



**"YOU ARE THE
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OF THE WORLD..."**

RID 3291, Zone-16
Rotary
Garden Reach



2337th RWM





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PREVENTION



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CHILD HEALTH



BASIC EDUCATION
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COMMUNITY
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DEVELOPMENT



ENVIRONMENT

Greetings on Birthday

Dec 16th : PP Timir Roy

Dec 18th : Ayushman, Son of Rtn. Abhijit Das

Dec 19th : Aahana, Daughter of Rtn. Anupam Pal

The Shared Ethos of Vande Mataram and Rotary International

PP Tanu Roy

At first glance, Vande Mataram—a stirring national song born in the crucible of India's freedom struggle—and Rotary International—a global humanitarian organisation—may appear to inhabit entirely different moral and historical landscapes. Yet, at a deeper level, both are anchored in a shared ethos: selfless service, unity beyond differences, ethical responsibility, and devotion to the greater good. One invokes love for the motherland; the other channels that same spirit toward humanity at large.

Composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Vande Mataram transcends the boundaries of poetry and patriotism. It is an invocation of reverence toward the nation as a living, nurturing force—one that calls upon its people to protect, serve, and uplift it. During India's freedom movement, the song became a moral compass and a rallying cry, inspiring courage, sacrifice, and collective action. It unified diverse communities under a single vision of national dignity and shared destiny.

Rotary International, founded on the principle of "Service Above Self," echoes this moral framework in a contemporary and global context. Rotary urges individuals to place community welfare above personal interest and to apply professional skills in the service of society. Whether addressing issues of health, education, peace, or sustainable development, Rotary's work reflects an ethical commitment remarkably similar to the spirit embodied in Vande Mataram—a commitment rooted in responsibility rather than reward.

A defining commonality between the two lies in their embrace of unity in diversity. Vande Mataram emerged at a time when India's social and cultural differences could have been sources of division. Instead, it fostered a shared identity and purpose. Rotary International operates on a similar principle, bringing together people of varied nationalities, faiths, and professions to collaborate in service. Both demonstrate that diversity, when guided by shared values, becomes strength rather than a fault line.

Equally significant is the emphasis on sacrifice and ethical action. The spirit of Vande Mataram asks citizens to subordinate personal comfort to national well-being. Rotary, in its own way, calls for the voluntary giving of time, resources, and expertise to improve lives. In both cases, service is not transactional; it is transformative—shaping character while strengthening communities.

Ultimately, Vande Mataram and Rotary International represent two expressions of the same moral ideal. One is deeply rooted in national consciousness; the other extends that consciousness to a global scale. Together, they remind us that patriotism and global citizenship are not opposing ideas but complementary ones—both grounded in empathy, integrity, and selfless service. In an increasingly fragmented world, their shared ethos offers a timeless lesson: that enduring progress is built not through power or possession, but through unity, service, and moral purpose.

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Journey of self-empowerment leads to Rotary

If this were a movie it would be a Hollywood salute to grit and gratitude, an inspirational biopic in which a determined woman survives life in a homeless shelter and repays the service organisation that rescued her. Here is Janelle Hall, mid-2008, in her worn pink shelter robe, jobless after a turn mopping floors at a Laundromat, a refugee from an in-law's tiny apartment with her then-husband and four young children.

"Hours from the street" is how Hall describes the day she and her family got admitted to the shelter in Clifton, New Jersey. This was shortly after a Rotary District Governor had called on Rotarians to set up a program to help families like hers battered by the Great Recession, and one volunteer, Bonnie Sirower, who was a board member at a nearby YMCA, was told about Hall.



"She was looking for a hand up, not a hand-out," says Sirower, who was part of a team of Rotary members from District 7490 that spent weeks with Hall and others in need as part of the district program. They provided Christmas presents for her children, a wardrobe for job interviews, a bus pass to get her to those interviews, and then leads to a service organization that offered not only a job but child care for Hall's kids, free. "It was like divine intervention," says Hall.

The daughter of immigrant parents from Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, Hall had flunked out of college, overwhelmed with challenges — small children, an emotionally abusive husband, and "bad decisions." So, with this chance for a second chance,

the Rotary team helped locate a possible college and paid for her application fee.

"There weren't any computers at the shelter, forget a laptop," remembers Hall. "I wrote my essay with a pencil on purple copy paper. My acceptance letter was mailed to the homeless shelter and I still have it today."

Three years later she graduated from William Paterson University. Soon after getting a job, a co-worker said, "C'mon, Janelle, why don't we get ourselves a master's degree!"

