

# THE LIGHTHOUSE

BOND | BUILD | BRING CHEER

WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS | ISSUE 16 | October 20, 2024







Dear RCMers,

On the 10th of this month, people around the world observed World Homeless Day, with plans to prevent and end homelessness and alleviate the suffering of those experiencing it.

Meanwhile, Rotary Club of Madras made a landmark contribution to these efforts by handing over 29 newly built homes for the underprivileged.



**Rtn.Shivkumar Eashwaran**  
Editor

**Rtn.A.R.Raghunandan**  
Chairperson

**Mr.Madhu Mathen**  
Co-Chairperson

## Rotary Club of Madras

**17<sup>th</sup>**  
Weekly  
Meeting

**Speaker :**  
**Rtn. Ravishankar Dakoju**  
 Rotary Club of Bangalore  
 DGN - District 3192  
 Indian philanthropist - who is the single largest community development fund contributor from India to Rotary Foundation at INR 100 Crores.

Topic : **Joy of Giving**

**Tuesday, 22nd October 2024 | 1.30 pm**  
**Lunch : 12:30 - 1:30 pm**  
 at Hyatt Regency, Chennai.

*Please note that spouses are cordially invited for this meeting*

**Rtn. G. Chella Krishna**  
President

**Rtn. Shanno Ravi**  
Director - Club Service

**Rtn. Rajesh Mani**  
Honorary Secretary

**Rtn. PP. Rani Muralidharan**  
Chairperson - Programs Committee

# THE LIGHTHOUSE

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Cover Pic : Handing over of Homes for the Homeless

Send in your articles, news and stories for consideration in the Lighthouse bulletin to:  
[editor@rcmlighthouse.com](mailto:editor@rcmlighthouse.com) Stay updated with our very own RCM magazine!

# Homes for the Homeless Project

## Homeless to Heartful

On October 13, 2024 the Rotary Club of Madras (RCM) inaugurated 29 homes for the Irular community in Bommaji Kulam, Gummidipoondi. The Irulars, a disadvantaged community residing across Tamil Nadu, have faced generational financial and social hardships. Bommaji Kulam, located just a five-minute drive from RCM's Boys Town Society, is a small hamlet where many families have long struggled against harsh weather, economic instability, and poor living conditions.

With the rains around the corner, it was decided to hand over the homes as quickly as possible so that this year, the beneficiaries will have a warm and safe home. Our partner in execution, 'AID India,' took it up in





## Hardship to Hope

When I called Vipin, expressing my desire to visit Gummidipoondi, for the handing over of the 'homes for the homeless' ceremony, I had no idea what to expect. As we approached the venue, the sight of the newly built homes for the Irular community left me speechless. Each house stood as a symbol of hope, ready to become a place where families would begin a new chapter.

The moment we handed over the keys and cut the ribbons, the air was thick with emotion. I'll never forget the look on the families' faces. Their eyes, full of gratitude and joy, told stories of hardship but also of hope. Their smiles, their quiet words of thanks, filled my heart in a way that's difficult to put into words. It is humbling to witness such pure happiness and it reminded me of the incredible power of giving.

After the ceremony, we visited Boys' Town. We were hosted by Rtn. Dr. Anuradha Ganesan for a delicious hot lunch at Boys' Town. Everyone involved in the Boys Town project demonstrated awe-inspiring dedication and care. Walking through the facility, it struck me as to how much effort goes into keeping such a place running. It is a place brimming with hope, compassion and the relentless drive to make a positive impact.

We also visited the vocational training centre and saw firsthand, the efforts and their impact on the residents there.

Of course, like every Rotary event, this day was organised with care and precision. President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna, Rtn. IPP. S. Ravi, Rtn. Dr. Anuradha Ganesan and District Governor Elect, Rtn. AKS Vinod Saraogi, spoke from their hearts as they addressed the community, their words ringing with authenticity and passion. The day was a poignant reminder of the profound impact service can have on a community - and on us.

This, to me, is the true beauty of being a Rotarian—the opportunity to witness happiness in its purest form and to reaffirm our commitment to service. Days like this fuel our determination to keep making a difference in the lives of others. It's a gift, and I am deeply grateful for it.

- Rtn. Nidhi Kapoor Thadani

## RCM Raises Roofs and Spirits



Green Rotarians Nidhi Kapoor Thadani and Ravindran Ramachandran on their maiden visit to Boys Town and the TTC facility.

