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NEXT MEETING

Wednesday
9th October 2024
at 7.00 PM
at Rotary Club of Cochin
Balbhavan



BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF COCHIN

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THE COCHIN ROTARIAN

REMARKABLE JOURNEY DURING HIS CLASSIFICATION TALK GIVEN AT THE ROTARY CLUB OF COCHIN

Rtn. John Chiramel, a dedicated board member in charge of Youth Services, recently shared his extraordinary life story with the Rotary Club of Cochin during his classification talk. His journey is one of relentless learning, diverse experiences, and an unwavering commitment to giving back—a testament to the philosophy that life is a journey to be savored, not merely a destination to be reached.

A Journey to His Roots

Rtn. John's journey traces back to his ancestral home in Puthenpeedika, a small town in the Thrissur district. Though his roots lie in this quaint town, his life began far from there. His father, a meteorologist, moved the family frequently, much like the clouds he studied, leading Rtn. John to attend seven different schools in 11 years. Despite this nomadic upbringing, Rtn. John found his grounding at Loyola High School in Pune, a city he now considers his second home, with Kochi, Kerala, being his first.

After completing his MA in Economics from Pune University in 1976, Rtn. John quickly realized that opportunities in the field were limited. This realization pushed him to pursue an MBA from XLRI, Jamshedpur, setting the stage for his long and successful corporate journey.



Rising in the Corporate World

Rtn. John's corporate career spanned 36 years, during which he rose from a sales executive to the CEO and board member of leading companies such as Asian Paints, Garware Paints, Arvind Mills, IL&FS, and MAS Holdings in Sri Lanka. Despite his rapid ascent, Rtn. John experienced a sense of corporate boredom—a sentiment many professionals encounter but rarely act upon. Driven by his passion for economics, he made the bold decision to pursue his first love once again.

The Shift to Academia and Ethics

Eager to deepen his expertise, Rtn. John enrolled at Columbia University,

Remarkable Journey..

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earning a postgraduate degree in Economic Policy. However, his plans to work in development economics were cut short by downsizing at the World Bank, prompting his return to the corporate world with MAS Holdings. As he approached retirement, he felt a strong calling to teach, but his burgeoning interest in ethics inspired him to pursue further education. This led him to earn another postgraduate degree in Ethics from Madras University and ultimately a PhD in Behavioral Ethics at the age of 66. His research focused on why good people sometimes make unethical decisions—a study that profoundly influenced his teaching and worldview.

Today, Rtn. John teaches at prestigious institutions including IIM Kozhikode, XLRI Jamshedpur, and XLRI Delhi. Even in his 70s, his commitment to teaching reflects his belief that learning and sharing knowledge are lifelong pursuits.

The Five Boxes: Goals That Guide His Life

Throughout his journey, Rtn. John has been guided by five personal goals, which he fondly refers to as his “five boxes.”

1. **Teaching:** His first goal was

to teach, which he has proudly achieved. He finds immense joy in interacting with bright young minds and considers teaching his true calling.

2. **Writing:** The second box is writing. Currently, Rtn. John is working on a musical play about King David, filled with thought-provoking theological questions. He is also penning a fictional novel based on a real family in Kerala, rich with intrigue and drama.

3. **Singing:** At 55, Rtn. John embraced singing, completing his eighth grade in Western Operatic Singing and now exploring pop and rock singing. He looks forward to showcasing his talents at a Rotary karaoke night soon.

4. **Playing the Piano:** Learning to play the piano has been his most challenging goal, but he remains determined to master it. Now at Grade 1 of the Trinity College piano course, Rtn. John finds joy and relaxation in playing and singing at home.

5. **Doing Good Works:** His final box is dedicated to service, and he has found the perfect platform in Rotary. As a member of the Rotary Club of Cochin, he actively contributes to community service, focusing on the Rotary

Tech Skills Initiative (RTSI). This initiative aims to educate students in artificial intelligence, with the first batch set to start in January 2025.

A Life of Gratitude and Ongoing Pursuits

Rtn. John’s journey is deeply supported by his family—his loyal wife Anita, three children who have returned to India after studying and working abroad, and two grandchildren who bring him endless joy. Despite his many accomplishments, he emphasizes that he is not finished yet. He believes in enjoying every moment of the journey, rather than fixating on the destination.

At 72, Rtn. John Chiramel continues to inspire those around him with his passion for learning, teaching, and serving others. His story serves as a powerful reminder that it is never too late to chase new dreams, embrace change, and make a positive impact on the world. As he concluded his talk, Rtn. John left the audience with a simple yet profound message: “It’s the journey that matters, not the destination.”

Thank you, Rtn. John, for sharing your extraordinary journey with us—one that motivates us all to keep learning, keep giving, and keep enjoying every step along the way.

ROTARY LAUNCHES CELEBRITY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Rotary International launched its celebrity ambassador program on 19 September, welcoming Kat Graham, Sibongile Mlambo, Gaby Moreno, and Archie Panjabi.

“We are pleased to announce this initiative, especially with the help of these remarkable individuals who are devoted to using their platforms to make the world a better

place,” Rotary International President Stephanie Urchick said. “As Rotary’s work has touched each of the ambassadors, we’re honored for them to amplify our organization’s impact and vision.”

Through traditional and social media, events, advocacy and more, ambassadors will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in

Rotary’s work and engage with supporters to amplify the organization’s mission and impact.

