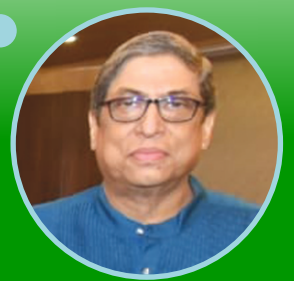




Rotary
Garden Reach



IMAGINE
ROTARY



LIGHT

WEEKLY BULLETIN October 25th, 2022 - Vol. 45 No. 15

President - Rtn. Abinash K Singh • Secretary - Rtn. Debasis Das • TREASURER - Rtn. Chiranjib Sha • Editor - PP Tanu Roy

The Goddess, a French Opera, star-crossed lovers and Lakmé

As a large part of India worships Goddess Lakshmi on the festival of Diwali, we recount the astonishing story of how Lakshmi inspired the most well known cosmetic brand of India.

The story begins in India in the 1950s, a nascent democracy that was unavoidably going through growth pains. Reportedly, the Nehru administration had realised that Indian women were spending a lot of money on imported cosmetics. According to MO Mathai's acclaimed book *"My days with Nehru,"* Indian urban women were furious when the Union Finance Minister halted all imports of foreign cosmetics due to a lack of foreign currency. Telegrams and letters poured into the PM's office.

Nehru sought to correct the situation by asking JRD Tata to create a Swadeshi beauty product to rival the international brands. In addition to being able to draw in the urban middle class, they sought a name that exudes the very best of Indian culture.

Surprisingly, a French opera provided the necessary inspiration. This opera took viewers to British India in the late 19th century unfolding a dramatic and tragic love story between an Indian Brahmin girl and a British soldier. It was first performed in 1883 at the Opéra-Comique in Paris and was titled Lakmé. It was created by French Romantic composer Léo Delibes and was based on short stories by Théodore Pavie and the novel *Le Mariage de Loti* by Pierre Loti.

The story unfolds at the covert shelter of the Brahmin priest Nilakantha, who has been forbidden by the British to practice his religion. When his daughter **Lakmé** & her friend Mallika went to gather flowers, a British group innocently broke into the secret refuge. One of them was Gérald, a young army officer who was enchanted by Lakmé's charm and beauty. Romance started brewing but when Gérald returned to meet Lakmé during the Durga Puja procession, he was stabbed by her father.



Lakmé, Sigrid Arnolds (1891)

Lakmé saved and cured the wounded soldier and deeply fell in love with him. But eventually Gérald returned to the path of duty and sacrificed his love for the Indian girl. The heartbroken Lakmé committed suicide at the end of the play taking the poisonous leaves of Datura flower. If you are wondering what Lakmé exactly stands for, it is the French rendition of the Sanskrit name for goddess Lakshmi.

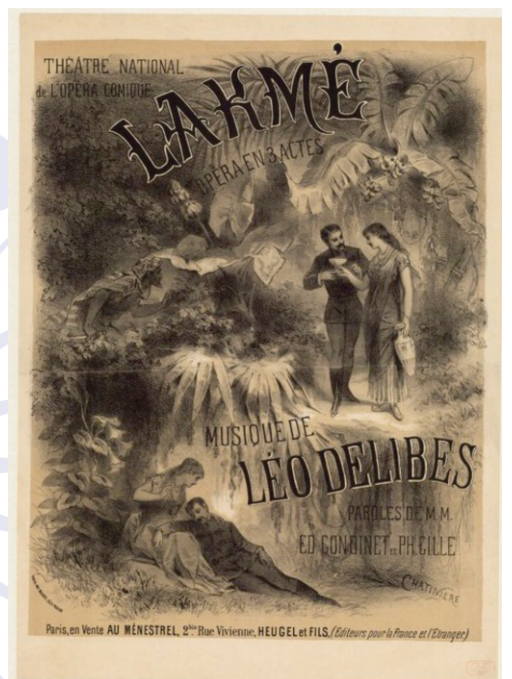
One cannot miss the scintillating 'Flower Duet' from Lakmé. In recent years, the Flower Duet has become widely popular due to its use in ads, ringtones, and elevators or in shopping malls; in particular the British Airways "face" ads of the 1980s had reached cult status. It was a time when Paris was engrossed with Oriental

romance, fashion and exoticism. Paris saw the release of many operas with an Oriental flavour. *Les Babouches du Brahmane*, from which Delibes adapted Lakmé, one of the stories that Theodor Pavie brought back from India.