Building 29 houses in Tamil Nadu, on the Andhra border sounded like a daunting effort, so I wanted to be a part of the RCM effort when it was being handed over. This was in two adjoining villages close to our Boys Town. In our RCM meetings, we often hear about the huge donations made, but we were able to see firsthand, where the money is being spent. Seeing the homes and the people receiving them, along with their happiness expressed in different

languages (but in the universal human emotions), made this a beautiful event to remember.

The earlier mud huts were still present as a stark contrast to what RCM has built, and the villagers spoke of the rains, snakes and insects troubling their day-to-day life and that of their children. The event itself was well curated and presented the depth of effort that President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna, IPP Rtn. S. Ravi and Community Services 1 Director Rtn. Dr. Anuradha Ganesan along with their respective chairs and committees over the last couple of years have invested, to ensure that not only the homes, but also the title deeds to these, are in place and handed over. Kudos to our Team, cheers!

I spoke with a few of the families benefiting and I could see the genuine joy and hope that they have for the future. One of the ladies lamented that we were not coming to her house in the adjoining village, to which I replied that we would do so next time around.

I had connected with a few other Greens to see if they would be available to join together to go, as the list of those who confirmed to visit this event was a bit underwhelming. Thanks to Rtn. Vipin Sachdev for stepping up and picking me up from my house for this.

Of course, the cherry on the top was the visit to Boys Town, which was all that I had heard about and more. Having the Boys Town gurus and veteran "NKs" (Rtn. PP. N.K. Gopinath and Rtn. N.K. Bhatia) show us around, tell us what was done there and also talking with the Boys and Principal/Teachers, made it all the more interesting and memorable.

- Rtn. Ravindran Ramachandran



earnest, managing to complete the project on time. We were ready to hand over the 271 square-foot houses, with fans and lights fitted.

The event began with a traditional Aarti welcome, performed by the village women, creating a warm and auspicious atmosphere. This was followed by the unveiling of the plaque by our Chief Guest, District Governor Elect RI Dist. 3234 (2025-2026) Rtn. A.K.S. Vinod Saraogi, in the presence of RCM President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna, IPP.Rtn. S. Ravi, Director of Community Services 1 Rtn. Dr. Anuradha Ganesan, Chair of the project Rtn. N. Prakash and other attending Rotarians.

Following this, the ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at the beautifully decorated houses, adorned with vibrant Rangoli and traditional



banana leaf torans. The festive atmosphere was filled with joy and gratitude from the beneficiaries, who eagerly expressed their heartfelt thanks to everyone involved.

This impactful project was carried out in collaboration with 'AID India,' with Mr. Balaji Sampath, Founder of AID India, joining the Rotarians in planting tree saplings in front of the homes.

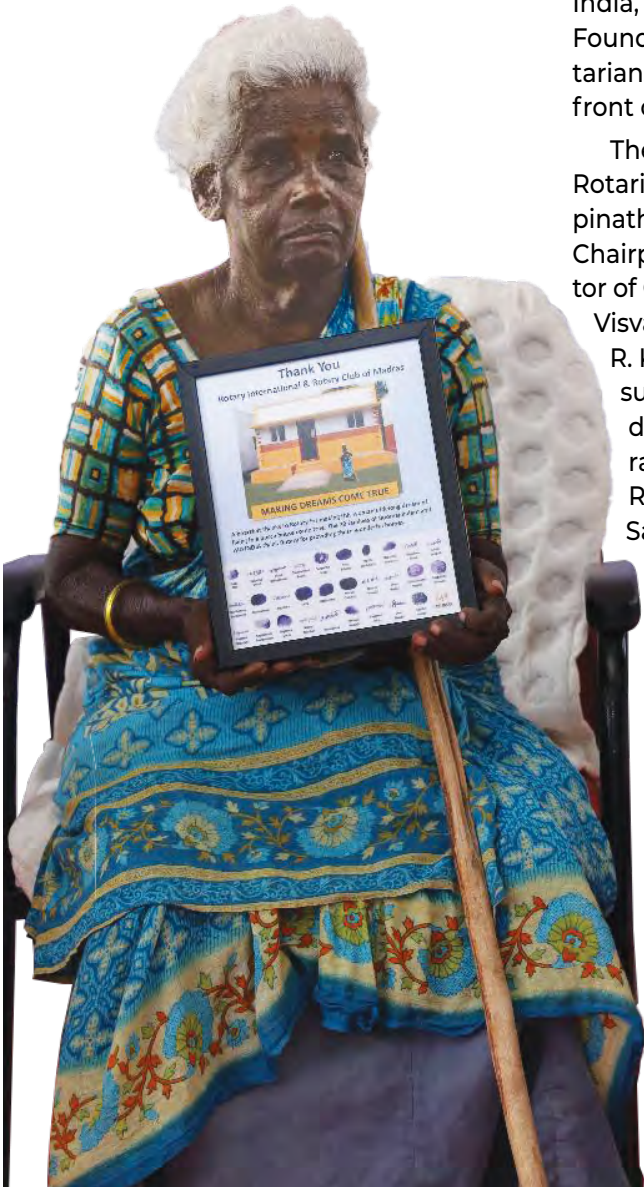
The event was graced by many Rotarians, including Rtn. PP. N.K. Gopinath, Homes for the Homeless Chairperson Rtn. N. Prakash, Director of Community Service 2 Rtn. A.M. Visvanathan, Rtn. N.K. Bhatia, Rtn. R. Kadiresan Adityan and Ann Vasughi, Rtn. Nidhi Kapoor Thadani, Rtn. S. Srilatha, Rtn. S. Subramaniam, Rtn. Ravindran Ramachandran and Rtn. Vipin Sachdev. It was heartening to see green Rotarian Nidhi attending the event and taking time to understand RCM's work in Gummidipoondi area.

