hope.
That we have still our hopes is owed to the few like him.
May we be granted the touch to create more in his image,
for, if we could, we would consign,
with our farewell to Rashmi,
the gift of a happy throng of brothers,
everywhere and forever.

Homage to an Eco Warrior

By Roshni Udyavar
Director, O.P.C.R., India

Life is a moment to be immortal - the concluding line of his poem conveys the essence of the vibrant persona that was Rashmi Mayur - environmentalist, scientist, poet and much more. After traversing his earthly mission like a brilliant flash of light, he left on 11 February 2004 to continue his journey into the unknown universe. His spirit lives on in the souls of thousands whom he inspired to tread his path.

Popularly known in India as the "doomsday professor", Rashmi Mayur prophesied that if human beings continue on their present reckless path of mindless development, the earth's ecological systems would collapse and the human race will become extinct. "The consequences of the war that has been waged against this planet for the last 200 years by human beings, may be that we may have no human inhabitants in the future." However, unlike many crusaders who relinquished hope and left the battlefield, and others who refuse to recognize the symptoms of a diseased planet, Rashmi loved it enough to see it with the eyes of truth. He was too optimistic to be biblical. "Nonetheless, we cannot be immobilized by the ugly reality. As long as we are alive, as long as we have vision and as long as we think of the future of the earth and our children, we must hope that sanity and wisdom will prevail."

Armed with a doctorate and full of hope and enthusiasm, Rashmi returned to his country from the United States more than 30 years ago, determined



Dr. Rashmi Mayur with Roshni Udyavar, Dr. Sadig Rashid, Director, UNICEF, South Asia, and Mr. Riccardo Di Done during the Fifth International Conference on the Child in May 2003

to make a difference in the lives of millions of suffering and voiceless people. He was convinced that educating people about the outcome of their path and providing ecological alternatives would bring about a sustainable future. Ever since he has been on a relentless struggle: writing papers, educating through seminars, conferences and producing live projects such as ecovillages. Dr. Robert Muller, former Assistant Secretary General, described Rashmi as a "one-person world organization".

Having aligned and worked with intellectual giants like Arthur C. Clarke, Jean Paul Sartre, Paul Ehrlich, J. Krishnamurti and Donella Meadows, Rashmi had a holistic vision for the planet, one that embraced peace, humanity, justice and equality not only for humans, but for millions of species who share this unique abode of life. "We must live on the planet during our brief span with such care and concern and love that the

Earth has become richer again. And one day, when we are ready to go – because the evolution must continue – whatever footprint we leave on the planet will determine the whole evolution. Let us depart such that our children and the flowers will have another beautiful morning to enjoy the ecstasy of this earth and evolution will continue beyond tomorrow into eternity."

Rashmi was a world citizen. The earth was his home. He was revolutionary in that he denounced redundant institutions and practices, even patriotism. Rashmi was a doer. At the same time, he had the ability to inspire and work with a wide variety of people. He was an inimitable orator. Equipped with the latest, most relevant statistics, an immutable logic and humor matched only by his passion, he almost always set the audience on fire, awakening people to the reality and bringing forth followers. His Program "Voices of the South" on WBAI radio broadcast from New York had a fan following

of thousands of people. His voice had a simplicity and logic that appealed to friends and foes alike.

Rashmi did not limit himself to any particular group. He built alliances with activists, NGOs, professionals, academicians, businessmen, religious groups and all types of people with a singular purpose of realigning them to the goal of sustainability. He recognized the need to integrate all sections of society, to garner their support and goodwill and wisdom for the protection of the planet. He was versatile, one moment shaking hands with the President of a country, the next moment laughing and talking to children from a slum in Mumbai.

Rashmi had a strength, purity of purpose, simplicity, objectivity and incorruptible judgment seldom found combined in one individual. He was always in search – of true love and eternal happiness. He had a rare

combination of knowledge, logic and passion. He often expressed his deep grief through his poems, which remain unpublished. He was convinced that suffering was bad. He believed in human creativity and its boundless possibilities for civilization and evolution.