The Indian epic, the Mahabharata, was translated by Pavie from Sanskrit text. From 1852 until 1857, he even instructed in Sanskrit at the College de France. The Opera had several Indian anecdotes including a musical piece *Candida Durga* to celebrate the festivity.

As per Nina Kullrich's book *'Skin Color Politics'*, Tata sent a delegation to Paris to gain some expertise in cosmetics from perfume producer Renoir and during the process they received the idea of the name Lakmé inspired from the said opera staged in Paris that time.

Tata named their brand after the Hindu girl from this 19th-century French opera - Lakmé, which is also a manifestation of Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth - symbolising its role in fortifying the Indian economy. Lakmé as we all know today went on to become one of the most trusted Indian brands known internationally.



Today is our 2195th

Members attended last RWM: 23

Birthdays Greetings :

Oct 26th Spouse Archana, Wife of PP Capt. Naresh
 Oct 27th PN Biswajit Saha
 Oct 30th Spouse Sharmishtha, Wife of PP Chinmay
 Oct 31st Farheen, Daughter of Rtn. Abbas



We're better people, thanks to Rotary: RI President

Kiran Zehra

Who, here, is not a better person because you are part of Rotary? Because of the opportunities it has given you to give back, to do service and fellowship? I think each one of us has a story with Rotary — things in our lives that are so special and important that we would have never experienced without Rotary,” said RI President Jennifer Jones, addressing Rotarians of RIDs 2981, 2982, 3000, 3231 and 3232 in –Chennai as part of her India visit.



Calling Service ‘the cornerstone of Rotary,’ she thanked them for the “good work you do in your communities and throughout the world. We are not only people of action but also people of purpose and influence.”

She recounted witnessing an open heart surgery at a hospital in Ma’an, Jordan, where she attended a district conference along with her husband Nick Krayacich.

Dressed in hospital greens she “stood without moving a muscle,” and watched Rtn. Mark Turpentine perform the surgery. She leaned forward and saw the patient lying on the table covered from head to toe with a sheet and “only a square opening in the area where the doctor was operating. There was an anaesthetist and a nurse in the room. As he was stitching, every once in a while, he would take his hand underneath the patient’s heart, jiggle it and ask the anaesthetist to ‘warm it up a little’, then he would resume stitching. This jiggle-warming-stitching continued.

When he noticed Jones in the room, he invited her to take a closer look. “He introduced me to the patient, six-year-old Salma, a –Syrian refugee. After the final stitch, he told the anaesthetist to ‘warm it up.’ And, at that moment, little –Salma’s heart started to

beat... I got to see her come back to life. That day I realised I am a better person because of Rotary.”

Talking about membership retention, she said that it is important to “make the members fall in love with Rotary. It shouldn’t be about ticking off numbers. We must make them feel welcome, and proud that they have an equal contribution to make in this organisation.”

DG Dr. N Nandakumar, RID 3232, thanked the RI President *“for inspiring us and reminding us about the care and comfort of our members. Truly, Rotary has touched our lives and changed us for the better.”*

Earlier Jones met Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, MK Stalin and briefed him about Rotary’s polio eradication programmes and its various humanitarian initiatives being implemented across the state, including the mega hepatitis vaccination campaign launched by the district.



