



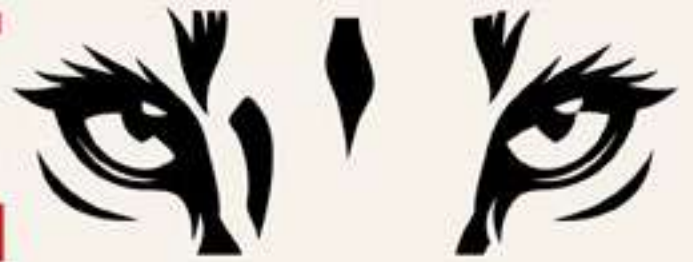
THE PANACHE

NEWSLETTER OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF CALCUTTA AVYANNA | Vol. 1

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ROARING FIT A PRIDE OF LIONESSES RECLAIMING WOMANIYA



From the Editor's Desk



Mita Walia
EDITOR

In 2017, District 3291 woke up to a small but significant development: the formation of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, the only ladies' club in the entire district. As the club toddled along, taking baby steps one day at a time, little would anyone have guessed what lay ahead in the days to come! Under the firm leadership of the Charter President and her dynamic team, the club sailed uncharted waters with great aplomb and was a trendsetter and an eye-catcher from day one!

With **"Ankuran"**, the flagship project of the club and a torchbearer in the grim surroundings of women's correctional homes, Avyanna has spread the light of learning where even sunlight feels scared to peep. The feisty ladies walked the long, arduous paths of red tape and government protocol to bring back the childhood that the hapless, lap children had so unfortunately lost. A full-fledged global grant in the tender years of the club was unthinkable, yet the think-tank and the leadership of the club truly believe the word "impossible" is actually "im possible," and therein hangs another tale. More than forty toilets were built in the far-flung Sunderbans, cutting across religious and caste divides, and the grant was successfully completed in record time. The stories are numerous. The projects countless. Touching thousands of lives in various corners of the district. The environment has been protected, vaccines administered, sustainability ensured. Seven areas of focus have been prioritised while the Four-Way Test has remained our constant touchstone.

To this gathering of laurels was added the *crème de la crème* of Rotary awards, the Silver Lion, for the year 2024–25, under the incredible leadership of President Chandreyi Mitra, ably guided by our forever beacon of inspiring light, our Charter President, Srabane Chakraborty. It was as if all our collective dreams had suddenly come true! We were lionesses, no doubt, but to roar so gloriously that the entire district heard us, was something the pride could never have imagined! But then, if one is sincere and steadfast in their striving, one is bound to meet with success, sometime, very soon. For the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, that moment of reckoning has arrived! Let us rejoice, revel and remember it all, in this issue of our Newsletter, specially dedicated to our majestic, leonine win!

Happy roaring and reading!



Sarmistha Das
CLUB PRESIDENT

With immense pleasure and gratitude, I share my thoughts in this edition of Panache, celebrating the first quarter of my tenure as President.

We began the Rotary year 2025–26 with a Blood Donation Camp on Doctors' Day, in collaboration with District 3291 — a significant Public Image initiative undertaken to highlight Rotary's mission and vision. The event reached a wide audience through an impactful visibility drive. One of the most memorable highlights of this quarter was our Grand Installation Ceremony, graced by District Governor Dr Ramendu Homchoudhury. The event was prominently showcased through LED hoardings across the city and celebrated the inspiring winners of the Maanyata Awards — our tribute to unsung heroes. The ceremony received extensive media coverage.

We also donated a computer to the children of red-light areas through the Krishna Foundation and contributed to Life Beyond Cancer and the Polio Plus Fund. In collaboration with Chessmeet Foundation and Lake Club, we conducted a meaningful Thalassaemia Awareness Project. A unique chess competition added a creative twist to spread awareness about early diagnosis and prevention. The event was graced by our District Governor and Grandmaster Dibyendu Barua, making it truly special. It received wide coverage in both print and digital media.

We organised a Mother and Child Health Care Camp at Upohar Sangha Club, Salt Lake, for marginalised communities, where nutritious food packets were distributed. Club members participated enthusiastically in this initiative. Our major sustainable literacy project, Ankuran, continues to provide study materials and uniforms to the children of women inmates at Dumdum Correctional Home. We are also set to launch a STEM Education Lab in six schools through CSR funding, beginning with two schools in the initial phase.

Together with Pairababu, the retired headmaster of the Ankur & Unmesh group at the Sundarban islands, Avyanna organised a Nature Education Programme, where children planted saplings of guava, water apple, and chikoo. Each child adopted a sapling and maintains a daily journal recording its growth into a tree. To encourage them, all participants were awarded trophies. We also hosted a transformative session with Karan Kakkad, offering profound insights on leading a balanced and purposeful life. The experience was truly soul-touching — everyone left deeply inspired, carrying home not just words but a divine energy to implement in daily life.

Our RCC Nildiganta Nilgunj has conducted several health camps in villages and successfully completed cataract surgeries for 19 beneficiaries. Together, we have also planted 400 fruit trees at different locations. In partnership with Chhaya – Animal Welfare and Rescue Centre, we facilitated the sterilisation of 15 stray dogs, contributing to animal welfare.

For Literacy and Mental Health Awareness, we collaborated with Treasures of Innocence NGO. We donated books for their Hanging Library and provided clay and acrylic colours, which the children used to create beautiful "Lotus Pond" art pieces.

Looking ahead, we are preparing for the Tejaswini Samman Awards — a Public Image initiative for Durga Puja. Judging has already been completed for 33 pujas. We have installed 31 banners for Tejaswini and another 33 banners and one digital hoarding highlighting Thalassaemia and Polio awareness across various puja pandals, creating a strong Rotary public image.

With the addition of six new members, our club meetings and fellowships have become even more vibrant and engaging.

My heartfelt thanks to all members for their camaraderie, enthusiasm, and spirited participation.

Together, We Unite for Good.

Enjoy the first edition of Panache — a testament to our shared efforts and aspirations.



DG Dr. Ramendu Hom Chowdhury

My dear Rotarians of Calcutta Avyanna,

You stand tall — the only all-ladies' club of our district, since June 2017 — a well-knit organisation led by seasoned and sensitive leadership. Every member of Avyanna is invaluable — constantly engaged in creative, innovative thought and meaningful action. Your fellowship, your connectivity, and your service have already earned you the coveted district awards and the admiration of all. You are truly the lioness in the jungle of Rotary — bold, graceful, and determined.

Today, Rotary looks up to you with great expectations — because there are issues that only you can understand with depth and empathy. One such issue is Thalassaemia, a disease linked to human partnership, love, and family — yet tragically born out of ignorance and silence. A mother carries life in her womb — she bears the weight of creation with pain, sacrifice, and infinite hope. But when that child is born with Thalassaemia — a life that depends on endless blood transfusions — the mother's world collapses. Her suffering is silent, unseen, unbearable.

And society — we — remain silent spectators to this self-made tragedy. A tragedy of suffering, of millions of blood units drained, and national wealth drying up. How can we, as a civilised society, remain so insensitive? The answer is simple, the solution is within reach: The quality of marriage and its outcome can be safeguarded with one simple blood test — before marriage or before pregnancy. A small step that can prevent lifelong agony.

Dear Avyanna, you can — and you must — take up this cause. Be the torchbearers of awareness, of education, of prevention. Lead from the front. Begin within Rotary — then carry your message to every school, every college, every corner of the community.

Because what is preventable must be prevented. And history will remember that it was Rotary Calcutta Avyanna — the all-lady club — who changed the destiny of human suffering, through compassion, courage, and conviction.

