

# THE LIGHTHOUSE

WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS  
ISSUE 35 | MARCH 19, 2024

BUILDING RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITIES

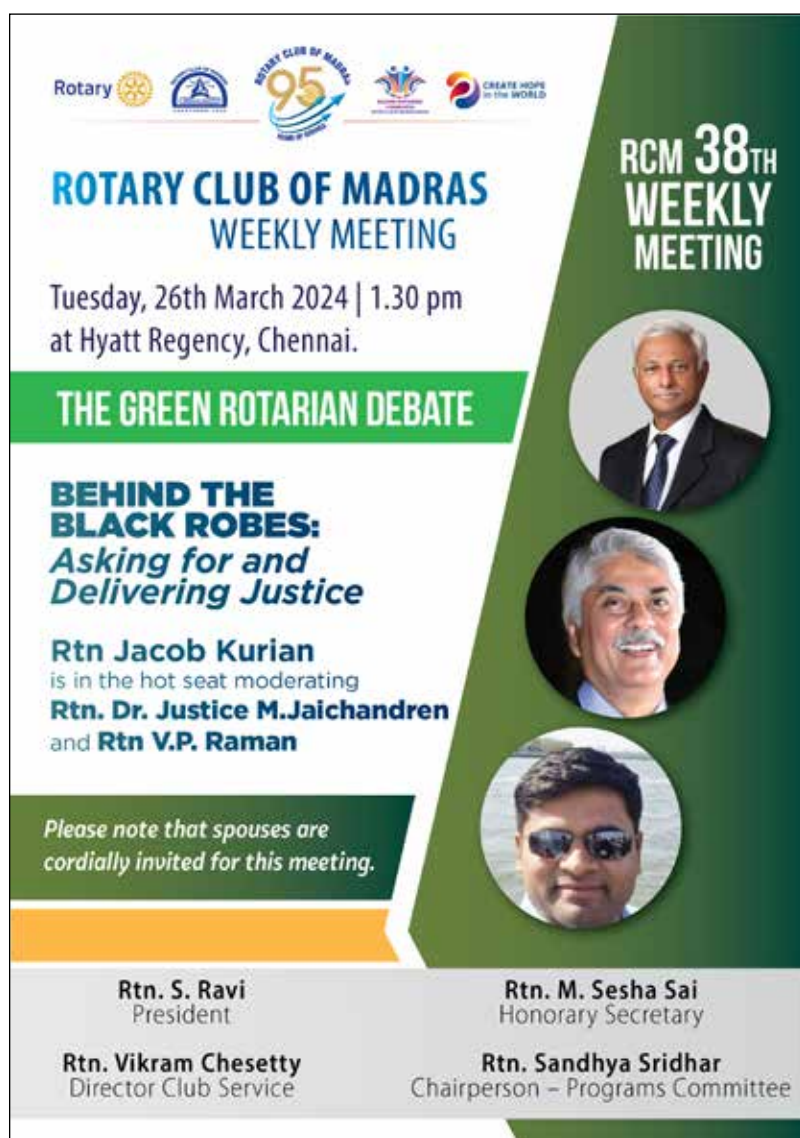


Dear RCMers,

This edition of Lighthouse features a kaleidoscope of events and an enlightening conversation with my good friend Karun Raman, who has worked against societal pressures and carved a name for himself in the fashion industry.

Enjoy!

Yours in Rotary,  
**Rtn. Sunita Suresh**



Rotary Club of Madras 95th Anniversary Logo

**ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS WEEKLY MEETING**

Tuesday, 26th March 2024 | 1.30 pm  
at Hyatt Regency, Chennai.

**THE GREEN ROTARIAN DEBATE**

**BEHIND THE BLACK ROBES:  
Asking for and Delivering Justice**

**Rtn Jacob Kurian**  
is in the hot seat moderating  
**Rtn. Dr. Justice M.Jaichandren**  
and **Rtn V.P. Raman**

Please note that spouses are cordially invited for this meeting.

