

The Lighthouse

Rotary
Club of Madras



BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS

ISSUE 16

OCTOBER 19
2025



SERVICE ABOVE SELF

BIRTHDAYS 🎂

Rtn Vijay Balaji	14 th October
Rtn PDG Benjamin Cherian R	15 th October
Rtn Maithili Shaan Katari Libby	17 th October
Rtn Dr Yashwanth Kumar Venkataraman	17 th October
Rtn Abdul Azeez H. E	18 th October
Rtn Mahmud Jamal N	18 th October
Rtn V.P.Raman	18 th October
Umagowri, Spouse of Rtn Subramanian. N	13 th October
Kousalya, Spouse of Rtn Dr R Narasimhan	14 th October
Janaki, Spouse of Rtn PDG Krishnaswami S	16 th October
Uma Ranjit, Spouse of PP Rtn Ranjit Pratap	16 th October
Susan, Spouse of Rtn Sapru Mathew	16 th October
Bhagyalakshmi, Spouse of PP Rtn Shanker C. Mangadu	16 th October
Dr James F Libby, Spouse of Rtn Maithili Shaan Katari Libby	19 th October
Mamta, Spouse of Rtn Ranjeeth D. Rathod	20 th October

ANNIVERSARY 🎉

Rtn Vipin Sachdev & Somna Sachdev	14 th October
Rtn Archana Shri Sanjay & Sanjay Balram	16 th October
Rtn Jacob Kurian & Achu Kurian	17 th October



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EDITED & PUBLISHED BY

Rtn Manasa T Pillai, Asst. Secretary

Rotary Club of Madras

RAYALA TOWERS

1st Mezzanine Flr., 158, Anna Salai,
Chennai 600 002 Phone: +91 44 2859 1020

CONTACT THE EDITOR AT:

lighthouse@rotarymadras.in

Bulletin Design:

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Send in your articles, news and stories for consideration in the Lighthouse bulletin to: lighthouse@rotarymadras.in
Stay updated with our very own RCM magazine!

Rotary Club of Madras (RCM)

Minutes of the 16th Weekly Meeting held on 12-10-2025

at Madras Club, Chennai at 05.30 PM

Call to Order

President Rtn. Nikhil Raj called the 16th Weekly Meeting to order.

Confirmation of Previous Minutes:

The minutes of the 15th Weekly Meeting were confirmed and recorded.

Four Way Test: Rtn.Hari Venkatesan:

Rtn.Hari Venkatesan said that one thing common to all of us as individuals, professionals, and businessmen, is that we make decisions every single day and the Four-Way Test guides us to make choices that benefit others.

Welcome Address

President Nikhil Raj welcomed all present including Probus Club members Probian Annadurai and Probian Suganaraj and guests from Higginbothams and Harper Collins.

He then shared the updates on the progress of various projects.

The Villupuram mammogram project was inaugurated at the Government Hospital, Villupuram, supported by Access Healthcare. The facility will help in early

detection of breast cancer in the region.

The HPV vaccination drive was launched successfully. An MoU was signed with the Inner Wheel Club, extending the initiative across India. At the last meeting, eight members pledged Rs.25,000 each towards vaccinating girl children aged 9–14.

The Chintadripet School toilet project will be inaugurated on 13th October at 11:00 AM. Members were invited to attend.

Secretary's Announcements

Rtn. Prasanna Rajagopalan announced that there will be no meetings on 14th and 21st October (21st being Diwali week).

The next meeting will be held on 28th October 2025 and the guest speaker will be the well-known

dietician and nutrition expert Mr. Saravanan Balakrishnan, Founder and CEO of Amura Diets.

President Nikhil Raj introduced the Special Guest of the day Mr. Chetan Bhagat, an

alumnus of IIT

Delhi IIM Ahmedabad, whose debut novel Five Point Someone was a bestseller, followed by

several popular books — many of which were adapted into hit films.

He also introduced Dr. Navin Jayakumar, an ophthalmologist with over 40 years of experience, a

keen lover of literature and an avid quiz master.

Interactive Session

A conversation followed between Dr. Navin Jayakumar and Mr. Chetan Bhagat, exploring the latter's

writing journey, creative process, inspirations and his latest book 12 Years.

Dr. Navin Jayakumar engaged Mr. Chetan Bhagat in a freewheeling, entertaining conversation which

was followed by a question and answer session with the audience.

Vote of Thanks : Rtn. Prasanna Rajagopalan.

Rtn. Prasanna expressed gratitude to Mr. Chetan Bhagat, Dr. Navin Jayakumar, the organizing

team, guests and all Rotarians for making the evening memorable.