Thank you.

Roaring Fit – A Pride of Lionesses



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!

It all began in 2017, with a dream that was as gentle as it was powerful — the birth of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna. I still remember our very first award ceremony vividly. The Rotary Club of Calcutta walked away with the Lion, and I sat there watching, wondering silently — what does it take to win that Lion? What must a club do to stand out, to be the best? That day, I didn't say it aloud, but I made a quiet promise to myself — one day, our little Avyanna too will roar.

Years went by. My own tenure ended, and others came in — each with her own spark, her own way of leading. Together, these remarkable women shaped Avyanna into what it has become today — a club that grows not in haste, but in harmony; not through noise, but through the steady rhythm of sincerity, compassion, and purpose.

And then came Chandreyi Mitra — a name that today shines like a beacon of what leadership truly means. I still recall the day I requested her to join our club. There was a certain glow in her eyes — quiet yet resolute — a light that told me she was meant to do something extraordinary. From that day, I had a feeling she would someday lead Avyanna, and she did — not just with grace, but with grit.

What makes Chandreyi's journey remarkable is not only her ability to lead but her humility to listen, learn, and include. She never forgot to acknowledge the guidance she received, yet she added her own strength — the strength of execution. Because mentoring, no matter how wise, means little unless someone is ready to act upon it. And that is where she truly excelled — she executed. Her leadership embodied what Avyanna stands for — courage, commitment, collaboration, and care. With her at the helm, the club reached new heights — not through individual triumphs, but through the power of collective spirit. She understood that Rotary is never about one person alone; it is about many hearts beating together for a shared cause.

So when Avyanna finally received the Four Lions Trophy for the Overall Best Club, it felt like a full circle moment — a dream fulfilled after years of dedication, teamwork, and faith. That Lion — once a distant symbol of aspiration — now stands proudly with us, as proof that every dream, when nurtured with sincerity, finds its roar. Winning 20 awards across diverse avenues — from Women Empowerment, Maternal & Child Health, Cervical Cancer Awareness, and Peace Building, to RYLA, Youth Service, and Public Image — is not just a list of achievements. It is a reflection of what happens when women unite with purpose. It is the roar of resilience, the song of sisterhood, the story of strength.

When I first started Avyanna, many told me that an all-women club wouldn't last. Too many women under one roof, they said. But I always believed otherwise. I believed that when women come together — with empathy, with conviction, with the will to uplift — they don't just survive; they soar. Today, as we step into our ninth year, sixty strong and stronger than ever, we have proved that a pride of lionesses can indeed rule the jungle of service. Together, we have shown that the true roar lies not in sound, but in solidarity.

This Newsletter's theme, "Roaring Fit – A Pride of Lionesses," could not be more apt. Because Avyanna is exactly that — a pride of fearless, graceful, and determined women who have grown together, stood by each other, and created a legacy of compassion and excellence. Each Avyanna has her own voice, yet when we come together, our harmony becomes a roar — bold, beautiful, and unstoppable.

As Charter President, I could not be prouder. The Lion we hold today is not just a trophy — it is our spirit cast in bronze. It is the embodiment of every challenge faced, every dream chased, every project executed with love and purpose. Yes, we did it! We dreamed, we worked, we believed — and we roared. Three cheers for Avyanna! Three cheers for woman power! Because when lionesses roar together — the world listens.

The Leonine Story – How Avyanna clawed its way to the very top!



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.

Maya Angelou famously said, "We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated," and those have, as if, been the watchwords of Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna. The only all-ladies club in Rotary District 3291, in just nine years of its formation, has proved all naysayers wrong and has marched forth on a difficult path to emerge triumphant and victorious. No, it was not, "roses, roses all the way." Just as "the path of true love never did run smooth," similarly we faced tough times, a pandemic, and ups and downs on a sea of uncertainty when we constantly adjusted our sails to keep afloat! But all our efforts and struggles soon bore fruit, and as we saw the rewards of our work reflected in the smiles of the suffering and the needy, we knew that we were on the right course indeed.

From the mangrove forests of the Sunderbans to the dingy, dark cells of the women's correctional homes, from the flood-ravaged districts of South 24 Parganas to the urban slum dwellers living in abject poverty, we have tried in these nine years to encompass all in our circle of care by providing sustenance and hope. Through "Ankuran", flagship project of the club and torch bearer in the grim surroundings of women's correctional homes, Avyanna has spread the light of learning where even sunlight feels scared to peep. We, feisty ladies, walked the long, arduous ways of red tape and government protocol to bring back the childhood that the hapless, lap children of the inmates had so unfortunately lost. A full-fledged global grant in the tender years of the club was unthinkable, yet the think-tank and the leadership of the club truly believe the word impossible is actually, "I'm possible," and therein hangs another tale. More than forty toilets were built in Khas Sankdaha, in the far-flung Sunderbans, cutting across religious and caste divides, and the grant was successfully completed in record time.

As cervical cancer spreads its dreaded tentacles, we at Avyanna took up the onerous task of getting more than four hundred needy young girls vaccinated by both doses of the vaccine procured by the Club's means. No mean feat, that! For long, we have collaborated with Sukumar Paira of Bali Island, Sunderbans, a headmaster with a difference. We identified him as a man of resource and compassion, a true teacher who had dedicated his life to his community and students. From spreading menstrual hygiene awareness for students of all genders, to plantation drives in the eco-fragile deltaic region, to contributing basic necessities during the two years of back-to-back cyclone that hit the mangroves, Avyanna was there with sustainable support throughout. This year, our Paira Babu was inducted by The Telegraph into its Hall of Fame for a teacher who walked beyond the call of duty. As the entire city applauded, we at Avyanna were overjoyed that once again we had worked in partnership with the very best.

The stories are numerous. The projects countless. Touching thousands of lives in various corners of the district. The environment has been protected, vaccines doled out, sustainability ensured. Seven areas of focus have been prioritised while the Four Way Test remained our constant touchstone.

Our concluding moment of reckoning was no doubt our winning the District Silver Lion for 2024–25 under the dynamic leadership of our President Chandreyi. The final cherry on the top, Avyanna — had arrived and how! But then, if one is sincere and steadfast in their striving, one is bound to meet with success, sometimes, very soon. For Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, that moment of glory is here!



Together We Roar, Together We Serve – Dil Maange More



Sheela Janakiram

Entrepreneur, Educationist, and Social Activist. B.A. (Hons) in Political Science, Delhi University. Diploma in Textile Designing, Sophia Polytechnic, Mumbai. Montessorian, IMC, Kolkata. Trustee, Athreya Charitable Trust. Trustee, Arsha Vidya Nidhi. Member, Advisory Committee of CII – Indian Women Network (IWN). Charter member, Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, District 3291. Club President (2022–23), District Lady Membership Chair (2023–24), Zonal Secretary (2024–25), and Assistant Governor (2025–26).

The Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, an all-women's club committed to purposeful service, is proud to have been conferred the Lions Trophy for the Best Club Award in Rotary International District 3291. This prestigious recognition reflects the dedication, unity, and motivation of our members in implementing impactful projects that address community needs.

Like a pride of lions, Avyanna stands together—strong, coordinated, and resilient. Our achievements are not the result of individual effort but of collective determination and teamwork, guided by Rotary's principle of Service Above Self.

During the past year, the Club has undertaken several projects of significance across Rotary's areas of focus:

- Installation of solar roofing at the Alipore Women's Correctional Home, promoting sustainability.
- Cervical cancer vaccinations administered to over 450 young schoolgirls, protecting them against a life-threatening disease.
- For Public Image, we displayed Polio Awareness and Four-Way Test banners during Durga Puja, reaching thousands in the community.