In Hall's biopic the pages begin flying off the calendar: a master's degree in public administration from Fairleigh Dickinson University in 2013; a doctorate in public policy and administration in 2020 from Walden University, where another co-worker urged they both enrol for a PhD. "Guess who got her degree first?" Hall says with a grin.

Hall is now an adjunct faculty member at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey. She has been honoured by local and state officials for her contributions to her community. She has written a motivational book titled *The Daughter of Destiny*, which maps her history and offers "8 steps [that] can lead you to personal empowerment."

In her own climactic, destined moment of self-empowerment, Hall became the executive director of the United Passaic Organization, a broad-based service group for the city that helps families in need — and the very organization that once helped pay her rent years ago when she was struggling. Her story, not surprisingly, has compelled attention, especially among Rotary members. Early in 2024, for example, there she was addressing 300 people at a Rotary presidents-elect learning seminar in Whippany, New Jersey.

"Let me introduce myself," she told the audience, whereupon she removed the pink bathrobe she'd pulled on earlier, the very robe she had worn in the homeless shelter, to reveal a striking blue dress and her proud empowerment. "I am a homeowner and college professor. I sit on the Board of Governors at Fairleigh Dickinson. I have my own business called Beyond Inspired. I am the CEO of the very organization that I once received services from."

With each accomplishment the room erupted in cheers, almost drowning out her conclusion: "And all the accomplishments I shared with you are thanks to the magic of Rotary."

"It took her almost an hour to leave the ballroom after her speech," Sirower reports. "Everybody kept wanting to talk to her. And she made a promise to me at that time that she would start her own Passaic Rotary club to replace the one our district had lost during COVID."

Within months, Hall had recruited 25 members and soon after, in February 2025, the Rotary Club of Passaic was officially chartered with Hall now serving as its president.

The club has already hosted its first retreat and is planning an international service trip to the Dominican Republic, which won't be Hall's first trip out of the country. In 2024 she was part of an organized trip to Ghana that she describes as a "quest for spiritual growth" and part of efforts "to reunite ... Africans and the global diaspora." The most meaningful part for her turned out to be a visit to an orphanage where Hall distributed 250 schoolbooks donated by a childhood friend and school principal, Tiffany Crockett, who is also a charter member of Hall's Rotary club.



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"You surround yourself with change agents. You want to challenge one another," Crockett says in describing her long-time relationship with Hall.

Hall's own journey has had no shortage of challenges. She says her husband did not physically abuse her but chipped away at her sense of self in other ways: verbal abuse, denial of control, restriction of access to friends, and a growing isolation. At age 21, "young [and] inexperienced," Hall married a man nearly twice her age. "My family essentially disowned me because of the choice I made," she writes in *The Daughter of Destiny*. She nevertheless kept her father company in the months before his death from leukaemia in 2019 and helped her siblings take care of their mother, who had Alzheimer's, until she died in 2021.

There is much to be thankful for. Her children are grown; three of them are currently in college. Hall herself has "taken back ownership of my name." "My divorce is final!" she writes in her book. "When the judge banged his gavel, he gave me full custody of my destiny."

"Your journey in life is how you use your success to help others," Hall says. "Things may seem dim or dark for a reason. It's up to you to be a beacon so others can understand that darkness is just temporary." Roll credits. Close curtain.

Passing the torch: A legacy of service across generations

Megan Schmidt, Mt. Vernon West Rotary Club, Illinois

When I watch my children listen to stories about their great-grandfather's kindness, I see the same spark that inspired generations before me. Service isn't just what we do—it's who we are.

Although we didn't attend many Rotary meetings growing up because my dad had stepped away from Rotary by the time I was born, the values of Rotary and its motto, Service Above Self, were still deeply woven into the fabric of our family life. As a fourth-generation Rotarian, I grew up hearing stories of service and leadership, and those stories shaped my understanding of what it means to give back.

My grandfather, affectionately known as "Gramps," embodied that motto in everything he did. I saw him give back in a variety of ways—from supporting international service efforts to helping local families in quiet, meaningful ways. My dad carried that spirit forward, showing me through his actions that service wasn't a title or a position. It was a way of life. That ripple effect extended to me, and now I hope it continues through my children.

As a mother, I often think about how to instill those same values in the next generation. That's what inspired me to write *Gramps' Lesson: Service Above Self*, a children's book based on my grandfather's life and the values he lived by. The story follows a young child learning from their grandfather how small acts of service can make a big difference. Through storytelling, I hope to plant seeds of empathy and civic responsibility in young readers around the world.

