

THE

# LIGHTHOUSE

BOND | BUILD | BRING CHEER



WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS | ISSUE 26 | December 29, 2024





Dear RCMers,

The first half year of Rotary Year 2024-25 has been a kaleidoscope of frenetic project activities, keeping the Lighthouse team on its toes and scrambling to keep pace !

Best wishes for the new year !



**Rtn.Shivkumar Eashwaran**  
Editor

**Rtn.A.R.Raghunandan**  
Chairperson

**Mr.Madhu Mathen**  
Co-Chairperson

**Rotary Club of Madras**

**26<sup>th</sup> Weekly Meeting**

**Speaker :**  
**MANOJ KUMAR**  
Founding CEO of Naandi Foundation,  
India's largest multi-sector non-profit  
that focuses on poverty reduction.

**Topic :**  
**Thinking Out of the Box  
in Social Development**

**Tuesday, 7th January 2025 | 1.30 pm**  
**Lunch : 12:30 - 1:30 pm**  
at Hyatt Regency, Chennai.

*Please note that spouses are cordially invited for this meeting*

**Rtn. G. Chella Krishna**  
President

**Rtn. Shanno Ravi**  
Director - Club Service

**Rtn. Rajesh Mani**  
Honorary Secretary

**Rtn. PP. Rani Muralidharan**  
Chairperson - Programs Committee

# THE LIGHTHOUSE

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**Rotary Club of Madras (RCM)**  
**Minutes of the 25th Weekly Meeting held on 19th December 2024**  
 at Hyatt Regency, Teynampet, Chennai

**Call to Order**

The meeting began with a recitation of the Gayatri Mantra by Sergeant at Arms Rtn. Jayant Hemdev.

He then collared President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna, who then called the 25th weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Madras to order and requested all members to rise for a silent invocation.

**Confirmation of Minutes**

The President sought confirmation for the 24th weekly meeting minutes, which was passed and adopted by the members, by way of acclamation.

**Welcome Address**

President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna welcomed:

Chief Guest Dr. Ram Vaidya, Visiting Rotarians, spouses and other guests

**Announcements**

**Vocational Services Announcement**

**Rtn. Deepak Chander** announced a workshop on Artificial Intelligence:

**Date:** 11th January 2025

**Venue:** Four Points by Sheraton, Velachery

**Details:** A beginner-friendly, hands-on workshop focusing on AI tools for personal and professional productivity.

**Secretary's Announcements**

**Rtn. Rajesh Mani** informed members:

The next meeting will be on January 7, featuring Mr. Manoj Kumar of the Naandi Foundation.

He then wished members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Introduction of Chief Guest**

Rtn. Usha Umaphathi introduced the Chief Guest, Dr. Ram Vaidya, highlighting his academic achievements and global contributions to the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS).

**Address by the Chief Guest**

Dr. Ram Vaidya delivered a speech on:

- Integral humanism in Advaita Vedanta and Jain philosophy
- The role of Sanskrit as a futuristic language
- Promoting global cultural unity
- The address was followed by an interactive Q&A session.



**Presentation**

Rtn. PP. Shanker C. Mangadu presented a copy of the Rotary Club's Timeless Legacy to the Chief Guest.

**Vote of Thanks**

Rtn. PP. Rani Muralidharan expressed gratitude to the Chief Guest and all attendees.

Special thanks to Rtn. R. Ashok Thakkar for organizing the session and selecting such an inspiring speaker.

**Adjournment**

President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna adjourned the meeting.

