

THE PANACHE

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OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2025

CRESCENDO OF CULTURES A SYMPHONY OF FAITHS



RECLAIMING WOMANIYA

From the Editor's Desk



Mita Walia
EDITOR

Dear Readers,

It is that time of the year again when celebrations are in the air! From Durga Puja in October, the annual homage that Kolkata pays to her resident deity, to the Yuletide festival during Christmas week that Kolkata claims as her own, the city's autumn-winter has a nostalgic gaiety in the air! The fragrance of shiuli flowers, the rhythm of dhaak, the glittering lights across streets and balconies, and the soft winter chill together create a tapestry of emotion that is uniquely Kolkata. It is a season when tradition meets tenderness, when community feeling rises above all else, and when every neighbourhood becomes a canvas of colour and devotion.

At Avyanna, this is also the time for our annual public image spectacle, the Tejaswini Awards. This year too, like the last six years, we paid obeisance in our own special way to Bengal's Durga Puja, a UNESCO-recognised festival, by awarding various artists associated with the different puja communities in the city. The artisans, the designers, the planners, the silent workers behind the scenes — all those who transform imagination into breathtaking reality — were acknowledged and celebrated. Alongside, we also spread awareness about thalassemia, a dreaded disease that is completely preventable by carrying out simple blood tests in advance. Service and celebration went hand in hand, as they always do at Avyanna.

This year, for the first time, we had an "art adda" at the award function, where leading artists of the city shared their feelings about Durga Ma and also about Tejaswini Samman being a shining example of a winning concept. It was more than a discussion; it was a confluence of ideas, art, faith, and responsibility. The warmth of conversation, the exchange of experiences, and the mutual admiration between creators and the community made the evening deeply meaningful. It was a proud moment for the club, indeed.

While Kali Puja and Diwali were celebrated by sharing lamps and sarees with the sex workers of the Sonagachi red-light district, Christmas was spent at The Little Sisters of the Poor, which houses the old and the infirm, where our honorary member, the legendary Usha Uthup, brought the house down. There were songs, laughter, moist eyes, and hands held in quiet gratitude. Festivals, for us, are not merely occasions marked on a calendar — they are opportunities to reach out, to include, and to stand beside those who may otherwise be forgotten in the rush of festivity.

Each celebration carried its own lesson. Durga Puja reminded us of the triumph of good over evil and the power of collective creativity. Diwali and Kali Puja illuminated not just homes but hearts, urging us to light someone else's world. Christmas echoed with the message of love, humility, and shared humanity. In moving from one festival to another, we were reminded how beautifully diverse yet deeply interconnected our cultural fabric is.

Embracing different faiths and imbibing the culture of all, Avyanna strides forth to remember and rejoice in the ethos of our vast and beautiful country. Acts of compassion and words of inclusion are the hallmarks of our journey. We wish to remain so, and our Panache too reflects the potpourri that is our country and Avyanna, a microcosm! Enjoy our diverse articles, dear readers — happy reading!



Sarmistha Das
CLUB PRESIDENT

The world today is restless. Across nations, we see conflict, fear, natural disasters, and deep emotional fatigue. At the same time, we also witness extraordinary courage—people opening their homes to strangers, volunteers serving in war zones, and doctors, teachers, and caregivers standing strong when systems fail. These moments remind us that even in chaos, humanity still sings.

This is the crescendo of cultures we live in—many voices, many beliefs, and many ways of life. If ignored, they clash. But when guided by compassion, they rise together into a powerful harmony. Our value of Service Above Self is not just a motto; it is a response to the pain of the world.

At the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, we may be a small part of the world, but we choose to act. As I stand here today, my heart is filled with gratitude. We have just completed the first six months of this Rotary Year, during which we have shared ideas, executed meaningful projects, and upheld the true spirit of Rotary with the wholehearted support, cooperation, and commitment of each one of you.

As we step into the next quarter, we have a series of impactful projects focused on serving the community with compassion. From our Polio Miking Day and Polio Drop Day, to organising a Blood Donation Camp with RCC, to distributing sarees, diyas, and sweets to underprivileged women and sex workers on the advent of Durga Puja, we have contributed to our community.

From our flagship project Tejaswini to another flagship project, Ankuran's Birthday, which we celebrated with the children of the school, we remain committed to our work. Through our Health Check-up Camp and Breast Cancer Awareness Workshop, we are touching lives. From participation in the District Diwali Meet to CSR Award Nite, we have consistently supported district projects as part of our commitment.

Our Thalassemia Awareness and Prevention Drive continues, with members volunteering their time and resources to make a tangible difference in the lives of those around us. We have executed mother-and-child health check-up camps, distributed blankets to sex workers, celebrated Children's Day with the special children of Pratham Padakshep, and observed pre-Puja celebrations with the children of Ankuran.

We organised mushroom cultivation as a vocational training programme to empower women and arranged a fundraising programme, Garage Sale, in an underprivileged locality.

We celebrated Christmas in a grand way with the senior residents of Little Sisters of the Poor, where our honorary member, Padma Bhushan Awardee Usha Uthup, led and joined with carols and Hindi songs to enhance the festive mood. We also celebrated Christmas with the special children of Pratham Padakshep, where the children sang and danced joyfully. Avyanna members participated in celebrations at both locations. We also participated in a Christmas Fellowship Lunch at the Calcutta International Club with our members.

While the world speaks of division, we choose inclusion. While headlines show despair, we create moments of dignity and care. Every project we undertake is a note in this symphony.

In these challenging times, let us be louder in love, stronger in service, and deeper in faith. Let our actions rise above fear and become a message of hope. When cultures unite and hearts believe again, humanity finds its music—and Rotary becomes its voice.



DG Dr. Ramendu Hom Chowdhury

At Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, culture isn't just celebrated—it resonates, evolves, and inspires. Over the past quarter, the Club has orchestrated a vibrant crescendo of cultural engagement, thoughtfully weaving together members, communities, and partners in harmony with Rotary's enduring values of fellowship and Service Above Self. Each cultural expression has been designed with purpose, creating spaces where creativity meets compassion and shared experiences deepen human connection.

These initiatives have done more than showcase artistic excellence—they have sparked conversations, encouraged inclusivity, and strengthened bonds across generations. Through music, dance, and creative collaboration, Avyanna has demonstrated how culture can become a unifying language, capable of transcending differences and nurturing empathy. Every programme reflected a belief that art, when anchored in values, has the power to inspire reflection and collective action.

RC Avyanna's cultural journey is more than a series of events; it is a living movement that uplifts, educates, and unites. By placing culture at the heart of community engagement, the Club has ensured that each initiative carries meaning beyond the moment—leaving behind inspiration, awareness, and a sense of shared responsibility.

With every thoughtfully curated effort, the Club reaffirms that culture is not merely about preserving heritage, but about shaping a more compassionate future. It stands as a powerful force for positive change—one that strengthens fellowship, amplifies service, and continues to touch lives with grace and purpose.

Best wishes

Crescendo of Cultures – Symphony of Faiths



Shromona Ghosh

Shromona is an alumna of Modern High School and Presidency College, Kolkata. She has been associated with the corporate sector for more than thirty years. An avid reader, Shromona is passionate about theatre and writing, and enjoys 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 and is devoted to her social work.

*"Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion, too
Imagine all the people
Livin' life in peace
You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one"*

The words of Lennon resonate as I look around and see a city celebrate with great gusto and much fervour a festival that is not theirs, yet which binds them and keeps them merry. Yes, I am talking of Kolkata, and the festival is Christmas. No, it is not the religion of the revellers, but the spirit of the faith pervades the entire city, and the grace with which the Christmas spirit is welcomed sets one thinking about how culture often captures sentiments and unites masses that many sermons may not. This brings us to the words of our theme this quarter, just as the world steps into a new year marred with wars, coups, and terror attacks.

But then this has been the ethos of Kolkata always — a melting pot of cultures, the erstwhile capital of British India, and a city with a never-say-die attitude. Here, as it is often remarked, a Muslim baker of a Jewish confectionery makes cakes for a Christian festival that is primarily purchased by a Hindu population. A small cake shop called Nahoum's, yet huge in its embrace of diversity. Such is the crescendo of cultures here that we see harmony rise and sustain generations, and a sweet music is created when these cultures coalesce. The annual Durga Puja festival is yet another example of an all-faith congregation and celebrations happening unitedly, year after year. Such a symphony was also heard when Ustad Bismillah Khan's shehnai strains wafted down the sacred Ganga while he played in his abode in Benaras and serenaded the Hindu gods.

