

THE PANACHE

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF CALCUTTA AVYANNA IVol.2



From the Editor's Desk



Mita Walia
EDITOR

Welcome back readers to the winter edition of Panache!

Shelley and his Ode to the West Wind may not be quoted in the context of a Kolkata winter for we would rather say if Spring is here can winter be far behind! For, the coldest month of the year is the eternal favourite of all those who live in Kolkata, nay Bengal! This season sees hordes of those who left the city for greener pastures, return and rightly so. While the weather is perfect with the right amount of nip in the air, stores overflow with jaggery delights and choicest fruits. Moa, pithe, patishapta, Nolen gur, Patali gur, we can never it seem have enough of it all! The upcoming Makar Sankranti that entails the ritualistic holy dip at Gangasagar, heralds the bountiful harvest season and in an agrarian economy such as us, is symbolic of all that is green and beautiful. This is also the season for lit fests, meets, exhibitions, curated walks and of course weddings; the city can't have enough of events it seems! Through it all, we Avyanna balance everything and from distributing blankets to the needy and making merry with the aged at Little Sisters of the Poor we make the best of the best season at hand.

This issue too, tries to capture the essence of this magical time and endeavours to envelope the spirit of Christmas and New Year in its fold. Wishing peace to all for 2025. May health and happiness, abide.



Chandreyi Mitra
CLUB PRESIDENT

Service in Action: A Quarter of Compassion and Care

Dear fellow Rotarians, As we reach the midpoint of our Rotary year, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the incredible work our club has accomplished. Our second quarter has been marked by a series of impactful projects, community engagements, and fellowship opportunities that embody the very spirit of Rotary. From our flagship project Tejaswini to the community economic development project for neurodivergent young adults after their vocational training in the first quarter, to our participation in the District Diwali meet, where the beneficiaries were given certificates by the District Governor himself, to our involvement in the District Polio meet and RYLA as the Lead Host, we have demonstrated our commitment to creating positive change in our community. Our members have selflessly volunteered their time, talents, and resources to make a tangible difference in the lives of those around us. Our HPV Vaccination drive continues, as do our efforts to provide clean drinking water to schoolchildren. We have stood beside rare disease campaigns, donated wheelchairs and Fowler beds, conducted CPR training once again, arranged a blood donation camp with our RCC, executed health check-up camps, and distributed blankets to below-poverty-line sex workers. We have actively advocated for a Green Diwali, while the gift of livestock brought Christmas cheer to the village women of Nabadiganta.

Christmas celebrations were heartwarming again with the senior citizens of Little Sisters of the Poor, where our honorary member Padma Bhushan Ushaji heralded the festive spirit. Equally fruitful was the Christmas lunch at EMC for 62 girls from the Girl2B Foundation. Our members reveled in caring and sharing happiness. The wine fellowship under the starry sky was a classy winter event, followed by the club picnic. We also hosted the theatre production Saat Chalis Ki Ladies Special—a presentation that highlighted the trials and tribulations of the LGBTQ+ community, advocating for an inclusive and compassionate society. Even our 10 Adult Literacy Centres are serving our HIV+ brothers and sisters. I would like to extend my sincerest appreciation to each and every one of you for your dedication, enthusiasm, and generosity. Your collective efforts have not only enhanced our club's reputation but have also inspired others to join us in our mission to serve. As we look ahead to the next quarter, I encourage you all to continue embracing the Rotary motto of "Service Above Self." Let us strive to build upon our successes, explore new avenues for service, and foster a culture of compassion, empathy, and kindness. Together, we can achieve greatness and make our community an even better place for all. Thank you for being an integral part of our magical Rotary family.



Dr. Krishnendu Gupta
DISTRICT GOVERNOR

Dear fellow Rotarians

Greetings in the New Year!!

As we continue on our journey of service and fellowship, I am delighted to share my thoughts with you in this second edition of the newsletter of Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna.

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate all the members of the club on its ongoing initiatives and projects. Your dedication to serving humanity and making a positive impact in your community is truly inspiring.

As we move forward in this Rotary year, I urge you to continue embracing the theme "The Magic of Rotary". Let us strive to create a magical world where everyone has access to quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

I am excited to see the club's focus on the prevention of Cervical Cancer through numerous awareness programmes and adolescent HPV vaccination, a cause that is close to my heart. Your efforts in this area will undoubtedly make a significant difference in the lives of numerous young adolescents.

To the President, Secretary and the vibrant members of Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, I offer my sincere appreciation for your tireless efforts. Your commitment and dedication to Rotary's ideals is a shining example to us all.

Let us continue to work together in the shared vision of "Service Above Self" and create a brighter future for our community.

Kind regards.

Winter Wonders

Our winters of much content



Shromona Ghosh

Shromona is an alumna of Modern High School and Presidency College, Kolkata. She is associated with the Corporate sector for more than 30 years now. An avid reader, Shromona is passionate about theatre and writing and loves a spirited debate. She subtitles Bengali movies in her spare time and edits an art magazine along with Jogen Chowdhury. She is also a committed Rotarian devoted to her social work.

Winter is on its way out. Our winter, which used to be of much content, in Kolkata, no longer is. A well-loved season, the best of the lot, high season for Kolkata lovers, is slowly losing its charm. But why? Let us then have a look at the myriad reasons that cloud the azure blue skies that used to be the heavenly blessing of "Calcutta winter".

Between January 2022 and winter this year, there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of migratory birds that visit Santragachi jheel in the colder times in the city. From 6792, the figure of birds visiting has now come down to 4197. This sharp decline has been ascribed by ornithologists to pollution and increased human habitation. While the number of lesser whistling ducks has not decreased but the number of trans Himalayan migratory birds has become zero this year and as a result no new species was spotted. Reasons ascribed include delayed clearance of water hyacinth and degradation of feeding ground. Rapid urbanisation and increased industrialisation have all lead to loss of foliage cover and lack of roosting space.

Yet there was a time when Kolkata was a happy hunting ground for Siberian birds, when Kolkata children spent many a chilly afternoon watching the flocks fly in from distant climes.

Pollution over the years, has become a killer in Kolkata and that is speaking literally.

Decreased windspeed, thermal inversion and increased dust from construction and road sites all lead to these pollutants in the air rapidly worsening the quality. Higher levels of PM2.5 in the air lead to extremely poor quality of breathable air. Low wind dispersion, increased emission, industrial density and vehicular congestion are reasons why P2.5 is now 90 meug/cum.

The light fog that gently rolled down the Hooghly, in the older days, is now a tight ball of smog, impenetrable and dangerous. All that we held beautiful, heralding the advent of a misty, mellow season, today is shrouded in apprehension and fear. Is this what we have done to our planet over the years? Relentless cutting down of trees, ruthless digging up of water bodies, complete lack of awareness in uncontrolled use of electronic items emitting dangerous gases have led us to such grey times. Yet let us not lose hope. There is still time on hand. Realisation and redemption can yet reverse the situation. May we see light soon, literally and figuratively and let us all make a conscious effort to contribute in our own way to to the betterment of the environment.

Then maybe, we will reclaim the lost winters of Kolkata, enjoy our morning walks, look up at the sky on lazy afternoons and watch migratory birds flock back to the city and have generations to come thank us for our forward thinking moves. In that heaven of realisation may we soon awaken.