<b>Birthdays</b> (1st Jan to 5th Jan 2025)	
Rtn. PP. Dr. N.V. Arulmozhi Varman	1/1
Rtn. Linesh Sanatkumar	3/1
Rtn. Fharzana Siraj	4/1
<b>Spouses' Birthdays</b>	
Ann. Subha, Spouse of Rtn. PP. S.N. Srikanth	4/1
Ann. Achu Kurian, Spouse of Rtn. Jacob Kurian	4/1
Ann. Ambika Ravindran, Spouse of Rtn. Ravindran Ramachandran	4/1
Ann. Jeyasri Raghunandan, Spouse of Rtn. Akur Raman Raghunandan	5/1
<b>Wedding Anniversary</b>	
Rtn. Fazal Mohamed. M & Shameem	4/1
Rtn. Harish K. Murthi & Asha	5/1
Rtn. Sriya Chari & Vivek Chandrasekharan	5/1





## Hindutva as a Philosophy

**C**hennai, a city that seamlessly blends history, spirituality and modernity, holds unique memories for many visitors. For one such visitor, his journey to this vibrant city spanned three distinct visits, each with its own purpose. The first was a delightful escapade with his parents to enjoy the beaches, the second was a pilgrimage to Tirupati, and the third was to meet Rotarians as the guest speaker for the 25th weekly meeting of RCM.

Introduced by Rtn. Usha Umapathi, this visitor brought a fresh philosophy that emphasizes the deep connection between nature and society, one that is often more intertwined than we might think.

On this occasion, the discourse shifted to understanding the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Explaining the RSS to an audience rooted in its own cultural context can be a challenging task. However, Dr. Ram Vaidya, firmly believed in the unity of all people, emphasizing that this was not a monologue but a Samvad—a conversation, as the beautiful Hindi word suggests.

Dr. Ram Vaidya, a distinguished yet humble academic, hails from Nagpur and is considered a world citizen. With a stellar academic record, he graduated with honours in Sanskrit, philosophy, and psychology, earning three gold medals during his postgraduate studies in Sanskrit at Nagpur University. Holding a Ph.D. in Sanskrit Darshan, Dr. Vaidya specializes in integral humanism within the frameworks of Advaita Vedanta and Jain philosophy. His work advocates for the harmonious coexistence of both material and spiritual dimensions of life, urging a



balanced integration of humanity with its environment.

During his talk, Dr. Vaidya offered a fresh perspective on the RSS and its history—one that is not immediately apparent to the wider world. His interpretation of the RSS is a thought to contemplate.

The RSS is often a term loaded with diverse connotations. Words like "right-wing," "left-wing," "fundamentalist," and "secular" are commonly associated with discussions about the RSS organization. However, these political and ideological labels fall short of capturing the true essence of the RSS. To truly understand it, one must approach the organization with an open mind, free from preconceived notions.

The founder of the RSS, Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, offers the most profound insight into the organization. His life, driven by a mission to serve society and achieve independence, serves as a testament to the core values of the RSS. Dr. Hedgewar's realization that societal transformation required a grassroots movement led to the founding of the RSS. Its activities centred on character building and fostering a spirit of selfless service.

The philosophy of the RSS transcends labels like "secular" or "non-secular." It cannot be easily categorized into "right," "left," or "center." As Dr. Hedgewar once emphasized, the RSS is about the mission, not the metrics. It aims to inspire individuals to rise above



divisions and contribute to the nation's welfare.

At its core, the RSS philosophy revolves around Hindutva—a term that is often misunderstood. Hindutva represents the intrinsic values that unify a diverse nation. It embodies oneness, respect for all religions, and the pursuit of harmony. As Dr. Hegdegar articulated, the goal was not exclusion but inclusivity, striving for a society where everyone could live together.

Dr. Vaidya explains that in Hindutva, we associate with Dharma, a word often misconceived as merely "religion." However, Dharma signifies the right way of living and the path of righteousness. Derived from the Sanskrit root dhr, which means "to support," "to sustain," or "to preserve," Dharma exists everywhere—in relationships, whether familial duties like Pathi Dharma and Pitru Dharma, or responsibilities toward the body and mind, such as Sharira Dharma and Mano Dharma.

He argues that Dharma is a universal, eternal principle, akin to natural laws like gravity. He identifies Sanatan Dharma as a reflection of timeless values such as gratitude and respect, which are applicable to all of humanity.