Rashmi was a giver. He gave off his material assets as easily as he shared his deep and pure love. His belongings were few – a collection of 13,000 rare books, a suitcase packed with his bare minimum requirements and mostly gifts for friends, a bulky passport which he lost innumerable times along with his wallet and some cash which often slipped through the holes in his suit pockets. Despite his hectic schedule, he never groveled over petty problems or cared to discuss his personal or financial problems. Nor at any time of his career did he vouch for high positions, which he could have easily attained. His mind was restless, always

pondering about the welfare of humanity and the question of sustainability. Rashmi was a tireless workaholic. It was natural for him to get off the plane after a trip around the world and land up in office the next morning ready to send press notes and interviews.

Mark Dubois, a close friend and international coordinator for the Earth Day International once remarked of Rashmi: “ I think genetic engineering is dead wrong given our collective human maturation, ethics and economics, yet the world would be better if he (Rashmi) could be cloned and his touching, motivating, awaking presence inspire more people of the world to act.” If but a small part of his character, devotion and intellectual genius remains alive or is transferred to the youth, our country and this planet will see a brighter tomorrow, or as Rashmi often phrased the conclusion of his articles: “The future of our children’s dreams” □

A Memorial is being organized on

MARCH 24 2004

FROM 6 PM TO 9 PM

At the

CHURCH CENTER

777 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA
(44TH STREET AND 1ST AVENUE)
ON THE SECOND FLOOR.

Let us join together to pay tribute to Rashmi , our beloved warrior and Tireless crusader for the Health of our Planet, for world Government and for the Underprivileged

Please RSVP: The War & Peace Foundation (info@warpeace.org or PH: 212.228.5836)

Tribute to Rashmi Mayur

By Shashi Tharoor

Under Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, United Nations



Shashi Tharoor

Those of us who are committed to building a better world know that every small success is built on the enthusiasm, the cooperation, the skills and the talents of many different people. In truth, our task will be a little harder, now that Rashmi Mayur is not with us.

Rashmi was, first and foremost, a man of boundless enthusiasm. Many people, convinced as he was that our collective stewardship of the planet was not always beneficent, would find it hard not to despair, or express their anger. Not so, Rashmi. He loved the world, and his love extended to the most diverse and cantankerous of creatures in it, human beings. When we were right according to his science and his lights, we were congratulated.

When he felt we were wrong, he would shower us with information, seduce us into rethinking, credit us all with the noblest of intentions and

enthusiastically present facts that would lead us to what he thought was a correct response.

He was deeply committed to cooperation. How will I ever forget his barrage of suggestions and proposals, and his missives of support for the work of my Department whenever he believed we were making an important contribution? Cooperation, for him, was not an optional activity but an obligation, and an obligation he imposed, through the strength of his personality, on everyone he felt could aid with the task at hand.

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In memory of my great friend

By Steven H. Puthuff

Chairman, President and CEO, Step Communications Corporation

Wherever he traveled throughout the world, Dr. Rashmi Mayur was a living model of remarkable wisdom and genuine strength. As a human being, he was totally aligned with universal truth, representing the underprivileged, a diva to all those with whom he met. Dr. Mayur's profound knowledge and compassion enabled him to address the needs of humanity in underdeveloped countries with love and support.

I first met Dr. Mayur, a keynote speaker in Moscow in 1989, when President Gorbachev, leader of the Soviet Union, held an International conference to address the needs of his country. Dr. Mayur then continued as my friend, confidant and constant advisor



Rashmi and Steve in Mumbai

as we led "The Americans for the Success of Perestroika" to assist the Soviets in their transformation to a market economy.

Dr. Mayur served as a member of the Advisory Board of SyberSay Communications, and was being inducted as an

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My Brother

By Dr. Carlos Hernandez, President, New Jersey City University;
Cco-author, Learning for the New Millennium, New Millenium and Pedagogy of the Earth

I recently arrived from traveling overseas, only to learn of the tragic loss of Rashmi. I cannot tell you how I grieve his death. I deeply regret not having contacted him during his hospitalization; my only consolation comes from the fact that he was regularly on my mind.

Rashmi was a pillar in my thinking about how an understanding of global issues must be at the center of life at the University. My meetings, discussions, and efforts to broaden the perspective of the University were among the most invigorating, provocative, and meaningful experiences of my professional and personal life.

Rashmi's intellectual power and prowess were matched only by his love and dedication to the poor, forgotten, and frequently abused people of the developing world. I know that not a moment went by in his life when service to the downtrodden was not at the



Dr. Rashmi Mayur with Dr. Carlos and Lillian Hernandez

center of his thinking or his actions. I know of no other person whose life was such a perfect embodiment of one's principles.

