

Service Above Self



“YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD...”



RID 3291, Zone-16

Rotary Garden Reach



2352nd RWM

THE NOBLE RISE OF THE “ENVIRON-MENTALIST”



BECAUSE SAVING THE PLANET REQUIRES MORE THAN JUST TALK.



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Birthday Greetings

Apr 8th : R'let Shreyanshi, Daughter of PP Abinash Singh

The Noble Rise of the “Environ-Mentalist”

PP Tanu Roy

(A field guide to those who love the planet... loudly, proudly, and occasionally, absurdly.)

There are environmentalists. There are activists. And then, there are the *Environ-Mentalists*—a rare, fascinating species that don't just care about the planet... they perform it.

You've met them. You may even be one. (Don't worry, denial is biodegradable.)

An Environ-Mentalist begins their day with a righteous sigh at humanity. They sip their sustainably sourced, ethically brewed, dolphin-blessed coffee from a reusable bamboo cup—only to post a picture of it online with the caption: *“Saving Earth, one sip at a time! #WokeAndGreen”*. The irony?

The post is uploaded via three servers, four satellites, and enough electricity to power a small village. But, let's not nit-pick. This is about intent; and aesthetic.

The Environ-Mentalist believes in change—provided it is convenient, visible, and ideally, applauded. They will passionately lecture you on plastic pollution while accepting a plastic straw “just this once” because the paper one “ruins the vibe.” They will attend climate marches in designer khadi, arriving in an air-conditioned SUV, windows rolled up to keep out the actual environment. They are not hypocrites. No, no. They are layered personalities.

One of their greatest strengths is vocabulary. Words like **“sustainable,” “eco-conscious,”** and **“carbon footprint”** are deployed with sniper-like precision—usually in conversations where nobody asked. They can turn a simple dinner into a TED Talk: “Do you know how much water it takes to grow that rice?” (You didn't. You just wanted to eat.)

And yet, beneath the satire, lies a curious truth. The Environ-Mentalist, for all their contradictions, cares. Perhaps not always efficiently, not always consistently—but unmistakably, they care. And in a world where apathy is easier than action, even noisy, imperfect concern is a beginning.

Because here's the twist: real environmentalism isn't glamorous. It doesn't always photograph well. It's refusing convenience when nobody's watching. It's carrying your own bag without posting about it. It's planting a tree and not checking how many likes it gets.

The true environmentalist works quietly. The Environ-Mentalist works publicly. But sometimes, just sometimes, the performance inspires the practice.

After all, revolutions have started with less.

So the next time you see an Environ-Mentalist passionately arguing about climate change while ordering extra packaging for their takeaway, don't just laugh. Smile knowingly. They are a work in progress—just like the rest of us.

And maybe, between the hash tags and the hypocrisy, a small, stubborn seed of change is taking root. **Because saving the planet doesn't require perfection. It just requires that, eventually, the performance becomes real.**



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ENVIRONMENT

Rotary Youth Exchange sparks a lifetime of Service

Dody Priambodo, former RYE Student, Rotary E-Club of Jakarta Gunawarman

In 1997, I arrived in Australia as a Rotary Youth Exchange student. What began as a simple opportunity to improve my English skills quickly became a blueprint for a life-long commitment to service.



My host families, predominantly Rotarians, provided me with powerful lessons. I watched in awe as these busy professionals with demanding, full-time jobs relentlessly carved out time, energy, and resources to serve their community through fundraising events and hands-on projects, both locally and around the world.

This inspired a question that became my calling: "How does a person with a full-time job manage to find time to serve the community?" With that powerful seed planted in my mind, I resolved that I, too, would dedicate my time to service once I had a

career.

During Outbound Orientations, exchange students were encouraged to join Rotaract upon their return. I immediately joined my local Rotaract chapter freshman year, quickly deepening my involvement by attending the first-ever Rotary Youth Leadership Awards in Indonesia and assisting Rotarians the following year.

