



ASHOKA NEWSLETTER OCTOBER, 2025

ROTARY CLUB OF DELHI SOUTH

R. I. President: Rtn. Francesco Arezzo

District Governor: Rtn. Dr. Ravinder Gugnani

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO THE CLUB



Dear RCDS Family Warm Greetings

I'm sure you all had a wonderful festive season and received the divine blessings of Ma Lakshmi and Lord Ganesha. It has also been a very special month for all of us — blessings have truly been showered upon Rotary Club of Delhi South!

Firstly we are delighted to share that two major partnerships for **Gift of Life** are progressing through the Rotary Foundation of India:

Project A - In collaboration with the Rotary Club of Bombay Airport, a Rotary Club in Germany, and an international donor from the US, with the support of our District Governor Rtn Dr Ravinder Gugnani, a USD 400,000 project has been initiated with Sri Sathya Sai Hospital as the implementing partner. This project will fund 200 pediatric surgeries, transforming young lives and

bringing hope to countless families.

Project B - In partnership with the Rotary Club of Millbrae, California (District 5150), this USD 37,500 project, executed through Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, focuses on extending medical support to those in need.

Adding to our blessings, our **Nari Shakti / Atma Nirbhar Program** with Etasha Society has received Global Grant approval of USD 30,500 (₹26.8 lakh). Thanks to the generosity of our members, the partnership with the Rotary Club of Suntec City, Singapore, and DDF commitments from both our District Governor Rtn Dr Ravinder Gugnani (USD 4,000) and our dear friend District Governor Dr Shahul Hameed from Singapore (USD 5,000), we will now be able to train 220 girls and boys—empowering youth with skill development and confidence for the future.

Our **Cervical Cancer Vaccination Drives** are progressing at a tremendous pace. We take immense pride in leading the way toward a cervical cancer-free India, ensuring that awareness and prevention reach every corner of our community.

PDG Rtn Deepak Kapur actively participated in the Sub-National Immunization Day (NID) for Polio, held across Delhi and

Gurgaon on October 12, 2025. We celebrated World Polio Day on October 24, 2025 by spreading awareness and contributing generously to the PolioPlus Fund.

We all came together for our Diwali Fellowship on October 16, a radiant evening filled with lights, music, dance, laughter, and togetherness — a true reflection of the RCDS spirit.

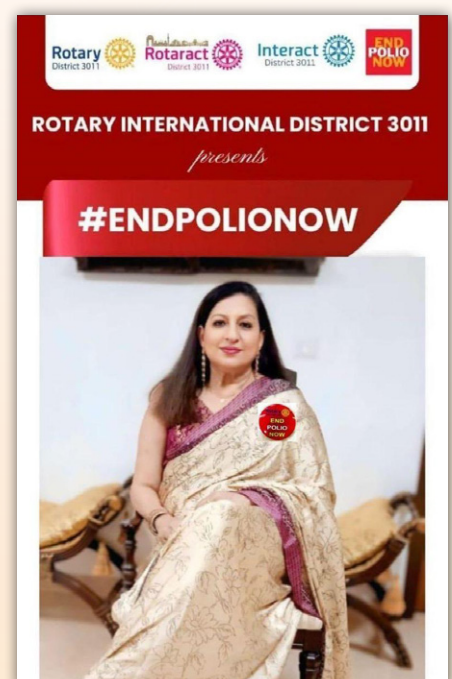
As we move forward, we look ahead to even more meaningful projects and joyful fellowships, living each day in the true spirit of Service Above Self.

With Warm regards and gratitude,

Rtn. Kaval Verma

President 2025-26

Rotary Club of Delhi South



PRE-DIWALI FELLOWSHIP AT DASAPRAKASH

October 5, 2025

A FEAST OF FRIENDSHIP AND FLAVOUR

The Pre-Diwali Fellowship at Dasaprakash Restaurant on 5th October 2025 was a delightful afternoon brimming with joy, laughter, and festive cheer.

A large number of members joined in to celebrate the season of lights, creating an atmosphere filled with warmth and togetherness. The afternoon unfolded amidst a medley of South Indian delicacies, where every conversation was spiced with humour and every smile reflected the spirit of fellowship.

A special word of appreciation for Dr. Shweta Javali, Hony Secretary, who was the perfect host - mindfully taking care

of everyone's order preferences and ensuring a smooth, happy experience for all. Her warmth and attention to detail truly created a joyous fellowship.

