

THE LIGHTHOUSE

WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS
ISSUE 22 | DECEMBER 05, 2023

BUILDING RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITIES



Dear RCMers,

Presenting to you the Nite of the Oscars,
RCM style with Kartiki Selena Gonsalves, winner of the
Academy prize for the best documentary film,
The Elephant Whisperers.

Celebrating Rtn. AVM Balu's 50 years of
Rotary. Colourful photo spread of the Japan trip.

It's indeed an engaging Lighthouse edition.

Yours in Rotary,
Rtn. Sunita Suresh



ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS
INVITES YOU TO OUR
23rd WEEKLY MEETING
TO CONFER THE
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD TO



Shri N. R. NARAYANA MURTHY
Co - Founder and Chairman Emeritus of Infosys



CHIEF GUEST
Shri PALANIVEL THIAGARAJAN (PTR)
Minister for Information Technology and
Digital Services Government of Tamil Nadu

EVENT HOSTED BY
Rtn. SHIVKUMAR EASHWARAN
Honorary Consul - Republic of Armenia

On **Friday, 15th December 2023** at 4:00 PM
at **Regency Manor I, Hotel Hyatt Regency, Chennai.**
(Tea - 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm & Event 4.45 pm to 6.15 pm)

Rtn. S. Ravi President	Rtn. M. Sessa Sai Honorary Secretary	
Rtn. Vikram Chesetty Director Club Service	PP Rtn Paul Jacob Chairperson Fellowship	Rtn. Sandhya Sridhar Chairperson Programs Committee
Rtn. Chella Krishna PE & Chairperson - Awards	Rtn. Vijay Balaji Director - Vocational service	

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Stay updated with our
very own RCM magazine!

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Minutes of the 22nd Weekly Meeting of Rotary Club of Madras

held at the Hyatt Regency on 5.12.23 | 07 at 7.00 pm

Meeting commenced: Sergeant at Arms Rtn. R.Rajenderan collared President Rtn. Ravi Sundaresan who formally called the 22nd weekly meeting of RCM to order followed by silent invocation.



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Present:

President Ravi
 Rotarian R. Rajendran (Sergeant at Arms)
 Rotarian Raj (Collaring President)
 Rotarian Sesha Sai
 Rotarian Vikram Chesetty
 Rotarian AVM Balu
 Rotarian Rao (Past District Governor, Kakinada)
 Past President Niel and Immediate Past President Ursula from The Rotary Club of Fort Collins - After Work. Colorado Other Rotarians and Guests

Opening:

Meeting called to order by President Ravi. Silent Invocation.

Agenda:

1. Normal session with the induction of one member.
2. Honoring AVM Balu for completing 50 years in Rotary.
3. Guest speaker: Ms. Karthiki Gonzalves, Oscar-winning director of "Elephant Whisperers."

Confirmation of Previous Minutes:

Confirmation sought for the 21st weekly meeting minutes

Visiting Rotarians:

Welcomed Rotarian Rao from Kakinada.
 Welcomed Rotarian Nei and Immediate Past President Ursula from Rotary Club of Fort.

Announcements:

Announcement regarding HAL vocational trip by Rotarian Vikram Chesetty. Secretary Sesha Sai announced about the next weekly meeting 15th and not on the 12th, 15th is a Friday and we are going to award a very distinguished gentleman N.R Narayanamurthy for his life time achievement and the person who is going to present the award is our minister Dr. Palanivel Thiagarajan IT minister.

Special Guest - Ms. Karthiki Gonzalves:

Introduced as the Oscar-winning director of "Elephant Whisperers." Presentation on the recent Japan trip with 15 Rotarians and family members.

Recognition of Past District Governor Rtn.Rao (Kakinada):

Acknowledged for his service and presented with a ponnadai and rotary legacy book.

Induction of New Member - Mr. P. Ravishankar:

Introduction by Dr. Bala Ramachandran.
 Induction ceremony conducted by President Ravi.

