



RID 3291
Rotary
Garden Reach



Light

WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

October 29th, 2024 - Vol. 47 No. 15

2286th Regular Weekly Meeting
Attendance: 19

Birthday Greetings
Oct 30th Spouse Sharmishtha, Wife of PP Chinmay Pal
Oct 31st Farheen, Daughter of Rtn. Abbas Ali Haldar

Dhanteras Today: Blending Tradition with Modernity

While the stories and legends behind Dhanteras continue to hold great significance, the way people celebrate this auspicious day has evolved over time. Today, Dhanteras is not just about lighting oil lamps or buying gold; it's about blending tradition with modernity. In the age of technology, many families come together virtually to perform the rituals and prayers, uniting across distances. Online shopping for gold and utensils has become increasingly popular, making it easier for individuals to participate in the age-old tradition of acquiring wealth on this day.

Moreover, people are recognizing the importance of giving back to society. Many use Dhanteras as an opportunity to contribute to charitable causes, extending the spirit of generosity beyond their families. It's a reminder that prosperity comes in many forms and that giving back is as important as earning wealth.

As we embrace the conveniences of the modern world, it's heartening to see that the essence of Dhanteras, rooted in love, prosperity, and tradition, remains intact. This blend of old and new reflects the resilience of Indian culture and the timeless relevance of its stories and legends.

As we embrace the festive spirit of Dhanteras, it's essential to reflect on its rich heritage, balancing tradition with modernity, and ensuring that the true essence of this festival remains intact amidst changing times.

Dhanteras ushers in the luminous festival of Diwali, serving as a harbinger of prosperity and joy. Observed two days prior to Diwali, this venerated day is steeped in deep-rooted cultural and spiritual traditions, embodying the rich tapestry of Indian heritage. It marks not just a momentous occasion in the Hindu calendar but also encapsulates a blend of historical significance, ritualistic practices, and an evolving narrative that resonates with contemporary ethos.



As the twilight of Dhanteras unfolds, it brings with it a symphony of lights, an array of traditions, and a spirit of rejuvenation that paves the way for the grandeur of Diwali. This festival is a confluence of mythological tales, economic activities, and familial bonds, offering a microcosm of India's diverse yet unified cultural panorama.

Focus on gratitude, set intentions for health and success, and invest in relationships and self-care. Taking time to reflect on your blessings and giving back, whether through charity or acts of kindness, can make Dhanteras a more fulfilling celebration of both material and spiritual abundance. Dhanteras is not just a day for material acquisitions but a time to reflect on the stories and legends that have made it a cherished part of Indian culture. It reminds us that wealth, in all its forms, is a blessing to be treasured and shared. The true essence of Dhanteras lies in love, family, and traditions.

-Editor



PEACE AND CONFLICT
PREVENTION / RESOLUTION



DISEASE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT



WATER AND
SANITATION



MATERNAL AND
CHILD HEALTH



BASIC EDUCATION AND
LITERACY



ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT



SUPPORTING THE
ENVIRONMENT

Being ‘male, pale and stale’ affects Rotary membership

During his recent visit to India, incoming RI President Mario de Camargo took out some time in Madurai to sit down for an interview with Rotary News. As candid as always, he did not mince his words as he expressed serious concern about Rotary’s stagnant, and even falling membership in some countries, and said this was “because we are still male, pale and stale”.

While praising India for membership growth, TRF giving and service projects, he also pointed out that negatives such as bogus clubs and election disputes were spoiling its image, and standing in the way of India holding a convention, because a Rotary convention can only be held in countries “where Rotary is at peace”.

Excerpts from the interview:

How would you sum up the strengths and weaknesses of Rotary in India?

The strengths are clearly membership and giving to The Rotary Foundation. Let me give you the numbers. India, in 2004 had roughly 85,000 Rotarians; today it has 170,000. So, its membership has increased 100 per cent in a period of 20 years. I never take one or two years alone. I always consider the trend... the design of the curve. It’s an ascending curve that India has. In absolute terms, India presents the highest growth in membership in Rotary worldwide the last 20 years. Period.... that’s a fact.

Second, years ago, India had a contribution/donation/investment in TRF equalling that of my country, Brazil... roughly about \$5 million a year. Brazil is still at \$5 million and India reached \$32 million (last Rotary year).

Why do you think this is so? Because even Brazil has grown and become an economic powerhouse.

Because India has implemented successfully the CSR (corporate social responsibility) programme. I had the privilege to discuss that with my (late) friend Sushil Gupta when this process was still being discussed and evaluated in the government... Indian -Parliament and TRF.

