

YOU ARE THE MISSING PIECE.



RID 3291
Rotary
Garden Reach



Light

WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

November 26th, 2024 - Vol. 47 No. 19

2290th Regular Weekly Meeting
Attendance: 15

Birthday Greetings
Nov 30th R'let Priyomjit, Son of President Biswajit Saha
R'let Devarsh, Son of PP Tanu Roy

Greetings on Anniversary
Nov 28th Spouse Annu & PP Abinash Singh

How does one begin to Serve?

The last one year has seen a lot of young people talking about service and engaging in national reconstruction. In many places, people ask specific questions on how does one get to engage in social work, and what are the areas in which one could engage productively.

*The youth today are extremely result-oriented and seek explanations for everything that they need to do. To them, Swami Vivekananda had a simple formula. He laid down in clear and simple terms the three levels of service that one can do. The first is that of the **Physical service** – taking care of the human body and undertaking activities to ameliorate human physical suffering. Running hospitals, orphanages, old-age homes and various income generation programs would qualify for this level. The next higher level is that of **Intellectual service**. Running schools, colleges and awareness and empowerment programs would operate at this level. And finally, for the evolved, he prescribed the highest level of **Spiritual service**.*



He did not forget to warn us of the pitfalls of undertaking such service activities. He understood the human ego and its extraordinary potential for creating problems. He repeatedly warned us against placing ourselves at a higher level than what we should. His famous quote of not standing on the pedestal and offering the poor man five cents is legendary. He wanted us to undertake these activities, not merely for the betterment of society but for our own evolution and growth. He saw the 'means' of serving society leading on to the 'end' of spiritual growth of the person doing it. And he so beautifully advised us to 'Serve God in Man'. All his philosophy is so elegantly and simplistically packed into one statement, and in such simple and lucid language that makes it at once achievable and attractive. This ideal is not only within the reach of each one of us but makes it so emotionally appealing and motivating to undertake.

One also needs to understand that social service does not automatically translate as giving up all the worldly responsibilities and sitting half-clad and starving in a remote village. It begins with arousing one's social conscience and translating this in practical terms into social action. One needs to be pragmatic and keep one's needs and limitations in mind before embarking on any such activity. One needs to begin with oneself first and then gradually expand this reach concentrically to include more and more deserving people. Each young person can continue to be what he/she is – a technocrat, a scientist, an engineer or a doctor. There is so much within the circle of our own small lives that we could do something about. The idea is to start with these small changes and incrementally build on them. Being a good and honest technocrat, scientist, engineer and a doctor itself is a good beginning. We could then expand to include more and more lives that we touch in our everyday existence.

And finally, Vivekananda wanted us to realize that what matters most is the understanding that in undertaking social activities lies the answer not only to the problems of people around us, but also to our own inner troubles and dilemmas.

Mr. Privilege teaches about hunger, poverty

Jason Browne

In September 2024, I found myself in an unexpected situation: I was “held hostage” by an entity whimsically named Mr. Privilege. He forced me into a disaster simulator where my water was scarce, my light extinguished, and my shelter stripped away. It wasn’t a physical abduction but a self-imposed journey to confront the comforts we often take for granted. By living without basic necessities, I shared a reality that so many worldwide face daily.



This adventure began in March 2024 at a Rotary conference. A seemingly innocent observation was shared with my friend Bill Tobin, Rotary Relations Manager at ShelterBox USA. “You have such great stories – why don’t you share them more on social media?” I asked candidly. ShelterBox Trust, founded as a Rotary Club initiative in 2000, provides emergency shelter and essential supplies to families devastated by disasters and conflict. ShelterBox Trust’s partnership with Rotary has been instrumental in reaching communities worldwide. Yet, it felt like ShelterBox USA’s storytelling didn’t fully capture the human impact of their efforts.