Winter Wonders

Our winters of much content

● **Srabanee Chakraborty**

CHARTER PRESIDENT / CLUB TRAINER



Charter President of Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna and Club Trainer, Srabanee Chakraborty is a true woman of substance. She exemplifies strength, resilience, and multitasking prowess. She has overcome certain medical challenges to achieve an enviable position in the world of advertising, event management and marketing. Highly educated, she pursued her studies after an early marriage and was determined to acquire knowledge which resulted in her various degrees. Her determination has earned her numerous accolades at regional, national, and global levels. A true multitasker, Srabanee has curated more than two thousand events and is a veteran of televised reality shows in India. A dedicated Rotarian in both District and her own Club, she is a pillar of strength and knowledge.

Winter, a season that once held a unique charm during my childhood, now seems to have lost its magic. The memories of winter from my early years are filled with warmth and joy. Back then, winter was synonymous with excitement and festivity, a time when we eagerly anticipated the winter holidays. I vividly remember how my father and his friends would quickly finish their lunch, pack bags full of snacks, and head to Eden Gardens to watch the matches. The rest of us would gather around the radio, listening to the live commentary with bated breath since there was no television then. The entire neighbourhood buzzed with excitement, and every now and then, we would hear shouts of "Out! Out!" when the players of the opponent team would get out and cheered with claps when India would hit a four or a six echoing through the streets. The thrill of an Indian victory in a test match, which lasted five days, was unparalleled. The joy and camaraderie surrounding these matches are something I miss dearly. Winter afternoons were a time for the women in the neighbourhood to come together. They would sit in the sun, knitting woollen cardigans and mufflers while discussing various designs, as the children played nearby. The warmth of the sun, the chatter of the women, and the laughter of the children created a cozy atmosphere. Sometimes, conversations flowed from one rooftop to another as neighbours exchanged stories and shared their lives. Winter also brought a plethora of culinary delights. I fondly remember my grandmother making 'Chittoi Pithe' and 'Payesh', traditional Bengali sweets that were staples during this season. The aroma of freshly made sweets, the taste of new jaggery made from dates (locally known as 'notun gur' 'Nolen gur'), and the joy of sharing these treats with family and friends are memories I hold close to my heart. Badminton was another winter favourite; we would play for hours, and when adults joined in, our job was to fetch the shuttlecock whenever it fell. The simple pleasure of playing badminton under the winter sun is something today's children, might never understand. Winter was also the season of picnics and festivals. We enjoyed numerous picnics in fresh air amidst nature's beauty. Music concerts were highlights of the season; I remember attending concerts where legendary artists like Pandit Nikhil Banerjee, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and Kishori Amonkar performed. Listening to their music and having a piping hot cup of tea during breaks under a starry winter sky was magical. The excitement of staying up all night for these concerts and the thrill of live music fostered a sense of community that is irreplaceable. Going to movies during winter holidays was another cherished activity. We would pack water bottles and snacks before heading to the movie hall, where we lost ourselves in films like Gupi Gayen Bagha Bayen, Sonar Kella, Joy Baba Felunath, Sound of Music, Crazy Boys, and many more. Watching a movie with family and friends—sharing laughter and discussions—are memories I treasure. Winter also meant an abundance of flowers; chrysanthemums, marigolds, and dahlias bloomed in every garden, adding colour to the season. We often visited horticulture shows with my grandfather driving us. Sitting outdoors in the Maidan (fondly remembered as "Gorre Math"), enjoying juicy oranges and other winter treats while occasionally stopping by a restaurant called Gay at Outram Ghat for mouth-watering sandwiches and ice creams added delight to our days. Today's children engrossed in their gadgets, might never know these simple joys that are still etched in our hearts. Growing up with my grandparents allowed me to experience the true essence of winter. The season had a distinct smell and flavour that I miss in today's Kolkata. The city's changing landscape and disappearing trams no longer feel the same. As Rabindranath Tagore beautifully said: "The butterfly counts not months but moments, and has time enough". The winters of my childhood—filled with crisp air, vibrant festivals, and simple pleasures, seem like distant dreams. Has Kolkata changed or have I?



Winter Wonders

Our winters of much content

● Sujit Sanyal



Sujit Sanyal is a retired senior advertising and brand communication professional, who has worked on a wide number of categories in the product and service industry. He continues his linkage with advertising by teaching at various institutes, including at the Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication at Lavale, Pune. He has authored a few books, including his memoirs, while also running a digital platform, Kahaani Koncerti. He is also the Chairman of Oly's Advertising Roundtable Charitable Trust, committed to deliberate and discuss matters on brand and marketing. A former Rotarian, he has served as the Past President of Rotary Club of Delhi Panchsheela Park and a Zonal Secretary.

Currently he serves as the Honorary Director of HARTS for the Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development, which includes working as an Executive Aide to the Trust Chairman. He is also the Convenor for the International Conference on Preserving Buddhist Heritage in Rural Areas.

A crispy December morning. Our family shifted back to Kolkata in 1964, and instead of going to Shillong where my father was posted, I came to Kolkata for my Christmas holidays from Lucknow, where I schooled. Other than the stately buildings down the road, what fascinated me were the tramcars crisscrossing the city. The tram line was just a minute's walk from our house on Mahanirvan Road, and I would often stand on the pavement in front of Deshapran Mistanna Bhandar, tucking into their famous kochuris, which came with an alu subzi, and the potatoes had the skin intact. A real winter treat, which was followed up by a notun gurer sondesh or two. Winter in Kolkata was splendid, and almost every day a part of my life was spent riding a tramcar, mostly route no. 24. How beautiful was the city! The vehicle moved slowly, the tracks were laid on a grass bed, slightly elevated from the road, almost up to Lake Market, after which the green beds gave way to the city road. The tracks ran along cars and other automobiles. At Rashbehari Crossing, it was like a junction. One set of lines came from Tollygunge and the other set from Esplanade. The speed of the tramcars matched the mood of the city—slow but elegant—and in First Class, which had cushioned seats, bhadraloks wore their best winter wear. Some wore suits (we still had the British hangover, people still wore ties with a shirt even in summer), some colourful pullovers, mostly knitted by some lady at home, who had spent time to choose the wool from Y O Wool House, adjacent to Basanti Devi College. At 10 paise, you could enjoy such a colourful company right up to Rashbehari Crossing, and often I would get adventurous and ride all the way to Esplanade. I had no friends and no siblings, so the tram rides became my fancy, and it also helped me to know the city better. I would get off at Esplanade, walk over to Metro Cinema, watch the people moving in different directions, slowly start walking towards Lindsay Street, past Tiger Cinema, go down to New Market, which gave you the feel of being in a foreign city. The shops were decorated, Santa stood inviting you, and for a boy from Lucknow, it was all magic. Once I had my fill, I would cross the main road, stand in front of Monohar Das Tarag, a lovely pond with four domes, one at each corner, and this time, I would hop onto a Second Class, which had a slightly lower fare but provided you with wooden seats. The fellow riders were not the elitist types, mostly working class, many wore a shawl over their shirt. Some had a muffler wrapped around their neck, some wore a woollen Jahar coat. Kolkata winters did not call for a monkey cap. They were purchased only when people travelled to a hill station or to a location in North India. The Tram Gumti at Esplanade was a marvel. All routes from the city met here and went back to their origin. I would often stand there and watch these tramcars. A few, incidentally, had only one bogie. Route No. 12 came from Galiff Street and went back. No. 25 went along Dharamtollah Street (it was not yet Lenin Sarani), turned into Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Marg, and went to Ballygunge via Park Circus. Another route went to Nimtollah, some passed by Nakhoda Masjid. The best ride in winter was to take the route from Esplanade to Khidirpur, which cut through the Maidan, ran along Red Road, past Victoria Memorial, and Race Course. An afternoon ride on this route was heaven. It gave you the feel of being in a foreign land. If Kolkata was the place to be in the winter months, the tramcars were in the same league as the Plum Cakes, Jhola Gur, D'Gama's Pastries, and Christmas Cards. Deshapran, Y O Wool House, and tramcars are now history. Winter does not set in Kolkata anymore.