A rendezvous with Rotaractors

The RI President received a rousing welcome at the Ethiraj College in Chennai, where she met Rotaractors of RID 3232. “Your energy is electric! I was told this district is home to the largest number of Rotaractors — all of 29,000! And Ethiraj College has the biggest female Rotaract club. Nick and I had no idea what to expect till we walked in through the door and experienced your crazy energy... and I love it,” she said. She thanked DRR Goutham Raj and Meera Sharma, Past President of RAC Madras Central, for “the incredible programme.”

Her theme *Imagine Rotary*, she said, is “powerful, because it gives you Rotaractors the opportunity to think about what you want for your community and our world.” Urging Rotaractors to dream big, she said, “with Rotaract you have a chance to become a better public speaker, understand how various governments work, develop leadership and professional skills, and have fun through service.”

Applauding them for their strong social media knowledge and presence, Jones said, “Rotaractors could finish designing a project in a month over quick chats on WhatsApp. Whereas –Rotarians would form committees and take 3-6 months to complete the same project.”

Talking about DEI she said, “Diversity is our strength and Rotaract has already figured it out. Be it gender equity or diverse membership, you have led the way forward.” She was delighted to learn that the district’s Rotaract membership has 50 per cent women. “The future of our organisation is sitting right here. You bring great energy, positive leadership, efficacy and quickness in solving the world’s most pressing problems and challenge us to think differently about how we do our Rotary business. Together we can achieve great things.”

Jones recalled the time when she accompanied her husband DGN Krayacich to a medical mission in the –Amazon. “I met many Rotarians from different parts of the world. The internationality of Rotary inspired me and I understood that irrespective of our nationalities, backgrounds, religious beliefs... as Rotary members we all want the same things for our families, our countries and Rotary helps us achieve these goals.”

Think long-term, beyond your year

AS Venkatesh, RI Director, 2021–23

One of the privileges I have is the opportunity to meet and interact with several Rotarians from around our region. During my interactions, the one thing that stands out is that the vision of club leaders rarely goes beyond one year.

We tend to look at projects that can be conceived and executed in one year. This, while undermining our collective ability, also limits our impact. Eradication of polio would not have been possible if it had been a short-term objective. Our fundraising plans, project ideas and the difference they can make are all limited by our reluctance to think long-term. Are we satisfied with paying school fees of a few deserving children or can we dream of constructing a school for such

underprivileged children? Are we going to fund the cost of a heart surgery or can we plan to construct a hospital ward?

These are some of the thoughts that I want each one of you to ponder over. The key to unlocking our full potential lies in our willingness to think long-term. Our President Jennifer Jones has urged us to Imagine Rotary. We imagine things that aren’t there presently! To be able to imagine something more impactful might mean a few fundamental changes to our thought process. To start with, we need to look beyond a year. Secondly, our vision should not be restricted to the resources we have with us at present. As is said, you find the cause, means will follow. Thirdly, we should be ready to collaborate with other organisations, maybe other Rotary clubs too.

You can imagine the difference we, as an organisation, can make, if all the clubs in our region adopt this. Rotary’s visibility will also be much higher, probably resulting in more people wanting to be a part of us. Let us shed our inhibitions and apprehensions and start imagining big. The time to be bold is now. I am sure we can.



Postcards from the Past

Susan Hanf & Wen Huang

Clubs now moving toward flexible attendance policies

Ronnie Yeager, 84, joined the Rotary Aransas Pass, Texas, on 1 May 1970. Over the 52 years of club meetings since, he has had perfect attendance. His extraordinary tenure in Rotary earned him a special recognition letter in September 2020 from then-Rotary International President Holger Knaack.

For Yeager, who had a demanding schedule as a district judge, maintaining his attendance has required meticulous planning and tremendous dedication. "I enjoy the fellowship," he says, "and I find it exciting to be with a group that represents an excellent cross section of people in my five-county judicial district." Yeager says his connection to Rotary deepened in the 1980s, when it made polio eradication its flagship program. A polio survivor, Yeager developed post-polio syndrome 30 years after initially contracting the virus at the age of 8.