All over our beautiful country, such examples and happenings are all too common. For centuries, we, the people of India, have lived in love and harmony, our rich culture, our interesting traditions, and our abiding faith all woven in a tapestry that is unique and wonderful. Our religions are celebrations that involve all, our multicultural philosophy inter-generational. Through the ages, we have lived in peace and harmony, possible because of our enduring love for our motherland. This tenet of multi-faith transcends time and space and finds place in our music, dance, and even old recipes!

A perfect example of a crescendo of our cultures is perfectly showcased by the Hindi film industry, also known as Bollywood. Here find place actors, musicians, and technicians of every faith, churning out movies loved by all in India. Possibly, a queue for movie tickets of a Bollywood blockbuster would find representation of every language, community, and religion of India!

Thus then do we creep united, from one generation to another, one century at a time. May we continue to do so in a world bleeding heavily from divisive politics. While Rotary urges us to unite for good, we, in our country, find unity amidst diversity, and such unity brings about the greater common good. With great faith in humanity, we stride forth for a peaceful, beautiful — "one world"!



Crescendo of Cultures – Symphony of Faiths



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 Panchsheel 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.

There is a story, over-circulated, that Hindus in Kolkata celebrate a Christian festival by standing in a queue to buy cakes made by Muslims from a shop owned by Jews. It is true. Yet, it is not a surprise.

For centuries, the people in this city, both who belong to it and those who have made it their home, have subscribed to this culture, and everyone has a sense of pride in "owning" that ethos. The culture mix starts with the way Bengalis treat the Sikh community, originally referred to as "taxi and bus drivers," with such trust and respect that during the Sikh riots of 1984, the Bengalis took on themselves to protect every Sikh in the city. When Ray was on his last journey to the crematorium, I am told the atheist's body was covered in a sheet offered by Gurdwara Jagat Sudhar. It symbolized the symphony of faiths.

In 1905, when Bengal was divided by Lord Curzon, the call by the leadership, particularly by Tagore and Ramendra Sunder Trivedi, to promote tying rakhi to people from the Muslim community, with Tagore penning Rakhi Sangeet (Banglar Maati, Banglar Jol, Banglar Hawa, Banglar Phol...), was all a result of the common culture we shared. And we have been living it since.

The Armenians, the Gujaratis, the Marwaris, all of them have made their contributions to the growth of the city, be it industry, commerce, education. The city celebrates Eid, with Hindus looking forward to biryanis made by their Muslim neighbours, while it is the Muslims who play the dhak during the Hindu festival of Durga Puja. Members of all communities dance to the beat of the dhak. Shoulder to shoulder.

The situation is a little critical now. Suddenly, during the past few years, there is a sudden spate of a new element in our social and political life. Hate. And this hate is spoiling the fabric of the common culture, shared faith that people in Bengal and Kolkata have lived with for over a century. The division is being engineered by people who do not belong to Bengal and by people who are looking for political gains.

This is where the people in the community services come in. Like the Rotary. They have to refurbish the legacy, protect it, and keep the flock together. In a democracy, everyone has a right to choose the philosophy they want to be in power, but that does not mean that we have to sacrifice a treasure that we have been guarding with zeal. The Rotary is apolitical. Rotarians are trusted keepers of community value.

The culmination of a variety of cultures and customs is not difficult to examine. Bengal — undivided Bengal — had an almost equal share of Hindus and Muslims in its population for centuries. The Muslim rulers who displaced the Hindu royalty since the time of the Mughals were amicable to Hindu customs, and later, when the Muslim rulers fell after the Battle of Plassey, the English — in fact, a number of European countries — moved into Bengal with their traditions and customs. The Hindu kingdoms — zamindaris — celebrated the victory of Clive over Siraj ud Doula, and Durga Pujas became the meeting point of the various cultures.

The entry of the Armenians, Jews, Portuguese, French, and even the Danes added to the mixture, and Indian Hindus started attending church services, leading to the average Bengali celebrating Baro Din, or X'Mas.

In any case, the Bengalis were more Brit than the Brits, which is why a Bengali visiting England is very much at home.

Not just the Europeans, even the Chinese community started moving into Bengal in the late 18th century to set up their businesses, were supported by the East India Company, and the end result was the popularisation of the culinary arts — basic fried rice and chow mein became almost a staple diet in Bengali homes! A visit to Terreti Bazar for Chinese breakfast is a routine exercise, while celebrating Chinese New Year with crackers bursting menacingly is also a celebration in Bengal.

What should stand out as perfect examples of this melting pot: the 'Kolkata Biryani', a blended cuisine from Lucknow; ordering Chateaubriand steak at Olypub; reading Baudelaire in Bengali; and relishing Goalondo Chicken, a dish where the two Bengals come together. Food again — the Kathi Roll, sold outside Bengal as the Calcutta Roll. Nothing Bengal about it!! Yet, it is a Kolkata delicacy.

Member's Spotlight



Srabane Chakraborty

A Woman of Substance with a Sweet Tooth and a Sharp Eye! Charter President and current Club Trainer of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, Rtn. Srabane Chakraborty is a powerhouse of resilience, creativity, and leadership. A Brand Strategist, Creative Director, and event industry veteran with over 2,000 events to her credit, she is also a familiar name in India's televised reality show circuit. Her early marriage did not stop her from chasing knowledge—she went on to earn multiple degrees, proving that when Srabane sets her mind to something, even the stars realign.

She has worn many Rotary hats—President, Assistant Governor, District Secretary, and more—serving with elegance and efficiency. Add to that her global awards, and you get a woman who balances passion and profession like a seasoned juggler... except she prefers desserts over juggling vegetables. A music lover for life, Srabane claims she can never be bored with a good tune, a great book, or a last-minute travel plan. She is fascinated by the history of cuisine, though she proudly avoids the kitchen unless dessert is involved. With the sharp lens of a director, she mentally records every detail around her—and with her mimicry skills, she can replay it for you in high definition and perfect comic timing!

How Rotary Changed Me

If I look back honestly, Rotary did not begin for me with confidence. It began with hesitation.

Years ago, I had joined Rotary, but I could not quite understand it then. I did not find my rhythm. I quietly stepped away. Sometimes I say, I actually ran away.

So when District Governor Shyamasree Sen approached me with the idea of starting an all-women Rotary club, my first instinct was reluctance. I was unsure. I was comfortable in my professional world, where structures were clear, hierarchies defined, and authority came with designation.

But life had other plans.

A dear friend, Dr. Dolly Gupta — more like a sister — believed in me when I did not fully believe in myself. She pushed me, encouraged me, and stood beside me when we decided to take that leap. We were supposed to begin with 21 members. The journey was anything but smooth. Members joined, members left. There were days we wondered if we would ever reach the required strength to file the charter.

Yet we did. With 51 members, we filed our charter and gave birth to the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna — the only all-women club in our district.

From the very first day, I knew one thing clearly: I did not want Avyanna to become just another club. I wanted excellence to define us. I wanted people to look at us and feel that something different was happening here.

But the real transformation was not just in building the club. It was within me.

Rotary taught me to see people differently.

I learned to look for strengths instead of merely focusing on flaws. That does not mean I stopped noticing shortcomings. I am not a saint, and leadership cannot function in denial. Of course, flaws have to be recognised. They have to be understood. But what changed in me was the way I began to see them.

Earlier, a flaw would define a person for me. Today, it simply informs me.

When I become aware of the fact that a particular aspect doesn't come naturally to a person, it always helps me understand them better and guide them towards roles where their true strengths can unfold, and appreciate what they can do exceptionally well. Every limitation, when seen calmly, becomes direction. Every weakness, when understood, becomes clarity.

Rotary taught me that no human being is complete — and no human being is empty either.

Earlier, I saw things in black and white. Today, I see shades. I pause before judging. I listen before concluding. That empathy, that balance between awareness and compassion, Rotary quietly built within me.

Leadership, too, changed for me.

In business and service, leadership often comes with hierarchy. People listen because they are supposed to. There is structure. There is protocol. There is accountability tied to salary.

But Rotary is voluntary.

Here, nobody has to listen. Nobody has to stay. Nobody is paid to work. And that changes everything.