Bill listened thoughtfully and posed a challenge: “Why don’t you help us tell these stories?” I was taken aback. Me? My observation was only meant to be a critique, not to express a passive interest in volunteering! But Bill’s suggestion ignited a spark.

What if we told their stories in a way never done before in Rotary or in ShelterBox? What if we took all the lessons learned from public image and brought Rotarians together across the United States online and in person? What if there were no restrictions on our storytelling?

The answer: The Mr. Privilege Saga

Six months after that conversation with Bill, I embarked on a storytelling journey online and in person. And since every good story needs a villain, a character named Mr. Privilege was created based on my then recent TEDx talk on the “Possibilities of Privilege.”

I crafted a Matrix and Neo-style narrative where I was “kidnapped” by Mr. Privilege and thrust into conditions mirroring those faced by disaster victims. Websites were created through ShelterBox and my own personal site. A series of videos were written, edited on my smartphone, and produced online. Events were created across the country to celebrate the cause and the story. Rotarians supported this creative project without hesitation.

The climax of the story coincided with my arrival in Echo, Oregon, where I entered a simulated disaster scenario (this simulation is very similar to what ShelterBox USA creates for select participants at its bi-annual event SAFE). Every day each video told the story of shelter and disaster from around the world in what we hoped to be uniquely captivating. To add a sense of immersion, props, actors, and my survival experiences were used to carry the narrative, and my battle against Mr. Privilege, through to its thrilling final act.

The ShelterBox Mr. Privilege Saga is fantastical. And I propose that it’s not only okay to be weirdly creative – it is necessary. We should be even more adventurous when telling our stories. By stepping outside traditional methods of communication, I was able to engage new audiences and hopefully inspire others to think differently about how we share our work.

I shared the story on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube (the latter being the best place to view it in its most complete form.) While the views, likes, and shares weren’t as high as I had hoped, the resulting content was more than I could have imagined. If these videos inspire a service-minded content creator, ShelterBox ambassador, or



Rotarian to share their story more uniquely, then this project was successful.

We can't be afraid to take leaps and be creative with our storytelling. Facts and figures inform, but the stories – the unconventional, the personal, the heartfelt – truly inspire action. By embracing creativity, we can find new ways to connect with others and share the good we all do around the world.

I encourage everyone within the Rotary family and beyond to think outside the box when it comes to sharing their stories. Don't be afraid to be bold, to be different, to challenge the norms. Your unique perspective could be the key to engaging someone who might not have listened otherwise. Thank you to everyone who helped me on this journey (even you, Mr. Privilege), and I look forward to seeing what stories you choose to tell.

Rotary introduces India's first AI-integrated Anganwadi

In an ambitious project to apply one of the latest technological tools — Artificial Intelligence (AI) — to revolutionise the learning methods of Indian children from underprivileged backgrounds who attend anganwadis, which are poor children's equivalent to the plush and fun-filled playschools frequented by the rich and upper class urban Indian children, RI District 3012 has launched an interesting and futuristic project in Uttar Pradesh.

Titled the **Rotary Viraj Anganwadi Project – *Nanhe Kadmo ki Udaan*** — this project hopes to dramatically change the basic functions of an anganwadi, which is to provide basic learning to children and address the healthcare and nutritional needs of both children and pregnant women. RID 3012 DG Prashant Raj Sharma, who is passionate and fully invested in this project, says it is common knowledge that the average anganwadi in India is lacking in so many ways — indifferent infrastructure, untrained and unenthusiastic teachers and absence of an interesting, interactive environment, resulting in failure to retain students beyond a certain stage.

"The teachers lack the skills required to facilitate engaging and effective learning experiences for students, particularly in grasping fundamentals. Furthermore, anganwadi schools lack a monitoring system which can tell us about the students' or expectant mothers' progress. In fact, there is little or no information on even the opening and closing hours of these anganwadis," he says.