Dr. Ram Vaidya shared a personal story to illustrate the spirit of respect and cooperation that Hindutva embodies. He recalled that his father, a Karyakarta (worker) of the Sangha, was once approached by the dean of Hislop College in Nagpur, a Christian institution. The dean asked, "Mr. Vaidya, can I join the RSS?" Dr. Vaidya's father responded, "Yes, you can, but there is one condition. If you want to join the RSS, you must respect all religions. We are taught in the Bhagavad Gita that religions are a personal matter. All religions have the right to exist, and many may emerge over time. You can worship as you like or not worship at all—it's your choice. But once we recognize our shared

humanity, we must respect each other. Cooperation and mutual respect are essential. This is the essence of Hindutva."

This simple yet profound lesson from his father captures the heart of Hindutva—respect, cooperation and inclusivity for all, regardless of religion, race or background.

In a world that often divides people along religious, racial and gender lines, Dr. Vaidya emphasizes that we all share one common goal: to serve others.

At Rotary Club of Madras (RCM), members are blessed with such diversity, which is what makes the Club unique. Members respect each other's differences and extend a helping hand to support one another. Rotarians stand for the Dharma of service—the duty to serve and work every day to make other people's lives easier and better.

*-Divya Priya Rajalingam*



Suggest the most quirky, whacky or creative caption/blurb for this photo (Maximum 15 words). The best entries will be reproduced in the next week's edition of Lighthouse.

Mail your captions to [editor@rcmlighthouse.com](mailto:editor@rcmlighthouse.com) on or before 31st Dec.

Issue 26



Issue 25 : Best Captions

1. "Bijlee ki Rane... Kehtein hai humco HAWA HAWAI..." - *Rtn. PP. K.K. Raman*
2. "Build Bond and Bring Cheer! In letter and spirit." - *Rtn. Rajib Kumar Hota*
3. "After seeing PP Mohan mastering offspin, the President gets tips on the googly!" - *Rtn. Sanjay Rao Chaganti*
4. "Plot twist: The Hawaiian shirts are just cover- this is actually a workshop on 'how to twist arms with a smile.'" - *Rtn. N.K Bhatia*



# First Half Highlights

*(Picture Abhi Baki Hai)*



**Rtn. G. Chella Krishna**  
President RCM

The role of the RCM president is truly amazing. The connection and collaboration with the Rotarians of RCM on a more personal basis, the board and teams you work with, the beneficiaries you interact with and finally, the partner organisations you learn from are all precious nuggets and memories that I will always cherish. RCM has stood for 96 years by virtue of its membership strength and its core values. I am profusely grateful for the opportunity to lead the club for 2024-2025.

The countless calls, meetings, inaugurations, speeches, the jacket-wearing, and the balancing of family and work have all been invigorating, to say the least. Everyone needs to do this for a year to experience the magic of the club in its fullness. As a custodian for a single year, I have enjoyed the first six months and I look forward to learning more in the months ahead.



**Rtn. Rajesh Mani**  
Secretary

The first half of my year as Secretary of the Rotary Club of Madras has been a whirlwind of fun and growth! From bonding with amazing Rotarians to diving into the exciting mix of projects, it's been a blast getting to know the heart of our club. I'm loving the chance to build connections, spread cheer and help to make a difference, one event at a time!



**Rtn. Nikhil Raj**  
President - Elect

They say time flies when you are having fun. It seems like just yesterday that the Rotary year started, but a flurry of activity has seen six months fly by. With the launch of various new projects and initiatives and progress visits for the ongoing projects, our Directors, Chairpersons and team members have been busy making a difference in the lives we touch. Innovative Firesides, full club fellowships and activities have encouraged most of our members to participate. I am looking forward to the next six months!



**Rtn. Shanno Ravi**  
Director - Club Services

With a wonderful team to work with, be it the board, or the committees, it has been an incredible fast-paced six months! Thank you for all the support from every quarter! Some committees work tirelessly week after week and some committees, by maintaining a low profile, work wonderfully. This is thanks to all the members! Cheers to more Bonding!