I had to learn inclusive leadership. I had to learn to persuade rather than instruct, to collaborate rather than command. I realised that in Rotary, leadership is not about position — it is about trust. It is about influence earned gently, not authority imposed loudly.

Rotary also taught me the value of my word. If I commit, I deliver — whether it is paid work or voluntary service. Commitment cannot be selective. Professionalism cannot be conditional.

Even charity, I learned, must be structured. Giving is beautiful, but giving must also be organised, accountable, and impactful. Compassion without structure is incomplete.

And when I look at Avyanna today, I feel immense pride. Each member is a pearl. Together, we are a pearl necklace — different personalities, different strengths, different temperaments — yet bound by a single invisible string of purpose. There were challenges. There were discouragements. We were told women cannot function together. We were told it would not last.

Nine years later, we are still here.

We have stumbled, we have risen, we have grown.

My dream now is simple. I want Avyanna to reach a stage where it runs on autopilot — where systems, values, and culture are so strong that even when the charter team steps aside, the club continues to shine brighter and stronger.

If one day I sit quietly in the audience and watch Avyanna soar without needing us — that will be my greatest satisfaction.

Rotary did not just give me a platform.

Rotary changed my lens.

It gave me discipline.

It gave me perspective.

It gave me growth.

Most importantly, it gave me faith — in women, in teamwork, and in myself.

Somewhere along the way, it made me not just a better leader — but a better human being.

And that, perhaps, is how Rotary truly touched my life.



Sonali Mehrotra

Sonali began her journey as a shy, small-town girl, married into a conservative family at a young age, and gradually evolved into a successful entrepreneur and businesswoman, managing a chain of retail stores in the country. She is a NIFT alumna with close to twenty years of experience in the fashion and retail industry, holds an advanced jewellery design qualification from the GJEP, and is a certified broker with the NSE.

Alongside her professional accomplishments, she is an artist, translating her visions onto canvas, and a Pranic healer with over two decades of experience, motivating and supporting people in their personal and emotional journey.

Deeply spiritual, her connection to this dimension profoundly shapes her approach to healing, creativity, and service.

She is also a proud mother of two grown-up children and is supported by a caring and encouraging husband, who believes in her aspirations and plays an important part in her journey.

Guided by a belief in purposeful living, she embraces life with gratitude and intention. Outside her professional commitments, she enjoys playing squash, swimming, and travelling, pursuits that continue to inspire balance, vitality, and growth.

Rotary: A Calling from the Universe

Some journeys are consciously chosen, while others quietly find their way to us. My association with Rotary feels like one such calling—a gentle yet powerful nudge from the universe to serve, to connect, and to grow beyond myself.

The seed of this journey was sown years ago by my uncle, Mr. Shyam Agarwal, a devoted Rotarian whose belief in service was unwavering. He often encouraged me to join Rotary and be part of something larger than myself. At that stage of life, I was deeply immersed in my professional commitments and felt I would not be able to do justice to the responsibility that service demands.

Life, however, has its own timing.

For me, the calling arrived in May 2023, when I attended my very first Rotary meeting—at the same time my uncle passed away. What might have seemed like a coincidence felt more like divine timing, as if the universe itself was guiding the moment.

As I stepped into Rotary, my heart was already searching for deeper meaning and a more purposeful way to give back to the society.

I am deeply grateful to my Rotary brother, AKS Mr. Bharat Jhunjunwala, whose unwavering support helped me settle into this journey. His guidance and encouragement gave me confidence during my early days in Rotary.

The past two years have been enriching and fulfilling. Avyanna is more than an all-women's club—it is a circle of strong, compassionate women who uplift others while growing together. Each Avyanna is a queen in her own life, a warrior facing her battles with grace and courage. The love and acceptance I got from my members was so heart-warming that immediately I felt a connection.

In my very first year, I was entrusted with the Chair of Non-Medical Projects, a responsibility that encouraged me deeply and gave me the opportunity to participate actively in service initiatives. That trust strengthened my commitment and helped me connect meaningfully with the spirit of Rotary.

My journey has been shaped by impactful initiatives including projects like Cervical Vaccination, Eye Camps, Menstrual Hygiene Awareness, Sanitation (WASH), Life Beyond Cancer, Polio drives, Thalassemia Awareness, Mental Health sensitisation, and CPR Training.

Closest to my heart is Ankuran, the flagship school at Dum Dum Correctional Home. The smiles of those children uplift the soul and reaffirm the power of compassion—quietly nurturing hope by shaping better citizens for tomorrow through education and care.

One of my proudest moments was being part of the journey when my club received The Four Lions Trophy—overall Best Club Award in the District for 2025. It was a dream come true—a recognition that truly belongs to every committed Avyanna member.

Fellowship has been the soul of this journey. From the joy and learning at the wine tasting workshop, to the laughter and bonding during the Joypur-Bishnupur and Vedic Village fellowships—these experiences turned service into lasting friendships.

Every project and every shared moment has strengthened my belief that service is most powerful when it comes from the heart. I am grateful for this journey and look forward to continuing to serve alongside my fellow members—united for good!

I AM PROUD TO BE AN AVYANNA!!



Sumi Chaudhury

30 years ago, led by a deep love for creativity and armed with a Master's Degree in English Literature, I dived into the world of advertising—quite excitedly—in the role of a copywriter. After spending some truly invigorating years of service in the creative departments of some of Kolkata's more established ad agencies, namely, Bates, Lintas, Enterprise Nexus Direct, and Rediffusion, my passion only intensified—for this entire "science" of branding and communication. So much so, that I began to feel the urge to try something different and deliver advertising support to clients in newer ways! And so, in 2001, I launched my own ad firm, VOYAGERS. Today, as the Co-Founder and Creative Head of VOYAGERS, I continue to lead a small team of like-minded professionals as we collectively pursue our mission of taking brands places.

My Rotary Experience

Joining Rotary—more significantly, the all-women Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna in July 2017 (the Club's Charter Year)—was for me an instantly enriching experience, purely as a human being!

It was amazing to realise how just by being a member of Rotary, I was able to be a part of this mammoth family of millions of Rotarians worldwide, all of whom dreamt the same dream and had united for the same cause—of service above self, of holding hands of those who needed help, of driving every possible effort to make this world a better place for all.

As we went about planning our Club activities, in line with the five different avenues of Rotary service, I began to sense the difference.

I realised it was not about localised charity but about touching the lives of communities across the world.

I began to believe it was not about imparting vocational training or imparting education to a handful but changing the lives of generation next.

I felt it was no longer about planting a seed but impacting and improving an entire ecosystem stretching across miles.

More so, as an all-women Club, it was wonderful to observe how our efforts took on a whole new dimension in serving women and young girls—in driving menstrual health and stepping up every move to curb cervical cancer.

It was my privilege to have served the Club as a Branding Chair and Editor for some years, which gave me the chance to align my professional experiences and skills with the Club's activities, as well as with my inner conscience as a human being.

As a Rotarian, together with my fellow Avyanna members, each community project, each interaction, for me, therefore, has been a satisfying journey of the soul, and hope will continue to fuel me and us—to make the change we set out to achieve!



Debjani Mukherjee

Rtn. Debjani Mukherjee A devoted and enthusiastic member of Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, Rtn. Debjani Mukherjee is an astrologer by profession, known for her wisdom, warmth, and unwavering commitment to the club's causes. When she isn't reading the stars, she's often charting travel routes—her other great passion. But what truly sets her apart is her unshakeable bond with sweets. A proud sweet-tooth warrior, Debjani di believes that life's too short to say no to dessert—even if it means having a friendly disagreement with her diabetic chart! Her joy for life and refusal to let restrictions dull her sparkle is exactly what makes her such a delight to be around.

A Second Innings with Purpose

When my children were settled and my grandchildren filled my home with laughter, life felt complete. Yet somewhere deep within, I felt a gentle urge to do something more meaningful with my time. I was associated with a few NGOs and tried to contribute in small ways. That is when my niece invited me to join the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna.

I was hesitant at first. I wondered whether I would be able to do justice to it. I had never worked professionally. I once tried to be involved in a small family business, but coming from a conservative background, I could not continue. Confidence was not something I naturally carried in such spaces.

I also questioned why I should join Rotary when I was already doing social work. But when my niece explained that through Rotary we could serve in a structured and organised manner and together create a much larger impact, I felt encouraged to take that step.