**Rtn. S. Ravi**  
President

**Rtn. M. Sessa Sai**  
Honorary Secretary

**Rtn. Vikram Chesetty**  
Director Club Service

**Rtn. Sandhya Sridhar**  
Chairperson – Programs Committee

**RCM 38TH WEEKLY MEETING**

# THE LIGHTHOUSE

WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS

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[rcmlighthouse2023@gmail.com](mailto:rcmlighthouse2023@gmail.com)  
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## EDITED & PUBLISHED BY

**Rtn. Sunita Suresh**, Asst. Secretary  
Rotary Club of Madras,  
RAYALA TOWERS,  
2nd Mezzanine Flr., 158, Anna Salai,  
Chennai 600 002 Phone: +91 44 2859 1020

## CONTACT THE EDITOR AT:

[rcmlighthouse2023@gmail.com](mailto:rcmlighthouse2023@gmail.com)

Bulletin Design:

**CHARIS MEDIA WORKS**

Visit RCM's official website  
[www.rotarymadras.in](http://www.rotarymadras.in)

**CONTACT RCM SECRETARY AT:**  
[office@rotarymadras.in](mailto:office@rotarymadras.in)

## Minutes of the 37th Weekly Meeting of Rotary Club of Madras

held on 19-03-2024 at Hyatt Regency, Teynampet, Chennai.

### Call to Order and Invocation:

Rtn.Ravi Sundaresan called the 37th weekly meeting to order.

A silent invocation was observed.

The meeting commenced at 01:30 PM with Rtn. PP Mohan Raman P.V. collaring President Rtn. Ravi Sundaresan, who formally called the 37th weekly meeting of RCM to order followed by an invocation.

### President Ravi Sundaresan:

President Ravi Sundaresan thanked PP Mohan Raman for collaring him and called the 37th weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Madras to order.

He welcomed everyone and requested confirmation of the minutes of the 36th weekly meeting held last week.

Rtn Anuradha Ganesan made an announcement regarding the wash project.

The president reiterated the discussion from previous meetings, stating that PP. Arul Mozhi Varman is submitting his nomination papers for the Governor's position.

### Rtn Dr. Anuradha Ganesan's Announcement:

Rtn. Dr. Anuradha Ganesan shared details about a satisfying morning and a 3-day program where the former Lt Governor of Puducherry, Mrs.Tamilisai Soundarajan spoke in English, which was surprising as most of the audience spoke in Tamil. She mentioned two anecdotes of the Lt Governor helping people in distress and thanked Dr.T.S Ravikumar for offering to fund the program.

President Ravi mentioned that the commissioner's office had inquired about similar initiatives in Tamil Nadu.

### PP Rtn. N.K. Gopinath, Announcement:

Rtn PP Gopinath N.K expressed satisfaction with the successful morning program, including a speech by the former lieutenant governor in English, anecdotes of her assistance to people in distress, and the provision of mannequins by the National Life Savers Association.

Dr. T.S Ravikumar offered funding support for the program.

President Rtn Ravi mentioned positive feedback from the Commissioner's office about the initiative.

Rtn. Dr. Anuradha Ganesan and Vinayaka



Missions Aarupadai Veedu Medical College were thanked for their contributions to the program's success.

The program had over 4000 registrations, and discussions were planned about replicating it with the state government.

The honorary secretary made an announcement regarding the third dialysis machine at Hindu Mission.

### Action Items:

Discuss replicating the program with the state government in the board meeting.

Further discussions about funding and support for future programs.

### Announcements by Rtn Sesha Sai:

Rtn Sesha Sai thanked everyone for their generosity, especially Redington, and shared details about the third dialysis machine donated to Hindu Mission under the leadership of Nimish Tolia.

He mentioned the past district governor's challenge regarding dialysis machines and highlighted the success of the recent event at Hindu Mission Nanganallur.

Guest Speaker Karun Raman:

The meeting welcomed guest speaker Karun Raman, a celebrity, fashion choreographer, and influencer, known for his transformational journey. Karun Raman addressed the gathering.

### Vote of Thanks by Green Rotarian Arun Palaniappan:

Green Rotarian Arun Palaniappan delivered the vote of thanks.


### Adjournment:

The president adjourned the meeting. ■

From the 37th Meeting of Rotary Club of Madras March 19, 2024





 *I see trees of green, red roses too,  
I see them bloom, for me and for you,  
And I think to myself,  
What a wonderful world*