Rtn. Dr. Anuradha Ganesan delivered the Welcome Address, thanking the dignitaries and expressing heartfelt gratitude to all Rotarians for their generosity and commitment. "We are all happy to see you happy," she remarked, referring to the beneficiaries.

She also highlighted the support and significant efforts of President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna, IPP. Rtn.S. Ravi, last year's 'Homes for the Homeless' Chairperson Rtn. A.M. Visvanathan and this year's Chairperson Rtn. N. Prakash, in ensuring the project's success through multiple site visits and constant engagement.

President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna praised the contributions of each Rotarian, especially acknowledging Mr. Balaji Sampath, for his dedication to social work and personal commitment of spending time and effort in executing this project. He also commended Rtn. IPP. S. Ravi for initiating the project and shared that the Chief Guest Rtn. Vinod Saraogi has contributed over USD 330,000 to Rotary's causes.

Next, Rtn. IPP. S. Ravi addressed the gathering and on behalf of RCM, he expressed deep gratitude to Rtn. Vardhaman Jain and Rtn. Mahinder Jain for their generosity. Rtn. IPP. S. Ravi also took a moment to acknowledge the tireless efforts of Nemalur Panchayat President Ms. G. Govindhammal and Ward Member Mr. Sampath Kumar in advocating for housing for the Irular families. He then invited Mr. Balaji Sampath and his team on stage to recognize their ongoing passion and efforts in securing housing for underserved communities.







Chief Guest Rtn. Vinod Saraogi expressed his happiness at seeing the completion of this project. He highlighted that a proper home is essential for a peaceful life, providing security and a conducive environment for children's education, which is vital for their future aspirations.

During the event, Rtn. N. Prakash invited three beneficiaries to the stage to share their joy at receiving a home. Filled with emotion, they expressed their gratitude to Rotary, marveling at the transformation, the new homes had made in their lives, after years of being homeless. A particularly touching moment occurred when an elderly beneficiary, overwhelmed with joy at receiving a home, presented the Rotarians with a special memento—a token of gratitude featuring the signatures of all the beneficiaries.

The ceremony concluded with Rotarians departing to Boys Town for a grand lunch, celebrating the success of the project and the beginning of new opportunities for the beneficiaries.

A lot of efforts in organizing the event were made by Rtn. N. Prakash and Rtn. A.M Visvanathan, who visited the far-off site multiple times.







## Boys Town needs your Time

Friends,

This is a time request for Boys Town. Boys Town as you are aware, is our facility where we house around 80 Boys in Gummidipoondi and take care of them while complying with Government Child Welfare Committee norms. These Boys are from difficult backgrounds - single parent homes, hard financial conditions, etc. and our Club gives them a place to stay, study, learn and enrich themselves. This is a project since 1987.

Specific point-there are around 35 weekends until we reach the end of this Rotary Year. Can we have one Rotarian visit Boys Town every week on a Saturday/ Sunday to spend an hour or two with the Boys? Perhaps a game, a drawing/colouring session - generally spend quality time with them. Hence we need around 35 Volunteers till the end of the Rotary year. Perhaps you can team up with a fellow Rotarian or your spouse or Annet.

The Boys Town Committee takes care to ensure that they are properly fed, clothed, taught Yoga, music etc. However, a visitor from RCM bearing a few sweets or even willing to spend a bit of time will give the Boys a very big boost. The basic aspects are already taken care of, by the Club. It is the enrichment time which a Rotarian can give, which is sought.

If you wish to volunteer for one weekend, do give your name to Rtn.Anuradha Ganesan,Rtn Rakesh Jaiswal,Rtn.N.K Bhatia or anyone in the Boys Town Committee. Please bear in mind that it is a 1.5 hour drive from the city.