Writing the book was both an emotional and empowering journey. It allowed me to preserve my grandfather's legacy while offering families a way to start meaningful conversations about kindness, service, and community. The response from readers, both Rotarians and non-Rotarians, has been heart-warming, especially from parents and educators looking for ways to teach these values in a world that often seems to prioritize self over service.

A portion of all book sales goes to support a project providing access to child orthopaedic services, an initiative my grandfather helped start when he served as district governor in 1977–1978. When I have the honour of serving as District Governor in 2027–2028, exactly 50 years later, we will celebrate five decades of this remarkable project still going strong.

I truly believe service is one of the greatest gifts we can pass on to our children. Whether through a Rotary program or project or a spontaneous act of kindness, every moment we model service is a step toward a better future. I'm honoured to carry my family's Rotary legacy forward and even more grateful for the chance to share it with others through this blog. Together, we can inspire the next generation of service leaders.



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On December 11th, 2025, Rotary Garden Reach conducted a Cervical Cancer Awareness at Sanghamitra Vidyalaya at Garden Reach; followed up with the Vaccination Drive on December 13th, 2025. We have vaccinated 60 girls against Cervical Cancer at the school. The parents of the students were very supportive & forthcoming; they really appreciated Rotary's efforts in wiping off deadly diseases from the world. This is a joint initiative with Rotary Calcutta Midtown & Rotary Calcutta Park Point.



From the ground up, Global ROOTS club builds its own experience

As a teenager in southern Italy in 2005, Maria Vittoria "Mavi" Gargiulo was "kind of forced" to join an Interact club that her father's Rotary club was trying to re-establish. The students wore suits (or at least coats and ties), and the atmosphere was very formal. "Everybody was pretending to be adult while I just wanted to be 15," she recalls.

She quit as soon as her father was off his club's board, but she reconnected with Rotary while attending the University of Salerno when she found a "more chill and relaxed" Rotaract club.

There, her Rotaract career took off. In 2022, she decided to also join a Rotary club at the urging of her closest friend, whose father was serving as president. It was what she calls a "legacy club," focused on lunch meetings and weekly speakers. The dues of 1,400 euros amounted to her entire salary as a post-doctoral student. "They were a good club, and a lot of District Governors come from it," Gargiulo says. "Some people really look forward to that kind of social gathering every Thursday, which is fair — that's the experience they want. That's just not the experience I like."



So she created the club she wanted to belong to instead. The result was the Rotary Club of Global ROOTS – District 2101, which chartered in April and has become a space for Rotaract members and others who had expressed interest in Rotary but hadn't found a club where they fit in.

Including "global" in the name reflects the club's desire to have an international membership and reach. ROOTS stands for resilience, outreach, opportunity, tradition, and sustainability, all values that founding members agreed were important during workshops to draft the club's constitution.

Gargiulo explains a second meaning of the name: "Roots also ground trees. And that is precisely what we want — to be deeply rooted in the founding values of Rotary, while also capable of projecting them into a changing world."

Already, the club has achieved an impressive diversity. Its membership crosses generations and professions, with 66 percent women and 76 percent younger than 40. More than half of the club is new to Rotary, while a quarter also belongs to a Rotaract club. Many of the initial members are from the Campania region of Italy, but some live in Rome, Milan, or as far away as the Netherlands. Even though most members speak Italian, the club language is English.



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Alfonso Toraldo, the club's executive secretary and a lawyer in training to be a notary, is a dual member of the Rotaract Club of Afragola-Frattamaggiore "Porte di Napolio." He says he has always been interested in international projects, having volunteered multiple times in Zanzibar, the African island, through an organization for children. He was attracted to the Global ROOTS club by the prospect of more service opportunities.

"She told us, we will take all the good parts of Rotary, and we will make big projects, and we will optimize our time," Toraldo says, describing Gargiulo's pitch. "This was her presentation, and I couldn't say no. It was amazing for me, as a volunteer, knowing that there is a reality that is going to form into a pattern of service."

Irene Petraroli joined the charter effort after meeting Gargiulo at a conference on disaster risk reduction, a field in which they both work. She was sold on the promise of deep inclusion and open communication. "The convincing part was when she discussed the idea that the group would be dedicated to engagement and community service project ideas," says Petraroli, a native of Italy who is in the Netherlands on a fellowship at the University of Twente. "That was the real selling point for me."

To attract young adults and respect their time and money, the club keeps costs low. Members under 30 years old pay about 300 euros a year, which includes the club's fees to Rotary International and the district, plus 150 euros for The Rotary Foundation. Those over 30 pay some additional costs (but never more than an additional 175 euros) for club administration, a website, and videoconferencing, plus seed money for projects chosen mutually.

