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NEXT MEETING

Wednesday

22nd January 2025

at 07.00 PM

at Rotary Balbhavan



BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF COCHIN

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TRANSFORMATIVE TRAVEL: HOW EXPERIENTIAL EXPERIENCES SHAPE US

Saju Mathew, Director and Chief Curator of Joabyjo, delivered an insightful and inspiring talk on “Transformative Travel: How Experiential Experiences Shape Us” at the Rotary Club of Cochin. With over 25 years of experience in the travel industry, Mathew has held prominent roles, such as Regional Manager South at SOTC, Sales Manager at American Express, and Vice President at InterCite Holidays. He is now dedicated to curating premium travel experiences through Joabyjo, a venture initiated with his wife, Gigi, driven by their shared passion for travel.

A Journey Rooted in Exploration

Mathew began his career in 1998 while pursuing a Master’s degree in Tourism Administration from Pondicherry Central University. His professional journey took him to renowned organizations like SOTC, a pioneer in



group travel. Over the years, he has explored more than 40 countries and led diverse groups on unique journeys, ranging from family leisure trips to corporate incentives and architectural tours. These rich experiences have cultivated his expertise in immersive and experiential travel, which he passionately advocates.

What is Transformative Travel?

Mathew emphasized that transformative travel goes beyond sightseeing. It is about immersing oneself in the essence of a destination, engaging with local cultures, and fostering personal growth. While travel has become more accessible due to cheaper flights, relaxed visa regulations, and digital resources, mass tourism often prioritizes cost efficiency over meaningful experiences. Mathew encouraged travellers to shift their focus to deeper connections with the places and people they visit.

Key elements of transformative travel include:

- **Immersion:** Engaging closely with local traditions, cuisines, and lifestyles.



- **Interaction:** Connecting with locals to understand their perspectives.
- **Personal Growth:** Challenging oneself through new experiences, leading to self-discovery.
- **Learning and Education:** Gaining insights from other cultures, which often challenge preconceived notions.

Memorable Experiences

Mathew shared anecdotes from his travels to illustrate the impact of transformative travel:

- **Kenya:** Visiting a Maasai village, he learned about their value systems, such as boys living with grandparents to imbibe societal values and rites of passage like earning the title of a warrior through bravery.
- **Switzerland:** Observing traditions like welcoming cows back from mountain pastures before winter highlighted the blend of modernity and cultural preservation.
- **New Zealand:** Interacting with

the Māori people revealed their migration history and unique culinary practices, such as cooking in geothermal springs.

- **Vietnam:** In Hanoi, weekend pedestrian-only streets bring families together, showcasing innovative urban living.

The Role of Challenges

Mathew believes that adventure and challenges are vital components of transformative travel. Activities like self-driving in a foreign country, paragliding, or skydiving push individuals out of their comfort zones, fostering resilience and confidence. He recounted his own experience of skydiving in South Africa, describing the emotional roller coaster that ultimately left him with a sense of achievement.

Cultural Connections

Travel offers opportunities to appreciate cultural diversity and interconnectedness. From savouring organic produce in Spain's farms to discovering Hungarian traditions of horse training and goulash preparation, Mathew highlighted how cultural experiences broaden per-

spectives. Even simple interactions, such as visiting a vineyard or attending a local market, enrich one's understanding of a destination.

Ethical Tourism

Mathew acknowledged the challenges posed by mass tourism, such as overcrowding and cultural dilution. He emphasized the importance of sensitizing tourists to respect local customs and environments. By supporting local economies and choosing authentic experiences, travellers can contribute positively to the communities they visit.

Transformative travel is about rediscovering the inner child, embracing curiosity, and finding joy in the journey. Mathew's talk underscored the power of travel to shape individuals into more open-minded and empathetic global citizens. His experiences and reflections left the audience inspired to embark on their own transformative journeys.

For those seeking curated, meaningful travel experiences, Mathew and Joabyjo specialize in crafting personalized itineraries that ensure every trip becomes a memorable adventure.

TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

January marks a fresh start, a time to take stock of what we have achieved and plan for future success.

It is important to remember that we are in the middle of a major year for fund development. The Rotary Foundation has set an ambitious goal to grow Rotary's Endowment to \$2.025 billion by this year, 2025. This will only be possible through the generous support of every person reading this message.

January is also Vocational Service Month, when we recognize

how vital each member's professional calling is to the work Rotary accomplishes.

During the Arch Klumph Society weekend in October, Gay and I were inspired by the diverse vocations represented among some of our most generous supporters. They included teachers, engineers, health care professionals, and builders. Uniting them was a shared commitment to building a better world through The Rotary Foundation.

So many of us bring the insight of



our professions into Rotary through Vocational Service. The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers exemplifies this. These Rotary members use specialized skills to guide project planning, grant applications, and evaluations, ensuring the projects you fund and implement are sustainable and effective.

The work of The Rotary Foundation, from safe water initiatives to literacy programs, depends on regular giving by our members. One convenient solution for many is Rotary Direct, which provides a sim-

ple way to make monthly, quarterly, or annual contributions. This empowers Rotary to plan effectively, respond promptly to urgent needs, and continue transforming lives.