**- Rtn.G.Chella Krishna**  
President



The Boys Town team supported with local coordination. Cleaning and sprucing up the place were a challenge, but the transformation witnessed was worth the efforts.

**-Rtn.Dr.Anuradha Ganesan,**  
Director Community Service 1

### Birthdays

(21st Oct to 27th Oct 2024)

Rtn. Nataraj Ramaiah	21/10
Rtn. Shivakumar Vellur	21/10
Rtn. Ravee Malhotra	22/10
Rtn. Dr. Sharon Krishna Rau	22/10
Rtn. K. Sapru Mathew	23/10
Rtn. Girdhar Hemdev	24/10
Rtn. V. Sridhar	25/10
Rtn. S. Nagarajan	26/10
Rtn. Ravi Bhatkal	27/10
Rtn. Geetha Nagu	27/10

### Spouses' Birthdays

Ann. Suseela, Spouse of Rtn. V. M. Sivasubramaniam	22/10
Ann. Priya, Spouse of Rtn. Ravi Bhatkal	23/10
Ann. Shailja Jalan, Spouse of Rtn. Vikram Jalan	26/10

### Wedding Anniversary

Rtn. R. Kadiresan Adityan & Vasughi	21/10
Rtn. Ramjei Narasimhan & Sharada	22/10
Rtn. Shanno Ravi & Dr. Ravi Ramalingam	22/10
Rtn. Lakshmanan Ramanathan & Pratyusha	22/10
Rtn. Lala Mathai & Thangam	25/10
Rtn. Ganesh Ananthakrishnan & Madura	26/10
Rtn. Ravindran Ramachandran & Ambika Ravindran	27/10

## Vocational Learning Visit to ITC Grand Chola

# Behind the Grandeur



The exclusive Vocational learning visit to ITC Grand Chola Chennai on October 12th 2024, was a remarkable experience for our enthusiastic group of 25 members. We were a mix of curious learners and seasoned hotel industry experts eager to explore cutting-edge technologies. The visit revealed how this luxurious hotel seamlessly blends grandeur and opulence with sophisticated, sustainable practices.

Walking through the luxurious rooms and presidential suites, we caught a glimpse of a world where no expense is spared to enhance the experience of their guests and dignitaries. The Presidential Suite spanning 2,870 square feet and the Grand Presidential Suite covering 4,380 square feet feature luxurious amenities like a private gym and swimming pool. These opulent accom-

modations truly exemplify the magnificence that defines the brand. Some quirky stories about how high-profile guests often request specific spices highlighted the extensive planning involved, the most recent being that of the Chinese PM.

Our visits to the behind-the-scenes operations—such as the sewage treatment plant, laundry facilities and water bottling plants were an eye-opener. What struck me was the seamless synergy between the front and back operations, which worked harmoniously together.

ITC Grand Chola prides itself on "Responsible Luxury," combining high-end experiences with environmentally conscious practices to positively impact society and the environment.

Some notable highlights include:

1. It is the largest LEED Platinum Certified hotel in the world in the new construction category.
2. Transitioning to electric boilers powered by 100% renewable energy.
3. Achieving 40% energy savings in cooling tower operations through advanced technology.
4. Generating 90% of renewable energy from self-owned wind and solar farms in Tamil Nadu.
5. Utilizing cutting-edge Photo-hydroionization technology, also known as Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) technology, for indoor disinfection.
6. Introducing an atmospheric water generator that produces 2,000 litres of bottled drinking water



**The Grand Chola Experience**

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Vocational Services Committee for organizing the visit to ITC Grand Chola. The program was perfect in its entirety.

One has to see all that goes behind the scenes to understand the vision and commitment of this luxury hotel to self-sustenance and sensitivity to the environment.

Their sewage treatment plant was an eye-opener.

The seventeen domes that have been strategically and aesthetically constructed to bring down the heat on the roof below, thereby reducing air-conditioning costs, are the details worth knowing about. Seeing their laundry system covering both employees and guests, was an amazing experience!

Their courtesy of ending the program with a high tea, comprising an interesting and elaborate spread, filled our hearts and stomachs.

In keeping with our culture, it was heartwarming to be greeted with a Namaste by everyone we crossed paths with, from the higher-ups to the laundry boys.

Overall, the visit was both enjoyable and a huge learning experience.

The next time I go as a guest to ITC Grand Chola, I will certainly have more respect for everything that I enjoy and pay for!

Thanks again, Sanjay, Aswath, Deepak and RCM.