This award is both an honour and a reminder that when women unite with vision and resolve, their impact resonates far and wide. Avyanna will not rest on its laurels—"Dil Maange More"—as we remain Roaring Fit, ready for greater service and new milestones.



Roaring Fit, Pride of Lions



Dipanwita Das

An MBA in Marketing from Jadavpur University, Dipanwita spent twenty-five years in the corporate world with Telecom, starting in Customer Service and going on to lead Customer Service and Operations for Kolkata and Bengal. She then moved to the social sector and was associated with United Way Kolkata as Regional Director, East. She is currently consulting on CSR projects and manpower recruitment. Her family consists of her husband, son, father, and mother-in-law. Dipanwita likes to travel, read, meet people, and learn languages.

When our Club Editor requested me to contribute to the newsletter Panache, I honestly had no idea what to articulate. Then, when I enquired about the theme and was told it was "Roaring Fit, Pride of Lions," a cascade of vivid images and associations burst forth in my mind. Yet, that still didn't help me figure out how to put together an article worthy of Panache. Well, with that disclaimer, like a young lion cub testing its prowess at hunting, I decided to take the plunge — or perhaps go for the kill (my readers can be the judges of that)!

"Roaring Fit, Pride of Lions" — what an apt tagline for a group of successful and spirited ladies! It beautifully captures the essence, energy, and verve that lifted that coveted Lion Trophy. What struck me most, however, was that a pride of lions is defined as much by its lionesses as by its lions. It is they who form the backbone of the pride — the true strength of the team — and their success lies in their collective power. Everyone contributes, supports, and hunts for goals together.

Of course, the few lions stand for leadership, vision, and guardianship. They stand tall, protect the pride, and embody the spirit of courage. Need I name the Lions of Avyanna? I hope this doesn't spark a gender debate, because I firmly believe that nature consciously created two distinct yet complementary forces — not to be identical, but to complete the Circle of Life by building on each other's strengths. So, for me, the "Lions" are also some of the dynamic ladies at the helm of this club.

As for us new entrants, we are the cubs — symbols of continuity, growth, and the future — keeping the pride alive. To be "Roaring Fit," we must bring in fresh energy, new ideas, and a renewed spirit of purpose.

A lion's roar can travel for miles — a powerful symbol of confidence and presence. "Roaring Fit" is not just about being healthy; it is about being audibly, visibly, and unmistakably powerful. And with power comes responsibility — one that we, as Avyannas, proudly bear for the well-being of our society and for those who need our support.

Finally, it's not only about the big win. Because even when they miss their hunt, even when threatened by hordes of hyenas, lions remain the kings of the jungle — and their roar declares their pride in who they are.



Member's Spotlight



Mandira Mukherjee

Mandira Mukherjee, a charter member of Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, Rtn. Mandira Mukherjee is the epitome of determination and dynamism. A grit-driven businesswoman, she has made a strong mark in the corporate world as a leading distributor for Godrej & Boyce, consistently topping national sales charts multiple times—a remarkable feat that speaks volumes of her dedication and acumen. Beyond the boardroom, Mandira is a culinary enthusiast, and her legendary salads are nothing short of a gourmet experience. Friends and fellow Rotarians will vouch that her table is as vibrant as her spirit. An avid traveller, Mandira finds joy in exploring diverse cultures through fashion, food, and the beauty of nature. Her journeys are not just vacations—they're windows into the world that fuel her creativity and zest for life. In Rotary, she has led from the front, having served as Club President and held several other important positions with integrity and enthusiasm. Her commitment to service and excellence makes her an invaluable member of the Avyanna family.

As one reflects on Mandira Mukherjee, the definition of a true human being stands tall and bright. Mandira is a highly successful entrepreneur with a heart of gold. She likes to keep things simple and focuses on making an impact on every project she undertakes, whether professional or philanthropic. She believes in continuous improvement, personal growth, and always begins with the end in mind.

On a personal level, she has a vivacious personality that instantly puts others at ease. She vividly remembers everyone who has crossed her path and makes an effort to stay in touch, whether they are in Tokyo or Timbuktu. Her love and generosity go above and beyond in caring for her family, friends, and community.

Those who know her feel truly blessed to have her in their lives.

My Rotary Journey

I have been a Rotarian for the past eight years as a charter member of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, the most amazing "only ladies" club in our district. From being a founding member to later serving as the President of this vibrant club, my Rotary journey has been nothing short of phenomenal.

When we began this all-women club, it was with a dream — to create a platform where women could come together with strength, compassion, and purpose to make a difference in society. Watching that dream blossom over the years has been deeply fulfilling. My tenure as President was one of the most enriching experiences of my life — a year filled with challenges, learning, teamwork, and, above all, the satisfaction of seeing meaningful projects come to life and impact real lives.

Rotary has given me the joy of giving back to the community in my own small way. Every initiative we undertake — be it an awareness campaign, a service project, or a fellowship event — reminds me of the immense power of collective action. The motto Service Above Self is not just a phrase; it's a guiding principle that has shaped my values and outlook on life.

What makes Rotary truly special is the fellowship and friendship it nurtures. Over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting and working with many inspiring Rotarians who dedicate themselves selflessly to uplifting others. Their spirit continues to motivate me every day.

Our club, Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, is not just an organisation — it is a family. As an all-women club, we take immense pride in standing by one another, supporting each other's dreams, and working together with strength and unity. Through good times and testing times alike, we have held each other up, bonded by empathy and shared purpose.

I deeply cherish our lively fellowships, where laughter and friendship flow freely, and the Rotary conferences and district programmes that broaden our horizons. These experiences have allowed me to grow both personally and as a leader.

One of the most beautiful aspects of being a Rotarian is the sense of belonging it brings, no matter where you are. Whenever I travel, I am always welcomed warmly by local Rotary clubs — and sometimes, those connections even lead to joint service initiatives. Rotary truly transcends geography, uniting people across the world through service and goodwill.

For me, Rotary is more than an organisation — it's a way of life that teaches compassion, humility, and purposeful action. I am deeply proud to be a Rotarian, and even prouder to belong to Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, where empowered women lead with heart, strength, and dedication.



Preeti Gupta

A masters in Fine Arts from Kanpur University, Preeti Gupta has also completed a six-year "Prabhakar" in Hindustani Classical Music. Preeti grew up in a joint family of twenty-plus members across four generations which included Freemasons, Rotarians, Lions and Inner Wheel members. Growing up, she was inspired by her grandmother, who was a practising Homeopathic doctor and ran a charitable clinic. Giving back to society has been her family ethos. Cataract and blood donation camps were all too common. Preeti has also dabbled in art, held exhibitions and is now studying general insurance through Tata AIG. Recently she is supporting her husband in the family business of lab-grown diamonds.

A Purposeful Journey with RC Avyanna

On a dear friend's suggestion in 2018, I joined The Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna and have enjoyed being a part of this vibrant family. As I need to travel a lot, I partake in the activities of the club's activities whenever and wherever possible. Associating with VRX Labs and executing numerous eye camps for the club was a feel-good factor. I love our all-ladies Rotary club !! It took a while for my ninety-plus father to grasp that I am a Rotarian. He had only heard of male members in Rotary and the ladies forming or joining the Inner Wheel Club !!

I am a very proud and happy ROTARIAN !!