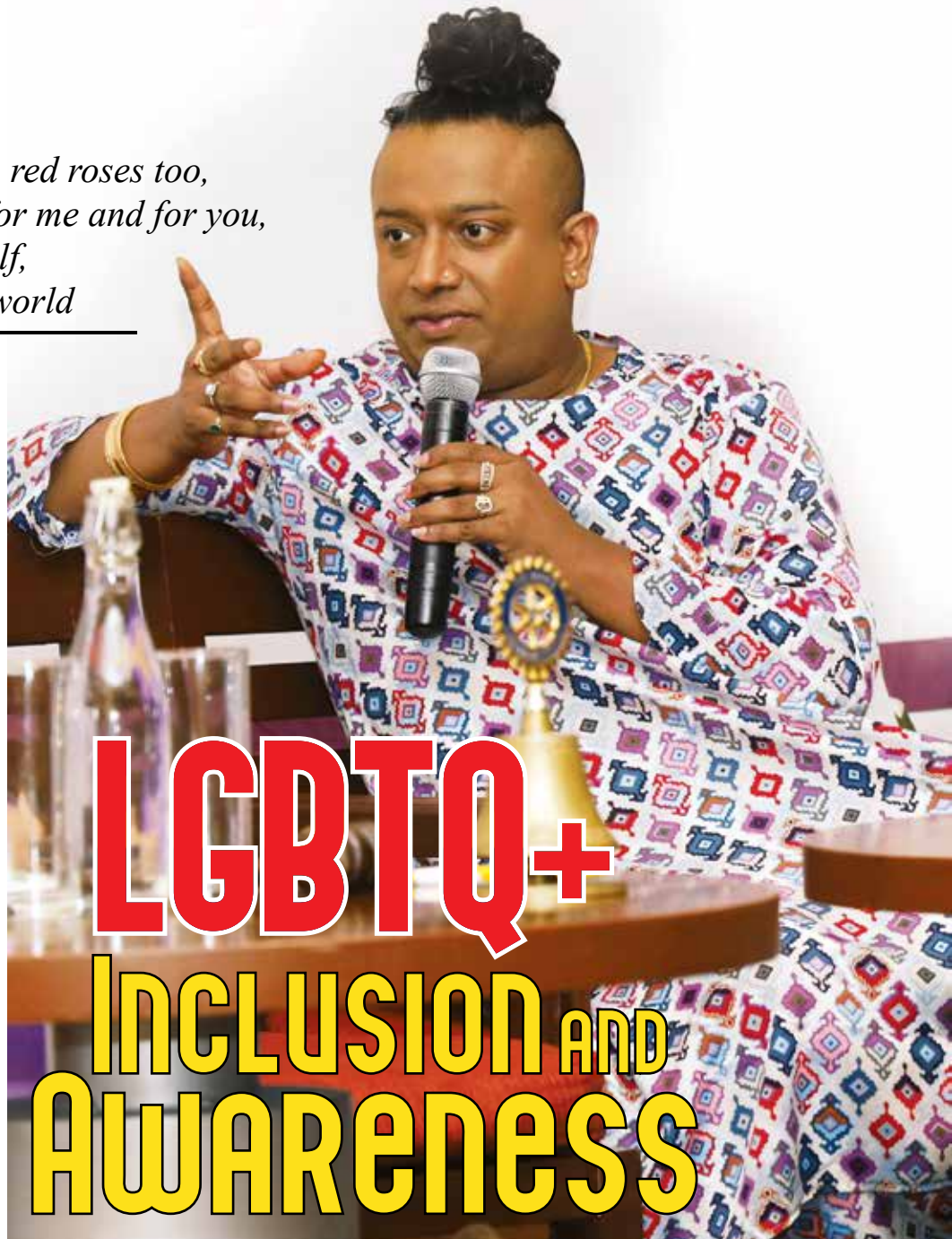
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It is indeed a wonderful world depending on what you see! But is seeing truly believing? What the eye doesn't see and the mind doesn't know, doesn't exist (even if it does exist) In other words, the eye only sees what the mind knows and more importantly, can comprehend.

The afternoon of March 19, 2024, our guest Karun Raman, opened our eyes, mind and hearts to his life and many others who deal and live life differently.

An acclaimed and successful fashion choreographer, a “Youtuber”, and an Influencer, Karun Raman’s journey seems glamorous and glitzy. But the road was not easy. An openly gay transgender, who was born and raised in Chennai, had more than a fair share of hurdles, and difficulties getting to this position of respect, dignity and influence and social status.

His transformational journey in the then Madras society, which was not so aware,, inclusive, and open-minded was therefore fraught with a lot of confusion, conflict and isolation. So much that he didn't pursue his education beyond the 10th grade. Lief at home was not so easy either: his father too was abusive and an alcoholic and



was completely not supportive of his gender orientation. His expectation was that his son should marry a woman and have kids made it more difficult for Karun at home. School was also no fun. Kids bullied him verbally and physically for his mannerisms and he spent most of his time hiding in the bathroom.