Wherever we were, I shared wonderful and life transforming moments with Rashmi. The modern buzz of Manhattan, the favelas of Rio, the shantytowns of Mumbai, were for us examples of the best and the worst of the human condition. And Rashmi taught me, as I daresay he taught everyone, the importance of dedication to the cause of eradicating the gross imbalances and injustices separating the "haves" from the "have-nots."

I will miss his force, his focus,

his wisdom, his intellect, and his commitment. I will equally miss his poetry, his love of humanity and his yearning for a just and peaceful world.

Rashmi called me his brother; I will miss my brother very, very much. But I will always remember and embrace the fact that I have

known a great man and this fact is eternal, immutable, and will be with me for as long as I live. □

Life is a burning desire

It is a challenge

to nothingness

It is a manifestation

of excellence

It is liberation

It is a will to do

the impossible

It is power to create

It is struggle to reach

the ultimate

It is drive to realize the dream

- Rashmi Mayur

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Advisory Board Member of Step Communications Corporation which paralleled his work as IT Committee head of the UN. He was instrumental in my receiving the Priyadarshni Award for communications and education in underdeveloped countries, with his true dedication and support. Dr. Mayur was just as comfortable conversing with corporate leaders in Silicon Valley and Congressmen and

Senators, as he was in talking with the beautiful families and children in the small villages in India. He spoke to all in quiet confidence and personal comfort.

Dr. Mayur understood no limitations in the completion of his personal goals and in the pursuit of support for others. With his eloquent command of knowledge of the underprivileged and his unique and passionate presentation

style, Rashmi was revered all over the world as a great orator representing people of underdeveloped countries. He was truly a remarkable man that will take his place among the kings of nations and liberators for peace, freedom and true equality for all mankind.

The Honorable, Dr. Rashmi Mayur, was one of my best friends and will truly remain in my heart forever. □

The Man with the World on his head

By Paul Hoeffel

Chief, NGO DPI Section of the United Nations, New York

Rashmi would have been the first to acknowledge the beauty of a life well lived. He was a man at ease with the cycles of life and death. But he was incensed by the premature, the unnecessary death – the young man with malaria, the child with diphtheria, the mother with HIV/AIDS. His death was premature and we too feel cheated by a life cut short. Rashmi shared his love of life with a generosity that flowed like fresh water. His complex, dynamic world was always edged with sadness. He could not contain his deep anger at today's losses and shared his graphic premonitions of catastrophes that lay ahead. Rashmi talked ceaselessly: *Our task is to release all our creative power by developing a global movement for protecting the Earth.*

I knew only one side of this trim fellow who exuded an air of restlessness, scented with cardamom; a man possessed, eyes sparkling with tight flashes of humor. I knew the New York Rashmi, the United Nations Rashmi, with the immaculate white shirt, floral tie, blue blazer, battered briefcase in hand bulging with articles, speeches, documents. This was his formal world – where his days were punctuated with conference-room meetings, compulsive name-dropping and stirring things up. Rashmi as high-level advisor, as keynote speaker, as NGO firebrand. Facts and figures flew from his conversation like sparks, igniting the imagination with the intricacies of the world, the fragility of the planet, the importance of a simple well in a thirsty village, the anger of farmer who has

lost his land, the delight of a child who has learned to write poetry. *Man, now, controls the destiny of his tiny solar satellite.*

I knew Rashmi, man of the world, flying into New York from Bombay, or perhaps Moscow, or Rio or Lagos or Cincinnati, tirelessly overflowing with enthusiasm, wonder, outrage and insights, new friends and enemies. First the itinerary: *I'm here to give the keynote speech at the NGO meeting on the future of energy consumption in developing countries. Another time: Just off the plane from the conference in Rio. I visited the favellas for three days. Can't see you; will be off tomorrow morning for a meeting on urban development in Cairo. Vast pools of jet fuel have been consumed to propel Rashmi's peripatetic world journey. The earth is under siege by us.*

Quickly, to the business at hand: *Anything important going on here? I have a feeling they've got it all wrong. But hang on, Rashmi, you're going too fast! I need your help. Over tea, Rashmi hands you a notebook and pencil. He wants you to take notes on his conversation, to enumerate – one to five – his requests: it's not a matter of self importance so much as an efficient exchange – the hard-headed scientist at work. Who's the best person to talk to about the commission on sustainable development's meeting on fresh water? Please put together all the documents you can find on peaceful uses of outer space and send it to me in Bombay. Join me for tea at 5:30: I want you to meet a lady who has a brilliant analysis of biodiversity.*

Sometimes there was occasion for some Indian food – vegetarian – and a good glass of wine.