Project Stories

• Debjani Mukherjee



Checkmate to Thalassaemia – A Game with a Cause

On a bright Sunday morning, July 20th, the lawns of Lake Club came alive with a different kind of excitement. The Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna, in collaboration with Chess Meet Foundation and Lake Club, hosted a unique and meaningful event — a Thalassaemia Awareness Project woven around the game of chess. The idea was both creative and thought-provoking — a Chess Competition that not only tested strategic minds but also raised awareness about thalassaemia, a condition that still needs much more public understanding and early diagnosis. Each move on the chessboard symbolised a move toward creating a healthier, more informed community. The event drew a wonderful crowd, including 1000 beneficiaries, participants, and enthusiastic Rotarians. The highlight of the morning was the inspiring presence of our District Governor, whose heartfelt words emphasised the importance of awareness, timely diagnosis, and collective responsibility in combating thalassaemia. Adding a special spark to the occasion was none other than Grandmaster Dibyendu Barua, whose presence delighted everyone — especially the young chess enthusiasts. His encouraging words reminded everyone how focus, discipline, and awareness can change the course of not just a game, but lives too. The project beautifully blended sport and service — showing that awareness can be spread in ways that engage both the heart and mind. Many Avyanna members actively took part, making it a memorable morning filled with

purpose, learning, and inspiration. As the last game concluded, one could feel a quiet sense of satisfaction — that every move made that day had contributed to a much larger win: a step forward in the fight against thalassaemia.

This is Debjani Mukherjee reporting from Lake Club.



Project Stories

• Rita Chatterjee



A Kindness That Heals

On the morning of September 15, 2025, members of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna set out for a very special visit — to Chhaya, the Animal Welfare & Rescue Centre at Aswathberia, Chandaneswar, Bhangar. Their mission for the day was close to the heart: supporting the sterilisation of 15 stray dogs, a small but meaningful step toward animal welfare and community safety. Chhaya, founded and run by Ms. Sharada Radhakrishnan, is a haven of compassion. A gentle yet determined soul, she has dedicated her life to ensuring that stray dogs are humanely neutered, vaccinated, dewormed, and most importantly, returned safely to the exact spot they were picked up from. Her centre reflects her care — the operation theatre and other facilities are well equipped, spotless, and efficiently managed. Avyanna members were deeply moved to witness how thoughtfully everything was handled. Every wagging tail seemed to tell a story of trust and healing. Club members Sheela Jankiram and Rita Chatterjee stepped forward to voluntarily contribute toward the sterilisation procedures, making this project even more meaningful. As the team watched the dedicated staff tend to the animals with patience and love, a quiet sense of fulfilment filled the air. This was service in its truest form — saving lives, ensuring safety, and creating harmony between humans and animals. When the Avyanna members finally left Chhaya, they carried with them the comforting thought that their furry beneficiaries were indeed in good hands.

This is Rita Chatterjee reporting from Chhaya, Aswathberia, Chandaneswar, Bhangar.



Project Stories

● Srabane Chakraborty



Strengthening Rotary's Public Image

It began with a simple idea — to let the city see and feel the spirit of Rotary wherever it goes. Over the past few weeks, bright Rotary hoardings have appeared across Kolkata, each carrying a message of hope, service, and unity. For the members of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Ayyanna, these hoardings are much more than just signboards. They are symbols of what Rotary stands for — service above self, and the quiet strength that comes from collective goodwill. As Rotarians, we believe that service is not just what we do — it's who we are. Every project we undertake, every cause we support, reflects that deeper purpose. And now, through these hoardings, that message reaches every passerby, every commuter, every curious onlooker who pauses to read and reflect. Each image and line displayed in the city tells its own story — of fellowship, compassion, and leadership in action. Whether it's a child being educated, a life saved, or a community uplifted, these glimpses remind us that the Rotary wheel keeps turning, quietly changing lives every day. These hoardings may seem like small steps, but together they mark a powerful stride toward strengthening Rotary's public image — one that inspires others to believe, to serve, and to join hands in creating a better world.

This is Srabane Chakraborty reporting from Kolkata.



Project Stories

• Sutapa Biswas



A Day of Learning, Creativity, and Joy with Treasures of Innocence

On 20th September 2025, the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna joined hands with Treasures of Innocence NGO for a day that brimmed with learning, creativity, and sheer joy. The morning began on a patriotic note, with the children singing "Mukhtir Mandir Sopanotole", their voices echoing enthusiasm and pride. The day took a meaningful turn with the inauguration of a Hanging Library, offering young minds the chance to explore, read, and dream beyond their classrooms. Curiosity and excitement filled the air as the children eagerly browsed the newly set-up collection of books. A fun Durga Puja quiz soon followed, with students participating with lively energy and infectious zeal. Laughter and friendly competition made learning even more enjoyable. Meanwhile, the elder children showcased their imagination in the Creative Lotus Pond craft activity — working in groups with clay, Fevicol, and acrylic colours, they completed their beautiful creations in record time, demonstrating teamwork and talent. The day was made even more special with the distribution of nutritious food, ensuring happy tummies alongside happy hearts. Throughout, the children's energy was contagious, while the teachers of the NGO extended their warm support and guidance. The success of the day was made possible thanks to the enthusiastic participation and contributions of Avyanna members, who helped make this project not only meaningful but truly memorable for every child.

This is Sutapa Biswas reporting from Garia.



Project Stories

• Chandreyi Mitra



A Morning of Meaning – Avyanna's 9th Installation

The morning of July 5th, 2025, dawned bright and full of promise. As I walked into Galaxy Hall at The Park Hotel, a wave of emotion washed over me — pride, gratitude, and a quiet sense of fulfilment. It was a special morning, one that marked both continuity and change — the 9th Installation Ceremony of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna and the 5th edition of our beloved Maanyata Awards. The hall shimmered with energy as friends, Rotarians, and distinguished guests gathered — led by our District Governor Dr. Ramendu Homchoudhuri, First Lady Rtn. Bandana Homchoudhuri, Past District Governors, and District Officials. There was a warm sense of togetherness, the kind that only Rotary can create. As I stood at the podium for the ceremonial changeover, a flood of memories from the past year came rushing back — every project, every challenge, every smile. With immense joy and pride, I handed over the mantle of leadership to our incoming President, Rtn. Sarmistha Das, a dynamic leader who embodies Avyanna's spirit of strength and compassion. The applause that followed felt like a collective blessing — a celebration of shared purpose and hope for the year ahead. The morning also saw the launch of two meaningful service projects — a computer donation to Krishna Foundation, supporting the education of underprivileged children, along with training assistance for their growth; and continued support for Life Beyond Cancer, a cause that touches hearts and restores courage. We also proudly contributed USD 200 to the

Polio Fund, reaffirming Rotary's unwavering commitment to a world free from polio. Then came one of Avyanna's most cherished moments — the Maanyata Awards. Since their inception in 2017–18, these awards have celebrated the unsung heroes among us — individuals who have risen above adversity, defied physical or social barriers, and proved that "winners never quit, and quitters never win." Each story shared that day reminded us that courage and resilience often bloom in the quietest corners. This year, we also placed strong emphasis on strengthening Rotary's public image. From city-wide hoardings to thoughtful media coverage, every effort was made to let the world see the true spirit of Rotary — service, fellowship, and leadership in action. The morning concluded on a high note with the induction of five new members, bringing fresh energy and ideas into our fold. As we welcomed them, I felt immense pride in knowing that Avyanna continues to grow — not just in numbers, but in heart and purpose. As I stepped down from my role, I carried with me deep gratitude — for my fellow members, for our shared vision, and for the privilege of having served a club that continues to inspire through every act of service. Together, we move forward — empowered, inspired, and committed to making a difference.

This is Chandreyi Mitra from The Park, Kolkata.