He made his debut in a Tamil movie named Madhavan. His expectation of the creative field to be more aware and open was sadly disappointing. He was brutally abused by a stuntman in the studio for his gender characteristics.

Through all the trauma and pathos, the only silver-lining was the unwavering unshakeable and fierce and wholesome support and love from his mother. Karun is very cognizant of his special situation where he has his mother as his pillar and rock with her undeterred and unconditional support as always.

Whether it was his schooling and education or job opportunities or even

renting as place for his own independent living it was an uphill task and he felt like an outcast.

Karun bears no ill-will or bitterness through all of his agonizing past and current struggles. He is appreciative and grateful for few good people who gave him his breaks. He left the acting arena and forayed into dancing. He mentions a special friend who was not challenged by his cross dressing and took him as he is and introduced him to the elite madras club as a dance teacher. He also decided to start his own fashion choreography company mainly with an aim to provide a safe space for all this aspiring to enter this field, irrespective of their gender orientation. His company holds a Limca record for the most number of shows in a day totaling about 82-85 in one day at the Chennai Trade Fair!

He is also aware that mental health and abuse and difficulties exist even in the “straight” communities, but draws attention to the fact that it perhaps manifold in the “LGBTQ+ Community”. On asked what is the meaning of all these letters are and what does it mean to him or where are we going with all of this: he has a simple answer: it really doesn’t matter. In fact, he easily and very simply shifts the focus towards equality rather than naming each kind of person, which in fact further categorizes a person. In fact, he doesn’t even prefer a pronoun to his name and would happily go by a mononym.

Karun goes on to state that there almost 2-3 transgender deaths a week due to suicide which is a bitter and harsh reality that speaks volume of the mental agony and lack of support systems. He finds himself fortunate, content: but perhaps not very happy. He is acutely aware and empathic to the struggles of his community folks. Whether it be in finding a job, or the safety at the workplace for them, or the suspicion with which they are

Through all the trauma and pathos, the only silver-lining was the unwavering unshakeable and fierce and wholesome support and love from his mother.

Karun hopes that transgender find mainstream jobs like Uber drivers, Doctors, Lawyers, Teachers etc.

treated or sometimes even persecution they are met with.

He implores all parents of straight or otherwise, to communicate more with their children. In this age of technology and camps and extracurricular-driven childhood, there seems to be no connection. And most children are swayed by a fake social media world and that leads to more mental health issues. And even though he has felt despondent and at the brink of self harm or worse, he has held off: knowing that guilt a parent would feel afterward, is worse than what the child may go through in a lifetime.

Karun hopes that transgender find mainstream jobs like Uber drivers, Doctors, Lawyers, Teachers etc.

He engages with NGOs and also does a show like “flowers have thorns too” to bring awareness and put the spotlight on these issues. He would like to see more toilets for his community. And although he feels that Tamil Nadu is perhaps the safest state currently for his community, he wishes there was more active engagement from all spheres of the society, governmental and otherwise. More counseling centers for transgenders thinking of sex change. He brought to light a subterranean community of a lady Trans who adopts a “trans child” and supports them and when the “adoptee is socially and financially secure; they pay it back to adoptive parent. However not all is hunky-dory. There are still so called seemingly safe spaces which still support a negative loop.

Despite all the pathos and sadness and darkness, Karun Raman is not bitter or angry or vengeful.

He carries a sense of hope a purpose of engagement and a positivity of inclusivity and equanimity and equality. There is not hate or divisiveness. He aspires for a better future for ALL kids irrespective of their gender orientation.

Truly: What a wonderful world it would be! ■



# SAGAA MANITHAM

## SUPPORTING AMONG THE ASPIRABLES AND GRATITUDE AWARDS 2023-24

We the Rotaract club of SDNB Vaishnav College took the initiative of felicitating and recognizing the Corporation workers who are the prides of our city.

On Sunday, 17th March 2024, all of us gathered in SDNBVC Main Auditorium for this occasion of recognizing the workers, also we had some cultural competitions in between to bring forth the talent of all our Rotaractors.

We started with the Inauguration ceremony along with Rtn. Ravi Sundaresan as the Chief Guest, Rtn. Sesha Sai as Guest of honour and Rtn. Balaji Chinni as Special Invitee. Their presence made the event unforgettable and proud.

After the Inauguration ceremony, we felicitated all the corporation workers who were present on the occasion. We not only felicitated them with an award but also provided them with the provision. The cause was to provide educational fee for a single parent's child who is one among the corporation workers.