Our task is to release all our creative power by developing a global movement for protecting the earth. He brings small gifts, bronze casts of Shiva, hammered jewelry, painted textiles – all of them handmade in villages outside Bombay – villages he knew and loved and spoke of with pride. The predominant notion of development is antiquated and irrelevant to poor countries with limited resources.

Rashmi, the public man, the speaker at UN meetings, at NGO gatherings, at scientific workshops, would bring a sleepy meeting in a stale conference room to life with his implacable logic, sense of urgency and clarity of vision. He calls for self-reliance, sparks flying, compressed data capturing a world in pain, in crisis, on the edge. *Mankind cannot comprehend the long-term implications of incarcerating Nature and disrupting millions of years of its handiwork.*

Rashmi, a man of science, pieces together the data – on population, military spending, literacy, consumption patterns – and it adds up to disaster. *We can't rely on politicians. We must put our efforts into civil society, into communities, into technologies that work with the Earth, not against it.*

Rashmi, a poet, man of the future, who was insulted and baffled by computers and never sent an e-mail. Rashmi, a man of vision, who hurriedly roamed the globe, putting people and ideas together like a fevered magician, advancing a vision that compels people to listen, to reach out and organize. Rashmi, the man with the world in his head, is gone. □

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In Memory of Rashmi Mayur

By Dr. Glen T. Martin

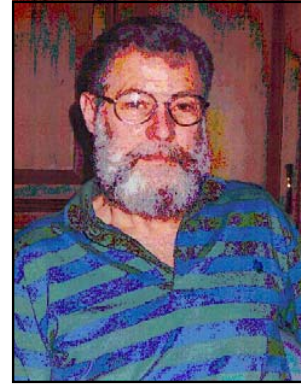
Professor of Philosophy, Radford University,
Secretary General, World Constitution and Parliament Association

And he was a man of many skills and talents. That he was an author and a scientist is well-recognized. But he had a third talent that we must also remember, and that was as an organizer. One need only cast an eye over the list of non-Governmental organizations in which he was active, including some he himself founded, to see that this man was a talented leader of people. It is my hope that these organizations will continue his good work in his name.

In his meditation on Don Quixote, the humanist philosopher José Ortega y Gasset wrote: "I am I, plus my surroundings, and if I do not preserve the latter, I do not preserve myself." These words remind me of Rashmi. I am sure he would want us all to continue to work together to preserve this world that was part of him and is part of us. □

Rashmi worked for many years with the World Constitution and Parliament Association in the service of democratic world government. He often was the speaker at our meetings. The first time I heard him speak, in London in 1998, I knew immediately that here was a brother in the service of democracy, freedom, and a decent world order. Since that time we began working together in other ways. I brought him to my university, Radford University, as keynote speaker for our week-long program "Earth, Science, and a New Human Order." He energized the students and faculty to care about the environment and the future of the Earth.

He hosted me on his radio show, broadcasting from New York City. He was always wonderful: energizing, enthusiastic, positive about the consequences of people uniting and working together for humanity. I visited his Institute for Sustainable Future in Mumbai in 2002 and co-hosted a workshop in environmental issues with him at



Dr. Glen Martin

that time. He was full of plans and creative ideas for working together and creating a new future. The World Constitution and Parliament Association, and those of us who knew him personally, have lost a valuable ally and wonderful human being in Rashmi Mayur.

The battered suitcase in which he brought his books and literature to Radford University two years ago, with his professional card taped all over it, remains in the corner of my office. I cannot bear to discard it. In his honor, let us redouble our efforts to create a new and decent world order. □



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Organization for the Protection of Children's Rights (OPCR)

5167 Jean-Talon East, Suite 370, St-Leonard (Quebec), Canada H1S 1K8

Phone: (514) 593-4303 Fax: (514) 593-4659 Website: www.opcr.org Email: info@osde.ca

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