**Rtn. PP. Rani Muralidharan**  
Chairperson - Programs Committee

When Shanno invited me to join her team as the Programs Chair, my initial reaction was pure shock! That quickly morphed into fear, followed by a wave of apprehension. But when she assured me of her unwavering support, my hesitation turned into excitement!

The past six months have been nothing short of exhilarating and packed with learning experiences. Visiting our first speaker of the year at his office set the tone for what was to come, it truly energized me. From engaging with the distinguished business magnate, Mr. M.M. Murugappan, to hosting the vibrant celebrity chef, Mr. Rakesh Raghunathan; from honoring Param Vir Chakra awardee Captain Yogendra Singh Yadav to celebrating the artistry of chocolatier Mr. Nitin Chordia, this journey has been nothing less than trailblazing.

I hope it has been as entertaining and enriching for our members as it has been for me. With six more months ahead, I am eagerly looking forward to continuing this incredible experience—scheduling, coordinating, and capturing it all on video! The best is yet to come, and I can't wait to thank my fantastic team at the finish line!

**Rtn. Sanjay Madhavan**  
Chairperson - TARIA

The TARIA committee has been working on a few areas outside the public eye, but nevertheless are very important for the long-term efficient functioning of RCM.

Archives: RCM has a rich history and legacy. It is important to digitize and make available all the current and historic document assets in a digital form for long-term storage and quick access. An RCM archiving standard has been defined, and the committee has started executing the plan.

Member Database: The RCM Member database was made available in the previous year. This year, we are expanding it with a few more attributes to track member TRF categories, etc.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP): Every time RCM has a new committee, the new team must learn most of the operational experiences from scratch. This causes some new committee members to come up with solutions that are not necessarily needed or in the best interests of RCM.

The TARIA committee has committed to creating an SOP manual that is kept updated annually and handed over from the outgoing committee to the new committee with formal short training of the procedures to be followed.

This work may not be very visible, but it's vital for keeping RCM organized and effective over the long term.



**Rtn. Abhay Mehta**  
Chairperson - Holistic Committee

A few months ago, Shanno asked me to lead the holistic committee and I thought it would be a cakewalk. Holy Cow! I quickly realise it wasn't a cake walk. But the cake was sweeter than I thought it would be. After celebrating a centenarian, we pickled ourselves on a Sunday morning, and now we are trying to catch the cat that is evading us. So, we set a tiger (Srini) to catch the cat.

I am looking forward to more special events - as soon as the Kaapis and Sapaads are done.



**Rtn. Vikram Chesetty**

Chairperson - Membership Development Committee

What does a chartered accountant, Mumbaikar, actor, mom and a practicing Parsi have in common?

She's Rtn. Roshan Poncha, all rolled into one and the 290th member of the Rotary Club of Madras. Roshan chose to join RCM from more than 150 clubs in Chennai. If there is one thing that sets our club apart, it's our diversity and focus on the quality of membership. While Rotary Internationally is struggling with dropping membership, RCM has added nine new members in just this half-year, with a pipeline of more than ten prospective members.

Our exacting membership application and selection process continues to evolve. However, one constant attribute we value is a proposed member's willingness and ability to contribute to the club's various activities. One metric the Membership Committee closely examines is the proposer's record as a Rotarian so that they can mentor their candidates and help them integrate seamlessly into RCM's fabric.

As RCM heads towards the three-hundred-member milestone and its centenary year, the board is working with the membership development committee to study, take stock and fine-tune membership policies to keep RCM amongst the world's top Rotary Clubs.

**Rtn. E. Aswath Kumar Reddy**

Chairperson - New Learning and Industrial Visits

After the Successful completion of Streetscape project, which involved 18 schools in the year 2023-24, the 2024-25 Streetscape project was launched during UNIFY, the combined installation on July 2024. This year, we have 20 schools participating in the project.

The kits were delivered to the schools in September 2024, shortly after they began implementing the project.

As of December 2024, almost all the schools have completed the project and a few have shared their pictures and videos by email.



**Rtn. Dr. Sharon Krishna Rau**

Chairperson- Sexual Harassment, Child Safety Protection

It's been blessedly inactive and thankfully totally jobless. I head the Sexual harassment subcommittee.