His attendance streak faced a challenge about 20 years ago when his family took a three-week vacation along the coast of Australia. Yeager managed to make up his absences while on the trip — a practice that in year past typically would be affirmed by sending a postcard to one's club. Yeager also recalls travelling to Vancouver, British Columbia, in 2006 and attending a local Rotary club event. "The club secretary said he would mail a postcard to my club," he says, "but I had him give it to me because I wanted to make sure that my club received it."

In Yeager's early years in Rotary, the Aransas Pass club met on Mondays, at times in conflict with his busy law practice. "There were several other Rotary clubs within 25 miles of where I live," he says, "and I always made sure that I got to the adjoining town for a makeup meeting." One nearby club was known for treating visiting members with delicious fried chicken. "That club had about 20 members," he recalls, "but they would normally have 70 to 100 visitors who were there like me for the food and attendance makeup."

Yeager commends his club's flexibility. Since retiring in 2013, he has been hospitalized twice. His club, which now has 13 members, accommodated his situation by holding the meeting at the hospital.

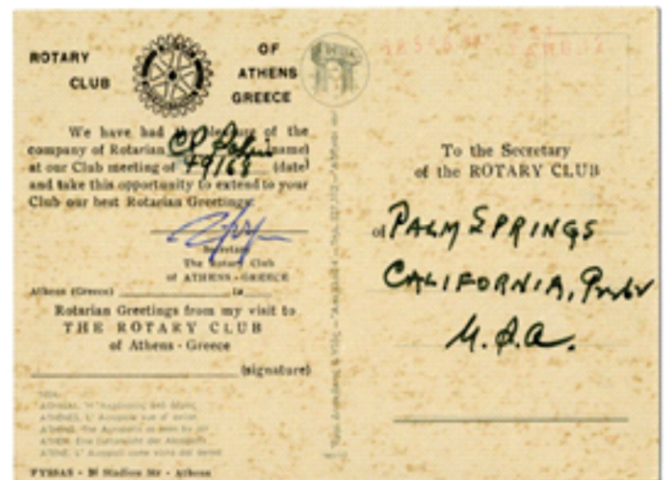
In recent years, many Rotary clubs have innovated by adopting flexible formats. Some clubs rotate their meeting locations among a member's home, a restaurant, or a business. Some meet virtually, while others use a hybrid format, allowing members to call in to in-person meetings.

"I think having some flexibility in meeting attendance requirements is a good idea," says Yeager. "It'll accommodate people with a disability or young people with a busy work schedule. Holding meetings every other week or in the evenings are good ideas to explore."

Changing the meeting format can keep members engaged and active, and enables guests to have fun, productive meetings that connect with Rotary's values and mission.

"There are certain things in life that we don't have that much control over," Yeager adds. "The new rules now give you a whole lot better control over that."

Susan Hanf is a Heritage Communications specialist at Rotary International.





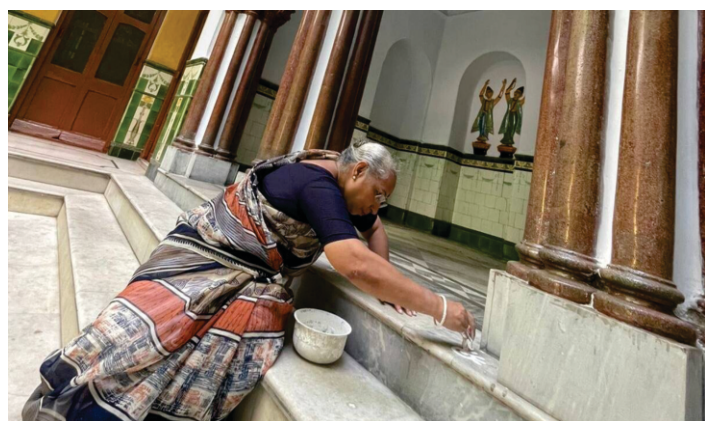
Sarees for 50 House-keeping ladies of BNR locality - by Rotary Garden Reach on September 27th, 2022, at BNR Officers' Club. It was much appreciated by Railway officials.