Member's Spotlight



Soma Bhan

Soma Bhan has served the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna as the Service Project Chair and Co Public Image Chair, showcasing her commitment to community service and effective communication. Her leadership and passion for making a difference are evident in her contributions to Rotary. With extensive experience as the President of Branding and Events at Medica Superspecialty Hospital, Soma now runs an advertising agency called Mirakii. She is a dedicated and straightforward leader with a soft and empathetic core.

My Rotary Journey

It was sometime in late 2016 or early 2017 when my dear friend and our Charter President, Srabane Chakraborty, and I were discussing how it was time to give back to society what we had been so privileged to receive. Our conversation was driven by a shared sense of responsibility and a desire to make a meaningful impact. As fate would have it, Srabane mentioned that Shyamashree Sen (PDG) was encouraging her to form a Rotary Club within District 3291. The idea immediately resonated with us. It felt like a godsend—a structured, powerful platform to reach out to the less privileged while giving us friends a chance to bond, grow, and stay energized. Thus began the journey of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, officially chartered on June 16, 2017, with 51 passionate members. Today, we proudly stand 54-strong, each member contributing uniquely to our shared mission. Being a Charter Member fills me with immense pride and a deep sense of responsibility.

The early days were a whirlwind of learning as we absorbed all we could about Rotary—the largest NGO in the world—and its incredible ability to transform lives. I had the privilege of leading Service Projects – Medical for a few years. This role gave me unparalleled satisfaction as we organized health awareness camps for adults and children, addressing critical issues and spreading knowledge that could save lives. One of the most significant milestones during this period was my involvement in setting up 'Ankuran,' our club's flagship project. Ankuran is a school within the Dum Dum Correctional Home, dedicated to providing education and a nurturing environment for the children of inmates, up to the age of six. Witnessing this project come to life and knowing its transformative potential remains one of my most cherished Rotary experiences.

Later, I transitioned to the Public Image team, ensuring that our club's initiatives gained the visibility they deserved. I must admit that balancing my commitments to Rotary with the demands of running a startup have not been easy. There have been times when I couldn't actively participate in as many projects as I would have liked. However, I've made it a point to support from the sidelines—whether it's offering ideas, lending resources, or ensuring my subscriptions are paid on time. After all, timely contributions are the backbone of any club's ability to plan and execute impactful projects.

Looking ahead, I'm determined to become more actively involved and contribute further to Rotary's mission of service above self. The journey so far has been deeply enriching, and I look forward to many more opportunities to make a difference, both within and beyond our club.



Sutapa Biswas

Ms. Sutapa Biswas, Co-founder and Executive Director of the Cancer Foundation of India, has a background in Mass Communication and documentary filmmaking. After a personal loss to cancer, she dedicated herself to cancer prevention, focusing on tobacco-related, breast, and cervical cancers. She has led numerous projects, received multiple fellowships, and produced award-winning films on cancer. Currently, she serves as the Service Project Chair Medical in the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna.

A Purposeful journey with RCC Avyanna

Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna is more than just an association for me—it is a space where purpose meets fellowship. As the Medical Chair of Avyanna, I find immense fulfillment in engaging with like-minded women, all deeply committed to making a difference in society. For over 25 years, I have dedicated my life to cancer prevention. My current mission is to protect the next generation of women from cervical cancer through HPV vaccination at an early age. At Avyanna, I have found the perfect platform to extend this mission, ensuring that girls from underserved communities receive this life-saving vaccine. The club's unwavering commitment to service aligns seamlessly with my lifelong dedication, making my Rotary journey both meaningful and impactful. Beyond service, Rotary has given me a circle of strong, compassionate women who uplift and inspire me. The camaraderie, shared purpose, and unwavering support enrich my professional and personal life, strengthening my belief in the power of collective action. For me, Rotary is not just about giving back—it is about growing, learning, and making a difference, together. And that is what makes this journey so fulfilling.

Project Stories

● **Sonali Mehrotra**
SERVICE PROJECT CHAIR
NON MEDICAL



Planting Dreams at Correctional Home

On October 2, 2024, I had the privilege of visiting the Dum Dum Correction Home as a member of The Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, along with the President, Mrs. Chandreyi Mitra, PDG Mr. Raju Rajgarhia, and fellow Rotarians. Our club, Avyanna, proudly runs a school for the inmates' children, named "Ankuran," inside the correction home.

It was a heartwarming interaction with the kids as we donated fabrics for their school uniforms, which would be stitched by none other than the women inmates themselves. This initiative not only provides uniforms for the children but also offers an additional source of income and occupation for the women behind bars.

Mr. Rajgarhia, PDG, had the honor of inaugurating the RO water filter, bestowed by Club Avyanna, ensuring that the children have access to clean and germ-free water.

We were immensely humbled by the kind gesture of Khadim's, a renowned city-based shoe company, which distributed comfortable and colorful shoes to the children, courtesy of President Chandreyi Mitra.

As much as the suffering of these innocent children pains my heart, it is a delight to see how their little souls remain unaffected by their surroundings. They bask in the love and care showered upon them by their caretakers. The toddlers were filled with gratitude as we presented them with gifts and distributed sweets. The smiles on their faces were priceless.

It is truly heartening to see Ankuran sow the seeds of happiness and hope in an otherwise dull and grim place. I sincerely pray and hope that these children receive a good education, paving the way for a brighter future, making a mark in society, and

becoming better individuals—unlike their progenitors within the premises. Gandhi Jayanti could not have been celebrated in a better way—honoring the Father of our Nation by contributing, in our small way, to the betterment of society.

I take immense pride in being a part of the most reputed all-women's club of Rotary—Avyanna—spreading hope everywhere!

This is Sonali Mehrotra reporting from Dum Dum.



HPV Vaccination Project

● Sheela Janakiram
PAST PRESIDENT AND
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY



Empowering a Healthier Future

Cervical cancer is a significant issue in India, ranking as the second most prevalent cancer and a leading cause of cancer-related deaths among women. The Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna has taken proactive measures to tackle this challenge. Our club has successfully vaccinated 462 young girls till date with the first dose against HPV, giving them a chance for a healthier future. We observed Cervical Cancer Elimination Day on November 17th, 2024, in collaboration with Cancer Foundation of India, by providing HPV vaccinations to 150 underprivileged girls in Khas Sankdah village. Sunderbans HPV Vaccination Camp. On December 12th, 2024, we partnered with the Cancer Foundation of India to vaccinate 104 girls aged 9-14 at Harinavi Subhasini Balika Sikshalaya. Cervical Cancer Awareness camp An engaging session was held in Tangra on December 17th, 2024, to educate women about HPV, cervical cancer, and the importance of vaccination and regular screenings. On December 22nd, 2024, our club collaborated with Calcutta Rescue and the Inner Wheel Club of Kolkata New Gen to vaccinate 62 beneficiaries against cervical cancer at Dr. Bobby's Memorial Clinic in Tangra. Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna is committed to safeguarding marginalized women from cervical cancer. Our dedication to community service and the wellbeing of women is evident in this project, fostering a healthier future for generations ahead. Our HPV vaccination project has made a meaningful difference, and we are determined to work towards a cervical cancer-free community. We are grateful for the support of our partners and are excited to expand our initiatives in the future.

This is Sheela Janakiram reporting from Khas Sankdah.



Empowering Rural Women Through Livestock

● **Aparna Banerjee**
CLUB SECRETARY



Donor Information: Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna.