Years later, I was spurred to further action when my youth exchange chair and mentor delivered a pivotal message to 15 alumni: "Rotary Youth Exchange has been instrumental in your good fortune. Now is the time to serve the community with your experience."

In 2014, we acted, chartering a new Rotary club — the first e-club in the area. Ninety percent of the 19 charter members were former exchange students. Their shared history created a powerful bond, driving meaningful projects from literacy to breast cancer awareness.

Their passion for the program led to an additional role: managing the district Youth Exchange program. I became a committee member in 2015, and the committee quickly grew to be 100% youth exchange alumni from different clubs.

Together with my friends, we are now actively recruiting for a major reunion we want to hold for exchange students from the 80s, 90s, and early 2000s, using the power of the exchange experience to attract the next generation of Rotarians.

The experience of my year in Australia continues to have a ripple effect through my life. Youth Exchange doesn't just send kids abroad; it creates an army of globally aware, committed community builders who embody the profound power of giving back.

How a fifth-grader and our Rotary club helped fight hunger

Derrick Kinney, Rotary Arlington, Texas

I got a call in November that immediately got my attention. It was from our district community service chair, Victoria Farrar-Myers. She shared an idea, "What if our Rotary club partnered with a fifth-grader to fight hunger?" I remember thinking, well, that's a first.

Our club president, Randy Hendricks, set up a meeting in a coffee shop for a few of our members to talk it through. That's when we met Leighton and her dad. Within minutes, it was obvious this wasn't just a "cute idea." There was sincerity in how she talked. I could tell she cared and had thought it through. Without hesitation, I was in.

Leighton attended the same school — Oakridge School in Arlington, Texas — as Victoria's son. The year before, Leighton had worked with an organisation called Meals of Hope to raise money and pack non-perishable



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DEVELOPMENT



ENVIRONMENT

meals for people facing hunger. Leighton figured that with our Rotary club's help, she could go even bigger (and she was right).

Victoria first talked with Leighton's dad about the idea, and when he brought it up with his daughter, she was excited and ready. The meals could be assembled quickly and donated locally, without worrying about spoilage or logistics getting in the way.

As she explained the idea, something clicked for me.

The problem we were trying to solve

I've helped organise a lot of good service projects through Rotary, but this felt different. This wasn't polished or overthought and it wasn't even a "Rotary program." It was a student with a passion and plan. Honestly, I'd been looking for something like this.

I wanted a sustainable, scalable way for our club to address food insecurity — not just another item on the calendar. Our District Governor had made reducing food insecurity a major priority and we took that seriously. But we kept struggling with how to create a service project that would actually bring the whole community together.

We didn't want something that was just Rotary planning it, talking about it, and running it. There's nothing wrong with that per se. But sometimes our projects become too contained and internal. We wanted something bigger that people outside our club would feel connected to and excited about. That's when the right leader showed up. And yes, she was a fifth-grader.

Why it worked, how it grew

Leighton wasn't asking Rotary to take over her project. She was asking us to support it and that difference matters. Her idea already had everything a successful service project needs: a student leader who cared; a school ready to engage, and a proven partner in Meals of Hope. Rotary didn't need to be the star, but we could provide members who were willing to show up and help activate the community to participate and not just observe. We could be the support system that helped it grow, and that's when we are at our best.

Leighton set a goal to raise \$7,000. That's a big goal for anyone, especially a student. I admired the courage behind that number, and I knew we could help.

Our board came up with the simple idea of donating \$1,000 in seed money and matching every dollar Leighton raised up to \$7,000. If she hit her goal, the total impact would be \$15,000. Over the years, I've learned that people don't just respond to need, they respond to momentum. With a match, a donation multiplies.

One of my favourite parts of this experience was helping Leighton think about how to share her message. At first, she just asked for donations. But I told her something I truly believe: being young is a superpower. It's hard to say no to a motivated fifth-grader with a plan.

We helped her craft her ask to "I set a crazy goal to raise \$7,000. Will you help me?" That small shift changed everything. She wasn't begging; she was leading. And people didn't just donate; they joined her.