Recognition of AVM Balasubramaniam's 50 Years in Rotary:

Felicitations by Rotarian Anuradha Ganesan.
 President Ravi honored AVM Balasubramaniam.
 AVM Balu's speech expressing gratitude and sharing experiences.

Guest Speaker Interaction – Ms. Karthiki Gonzalves with Sanjay Madhavan:

Discussion on documentary filmmaking and experiences.

Honoring the Chief Guest:

Chief Guest Karthiki honored by Sanjay Wadhwa.
 AVM Balu and Secretary Sai joined on stage.

Acknowledgments and Token of Appreciation:

Rotary legacy book presented to Chief Guest Karthiki.
 Rotary Foundation medal and PHF presented to Chief Guest.

Vote of Thanks:

- Delivered by Secretary Sesha Sai.

Meeting Adjournment:

- President Ravi adjourned the meeting. ■

BIRTHDAYS

- Dec. 4th - Rtn. Balasubramanian .M
 Dec. 7th - Rtn. Bharat B. Mohindra
 Dec. 6th - Ann. Narayani, Spouse of Ravi Moorthy

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

- Dec. 4th - Rtn. Vummidi Shailesh Raj & V.Sushma
 Dec. 4th - Rtn. Hiren Bhaskar Shah & Nita
 Dec. 7th - Rtn. Rakesh Jaiswal & Ar.Smita
 Dec. 10th - Rtn. Ramasubramanian V. Dr.& Dr.Aruna

From the 22nd Meeting of Rotary Club of Madras Dec. 5, 2023







"CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF SERVICE"

I am deeply honored to stand before you, to speak about the remarkable journey and contributions of Rtn. A.V.M. Balasubramaniam, affectionately known as AVM Balu.

His Rotary journey, which began in 1973, has been a testament to unwavering dedication to the ethos of service. From his early days in the Rotary Club of Madras, where he learned alongside stalwarts, to becoming a driving force in active Rotary engagement, AVM Balu's impact spans five decades.

Now, 50 years later, we commemorate his extraordinary service. Rtn. AVM Balu's impact, resonating both at the Club and District levels, is nothing short of remarkable.

Within the Rotary Club of Madras, Rtn. AVM Balu served as Director of International Services, gracing the board for years. As the Director, he initiated the very first Exchange Programme with the Rotary Club of East Fresno, USA, fostering international friendships and cultural exchange.

He hosted the much-enjoyed "Kalyana Samiyal

Sadham," a full club fellowship fostering camaraderie.

In championing polio awareness, Rtn. AVM Balu played a pivotal role in the "My Flame My India" Project.

Originating in RCM, the Rotary Flame embarked on a global journey. Subsequently, Rtn. Balu took up the significant task of carrying this symbolic flame to several clubs within the district, amplifying Rotary's commitment to eradicating polio.

He has been twice honored as "Best Rotarian," Rtn. AVM Balu's benevolence and support for Rotary projects shine beyond titles and accolades. A humble person, he believes in the saying that the left hand should not know what the right hand does when it comes to charity.

At the District level, he adorned various key roles, including District Chairman for International Services under eight District Governors. His



legacy boasts organising international fellowships, leading Rotary delegations to diverse corners of the world, like East Africa, South Africa & Turkey.

Signing prestigious Sister Club agreements, notably with the Rotary Club of Dubai. Organising a Cycle Rally from Chennai to Malaysia for Rotractors

His influence extended to mentoring the Group Study Exchange Programme, steering District Conferences, advising President Elect Training Seminars, and championing the Awards Programme.

Here I would like to mention that Rtn.

AVM Balu holds the unique honor of serving as the District Chairman for the District Conference, a role traditionally reserved for Past Presidents. Breaking the mold, he became the first non-Past President to undertake this responsibility.

Following which, he seamlessly transitioned into the role of Advisor for numerous District Conferences.

A true Rotarian at heart, he has broken barriers and created friendships among many Rotarians across the District and the Rotary world at large.

His motivation to serve Rotary for such a long time, he confesses, stems from the friendships cultivated across the District and the wider Rotary world.

Notably, his entire family stands as Major Donors to the Rotary Club Foundation, a testament to their shared commitment.