**- Rtn. Usha Umaphathi**

daily, significantly reducing plastic waste.

**7. EV charging stations for guests and associates**

It is the only hotel with four porches – the ‘Valavan’ (North), ‘Sembiyan’(East), ‘Killi’(South) and ‘Cho-



la’(West), each reflecting its rich architectural heritage and culture. Each entrance showcases different design elements, materials and historical influences.

We also toured their signature restaurants, such as Madras Pavilion, Tranquebar, Ottimo Cucina Italiana, Pan Asian and the renowned and most patronized Peshawri, all of which showcase the hotel’s culinary excellence.

**A few personal revelations from the visit included:**

- The surprisingly mild odour at the sewage treatment plant is a sign of effective aeration and healthy bacteria management.
- The atmospheric water machine’s efficiency and the innovative color-coding system for bottled water reinforce their commitment to sustainability.
- The wind turbines in Coimbatore contribute to the hotel’s goal of becoming 90% energy self-sufficient through renewable energy sources.
- The efficient huge laundry machines can make their sparkling

white sheets, napkins and uniforms look brand new.

While exploring their various restaurants, we were enticed by the delicious aromas coming from the dinner preparations. We were pleasantly surprised to have a delightful high tea awaiting us. This featured a standout stuffed ‘Neer dosa’ and delicious ‘tender coconut souffle’ among many other treats. This was truly the cherry on top of a well-spent afternoon!

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the hotel staff: Mr. Adhar Sharma Resident Manager, Mr. Sandeep Pednekar Chief Engineer, Mr. Shariq Aktar General Manager and other staff for their patience in answering our questions and accommodating our curiosity throughout the tour. Every staff we passed was so courteous and their smiles while elaborating on some of the procedures, reminded us how proud they were, to be part of this grand hotel. Their hospitality made the experience even more memorable and exemplified the future of luxury hospitality.

**- Ann. Laura Raj**



# Lillete Dubey's 'JAYA'

## RCM brings '*The Mahabharata*' to Chennai

After a stellar run at NCPA Mumbai and Siri Fort Delhi, 'JAYA' is set to take Chennai by storm.



**J**AYA, a magnum opus rock musical in English, produced and directed by the acclaimed theatre director Lillete Dubey, presents the major events of our favourite epic 'The Mahabharata' in an exciting, contemporary and visually stunning manner.

The play is written by the visionary Sandeep Kanjilal and the music is composed and arranged by the very talented Ashutosh Pathak. World-class lighting is provided by globally renowned Nrityagram Dance Ensemble's designer Lynne Fernandes, the stunning sets by the highly talented Fali Unwalla and costumes are designed by the London-trained Pallavi Patel.

The play features state-of-the-art sound and extraordinary live singing, spearheaded by some of the best in the business.

The production is led by Sherrin Verghese, singer-musician and founder of the 'Band of Boys' and also Saregama exclusive artiste; Megan Murray, a musical theatre actress who has lent vocals to the Grammy-nominated Blues queen Copeland's album 'Done come too far' among many other projects; and 2blue, a true rocker who has played and sung with bands like Iron maiden, Guns N' Roses, Dokken and who has also played Judas in Alyque Padamsee's 'Jesus Christ Superstar'.

The cast also includes the very talented Vikrant Chaturvedi, a veteran of stage and screen from 'Jesus Christ Superstar', 'Aladdin' and a host of big & small screen shows, the multi-talented Asif Ali Beg from web series 'Trial by fire,' 'Scam 1992' and plays like 'Jesus Christ Superstar' among others.

Special talents like Keshia B, the 'Black Mama' of Indian and Western Music, who has sung with some of Bollywood's finest like Arijit Singh; Sid Makker, a regular and well-known face on the Indian screen; Varun Narayan, with his baritone voice from musicals like 'Beauty & the Beast', 'My Fair Lady', Films 'Gulmohar' and 'Article 370' and Ujjayinee Roy, an operatic singer-dancer who has worked with the likes of

A.R. Rahman together with Danny Sura, a well-known singer-actor, these artistes bring an array of professional voices to enrich the musical.

The play features a specially composed richly layered two-hour original music score by the multi-dimensional musician, arranger and composer Ashutosh Phatak, with lyrics by the visionary Sandeep Kanjilal. The wonderfully choreographed Kalaripayattu sequences by the Kalari Guru Arpit Singh, together with Pooja Pant's Kathak, will make the play a truly unique and original experience.



JAYA presents the key events of the Mahabharata in a dramatic montage style through the eyes of Yudhishtira, the main protagonist and the eldest Pandava brother. The play examines and contrasts his 'experiments with truth', with two other divergent beliefs and viewpoints of Duryodhana and his faith in victory and power at any cost, and Karna's fatalistic belief in an unchangeable destiny.

