



RID 3291  
**Rotary**  
Garden Reach



August 13th, 2024 - Vol. 47 No. 07

**2278th Regular Weekly Meeting**  
**Attendance: 17**

Birthday Greetings  
Aug 17th Sukriti, Daughter of Rtn. Tanmoy D Mahapatra

# Light

**WEEKLY NEWS LETTER**

## **RECAP: India: Mythology and Reality**

IPP Rajiv Mehta, Rotary Fort Collins, Colorado

So, what keeps India together? Although there are numerous different uniting features of the society (shared history, cultural diversity, nationalism, resilience, religion, and mythology), he focused on religion, mythology, and history. In the past, India has been referred to as "Hindustan", reflecting the dominance of the Hindu religion in the country (some 80% of the population is Hindu, 14% Muslim, the remainder other religions). The constitution of the country, however, is secular and there have been Prime Ministers (the leader of the government) from several different religions.



There is a distinction between religion and mythology. The mythological base of Indian society is recorded or promulgated by millions of lines of verse developed over some 5000 years of history. He quoted several scholars about the impact of myth including Stephan Hoeller ("Myth is truer than physical truth, Myth is truer than even intellectual truth,") and Joseph Campbell ("Myth opens the heart and the imagination to the wonders of the universe and the mystery of existence. . . The myth is the public dream, and the dream is the private myth."). A (very) brief summary of two major recorded myths, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The Ramayana, consisting of some 24,000 verses, is the story of Ram (a manifestation of God) rescuing his wife from captivity in Sri Lanka. The Mahabharata, including the much shorter Bhagavad Gita, is the discussion or interaction between man (represented by Arjuna) and God (represented by Krishna). This led to the distinction that Hinduism is really a monotheistic religion wherein God has many (perhaps millions) of manifestations, each of which is worshiped as an independent representation of God – an approach called Henotheism.

Historically, Indian civilization began in the Indus valley and spread both to India and to Persia. Although timing is uncertain, this may be the oldest civilization in the world. Over a period of several thousand years, the area was subjected to numerous successful invasions, especially the Mughal invasion (including the most successful rulers Akbar and Shah Jahan from the mid-1500s to the mid-1600s), ultimately followed by the British who were present for some 200 years and dominant for some 100 years, ending with Indian independence in 1947. The independence movement was led by three individuals, Gandhi (a highly educated lawyer who assumed the persona of a villager), Nehru (who became the first Prime Minister of India) and Jinnah (who, although not much of a practicing Muslim, became the first Prime Minister of Pakistan). Independence was followed very quickly by the chaos and violence of the subdivision of the country into Hindu-dominant India and Muslim-dominant Pakistan. Through much of its history, independent India was governed by the left-of-centre Congress Party, the party of Nehru. More recently, it has been governed by the right-of-centre BJP, the party of Narendra Modi.

In trade relations, India has tried to maintain a neutral stance, especially in the period from Independence (1947) to 1982, although much of its trade was with the Soviet Union. In 1982, the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, visited with Ronald Regan, the President of the US, and Regan started pushing involvement of US industry in India. Since 2015, the organization "National Invest India" has focused on promotion and facilitation of economic development in India including encouraging start-ups, innovation and consolidation of branches of Government, and digitization of Government. In the 5000 years of Indian history, there have been three pillars of change in the country: **Economic, Social, and Political.**

On the economic front, foreign direct investment, coming from some 162 countries and affecting 31 of the Indian states, has more than doubled in the last 90 months. The national GDP is now some \$3.5 trillion, making India the fastest growing large economy in the world and the 5th largest in the world, 2/3 of which is driven by domestic demand.

Socially, the country has a human resource base of some 1.4 billion people, one billion under 35 years of age and an average age of 29. India is projected to be the youngest country on the planet until 2070. This resource base comes with big spending power.

Politically, the country is the world's largest democracy with some 960 million registered voters, of whom some 600 million cast their votes. It has a large, complex voting system which is executed to Sigma 6 standards.

Since the launch of Digital India in 2015, India has become the number one data consumer in the world, larger than US and China combined. Some 41% of world real-time transactions happened in India, almost three times greater than China. Digitization has been a driver in the remarkable growth of start-ups in the country, with some 452 registered start-ups in 2016.