Recipient Information: 20 rural women of Khas Sankdah village, North 24 Parganas.

Type of Livestock: The donation of Livestock in the form of ducklings and chicks is not just a simple act of charity but a symbol of hope and resilience. These animals will become a lifeline for the beneficiary women, transforming their lives from a state of uncertainty to one of empowerment.

As I embarked on my journey on a crisp winter morning with my fellow Rotarians, I could vividly see the need for upliftment in these rural areas. The villagers face immense challenges in sustaining their daily livelihoods, and the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna remains committed to service—especially the empowerment of rural women. Upon reaching Khas Sankdah village, where we were donating the ducklings and chicks, we witnessed a flicker of hope reigniting in the eyes of these women. Their smiles, brimming with gratitude and newfound determination, spoke volumes about their strength and resilience—no less than that of warriors.

This is Aparna Banerjee reporting from Khas Sankdah.



Tejaswini Samman Awards

● **Apala Datta**
PAST PRESIDENT AND
INTERACT CHAIR



The Tejaswini Samman Awards, a flagship property of Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, was conceptualized by Charter President Srabane Chakraborty in 2019. Initially, the awards recognized Durga Pujas organized by women in Kolkata and its suburbs. Over the years, the event has grown, with more puja pandals being awarded. In 2023, we expanded our scope to include larger pujas, coinciding with UNESCO's recognition of "Durga Puja in Bengal" as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In 2024, Tejaswini Samman took on a different tone, focusing on awareness about Cervical Cancer and Polio. We dispensed with the ranking system and instead recognized all participating puja pandals and exceptional artists. The event was powered by Mani Group and SMA Consultancy Service Private Ltd. Pennon Shipping Private Ltd was the Platinum Host, while RC Belur and RC Calcutta were Lead hosts, along with Rotary Club of Calcutta Yuvis, Rotary Club of Calcutta Mahanagar, Maverick Creation, Tea Leaf Co. Rtn Binod Khaitan and Addy Foundation. Under President Chandreyi Mitra's leadership, Tejaswini Samman adopted a three-pronged approach: displaying awareness banners, setting up a kiosk for specially-abled and elderly people, and branding Rotary through prominent banner displays. The event concluded with an award ceremony, graced by the District Governor and several Past District Governors. This endeavour embodied the 2024-25 Presidential theme, "The Magic of Rotary," spreading light and making our world shine brighter.

This is Apala Datta reporting from TOPCAT/OFFBEAT CCU.



Yuletide-Tidings

● **Srabanee Chakraborty**
CHARTER PRESIDENT /
CLUB TRAINER



SPREADING CHRISTMAS JOY!
This festive season, Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna brought joy and cheer to two deserving groups! First, we hosted an unforgettable musical afternoon at Little Sisters of the Poor, featuring the legendary Padma Bhushan Usha Uthup! Watching senior inmates dance to Usha ji's iconic tunes was truly heartwarming, proving once again that music is the best medicine. Next, we spread joy to 51 underprivileged girls from the Girl2B Foundation, treating them to a festive day filled with fun, games, and rides at the Eastern Metropolitan Club's Christmas carnival. The girls enjoyed a delightful Christmas lunch and an array of goodies, celebrating hope, happiness, and the beauty of diversity, inclusivity, and equity. Kudos to our team for making these events happen! Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas!

This is Srabanee Chakraborty reporting from The Little Sisters of the poor & Eastern Metropolitan Club.



A Snapshot of Projects Executed

OCTOBER

Date	Title	Area of Focus	Category	Sub-Category
Oct 2	Water Filter for Children of Ankuran	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	Water Kiosks	At Educational Institutions
Oct 2	Distribution of Uniform and Shoes to the Children	Basic Education and Literacy	Schools	Running of Schools (Number of Students)
Oct 7	Awareness, Cervical Cancer and Polio Eradication	Disease Prevention and Treatment	Advocacy and Awareness	Health Issues – Social and Print Media
Oct 8	Adult Literacy, Transforming Lives with Education	Basic Education and Literacy	Adult Literacy	Vidya (Through Partner Organizations)
Oct 29	Polio Awareness Seminar	Disease Prevention and Treatment	Advocacy and Awareness	Health Issues – Seminar
Oct 30	Blood Donation Camp	Others		
Oct 31	Green Diwali Campaign with Diyas, Saris and Food	Environment	Advocacy and Awareness	Campaigns

VOCATIONAL SERVICE

Date	Title	Area of Focus	Category	Sub-Category
Oct 1	Empowering Neurodivergent Youth	Career Guidance & Skill Development	Vocational Training – Employment Generation Programs	

A Snapshot of Projects Executed

OCTOBER

NEW GENERATION SERVICE

Date	Title	Area of Focus	Category	Sub-Category
Oct 7	Installation of Interact Club, St. Francis Xavier	Formation of New Interact Club		

PUBLIC IMAGE INITIATIVE SERVICE

Date	Title	Area of Focus	Category	Sub-Category
Oct 5	Recognition of Inclusive Durga Pujas	Newspaper Coverage		
Oct 8	Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna's Health Clinic	Rotary Stalls in Business Fairs		
Oct 10	Puja Parikrama for Senior Citizens	Hoarding		
Oct 28	Tejaswini Samman, Celebrating Spiritual Solace	Hoarding		

A Snapshot of Projects Executed

NOVEMBER

Date	Title	Area of Focus	Category	Sub-Category
Nov 9	CPR Training for a Healthier Community	Disease Prevention and Treatment	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	Training for Safe Practices
Nov 15	Promoting Inclusivity and Peace Through Theatre	Peace Building and Conflict Prevention	Others (Awareness Through Theatre Presentation)	
Nov 17	HPV Vaccination, Empowering a Healthier Future	Disease Prevention and Treatment	Vaccination/ Vaccination Centres	Cervical Cancer
Nov 22	Aware for Rare (Diseases)	Disease Prevention and Treatment	Advocacy and Awareness	Health Issues – Seminar
Nov 23	Fowler Bed, a Wheelchair Chair to Bring Comfort	Disease Prevention and Treatment	Hospital Equipments	Providing New Equipments

NEW GENERATION SERVICE

Date	Title	Area of Focus	Category	Sub-Category
Nov 14	Gift of Confidence	Others		
Nov 14	Children's Day Celebration	Others		
Nov 22	Painting of Classrooms and Boundary Walls of School	Others		

A Snapshot of Projects Executed

NOVEMBER

PUBLIC IMAGE INITIATIVE SERVICE

Date	Title	Area of Focus	Category	Sub-Category
Nov 15	Rotary Presents Empowering Marginalized Voices	Others		

DECEMBER

Date	Title	Area of Focus	Category	Sub-Category
Dec 12	Vaccinating Marginalized Young Girls Against HPV	Disease Prevention and Treatment	Vaccination/ Vaccination Centres	Cervical Cancer
Dec 13	Participation in District RYLA Project	Others		
Dec 17	HPV Vaccination Awareness Program	Disease Prevention and Treatment	Advocacy and Awareness	Health Issues – Seminar
Dec 22	Cervical Cancer Vaccination	Disease Prevention and Treatment	Vaccination/ Vaccination Centres	Cervical Cancer
Dec 23	Gift a Livestock! Empower the Woman!	Community Economic Development	Empowering Girls	Gainful Employment
Dec 24	Spreading Love and Joy	Others		
Dec 24	Spreading Christmas Joy to Lonesome Elders!	Peace Building and Conflict Prevention	Others (Shedding Loneliness, Sadness and Disparity!)	