Which year are we talking about?

The year 2016; when I was a (TRF) Trustee, along with Sushil Gupta. So, I kind of followed the progress; of course. Sushil followed very closely the evolution of that idea within the political universe in India. And we always exchanged some ideas, because Brazil has a similar law, but which was never implemented with the same efficiency as in India. It is more generous than the India regulation, but it is so limited in terms of the areas of focus that you can invest in, that in practicality very few enterprises take advantage of it.

In India, now you can see an explosion of CSR projects because first, I think here you have a lot more connections between the NGOs and the business world so people are more connected.

Second, the legislation here in India is mandatory, the companies have to invest two per cent of their net profit above a certain level of revenue, in social programmes. In Brazil, it is optional. That makes a big difference. So many companies just let it sit and the money just goes to the government. Because when you do not appoint or assign a specific project to invest that money in, it just rests in the treasury of the national federal government.

On membership growth, are you happy with the growth of women’s numbers in Rotary in India?

I think India is on the right track. It has not reached the level of participation of women in Rotary like the US, where women account for one-third, as also in Brazil, where one in three Rotarians are women.

Are you happy with the kind of projects done by Rotary in India?

Yes, because Indian Rotarians are giving/investing in the Foundation and then using the money in the projects. Oh



yes, India is the leader in the utilisation of Rotary funds.

Which is really good for the public image of Rotary because Rotary's work gets visibility through these projects.

That is exactly why Rotary's membership in India is growing, because by doing more projects, getting more visibility and hence a better public image, you attract more Rotarians. That is also coupled with the emerging middle class in India. When I visited India for the first time in 2008, it was a different country.



How so?

I saw India as a contrast then between a small minority of very wealthy people and most of the population living in poverty. Today I see a different mood. I see the middle-class building, growing. That is one of the reasons for Rotary's successful growth in India, because of its 400-million strong middle class!

For the last two years two RI Presidents Gordon McInally and Stephanie Urchick, as well as you, have been speaking of concerns in India such as bogus clubs, election complaints, etc. Has this made a difference? Do you see such tough speaking making a difference?

Yes, yes. I said it at the Bangalore Institute and I repeated this last night in Mumbai. India is doing very well in terms of membership. You don't have to resort to fake clubs. That tarnishes the image of the country. Political disputes tarnish the image of the country. For instance, India today

would be qualified to hold the convention.

According to the latest reports, there is a brand-new convention centre in Delhi, capable of holding 20,000–25,000 people, with all the modern facilities. But to be able to hold the convention in India, you have to be a country where Rotary is at peace. We talk about peace and conflict resolution and give scholarships to younger people to educate and enable them to talk about peace in troubled areas. But then we have a country that is divided within Rotary. That is not the Rotary way. You have to be united in India so that you can claim a convention for India. **True Rotary begins with true clubs, true membership.**

What will be your main priorities as RI President?

Membership, membership.

How will you grow the membership?

We have to rejuvenate our brand in the US, because differently from India where Rotary is still a very attractive proposition, in the US it no longer attracts the younger people. So we will have to build a better image. A rejuvenated image, an image of people in action, purpose, projects.

We are still lagging behind in several areas of the world because we are still male, pale and stale. We have to offer new products, new club formats, new forms of meetings. You don't have to meet every week, you don't have to pay for meals, if you want to gather in a happy hour among younger people and develop your projects. That is also a Rotary club.



By 'pale' do you mean white men?

Yes.

So, what will Rotary have to do differently to get more members?

We have to go back to the lesson we learnt from polio that, alone we can do a lot but if we partner with others, we can change the world. We are pretty good at getting money out of Rotarians' pockets... Arch Klumph, Major Donors, etc. But we are even better in getting money out of someone else's pockets... the US, Canadian, Japan or German governments, among others.

So, if we are that good in advocating for a cause, why are we not that good in advocating for ourselves? To get more members so that clubs may continue to exist. That's a reflection; we can plan and make it happen. Just like in business you don't reject customers... but we reject potential Rotarians when we don't look for new members with intensity. And then we complain that 150,000 Rotarians leave Rotary every year. Some of that happens due to the natural process, when you have members who are 75, 78, etc. But we have to plan and move forward with commitment, targets, engagement.

The Challenges of eradicating Polio

Reg Ling (End Polio Now, Chief Information Officer)

Forty-five Rotary presidencies have focused on polio: first in 1979 for vaccinating all the children in the Philippines, to today with the objective to eradicate polio globally.

Since Rotary began its campaign against polio 35 years ago, two of the wild polio virus types have been eradicated and five of the six World Health Organization regions have been declared polio-free.