The day everything came together

Momentum built quickly. Our club shared the event internally. Leighton promoted it at Oakridge. We shared it on Facebook and with local media. Partnerships, in addition to our club, included



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DEVELOPMENT



ENVIRONMENT

Oakridge School, the Oakridge Black Students Association, and The Girl Scouts. The Black Students Association helped lead artwork, music, and coordinate volunteers. Students were creating the experience. We held the event on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which felt like the right way to honour his belief that everybody can be great because everybody can serve. From 10 am to noon, the Oakridge School gym was packed with families, students, Rotary members, and 140 volunteers working side-by-side. In just two hours, we packed more than 43,000 meals for people in need.

I remember standing there for a moment, just taking it all in. Then came the part that still blows my mind!

Leighton raised the full \$7,000. With our match, the total was \$15,000, raised by a fifth-grader.

What I learned (again)

If you're part of a Rotary club, or any organisation trying to create meaningful impact: a compelling story beats a perfect plan. Matching funds motivate. And Rotary doesn't have to own the event to be the reason it succeeds. Sometimes the best role is simply being the fuel behind someone else's mission.

Leighton didn't need us to take over her vision. She needed us to believe in it. This day wasn't just about food insecurity. It was about what happens when a student decides to lead.

Thank you, Victoria Farrar-Myers, for making the connection, and club president Randy Hendricks for saying, **"Let's make this happen."** And thank you to every volunteer who packed meals, donated, served, and showed up. This is the kind of day you don't forget, because it proves the heart of the community is still there.

The way you make Rotary even better isn't by doing more as Rotary. It's by inviting more people who want to make the community better to do it with you.

Rotary leaders felicitate RIDE Gurjeet S Sekhon

Warm applause and fond anecdotes marked the felicitation of Gurjeet Singh Sekhon in Amritsar, on his election as RI Director for Zones 4 and 7 for 2027–29. Rotary leaders from across India described him as a thoughtful, analytical and humble leader who will represent India with distinction on the global Rotary stage. Sekhon served as Governor of RID 3070 for 2014–15.

Congratulating him, *PRIP Kalyan Banerjee* said that serving on the RI Board "would expose you to some of the finest leaders from around the world and provide you with perspectives that broaden leadership thinking. A country like ours will give you the best of times, and the most difficult times as well, during your two years. But your leadership should ensure that India is always on balance, and Rotary will depend on it." He added, "If your spouse is by your side, it will enhance your ability and multiply your successes tremendously."

Offering a personal glimpse into their journey, his wife *Amandeep* spoke warmly about her husband's life and values. The son of a soil scientist, Sekhon studied agriculture in Ludhiana before beginning his career in the corporate sector and later turning entrepreneur in Amritsar. His Rotary journey began in 1994 as a Charter Member of Rotary Amritsar Civil Lines. She said, "The opportunity to serve as an RI Director will allow him to apply his leadership abilities for Rotary's larger good."

Recalling discussions on membership strategies and organisational data, *PRID and TRF Trustee-elect AS*



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Venkatesh said Sekhon's hallmark was "meticulous preparation and analytical thinking, and his willingness to listen, learn and unlearn — a trait that distinguishes strong leaders."

For *PRID Raju Subramanian*, Sekhon's defining traits are precision, discipline and passion for training leaders. He recalled his role in organising learning programmes for

Governors-elect, where "his attention to detail and relentless follow-up ensured excellence. Leadership for Gurjeet is not about personal importance but about collective success."

Drawing parallels with athletes who achieve extraordinary milestones, *TRF Trustee Dr. Bharat Pandya* said Sekhon possessed the "three Cs" necessary for leadership — commitment, competence and courage. Pandya urged him to remain focused on strengthening Rotary clubs, emphasising that Rotary's real strength lies at the grassroots level.

PRID Anirudha Roychowdhury expressed confidence that Sekhon would bring thoughtful leadership and ethical governance to Rotary at a time when it is redefining its role in a rapidly changing world.