To dramatically transform this dismal scenario, this project, launched in partnership with the CSR partner AMU Lines which has donated \$55,000 of the total project cost of \$225,000, aims to bring a transformational change to 100 anganwadis in Uttar Pradesh. In alignment with two of Rotary's focus areas of maternal and child health, and literacy and basic education, the first



colourfully painted and embellished anganwadi, complete with spanking new furniture and an interactive smartboard, at Morti village, about 3 km from Ghaziabad city centre, was inaugurated by UP Governor Anandiben Patel.

Key features of AI-powered anganwadi

The special attributes of the modern anganwadi as explained by RID 3012 DG Prashant Kumar Sharma include:

☀ **Enhanced learning experience:** It will provide students with interactive and multimedia-rich educational content, making learning more engaging and effective.

☀ **Teacher support:** The AI solution will serve as a valuable aid for teachers, enabling them to explain concepts to



students more easily and effectively.

- ☀️ **Monitoring of centres:** The integration of smart digital boards will enable real-time monitoring of the anganwadi centres and allow supervisors and administrators to track attendance, assess teaching effectiveness, and identify areas for improvement.
- ☀️ **An intro to digital education:** By incorporating smart digital boards, such an anganwadi will introduce the young child to digital learning tools and technologies, preparing and equipping her for the digital age by providing essential skills for the future.



On Sunday, November 24th, 2024, Rotary Garden Reach conducted a free Eye Check-up Camp in collaboration with Vivekananda Netra Niketan at Dongaria Ramakrishna Gayatri Sevashram, Budge Budge. In total we had 180 beneficiaries, out of which free 25 Cataract surgery will be done. Free spectacles will be distributed after 2 weeks to the beneficiaries. TRF and its Coin-operated Magic Wands



Strategies for Rotary's growth

As Rotary president, one of the key priorities of RIPE Mario de Camargo will be "to retain you all, keep you engaged as too many — 155,000 Rotarians — are quitting Rotary each year. But we don't own Rotary as we are here for a purpose, and we have to keep it going for the next generation with a good succession plan," he said, addressing the membership conclave in Hyderabad.

With the average age in Rotary being 62 and declining membership, "I have a nine-point vision programme to increase our numbers. First, you have to promote new format clubs, and for that let us evangelise the myriad club alternatives Rotary has to offer such as satellite, companion, cause-based, and enterprise or corporate clubs." He recommended resurrecting dying clubs (with less than 20 members) as they don't have a critical mass to survive. "We need a focused approach to large clubs that have lost a large number of members, with specific programmes to revive their connect in their communities," he said.

Rotary leaders must engage former members, reach out to the youth through Rotaract, RYLA, GSE and NGSE professionals, and Rotary Action Groups, develop rapport with professional bodies of lawyers, engineers, architects, businessmen, trade chambers and government officials, and project Rotary's work on social media to boost membership, said de Camargo.

"RI is the best school for leadership training in the world. We spend \$6.5 million at the International Assembly to groom 500 district governors and this is an investment for Rotary's growth."

A 1.4 billion market

India, with its 1.4 billion population, offers a humongous market for Rotary's growth, even as 450 million joined the country's middle-class last year, he said citing a recent report. "We have to identify and map new localities for Rotary to grow. The new DGs must select their AGs who can form new clubs in unchartered territories," he said.

Every district must set forth three-year goals with the DGs, along with DGEs and DGNs, charting out long-term plans and schedules with unity of purpose, said RID Raju Subramanian. He urged district leaders to hold pre-induction sessions for new members, and identify their needs so that they participate in club activities.

Clubs must do a 'satisfaction survey' among members and ensure there is 100 per cent attendance in weekly meetings, he said. RID Anirudha Roychowdhury noted that Rotary has taken a "paradigm shift by embracing digital technology to stay relevant." He called for identifying the areas of concern such as declining membership, leadership continuity, sluggish adaptability, and the last-mile challenges in eradicating polio from the world.