Rotary in India has grown dramatically since its first club in 1920, its some 200,000 Rotarians now making it the 3rd largest donor in the world. In Rotary year 2021-22, there were over 91000 Rotary projects in India, representing the efforts of over 2100 clubs, over 8 million man-hours, and over \$102 million in funds raised. Common partnerships between Rotary clubs and the Government, Rotary's contributions to social causes, Rotary's impact on youth, and Rotary's expected continuing involvement in the improvement of the country.



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## Let's continue to Create Magic

Raju Subramanian, RI Director, 2023-25

As we step into a new Rotary year, a world of possibilities unfolds before us. July marks the beginning of this exciting journey, filled with opportunities to make a positive impact on our communities. As we embark on this new chapter, let us celebrate the spirit of Rotary and the power of service that unite us all. Welcome to the new Rotary year, 2024-25.



We're all looking forward to new activities to serve our communities, build new collaborations, and enjoy fun and fellowship with our club members and their families. As Rotarians step into the new year to weave their magic in their clubs and communities, I am reminded of the lines from a popular song:

We can't go on pretending day-by-day that someone, somewhere will soon make a change. We're all a part of God's great big family, and the truth, you know, love is all we need. We are the world. We are the children. We are the ones who make a brighter day, so let's start giving. There's a choice we're making. We're saving our own lives. It's true we'll make a better day, just you and me.

Our theme this year, **The Magic of Rotary**, is both a reminder and a challenge. Rotarians have been creating magic for more than a hundred years around the world. From the eradication of polio to touching countless lives in communities worldwide, the challenge now is to evolve our capacity to

create magic at a level where we impact sizable populations with their larger issues.

As we move forward, take the opportunity to deepen your understanding of Rotary. Familiarise yourselves with the rich history and culture of our beloved organisation. Educate your clubs about Rotary International, your district, club history, and the invaluable work we do. We must continue to focus on retaining our members through active engagement. When inviting new individuals, let us seek those who will become dedicated Rotarians, not just mere members.

Engage with our communities and do what we do best — serve! While serving, let us share all our good work, as Public Image is a powerful tool for inviting like-minded individuals who can contribute to our cause. Let's make this Rotary year a transformative journey of service, fellowship and positive change.

While we must continue to create hope in our communities, it's now time to create magic in our clubs and in the lives of the deprived. Have a great Rotary year.

### The RI Board Mandate

1. Updates to District Election Pilots - Introduction of the district conference voting pilot to ensure a smooth election process.
2. Strategic Planning Committee Report - The Board decided to undertake the next five-year planning cycle of the action plan. The plan will include the following:
  - a. **Creating new ways for participants to experience Rotary**
  - b. **Increasing club flexibility and appeal**
  - c. **Improving the understanding and support of individual participants**
  - d. **Providing learning opportunities for leadership development and skill-building**
  - e. **Fostering more diverse perspectives in decision-making**
  - f. **Eradicating polio and leveraging the policy-reaching existing and new audiences through different**





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## focus programs

**g. Website traffic for [endpolio.org](http://endpolio.org) is up 8% this year**

**h. Campaign visits are up by 30% since last year**

3. Rotaract Participants at IA25 - The aim for incorporating Rotaractors into the 2025 International Assembly is to show the importance of engaging Rotaract members as equals and encouraging them to become Rotarians.

4. DEI Advisory Council Report - The DEI discussed the following topics and agreed to strategize concrete measures to incorporate them:

**a. Improving awareness and accessibility in Rotary**

**b. Gender diversity in leadership**

**c. Fostering LGBTQIA+ inclusion in leadership and creating a more welcoming environment at Rotary events**

**d. Advancing people of colour and under-represented groups in Rotary**

5. Rotary Citation Name Change - Changes the name of the Rotary citation to the Club Excellence Award.

6. Age Limit for Rotaract Club Admission- Established an upper age limit of 30 for induction into a Rotaract club.

7. Youth Advisory Council Report - The Board facilitates connections with clubs, young leaders, and participants in the Rotary family, raising awareness of Rotary's youth protection policies, and elevating leaders.

8. 2025 Presidential Peace Conference Update - The Board decided to convene a presidential peace conference in Istanbul, Turkey, to celebrate Rotary's contributions to peacebuilding and inspire the broader Rotary community and public. The following are the focus of the plenary and breakout sessions:

**a. Peace in a polarised world**

**b. Making peace last**

**c. Technology, media, and peacebuilding from conflict to connection**

**d. Sustainable development and environmental issues in peacebuilding**

## Our stories are what attract people to Rotary

**Joe Otin, Past Governor, RID 9212 (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan)**

I gravitate naturally to statistics despite the negative feelings some people have about them. I think that information is the fuel that our world runs on and without it our systems will sputter, stall, and shut down. That is because statistics are significant in decision-making.