As we celebrate Rtn. AVM Balu's half-century of unwavering dedication to Rotary, it's not just a tribute to his service but a testament to the enduring spirit of Rotary that he embodies—a spirit that continues to inspire generations, including mine and those yet to follow.

Co incidentally I was born the same year as the number of years he has dedicated to Rotary. Rtn. AVM Balu celebrated his birthday yesterday and I wish him a belated but heartfelt happy birthday! May the joy of celebrations continue as he receives a well-deserved recognition for his invaluable contributions.

Despite yesterday's severe weather in Chennai, today's meeting aligns with brighter skies as we come together to honor Rtn. Balu for his outstanding service. It seems the elements themselves recognize the significance of this event.

Rtn. AVM Balu's dedication to Rotary for all these years is truly awe-inspiring.

I've always been impressed with his humility, thoughtfulness, benevolence, passion, dedication and his sense of humour. There is just so much to learn from him.



Let us take a moment to honor this remarkable individual and express our gratitude for his exceptional contributions to the Rotary family.

Thank you.

- Rtn. Anuradha Ganesan

Director - Community Services 1 ■



The Rotary Club of Madras had the pleasure of hosting a distinguished guest speaker, Kartiki Selena Gonsalves, renowned for her compelling documentary, "The Elephant Whisperers." The event, skilfully and seamlessly moderated by Sanjay Madhavan, delved into Kartiki's extraordinary journey and insights into the world of documentary filmmaking.

This trailblazing Indian director and documentary filmmaker, holds the unique distinction of being the first Indian film director to receive an award for her exceptional work on "The Elephant Whisperers." Her multifaceted career includes roles as a cinematographer and co-executive producer, coupled with experience as a camera operator for globally recognized channels like Animal Planet and the Discovery Channel. Currently residing in the Nilgiris, Kartiki has not only made her mark in filmmaking but also founded Birth Spectrum in 2018. This organization harnesses the power of storytelling to raise awareness about diversity and cultural life.

Sanjay commenced the discussion by lauding Kartiki's dedication to attending the meeting of the Rotary Club of Madras despite the challenging weather conditions. He highlighted the emotional

impact of "The Elephant Whisperers" and recommended it as a must-watch.

Kartiki shared her captivating journey, from her early years at IIT Chennai to her eventual immersion into nature in Ooty. Her initial ambition as a photographer transformed into a passion for visual communication, film making, and photography during her college days. A pivotal question about happiness and passion led her back to Ooty, where she discovered the world of wildlife photography and tour guiding. Living with the Muslim community near the India-Pakistan border fueled her transition to cinematography.

The turning point came with her encounter with Raghu, a baby elephant, on the side of the road. This marked the beginning of a remarkable journey that spanned six years, resulting in the emotionally charged and visually stunning documentary, "The Elephant Whisperers." The film gained global recognition after Netflix took over, opening doors for a broader audience and bringing attention to the plight of Asian elephants, leading to positive changes and recognised efforts of Bomman and Bellie, contributing to wild elephant conservation. Looking ahead,

Kartiki's next project focuses on the relationship between orcas and the First Nations in the Pacific Northwest of Canada. She envisions bridging the parallels between two matriarchal societies and continuing her storytelling journey.

The discussion then expanded with the entry of Sanjay Wadhwa and Lata Murugan posing crucial questions. Sanjay, the Managing Partner of AP International and an influential figure in the film industry, offered insights into the challenges of funding documentary films.

Lata Murugan, part of the AVM family with a background in film and documentary production, acknowledged her uncle Balu's 50th year at the Rotary and expressed the enthusiasm of her students at the L V Prasad school to learn from Kartiki, highlighting a growing interest in documentary filmmaking among the younger generation.

The dialogue touched on the challenges faced by documentary filmmakers, the evolving landscape of documentary filmmaking in India, and the potential for documentaries to make it to theatres through smaller platforms focusing on niche content. Technology's advancements were highlighted, as consumer-grade equipment now provides cost-effective alternatives. The

conversation also delved into the diverse nature of documentary filmmaking, from political propaganda to telling the stories of communities, often driven by passion and a desire to share meaningful messages.