A Snapshot of Projects Executed

DECEMBER

Date	Title	Area of Focus	Category	Sub-Category
Dec 25	A Celebration of Hope and Happiness!	Peace Building and Conflict Prevention	Others (Spreading Joy and Bridging Disparities)	
Dec 28	Gift of Warmth and Healthcare at Red Light Area	Disease Prevention and Treatment	Community Large Health Camps	Preventive, Diagnostic and Curative - Slums
Dec 29	Free Health and Eye Checkup Camp	Disease Prevention and Treatment	Community Large Health Camps	Preventive, Diagnostic and Curative - Village/Community

NEW GENERATION SERVICE

Date	Title	Area of Focus	Category	Sub-Category
Dec 10	Embracing Resilience and Inclusivity	Project with Interact Club		
Dec 16	Sahayog	Project with Interact Club		
Dec 16	Spreading the Yuletide Joy	Project with Interact Club		

Potpourri



Sumi Chaudhury

Sumi Chaudhury, an Advertising Professional with over 30 years of experience, founded her own ad firm, Voyagers, in 2001. She has a background as a Copywriter and Creative Consultant in renowned agencies. Currently, she serves as the Branding Chair at the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, while continuing to create prose, rhyme, and art for both work and leisure.

Kindness Shapes Character

a perception by Sumi Chaudhury Growing up I discovered one precious truth - that life was simply an essay in transience; a hazy kaleidoscope of incidents. The passing years, people, places, things - both tangible and otherwise - seemed almost a blur, a cascading rush in this ripple called Life - until the day I felt deeper stirrings within my soul and found a connect that put everything into meaningful perspective. I discovered Kindness. I realised it was empathy that instantly added meaning to whatever I experienced. And soon enough it became my second nature, my guiding light, shaping my mind, influencing my spirit, allowing me to distinguish the good from the bad. It is this sensitivity that actually began to make me love life and draw me closer to people, and much more so, to my world! I realised kindness was the key to keep your head on your shoulders even when everything else around you was falling apart. I thrived in kindness as it smoothened out the jagged edges of negativity, adding joy to everyday interactions! It helped me find reason in dealing with the emotional highs and lows; made me wear a smile through the toughest days. I realised there was depth, beauty and power in this one distinctive trait which could eventually temper your moods and affect your actions, lending you character. As a Rotarian, I believe I have found a wider doorway to investing in kindness - in touching lives, uplifting communities, creating pathways to a better, brighter tomorrow! After all, it is kindness which lets you celebrate being human - every day!



Rajlakshmi Mohan

Mrs. Rajlakshmi Mohan wears many hats! A marketing and media wiz, she is right now entrenched in academics and gardening (not necessarily in that order!). But nature remains her first love. A charter member of our club she has also graced the position of Club President during the difficult Covid year. Over to the free spirit we also call Raj!

Peak to Peak

When life throws you a lemon, make lemonade, a popular saying we have heard often! Universe threw this opportunity at me and I grabbed it with full dedication and optimism! A stray conversation opened doors to a completely new industry for me! In my mid 60's I was invited to join PNB METLIFE as a "Valued Partner", VP, new term for age old Insurance agents. In my last job in DNA MUMBAI, I was a VP sales & marketing. I chuckled to myself, once a VP always a VP. Being mathematically challenged the whole idea of Selling Investment / Insurance plan was daunting! Least did I know the world has moved on with Apps of various kinds, which does all calculation! Once this assurance came up, it completely engulfed my Sales instinct of early years! I did promise myself, if Universe led me here, I have to fulfil the purpose! The highest honour in Insurance industry, the OSCAR here is called MDRT, Million Dollar Round Table. A Global recognition, applicable pan India & across the world. It certainly comes with a stiff target and the deadline is 31st Dec midnight. Sure, there was a point when I was almost doubting myself, but a midnight chat with my dad, (in my mind) helped to start afresh the next day with renewed vigour! At 11.33 pm, on 31st Dec my last logging was completed! The moment was almost surreal! Entire team of seniors, Team Head, Branch Head, Regional Head & Zonal Head along with few junior team members burst out clapping and cheering! At that late hour the entire office was there to assist me! This I felt was Divine blessing! Final announcement however came on 10 January 2025. And our MDRT celebration at branch level was on 15 January 2025! This too was a unique communication for me personally! MDRT's of Kolkata were taken by ghorar gari ride from Victoria to ROTARY SADAN!!!! Felicitations & celebrations all day long were at Rotary Sadan! We weren't told about the plan, as the day went by it unfurled. I had goosebumps all over when the buggy stopped at ROTARY SADAN gate!!! In my late years Rotary has become integral to my mental wellbeing and it got etched permanently with the MDRT celebration being held there! My humble thanks to all who held my hand in this magnificent ride of mine.

Musings by our Interactors



Yashodhara Singh
11 E

Winter in my city: Unique Features of our Local Winter

As the first rays of the nascent sun crack through the mist and fog, casting its soft glow on the lush greenery of the Maidan, the flowing water of the Hooghly river, the nooks and corners of the city, my beautiful Tilottama breaks its slumber and wakes up to yet another winter morning.

Winter is the season which is supposed to be cold, harsh, colourless and dull. But to quote a very famous line "Winter teaches us that even the coldest days can lead to beautiful transformations" which is proved in my city of unfound oddities. Here winter is a season filled with vigour, enthusiasm and diversified events. The famous quintessential Bengali picnics dominate the weekends. We frequently witness an uncontrollable crowd in the famous Alipore Zoo, Botanical Garden, Birla Planetarium, Science City, the Indian Museum and so on. Another not so famous yet colourful event is the vintage car rally that takes place on Sunday mornings.

Long before most of India, Kolkata came up with the thought of celebrating Christmas - popularly known as 'Bododin'. Parkstreet is lit from end to end and Christmas cakes and plastic Christmas trees dominate the local market. Bow Barrack has its own share of celebrating Christmas.

Kolkata, the city of Satyajit Ray, Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore, is punctuated this time by the routine wonders of Nolen gur, payesh and other delicacies as it celebrates 'Poush Parbon', a famous festival of Bengal. Various types of 'pithe'- a salty and sweet delicacy is prepared at homes and savoured by all. We embrace the warmth of winter with oranges on sunny rooftops, woollen clothes smelling of naphthalene and so on.

As the city embraces itself in warm blankets and comfortable sleep, there are a huge number of people who pass every night with the thought "When winter comes, can spring be far behind?". For the people living on the streets, winter is a curse, a season most unwelcomed. Wrapping themselves in tattered blankets and clothes, desperately trying to keep themselves warm by kindling a fire, they pass each day pining for spring to arrive.

The city of joy has its own charm and winter is the time to romance and fall in love with Kolkata once again and cherish its beauty and multifariousness.



How Different Cultures Celebrate Winter Holidays



Adrika Das

Winter Night Festivities

Winter, marking the end of fall,
Lingers brief as the time does stall
For a few months, till spring arrives;
Around the world, festivity thrives.

Bells and stars upon the conifer tree,
Gifts and fruit cakes amplify the glee.
Corners of every street bask in light,
Sharing the joys of a Christmas night.

Another candle lit every passing day,
Heartfelt latkes arranged in every tray.
Eight days revel in Menorah's light,
Sharing the joys of a Hanukkah night.

Door to door, sweet carols' cue,
Gathering many or a simple few.
Pinatas hung amidst the gaudy light,
Sharing the joys of a Las Posadas night.

Along the rivers, lanterns set afloat,
Drifting away from the anchored boat.
Tangyuan savored under the light,
Sharing the joys of a Yuan Xiao night

Toasting to the win of the good,
Relishing a feast of humble food.
Rangoli shimmers in Diya's light,
Sharing the joys of a Diwali night.