Celebrating Courage and Service The 5th Maanyata Awards

On a radiant morning, the Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna came together to celebrate courage, perseverance, and quiet heroism at the 5th Maanyata Awards. The awards honoured extraordinary individuals who have risen above personal, social, and physical challenges to make a lasting difference. Among the luminaries were Dr. Srabanti Bhattacharya, whose resilience in the face of E-beta thalassaemia inspired countless students; Mr. Diptansu Sen, a patient advocate, educator, and published author whose quiet dedication uplifts lives daily; and Mr. Deep Narayan Nayak, the "Teacher of the Streets," who has transformed grassroots education for tens of thousands of children. Each story reflected the essence of Maanyata — that true strength lies in determination, compassion, and service, and that heroes often shine brightest without seeking the spotlight. This celebration of service was beautifully complemented by Rotary Avyanna's city-wide public image initiative, with hoardings across Kolkata spreading the message of Rotary's spirit and values. Through these simple yet meaningful steps, the Club reminded the community that service is not just what Rotarians do, but who they are — a living testament to fellowship, leadership, and the enduring power of giving back. Together, the awards and the outreach project strengthened not only the visibility of Rotary but also the inspiration it brings to every corner of society.

This is Rajlakhmi Mohan reporting from The Park.



Deep Narayan Nayak



Dr. Srabanti Bhattacharya



Diptansu Sen



Papiya Sultana



Tumpa Das



Tanya Sanyal

A Snapshot of Projects Executed

JULY

Date	Title
Jul 1	Blood Donation Camp in association with RCC Nildiganta Nilgunge. Blood donation is important for Thalassaemia patients. The direct beneficiaries were 135.
Jul 1	Doctor's Day celebration was held in conjunction with our RCC.
Jul 4	As part of a grand Public Image initiative, LED display hoardings were put up at various locations across the city.
Jul 5	₹25,000 was donated to the social initiative Life Beyond Cancer for the betterment of paediatric cancer patients.
Jul 5	Computers were donated to Krishna Foundation in support of children from red-light areas.
Jul 5	A donation of ₹17,000 was made towards the Pulse Polio Foundation.
Jul 20	A Chess Meet was held at Lake Club to promote awareness about Thalassaemia through this Public Image initiative, which was also graced by the District Governor.
Jul 21	A Mother and Child project was held in Chingrihata for impoverished and malnourished mothers, marking Rotary's Mother and Child Month.
Jul 22	A Goodwill Project was held to promote social responsibility.

A Snapshot of Projects Executed

AUGUST

Date	Title
Aug 3	An eye camp was organised by Nildiganta Nilgunge, our proactive RCC, wherein it was decided that patients requiring cataract operations would be identified, and surgeries would be conducted in due course.
Aug 15	As India celebrated its 79 th Independence Day, in a remote village in the mangroves of the Sunderbans, students of a small primary school were gifted plants by RC of Calcutta Avyanna to nurture and help bloom. They were also awarded trophies, sponsored by RC of Calcutta Avyanna, for their yearlong efforts by their dedicated Headmaster, Mr Sukumar Poiria, who works tirelessly to help his students blossom into model citizens of tomorrow.
Aug 21	A cataract surgery camp was conducted by the club in collaboration with RCC Nildiganta Nilgunge, wherein the patients identified during the eye camp on Aug 3 were operated upon and sent home. Eight patients benefited from the surgeries.
Aug 29	Avyanna launched a project titled Sarees for Smiles with Sher, under which three hundred new sarees were donated to economically challenged women from the mangroves of the Sunderbans, adding dignity and grace to their Puja celebrations.

A Snapshot of Projects Executed

SEPTEMBER

Date	Title
Sep 5	On Teachers' Day, RCC Nildiganta Nilgunge, along with RC of Calcutta Avyanna, felicitated thirty teachers associated with a school adopted by our RCC. The school reaches out to over three hundred and eighty marginalised students.
Sep 7	In line with our focus on mental health and well-being, a retreat was held with renowned mental health expert Shri Karan Kakkad, in association with RC Endeavour and RC Benevolence. Members and their guests participated enthusiastically in this inspiring programme, which provided deep insights into self-awareness and offered guidance for leading a balanced and purposeful life.
Sep 14	Cataract surgeries were conducted by RCC Nildiganta Nilgunge for patients identified during the free eye check-up camp held on Aug 3. Free powered spectacles were also distributed.
Sep 15	An important initiative was undertaken by the Club through the sterilisation of stray dogs at Chaya Animal Welfare and Rescue Centre.
Sep 20	The Club collaborated with NGO Treasures of Innocence, where a Hanging Library was donated by RC of Calcutta Avyanna for children from economically backward sections. Nutritious food packets were also distributed to about fifty children.

Potpourri



Soma Bhan

The Art of Living Well

Listening

Life today feels rushed — everyone is in a hurry. Perhaps that's why listening skills are fading. Too often, we are so eager to prove our point that we hardly pay attention to what the other person is trying to say. Instead, we rush in, interrupt, and raise our voices to make ourselves heard.

How many of us are guilty of this? Do we truly give others the space to put forward their views? We can always agree to disagree, but how many of us have the patience to L-I-S-T-E-N? The other person's thoughts may be completely different from ours, but does that give us the right to keep cutting them short? Interrupting doesn't display intelligence — it reveals intolerance.

When interacting with people, listen carefully before responding. It disarms the speaker and makes them feel respected. Remember, you may win the argument — but lose a friend.

Empathy

We love to use the word empathy. It makes us feel we are compassionate and understanding. But how often is this truly the case? Empathy, for many of us, is shaped by our own moods and state of mind.

It's easy to pass judgement on friends or acquaintances without pausing to reflect on the battles they may be fighting silently. Not everyone is comfortable sharing personal struggles, and outward appearances can be misleading. A smiling face may still be carrying heavy burdens.

So, when someone behaves differently or seems withdrawn on a given day, give them the benefit of the doubt. They may have had a difficult day at work or home. Don't react hastily — pause, reflect, and choose kindness.

Restraint

When someone says something that hurts us, our first instinct is often to snap back. We perceive it as an insult or an attempt to belittle us, and we feel justified in "giving it back." For a fleeting moment, this may feel like justice served — but at what cost? Sometimes, in that single outburst, goodwill built over years can vanish.

The next time the urge to lash out rises, let's take a step back. Breathe. Calm ourselves before responding. Conflicts are best resolved privately, in a one-to-one conversation, rather than in the heat of the moment.

Restraint is not weakness — it is strength in its highest form. Sometimes, it is also prudent not to react at all. After all, not every situation is a battle we need to win.



Potpourri



Rita Chatterjee

Side Effects of Exercise

I love myself very much. So I took a lot of 'care' showering myself with amazing ice creams, layered pastries, lots of rest and not to forget the famous fried titbits available all around. The 'before and after' advertisements never really impressed me, and slimming centres, I knew, were money-siphoning centres. A few months ago my friend came down from Mumbai. We were meeting after nearly a year. I knew she also loved and treated herself very much the way I did. But GOSH — when I saw her I couldn't believe my eyes!! This trim-shim lady... my friend! After the 'after-shock' I decided to join a gym. I had to — because I love myself very much.

The first few days in the gym were really challenging. I experienced nausea, headache, dizziness, muscle cramp, stomach pain, and a strong urge to stop exercising. Honestly, exercise is physically very demanding.

Reasons for Nausea

During exercise (high intensity), the blood flow significantly increases to the muscles, heart and lungs. Consequently, there's a shifting of blood away from the gut, which is thereby deprived of the amount of oxygen it requires to function. This can make one feel nauseous.