This is a play that combines rock music with mantras and Krishna's flute, together with Kalari drums, to present a modern-day retelling of one of our greatest epic tales. At the heart of the story, is Krishna's powerful sermon on the battlefield from the Gita, culminating in a final ending that is as moving as it is inspiring.

Brilliantly directed, designed and performed by a highly talented cast of professional singers and dancers, 'JAYA' is a universally fascinating tale that is both contemporary and eternal.

It is the Mahabharata for the 21st Century, one that illuminates why it is still so vital and relevant for us even today.

The title sponsor for this event is Access Healthcare. We thank Rtn.Vardhaman Jain for the generous sponsorship.

# SAVE THE DATE



Rotary Club of Madras  
presents

'JAYA' - Lilliete Dubey's  
acclaimed play in rock ballad style

**Sunday, 15th Dec '24,**  
**2 Shows (4.30 pm and 7.30 pm)**

Details to follow...



Issue 16

Suggest the most quirky, whacky or creative caption/ blurb for this photo (Maximum 15 words). The best entries will be reproduced in the next week's edition of Lighthouse.

Mail your captions to  
[editor@rcmlighthouse.com](mailto:editor@rcmlighthouse.com)  
on or before 22nd October.



### Issue 15 : Best Captions

1. "Perfect man to bank a couple of drinks with..."  
- **Rtn. Rajib Kumar Hota**
2. "Sesha Sai invites Bharat Pujara for a Bachelor's Party in Seychelles." - **Rtn. Govind Parikh**
3. 'GLASS mates '... yeh dosti hum nahi chodenge ...'  
- **Rtn. Vijay Dugar**
4. "Sharing laughter and liquor with my partner in crime"  
- **Rtn. Hemant P. Chordia**
5. "Chal Dost tuuu be maza khar or may bee."  
- **Ann. Smitha Harikrishna**
6. "Now that you have fixed my stiff drink, I am ready for your 'Namaskaaram' explanation." - **Rtn. Asha Mathen**
7. "Two legends, one glass raising the bar on friendship and spirit!"  
- **Rtn. N.K. Bhatia**
8. The Double Barrel gun of RCM....Pun unintended  
- **Rtn. PP. Vivek Harinarain**



# Singappenney

**R**tn. PP. Dr. Vijaya Bharathi Rangarajan. She is a doctor who runs a large hospital, is an outstanding Rotarian, an AKF (the Outlier class) and runs one of the largest cancer awareness programs in the country.

24 hours a day isn't sufficient; she manages it all.

She shares her life and her take on various issues openly and honestly, in a heart-to-heart interview from her adopted country, Canada.

She is candid enough to admit that the process of thinking through and responding to the questions wasn't easy, and recalling related events was tough at times.

She has dug deep, recalling not so pleasant memories and has captured her personal journey beautifully. As you read through her narrative, you realise that she is an inspiration and a role model to emulate. A perfect example of grit and determination in times of adversity!

- Rtn.A.R.Raghunandan,  
Chairperson,  
Lighthouse Committee



**1. Vijaya, you're a lady of many accomplishments. You started 'CanStop' in 1998, in memory of your late husband, Dr. Rangarajan. What is 'CanStop' to you and how important is it to be part of your life?**

CanStop – Cancer can be stopped - was born out of a specific need. After my husband's passing, I was overwhelmed by the desire to honor his memory in a meaningful way.

Explaining the loss of a wonderful husband, a man I fell in love with when we met in 1978, and married in 1981, is a story by itself. Losing someone you love to cancer, is a life-altering experience that brings immense grief.

I realized how much support, compassion and guidance are needed by families going through the same ordeals, especially in Government hospitals. My education and background, along with the support of my family, made me realize how much more I had to give back. Our organization aims to provide the kind of resources and emotional care, I wish I had access to, during my husband's battle.

By helping others who are affected by cancer, I hope to create a community where no one feels alone, and those who are fighting cancer have the strength to keep going, just as my husband did.

As I sit for the last three hours, at my old desk in my old bedroom in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, where I grew up, all kinds of memories pass me by, as I try to answer Rtn. Raghunandan's questions. It's never easy, for cancer doesn't just take away the person affected, but leaves behind a profound sense of emptiness and countless memories of battles fought with hope and moments of

helplessness, for the whole family. CanStop is my way of keeping my husband's memory alive in a meaningful and purposeful way.