Today, Rotary feels like my second home. I have found not just a platform for service, but a family. The love, warmth, and encouragement I receive from every member fill my heart with gratitude. Taking up the responsibility of Treasurer was something I never imagined I could do. I am deeply grateful to each and every member who held my hand, guided me patiently, and trusted me with this role.

Rotary has taught me professionalism, accountability, and confidence. Being part of this all-women club makes me feel comfortable, valued, and even young at heart. Looking back, I feel God gave me this opportunity at the right time in my life. I truly feel blessed, and I remain deeply grateful for this beautiful new chapter.

Project Stories

• Debjani Mukherjee



End Polio Campaign

On the occasion of World Polio Day, on 11th and 12th October, the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna actively participated in a two-day Polio Awareness and Immunization initiative across Ward Nos. 92, 93, 94, and 95.

On 11th October, the Club organized a Polio Miking Awareness Drive, using an auto decorated with printed flex banners carrying polio awareness messages. Club members accompanied the vehicle through busy market areas, residential complexes, housing zones, and slum localities from 8 am to 7 pm, spreading awareness on polio prevention and the importance of immunization.

On 12th October (Polio Drop Day), Avyanna members actively supported the National Immunization Drive by assisting at polio booths, helping in administering polio drops, and simultaneously continuing miking to encourage community participation. Heartfelt thanks to District Polio Chair Rotarian Mukul Sinha and PRI Director Rotarian Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury for personally visiting the booths and motivating parents and children. Cadbury chocolates were distributed to children.

These initiatives successfully created awareness, ensured smooth coordination, and reaffirmed Rotary's strong commitment towards a Polio-Free India and Polio-Free World.



Project Stories

● Srabane Chakraborty



National CSR Award

On 23rd October, Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna participated in the National CSR – Eastern Region Awards as a Co-Host Club from District 3291, held at Hyatt Regency. Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna was one of the 12 clubs supporting this significant and prestigious event, which brought together corporates, social organisations, and Rotary leaders to recognise meaningful CSR initiatives.

A 2-minute film on the club's projects was screened, along with presentations by the other participating clubs. It was encouraging to witness the diverse and impactful service initiatives being carried out across the district. A display section was also arranged where projects were showcased, allowing guests and dignitaries to understand the work in greater depth and engage in thoughtful discussions.

The District Governor, Past District Governor, and other District Officials graced the occasion, adding further importance to the event. For Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, the participation was not merely ceremonial but a reflection of its continued commitment to purposeful and structured service.

Overall, it was a very satisfying and enjoyable event, leaving behind a sense of pride and renewed enthusiasm.



Project Stories

• Rita Chatterjee



Prothom Padakshep

On 14th November, Children's Day, a team of Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna visited Prothom Padakshep, a day school for specially abled individuals from 3 to 33 years. The atmosphere was filled with joy and warmth as the special children enjoyed music and a delightful magic performance arranged especially for them. Their faces lit up with excitement, and they expressed their happiness in their own beautiful and unique ways—through spontaneous singing, clapping, and cheerful laughter—creating a heartwarming and truly touching environment.

Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna presented thoughtful and useful gifts to the school, including an electric dry iron and Fevicyl colours for painting activities. These items will support the children's daily needs and help nurture their creativity and self-expression through art. The interaction between the club members and the children was filled with genuine affection and positive energy.

Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna members spent meaningful time with these specially abled individuals—moments that were cherished by both alike. The visit was not just a celebration but an experience of connection and understanding. It truly reflected Rotary's spirit of inclusiveness, compassion, and selfless service, making this Children's Day meaningful and memorable for the children as well as for Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna.



Project Stories

● Dipanwita Das



Avyanna's Promise— From Awareness to Action: Towards a Thalassemia-Free India

Thalassemia demands attention—not tomorrow, not someday, but now. Because thalassemia is not just a medical condition; it is a lifelong sentence for a child who has done no wrong. There is no cure. There is no recovery. There is just a struggle for survival—dependence on blood, again and again, innumerable times, for an entire lifetime. Every thalassemia-affected child lives on borrowed blood, while the country continues to face an ever-growing shortage. That blood could have otherwise saved countless other lives.

And yet, this painful struggle is completely preventable.

We match horoscopes. We consult astrologers. We search for stars and signs. But how often do we look through a microscope—at a simple blood test that can change destinies? A thalassemia test before marriage can prevent a lifetime of suffering. If both parents are carriers, the child is at risk. If only one is, there is no danger. Knowledge here is not fear—it is power.

Even during pregnancy, early testing can determine whether a child is affected. Difficult decisions may arise, but no decision is more painful than watching a child grow up with needles, transfusions, hospital beds, and fragile hope. All of this can be avoided—not by chance, not by prayer alone—but by awareness and responsibility.

This belief lies at the heart of the mission of Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna—the dream of a Thalassemia-Free India. Awareness is the first step. Action must follow. That is why our initiatives do not stop at words. They move into classrooms,

colleges, and communities. They reach parents, young adults, and families—helping them understand the gravity of the issue and empowering them to act. Where awareness is accepted, testing follows. Where understanding grows, prevention begins.

This year, Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna is committed to conducting 50 to 60 awareness campaigns across Kolkata, standing shoulder to shoulder with the national mission of Thalassemia-Free India. Each campaign is a conversation. Each test is a possibility saved. Each informed choice is a life protected. Because no child should be born into suffering that could have been prevented.

Because awareness today can spare a lifetime of pain tomorrow. Because this is not just a project—it is a promise.



Rishi Aurobindo Academy



Bidhannagar Municipal School



Birla Bharti



Pramila Memorial School



Duff School

Fellowship

● Moushume Garg



Jingle All The Way

There are some days that do not simply mark the end of a calendar year — they gather emotions, generations, faiths, and journeys into one harmonious moment.

This Christmas, the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna experienced exactly that.

We chose to celebrate not in isolation, but in connection. Not with grandeur, but with grace.

Our day began with a goodwill visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor, in association with Athreya Charitable Trust. The morning unfolded gently — filled with warmth, music, and companionship. The legendary Usha Uthup graced the gathering with soulful Christmas carols and her signature vibrant numbers. But what stayed with us was not merely the music — it was the emotion it stirred. Smiles widened slowly. Hands began to clap in rhythm. Eyes sparkled with nostalgia and joy.

The elderly residents, carrying decades of life within them, forgot their age for a while. They swayed, they laughed, and some even danced alongside Avyanna members. In that hall, there were no differences — only shared happiness. The melodious carols sung by the students of Queen of the Mission School added innocence and tenderness to the celebration. Young voices blending with seasoned lives — a true symphony of faiths.

As "Jingle All The Way" echoed through the space, Christmas felt universal. Faith was not defined by religion, but expressed through love. The celebration continued with the special children of Pratham Padakshep — in a joyful and heartwarming atmosphere that reminded us what inclusion truly means.

Pratham Padakshep is a place where

every child is seen, celebrated, and supported — just the way they are. For 14 years, they have grown on trust, patience, and powerful partnerships with parents. Every small step matters. Every breakthrough counts. Every win is celebrated with pride.

Spending time with the children was not an act of charity — it was an exchange of energy. Their laughter was unfiltered. Their joy was fearless. Their presence reminded us that abilities shine brightest when nurtured with acceptance.

This milestone belongs to their incredible students, resilient parents, supporters, and well-wishers — because journeys like these are never walked alone. And as we celebrated together, it became clear that progress is not about speed. It is about spirit. Moving forward — one step at a time.

The day gently transitioned into our Christmas Lunch & Fellowship at Calcutta International Club.

If the morning was about compassion and the afternoon about inclusion, the evening was about gratitude.

We gathered not just as Rotarians, but as a family strengthened by shared purpose. Conversations flowed warmly, laughter filled the room, and festive cheer wrapped around us with comfort and belonging.

Because fellowship too is service. Bonding strengthens commitment. Celebration fuels continuity.

As we closed the year, there was one quiet realisation — Avyanna is not merely a club. It is a community that believes in weaving cultures together, respecting every faith, and celebrating humanity in its purest form.

This Christmas was not about scale. It was about sincerity.

Not about decoration. But about devotion — to people, to purpose, to togetherness.

In every note sung, every hand held, every smile shared — our theme came alive.

A crescendo of cultures.
A true symphony of faiths.

And above all, love — shared freely.