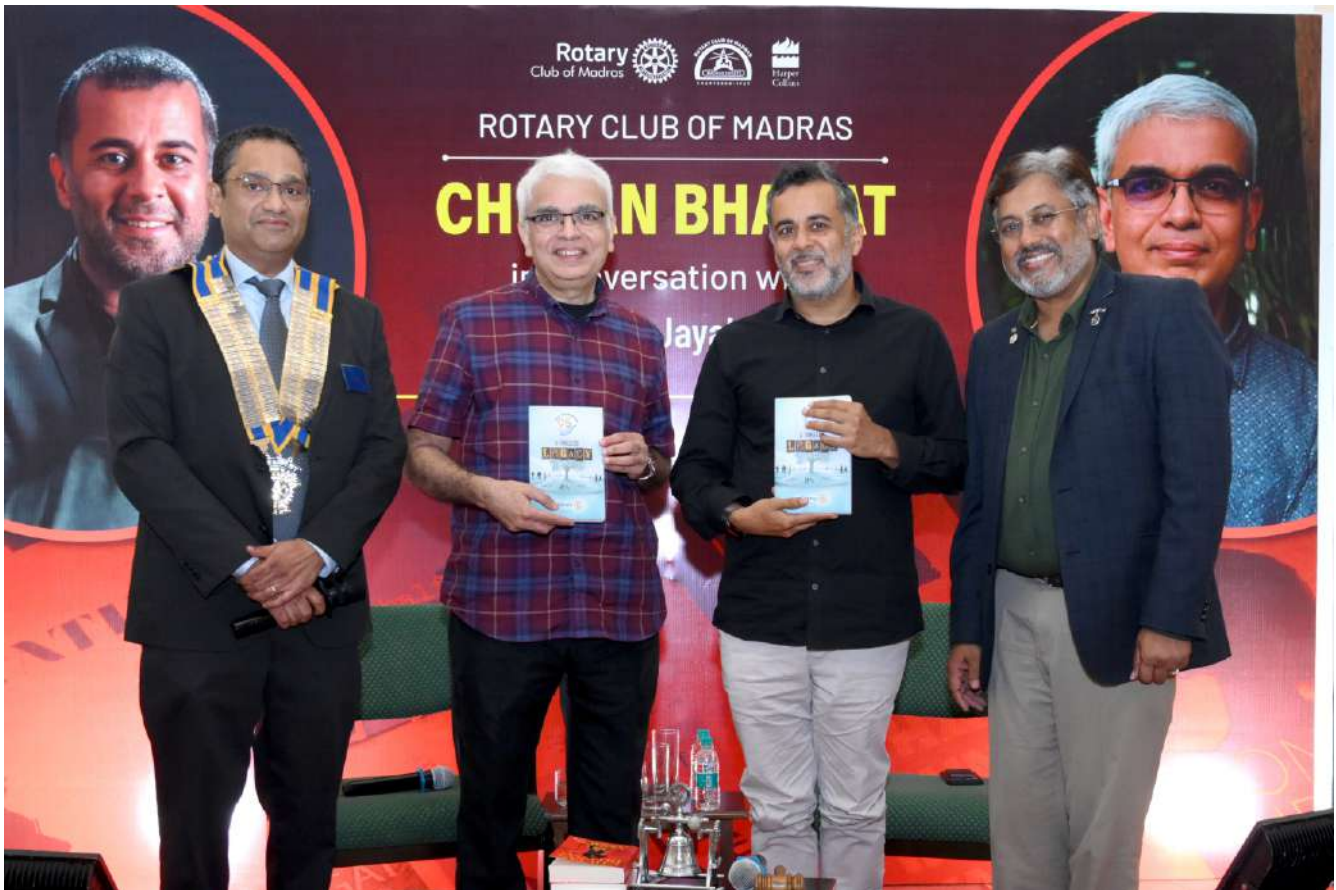
Adjournment

President Nikhil Raj adjourned the meeting.

THE ALGEBRA OF EMOTION: BANKER. STORYTELLER. DISRUPTOR. FROM EXCEL SHEETS TO EMOTIONAL TRUTHS

It was an evening that shimmered with honesty, humour, and human insight. In conversation with Dr. Navin Jayakumar, bestselling author Chetan Bhagat peeled back the layers of his life and art, revealing a man transformed — from the corporate banker juggling Excel sheets to the writer pursuing depth, mastery, and meaning. Far from the high-octane glitz of

Bollywood, the 51-year-old author described a profound pivot in focus. “I now aim for mastery over my craft,” he said, preferring “deep work” over fleeting applause. The discussion flowed seamlessly — from the physics of sleep to the philosophy of writing — as Bhagat spoke of an author’s duty to revive the fading culture of reading in India.