**2. We all understand, it is about cancer awareness and assistance, but there are several aspects to it. Can you elaborate?**

Beyond cancer awareness and assistance, CanStop provides emotional support and guidance for families, navigating the difficult journey of cancer treatment. Our work is about creating a compassionate community, where volunteers and social workers offer care and empathy to those battling cancer, ensuring that no one feels isolated during this challenging time.

Creating cancer awareness and assistance, will always play a significant part of my life, for many reasons.

I was involved in social service from the beginning, as a teenage volunteer. I would visit old people in hospitals, writing letters (like in the old days) to their family members or doing crafts with them to keep them occupied. Especially after completing my dental studies in India, I would visit old people's homes and orphanages and provide free dental work.

So, I decided to visit government cancer hospitals to see if there was any way to channel my pain into some meaningful purpose and may be, to understand why things happen the way they do. CanStop has become not just a purpose, but has helped me create a path to healing. It definitely has given me a direction of what best I can do for others with a sense of purpose.



**3. It's been 26 years since you initiated the program. A long time. Can you enumerate major details of the activities so far?**

The social workers and volunteers over the past 26 years have genuinely helped to support people, building a network of empathy and care, for which I am truly touched and grateful for their commitment.

CanStop stands as a tribute to my husband, for every life touched or helped through this organization reflects the love and values he very much represented. His dream all along as he changed careers from being an accountant, with BCom, CA and MBA, to going into medicine at the age of 30, and becoming an MD eight years later, was to strive for professional excellence and to make a contribution to meeting the healthcare needs of the community.

This is exactly what has been done by setting up 'Sundaram Medical Foundation', a community based not-for-profit hospital. Our staff and the many doctors continue

to uphold his vision and with the support of his family and Trust members, we have completed 30 years of service to the community.

**4. You take care of SMF and the administration of it. Does it give you time to practice your profession as a dentist?**

My work at the hospital as Administrator and Trustee, alongside my role as a dentist, takes up a lot of my time. For the past eight years, I have closed my private practice, but continue to see my patients at the hospital. Running an NGO and managing a family has not been easy, but as many will say - one needs to set clear priorities, delegate and build a strong team, and create routines for family time.

**5. You are a doctor, a philanthropist, a Rotarian and you run this major non-profit organisation. We know you're involved in a significant way in all of them. How do you balance your time with all of it and also the family?**

One needs to set clear priorities, delegate, build a strong team and create routines for family time. Sometimes, family life and NGO work have overlapped in positive ways, especially in the beginning.

Balancing my roles requires discipline and structure. I prioritize tasks, delegate responsibilities, and ensure I have a routine that allows for family time. In some cases, my family and CanStop's activities overlap, which has helped integrate both aspects of my life in a positive way.

**6. You have already contributed to Rotary's cause by committing to be a major Donor, an AKF Member. That in itself is very generous. You've also done your stint as the President of RCM. If you remember, I was inducted in to RCM during your tenure. You're a part of the district administration and very active. What more with Rotary, Vijaya? International?**

Our Rotary journey started in 1990. My husband Raghu's cousin PDG R. Ratnam asked him to join







RCM and I was asked to join PDG Rekha Shetty at Temple City. In 1994, we opened SMF and in 1995, left Rotary as attendance was compulsory. I was then brought back into the Rotary fold by Rtn C.N Ramdas.

Serving as Rotary Club of Madras President in 2019-20, has certainly been a year of personal growth and learning. It has taught me leadership skills, to have empathy, and most important, be resilient. The more challenges one faces and overcomes, the greater the learning curve and sense of fulfilment.

Bringing my NGO into my Rotary work, I could see the focus being to expand its outreach. We are now able to collaborate with larger networks, at the same time tapping into new areas of need. This has shown me the scaling impact Rotary makes, and it's now entire communities that are benefitting, on a larger scale.

I also like the fact that Rotary is able to deepen partnership with other organizations, both locally and

globally. As I am presently in Canada and have visited RC of Cataraqui - Kingston, Ontario Canada, where we were international partners for their Global Grant for the F.A.R. Project.

This is the kind of collaborative projects that helps us achieve greater milestones.

As I move forward, the key will be reflecting on how best to balance growth with personal fulfilment, ensuring that every step continues to align with my passion for serving others.

**7. How large is your family and what is their participation in all that you do?**

Family life and NGO work have overlapped in positive ways, especially in the beginning.

My son Arjun who completed medicine, then Master's in Public Health, was living in Boston with his wife Meera, also a Master's in Public Health. He left his job few years back to join a start-up, NOORA Health, in Bangalore, helping to set up stan-

dards of care at the preventive level to patients and their caregivers.