Across the world, it is all the same,
Warmth is found in every name.
If not beckoning the gleaming lights,
What are the joys of winter nights?



Andrew Fleming



Payel Chatterjee

Embracing Resilience and Inclusivity: A Path to Personal Growth

On December 10, 2024, Interact Club of Birla Bharati School organized a unique and insightful workshop on Inclusive Education and Personal Development, marking a historic first for the city by hosting a session facilitated by representatives of the British Consulate.

This extraordinary event brought together dignitaries such as Dr Andrew Fleming, British Deputy High Commissioner to Kolkata, Ms. Monica, Inclusion Lead, Mr. Aziz Hussain, Deputy Head of Employee Experience, and Ms. Kendi, Disability Policy Lead at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Their collective expertise brought forward meaningful discussions on mental health awareness, inclusivity, and personal growth, leaving an indelible mark on more than 150 students as well as interactors from Classes 9 and 11.

The session stood out for its focus on addressing real-life challenges such as overthinking, fear of failure, and misconceptions surrounding mental health support. Through engaging discussions and practical strategies like journaling and talk therapy, students were inspired to overcome insecurities and foster emotional resilience. The interactive format allowed participants to share their personal experiences and find strength in mutual understanding and empathy. Participants reflected on the positive impact of the session. One student noted how it deepened her understanding of the struggles faced by neurodivergent individuals and the importance of empathy. Another student highlighted the session's ability to foster a positive mindset, helping them realize their potential despite life's challenges.

A key feature of the event was the breakout sessions, where around 46 students engaged in smaller, focused discussions with Ms. Monica, Mr. Aziz, and Ms. Kendi. It also encouraged students to view failure as a stepping stone to success, presenting strategies like journaling, constructive feedback, and self-reflection to help them overcome setbacks. Practical tools, such as the Pomodoro Technique, were introduced to manage stress effectively. A significant focus was placed on fostering adaptability, consistency, and emotional resilience to face experiences, learn from one another, and reflect on their unique strengths. These sessions offered students an in-depth opportunity to explore their thoughts and challenges in a safe and supportive space. Students expressed how these interactions helped them view situations with a positive mindset, confront insecurities, and recognize their own potential despite external challenges.

The proactive involvement of the school's leadership also played a crucial role in the success of the workshop. Students praised the Principal's initiative in organizing such a transformative event, as well as her approachability and understanding nature. The School Counsellor was equally appreciated for fostering an inclusive and supportive environment where students felt heard and valued. This impactful workshop empowered students with practical tools like journaling, talk therapy, and self-reflection, helping them build resilience and self-awareness. With its focus on creating a nurturing and inclusive educational environment, Birla Bharati School has set a benchmark for holistic student development.

This is Payel Chatterjee reporting from Birla Bharati School.

Down Memory Lane ...



Shyamashree Sen

It has been a long and really wonderful journey since 1993. I was very surprised when I was invited to a meeting of unknown people – at the Bidhannagar Swimming Association. I had no clue why I was invited by some senior gentlemen and one lady Rtn Dipti Di who had gathered to constitute a new Rotary Club in Salt Lake. I asked why I was being invited that evening. Over a couple of days, I was interviewed by Rtn Samanta Da, a senior and very serious member of Rotary Club of Salt Lake Mid Town, a club that boasted of a large population along with an Interact Club and a Rotaract Club. It was a great meeting and I was introduced to the Club President Rtn Shyam Modi Ji and another gentleman by the name of Rtn Swapan Mitra who wanted some of us to create a new club.

Unlike the speed at which clubs are being created today, the club that became my family and home from that memorable day in August 1993 till we were declared "Provisional" in the month of December 1993! And, to the surprise of all the new members who had been invited to join the new club which was provisionally known as Rotary Club of Salt Lake Central (Provisional) from that wintry evening. Finally on 14th March 1994 the club was presented its Charter. However, our Charter Ceremony was held at the Ordinance Club in the month of May 1994 and I moved from a Provisional Club Secretary to a Charter Secretary for RC Salt Lake Central. This assignment was my longest tenure, starting from 1994 to 1996. In 1997-98 I was invited to be the Club President for my 1st club. It was a very interesting year and our tiny club was given a 5th position by our District Governor Anjan Kumar. That was an exciting day! My club received the prestigious R.I. President's Citation and the District Governor's Citation.

However, from 1998 to 2000, I was beginning to think about a change. I was assigned as Co-Chair for the Governor's Monthly Letter, the newsletter of the District Governor in 1998-99. This is when I fell in love with my new job as I had a background in press and media. So in 1999 to 2000 I was promoted to the position of the Governor's Monthly Letter Chair. Those were the days of learning, knowing how to present the GML and making sure that the copy would be in the hands of the readers within the first three days of the month. And simultaneously, I would receive a pretty card with words of encouragement from the then District Governor, Shekhar Mehta who finally became the Rotary International President in 2023-24. I must admit that writing and editing is in my blood and so this was, perhaps, my best assignment. I published newsletters for a number of mega events such as the Literacy Summit in Nepal, the Arsenic-Free water Summit in Kolkata, the Hyderabad Summit and the Mahabalipuram Institute! have also worked on the District Directory during PDG Raj Kumar Rajgaria's time and have created tons of newsletters during my tryst with Rotary, including newsletters for our Mahabalipuram Institute and the Hyderabad Summit.

In 2000-2001, District Governor Ravi Sehgal gave me the gift of organizing the Inter City Meets and Seminars. Following the programmes organized by my batch-mate Past President Gopinath Ghosh, I had to work a lot to reach his footsteps. In those days we had the seminars and meetings at G.D. Birla Sabhaghar, the auditorium of Birla High School, Gorky Sadan and even the Sarat Sadan in Howrah. The meetings would be very thought-provoking and truly interesting. Needless to say that the halls would be completely full and post the meetings, we would gather at some tea or coffee place to discuss about the meetings. Sadly, today we find it difficult to fill the seats and invite the ignited minds to speak to us.

In 2001-02, I was appointed District Secretary Co-ordination, the first woman to achieve this position. I was fortunate to have a District Governor like Siddhartha Sadhan Bose, who was recommended by the then DG, to be appointed as R.I. Task Force Zone Co-ordinator – Zone 5 for New Generation Membership.

The year 2002-03 gave me a unique opportunity to start a new revolution – through knowledge sharing in Rotary. District Governor Amitava Mookerjee gave me the opportunity to work as an Assistant Governor Training. Initially my job was to gather those Rotarians who were interested to learn about various topics in Rotary. I felt like the Pied Piper, gathering Rotarians to start the Rotary Leadership Institute. Initially there were two day sessions but soon after it became three parts. I was lucky to be one of the first to be able to be a faculty as well as to get certification.

In 2011, I travelled to Bhubaneswar and worked on my Trainer's Training under PDG Frank Wargo and I passed with flying colours. After that I was always invited to speak at the RLIs... I had been faculty of RLI from 2003 in Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Guwahati, Goa, Chennai, Rourkella, Indore and the Southern states as well as Sri Lanka which were held online due to Covid.

For 5 consecutive years I served as Assistant Governor Administration, serving 5 clubs every year. In 2008, I was surprised to receive the Avenues of Service Award from R.I. President D.K. Lee.