Fund Raising

• Soma Bhan



Garage Sale

On a bright and sunny winter day in December, the Rotary Club of Calcutta Ayyanna experienced something special. Service, that day, looked like laughter, easy conversations, and shelves filled with almost-new, pre-loved treasures.

The first Garage Sale of Ayyanna was not just an event. It was an emotion. It was about togetherness, warmth, and a gentle reminder of why fellowship is at the heart of Rotary.

What truly made the Garage Sale special was the spirit behind it. Every item on display was second-hand, yet almost new in quality, shared with care and intention. Members gathered, chatted freely, laughed, and enjoyed the moment. It felt less like a fundraiser and more like friends spending a happy day together — full of camaraderie, bonhomie, and shared purpose.

What added to the joy was the wonderful response from people in the vicinity. Residents and visitors from nearby areas walked in, carefully inspected each product, examined the quality with genuine interest, and were pleasantly surprised. Many remarked that the items felt almost new. They happily picked up what they loved, and what was even more heartening was that they kept coming back — sometimes later in the day, sometimes with friends and family. Word spread organically, and the shelves saw constant movement as customers returned again and again, delighted with their finds.

Along with the joy, there was also a deep sense of fulfilment. The funds raised through this simple initiative will be used to support village women by providing livestock, helping them build sustainable and independent livelihoods. It was heartening to know that a day filled with fun and fellowship could quietly lead to long-term empowerment.

The day also carried a strong message of responsibility. By choosing reuse and mindful sharing, we embraced sustainability in the simplest way possible. Every purchase became an act of kindness, every contribution a step towards collective good.

This Garage Sale was our first — but certainly not our last. It marked the beginning of an ongoing journey, one we hope to continue through many such joyful and meaningful initiatives. As the day ended, we went home with more than memories. We carried warmth in our hearts and the belief that when service is driven by joy and togetherness, its impact lasts far beyond the moment.



A Snapshot of Projects Executed

OCTOBER

Date	Title
Oct 10	Ankuran's 8 th Birthday.
Oct 11	Polio Miking Day.
Oct 12	Polio Drop Day.
Oct 13	Thalassemia Awareness at St. Francis Xavier's – <i>Continues.</i>
Oct 15–17	LED for Tejaswini Award.
Oct 17	Tejaswini Awards.
Oct 18	Blood Donation Camp with Rotary Community Corps.
Oct 19	Diya Donation in Sovabazar Red Light Area.
	45 Sarees – Joy of Giving – Kadamtala Milan Sangha
Oct 20	45 Sarees – Joy of Giving – Kargil Club, Salt Lake.
Oct 21–22	LED Display for National CSR Awards.

A Snapshot of Projects Executed

OCTOBER

Date	Title
Oct 23	Co-host at National CSR Project.
Oct 24	District Programme – World Polio Day.
Oct 26	Empowerment of Girl Child – Sundarbans.
Oct 30	Happy School Project at Bidhannagar Municipal School.
Oct 30	Breast Cancer Awareness Session.

NOVEMBER

Date	Title
Nov 01	Host Club for Roshnai Bijoya Diwali Meet of District 3291 – Fellowship.
Nov 08	Thalassemia Awareness & Prevention – Bidhannagar Municipal School – <i>Continues</i> .
Nov 14	Children's Day Celebration @ Ankuran. Children's Day Celebration @ Prothom Padakshep.
Nov 22	Smile Street as Co-Host in collaboration with Rotary Club of Calcutta Mahanagar.
Nov 25	Distribution of 100 Food Packets at Dhakuria Ramchandra High School.

A Snapshot of Projects Executed

DECEMBER

Date	Title
Dec 04	Thalassemia Awareness Session – Rishi Aurobindo Academy – <i>Continues.</i>
	Skill Excellence Session at Rishi Aurobindo Academy.
Dec 11	Skill Excellence Session at Birla Bharati School.
Dec 14	Mushroom Cultivation and Vocational Training Programme for Women Empowerment at Rotary Community Corps Nilganj Nildiganta.
	Distribution of Plastic Commodities among the Senior Citizens of Nilganj Nildiganta.
Dec 16	Installation of our Interact Club (Sahayog) of St. Francis Xavier's School.
Dec 17	Health Check-Up Camp with Indian Cancer Society & Treasures of Innocence at Bhagerkhol.
Dec 20	Blood Test Camp with Dr. Lal PathLabs at Meena Gracia, Kestopur.
	Health Check-Up Camp with Rotary Community Corps in Barasat.
	Garage Sale – Fund-Raising Activity.
Dec 23	Christmas Day Celebration with the Members of Prothom Padakshep.
Dec 25	Christmas Lunch – Fellowship on Christmas Day at Calcutta International Club.

A Snapshot of Projects Executed

DECEMBER

Date	Title
Dec 27	Blanket Distribution with Buddhadeb Bakshi as Lead Host Club at Sonagachi.
	Health Check-Up Camp at Sonagachi.
Dec 31	Christmas Celebration with Little Sisters of the Poor in collaboration with NGO Athreya Charitable Trust.

Potpourri



Mita Walia

How Children Learn to Write

Children learn to write through a complex, natural, and highly social process. Research and classroom observations suggest that this process is shaped by discovery, modelling, interaction with peers, and meaningful exposure to written language.

First, children possess a powerful capacity to discover how language works—a capacity that applies to written language as well as to speech. They actively explore patterns, experiment with symbols, and invent strategies long before formal instruction begins.

Second, parents and other adults instinctively adjust their language when interacting with children. They model a simplified, more accessible form of language that is easier to learn than the language used with other adults.

This kind of simplified modelling—often referred to as scaffolding—plays a significant role in the acquisition of written language, just as it does in spoken language.

A third important source of learning is other children. Peer influence and peer learning are increasingly recognised as powerful forces in language development. For example, if making scribbles is Rob's way of writing, he will scribble consistently and enthusiastically whenever he has a reason to write—perhaps issuing a "parking ticket" to a classmate's tricycle in a kindergarten play area, or writing a caption beneath a large orange blob he has just painted.

Now imagine that during sharing time, Michelle holds up her own orange painting. Like Rob, she has written a caption beneath it—but her caption consists not of scribbles, but of individual squiggles that resemble letters.

"What are those?" Rob asks, referring to the squiggles.

"Those are letters, because this is writing," Michelle replies.

Before long, squiggles begin to appear in Rob's writing as well, though he may continue to scribble when, as he puts it, "he is writing a lot."

Key Conclusions:

From the discussion above, several important conclusions can be drawn.

Children Learn to Write Through Discovery:

Children learn to write by actively discovering strategies for themselves. With even minimal encouragement, most children willingly produce what they call "writing," even if they have not been taught spelling or letter formation. It is therefore essential that teachers provide opportunities and encouragement for writing activities—especially informal ones—early on, even before formal instruction in reading, handwriting, and spelling begins.

Children Use Strategies That Reflect Their Understanding of Writing:

When children "write," they use strategies that may not resemble adult writing. At any given stage, a child is testing unspoken rules or patterns she believes will produce written language. She may draw pictures and add letters, abbreviate spellings, match letter names with sounds, or write a story by naming a character and making a statement about them. Each of these actions reveals an underlying theory—temporary though it may be—about how writing works.

Writing Development Progresses Through Predictable Stages:

Children move developmentally from one writing strategy to another as they gain experience and sophistication. The younger the child, the easier it is to identify their position along a known developmental continuum. Knowing "where a child is" allows teachers to offer appropriate guidance and encouragement. For this reason, educators must understand developmental benchmarks in writing and the instructional practices suited to each level.

Children Need Meaningful Exposure to Written Language:

Children do not discover writing strategies in isolation. They need abundant, meaningful examples of print in use. Interestingly, a typical inner-city street corner often offers more print—and more people actively reading—than many preschool or kindergarten classrooms. To spark children's curiosity about print, classrooms must be rich in written language and authentic literacy practices.

Progressive early-years teachers are increasingly incorporating print into classrooms in creative ways—not only by reading aloud or labeling objects, but also by setting up play-based activity centres where children naturally pretend to read and write. These practices integrate literacy seamlessly into children's everyday experiences.

Children Learn a Great Deal From One Another:

As psychologist Jean Piaget observed, it is often easier to learn from someone who is only slightly more advanced than oneself. A child beginning to write may learn more about invented spelling from a peer who is actively sounding out

words than from someone who already spells perfectly. Similarly, a new storytelling strategy is often more accessible when learned from a peer excitedly sharing a recent discovery than from reading the work of a professional author.