THE GENESIS OF A WRITER: LUCK, PERSISTENCE, AND A FLOOD IN MUMBAI

Bhagat’s leap from investment banker to storyteller began with what he called “an inner urge.” He confessed, half-smiling, that he “barely worked” at the bank yet was paid handsomely — but the call to write was too strong.

That urge birthed *Five Point Someone* — though its road to success was anything but smooth. Publishers dismissed his first draft as “fragmented” and advised him to seek feedback from other writers. Instead of quitting, Bhagat rewrote the entire book, this time with a tighter plot and clear structure. The rest is literary folklore.

When *3 Idiots* was eventually made, it was through a stroke of what Bhagat called “pure providence.” Director Rajkumar Hirani, then shooting *Munna Bhai M.B.B.S.*, had no time to

read the manuscript. But in 2005, a sudden cloudburst flooded Mumbai, halting all shoots, cutting electricity, and leaving Hirani stranded at home — with only one book on his dining table. He picked it up, read it cover to cover, and called Bhagat in Singapore the next morning. Despite producer pressure to make *Munna Bhai 3*, Hirani followed his instinct and chose the college story instead.

Bhagat chuckled, “Some success is just divine timing.”

He also revealed his quirky obsession with numbers in titles — *Five Point Someone*, *2 States*, *One Night @ the Call Centre*, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*. The reason? “It’s my engineer-banker past. Those numbers are reminders of where I came from — vestiges of the life I left behind.”



THE EVOLUTION OF LOVE — AND THE RISE OF 'SITUATIONSHIPS'

Bhagat's latest book, *12 Years*, marks his first full-fledged love story since *Half Girlfriend* (2014). He said the long gap was intentional: "I had to wait for society — and modern love — to change."

If *2 States* was about convincing parents, *12 Years* deals with convincing yourself. The novel explores the confusion of "situationships" — the blurry in-betweens of today's relationships. Bhagat explained, "It's about that question we all ask: How do you know someone is the one?"

The story revolves around Sake, a 33-year-old divorced stand-up comic, and Pile, a 21-year-old Stanford graduate working in private equity. Their 12-year age gap stirred public controversy

— some critics even used the term "grooming." Bhagat countered firmly: "Pile is an adult, a working woman. To say she can't make her own choices is to infantilize women — and that's insulting."

Pile's double life, Bhagat noted, mirrors that of many young Indians — modern on the outside, yet bound by traditional roots. "She comes from a rich but conservative Jain family — no onion, garlic, alcohol, or boys. So she lives two lives."

Around them orbit colourful secondary characters: Sake's brutally honest best friend, Pile's competitive housewife friend — "because love never happens in isolation," Bhagat smiled. "It's always shaped by friends and family."



'CHETAN ENGLISH': SIMPLICITY AS A SUPERPOWER

When asked about his famously simple writing style, Bhagat laughed, calling it "Chetan English" versus Shashi Tharoor English." He explained that while 80% of it comes naturally, the remaining 20% is intentional. "I make it extra simple so the emotion travels faster. My job is not to show off English; it's to make readers feel."

He compared language to a sculptor's hammer — merely a tool. "Why say melancholy when I can say sad and upset? I want even a first-generation reader to understand instantly."

Bhagat rejects the idea that complexity equals quality. "Just because it's easy to read doesn't mean it's shallow," he said. "If a reader in Guwahati stays up till 3 a.m. with my book, that's good writing."

His frustration with India's reading habits was palpable. "The industry? It's bad only," he sighed. "Too few read, and too many watch cheap video content. Their brains get lazy. Imagination dies."

He condemned literary elitism that mocks "light reading." "If you shame beginners for reading simple books, they'll go back to Instagram reels. That kills literature."

Determined to fight this, Bhagat insists that his vernacular editions — in Hindi, Tamil, and other languages — use the same high-quality paper and production as his English books. "Why should regional readers get lower-class treatment? Good paper from Norway for all!" he grinned.

GEN Z, GROWTH, AND THE GOSPEL OF FITNESS

Turning reflective, Bhagat spoke about today's youth. "Their wants are simple — job, money, love. They're a little selfish," he said, echoing JFK: "Ask not what you can do for your country — because they'll say, 'Nothing!'"