Three billion children have been immunised and 21 million saved from paralysis. From wild polio being endemic in 125 countries, there are just two today. The numbers of cases have dropped from 1,000 a day to only some cases this year in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Environmental surveillance has been introduced to identify any polio viruses present. Laboratories have been built to provide test facilities closer to the infections and shorter test times have been achieved. Vaccines have been developed and strategies refined to concentrate on the actions required.

Global events, national disasters, conflicts and changing priorities have adversely affected the schedules with the residual effects of Covid really stinging the campaign.

Only two years ago polio eradication was in the best position it had ever been in and 2023 was to be the year that the transmission of the polio virus would be interrupted.

The novel oral polio vaccine became more extensively used to counter mutations. Though cases became more geographically confined and numbers came down, this was not enough to meet the 2023 target.

By the end of July, with more polio cases and environmental samples marking the high transmission season, experts agreed that the timelines should be extended for wild polio virus eradication to 2027, and the variant polioviruses by 2029.

The Challenges:

- **For wild polio virus type 1; from reaching unvaccinated children and countering misinformation, to overcoming vaccine refusals and boycotts. An increase in the number of cases is continuing. So far this year it is 33 from two countries (only 12 in all of 2023). The presence of positive samples is higher too (356 vs. 190 last year) but the reports are genetically linked. There is political will and high public awareness. Surveillance is foremost and immunisation rounds are almost monthly, but security is another challenge. Consultative meetings with the GPEI partners have agreed the polio transmission interruption will be in**



2025

- **For cVDPV2; the extent of ES is uncertain with ongoing conflicts. The number of cases confirmed across 26 countries is 140 but they are 36% of the 2023 total. Only 15 countries have had cases with onset of polio in 2024. The number of cVDPV2 positive ES samples across 38 countries is 138 (40% of the 2023 total). There has been a risk of a polio outbreak in Gaza where the territory's health systems are in a dismantled state. Most hospitals are no longer able to function and less than half of the primary healthcare facilities are operational. 70% of all sewage pumps have been destroyed and not a single wastewater treatment plant is working. These conditions are a breeding ground for polio and a source of polio outbreaks elsewhere. WHO has sent polio vaccines to Gaza for two rounds of immunisations which began in September. Israel agreed to a series of "humanitarian pauses" in Gaza to allow for the vaccination of children against polio. The campaign aimed to vaccinate around 640,000 children across the Gaza strip, rolled out in three separate stages, across the central, southern and northern parts of the strip.**
- **For cVDPV1: the number of cases confirmed from 2 countries is less than 5% of the number in 2023 when infections were in 3 countries, and there have been no positive ES samples collected this year.**
- **For cVDPV3; there have been no reports for over two years.**
- **The GPEI funding requirement is falling short of what will be required to eradicate polio.**

The historic opportunity to eradicate polio remains within reach and the best way for Rotarians to continue our leadership role in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI).

The annual financial requirement is about \$1 billion and Rotary's fundraising goal of \$150 million, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's 2:1 match, is significant.

The GPEI funding requirement is falling short of what will be required to eradicate polio. Rotary has always responded to financial challenges yet more money is required to sustain the GPEI programme.

The Rotary Foundation polio goals for 2024-2025 are for clubs to raise \$1,500 each for PolioPlus, and for Districts to donate at least 20% of new District Designated Funds to PolioPlus.

The take up of personal contributions to PolioPlus has not been overwhelming. By the end of July, just three clubs had donated \$1,500 or more to PolioPlus yet 92% of Rotary clubs in Great Britain & Ireland had made no contributions.

So, continue to raise awareness about Rotary's role in polio eradication and to invite others to join in the global effort.

The intersection of Literacy and Peace

Vasanthi Ranganathan, Rotary Ambattur, India; Rotary Positive Peace Activator



As Rotary celebrates the intersection of literacy and peace this year, I am reminded of the importance of understanding both negative and positive peace. In today's world, where there is so much information overload, media literacy is crucial. Teaching nonviolent communication as part of our literacy efforts helps foster new perspectives and build leadership skills centred on peace.

I have always found peace and conflict prevention an exciting and rewarding space. As a Rotarian, a Rotary Positive Peace Activator, and a member of the Cadre, I have been privileged to help motivate others to dream, discover their full potential, and make a lasting impact on the





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world.