Having hosted several GSE Team Leaders and Members as well as Youth Exchange students I was thrilled to introduce my guests to my two children. The exchange of cultures and thoughts enriched my children and me. In 2008, I was selected to lead a Group Study Exchange Team, to North Eastern Pennsylvania (District 7410), as a return for their team who had visited us. This was one more life-changing experience for me and my lovely team consisting of Ayesha Goopu, Sushmita Mullick, Sharad Jain and Aninda Sen. We travelled from the lowest part to the highest part of North Eastern Pennsylvania and were taken to New York and Philadelphia even though those were not on the itinerary. Living with people whom we had never met, eating new types of food, visiting newspaper offices and factories, coal mining places, travelling to different cities and meeting judges, doctors, engineers and a variety of people, it was a great experience for more than a month. Many of the friends who met us have been lifelong friends, some of them have left us and we shall cherish their memories. I would like to send up prayers for Bill Hawkins and Frank Wargo, who were also RLI officers and I really miss both of them.

I must say that I have been very lucky to have attended 8 Conventions starting from Singapore in 1999, Los Angeles in 2008, Bangkok in 2012, Atlanta in 2017, two conventions online during the pandemic, Houston in 2022 and Singapore in 2024. Each Convention was a learning curve and a chance to meet so many new friends and renew old relationships. For me, the break out session on RYLA at Bangkok was an exciting moment, because I was speaking there for the first time and especially, seeing the 4 booths where the speeches were being translated.



I was very lucky to have a wonderful year of service and fellowship during 2016-17. I was the only Woman District Governor in India that year and was very privileged as my batch mates really cared for me and treated me like their brother. The year was truly like a dream for me. I brought in many changes. On the 1st day of July 2016, we had a whole day's health check up at the Metro Stations as well as in the Howrah and Sealdah and Dum Dum railway stations where the Railways Officers initiated Swachha Bharat Abhiyaan. Yes, after all this work, the Rotarians gathered at Nazrul Manch where we had not only invited our own Rotarians but also a whole lot of guests from different walks of life. There were a lot of dance and music, some social activities took place and also 25 Rotarian doctors were felicitated. We had both Directors from India, Yash Pal Das and Shekhar Mehta and more than 85% of our clubs were brought on stage to be introduced as Presidents and Assistant Governors. At the end of the year there were 151 clubs and I was able to cover more than 95% of our clubs for the DG's visit.

For many years, I am serving as the Disaster Relief Chair for the Eastern India Rotary Welfare Trust. I have worked with many clubs to mitigate the conditions of the people who were made homeless during Amphan and other natural disasters.

During the years 2016 to 17, my team worked with Acid Victims and Trans people and I had been able to bring about some changes for both the affected persons as well as the authorities. I must admit that for both these important projects, some of my Assistant Governors and the District Secretariat were of great help.

My happiest moments were when I was introduced to Jennifer Jones, first at the training in 2016 when she was the Vice President of Rotary International. We clicked the first photograph together there. Then at the Indore Institute, I was asked to be Aide to Jennifer Jones and I realized what a wonderful human she was. Over the years we have grown to be good friends and she invited us to the Headquarters during her term as RI President. We also met at the Singapore Convention.

I was very proud to be chosen to be given the responsibility of Public Relations and Media which is my true calling.

I have been Rotary International President Representative twice – once at Hyderabad at the District Conference "Jalsa" at District 3150 in 2021 and again in 2023 at Aurangabad for the District Conference Anusree for District 3060. Both of these conferences were a pleasure to witness and I enjoyed both of them thoroughly.

At the end of my tenure, as the District Governor, I received a Polio Citation from Rotary International. I had organized a Polio Workshop and Polio Walk as well as a Seminar on "Life after Polio" partnering with R.I. District 5240. The Chief guest for this program was International Polio Plus Chair Michael McGovern. I have served 4 years as Regional Leader of Rotary International, serving as End Polio Now Co-ordinator of Zone 6. R.I. has, very kindly bestowed upon me the Regional Service Awards for a Polio Free World from Rotary International.

My husband Rtn Captain Sunando Sen and I are second level Major Donors and we try to support the cause of Polio Eradication sincerely. Most of my club members have joined the Polio Plus Society.

This, and the fact that in 2017, I received the Charter of RC Calcutta Avyanna, a very hard-working and dedicated club constituting very brilliant minds and thoughtful women as members. I will always be thankful to their contribution to Rotary. I have given you a story of a part of my life ... which is Rotary.



Vermicelli/ Semiya: A Culinary Delight

● Sheela Janakiram



Vermicelli/ Semiya Payasam

Vermicelli has a rich history and has become an integral part of Indian cuisine. Its versatility has made it a popular ingredient in various dishes, from sweet treats like semiya payasam to savoury breakfast options like semiya upma.

Vermicelli is typically made from whole wheat flour.

The fact that vermicelli was introduced to India through trade networks with the Middle East, highlights the significant cultural exchange that has shaped Indian cuisine.

Today, vermicelli is a staple in many Indian kitchens, and its versatility extends beyond traditional dishes to modern innovations like coating cutlets for added crispness, and is also added to salads.

INGREDIENTS

½ cup Semiya Vermicelli

½ cup Sugar

1 cup Water

1 cup full fat Milk

2 teaspoons Ghee

6 Cashew nuts

12 Raisins optional

1 Cardamom crushed

Salt - a pinch

INSTRUCTIONS

Heat a pan, add ghee and fry cashews till golden. Make sure the flame is low to avoid burnt cashews. Remove and set aside.

If using raisins, fry them as well in ghee until they fluff up. Keep aside.

In the same pan, roast vermicelli on medium-low flame while stirring constantly. The vermicelli should turn partly golden. Set aside.

Cook semiya in 1 cup water with a pinch of salt, for 5 minutes or until soft. Keep the flame on low or medium.

Add sugar and powdered cardamom. The cooked vermicelli turns transparent at this stage. Boil for 2 minutes. Add the milk.

Bring to boil till it thickens slightly, then switch off the stove. As it cools down, it gets thicker. Garnish with fried cashews and raisins.

Serve hot or chilled.



Vermicelli/ Semiya Upma

INGREDIENTS

1 cup Vermicelli/ Semiya -1 cup
1 Onion sliced thinly
¼ cup Carrot, Beans, Peas, chopped in cubes

½ Capsicum chopped in cubes
2 Green Chillies
Salt
1 & ¼ cups Water
Juice of half a Lemon
Chopped Coriander leaves for garnish.

To Temper

2 teaspoons Oil
½ teaspoon Mustard
½ teaspoon Urad dal
1 teaspoon Chana dal
1 Sprig Curry leaves

INSTRUCTIONS

Roast semiya in a teaspoon of oil and fry on low flame without changing its colour (Skip this step if it's roasted vermicelli).
Heat a pan with oil and temper with the items given under To Temper table. Saute until aromatic.
Add sliced onion and green chillies, fry till translucent.
Add the chopped vegetables, salt and saute on medium or low flame, for 2 minutes.
Add water and bring it to boil.
Add the vermicelli and salt. Stir and mix well.
Once the water is absorbed, cover and cook on low flame for 4- 5 minutes.
Add lemon juice.
Once done, fluff and serve.

NOTE:

After adding semiya to boiling water, it is important to boil until the water is almost absorbed to avoid it from getting mushy and turning fluffy.
Cooking uncovered initially when there is lot of water, helps the upma to maintain its fluffy texture



Traditional Winter Delight: Nolen Gur Payesh and Roshopuli

● Moushume Garg



Nolen Gur Payesh

These cherished recipes, passed down through generations from my grandmothers to my mother and now to me, embody the warmth and sweetness of winter. The unique flavor of Nolen gur (date palm jaggery) is a staple of Dida Thakuma's home-cooked meals, served with love and affection.