Kartiki emphasised the need to change the perception of documentaries and advocated for fair compensation for filmmakers. She also pointed out the positive trend of Indian stories making a splash in the market, marking the beginning of a new era for documentary filmmaking. The essence of documentary filmmaking, she emphasised, lies not just in capturing visuals but in being open, listening, understanding communities, gaining trust, and telling their stories with authenticity.

In conclusion, the afternoon left the audience with a call to action from Kartiki. She urged aspiring filmmakers to tell stories with passion, stand strong with simple ideas, and believe in the world's eagerness to embrace their narratives. The conversation underscored the challenges and opportunities within the documentary filmmaking landscape in India, charting a promising course for the future.

- Rtn. Niloufer Seth. ■





'WELCOMING THE GREENEST ROTARIAN'

P Ravishankar

Born in the city of Coimbatore on 18 May 1961, he completed his schooling from Don Bosco, Egmore he completed his schooling and went to complete his B.E Mechanical from the College of Engineering, Guindy, Anna University, Chennai.

He was a keen sportsman playing cricket for Don Bosco, swam for Tamil Nadu juniors, badminton for Anna University, and was the runners-up of the 1981 national rowing championship for Tamil Nadu.

He also has an MBA from the prestigious Asian Institute of Management in the Philippines majoring in Finance and Marketing.

He has worked cross functionally in various major corporates such as the Tata Administrative Services, Caterpillar, Ashok Leyland and John Deere and Volvo Eicher. He has over 20 years at the CXO level including CEO. He is currently the CEO at Kanchi Kamakoti Children's Trust Hospital.

Sandhya Ravishankar, his spouse is also an engineer from the Anna University and works for Airbus Industries in the UK. She is also a talented pottery expert and has been instrumental in their

two children's growing up to be honest and compassionate individuals, and excellent, young, dedicated professionals, in their respective fields.

First, his elder daughter – Shambhavi graduated in business administration and law from Christ University Bangalore and her masters in law at the University of Reading UK, as a Felix Scholar. She is a budding public policy lawyer, providing various advisory services for digital health and digital gaming companies in India and abroad. She is also on the board of directors of the Alagille Syndrome Alliance, an international rare disease organisation based out of the US, that pushes for cures for ALGS, and supports families globally.

Second, his son – Dr. H. R. Advait, finished schooling in Sishya School, Chennai, and went on to finish his MBBS, from KMC, Manipal University, Mangalore. He is currently a budding medical professional working at Manipal Hospital, Bangalore, and planning to his post-graduate studies overseas.

Common family hobbies - they are a family of readers, golfers, swimmers, photography lovers, and trekkers. Go-karting also happens to be a family passion. ■



A TRIP TO THE 'LAND OF THE RISING SUN'



On 22nd November 2023, 15 RCMers, their family and friends left for the 'land of the rising sun', Japan. There was an air of excitement and happiness about what was to unfold in the next one week of the trip. Introductions done, everyone settled down, and we took off with expectations galore.

We landed at Narita airport in Tokyo and an hour's drive later were at our hotel. Akira was our guide during the trip. He spoke enough English to convey what he wanted. And his introduction upfront was that he was a martial expert. Don't know if that was a fair warning to us? But the only word he didn't use was YES. For everything, it was a no if we wanted to deviate even a little!

Over the next 6 days, we were treated to the beauty of nature at its best.





The cleanliness everywhere, the serene atmosphere and brilliantly blue skies made it an experience of contentment.

The buzzing city of Tokyo, the old-world quaint charm of Kyoto and the skyscrapers of Osaka - We experienced a bit of everything all in the glorious vibrance of autumn colors.

We explored the places on our own for a few hours and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Before we knew it, the holiday was coming to an end and all of us wished it not to. But all good things have to come to an end for other things to begin.

Overall, a satisfying trip, even as we acknowledge there is always scope to improve.