My daughter Anupama with a BB. Admin from Boston, is more into the care of animals than humans, and is doing her own thing.

All three of them have been very supportive of CanStop's activities and participate whenever possible.

**8. Do you have a mentor, role model, advisor, confidante?**

I would visit Dr Shanta of Adyar Cancer hospital many times to get her guidance, for she was very supportive. She would ask her volunteers to get in touch with me on ways of creating awareness for the general public.

Others were some patients of mine, a judge, a writer and a mother - many who were in similar situations, sharing our ups and downs, gave us all some perspective.

My father would visit me every six months to help me with the hospital. At home, my father and mother-in law were my biggest supporters, encouraging me at every step.

**9. Mentally and emotionally, are you content with what you do? What is your satisfaction quotient in doing so much of service to the society?**

Having been involved with CanStop has shown me the tangible impact one or a group of volunteers can make with their efforts. Seeing lives improve with a little support and helping the caregivers feel empowered and growing stronger as a community they can lean on gives us each a deep sense of fulfilment.

The smiles on the faces of the children when they see us, for they have forgotten momentary pain, looking forward to the treats or the entertainment, is special - even if the smiles last only for a few hours. Knowing that the work is making a difference, is all that one needs.

## Two Mins Business Lesson from Ratan Tata

I worked with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) for 30+ years and for most of the period, Mr.Ratan Tata was the Chairman. Even in this long tenure, my personal meeting/discussion with him lasted just two minutes. But an important lesson was learned in those two minutes.

I headed India as a Business/ Geography unit, responsible for its P&L from the year 2000 to 2008. It was a great experience.Every year, we used to have our annual business meet and for some meetings, Mr. Tata would be present. We used to have an open house session with him, followed by dinner.

During one such event in the year 2005, during dinner, my two minutes discussion happened. He was walking around meeting people and when my turn came, my boss Mr.Ramadorai introduced me to Mr Tata

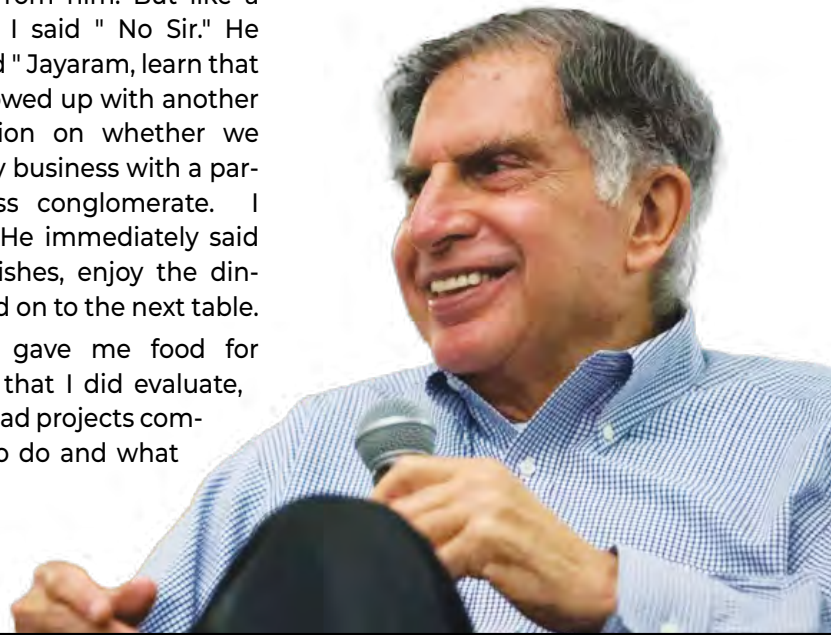
and also told him that I lead the India Business.

He immediately asked me " Jayaram, have you ever said NO to any business?" Honestly, I didn't expect this question from him. But like a true salesman I said " No Sir." He smiled and said " Jayaram, learn that habit ". He followed up with another specific question on whether we were doing any business with a particular business conglomerate. I said "No Sir." He immediately said "Good, best wishes, enjoy the dinner" and moved on to the next table.

That really gave me food for thought. After that I did evaluate, whenever we had projects coming up, what to do and what not to.

A big change in mine and my team's thought process. Very effective two Minutes.

**-Rtn. K.Jayaramakrishnan**



### Award for Interact Club of Sri Sankara Vidhyashramam:

Madras Voluntary Blood Bureau and Association of Voluntary Blood Donors (TN) held their 49th annual award function on October 1, 2024. Chief guests Dr. C. M. K. Reddy and Padmashree Dr. Nithyashree Mahadevan presented the "Distinguished Service in Blood Donation" award to four Interactors and two teacher coordinators .





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