Children therefore need regular opportunities to share their writing and talk about how they write. Effective classroom structures can support and manage this sharing productively.

Discovery Learning Is Effective and Beneficial:

When children are learning about writing, discovery-based learning not only works—it benefits them. When process writing and invented spelling were first introduced, many teachers feared that allowing incorrect forms would cause children to “overlearn” mistakes and hinder progress. As a result, some believed children should not write until they had mastered correct letter formation, spelling, and sentence structure.

However, language development offers a helpful parallel. Children naturally use incorrect speech forms—such as “all-gone milk” or “two foots”—which they later discard as their language matures. Research and teaching experience strongly confirm that children do the same with writing. Those encouraged to write early using pretend writing and invented spelling ultimately learn correct spelling more effectively than children taught through conventional methods alone.

The Role of Instruction:

Does discovery learning alone—given sufficient opportunity and encouragement—enable children to learn handwriting, spelling, and composition without formal instruction? The answer is not absolute.

It is helpful first to define what is meant by instruction. Traditional instruction typically includes commercial spelling programmes, workbook exercises, memorisation tasks, and language textbooks that focus on parts of speech, grammatical errors, and prescribed formats. Many of these activities exist as much for classroom management as for genuine learning.

There is growing evidence that much of traditional language and spelling instruction is unnecessary—and often ineffective—for learning to write.

As teachers increasingly encourage authentic writing, reading, and sharing, they often resent workbook-based programmes that consume time without clear educational value.

However, this does not mean that no direct instruction is needed. Research on handwriting consistently shows that:

Some systematic instruction helps children write legibly;

Encouragement to write clearly is more important than rigid adherence to a specific handwriting style; and

Most children benefit from refresher lessons in legibility beyond third grade, even after formal spelling instruction ends.

In summary, children learn to write best when discovery, encouragement, meaningful exposure, peer interaction, and thoughtful instruction work together to support their natural development as writers.



Rita Chatterjee

Rotarian Dr. Rita Chatterjee's mantra is... *“Have more than you show and speak less than you know.”*

This reticent lady is on the Editorial Board of many international scientific and medical journals. She has more than 30 years of experience practising and teaching medicine in India and abroad.

She has been a successful counsellor to young adults.

She has had the great privilege to work with Mother Teresa in her teenage years and has imbibed compassion and care while serving with the Missionaries of Charity.

Working in the United Nations Corps has taught her empathy and instilled tolerance in her.

Dr. Rita is blessed with two wonderful children who form her centre of existence.

She loves to read, travel, and explore new cultures, places, and minds.

My Dubai Safari

On a chilly December morning in 2025, I bade India goodbye and landed in Dubai, where friends welcomed me with a loud “Marhaba”.

Incidentally, this was not my first visit to Dubai.

From 1980 to 1990, I was a temporary domicile of the UAE, travelling frequently through the different Emirates. That was just a decade or so after the warring Emirati factions united to form the UAE.

Dubai then was a small, dusty desert city transitioning from a pearl-based economy to an oil-boom one, with sand-coloured huts, a simple lifestyle, triangular-sailed dhows ferrying people across waterways, and no skyscrapers or wide gliding roads.

But lo and behold! Is this the Dubai I had left behind a few years ago? I was literally dumbfounded. Such awe-inspiring towers, high-rises, beautiful roads, and the airport—all seemed like a dream unfolding gradually before my eyes.

The next five days that I spent there were filled with unlimited joy, reminiscences, adventures, and much more.

On Day 1, the Desert Safari adventure was unimaginable for me. Quad bike riding was exciting, but above all, dune bashing gave me the highest thrill I had ever experienced. I felt like a teenager riding a huge roller coaster. Our gang laughed and shouted so much that even the driver started laughing with us. Finally, when we stood on a high dune watching the setting sun, he said that so far he had never met a group of ladies who enjoyed dune bashing so much!



Dinner at the tent camp set the perfect ending to a long day spent on the sand. Succulent kebabs along with hot coffee and tea were served at the tables while we watched a variety of performances on the stage—it was a royal experience.

The next day, a visit to the Miracle Garden was in absolute contrast to the previous day. Wandering among the numerous multicoloured petunias, I wondered how much incessant hard work, love, and care had been showered upon the arid desert sands to bring this riot of colours into existence.



The much-hyped Burj Khalifa may be the tallest building in the world till now, but to me, the view from its 124th floor was not much different from that of the 86th floor of the Baiyoke Hotel in Bangkok. It is a matter of perspective, though.





Visiting the old quarters of Dubai, where traditional mud houses are well preserved, was a nostalgic journey for me. Caressing their walls, doors, and windows brought back so many sweet memories.

In Dubai and not shopping? Unimaginable! The Souk Al Dahab, or Gold Market, was not on my shopping list, but peer pressure—you know. The only item on my list was good-quality dates, and I bought plenty.

Sooner than I realised, the “Goodbye Dubai” day arrived. Even though bidding “Ma’a Salama” to my friends was not easy, it had to be done.

I returned with my heart full of love, awe, and pride for the country that I had known as a small bud and which has now blossomed into a beautiful flower.

Masha’Allah, Dubai.



Aparna Banerjee

THE COSMIC KINS

We are stardust; we are possibilities.
The stars are not distant; they are within.
Every atom in our body belongs to the stars,
A universal blueprint, a coherent song!

We are responsible—to be clear, to shine,
To bring light where there is darkness,
Hope where there is despair,
Dignity to harness!

Our service is not just action, but a cosmic continuity.
We are returning the gift, nurturing life with purity.
This is no fable or romantic fantasy;
We are empowered—a bond of indestructible affinity.

Let us transform with the fire of stars,
Listening to the song of oneness,
Banishing ignorance that causes wars.

Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, or Muslims—
We are united as cosmic kin!

Rise above all; recognize your soul.
You are not insignificant; you have a role.
A part of the cosmos and distant stars,
A part of Brahman, the unfathomable constant!

*Aparna Banerjee
Inspired by world-renowned scientists*

Potpourri



PDG Prabir Chatterjee

The Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna stands as a powerful example of purpose-driven service, inclusive leadership, and sustained community impact. A dynamic all-women Rotary Club, Avyanna's defining strength lies not in a single domain, but in its ability to work holistically across literacy, environment, health, sanitation, and cultural empowerment—addressing real needs with depth, continuity, and innovation.

The Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna has consistently demonstrated a deep commitment to literacy and education. Through its flagship school project, Ankuran, the Club has created a nurturing learning environment for children within a women's correctional home, redefining education as a pathway to dignity, reform, and transformation. Beyond Ankuran, the Club has been actively involved in promoting English literacy among rural children through an innovative student-to-student teaching model. This peer-led approach made learning more relatable while empowering young mentors to take ownership of leadership and responsibility.

Infrastructure development and sanitation form another critical pillar of Avyanna's work. The Club has upgraded and constructed multiple toilet units with proper sanitation facilities, washbasins, and water access, taking responsibility for the entire unit rather than fragmented interventions. These initiatives have significantly improved hygiene, safety, and dignity, particularly for women and children.

Avyanna's environmental commitment is equally noteworthy. From implementing solar projects that encourage sustainable energy usage to planting over 25,000 mangroves in the Sundarbans, the Club has actively contributed to ecological restoration and climate resilience. These efforts reflect a long-term vision that connects environmental well-being with community survival.

While the Club is well known for celebrating India's rich artistic traditions—dance, music, and craft—these cultural initiatives are only one facet of its expansive service canvas. With the living legend Usha Uthup as an honorary member, cultural programmes have always held prominence in installations and major Club events. Many of these programmes have served as fundraisers for signature initiatives, including Project "Shakti", focused on women's empowerment. Through dance therapy, yoga, and stage performances, inmates have been guided from confinement to confidence, with many finding sustainable livelihoods through the performing arts.

Rooted in inclusivity and the harmonious coexistence of diverse religions and beliefs, Calcutta Avyanna functions like a symphony of shared purpose. It is this integrated, values-led approach to service that led the Club to be recognised as the Best Rotary Club in Rotary International District 3291—an honour earned through consistency, compassion, and courageous leadership.

Kudos to President Sarmistha and Team Avyanna.