My journey in empowering marginalized communities and fostering peace began at an early age with simple acts of empathy – listening and mingling with those different from me. As an 11-year-old, I remember visiting a mental health care hospital, as my school program, to entertain the residents, and later became involved as a volunteer in the field of mental health. These early experiences, combined with engaging in sports activities with children in government schools, children whose parents were in prison, and orphans, taught me that working with youth in their formative years on inner peace translates into peaceful actions and behaviours.

At age 16, I married for love, crossing caste boundaries in a society where such a union was unheard of. Born into the highest caste, convent-educated, English-speaking, I chose to marry a man who was different, everything society objected to – tall, dark, non-vegetarian, and a school dropout. Together, we had two beautiful children, and our life became a mission to address poverty, empowering individuals to discover their potential, dare to dream, and deserve to win.

My first major step beyond India was pursuing management education at the University of Connecticut in Hartford, USA, as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar at age 30. Leaving my two young children behind, I embarked on a journey that opened my eyes to the world's misconceptions about India – caste, dowry and gender-related abuses were often the only things people knew. It was surprising to learn that many Americans weren't aware that India granted women the right to vote alongside men, long before the U.S. or even Rotary allowed such inclusion. I continued my studies at the East-West Center in Hawaii, pursuing a doctorate in counselling and guidance. Practicum and internships in American schools, particularly with military populations, enriched my understanding of peace and education. At Hawaii, I was given the Makana award in 1988 for my work.

I went back to India in 1991, working as an educational and management consultant. After visiting Malaysia for consultancy, I introduced the Abacus learning method as an after-school support centre for children ages 3-14. This method employs kinaesthetic, auditory, and visual elements to increase a student's speed and accuracy. We turned local resources into ventures that promoted access to education while also creating business growth and community development.

My focus has always been on fragile, vulnerable communities – children whose parents are in prison, victims of war, the dependent elderly, and stay-at-home women assigned that role by their culture. While advocating for inclusion at higher levels, I've learned the importance of teaching these individuals to seek and demand their rightful place. Gender discrimination has been a part of my journey, but I've gained confidence and strength through my leadership experiences.

Over the years, I've learned key lessons essential to any peacebuilder: the importance of engaging a local culture and involving the community so they can take ownership of an effort and not just remain passive recipients. When we seek to build a legacy by helping others improve their situation, we create peaceful communities that can carry on creating change.

Becoming a Rotary Positive Peace Activator for the Asia cohort has been an incredible journey. It opened up new worlds of work, introduced me to extensive peace curricula and resources, and exposed me to countless training opportunities. Networking with my Asia cohort team and connecting with activators from other regional cohorts has broadened my own personal vision and strengthened my connections, helping me learn and replicate models. As a member of the Cadre, I've had the privilege of auditing and consulting on numerous global grants. My role often includes emphasizing the importance of inclusion and the eight Pillars of Positive Peace. Workshops train teachers in self-esteem and inclusion. These enable peers to work together in peace and allow parents and the community to serve as stakeholders in the education process. Teaching youth skills like negotiation, arbitration,



and mediation equips them for creating a better future for themselves and others, one that recognizes that investment and productivity only happen in peaceful communities.

Despite the challenges our world faces, I find motivation in the simple, constant rhythms of nature like the sunrise or the waves returning to the shore. These daily reminders encourage me to rise again, even after moments of despair. Education can transform lives, even if it's just one child at a time, and there's so much more we all can do. Today, at 72, I choose to live happily, finding joy in the smiles and warm gestures of those whose lives I've touched. The journey continues, and I'm grateful for every step I've taken, and for all the steps ahead as I continue to follow my journey of purpose.

Ratan Tata - an AKS member

An anecdote for all Rotarians to feel proud and eulogise a great soul in our most revered & beloved Late Shri Ratan Tata...#BeInspired

For pedigree, Rotary Bombay has no dearth. After all, JRD Tata was its member!

And now, his successor at the Tata group, noted industrialist and philanthropist Ratan Tata, an honorary member of the club for over 20 years, has become an Arch Klumph Society member. On June 6th, 2017, the cheque was handed over by the Tata Education and Development Trust to Past President of the club Nirav Shah on behalf of its Chairman Ratan Tata, making him the fourth AKS member from this club during 2016-17.

