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NEXT MEETING

Wednesday
18th September 2024
at 6.30 PM
at Rotary Balbhavan

Speaker:
Rtn. John Chiramel

Topic:
Classification Talk



BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF COCHIN

Volume 89, Issue 11, 11th September 2024

THE COCHIN ROTARIAN

AGING GRACEFULLY: EMBRACING LIFE'S LATER STAGES



Ageing is an inevitable journey that begins at birth and continues relentlessly until our final moments. It is a natural process, often likened to a clock that starts ticking the moment we are born, with no option to turn it back. In our youth, we look forward to life with enthusiasm and optimism. Our bodies grow faster than they degenerate, and we experience phases of physical and mental growth, adding to our cognitive skills, professional acumen, and breadth of knowledge.

However, as time passes, a balance emerges between the constructive biological processes of building and the degenerative processes of aging. Eventually, the breaking down processes biologically overtake the constructive ones, leading to physical and mental decline. This stage of life is a universal experience, eloquently described by Shakespeare in *As You Like It*, where

he depicts the seven stages of man, culminating in a state devoid of sight, hearing, and vitality.

As we grow older, our priorities shift from academic and professional achievements to concerns about health and financial stability. For many, retirement represents a challenging transition. The emotional impact of stepping down from positions of power, responsibility, or high income can be profound, especially for those accustomed to being at the top of their fields. Dr. Abraham emphasizes that retirement should not equate to withdrawal from life. Instead, it should be a time to learn new skills, engage in activities that bring joy, and maintain a positive attitude.

He stresses that the key to a fulfilling life, especially in later years, is attitude. It is vital to remain positive, acquire new knowledge, and foster interactions

with friends and communities. This phase of life can be as rewarding as any other, provided we approach it with the right mindset.

The Importance of Never Retiring

Dr. Abraham advises against the traditional concept of retirement. With life expectancies increasing, many of us will spend more years as retirees than we did in active employment. Rather than retiring, he suggests planning for this phase thoughtfully, engaging in activities like learning new languages, traveling, teaching, or pursuing hobbies. Scientific evidence shows that learning new skills, such as a foreign language, can significantly reduce the risk of cognitive decline, including conditions like Alzheimer's.

Dr. Abraham cites Benjamin Franklin as an example of a lifelong learner. Franklin, known for his contributions to the American Revolution, was also a prolific inventor, writer, and diplomat who continued to learn and contribute until his death. This spirit of lifelong learning and adaptability is something we can all aspire to, no matter our stage in life.

Maintaining Social Connections and Emotional Well-being

Maintaining a robust social network is crucial for emotional well-being in our later years. Close friendships and community bonds offer support, companionship, and joy, acting as a buffer against the challenges of aging. Dr. Abraham shares his own experience of living in a gated community with close relatives, a model that provides support without infringing on personal space.



He encourages us to nurture deep, meaningful relationships and engage in group activities, whether professional, social, or recreational. Pets, too, can play a role in enhancing our quality of life, offering unconditional love and companionship. As we navigate this stage, it is essential to focus on the positives, like the joy of friendships and the comfort of routines, which can significantly mitigate feelings of loneliness or isolation.

The Role of Family and Financial Planning

Family dynamics, particularly with children, can be both a source of joy and stress. Dr. Abraham advises parents to provide their children with the right values rather than material wealth, as wealth should serve as a safety net rather than a means of indulgence. He emphasizes the importance of giving children roots and wings, equipping them with the values needed to lead grounded lives while supporting them to pursue their own paths independently.

He also underscores the importance of writing a will to avoid familial disputes and ensure that one's spouse is financially secure after one's passing. This foresight protects the dignity and autonomy

of the surviving spouse, fostering respect from the family. By ensuring that financial matters are clearly addressed, one can prevent unnecessary conflicts and maintain harmony among loved ones.

Embracing Life with a Positive Mindset

One of the greatest challenges of aging is managing anticipatory anxiety—the fear of potential future problems. Dr. Abraham reminds us that the mind often exaggerates negatives and downplays successes, which can lead to a state of constant crisis management. He suggests compartmentalizing problems into categories: serious problems that are rare but significant, problems with manageable solutions, and problems that may not be solvable but should not dominate our thoughts.