After the recognition and felicitation, we started with cultural competitions in which most of the green Rotaractors and other college Rotaractors actively participated.

**- Rtn. Balaji Chinni ■**





PP SN Srikanth has been invited to speak "Behaviour Change for WASH" at the prestigious World Water Summit of Rotary's Water and Sanitation Action Group, to be held in Singapore on May 24, 2024, just ahead of the Rotary International Convention which starts a day later. The annual Summit is Rotary's biggest WASH event.

PP Srikanth was instrumental in starting the hugely successful sanitation project of our club in 2014-15. His emphasis on behaviour change techniques immediately attracted the attention of RI which invited him to present his work at the Sao Paulo, Brazil Convention in 2015

PP Srikanth has since become the foremost expert on behaviour change in Rotary. He is a WASHRAG Ambassador and has also served as Advisor to the Rotary Foundation on WASH Grant Guidelines. ■



### Sharing some fantastic news!

Our PDG Krishnaswami has been conferred the **REGIONAL SERVICE AWARD FOR A POLIO-FREE WORLD 2023-24!**

It was proposed by PRIP Wilf Wilkinson and is a big honour for us Rotary club of Madras to have such a committed Rotarian working towards enabling a Polio-free India, right from arranging the freezer boxes for the vaccines back in those days! **Congratulations Sir.** ■



## HANDING OVER OF THE ELECTRO SURGICAL GENERATORS AND DENTAL EQUIPMENT TO CHILD TRUST HOSPITAL

The steadfast commitment of RCM in executing projects evokes a profound sense of fulfillment for all involved. Today, our hearts swelled with joy as we delivered a much-needed dental machine to the Child Trust Hospital. Our gratitude knows no bounds as we extend heartfelt appreciation to the dedicated doctors, the compassionate Redington family, and our fellow RCM members whose unwavering generosity made this possible.

The touching response from every doctor at the hospital deeply moved us, reminding us of the profound impact our collective efforts can have on saving lives. Their gratitude humbled us and reaffirmed the importance of our mission.

We are indebted to Rotarians such as Rtn. Bharath Pujara, Rtn. Ganesh Ananthakrishnan, Rtn. Narsi,



Rtn. Ravi Shankar, and Rtn. Dr. Rama Ramachandran for their pivotal roles in ensuring the success and significance of this meaningful project.

Special recognition is also due to District Governor Rtn. Ravi Raman, DGE Rtn. Saravanan, and Rtn. Vinod Sarogi for their unwavering support and invaluable guidance throughout this journey.

Rtn. Chella Krishna and Rtn. Nikhil Raj were also a part of this wonderful afternoon. ■



## E-WASTE COLLECTION DRIVE



Join us this month by participating in the e-waste collection drive. This initiative not only addresses the mounting issue of electronic waste but also promotes responsible disposal and recycling. We accept a wide range of electronic items, like old computers, laptops, smartphones, tablets, printers, monitors, keyboards, mice, cables, and other peripherals. Additionally, household appliances like refrigerators, washing machines, and microwaves are accepted. The goal is to divert these items from landfills, ensuring they are

recycled or disposed of in an environmentally responsible manner to reduce the environmental impact of electronic waste.

#ewastecollectiondrive | #cleanerplanet | #Reduceewaste  
Drop off point: **Wasted 360 Solutions**, T.Nagar, Chennai: 600017

Google Map Link: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/zDrpausVvV9fCcz97>

Do fill the google form once you send for our team to quantify and know you participated:

<https://forms.gle/WB4LfjhdSLYpi59A>

Thank you so much!

Rtn. Gautam Reddy & Rtn. Dr. Vani Vijay,  
Environment Committee

## BIRTHDAYS

March 19th - Rtn. Sai Srujan T.V.  
March 20th - Rtn. Raghunath Narayanan  
March 21st - Rtn. Vasudevan. R  
March 23rd - Rtn. Ashish Gupta  
March 24th - Rtn. Jayaramakrishnan K.  
March 24th - Rtn. Dr. H. Krishna Hande

March 22nd - Ann. Kalpana, Spouse of Rtn. Ishwar Achanta  
March 22nd - Ann. Shantha Raghunath, Spouse of Rtn. Raghunath Narayanan  
March 23rd - Ann. Sushma V. Spouse of Rtn. Vummidi Shailesh Raj

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

March 20th - Rtn. Nataraj Ramaiah & Sashi  
March 23rd - Rtn. Rajendra Sabanayagam & Renuka ■



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