Other reasons include —

- Not enough warming up and cooling down
- Eating too close to workout, which may cause indigestion
- Eating food with high fat content
- Too much or too little fluid intake during workout

Steps to Prevent This

- Proper warming up at the beginning and cooling down at the end of an exercise session is imperative
- A meal should be taken approximately 3–4 hours before exercising. However, a small snack can be taken an hour before workout
- Appropriate hydration should be ensured before starting to exercise
- Whatever the fluid of choice is, drinking in sips rather than gulps is advised during exercise
- It is also important that within half an hour after a full exercise session the body should be refuelled with a snack that contains high protein along with some carbohydrates. Otherwise, the body will start breaking down muscles to replace the protein and glycogen stores that have been depleted during exercise

Reason for Headache

Any headache that occurs during a workout is likely a sign that fluid intake was insufficient before starting the exercise.

Reason for Light-headedness

Since the brain is one of the most highly oxygen-dependent organs, a long intense workout which shifts considerable blood away from it might make one feel dizzy/light-headed — especially for those who are new to the exercise regime. A drop in blood sugar can also be one of the reasons.

Steps to Be Taken

- Exercise should be stopped immediately
- The subject should lie down with elevated legs to help improve blood flow to the brain
- A carbohydrate drink, such as fruit juice or a sports drink, should be taken

Reasons for Muscle Cramp

This typically happens when a muscle gets fatigued or over-worked. It might also happen if the warming up was not enough.

Steps to Prevent This

- If it happens mid-workout, then exercise should be stopped immediately and light massage should be applied to the area
- Heat may be applied if massage doesn't help, but application of ice should be totally avoided as it can aggravate the cramp

Word of caution

However, if any of these symptoms become long-lasting, then a doctor should be consulted immediately. Finally, remember — whatever you do, do not stop exercising. It is far better for your health than any negative factor brought on by it. Under proper guidance, make a few modifications to make exercising/workout less taxing on your body.

Potpourri



PDG Rajani Mukherjee

Rotary Calcutta Avyanna is one of the most active and leading clubs of Rotary District 3291. They undertake service activities that touch various aspects of life.

A few of their initiatives under the area of Social Empowerment are worth mentioning:

- Donated a computer to the children of the red-light area in collaboration with Krishna Foundation.
- Provided education to the children of Ankuran, a school set up by Rotary Calcutta Avyanna for the children of lady inmates at Dum Dum Correctional Home.
- Completed the Mother and Child project at Sukanta Nagar.
- Donated books for the Hanging Library for underprivileged children in collaboration with the NGO Treasures of Innocence.

By taking up these projects, they strengthened the process of enhancing an individual's or marginalised group's ability to gain control over their lives, achieve self-sufficiency, and reshape social structures by promoting equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources.

It touched upon the key aspects of Social Empowerment:

- Increased Autonomy and Control
- Access to Resources
- Promoting Equality



Sujit Sanyal

Many years ago, while on a trip to Corbett National Park, we tried to sight tigers—and of course, failed. While we ended up seeing pugmarks and dried droppings of the tigers, the guide told us that Indian males had a lot in common with lions. He went on to explain that lions are lazy; they just sit and do nothing, lording over the jungle while the lionesses go around organising food, hunting, and bringing up the family.

I understand that the lionesses in the Rotary group in Kolkata have broken the glass ceiling, and the Shinghi Bahini of RC Avyanna have triumphed in a male-dominated community, walking away with the prized trophy.

The lion, however, I was told, is not an Indian. From Africa, they walked up to Gujarat (along with some tribes that still exist in Gujarat, who continue to follow traditional customs and even resemble the Africans) and settled there. In fact, we are told that when a lion was brought to the Calcutta Zoo way back in 1880, there was a huge rush to see what a "lion" looked like! India is predominantly a tiger country, though our Goddess Durga comes riding a lion.

The lion is regal. Which is why—from Durga to the coat of arms of British royalty—the lion has always had a strong association with power and majesty. The ladies winning a lion is actually a reinforcement of that statement. They have set an example of women's power, and they alone are truly running the show. The iconic HUL now has its first lady Chairman; governments all over the world are being led by women—including, well, in our own state! Today, men have no reason to be surprised when a woman achieves success—except to acknowledge that for centuries, women have been achieving more than men; it's just that their contributions were never appreciated.

The collective success of RC Avyanna, triumphing home with the lion, is more than just a victory. It is an all-time inspiration for women to step forward.

Their leadership will now carry the constant challenge of spreading nari shakti.

Before I close, I would like to dedicate this piece to a remarkable woman—a real lioness, a light of hope, a human lioness: Savitribai Phule.

– Sujit Sanyal
Sujit Sanyal Workshops

Potpourri



Shromona Ghosh

Our Paiba Babu

Our very own and very dear **Sukumar Paiba** received the highest award — “**Induction into The Telegraph Hall of Fame**” — at the recently concluded TTIS Award Ceremony!!

The Telegraph recognised his amazing journey and path-breaking work for more than 40 years at Bali Island, Gosaba, Sunderbans, in nurturing and forming young, impressionable minds into responsible adults emerging from the far-flung, remote mangrove areas of our diverse country.

He featured on the front page, appeared again in the inside pages, received a standing ovation, and the award was handed over to him by none other than historian **Uma Dasgupta** and scientist **Partho Ghosh!**

We, who have visited his school numerous times in the last five years, are aware of his dedication, enterprise, and never-say-die attitude. He is a man who genuinely can move mountains.

RC of Calcutta Avyanna stands overawed at his achievement and overwhelmed that he allowed us to be an integral part of his journey.

After winning the Lion Award as the *Best Club in the District*, this is the second time in a month that Avyanna has proved that our work speaks louder than our words.



Sukumar Paiba



Musings by our Interactors

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



● **Susmit Mondal**
JOINT TREASURER
INTERACT CLUB OF
BIRLA BHARATI



Service and Solidarity on Raksha Bandhan by Birla Bharati Interact Club



Raksha Bandhan celebrates the bond of love, trust, and mutual support between siblings. Historically, the festival has been observed in various forms across centuries. One well-known account is of Rani Karnavati of Mewar, who sent a rakhi to Mughal emperor Humayun, seeking his support when her kingdom was under threat. Though Humayun could not arrive in time, the gesture became a powerful symbol of trust and alliance.

Moreover, during British colonial rule, particularly during the Bengal Partition of 1905, Rabindranath Tagore redefined Raksha Bandhan. He turned the customary celebration of sibling bonding into a symbol of unity and solidarity between Muslims and Hindus. As a sign of brotherhood, mutual respect, and resistance against the polarising British policies, Tagore urged members of various communities to tie rakhis to one another. His interpretation of Raksha Bandhan evolved into a potent call for national unity and communal harmony.

Over time, Raksha Bandhan has moved beyond traditional roles, becoming a broader celebration of family bonds, friendship, and solidarity. It continues to evolve in modern times, often observed across distances and even among those who are not biologically related, highlighting its enduring message of connection and support.

The Interact Club of Birla Bharati organised a cultural and interactive programme on the auspicious occasion of Raksha Bandhan (9th August) at Sarbari – the Women's Rehabilitation Centre of Iswar Sankalpa, Support for the Mind. The event was aimed at fostering empathy, cultural exchange, and long-term engagement with the women of the centre, many of whom have faced the challenges of trafficking and are now courageously rebuilding their lives.

The programme began with soulful presentations guided by Aparajita Ma'am. A powerful recitation of "Ebar Tor Mora Gangey Ban Eshechhe" was followed by the iconic song "Banglar Mati Banglar Jol", celebrating the essence of Bengal. A short speech on the mythological and historical significance of Raksha Bandhan further enriched the occasion, connecting tradition with contemporary values.