The inaugural Rotary ambassadors include:

Kat Graham, actress, singer, producer, humanitarian - “I have been fortunate enough to have a long history with Rotary, from promoting



women's health and safety around the world to gathering with Rotary members in California to promote peace. Rotary empowers regular people to become extraordinary changemakers by launching their unique initiatives using their unique skills and passions. By doing so, they improve the lives of others far beyond their communities. I've seen the profound difference Rotary members make, and I'm honored to serve as a Rotary ambassador."

Sibongile Mlambo, actress, producer, philanthropist - "I had the incredible opportunity to travel to Uganda with Rotary and see their work firsthand. Witnessing their

dedication to helping refugees and their unwavering commitment to peace left a lasting impact on me. Rotary members show respect for those displaced, empowering them through education, job training, and more, helping to create the conditions for stable, sustainable, and peaceful communities. As a Rotary ambassador, I will enthusiastically help to amplify their message of hope and resilience."

Gaby Moreno, artist, producer - "Returning to my home country of Guatemala with Rotary exposed me to the life-changing impact its members have had on early education and literacy in the country. I

met children who now are inspired to dream big, and who have been given the tools necessary to make their dreams a reality. As a Rotary ambassador with deep personal connections to its members, I want to help spread the word about this remarkable organization that's giving hope to so many children around the globe."

Archie Panjabi, actress, producer - "My first visit to India at the age of 10 opened my eyes to the heartbreaking reality of children suffering from polio. Years later, I returned to administer the polio vaccine and witnessed the dedication of health workers, inspiring my commitment to this cause. For over a decade, I've proudly served as a Rotary Polio ambassador and continued the fight to eradicate polio while shining a light on the full scope of the vital work Rotary members undertake to create a brighter future for all, from safeguarding our environment and improving maternal health, to providing clean water and promoting peace."

Source : <https://www.rotary.org/en/rotary-launches-celebrity-ambassador-program>

VALLAMKALI: THE MAJESTIC SNAKE BOAT RACE OF ONAM

Vallamkali, or the Snake Boat Race, is one of Kerala's most thrilling and visually spectacular traditions, held during the grand festival of Onam. This traditional boat race, featuring long, sleek snake boats cutting through Kerala's serene backwaters, not only exemplifies the state's rich cultural heritage but also embodies the spirit of unity, teamwork, and communal harmony. As Onam celebrates the mythical return of King Mahabali, *Vallamkali* stands as a tribute to these values, making



it an integral part of the festivities.

The origins of *Vallamkali* date back centuries, rooted in the martial history of Kerala. It is believed that snake boats, known as **Chundan Vallams**, were originally crafted as war canoes for battles between local kings in the region's extensive waterways. Over time, these martial vessels transformed from tools of conflict to symbols of community pride and friendly competition. Today, *Vallamkali* is no longer about

battle but about showcasing valor, coordination, and the rich cultural heritage of Kerala.

Significance of Vallamkali during Onam

Onam, the grand harvest festival of Kerala, commemorates the annual visit of the mythical King Mahabali, whose reign is remembered as a golden age of prosperity, peace, and unity. *Vallamkali*, held during this period, is a vibrant display of these very values. The snake boats, often measuring over 100 feet in length and manned by up to 100 oarsmen, are decorated with vibrant colors and adorned with ornamental silk umbrellas.

The rhythmic rowing, accompanied by the traditional **Vanchipattu** (boat songs), reflects the harmony and joy associated with King Mahabali's rule. The spirit of teamwork and collective effort displayed in the races mirrors the ideals of Onam—unity, prosperity, and the celebration of life.

The Iconic Nehru Trophy Boat Race

Among the many *Vallamkali* events held during the Onam season, the Nehru Trophy Boat Race is the most famous. Established in 1952 in honor of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, this race is held on Punnamada Lake in Alappuzha. Nehru was so captivated by the excitement and fervor of the race during his visit that he donated a silver trophy, which has since become a coveted prize for the winning team.

The Nehru Trophy Boat Race is not just a competition; it's a festival that attracts thousands of spectators, both local and international, turning Kerala's backwaters into a vibrant tapestry of tradition, culture, and sport. The enthusiasm and energy of the participants, coupled with the cheers of onlookers, create an electrifying atmosphere that captures the essence of Onam.

Symbol of Unity and Teamwork

Vallamkali is much more than a boat race; it is a celebration of unity and teamwork. Each snake boat is manned by rowers, a coxswain, drummers, and singers—all working in perfect harmony to steer the boat to victory. This spirit of cooperation transcends the com-

petitive nature of the race, highlighting the deep-rooted sense of community that is central to Kerala's culture. *Vallamkali* has evolved into a cultural and social event that brings together people from all walks of life, cutting across social, religious, and economic divides. It serves as a reminder of Kerala's inclusive traditions and offers a platform for the state to showcase its vibrant folklore and heritage. The race has become a major tourist attraction, promoting Kerala's unique culture on a global stage.



Vallamkali, with its captivating blend of history, tradition, and celebration, is a defining feature of Onam. It is not just a race but a living tradition that unites people, celebrates teamwork, and honors the values of the beloved King Mahabali. As the snake boats glide through the waters with the rhythm of drums and chants, *Vallamkali* continues to be a symbol of Kerala's enduring spirit and the joyous essence of Onam.

By Rtn. Prathik Nayar



Rtn. Ajit A. Moopan	29 Sep
Rtn. PP Raghu Jairam	04 Oct
Rtn. Ninan Philip	07 Oct
Rtn. Gayatri Krishnan	08 Oct
Rtn. Srikant Suryanarayan	09 Oct



Rtn. Dr. Puneet Dhar / Rtne. Dr. Meenakshi	30 Sep
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