In today's fast-paced world, with the advent of technology, gadgets, and changing lifestyles, such cherished traditional recipes like these are slowly fading away. I urge you to try this authentic Nolen Gur Payesh and Roshopuli at least once before the season's gur disappears, or wait until next winter to experience its magic.

Yields: 4-6 Servings

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1 liter milk (low-fat or reduced cream recommended)

1 fistful of new Gobindo-bhog rice

150g Nolen gur (date palm jaggery)

10g ghee

1 teaspoon sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

Prepare the Rice:

Soak the Gobindo-bhog rice in water for 10 minutes. Gently strain and spread the rice to dry. Coat the soaked rice with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of ghee and set aside.

Boil the Milk:

In a heavy pan or Kadai, apply ghee all around. Pour in the milk and add 1 teaspoon of sugar. Bring the milk to a boil over medium heat, then reduce the heat and simmer for 15 minutes, stirring regularly.

Cook the Rice:

Add the ghee-coated rice to the boiling milk. Continue cooking on low heat until the rice is fully cooked and mushy soft. Stir gently throughout.

Incorporate the Nolen Gur:

Once the rice is cooked, turn off the heat and add the Nolen gur. Ensure the rice is fully cooked before adding the gur. Fold everything in and cover the pan, allowing the residual heat to melt the gur completely.

Serve:

Serve the payesh hot or cool, as per your preference. You can add fried cashew nuts and raisins, but the pure flavor of the Nolen gur is best enjoyed on its own.



Roshopuli

Pithe is a broad term encompassing a wide array of sweet delicacies prepared in Bengal, particularly during Poush Sankranti, the harvest festival that marks the winter season. These treats are crafted using the bounties of the season: rice, date-palm syrup (patali gur), coconut, milk, and flour.

Pithe making is a cherished tradition in Bengali households, often a community activity where families gather to prepare and enjoy these sweet delights. They are not just food; they are an integral part of Bengali culture, symbolizing celebration, togetherness, and the joy of the harvest season. There is a variety of puli pithe that are made in winter in Bengal.

Roshopuli is a beloved Bengali sweet, a type of "pithe" (pronounced pi-thay) or "pitha" that is especially popular during the winter months. These delectable treats are essentially dumplings made from a delightful combination of coconut and semolina (sooji), cooked to perfection in creamy milk and nolen gur during winters.

Yields: Approximately 8-10 servings

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

For the Puli (Dumplings):

150g grated fresh coconut

75g semolina (sooji/rawa)

100g sugar

½ tsp cardamom powder (optional)

For the Milk Sauce:

1 liter full-fat milk

75g Nolen Gur (date palm jaggery),

¼ cup water (optional, if milk is too thick)



INSTRUCTIONS

Making the Puli:

In a pan, combine grated coconut, semolina, sugar, and cardamom powder (if using).

Cook over low heat, stirring continuously, until the sugar melts and the mixture becomes sticky and forms a cohesive mass (about 8 minutes).

Remove from heat and transfer to a plate to cool slightly, just enough to handle.

While still warm, divide the mixture into equal portions (about 8g each).

Roll each portion into a small ball, then gently elongate it into an oval shape.

Cooking the Puli in Milk:

In a separate pan, heat the milk. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes.

Add a quarter of the Nolen Gur to the simmering milk and stir until dissolved.

Gently add the prepared puli to the milk.

Cook for 5 minutes, stirring gently and scraping the bottom and sides of the pan to prevent sticking. The puli will start to float.

Check a puli to see if it is done – it should be cooked through to the center.

Add the remaining Nolen Gur to the milk and stir until dissolved.

Continue to simmer and reduce the milk until it reaches a thick, sauce-like consistency (about 10 more minutes). If the milk becomes too thick, add a little water.

Serving:

Serve Roshopuli slightly warm.

Members' Nuggets



The Panache is elated to share that our esteemed member, Moushume Garg, has completed her Masters in Advanced Counselling with first-class honours!

The Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna extends heartfelt congratulations to her and wishes her a bright and successful future ahead.



Congratulations to our PP Rajlakshmi Mohan for achieving MDRT within seven months of beginning in a field completely new to her.

This remarkable accomplishment proves that if there is a will there is always a way and the one who ultimately wins is the one who believes she can.

Happy Birthday!



OCTOBER

Sarmistha Majumder (4th October)
Soma Bhan (9th October)
Sharmila Khanna (9th October)
Uma Mitra (15th October)
Laily Thompson (24th October)
Dipa Kapoor (25th October)
Dolon Ganguly (31st October)

NOVEMBER

Preeti Gupta (8th November)
Shukti Singh Roy (12th November)
Debjani Mukherjee (20th November)
Manashi Roy Choudhuri (25th November)
Puja Tandon (26th November)

DECEMBER

Aparna Banerjee (18th December)
Neeta Kapoor (26th December)



Just for Fun!



Rita puts up a serious, dignified front, but the naughty gleam in her eyes gives her away!



Mita is totally fuss-free where food is concerned. If none is offered, no fuss is created! (But don't be too sure).



Rhythm, Order and Creativity emerging out of a totally chaotic situation? Srabane must be around!



She may look demure, but beware of Sheela's friendly pat on your shoulder. She packs in quite a punch!

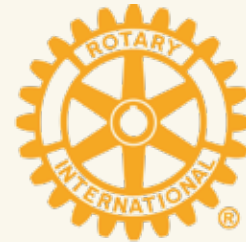


No matter how much effort you put in, Chandreyee is bound to be a few notches smarter, sharper and nattier.



Su'darshan'a. Wish she would give 'darshan' sometimes.

DID YOU KNOW?



We all know Rotary's primary motto. 'Service Above Self'. What is the secondary motto?
'One profits most who serves best'.

In which year did women join Rotary?
The first women joined Rotary in 1987.

How many Rotary clubs are there worldwide?
There are currently 34,282 Rotary Clubs worldwide.

What is the meaning of the Rotary Wheel?
The 6 spokes and 24 teeth symbolize work to be done, not idleness.

Impact Stories: Voices of Change



Ankana Chatterjee

Ankana Chatterjee, from Christopher Road Govt. Sponsored Higher Secondary School (For- Girls). Our School recently Installed an Aquaguard Water Purifier in our school. This is one of the best quality water purifiers which helps us to get sweet water for drinking in school. Before installing it, we had suffered a lot because we didn't have sweet water to drink at school. But now we all can drink the water in school. This Aquaguard filters 3 types of water like cold for summer, medium temperature and hot water for winter. We are all especially thankful to our English teacher Chandreyi Ma'am who made this arrangement with the help of Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna. As students, it's our responsibility to keep the Water Purifier clean and safe in school.



Srinika Das

I, Srinika Das, a student of Christopher Road Govt Sponsored Higher Secondary School (for girls) is deeply grateful for the successful fruit tree plantation initiative at our school. Despite our previous attempts, which unfortunately failed due to lack of care for plantation, this time we were fortunate to have the support of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Anyanna and the guidance of our dedicated English teacher, Chandreyi ma'am. Their collective efforts have not only beautified our school grounds but also provided us with a valuable opportunity to learn about the importance of sustainability and environmental conservation. Planting fruit trees is essential for our ecosystem, as it helps to purify the air, conserve water, and provide a natural habitat for various species. Moreover, fruit trees offer us nutritious fruits, which are vital for our health and well-being. I extend my sincerest thanks to the Rotary Club of Calcutta Anyanna and Chandreyi ma'am for their kindness, expertise, and commitment to making our school a greener and more sustainable place.

Chit Chat With A Rotary Hat

● Shromona Ghosh
TREASURER



CLICK HERE TO PLAY THE VIDEO



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