He uses that insight to draw them in through romance and career — then slips in deeper messages about life and contribution. But his real concern is for the future generations: "Gen Alpha and Beta may be dating robots," he joked. Beneath the humour was a warning — rising anxiety, loneliness, and depression. He cited data showing teen suicides skyrocketed after the smartphone era began.



THE ART OF GROWING INWARD

In the final stretch of the conversation, Bhagat grew philosophical. Turning 50, he said, changes you. "External highs like fame don't reach the soul. Real happiness is internal growth."

He recommended practices like Vipassana, the 10-day silent meditation that "shuts off the noise of the thinking brain" and reconnects you to your authentic self.

Bhagat's biggest regret? "Neglecting my

health," he said candidly. "Fitness is non-negotiable — food, exercise, sleep." Among the three, he ranks sleep the highest. He explained the body's circadian rhythm and how blue light, late eating, and overstimulation disrupt it. "Read before bed," he advised, "not scroll."

Bad sleep, he warned, triggers sugar cravings and long-term health issues. "A fit person is a happy person — simple as that."



YOU GOT TO LIVE YOUR LIFE, GUYS

As the audience applauded, Bhagat left them with one last line — both playful and profound:

"You got to live your life, guys. Enjoy, grow within, and don't chase the glitter. The real win is

peace." And with that, the banker-turned-writer, who once measured success in spreadsheets, reminded everyone that the true formula for life lies not in numbers, but in connection, simplicity, and self-care.



The headline reads:

"Sailor Shreya gets invited to Regatta of Champions"

One of the most prestigious events in junior sailing being held in Cyprus from Nov 2nd. Just 45 sailors from around the World.

This is just incredible. Rtn Dr Sharon's daughter Shreya is the only one from India to be selected and, I believe, the first ever Indian to reach this elite group. A real sailing prodigy. On her way She will take part in an event in Mussanah Oman.

Hearty congratulations to Shreya, our sailor extraordinaire, and no less to her dedicated parents who have been amazing.

Wishing Shreya all the very best and may her current purple patch of form continue and bring her more success.

The RCM family will be rooting for her.

LIST OF 3RD. GENERATION ROTARIANS CURRENTLY IN RC MADRAS

1. Rtn. Pratap Kumar, s/o late Rtn. Prabhat Kumar, s/o Rtn. M. C. Cunanan.
GEM & CO

2. Rtn. Dr. Anisha Ashok, d/o late Rtn. Ashok Sundararaman, s/o late Rtn.
PDG. S. Sundararaman. RENOWNED SURGEONS ALL

3. Rtn. Vikram P. Raman, s/o Rtn. PP. Mohan Raman, s/o Rtn. V.P.Raman, a
legal luminary.



DABRAS TAKE CENTER STAGE AT A MEMORABLE FIRESIDE



When the idea of "firesides" was first envisioned, it was surely to give members a chance to meet not just as Rotarians, but as friends — with warmth, good food, and easy laughter. The recent evening hosted by Vidya and Bikram Shivkumar was a shining example of that spirit.

The snacks and drinks flowed smoothly, as did the conversations. Corners buzzed with chatter, new friendships took root, and familiar bonds were renewed. Bikram and Vidya were gracious, joyful hosts — enjoying the evening themselves while ensuring everyone else did too.

The undisputed star of the night? Filter coffee ice cream served in a traditional dabra — a clever and delicious nod to tradition meeting modernity. In many ways, it mirrored the Rotary Club of Madras itself: rooted, evolving, and full of life.

A warm thank-you to the Fireside Committee for shepherding this delightful evening.



-Rtn Sanjay Rao Chaganti

Inauguration of the toilet block at The Chintadripet Boys Higher Secondary School, a 181 year old school. A big thank you to all the donors who made this possible and the various Presidents, Directors and Chairperson who saw it through.

On 13 Oct 25, Rotary Club of Madras completed and delivered another impactful project. This time it was the construction and handover of a new toilet block to the 181-year-old The Chintadripet Boys Higher Secondary School. This 80-student strong

Government school has an old connection with RCM as it has a long standing affiliated Interact Club. Located in one of the city's oldest and most crowded suburbs, the school expressed an urgent need for a modern toilet block for its students. The provision of such a toilet facility, along with hand wash outlets, provides an impactful benefit to the student population encouraging greater personal hygiene, comfort, and contributing to discouraging school dropouts.