The event was further dignified by the presence of renowned actor and personality Abir Chatterjee and Rotarian BDG Rajendra Khandelwal, whose encouraging words brought inspiration and warmth to all present. Their gracious presence underscored the importance of compassion, service, and solidarity.

A major highlight of the day was the announcement of a long-term collaboration between Birla Bharati and Iswar Sankalpa. Through this initiative, the Interact Club, together with teachers, will arrange interactive workshops to support and empower the women at the centre, helping them gain confidence, dignity, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

The programme was made possible through the dedicated efforts of the Interact core members of Birla Bharati, whose leadership and commitment form the backbone of such initiatives. Alongside them, other students of the school also contributed by presenting paintings, songs, and instrumental performances, which added depth and creativity to the day's celebrations.

The event proved to be a deeply enriching experience, weaving together service, art, and compassion. It stood as a reminder that the spirit of Raksha Bandhan lies not only in symbolic rituals but also in building bonds of protection, kindness, and humanity. Holding an interactive Raksha Bandhan programme was more than just a traditional celebration; it was a significant event that made everyone feel happy, connected, and emotionally warmed. In a

constructive and welcoming setting, the women were able to express themselves, feel like they belonged, and interact with others. The festival acted as a reminder that even seemingly insignificant acts of kindness and camaraderie can make a big difference, particularly for people who frequently feel forgotten or alone. This celebration was more than just a token event; it was a step towards empowerment, emotional healing, and the development of cross-cultural human connections.

Reported by

Aritri Seal (Director) & Susmit Mondal (Joint Treasurer)

Interact Club of Birla Bharati



Musings by our Interactors

● Susmit Mondal
JOINT TREASURER
INTERACT CLUB OF
BIRLA BHARATI



Mahamaya



The term 'Mahamaya' is an amalgam of 'Maha' (great) and 'Maya' (power or illusion); it roughly translates to 'great power'. Mahamaya is generally used as an epithet to refer to the supreme goddess, Devi Durga. Mahamaya is not just a name, but a presence that embodies purity, strength, and boundless compassion. She is the spirit that protects the weak, inspires generosity, and nurtures humanity with grace. Her blessings remind us that true devotion lies not only in prayer but also in acts of kindness and service.

This programme is thus named Mahamaya as it evokes strength, care, and a sense of upliftment for the women who received sarees. At the threshold of Durga Puja, this endeavour aimed to help them experience the joy of wearing new clothes for the festival, just as everyone else does.

The fund for the sarees was raised from the faculty and the administrative staff, including the Principal, Ms Apala Datta; Vice Principal, Mrs Sumana Mukherjee; and Admin Head, Mrs Priyanka Ghosh. The school bags were procured by Birla Bharati itself, and the teachers willingly contributed monetarily as an expression of their shared commitment and support for the cause.

On 20th September, the 17 Interact core members of Birla Bharati began their journey by boarding the bus from Taratala, Kolkata, at 8:10 a.m., reaching the Sundarbans at 11:35 a.m. From there, we took a launch to Bali Island, Gosaba. Upon arrival, we hired two autos to reach the small local school, where the guiding teacher greeted us warmly. A representative from the school shared the story of how the school was established, the conditions of the village, and the gradual improvements being made in education and community life.

The members and teachers were welcomed with a ceremonial application of sandalwood paste and a beautiful bouquet of flowers. The students of the island greeted us with vibrant dance performances, brimming with talent and grace. After the welcoming ceremony, the members interacted with the students and teachers and distributed 120 school bags to the students. Watching their faces light up upon receiving the bags was a moment of pure joy.

Later, the women of the community came downstairs, and we presented 100 new Tangail sarees to them — a simple gesture that carried deep meaning, dignity, and care. After completing the donations, we returned to the spot where the launch awaited to take us back from the Sundarbans. Around 2:45 p.m., as the rain poured heavily, we had our lunch on the launch, which was surprisingly delightful and refreshing, adding a unique charm to the day.

By the time we reached the shores and eventually returned to Kolkata, the Interact core members carried with them not only memories of the children and their smiles but also a profound sense of fulfilment, empathy, and the heart-warming joy of giving, which truly made Mahamaya 2.0 an unforgettable journey.

This journey to the Sundarbans and Bali Island for Mahamaya 2.0 was an incredibly heart-warming and memorable experience. Helping others, especially before such a pure and auspicious occasion, filled me with joy and energy that came straight from the heart. What made it truly special was talking with the children — asking them about their favourite subjects, their dreams, and their daily lives.

One little girl, just three or four years old, listened carefully as I encouraged her to study hard and believe in herself, while other children shared their love for maths and English and their aspirations to achieve something big.

Witnessing their determination and innocence, seeing their bright, hopeful faces, and sharing small moments with them made me realise the true value of empathy and selfless giving.

The donation event proved to be a remarkable success, with enthusiastic participation and heartfelt responses from the recipients. It not only fulfilled its purpose of distributing sarees and school bags ahead of the Puja but also brought a sense of joy, dignity, and inclusion to those who received them.

Reported by

Susmit Mondal (Joint Treasurer) & Aritri Seal (Director)

Interact Club of Birla Bharati



Stirring Stories and Recipes

• Anjali Patnaik



Dahi Baigana (Dahi Baingan)

Dahi Baigana is one of the most relished dishes in Odia cuisine.

INGREDIENTS

- 250 grams brinjal (eggplant)
- ½ teaspoon chilli powder
- A pinch of turmeric
- 1 cup yoghurt/curd (dahi)
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon black salt
- Salt to taste
- 2 + 1 teaspoons mustard oil
- 1 teaspoon panch phoran (mustard, cumin, fennel, fenugreek, and nigella seeds)
- 1 tablespoon curry leaves
- 2 green or dry chillies
- 1 teaspoon cumin powder

METHOD

- Wash and cut the eggplants (baigana) into thin slices.
- Sprinkle turmeric, red chilli powder, and ½ teaspoon salt on the eggplants and toss well so they are evenly coated. Set aside to marinate for 10 minutes.
- In a bowl, add sugar, black salt, and salt to taste to the yoghurt (dahi) and blend well. Adjust the consistency by adding a little water as per your preference. (The yoghurt mixture should not be too thin.)
- Heat 2 teaspoons oil in a pan, add the marinated eggplants, and pan-fry until just cooked.
- In the same pan, add 1 teaspoon oil, then add the panch phoran, chillies, and curry leaves.
- Switch off the heat, add the fried eggplants, and toss well. Let it cool to room temperature.
- Add the cooled eggplant to the yoghurt (dahi) mixture and stir gently.
- Sprinkle cumin powder on top and serve.



Ambila

Ambila is a traditional sweet-and-sour vegetable dish that is mostly prepared in the Ganjam district (Brahmapur) of Odisha.