Responding to the felicitations, **RIDE Gurjeet Sekhon** expressed deep gratitude to PRID Raju Subramanian and Trustee Dr. Bharat Pandya for encouraging him to take up the new assignment, and his mentor PDG Avinash Mohindru.

"Leadership is not about managing a year or tenure. It is about strengthening an institution," he said, noting that while Rotary's leaders change every year, the organisation's systems and values must remain stable and enduring. He outlined eight structural shifts that he believes will determine whether Rotary grows intentionally or "drifts comfortably."

The first, he said, is moving from individual-dependent functioning to process-driven systems. While Rotary often celebrates dynamic leaders, institutions cannot rely on individual brilliance alone. "We must move from individual brilliance to institutional excellence, and the processes must outlast people," he said.

Next, he called for "professionalising learning and leadership training. Stronger training will ensure that Rotary develops capable leaders at both club and district levels."

Rotary must also invest more seriously in leadership development and club viability, he cautioned, warning that without nurturing new leaders, **"We will decline. As top leadership, we need to ask ourselves, are we preserving Rotary's reputation or quietly diluting it?"**

He further advocated structured mentorship across districts and clubs and highlighted member engagement and belonging as the core of Rotary's sustainability. Retention, he said, is not merely numerical but emotional.

"Members give their time, resources and trust. We must respect that. Membership satisfaction cannot be an annual exercise; it must be a continuous engagement. Then we will not need to chase the growth; it will happen organically," he said.



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A Cyclonic History of Calcutta!

Cyclones often leave with memories of pain, agony, and distress, but owing to some historic storms that hit Kolkata; our city got some of its interesting places and alterations. Let's discover the cyclonic snapshot of Calcutta.

With every monsoon season approaching and earthquakes occurring frequently across, alarms of heavy rains almost every year over the city of Kolkata have now become a part of living. But some leave a greater impact and a deeper scar on the city's face.

Since colonial days, records of such devastating weather that hit the city have been known to leave behind panicking memories. A remark goes that British officers feared most about Calcutta were its frequent cholera upsurges, advent of malaria, and third, the annual storms.

During 1737 Calcutta had just started taking its baby steps. Main city was segregated into separate Black Town for natives & White Town for colonial settlement. Black Town mostly had kaccha houses, while White Town only had pakka ones. Francis Russell, a high-ranking official, writes that it was such an intense storm & record rain took place that Kolkata had never witnessed before. Just a few hours of rain resulted in 15 inches of stagnant water across the city. Most houses of officers had broken doors and windows.



The havoc damage was unforeseen. The police station received complaints that more than twenty thousand boats, small shops, vessels, and bajras had been submerged in Ganga that night. Innumerable cattle and animals got drowned.

Later, alongside cascades of domestic cows and buffaloes, officials even recovered many drowning tigers and rhinoceroses too! From the company business vessels many small crocodiles were recovered, as records say.

This particular storm of 1737 has immense geographical relevance as it heavily changed the discourse of the city's rivers. Previously, the

Bhagirathi and Bidyadhari were joined through a canal. Through this canal sailed business vessels during the early colonial era. Post this storm, the canal was fully broken & damaged; no ship could pass, the Bidyadhari River was cut off from water supply & fully dried out within some time. The Company filled the canal, though some parts of Bidyadhari's course can be spotted near Ashoknagar.

In Kolkata, the Bidyadhari's connecting canal was filled to create a joining road. Later, the same road known today as Creek Row was built over that discarded canal after the storm. It took some decades for Calcutta to stabilize again.

Until in 1773 the storm returned in a big way and this time was accompanied by an earthquake. The storm lasted for an entire night but caused havoc damage throughout. The pious heritage structure of the esteemed *Nabaratna Temple of Gobindaram Mitra*, which stood in the heart of the city, was regarded among the highest contemporary structures, collapsed and the 9 steep pinnacles fell down. Now only old paintings of the era can connect us to severity of how devastating the damage was. It was during this, that another new place in Kolkata got its name.