The club decided to collect a donation for the Foundation from every member to impart an appreciation of Rotary's larger reach. The board frequently shares with members international club projects from Rotary's website or in Rotary magazine. Every new member is paired with a mentor who has more experience in Rotary.

Luigi Riello, an attorney general emeritus of the city of Naples and long-time Rotarian who joined the club as its oldest member at age 71, enjoys this group for its fresh approach and potential. "For me, taking part in the founding of the Global ROOTS club has represented not merely an opportunity, but a true responsibility," he says. "Together with women and men of diverse ages, backgrounds, and sensibilities, we have given life to a club unbound by geographical affiliation yet profoundly rooted in the principles of Rotary International."

"Ours is a Rotary that seeks to return to its very essence: to tangibly promote peace, to combat global hunger, and to oppose every form of injustice. We are not drawn to social formalities, elegant dinners, or repetitive rituals. What inspires us is a determination to act — with practical tools, well-defined projects, and measurable objectives — in pursuit of social justice and human dignity."

From Here to Human builds bridges through storytelling

Eli Hauber, Rotaract UNC Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Rotary has this funny way of finding you, not the other way around. It meets you where you are, smiles, extends a hand, and pulls you in for a big hug.

I was sixteen when I got my big hug.



Struggling to adjust to high school, I was changing who I was to fit in. My peers made me believe leadership meant being loud. Standing at the front of the room. Having answers. But when I started an Interact club, Rotary introduced me to a different kind of leadership, the quiet kind that listens before it speaks. The kind that puts service above self and measures success not in applause, but in the sparks it ignites in others.

We weren't changing the world — at least not yet. We were recycling fruit, building libraries, learning to coordinate, care, and show up for others. Interact is kind of like a kid learning to ride a bike. It's messy and unpredictable, but it's the seed — full of potential. It's where dreamers can dream big dreams and begin turning the unlikely into reality.

Now, all my seed needed was a little rain and sunshine.

My first Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) was all that and more. I find it impossible to convey just how life-changing RYLA is and what a turning point it turned out to be in my life. Surrounded by people just like me, I discovered there was a place for me in the world. A place where I didn't need to fear failure or judgment. A place where my best self could begin to take form.

When I returned as a counsellor and eventually a co-director, I watched new leaders undergo the same transformation. Seeing my younger self in them, I realized the magic of RYLA doesn't wear off after the closing ceremony. It lingers in every act of kindness, every moment of courage, and every time we put service above self. The magic is in the ripple effect that turns four days into a lifetime of impact that quietly changes the world.

At UNC Chapel Hill, Rotaract became my next laboratory for impact, where I experienced Rotary's global ecosystem of action for the first time. Brothers and sisters of one family united by one cause. Through my club's mentorship program, I met Nathan Thomas, a past district governor and founder of All We Are, a non-governmental organization working to make sustainable energy more affordable and accessible in Uganda. One conversation led to another, and soon I found myself on a plane to Africa.

Service Above Self... but never above the agenda.

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Minutes of the 2336th RWM held on December 9th, 2025 at BNROC, garden Reach

1. The President Bandaru called the meeting to order and requested the members to rise for the National Anthem.
2. The President briefed the members regarding the arrangements made for the Cervical Cancer Awareness Camp scheduled on December 11th, 2025 and the Vaccination Programme on December 13th, 2025 at Sanghamitra Vidyalaya, Garden Reach. The event is a joint initiative of Rotary Calcutta Mid Town, Calcutta Park Point & Garden Reach supported by Serum Institute.
3. Arrangements for the medical camp at Daspur Ramakrishna Sebashram were discussed. Members were informed that a 26-seater bus has been arranged from BNR, and all members were requested to participate in the programme to ensure its success.
4. Members were updated on the procurement of the Blood Units Storage Refrigerator for Thalassemia Society of India, New Alipore. It was informed that the project is expected to be completed by the end of January 2026.
5. President formally handed over the proceedings to the District Governor to conduct his OCV.
6. Following the District Governor's address to the members, covering the six-month performance of the club. A PPT presentation on the prevention of Thalassemia was delivered by the Hon'ble District Governor.
7. A formal Vote of Thanks was proposed by PP Rtn Dr. Arabinda Ray.
8. Club Secretary, Rtn. Shubhayan conducted the club business.
9. President Bandaru confirmed the minutes of the last meeting and terminated the meeting.