**Rtn. Rajasekar Gorantla**

Chairperson – Constitution & By Laws Committee

Fortunately, nothing to write.

## Flag Exchange and Collaboration with San Jose



I had the pleasure of attending a meeting at the Rotary Club of San Jose, District 5170, a vibrant club with 420 members that meets over lunch on Wednesdays. Their current President, Rtn. Heather Lerner, led the meeting with great professionalism, starting and ending on time, much like our own President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna and Secretary Rtn. Rajesh Mani. The decorum was well-maintained, and the atmosphere was formal.

During the meeting, I shared a brief overview of our own club's size and highlighted our impressive Rotary Foundation contributions of over \$1.3 million last year. I also extended an invitation to their club to join us for our centennial celebrations in four years. It was inspiring to see their commitment to impactful causes, especially their significant support for Ukraine, providing medical aid and food. At the end of the meeting, President Heather and I exchanged our club flags, a symbolic gesture of friendship and goodwill.

Later, I had the opportunity to meet a past District Governor from District 5170 and invited myself to his house for tea. Over our conversation, I learned about a wonderful initiative—his district has been sending a team of four Rotarians to support the Rotary Club of Karaikal ever since the tsunami days. They've been consistent in their contributions and have also extended support to a club in Gujarat, funding efforts to provide HPV vaccinations.

Although he hasn't visited the Rotary Club of Madras, he's familiar with some of our members who regularly attend the Rotary International conventions. We discussed potential collaborations, and he graciously agreed to visit Chennai during his next project trip to Karaikal. It's heartening to see the shared commitment and generosity that bind Rotarians across the world!

- Rtn. PP. Indra Subramanyam

# Children’s Health Screening Camp



On December 21, 2024, the Rotary Club of Madras (RCM) successfully organized a free medical camp at Chennai Girls Higher Secondary School, Perambur, in association with the medical partners The Voluntary Health Services, Yash Dental, Kanchi Kamakoti CHILDS Trust Hospital and with the support of NalandaWay Foundation. The camp covered students from Chennai Girls Higher Secondary School Perambur and Choolai. The camp offered various services including eye check-ups, dental care, paediatric consultations, gynaecological check-ups, blood pressure tests and height and weight measurements.

A total of 141 girl children and a few community members benefited from the medical services. Notably, 38 individuals reported eye-related complaints and were referred to the hospital for further treatment.

**- Joseph. P**  
RCM Reporting & Compliance Specialist



## Spreading X- Mas Cheer



For the two teachers and four Interactors the holidays began on an inspiring note!

Cheerful faces and a sparkly X-Mas tree greeted them at the Cheshire home on 23-12-2024. Interactors donated toiletries and sanitary pads to the inmates of Cheshire home. What a day it was, filled with the magic of togetherness and love! The differently abled inmates shared their routine and blessed the Interactors for their gifts of love.

Interactors had the good fortune of meeting Mrs. Maureen Hudson Murari

Hon. Secretary, Cheshire home, who inquired about their activities and praised the students for their contribution towards a good cause.

**Sri Sankara Vidyashramam,**  
Interact Club





# Rotary Nostalgia

## From 14 Members to Nearly 800

*The Journey by RC Vijayawada Midtown*

*(From disbanding to dizzy heights)*

RC Vijayawada Midtown was chartered with 33 Ex-Rotaractors of average age 25 in 1985.

Though the club was maintaining a membership of 60 to 70, the attendance at club meetings was not attractive. When its member Sam Movva became DGN in 2000 he was disappointed to see the poor attendance of 14-15 members only. They decided they couldn't continue like that and wrote to all members that they had only two options. 'Either disband the club which had a DG nominee or merge with one of the two senior clubs.'

After analysing the responses, they decided to change their regular Wednesday evening meetings to Breakfast meetings on Sundays.

Also, decided to shift the meeting venue to the best hotel in the town.