Reflecting on our journey, we should recognize how fortunate we are, celebrating the positives in our lives. Dr. Abraham shares a personal story of his daughter's illness, illustrating the unpredictability of life and the importance of resilience and faith in the face of adversity. He urges us to remain grateful for the blessings we have, understanding that life's journey is as much about acceptance as it is about striving.

In conclusion, aging gracefully is not about defying the inevitable, but about embracing it with dignity, wisdom, and an unyielding spirit of learning and growth. By maintaining a positive attitude, nurturing relationships, planning thoughtfully for the future, and staying engaged in meaningful activities, we can transform the later stages of life into some of the most rewarding and fulfilling years.

**By Rtn. Dr. Mathew Abraham,
Speech at Rotary Club of Cochin**

The Magic of Rotary is belonging, and it's a feeling that can appear when you least expect it.

Earlier this year, I was in Slovakia serving as a president's representative during a six-week trip through Europe. When I wrote to Katarina Cechova, governor of District 2240 at the time, I mentioned that my grandmother Veronica Zilka grew up in a small village in the area before settling in the U.S.

It wasn't long before Cechova tracked down my grandmother's village, JakubovaVol'a. She even organized a visit for me, where I received an unforgettable Slovakian welcome.

When I entered the community center of JakubovaVol'a, a small crowd of people dressed in traditional Slovakian clothing greeted me. They sang with beautiful and powerful Central European voices that reminded me of my grandmother.

A lot of families play cards or games when they get together. When I was young, my father would pick up his accordion and lead my family in song. My grandmother would sing along with her impressive voice.

When I walked into the community center and heard traditional music from my childhood — when I

saw a woman play the accordion the way my dad played — I suddenly felt like a little girl sitting at my grandmother's house in Monessen, Pennsylvania. I burst into tears of joy at the memories.

But the magic didn't stop there. District Governor Cechova really outdid herself. A local genealogist worked with a videographer to make a short film about my grandmother. We watched the video together in the community center.

When the video ended, I turned around and saw a man standing in the back of the room. I quickly learned that this stranger, Frantisek Zilka, was my second cousin. His grandmother and mine had been sisters. I felt like I had been struck by lightning.

I visited my newfound cousin's home, which happens to be the home where my grandmother was born. There, he shared old photographs I had never seen of my dad, my uncle, and my grandmother.

Since then, I can't stop thinking about my family of Rotary. When I refer to you as my family, I'm not just being kind. I really think of everyone in Rotary as my family. But I never would have imagined that my Rotary family would introduce me



to long-lost personal family.

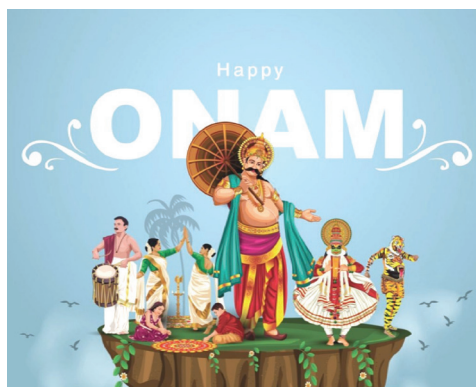
Sitting in that community center listening to traditional Slovakian music from my childhood filled me with joy and a profound sense of belonging. I am so grateful to District Governor Cechova and everyone who helped create that magical experience.

As members of Rotary, we have a unique opportunity to share the same magic with each other and with the world. I encourage you to consider how you can help spread that magic and ensure other members of your club — other members of our Rotary family — feel like they truly belong.

Stephanie A. Urchick
President 2024-25

ONAM - MY PERSONAL NOSTALGIA

‘Onaveyil’ or the arrival of the much awaited sunshine after months of heavy downpour brings out a sudden abundance of colours around you. With tiny white and yellow butterflies flapping their wings around, pretty patches of white ‘thumbapoov’, purple ‘kakkapoov’ and yellow ‘mukkootti’ flowers weave an intricate design on the green grass carpet – all



complemented by the canopy of bright blue skies freshly washed by the monsoon rains. These compose a pretty canvas to welcome Onam.

There is nothing about Onam that Keralites are not aware of – so I thought of sharing some nostalgia about my early Onam memories. Rewind seven decades to my childhood

and I can see Onam as was then celebrated at home.