*Says, DG Gopal Rai Mandhania, "Under the dynamic leadership of the Club President Dr. Mukesh Batra, aided by his team, this club has more than justified its premier status in the District. The news of **Honorary Rotarian Ratan Tata becoming an Arch Klumph Society member**, has made this the happiest day for me in the year."*

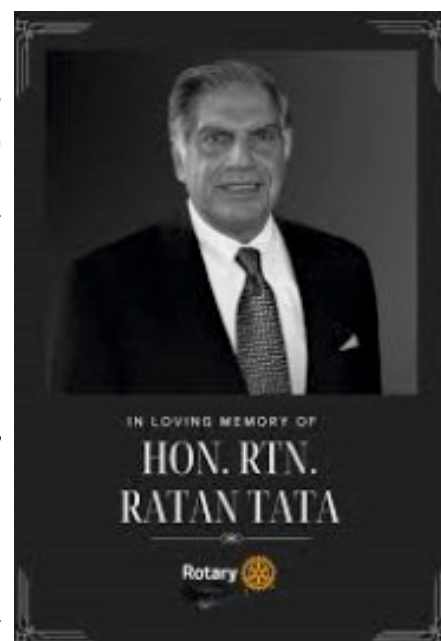
A highly respected doyen of Indian industry such as Ratan Tata becoming an AKS member once again proves the credibility of the good work The Rotary Foundation has been doing for the last 100 years, he said. "That business leaders of the stature of Tata are appreciating the good work Rotary is doing for the betterment of mankind, is a very big statement. It is this work that had made Bill Gates support us for our Polio cause."

How it happened

Recounting how Ratan Tata had been inducted into the distinguished gallery of AKS members, Nirav Shah said that a few months ago he was approached by his friend Nikhil Merchant of Swan Energy, saying that Ratan Tata wanted to see some 500 vintage cars. "I said I would organise that, but in return I wanted an audience with Ratan Tata."

So, a meeting was arranged and on March 16, accompanied by DG Mandhania and Akkshay Mehta, TRF Support Avenue Chair, he met Mr. Tata and they made a video presentation to him on the grassroots work the Foundation does for community welfare across the world. Mr. Tata was very happy with the presentation and praised the good work that Rotary does. It was suggested that he become an AKS member and "Ratan Tata promised to think about it. In the next few weeks, I kept following on that and finally, with some help from Rtn. Manoj Murarkar, another meeting was arranged and the cheque was handed over to us," says Shah.

He adds that apart from Merchant, Rtn. Manoj Murarkar and R Venkatraman, Managing Trustee of Tata Trusts, had played a big role in ensuring that Ratan Tata's AKS contribution for TRF came through a single cheque.



Minutes of the 2285th RWM held on October 22nd, 2024 at BNR Officers' Club, Garden Reach

1. President Biswajit Saha called the RWM to order and requested the Rotarians to rise for the National Anthem.
2. President Biswajit requested all members to stand and observe 2 minutes silence in the memory of Late Mannatnath Das, father of Rtn. Abhijit Das who left this world on October 15th, 2024.
3. PP Dr. Arabinda Ray was requested by President to explain the visit to Mahila Gosti Sarbojonin Durga Utsav committee, Madhyakalyanpur towards distribution of clothes to the needy. PP Dr. Arabinda explained the program details and inauguration of the Durga Pratima in the Pandal. Members present were PP Dr. Arabinda Ray, Dr. Sharada Ray, Rtn. Kumud Kar, Rtn. Amar Saha and Rtn. B Mohan attended the program.
4. "Pujo Parikroma" was held on October 6th, 2024 for differently abled and Senior Citizen Friendly Durgotsav Award, 2024 was held and a stand in Braille was displayed in pandals for Blind persons. PP Biswajit Chakraborty, actor Bobby Chakraborty, PP Ashif Shah & President Rtn. Biswajit Saha was present at the occasion. Rtn. Santosh Singh and Rtn. Amar Saha were also participated as Judges to adjudge the facilities created for special children, wheel chair arrangements.
5. PP Dr. Arabinda Ray informed that Mr. Jagjit Singh of Parnasree Greens is willing to donate a Water Purifier for any school. The matter to identify the school to be taken up.
6. PN Dr. BN Jha proposed for organising a medical camp under Rural Healthcare at village High School, Daria, Kulpi, Diamond Harbour Road (8 kms from highway) on November 17th, 2024. The proposal was agreed and arrangements will be made accordingly.
7. Club Bijoya Diwali Meet is tentatively fixed for November 15th or 16th, 2024. A committee was nominated under the Chairmanship of PP Dr. Arabinda Ray and Rtn. Abbas Halder & Rtn. Santosh Singh are the members for this event. Venue is Parnasree Greens Banquet (to confirm the availability).
8. 4th Board Meeting will be held on October 29th, 2024. Rtn. Subhojit and Rtn. Tanmay will be hosting the same.
9. Club Secretary conducted the club business.
10. On confirmation of the minutes, President Biswajit terminated the meeting.