Musings by our Interactors

● Susmit Mondal
JOINT TREASURER
INTERACT CLUB OF
BIRLA BHARATI



Fun Learn Boarding Day School Workshop



One of the most effective strategies for both individual and societal development is literacy. It enables people to communicate, learn, and fully engage in their communities by opening doors to information, confidence, and opportunities.

However, the consequences of denying impoverished children access to a high-quality education can last a lifetime. It is crucial to give every child the opportunity to learn to read and write, both for their future and for the advancement of society at large. Founded in 2014, Fun Learn Boarding Day School serves underprivileged learners in Metiabruz, Kolkata, providing inclusive, English-medium, high-quality education to economically weaker sections, where access to quality education—especially for girls—is limited.

On Friday, 28 November 2025, the Interact Club of Birla Bharati organised a literacy workshop for students of Classes 3 to 7 from Fun Learn Boarding Day School. The workshop was held in the school library and was attended by 10 Interactors along with several teachers. After the students were escorted to the venue and made comfortable, a brief round of introductions was conducted.

The workshop included a few simple literacy-based activities such as an icebreaker, a letter to their future selves, and a short vocabulary session. The members of the Club took the lead accordingly and conducted the interactive activities. The first activity involved introducing oneself using a word written on a chit, which was randomly chosen by each student. Based on the word they picked, the students introduced themselves creatively. The Interact Club members also took one chit each and introduced themselves, which helped build rapport. The students were beaming with confidence and joy.

The second activity aimed to understand the aspirations and dreams of these bright young minds and the things they were eager to learn. A template was provided, with the help of which students filled in required details such as their dreams and what they wanted to become when they grew up. The responses were diverse, and the students completed the activity with great enthusiasm and interest. What caught everyone's attention, however, was one student's answer to the question of what he wanted to become when he grew up—he wrote, "a good human being." Everyone applauded and appreciated his awareness of the importance of being a good human being above all else.

The last activity was more of a learning segment, during which the members introduced words that were familiar to many students but whose meanings have evolved over time. This helped the students gain a deeper understanding of language usage. The workshop was a happy and successful experience, as the students were very responsive and open to learning new things. Every student attended the workshop joyfully and participated

with great enthusiasm. The atmosphere was lively, and the students eagerly engaged in each activity, making the session both enjoyable and meaningful for everyone.

We hope to conduct more sessions with these students in the future, including dance, music, and yoga, for overall holistic development and refinement towards learning using our school resources.

Reported by

Susmit Mondal (Joint Treasurer)

Interact Club of Birla Bharati



● **Aritri Seal**
DIRECTOR
INTERACT CLUB OF
BIRLA BHARATI



Interact Club Visit to Marudyan: A Step Towards Social Rehabilitation

On November 25, 2025, the Interact Club of Birla Bharati, along with 10 Interactors and three teachers, visited Marudyan – An Oasis of Hope, a unit of Iswar Sankalpa. The organization works towards the rehabilitation of men who were once homeless by providing basic necessities and employment opportunities.

During the visit, the school's music and dance faculty, together with the Interactors, organized a therapeutic dance and calming music session for the residents. This activity encouraged participation and facilitated meaningful interaction in a calm and positive environment. The visit concluded with the rendition of the Rabindra Sangeet "Anandaloke Mangalaloke."

This visit to Marudyan emphasized the importance of compassion, community engagement, and service towards marginalized sections of society.



Motor Skills Development Workshop for Women Survivors at Sarbari – Iswar Sankalpa

The Interact Club of Birla Bharati, in collaboration with Iswar Sankalpa, successfully organized a motor skills development workshop on November 11, 2025. The event saw enthusiastic participation from Interactors, along with the Physical Education teacher and the counsellor, who engaged in interactive motor skill exercises, yoga sessions, and games with women survivors of human trafficking who face complex psychosocial challenges.

The event was held at Sarbari, the shelter centre for women under Iswar Sankalpa – Support for the Mind. The initiative not only promoted skill development but also strengthened community ties, empowering the minds of women who have experienced periods of complete isolation and mental as well as physical trauma, making it a truly impactful day.



Therapeutic Dance Session at Iswar Sankalpa Women's Shelter



On December 16, the Interact Club of Birla Bharati organized another therapeutic dance session in collaboration with Iswar Sankalpa at its women's shelter. The session was conducted with the participation of two teachers and seven Interactors, who actively engaged with the women through guided dance movements and rhythm-based activities.

The objective of the session was to encourage emotional expression, relaxation, and positive interaction in a safe and supportive environment. Such therapeutic initiatives play an important role in promoting psychosocial well-being and can contribute meaningfully to the long-term rehabilitation and social reintegration of women who are survivors of human trafficking.

Reported by

Aritri Seal (Director)

Interact Club of Birla Bharati

Musings by our Interactors

● Archisman Ghosal
PUBLIC RELATIONS
OFFICER
INTERACT CLUB OF
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER



Daan Utsav – “Joy of Giving”



The Interact Club of St. Francis Xavier School, Sahayog, celebrated Daan Utsav — the “Joy of Giving” — not as a ritual, but as a responsibility.

With sincerity and quiet determination, the young Interactors donated basic commodities to Prabartak Sangha Home, ensuring that the spirit of Diwali reached hearts that often remain away from the festive spotlight. It was not merely about distributing essentials; it was about sharing dignity, warmth, and inclusion.

What made the initiative special was the intention behind it. The students were not guided by obligation, but by empathy. In the process of collecting, organising, and handing over the items, they experienced something far greater than charity — they experienced connection.

This effort was consciously designed to nurture a sense of community service and social responsibility among them, to help them understand that compassion is not a lesson taught in classrooms, but a value lived through action. And they rose to the occasion beautifully.

As they interacted with the residents, there was a visible shift — from awareness to realisation and understanding, from sympathy to sensitivity. They realised that giving is not about surplus; it is about sharing. Not about grandeur, but about grace.

The Daan Utsav initiative became more than a project. It became a learning moment — one that strengthened their commitment to kindness and reinforced the belief that festivals are brightest when celebrated together.

The Interact Club's effort was a resounding success, not because of the scale of the donation, but because of the spirit it carried. It showcased the quiet power of young hearts coming together with purpose — proving once again that when compassion leads, community follows.

Stirring Stories and Recipes

• Soma Bhan



Litti Chokha with Baingan-Tamatar Bharta

Litti Chokha is a rustic, flavourful traditional dish from Bihar. Whole-wheat dough balls stuffed with spiced sattu are roasted till crisp and served with smoky mashed vegetables (chokha). It is wholesome, earthy, and best enjoyed with a drizzle of mustard oil.

Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS

For Littis (Outer Dough)

- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tbsp ghee or oil
- Water, as required (to knead)

For Littis Stuffing (Sattu Filling)

- 1 cup roasted gram flour (sattu)
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2–3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1–2 green chillies, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp fresh coriander, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp lemon juice or raw mango juice
- 1½ tbsp mustard oil
- ½ tsp ajwain (carom seeds)
- ½ tsp nigella seeds (kalonji)
- Salt to taste

For Baingan-Tamatar Chokha

- 1 large baingan (eggplant / brinjal)
- 2 medium tomatoes
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1–2 green chillies, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp mustard oil
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander, finely chopped

For Serving

- Ghee (for dipping)
- Extra mustard oil (optional)



METHOD

Prepare the Dough

- In a bowl, mix whole wheat flour and salt. Add ghee or oil and rub it into the flour.
- Gradually add water and knead into a firm, smooth dough. Cover and rest for 15–20 minutes.

Prepare the Sattu Filling

- In another bowl, add sattu, chopped onion, garlic, green chillies, and coriander.
- Add lemon juice, mustard oil, ajwain, kalonji, and salt.
- Mix well using your fingers. The mixture should be moist but crumbly, not wet.

Shape the Littis

- Divide the dough into lemon-sized balls.
- Flatten each ball slightly and place about 1½ tablespoons of stuffing in the centre.
- Bring the edges together and seal well. Roll gently to form a smooth ball.

Cook the Littis

- Traditionally, littis are roasted over charcoal or cow-dung cakes.
- At home, roast them in a preheated oven at 200°C for 25–30 minutes, turning once, until evenly browned.
- Alternatively, cook on a gas tandoor or heavy pan, turning frequently, till crisp outside and cooked inside.
- Once done, dip hot littis in ghee and keep aside.