When I joined the Rotary Nairobi East, Kenya, 24 years ago, I was told that good Rotarians were defined by the regularity of their attendance, the frequency of their gifts to The Rotary Foundation, and most importantly by their ability to introduce new members to the club.

In my quest to be a valuable member, I turned to statistics as a way to demonstrate the credibility of Rotary to family, friends, and neighbourhood sceptics. I learned all the important stats by heart and would spit them out at the slightest provocation. If someone happened to notice my membership pin, they would get a barrage of information enough to weigh down even the strongest weightlifter.

### A different way

Only a bolt of lightning would get my victims to wake up again by the time I was done talking. I thought I was promoting the club but instead I was boring them to death.

Looking back, it shouldn't have been a surprise to me that my recruitment efforts led to naught. Not a single person that I targeted with my facts and figures joined the organization. Yet other members invited guests to our lunches every week, and these guests eventually joined our club within a month or two.

One day I got a call from a business journalist who wanted to discuss the results of a survey that my company had recently published. This was not unusual because in those days I worked for a research company and media

**"When we do good as Rotarians, we attract good people to Rotary"**





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executives regularly called me for insights and information.

*The human and relatable stories we tell are the ones that fire emotional triggers and create the special connections we have in Rotary.*

We met at a popular restaurant and after trading personal stories, I casually brought up a Rotary event I had gone to over the weekend where we'd commissioned a sports arena in a school that was situated in a nearby slum. That story captured her imagination so much that by the end of our meeting she asked for an invite to my Rotary club. She eventually became the first person that I successfully introduced into membership without having to twist their arm.

The business journalist I speak of is none other than Carole Kimutai, who went on to become one of the most celebrated past presidents of the Rotary Nairobi-East.

I learned something from that experience. Nobody really cares about statistics and data; they are more interested in what the experience means to you and me. People tend to follow the passion and the feelings that they see in us, which creates an emotional connection that is more powerful than a rational thought process.

### Telling stories

I learned to tell stories about my Rotary experiences. I spoke about the members and the interesting things that they did. I spoke about the people that we worked with on various projects who seemed to have a deeper understanding of life because of their service to mankind. I spoke about the social interaction, new relationships and old friendships, and the impact that they had on my life.

I also described those ripples that oscillate in my soul whenever I see happy faces of needy children who receive new books or toys, and the joy of mothers who bring their children to medical camps for free health check-ups.

The results speak for themselves. In my first three years of spewing statistics, I didn't bring in any new members. In the following 16 years, I have introduced over 30 new members, and together with Jim Wilson and George Mathenge, launched a new club with over 35 members. This club has gone on to form another club with a similar number of charter members.

The human and relatable stories we tell are the ones that fire emotional triggers and create the special connections we have in Rotary. Whether it is through face-to-face interaction, on social media, or even when presenting a speech to a large audience, we can make our clubs appealing by defining and articulating what is truly meaningful to us.

### A Decade of Determination Strengthens Women's Safety

**Manjari Jaruhar, 1st Woman IPS Officer of Bihar & 5th Woman IPS Officer of India. Former Special DG, CISF**

Over the past decade, India has witnessed a transformative journey in enhancing women's safety, marked by significant legislative reforms and the adoption of advanced technological solutions. The period from 2014 to 2024 stands out as a crucial period during which the collective consciousness around women's safety found resonance in the corridors of power, leading to robust policy changes and the implementation of sophisticated safety measures.

The turning point in the decade-long reforms was arguably the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2018. This amendment, catalysed by the national outrage over brutal child rape cases, was a watershed moment in strengthening the legal apparatus against sexual crimes, especially those committed against minors. The law introduced severe penalties for the rape of minors under 12 years, including the life imprisonment or capital punishment, that were a significant escalation from previous laws. These changes were aimed at deterring heinous crimes through the fear of stringent legal repercussions.

Moreover, the amendment brought about a crucial operational change in the judicial handling of rape cases. Anticipatory bail for those accused of raping or gang-raping minors under 16 was also disallowed, which addressed concerns about perpetrators evading the law.