Deepawali gift: Retired school teacher, artist draws “Alponas” outside homes of strangers in Kolkata

“Alpona” is a centuries-old art form of Bengal that is traditionally practiced by women with the belief that the ‘auspicious’ designs usher in prosperity and happiness for the family.

Sweety Kumari

With a bag full of zinc oxide, retired school teacher Ratnaboli Ghosh, 70, and artist Mudar Patherya, 59, went from one house to another in north and south Kolkata in the wee hours of Saturday and Sunday, to draw ‘alponas’ (traditional floor decorations in Bengal) outside buildings.



“Alpona is... an ambassador of art, design, and inclusion... They (residents) might have appreciated the alponas but the purpose was to send across the message that ‘we care’,” said Patherya.

The two stuck to relatively ‘neutral’ designs that are not specific to any particular religion. “If you want to include the world... you do such things. Ratnaboli

Ghosh was willing to collaborate and as a team of two we did it successfully,” said Patherya. Notably, Patherya kick-started the trend of painting portraits of eminent personalities on electric boxes in Kolkata.

On Saturday and Sunday, in the run-up to Kali Puja and Deepawali, the duo painted alponas outside at least 20 houses in the city. Alpona is a centuries-old art form of Bengal that is traditionally practiced by women with the belief that the ‘auspicious’ designs usher in prosperity and happiness for the family.

“Since I was five years old, I have loved making alponas. Traditionally, alponas are made with rice flour and water but here we have used zinc oxide and mixed it with some water and adhesive. This way, the designs last much longer... My mother, Pratibha Sengupta, was from Santiniketan. She was a student of Nandalal Bose from the Bengal School of Art... she was truly God-gifted,” tells Ghosh.

In the last two days, Ghosh and Patherya painted alponas outside 10 houses in north Kolkata and 10 in south Kolkata, in areas such as Amherst Street, Shyambazar, Lake Gardens, and Rabindra Sarovar. The two woke up early in the morning and finished making alponas by 8:30 am on both days.

Last year before Deepawali, Ghosh, her 32-year-old daughter, and Patherya had designed alponas outside apartments in Patherya’s housing society at night after 11 pm.

“So the next day, when people woke up and saw the alponas outside their gates along with the pradips (earthen lamps) and greeting cards that Mudar had kept for them, they were quite surprised and happy. Then Mudar got a team and they went and designed alponas at different places in Kolkata.

“This time, those who were awake saw me making the alponas and appreciated the gesture. While many saw the alponas after we completed them,” said Ghosh.

However, there is one major difference between this year and last year. Last year, the duo designed alponas only for people they knew but, this time, the alponas were for total strangers. “It wasn’t done for personal consumption but as a public service,” added Patherya.

“These days, nobody wakes up at 6:30 am. So the idea was that people would get to see the alponas when they step out in the morning to collect the newspaper... A lady in Shyambazar saw it while Ratnaboli didi was doing it and she said ‘durdanto (awesome),’” said Patherya.

“I remember a man who wasn’t very welcoming when he first saw me drawing the alpona at his doorstep but he, too, took pictures in the end and looked happy,” said Ghosh.



Polio – A Threat to every Child

Safia Ibrahim

Sometimes I catch myself admiring my daughter as she reads a book at bedtime or does her math homework. These are skills we have come to expect from a child at her age. However, my memories as a young girl living with a disability from polio in Somalia are quite different.



I remember every morning I would wake at the peak of dawn, brush my teeth, comb my hair and change for the day. I then would sit outside our front door and watch as children from my neighborhood walk to school with their thermos full of water and school bags on their backs. I would wave to them with a smile but internally I was crushed.