RIDE KP Nagesh said that through the RAG (Red-Amber-Green) analysis "we are targeting to achieve three lakhs in membership in all the four zones by June 2027. At present, there are 1.78 lakh Rotarians across 4,616 clubs in 41 districts in India."



Rotary must sync with the times

In Kolkata, RIPE de Camargo addressed 600 delegates from 10 RI Districts. "In the last 20 years, India saw an explosive growth of 103 per cent in membership (next only to Taiwan, posting 127 per cent), whereas USA, Canada, Great Britain and Ireland, and Australia had a sharp fall in numbers. We need a long-term plan for membership growth," he said.

Earlier, at a press meet, replying to a question from Rotary News about the Taliban regime banning the PolioPlus drive in Afghanistan, de Camargo said, "In the last four years, the polio battle has had to face challenges of militancy, ignorance, prejudice, logistic nightmare and a porous mountainous terrain in the Pak-Afghan border. Rotary will not give up its efforts to vaccinate children in Afghanistan." So far there are 40 known polio cases in Pakistan (19) and Afghanistan (21) this year. "Our power is advocacy, not raising money. Out of \$21 billion spent on

our polio eradication efforts since 1985, Rotary spent \$2.7 billion, while the balance \$18 billion was raised by our partners such as WHO, UNICEF, CDC and the Gates Foundation."

Rotary wanted to celebrate a polio-free world in 2005 itself to coincide with its centennial year, he said. "Here we are not just fighting a disease, but also people's ignorance and lack of public healthcare, hygiene and related social issues." Rid of polio, countries such as India and Brazil must maintain the vaccination level at 95 per cent children for collective immunity to act as a barrier against the resurgence of wild poliovirus, he added.



Minutes of the 2289th RWM held on November 19th, 2024 at BNR Officers' Club, Garden Reach

1. President Biswajit Saha called the J-RWM to order and requested the Rotarians to rise for the National Anthem.
2. President Biswajit requested PN Dr. BN Jha to brief the members on the medical camp held at Deria, Diamond Harbour, where around 100 patients were examined. General Health Checkup like Blood Sugar & BP and free suitable medicines were given to the patients as per prescription. The medical camp was a great success and local villagers were given mosquito nets, football for children and slippers for elders.
3. Another medical camp was proposed to be held at Dalhousie Athletic Club on December 1st, 2024 for all the Malis (Ground staffs) of all the sports clubs established in Kolkata Maidan. The Medical camp will be held in collaboration with Susrut Eye Foundation and Dalhousie Athletic Club from 10-2 pm. We expect around 100 persons will be attending the medical camp. Tea/biscuits, lunch packets along with t-shirts to all Malis will be handed over.
4. President Biswajit mentioned about conducting an Eye Check-up Camp at Ramakrishna Gayatri Sevashram at Dongaria on November 24th, 2024. The camp will be conducted in collaboration with Vivekananda Netra Niketan. Members are requested to attend the same.
5. Rotary Garden Reach Charitable Trust account was opened and details will be given to all members.
6. IPP Shweta Bose Barua raised the issue to provision of benches and tables for the students of Bharatgarh Rotary School. IPP Shweta mentioned about the cost of each set of bench & table for Rs. 2400; 12 sets are needed in the ground floor. The following members agreed to pay for the same: IPP Shweta-4 sets, PP Tapan-3 & PE Mohan, PP DK Rao & Rtn. Dr. Subrata-1 set each. An advance of Rs. 10,000 to be paid to the carpenter.
7. Rtn. Susmita Chakravarty of Rotary Kolkata Benevolence introduced her delicious snacks from her Cloud Kitchen 'Eastern Staples'. The snacks were delicious and Rtn. Susmita mentioned about her journey from a School Teacher to owning a Cloud Kitchen and serving more than 100 meals to IT units and mid-day meals to schools. It was really nice to hear her journey through Covid and Post Covid period.
8. Club Secretary conducted the club business.
9. On confirmation of the minutes, President Biswajit terminated the meeting.