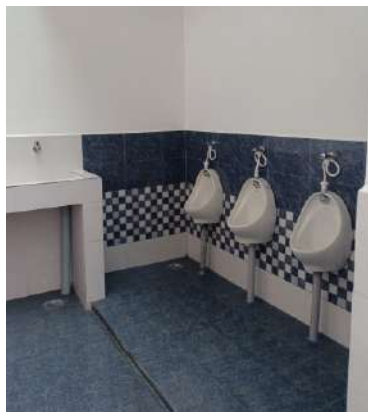


The project first conceived 3 Rotary years ago under the tenure of PP Rtn Jayshree Sridhar was delayed as it was difficult to get the soil outlets connected to the city's sewerage system. Finally, it was in the past rotary year that the necessary connections were obtained by the school and the linkage was possible. Under the tenure of PP Rtn Chella Krishna and Director Community Services 1 Rtn Anuradha Ganesan the project construction commenced and was completed in the present year under the Presidentship of Rtn Nikhil Raj . At a simple ceremony inaugurating the toilet block and

handing it over to the school Principal Dr Gnanavel, welcomed the gathering. He, along with the past Principal and governing board member, and the Interact Club coordinator thanked RCM for the new facility. In her address, PP Rtn Jayshree Sridhar traced the close connection of the school with RCM through its interact club. She along with Rtn Anuradha described the progress of the project despite its delays in getting a sewerage connection and of RCM's unwavering commitment to see the project through.



President Nikhil Raj in his address, acknowledged the support of numerous RCMers whose personal monetary contribution crowd funded the project, thanked the Contractor and coordinator for the timely construction, while expressing his gratitude to the school authorities for their cooperation. He exhorted the students to focus on their studies as education was their path to growth. He urged both the school authorities and the students to ensure that the toilet facility is kept clean and well maintained so that it is in good condition to serve students for many years.



The completion of the toilet block project and its handover to the school is a testament to RCM's quiet determination to complete such impactful projects, push past the challenges while seamlessly handing over the baton from one set of office bearers to the next.

Rtn Arivnd Kumar Shankar
Chairman WASH

Rtn Suresh N Amirapu
Director, Community Services-Development



Rtn Aman Khandari

FRESH FUEL



1. Describe a moment within RCM where you felt completely out of your comfort zone. What did that discomfort teach you—and how did it help you grow as a person or professional?

Answer: Too early to say something about Rotary But in General

Just Remember: There are two sides to a coin and don't believe everything you hear... Don't Assume and Don't Presume...

2. If you could introduce a new tradition, ritual, or quirky custom to the RCM culture, what would it be—and why do you think it would resonate with current and future members?

Answer: Always keep a Smile on your Face. & When the Screening Committee is Interviewing a New Member, Offer him a Glass of Water to make him or her feel Comfortable.

3. Every Rotarian brings a unique spark. What hidden talent or passion of yours do you hope to contribute to RCM that people might not expect from you at first glance?

Answer: Try me or Ask me, I may Surprise you

BREAKFAST NEVER TASTED BETTER AFTER A SLOW ROAST AT MARINA



Sunday's (12 Oct 25) New learning event on photography at Marina beach went well. The heat and humidity overpowered us and we decided to do 1 hr at the beach and 1 hr at the review session with breakfast at Hotel Maris.

Surya was knowledgeable and shared his insights freely.

About 20 people attended the workshop and 14 for breakfast.

All in all a very interesting learning experience well curated by Rtn Vivek Parachur and Rtn Rajesh Somasundaram.



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Rotary Club of Madras

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What began as a humble initiative to provide livelihood has now blossomed into a tapestry of skill, pride, and creativity. The women of the RCM Selayur Vocational Training Centre, once engaged in rudimentary tasks, have transformed into confident craftswomen—threading their way from the ordinary to the extraordinary.

Guided by Deepthi Prassanna who was catalytic, these women were trained in the art of fine stitching, design, and tailoring. Their dedication was formally recognized by the Apparel, Made-Ups & Home Furnishing Sector Skill Council, under Skill India, earning them NCVET-approved certification as Trained Tailor Craftswomen.

Their first triumph? The stunning RCM Selayur Assorted Pichwai Gift Bags—a festive fusion of art and sustainability, priced at Rs.1 200 for 10. Each vibrant piece is not just a product; it's a story of transformation, ownership, and rediscovered dignity.

With every stitch, they have rewoven their identity, proving that empowerment truly begins when skill meets opportunity.

From rudimentary work to refined craftsmanship—this is what Rotary calls service with a soul.



Rtn Dr Sharon Krishna Rau
Director, Vocational Service

Rtn Rajib Hota
Chairperson, Vocational Service Centre, Selayur



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