Prepare Baingan-Tamatar Chokha

- Roast the baingan and tomatoes directly on an open flame or in the oven until the skin is charred and the flesh is soft.
- Cool slightly, peel off the skin, and mash the flesh in a bowl.
- Add chopped onion, garlic, green chillies, salt, and mustard oil.
- Mix well and finish with fresh coriander.

Serve hot ghee-dipped littis with baingan-tamatar chokha. Drizzle a little extra mustard oil over the chokha for authentic flavour. Best enjoyed fresh, rustic, and warm.

Thekua

Thekua is a traditional deep-fried sweet snack from Bihar, especially popular during Chhath Puja. Crisp on the outside and slightly crumbly inside, it has a rich aroma of jaggery, ghee, and fennel, making it perfect as a tea-time treat.

Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup grated jaggery (or powdered jaggery)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup ghee
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp fennel seeds (saunf), lightly crushed
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cardamom powder
- 2–3 tbsp grated fresh coconut (optional, traditional)
- Milk or water, as required (to knead)
- Ghee or oil, for deep frying

METHOD

- In a bowl, add the grated jaggery and ghee. Mix well till the jaggery softens and blends with the ghee.
- Add crushed fennel seeds, cardamom powder, and grated coconut. Mix well.
- Add the whole wheat flour and combine to form a crumbly mixture.
- Gradually add milk or water, little by little, and knead into a firm dough. The dough should be tight, not soft.
- Cover the dough and let it rest for 10–15 minutes.
- Divide the dough into small portions. Roll each portion into a ball and flatten slightly.
- Traditionally, designs are pressed using a wooden mould or fork. You can lightly press patterns on the surface if desired.
- Heat ghee or oil in a deep pan on medium-low heat.
- Fry the thekuas in batches on low to medium heat, turning occasionally, until they turn deep golden brown and crisp.
- Remove and drain on absorbent paper.
- Cool completely before storing. Thekuas will crisp up further as they cool.
- Once cooled, store in an airtight container.



Stirring Stories and Recipes

• Gursareen Kaur Patheja



Makki Ki Roti and Sarson Ka Saag

Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS

For the rotis

- 3 cups maize flour
- 2 cups hot water
- Salt to taste

For the saag

- 2 bunches sarson saag
- 1 bunch palak
- 1 bunch baathu
- ½ bunch methi leaves
- Half cup water
- Salt to taste

For tempering

- 10–12 cloves garlic
- 1" ginger
- 2–3 dry red chillies
- 2 tbsp ghee
- 1 large onion
- 1 large tomato
- 2 tbsp maize flour
- Salt to taste



METHOD

- Take the flour in a bowl and add hot water little by little and mix using a spoon. Once it cools down a little, knead the dough well with your hands until smooth and firm. Roll the rotis between 2 plastic sheets and cook on hot tawa using ghee. Cook on both sides and serve hot with sarson ka saag.
- Wash and chop all the greens. Pour half a cup of water in a pressure cooker. Add all the chopped leaves and pressure cook on high for 1 whistle and then cook on low heat for 4–5 whistles. Once it cools down, open the cooker and blend the saag.

Tempering

- Take ghee in a pan, add dry red chillies and chopped ginger and garlic. Saute till golden brown, then add the chopped onions. Saute till pinkish brown, add red chili powder and add chopped tomatoes. Cook till oil separates. Then add the boiled saag. Add in the maize flour to adjust the consistency. Cook for 5–7 minutes.
- Once done, remove in a bowl, add some butter/homemade white butter on top and serve hot with makai rotis.

Gajar Ka Halwa

Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS

- ½ kg red carrots
- ½ litre full fat milk
- 100 gms sugar
- 2–3 cardamom
- 3 tbsp ghee
- Few nuts

METHOD

- Peel and grate carrots. Take a pressure cooker. Add 1 tbsp ghee. Add the grated carrots. Cook till water evaporates. Add half litre milk. Close lid and cook for 1 whistle. Open pressure cooker once it cools down. Now cook on low flame till milk dries up. Then add 100 gms of sugar and a pinch of cardamom powder. Mix well. Cook for 4–5 minutes.
- Take 2 tbsp ghee in a pan and add chopped nuts and fry till colour changes. Add this to the halwa and serve hot.



Members' Nuggets



Rtn. Vayjayanti Saharia Pugalia Honoured with Karmaveer Chakra Medal & Rex Karmaveer Global Fellowship

New Delhi, November 26, 2025: Rtn. Vayjayanti Saharia Pugalia was honoured with the prestigious Karmaveer Chakra Medal and the Rex Karmaveer Global Fellowship at a distinguished ceremony held in New Delhi. Instituted by the people sector along with partner organizations, active citizens, and media supporters, the Karmaveer Puraskaar (KVP) is India's national recognition for Social Justice and Citizen Action.

The Karmaveer Puraskaar (KVP) is India's national honour for Social Justice and Citizen Action, instituted by the people sector with partner organizations, active citizens, and media supporters. The awards serve as a platform for deliberation on key socio-political issues such as poverty alleviation, marginalisation, disability rights, climate change, communal harmony, electoral reforms, and humane capitalism. Over the years, KVP has acknowledged change makers from diverse sectors. Distinguished past awardees include King Charles, Kajol, Gul Panag, Anupam Kher, and Mary Kom, with Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam having served as the Brand Ambassador for the Rex Karmaveer Chakra Awards

Against this esteemed backdrop, Vayjayanti Saharia Pugalia stands out as a multi-dimensional leader and a catalyst for social transformation. Vayjayanti, a Paul Harris Fellow, is the curator of influential platforms such as the Kidopreneur Summit, which promotes child entrepreneurship, and the Third Eye Summit, a path-breaking initiative advocating transgender inclusion. Her commitment to reviving Indian art, culture, and Vedic literature has helped bring traditional wisdom to contemporary audiences. Her initiative, Colours of Innocence, enables over 100 children each season to paint and auction artworks in support of health and education causes. She also leads transformative programmes such as Project HOPE and Main Apni Favourite Hoon, which foster personal confidence and emotional well-being.

This honour celebrates her steadfast belief that "one may pause, but must never stop" in the pursuit of growth, learning, and social upliftment.

Happy Birthday!



DECEMBER

OCTOBER

- Sharmila Khanna (9th October)
- Uma Mitra (15th October)
- Laily Thompson (24th October)
- Dipa Kapoor (25th October)
- Dolon Ganguly (31st October)

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

NOVEMBER

- Preeti Gupta (8th November)
- Shukti Singh Roy (12th November)
- Moushume Garg (15th November)
- Debjani Mukherjee (20th November)
- Manoshi Roychowdhury (25th November)
- Puja Tandon (26th November)



Just for Fun!



Adventure sports on one hand (we've witnessed her sliding down the sloping roof of a complete stranger's home); teerth yatras on the other. What a combo!!



She joined the Club, and jumped right into the thick of things... Bravo!



Generally quiet, watch her transform with oodles of zest and enthusiasm when her exhibition is round the corner!!

DID YOU KNOW?



Rotarians often use first names (Joe, Bill) regardless of titles, fostering camaraderie.

Rule of 85: A member is exempt from attendance if their age, plus years of membership, equals 85 or more.

The Rotary emblem was printed on a commemorative stamp for the first time in 1931, at the time of the Vienna Convention.

In 1968, the first Rotary Club banner to orbit the moon was carried by astronaut Frank Borman, a member of the Houston Space Center Rotary Club.

The largest Rotary Club is the Oklahoma City Downtown Club, with over 600 members.

Impact Stories: Voices of Change



Rani Bhawani
Founder,
Treasures of Innocence

Treasures of Innocence and Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna collaborated by mutual trust, compassion, and a shared vision of service. Sarmistha and I have successfully executed impactful projects such as the Hanging Library literacy initiative and the Mother and Child Health Camp initiative at Bhagerkhol.



Salma Sultana

I am truly thankful to Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna for organizing the Mother And Child Health Camp at Bhagerkhol. The camp was extremely beneficial to the children. I was able to get my daughter examined by an experienced pediatrician, which was a great help for me.



Paramita Mondal

I am Paramita Mondal, and I had a great shopping experience at the Garage Sale organised by Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna. Lovely items at throwaway prices! I bought a whole lot of stuff, and this is a happy me!

Chit Chat With A Rotary Hat

• Mita Walia



CLICK HERE TO PLAY THE VIDEO



Rotary
Club of Calcutta Avyanna
District 3291



UNITE FOR GOOD