These two decisions clicked and once the club's meetings became purposeful, the club membership slowly began to grow. If the club took eight years to reach 200 mark, the next two hundred came in four years. As of 1 July 2023, the Rotarian count was 787. The main reasons for the growth, according to Sam Movva, are the 'numerous families meets and great fellowship.'

As of July 1, 2023, Rotary International faced a significant challenge with membership distribution across its 36,849 clubs worldwide. Here's a breakdown:

Membership	Clubs: World	Clubs: India
200 and above	83	22
100 to 199	638	129
50 to 99	4790	777
30 to 49	9127	1220
20 to 29	9379	1076
10 to 19	9845	941
6 to 9	2291	281
1 to 5	703	91
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,856</b>	<b>4537</b>

Out of 36,849 clubs on 1 July 2023 globally, as many as 12,839 clubs had less than 20 members each, out of which 1,313 clubs are in India. There were even 703 clubs with less than six members each which are liable for termination, if the concerned governors recommend. The number of clubs in all categories above 20 member clubs showed decline from the preceding year.

### Are We Ignoring Our Members?

#### The member who never came back

"It amuses me to think that your organization spends so much time looking for new members when I was there all the time.

Don't you remember me? I am the fellow who came to every meeting, but nobody paid any attention. I tried to be friendly, but everyone seemed to have his own friends to talk to and sit with. I sat down among some unfamiliar faces several times, but nobody paid much heed to me. I hoped someone would ask me to join a committee or to somehow participate - but no one did. Finally, because of ill-ness, I missed a meeting. No one asked where I had been. I guess it did not matter whether I was there. Who am I? I'm the member who never came back."

*The above item appeared in a club bulletin several years ago and was reproduced in 'The Rotarian.'*

#### The clubs that top in membership

Club & Year of charter	Country	Members
Vijayawada Midtown (1985)	AP, India	787
Birmingham (1913)	AL, USA	593
Oklahoma City (1911)	OK, USA	562
Atlanta (1913)	GA, USA	470
Baton Rouge (1918)	LA, USA	460
Nashville (1914)	TN, USA	438
Seoul Gangseo	Korea Rep.	412
San Jose (1914)	CA, USA	409
Madison (1913)	WI, USA	406
San Diego (1912)	CA, USA	405



*Rotary countries with more than 10,000 Rotarians*

Country	Rotarians on July 1, 2004	Rotarians on July 1, 2023	Loss or Gain w.r.t 2004 -05
United States	385,958	272,157	113,801
India	84,366	164,098	79,732
Japan	102,781	82,097	20,684
Korea, Republic of	47,221	62,745	15,524
Brazil	51,012	49,731	1,281
Italy	40,199	38,054	2,145
England	44,580	26,938	17,642
Taiwan	15,012	33,752	17,994
France	33,406	27,309	6,097
Australia	35,216	22,537	12,642
Philippines	18,915	27,352	8,437
Canada	28,664	18,733	9,931
Sweden	30,048	14,961	15,087
Netherlands	19,557	14,730	4,827
Switzerland	11,041	13,118	2,077
Bangladesh	3,552	11,783	8,231
Nigeria	3,496	14,951	11,455
Total	998,271	952,794	45,477
<b>Globally</b>	<b>1,195,849</b>	<b>1,153,717</b>	<b>42,132</b>

**"It amuses me to think that your organization spends so much time looking for new members when I was there all the time. Finally, I missed a meeting. No one asked where I had been. I guess it did not matter whether I was there. Who am I? I'm the member who never came back."**

The membership loss in about two decades (2004 to 2023): US (29%), England (40%), Australia (36%), Canada (35%), Sweden (50%), Japan (20%) and Netherlands (25%)

The Vijayawada Midtown story is a great example of how a club can turn things around by making smart changes and focusing on community. The global statistics show that membership is declining in many places, emphasizing the importance of making clubs welcoming and engaging for all members.

*Sourced from: Know Your Rotary by Rtn. N. Bhaskaran Pillai*

Sourced By: **Rtn. PP. N.K Gopinath**



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