We thank President Ravi and the International travel team for choosing Japan. Rtn Ramji and the International Travel Team worked for over 3 months to get us the amazing experience we got from our trip. A big thank you to Soundarya for stepping in to accompany us instead of Ramji and navigating our requests with the guide Akira.

Overall, it was an amazing trip, largely thanks to the wonderful camaraderie and happy moments with everyone.

- Archana Shri Sanjay. ■



"ONE Walk, HOPE: A TRIUMPH IN BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

CANSTOP FOUNDATION'S WALKATHON 2023"



invigorating Zumba dances, and the heartwarming formation of a human pink ribbon, all geared towards spreading awareness and support for breast cancer.

The event's pinnacle was marked by the gracious flag-off of the walkathon by the chief guest, culminating in a successful and memorable walk. Participants were not only treated to a fulfilling experience but were also provided with refreshments and participation certificates as tokens of appreciation.

The "One Walk, One Hope" event was not just a walkathon; it was a celebration of unity, hope, and shared determination in the fight against breast cancer. With smiles, energy, and a profound sense of togetherness, the community made a resounding statement of support and solidarity in the face of this critical cause.

- Rtn. Balaji Chinni. ■

In a vibrant display of unity and support, Olcott School, Besant Nagar, served as the backdrop for a spectacular event organized by the Canstop Foundation on October 29th, 2023. The title sponsor, Sundaram Group of Foundation, contributed to the success of this heartwarming affair that drew over 1500 enthusiastic participants.

Honored by the esteemed presence of HON. MP Thamizhachi Thangapandian as the chief guest, the event was brought to life through the dedicated efforts of Rtr. Dharmesh S. from the Rotaract Club of Jeppiaar University, who was the event chairman with the motivation of Youth service director Rtn. Balaji Chinni and mentorship of Rtr. Sasikumar. Supported by 11 other Rotaract Clubs, including Rac Jeppiaar University, Rac New College, Rac Loyola, Rac SDNBV, Rac AVIT, Rac MOP Vaishnav, Rac Madras, Rac Chennai, Rac GSS, Rac ISSM Business School, and Rac Jeppiaar Engineering College, the event was a collaborative triumph.

The day was filled with engaging activities such as DJ sessions,

LEGALITIES OF **ORGAN DONATION** WEBINAR – A REPORT

Organ donation - the word conjures up various questions in one's mind. A noble cause alright, but fraught with difficulties, a brave man's fight for justice, a landmark judgement and its offshoot... an organisation that works towards a better and smoother functioning of the system.

The Interact Club of Venky Yoda organized a webinar on 26th November 2023 on the topic "Complexities of Organ Donation Law in India." It is significant to note that this webinar was the first of its kind in India. The webinar saw many participants.... Rotarians, social media influencers, transplant recipient, Interactors and faculty co-ordinators. The webinar was supported by Rotary district 3232 and RCM.

It was an honour to listen to the keynote speaker, eminent Advocate Prashanth Ajmera, a Canadian citizen of Ajmera Law Group.

Advocate Ajmera discussed about the challenges he faced when there was a need within his close family as a recipient of organ donation. He gave details of the problems and solutions to the system. He recommended that a National Registry be available in local language, a procedural manual which is standardized and centralized. Further the Government approved



co-ordinators to be trained in law and counselling, availability of application in written format, linking of organ donation to the Aadhar Card as a document of proof. The current scenario is that the interpretation and application of the law tends to lean towards individual perceptions creating confusion where precious time is lost.

His organisation 'One India One Law' run by volunteers works tirelessly to simplify the complexities of organ donation and effectively reach out to the recipients and donors.

The focal point was the law, its amendments and regulations that govern it were addressed including the prevention of commercial dealing and the creation of a National Portal. Thus the first of its kind webinar on the legalities of organ

donation opened doors for more dialogues and positive changes, and brought awareness on this all important but often neglected topic.

Ms S Rajam

*Interact Coordinator
 SSVMHS, Thiruvananthapuram*

Rtn. Suresh Amirapu

*Chairman Zone 1, Interact Clubs,
 Youth Services*






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