Looking further ahead, the enactment of the three new criminal laws—*Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam 2023 and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023* is set to replace the colonial-era penal and





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procedural laws, indicating a forward-looking approach that aligns with contemporary legal standards and societal norms.

The new laws are going to be implemented across the country from July 1, and would evoke new confidence among women, society, enforcement agencies and courts for punishing culprits, deterrence of crimes and ensuring time bound justice to victims. Under the provisions of the new criminal laws, medical practitioners are mandated to send the medical report of a rape victim to the investigating officer within seven days. For sexual offences, a woman magistrate shall record the statement of the victim and where a woman magistrate is not available, the statement shall be recorded in the presence of a woman.

These laws have refined definitions and classifications of crimes against women, emphasising the role of digital evidence and reinforcing the protection of victims, thereby shaping a more responsive and just legal environment.

Parallel to these legal reforms, the integration of technology in policing and surveillance marked a new frontier in India's approach to women's safety. The implementation of the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) providing a unified emergency number (112) across the nation, the roll out of Safe City Projects with extensive surveillance systems and the establishment of digital databases such as the National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO) significantly bolstered the infrastructure to prevent and respond to crimes against women.

Amid these legal and technological advancements, political leadership has also played a pivotal role. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has consistently emphasised the critical role of women in fostering a stronger society and has advocated for their safety and empowerment as integral to the nation's progress. In his addresses to the nation, including his Independence Day speeches and the 'Mann Ki Baat' radio broadcasts, the Prime Minister has highlighted the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women. He has praised the increasing participation of women in the police force, noting that their presence not only boosts security, but also instils a greater sense of confidence among women.

The Prime Minister has often spoken about the need for societal shifts to eliminate patriarchal practices that demean women, advocating instead for a culture that respects and values women equally. He has also strongly advocated "women-led development" many times.

Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah has stressed that women's safety, respect and participation in all activities are fundamental to the Union Government's priorities. He articulated this stance during discussions on the Women's Reservation Bill, asserting that the passage of the bill would herald a new era for women's equality. He emphasised that women's empowerment is a core principle and noted that ensuring the safety of women and children remains a top priority of the present dispensation.

## Swimmer escaped the British, Suffered bullet wound & Won gold For India

Millions of Indians joined Mahatma Gandhi's call for mass civil disobedience against British colonial rule in 1930. Popularly known as the Civil Disobedience Movement, it was marked by protest rallies across a plethora of villages, towns and cities. Among the millions who participated in this landmark movement was a 10-year-old boy. Attending a public rally along the banks of the Ganga in Varanasi, a holy city in present-day Uttar Pradesh, this young boy got caught in the midst of a police crackdown.

As they began lathi-charging protestors, this 10-year-old boy "jumped into the River Ganges to hide from the police in between the boats" and hid underwater. Meanwhile, as a 2014 media report notes, "a 10 km swimming competition was going on over the Ganges."

"To hide himself, he also joined the competition group," the report goes on to add. To everyone's bewilderment, he finished third in this race. It was the start of something special.

The young boy's name was Sachin Nag, a legendary swimming champion and gold medal winner in the men's 100 m freestyle event at the 1951 Asian Games in New Delhi. Till today, it remains India's only gold medal in swimming events at the Asian Games.

### For the love of swimming

Born into a Bengali family in Varanasi in 1920, Nag found his love for swimming on the Ganga. From the moment





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he surprised everyone in that accidental race in 1930, he competed in many local swimming competitions till 1936 and often finished in the first two positions.

In the following year, Jamini Das, a well-known swimmer, coach and captain of the Indian water polo team in the 1948 London Olympics, made his way to Varanasi from Kolkata (Calcutta). Representing the Calcutta-based Hatkhola Club, Das was accompanied by young swimming talent who had come to compete in a competition in Varanasi. At this competition, Das saw a young and untrained Nag beat the best his club had to offer.

Upon witnessing this talent, Das invited Nag to come to Calcutta and train with him. In this new bustling city, the young Nag trained with the club and stayed at Das' house. For Nag, moving to Calcutta was the break he needed to train and compete at a higher level. Nag began training and competing on behalf of the Hatkhola Club in the Bengal state championships.

Suffice it to say, he beat the best the region had to offer, starting with the 100 m and 400 m freestyle events in 1938. In the following year, he equalled the national record for the 100 m freestyle event with a time of 1 minute and 4 seconds. At the same competition, he broke the record in the 200 m freestyle event with a time of 2 minutes and 29 seconds. In 1940, he broke the 100 m freestyle record set by fellow swimmer Dilip Mitra with a time of 1 minute and 4 seconds.