At that age I knew two things for certain; one, I wanted to also carry a thermos and a backpack and walk alongside my peers, and two, something life changing was happening at that building they called school and I was missing out.

I was missing out because as a toddler I contracted polio – a highly contagious disease that attacked my brain and left me partially paralyzed from the waist down. As a result, I spent the first six years of my life crawling. It was clear to me growing up that because I had a physical disability, my experience was going to be vastly different from other children.

Children with disabilities face many barriers, including, for me, an inaccessible physical environment. Also, being a girl meant additional restrictions, as any available resources would go to boys with disabilities first – and it was rare that there would be enough for all of us.

When the civil war in Somalia broke out, my family and I migrated to Canada. Moving to a new country meant new experiences. I was first taken to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and was fitted with leg braces and crutches. They were bulky and heavy, but liberating. For the first time in my life, I was able to walk more than two metres without needing to rest.

I was then informed that I was starting school the following week. I couldn't comprehend this new concept as I was raised to believe school was not a place for me. I remember picking out my clothes, folding and unfolding them, and packing my school bag with my new pencil case and binder that I insisted on buying. I was beyond excited, but nervous at the same time because I didn't know what to expect. I just knew I belonged there.

Monday finally arrived. I combed my hair, brushed my teeth, and changed just as I had always done in Somalia. But something was different about this day. Today I was finally going to start school.

I climbed into the back of a taxi that the school sent. We didn't drive for long but it felt like eternity. My heart was about to jump out of my chest.

When I got to the school, I found out that I had been assigned a special education teacher. Her name was Lisa. She was just as excited to meet me, and her smile calmed my nerves. She helped me find my new class and introduced me to my teacher, Ms. Pat.

At that moment, I looked around as I saw five multi-coloured round tables with four plastic chairs each. There was a fish tank, a blackboard at the front of the class, and letters on the wall. There were children's drawings displayed on the walls and a rocking chair in the corner where Ms. Pat sat during story time. Ms. Pat guided me to a blue table, the one nearest to her desk. There were labels with letters on the table, and she pointed to one. "Safia," she said, pointing at me. At that moment I realized that spot was created for me. I finally had a seat at the table, and it didn't matter that I had a disability or that I was a girl or a refugee.

Every child that is paralyzed from polio is one too many. Polio will rob them of their childhood, they will be forced to watch from the sidelines as they will continue to be excluded from buildings they belong in and they will miss out on life's simplest joys like scoring their first goal in the game of soccer.

We have come a long way in the fight against polio. Before the Global Polio Eradication Initiative started in 1988, the disease paralyzed more than a thousand children a day. We are close to the finish line, but the case in New York, where polio was eradicated more than 30 years ago, is a sobering reminder that polio is just a plane ride away and until every child is immunized, polio will continue to be a threat to every child.



Distribution of 288 RILM Food packets to students of Sanghamitra Vidyalaya & Arya Parishad Vidyalaya at Garden Reach on October 20th, 2022.

Minutes of the 2194th RWM held on October 18th, 2022 at BNR Officers' Club, Garden Reach

1. President Abinash called the RWM to order and requested to rise for the National Anthem.
2. President informed that on September 27th, 50 sarees were distributed to under-privileged women in and around BNR Garden Reach. The project was very much appreciated by the Railway Officials.
3. Members decided to renew the Club Website.
4. President announced that on October 26th, 2022, 40 sarees will be distributed to under-privileged women at Madhya Kalyanpur.
5. After much discussion it was agreed upon to host the “Bijoya-Deepawali Utsav” on November 5th, 2022 at BNROC.
6. The 4th Board Meeting will be held on October 25th, 2022 at the club venue. The meeting is hosted by PP Mousumi Bhattacharyya.
7. PP Prosenjit & Rtn. Shweta have agreed to host the 5th Board Meeting jointly on November 19th, 2022.
8. Club Secretary, Rtn. Debasis conducted Club business.
9. Minutes of the last RWM were confirmed. President terminated the meeting.