INGREDIENTS

Take quantities according to the number of people being served

Vegetables:

- Pumpkin (Kaddu / Kakharu)
- Sweet Potato (Shakkar Kand / Kanda Mula)
- Taro (Arvi / Kuji Saru)
- Radish (Mooli / Moola)
- Brinjal (Baigan / Baigana)
- Tamarind (Imli / Tentuli)
- Desi Ghee or Refined Oil (Ghee / Refine Tela)
- Panch Phutan (a combination of mustard, cumin, fennel, fenugreek, and nigella seeds)
- Turmeric Powder (Haldi / Haladi Gunda)
- Dry Red Chilli (Sukhi Lal Mirch / Sukhila Lanka)
- Asafoetida (Hing / Hengu)
- Curry Leaves (Curry Patta / Bhursunga Patra)
- Sugar or Jaggery (Chini / Gud)
- Salt to taste (Namak / Luna)

METHOD

- Cut the vegetables into medium-sized pieces.
- Soak the tamarind in water for a while and extract the pulp.
- Boil the vegetables in water with a little turmeric powder and salt. Do not overcook; they should be parboiled.
- Heat two teaspoons of desi ghee or refined oil in a pan.
- Prepare the tempering (tadka) by adding panch phutan, asafoetida, curry leaves, and dry red chilli to the hot oil. Stir until the panch phutan crackles.
- Add the boiled vegetables to the pan and mix well.
- Pour in the tamarind pulp — the quantity depends on how sour you prefer the dish.
- Add sugar or jaggery to balance the sourness of the tamarind with an equal sweetness.
- Let it all simmer for about 10 minutes.

Now your Ambila is ready to be served.



Stirring Stories and Recipes

• Diksha Rathi



Gatte ki Sabji

Gatte ki Sabji is a signature dish from the royal kitchens of Rajasthan, loved for its rich taste and simple ingredients. Soft besan (gram flour) dumplings, called gatte, are cooked in a spiced yoghurt-based curry that's tangy and aromatic. This dish is a staple of Marwari cuisine, created in the desert regions where fresh vegetables were scarce. Served with roti, bajra roti, or steamed rice, it beautifully captures the earthy and traditional flavours of Rajasthan.

Servings: 5

INGREDIENTS

For Gatte

- 1 cup besan
- 2 tbsp curd
- 1 tbsp oil
- ½ tsp ajwain
- ½ tsp cumin
- ½ tsp turmeric
- ½ tsp red chilli powder
- ½ tsp coriander powder
- Salt, as required
- Water, as required

For Curry

- 2 tbsp oil or ghee
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- Pinch of hing
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 tomato, puréed
- ½ cup curd, whisked
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- 1 tsp garam masala
- Salt, as required
- Fresh coriander leaves, for garnish

METHOD

Step 1: Prepare the Gatte

- In a mixing bowl, add besan, curd, oil, ajwain, cumin, turmeric, red chilli powder, coriander powder, and salt.
- Knead into a stiff dough using a little water as required.
- Divide into equal portions and roll into long cylindrical shapes (like sticks).
- Boil water in a pan and cook these rolls for 8–10 minutes until they float.
- Remove, cool slightly, and cut into 1-inch pieces (gatte).

Step 2: Prepare the Curry

- Heat oil or ghee in a kadhai, add cumin seeds and a pinch of hing.
- Add onions and sauté until golden brown.
- Add ginger–green chilli paste and sauté for a minute.
- Add tomato purée and cook until oil separates.
- Add turmeric, coriander powder, red chilli powder, and salt.
- Lower the flame, add whisked curd, and stir continuously to avoid curdling.
- Cook until the masala releases oil.



Step 3: Combine Gatte with Curry

- Add the boiled gatte pieces into the masala. Add 1–1.5 cups hot water (adjust consistency).
- Cover and simmer for 8–10 minutes so that gatte absorb the flavours.
- Sprinkle garam masala and garnish with fresh coriander leaves.

Serving Suggestion

Serve hot with steaming phulka, bajra roti, or jeera rice.

Sangri ki Sabji (Marwadi Style)

Sangri is a signature dish of Rajasthan, especially popular in the Marwar region. Because of Rajasthan's desert climate, locals preserve ker and sangri in dried form and later cook them with generous amounts of ghee, curd, and spices. This sabji has a unique tangy, spicy, and earthy flavour that pairs best with bajra roti or missi roti.

Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup sangri (dried)
- ½ cup curd (yoghurt, whisked)
- 3–4 tbsp mustard oil or ghee
- A pinch asafoetida (hing)
- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- ¼ tsp carom seeds (ajwain)
- 2 dry red chillies
- 2 tsp coriander powder
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- 1 tsp amchur powder (dry mango powder)
- Salt, to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves, for garnish

METHOD

Step 1: Prepare Sangri

- Wash dried ker and sangri thoroughly 2–3 times to remove sand and dirt.
- Soak them overnight in water.
- The next day, boil them in salted water until soft. Drain and keep aside.

Step 2: Prepare Curd Mixture

- Whisk the curd in a bowl until smooth.
- Add turmeric, coriander powder, and red chilli powder. Mix well.

Step 3: Prepare Tempering

- Heat mustard oil or ghee in a kadhai until it smokes lightly.
- Add hing, cumin seeds, ajwain, and dry red chillies. Let them splutter.
- Add the boiled sangri and sauté for 2–3 minutes.
- Lower the flame completely and add the curd–spice mixture gradually while stirring.
- Cook on a low flame until the oil separates and ker-sangri absorbs the masala.

Step 4: Finishing Touch

- Add salt and amchur powder for tanginess. Mix well.
- Garnish with fresh coriander leaves.

Serving Suggestion

Serve hot with bajra roti or missi roti.



Members' Nuggets

United to Be One

A Joyous Celebration in Lisbon

Our member, Rotarian Sonali Mehrotra, recently celebrated the wedding of her son Shashwat with Ankita in the enchanting city of Lisbon, Portugal, on 7th October 2025.

The Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna extends its heartiest congratulations to proud parents Sonali and Mr. Abhilash Mehrotra, and conveys its warmest wishes and blessings to the newlyweds Shashwat and Ankita for a lifetime filled with happiness, harmony, and love.



A Beautiful Celebration in Jodhpur

Rotarian Sabina Nathani recently celebrated the wedding of her son Sahil with Mahima in the magnificent city of Jodhpur on the 2nd and 3rd of November 2025. The joyous occasion beautifully reflected love, warmth, and tradition amid the regal splendour of Rajasthan.

The Rotary Club of Calcutta Avyanna extends its heartiest congratulations to Sabina and her husband Mr. Vijay Nathani, and offers warm wishes and blessings to the newlyweds for a lifetime filled with love, happiness, and togetherness.



Happy Birthday!



AUGUST

Nilanjana Mukherjee (5th August)
Rajlakshmi Mohan (11th August)
Barsha Khattry (23rd August)
Sutapa Biswas (28th August)
Vayjayanti Pugalia (31st August)

JULY

Suniti Khastigar (19th July)
Srabanee Chakraborty (23rd July)

SEPTEMBER

Tista Nath (12th September)
Chandreyi Mitra (21st September)



Just for Fun!



Our universal "Mashi's" diary pages are regularly chewed by her puppy; maybe it just needs an extra helping of food!



Hesitant initially, but once she takes on the dance floor, she doesn't leave until the music is turned off.



Her intentions are always punctual. It's just that the circumstances aren't!



Don't let her quiet demeanour fool you; tickle the right bone and you'll see her naughty look and infectious laugh.

DID YOU KNOW?



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

The Rotary Foundation provides the world's largest privately-funded scholarships, known as the Ambassadorial Scholarships.

The "plus" in PolioPlus refers to the vitamin A supplements that have been provided alongside polio immunizations, which have averted an estimated 1.5 million childhood deaths since 1998.

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

Rotary became bilingual in 1916, when it organized a non-English-speaking Club in Cuba.

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.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Paul Harris traveled extensively, ceremoniously planting trees to symbolize goodwill and friendship.

Impact Stories: Voices of Change



CLICK HERE TO PLAY THE VIDEO



CLICK HERE TO PLAY THE VIDEO



Chit Chat With A Rotary Hat

● Mita Walia



● Shoma Bhan





UNITE FOR GOOD