According to his biography, this record stood for 31 years. He would go on to win the state 100 m freestyle title continuously for nine years. By the mid-1940s, however, Nag began harbouring dreams of competing on a world stage, particularly the London Olympics of 1948.

### Tragedy followed by resilience

Tragically, a year before in January 1947, Nag suffered a serious injury which could have jeopardised his chances of making it to the Olympic Games. This was a time of great violence and chaos. Only a couple of months earlier, Calcutta had witnessed bloody communal riots.

While there isn't much evidence of how the accident actually took place, what remains uncontested is that Nag was returning from a training session when a bullet struck him on his right leg, shattering his femur. Severely injured, he was admitted to a hospital for five months.

After he was discharged, the doctor told him that it would take at least two years before he could get back to swimming. It was evident that Nag's chance at competing in the Olympics was under severe jeopardy. Determined to compete, he resumed training just six months after the injury.

To facilitate his recovery, he returned to his family in Varanasi and rejoined a local swimming club while getting treatment from local masseurs. But recovering from a serious injury wasn't the only hurdle he had to overcome. Back in the late 1940s, athletes representing India had to bear a great deal of the expenses required to compete in such tournaments.

To pay for his trip to London, he took up work washing vehicles in the wee hours before training. Despite taking up all sorts of work, he couldn't gather the requisite funds. Nag was about to give up on his dream when Hemanta Mukhopadhyay, a singer, heard about his

plight and decided to raise funds. One of the ways in which the singer raised funds was through a musical performance at the Uttara Cinema Hall in North Calcutta.

Nag finally had the money to realise his dream of competing in the Olympics. He finished in sixth place at the 1948 London Olympics in the 100 m freestyle event. What's more, he also played for the Indian water polo team and





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scored four goals in a 7–4 win versus Chile.

### Moment of Glory

Nag's moment of glory, however, came three years later at the inaugural edition of the Asian Games in New Delhi. In a dazzling display on 8 March, 1951, he secured gold in the 100 m freestyle event with a time of 1 minute and 4.7 seconds.

Watching Nag perform his magic in the audience was Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. According to media reports, Nehru was so overjoyed that he broke protocol, embraced Nag, and presented him with the red rose from the breast pocket of his coat.

According to press reports, Nag noted how this was one of the greatest moments in his life. Besides winning gold in the 100 m freestyle, he also picked bronze medals in the 4×100 m freestyle relay and the 3×100 m freestyle relay. He would also go on to compete in the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, representing India in water polo.

Following his incredible achievements in the pool, he would train future generations of Indian swimmers – including Arati Saha, the first Asian woman to cross the English channel in 1959, and Nafisa Ali, a national champion in the early 1970s who was also crowned Miss World.

### Desire for recognition, acknowledgement

Despite his many achievements for the country against incredible odds, Nag passed away on 19 August, 1987, without real recognition or financial support.

Speaking to The Hindu in 2014, Ashoke Kumar Nag, his son and a Kolkata-based insurance agent at the time, recalled, "He yearned for recognition from the government. Not financial considerations but the acknowledgement of his service to the sport and the country."

For years, Ashoke tried to secure his father's legacy but was often met with bureaucratic apathy and rejection. On multiple occasions, he reached out to the Sports Ministry to bestow an award to his father posthumously in recognition of his achievements, and he never gave up.

In August 2020, Nag was awarded the Dhyan Chand Award for lifetime achievement in sports. Finally, one of post-Independence India's first sporting superstars received the recognition he deserved. *Ideally, he should have been celebrated during his lifetime, but better late than never.*

## Minutes of the 2277th RWM held on August 6th, 2024 at BNR Officers' Club, Garden Reach

1. President call the meeting to order and requested the members to rise for the National Anthem.
2. President announced that the medical camp at Shyamnagar has been postponed to a later date.
3. President discussed a prospective project at Kakdweep raised by Rtn. Abbas Ali Halder.
4. Flag hoisting Ceremony & associated issues for August 15th project discussed for Dongaria, Budge Budge.
5. Prospective Medical follow-up camp at Santragachi on August 25th, 2024 discussed.
6. Members have been requested for early payment of the 1st SAD.
7. The Club Secretary conducted the Club business.
8. On confirmation of the minutes, President Biswajit terminated the meeting.