The Paul Harris Society, which honors those who contribute \$1,000 or more annually, also strengthens the Foundation. Paul Harris Society members, like Klumph society members and Rotary Direct contributors, embody the spirit of sustained giving.

When setting your personal goals for this year, remember that by sup-

porting The Rotary Foundation, you extend your impact worldwide. Every contribution — no matter the size — adds to the momentum driving meaningful change. So, as we enter 2025, let us reaffirm our commitment to The Rotary Foundation.

By combining our efforts and our giving with others in our great organization, we can truly say that no matter our vocation or location, we are contributing to a global force for good.

Thank you for all you do.

Mark Daniel Maloney
Trustee Chair 2024-25

ENTEMAUVU: CULTIVATING GREEN MINDS IN CHELLANAM

In an inspiring initiative to nurture environmental consciousness among young minds, the Rotary Club of Cochin, in collaboration with the Agri Tourism Society, successfully conducted this year's edition of the "EnteMaavu" project. This heartwarming program aims to provide mango saplings to first-grade students across schools in the Chellanam area, fostering a connection with nature from an early age.

This year, 255 mango saplings were distributed to first-grade students from seven schools in the region. The event witnessed en-

thusiastic participation from the young recipients, who were excited to plant and nurture their saplings, symbolizing a greener future.

Several dignitaries graced the occasion, lending their support to this meaningful cause. Advocate Mr. Julappan, President of the Agri Tourism Society, and Mr. Ravikumar, General Secretary of the Agri Tourism Society, played pivotal roles in facilitating the initiative. Ms. Vasanthy, the dedicated Headmistress of one of the participating schools, and Mr. Antony Sheelan, PTA President, added their encour-

agement and insights to the event.

Assistant Governor Rtn. Sanjeev Samuel highlighted the Rotary Club's commitment to environmental sustainability, emphasizing the long-term impact of such grassroots initiatives. Our Community Service Chair Rtn. Gautam Sreedharan, a key figure in the project's execution, also attended, reinforcing the importance of community collaboration.

The "EnteMaavu" project exemplifies how simple yet thoughtful actions can inspire children to take

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responsibility for the environment. By planting and caring for these saplings, the young students will not only contribute to a greener Chellanam but also develop

a lifelong bond with nature. The Rotary Club of Cochin and the Agri Tourism Society remain committed to continuing this initiative, ensuring that the seeds of environmental stewardship are sown for generations to come.

PONGAL: A CELEBRATION OF GRATITUDE AND TOGETHERNESS

Pongal, one of the most cherished festivals in India, especially in Tamil Nadu, is much more than a harvest celebration. It is a profound expression of gratitude, a community-driven tradition, and a testament to the harmonious relationship between humanity and nature. Celebrated with joy and fervour, Pongal marks the beginning of the Tamil month “Thai” and coincides with the sun’s northward journey, an astronomical event known as “Uttarayan.”

The Significance of Pongal

The festival derives its name from the Tamil word “pengu,” meaning to overflow, symbolizing abundance and prosperity. Traditionally, it is observed over four days, each with its own rituals and significance.

1. **Bhogi Pongal:** The first day focuses on cleansing and renewal. Old, unused household items are discarded in a symbolic bonfire, representing the burning away of negativity and the welcoming of new beginnings.
2. **Thai Pongal:** The central day of the festival is dedicated to the sun god, Surya. A special dish called “Pongal” is prepared by boiling freshly harvested rice, milk, and jaggery until it overflows. This ritual epitomizes abundance and gratitude for a bountiful harvest.
3. **Mattu Pongal:** On this day, the contribution of cattle, especially cows and bulls, is honored. The animals are bathed, adorned with garlands, and worshipped as a sign of respect for their vital role in agriculture.
4. **Kaanum Pongal:** The final day is a time for social gatherings and family reunions. People exchange greetings, visit relatives, and enjoy cultural activities. It’s a day to strengthen bonds and appreciate shared joys.

The Essence of Pongal

The festival is a celebration of the farmer’s toil, the earth’s bounty, and the divine forces that sustain life. It teaches the values of gratitude, sustainability, and community spirit. The simple act of preparing Pongal, of



ten outdoors in clay pots, becomes a communal event where neighbours, friends, and families come together in unity.

Celebrating Pongal Together

This Pongal, let us extend the spirit of thanksgiving beyond our homes. By recognizing the efforts of those who ensure our sustenance, from farmers to delivery workers, and by giving back to the less fortunate, we can truly embody the festival’s essence.

May the overflowing sweetness of Pongal fill our lives with prosperity, kindness, and joy.

Happy Pongal!

By Rtn Prathik Nayar



Rtn. PP C.A. Salim / Rtne. Rasheeda	16 th Jan
Rtn. K. Mathew Abraham / Rtne. Geetha	17 th Jan
Rtn. Deepak Mathew Varghese / Rtne. Leena	19 th Jan
Rtn. Mohan Kavalakkat / Rtne. Thresiamma	22 nd Jan



Rtn. John George Nechupadam	17 th Jan
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