The dinghi boats were parked across central Kolkata, over that rain 7 big dinghis got twisted over, it had huge business losses. From that incident, the place we know today as *Ultadanga* got its name allegedly from Ulto Dingi, or the overturned boats. Strange, but it goes like so!

Five years later William Hickey's records bear testament to another havoc storm hitting Kolkata during 1778. Hickey recalls going over to a friend's place for dinner, his house was newly constructed then. A severe storm hit overnight, when Hickey came back next morning to check, it was only the frames of building standing, with everything inside broken and damaged, thrashed by the gusty winds and rain. Parks mentions a big storm taking over the city during June of 1823, where he remarks it as possibly the fiercest wind he had witnessed in his lifetime.

Along with severe thundering, he wrote that the storm had completely erased his fond memories of enjoying light showers in Europe, and this storm shocked him from within. All the window panels of his house breaking in front of him were quite wrenching to witness. Quite similar to 1737, another historic cyclone storm gave Kolkata another wonder, quite interestingly. The Company officials were finalizing the English colony for their settlement across central Calcutta and thought of making it the main port of the city for trading nearby.





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As planned, Port Canning came into existence as Calcutta's port soon nearby. But a senior Englishman among them named Henry Piddington was sceptical about the port since its inception and often remarked that constructing the main port of the city just near the dwelling area adjacent to the Ganges would not be wise because, to his knowledge, this area gets heavily drenched and flooded whenever storms or heavy rains arrive every year. The officials did not take his point seriously.

But soon the Kalbaishakhi season hit and in no time the newly built Canning Port got entirely damaged and wrecked. Now the officials got the taste of reality, and the higher authorities took an immediate call that the main port of the city needed to be relocated somewhere interior to the land and away from the core settlement. That is how, as we see today, the current location of Kolkata Port was chosen and constructed, and it operates till date as one of the most efficient ports of eastern India, as we know further.

The stormy memories that Kolkata has whether towards later recent years like Aamphan, Aila, Phani, or even the storms during the last Puja season mostly carry scars and gloomy memories for all, likewise goes for the history of the city too for its geographical location. But as the rhythm goes, sailing through the waves and storms and the darkest clouds, my city will always sing the anthem of rising up again and again to its life, repairing the wounds to glee. To The City of Joy always, dear Kolonolini Kolkata!

Minutes of the 2351st RWM held on March 31st, 2026 at PVR, Hide Road

1. The President Bandaru called the meeting to order & requested all members to rise for the National Anthem.
2. The President then requested PP Sanjay to officiate as Secretary in the absence of PN Shubhayan Sengupta.
3. The President informed that the earlier model has been discontinued and the new model will involve a higher cost. Contributions pledged:
 - School Authorities: 10,000
 - Dr. Sharda Ray (spouse of PP Dr. Arabinda Ray): 25,000
 - Rtn. Banadru Mohan: 2,500
 - PE Dr. BN Jha: 2,500
 - Proposed Installation Date: May 18th, 2026
4. PP Dr. JK Singh spoke about the outflow of funds. He further elaborated on inflow and outflow, suggesting that a decision may be required on making certain contributions compulsory.
5. The President informed that the earlier model of Blood Storage Unit for donating to TSI has been discontinued. The updated machine will cost approximately 20,000 more, which will be met from Trust funds. PP Tapan Roy raised a query regarding individual member contributions for TSI project.
6. The President emphasised the need to schedule a timeline for collection of Semi-Annual Dues (SAD).
7. PE Dr. BN Jha briefed the members on Dental & Hearing Projects. He also suggested undertaking joint-projects with 5-6 Rotary Clubs.
8. PP Dr. Arabinda Ray informed that plans are underway for the 7th Medical Mission to Nigeria.
9. In absence of the Club Secretary, PP Sanjay conducted the club business.
10. President Bandaru confirmed the minutes of the last meeting and terminated the meeting.