As a prelude to the festivities, a complete spring cleaning of the house was done the day before the month of Karkidakam. 'Sree Bhagavati' would be ushered in and 'Dasapushpam' offered to her every day during this month. My mother used to make a green paste of 'Mukkootti' leaves which we applied as 'pottu' on our foreheads. It was such fun collecting 'mylanchi' leaves from a neighbour's compound, grinding these to a paste and applying this 'mylanchi' on my hands and feet. Another excitement was when the 'Oonjal' plank was brought down from the attic. My brothers would climb on the mango tree in front of our house and install the 'Oonjal' for us to swing on during this season. Our cow and calf would temporarily be shifted to be tied to another tree till the swing was brought down after the Onam season.

I remember eating a concoction cooked with ten different leaves ('pathuela') during this month. In my childhood, I had not heard of the now popular 'Karkidaka kanji'.

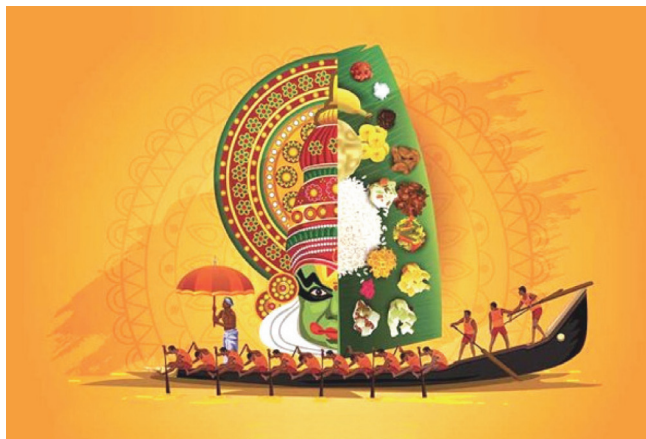
Then there was 'Illamnira' where a fresh sheaf of paddy- 'nelkathir' -is brought to the house from the temple and pasted on top of the main door and on the 'nellara' -the granary where paddy is stored- in the hope that your 'nellara' will remain full with grain through the ensuing year. 'Ona pudava' - new clothes - were given to all the household servants as well as to the farmers who took care of our paddy fields. The latter came to the house bringing 'Ona kazhcha' - jackfruits, bunches of bananas, yam 'chena, white gourd 'kumbalanga' etc. These would fill up our storeroom for weeks to come.

Ten days before Onam, we would start 'poovu idal' with flowers collected from our garden and compound. I used to dislike the smell of cow dung spread thinly on the ground every morning on which the 'pookkalams' -the floral patterns- were made. Then, on Thiru Onam day, we kept 'Thrikkakara Appan' (Vamana) made of wood, washed with 'kaavi' - and decorated with rice flour paste and 'swarnaalari' flowers. A puja would then be done by my father. We would all then look forward to eating the main 'prasadam' which would be 'ottada' cooked on

the 'dosa kallu'. That, together with 'pazham nurukku' and 'pappadam' would be the menu for breakfast on Onam day.

This would be followed by a homemade 'sadya'. Those days Banana chips emerged only at Onam time. Kalyani amma, our old house help would ask, "Mole, namukku kaikotti kalikkende?" (Shall we do a few kaikootikali steps?) and we will do a few dance steps while she sang. My memories of Onam then, were of a family event and celebration, not the social event that it has become today.

We had Kummatikali and Pulikali coming to our doorstep during the Onam season. In Kummatikali, young boys would cover their entire bodies with a particular type of grass and will have different types of



masks - 'Thalla' a toothless old woman and bears are characters I can remember. They went from house to house, sang and danced to Kummatti songs and would leave only after they are tipped some money. I used to be scared of the 'pulis' painted like tigers dancing to the beat of the drums. There would also be a man dressed as 'Saippu' - white man - with a gun trying to shoot the tigers. On the 4th day of Onam, there will be an entourage of 'pulis' on top of lorries going around the Trichur Round performing 'pulikkali' as they go, with hundreds of people collected on both sides of the road to watch the spectacle.

With that the curtain falls for Onam celebrations for the year.

By Rtne. Dhanya Nair



Rtn. Kurian C. George	14 Sept
Rtn. Sidharth Dominic	14 Sept
Rtn PP C.A. Salim	15 Sept
Rtn. Sebastian Joseph Zacharias	15 Sept
Rtn. PP Joseph Zacharias	18 Sept



Rtn. PP Raghu Jairam / Rtne. Radhika	15 Sept
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