From hearty laughter to nostalgic stories, from friendly banter to cheerful camaraderie - the gathering captured the essence of Rotary bonding. The rhythmic clink of coffee tumblers, the shared love for dosas and filter coffee, and the collective festive energy made it a memorable prelude to Diwali.

Everyone left with happy hearts and smiling faces - already looking forward to the next get-together!



IN LOVING MEMORY OF PP RISHAB JAIN

October 8, 2025

AREA OF FOCUS – MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH

On 8th October 2025, Rtn. Ila Jain visited Mother Teresa's Home to share an evening meal and sweets with the children there, in remembrance of her late husband, Past President Rishab Jain, on his death anniversary.

It was a touching and emotional visit—tinged with sadness at the sight of the girls but also filled with quiet satisfaction at being able to bring them a moment of joy. The gesture reflected the spirit of compassion and service that defined Rishab's life and leadership.

As we remember him with deep affection and gratitude, we pray for his eternal peace and continue to draw inspiration from the values he embodied—kindness, humility, and service above self.



CERVICAL CANCER VACCINATION CAMPS IN MADURAI

October 13, 2025

AREA OF FOCUS : DISEASE PREVENTION & TREATMENT

Under the inspiring leadership of District Governor Rtn Dr Ravinder Gugnani, on 12th and 13th October 2025, Rotary District 3011 and District 3000 joined hands to conduct Cervical Cancer Vaccination Camps in Dindigul and Theni, Tamil Nadu. These camps marked a significant milestone in Rotary's continuing mission to protect young girls from cervical cancer through awareness and preventive vaccination.

On 12th October 2025, a highly successful camp was organized by Rtn Vandana Bhalla, District Director, Cancer Initiatives, District 3011 at Kamaraj Vidyalaya School, Dindigul, with the Rotary Club of Dindigul Queen City. A total of 558 adolescent girls, primarily from economically weaker sections, received their second and final HPV vaccine dose. With this, these children are now completely protected against cervical cancer. The event was graced by District Governor Dr. Kartik (District

3000), and the atmosphere was filled with gratitude and hope. "Feeling blessed that we were able to make a difference in the lives of these beautiful children," shared Rtn. Vandana Bhalla, District Director – Cancer Initiatives (District 3011), who was leading this initiative.

The following day, 13th October 2025, additional vaccination drives were conducted by the Rotary Club of Theni Star at:

- NRT College of Nursing, Theni – 274 doses administered
- Thiravium Nursing College, Theni – 84 doses administered

Total Doses Administered (12th & 13th Oct 2025): 916

These joint efforts between Districts 3011 and 3000 continue to strengthen Rotary's impact on women's health and cancer prevention, reaffirming the collective vision of a Cervical Cancer-Free India.



CERVICAL CANCER VACCINATION CAMP - GUNTUR

October 16, 2025

AREA OF FOCUS : DISEASE PREVENTION & TREATMENT

On 16th October 2025, Rotary Districts 3011 and 3150 came together for a joint Cervical Cancer Vaccination Camp at Vigyan College, Guntur, where 1,062 children were vaccinated through the collective efforts of Rotary Club of Delhi South, Rotary Club of Faridabad One, and Rotary Club of Guntur. With the full support of District Governor Rtn Dr. Ravi Guhnani and strong leadership from Rtn. Vandana Bhalla (District Director, Cancer Initiatives), Rtn. Virender Mehta (District Cervical Cancer Chair) and Rtn. Sanjay Juneja (Zonal Chair), the initiative exemplified Rotary's spirit of service beyond boundaries. PDG Rtn Ravi Vadlavamani, Chief Organiser from Guntur, expressed heartfelt gratitude to the team for their remarkable dedication to preventive healthcare and the shared mission of a cancer-free future.



CERVICAL CANCER VACCINATION CAMP AT VIMUKTI SANSTHA, JAIPUR

October 24, 2025

AREA OF FOCUS : DISEASE PREVENTION & TREATMENT

Under the leadership of District Governor Rtn Dr. Ravinder Guhnani, Rotary Club of Delhi South organised a Cervical Cancer Vaccination Camp at Vimukti Sanstha, Jaipur on 24th October 2025.

Over 300 girls from underprivileged communities received their second dose of the HPV vaccine, reinforcing Rotary's commitment to women's health and preventive care.

Rtn Vandana Bhalla (District Director, Cancer Initiatives) led this vaccination drive, supported by Rtn Kaval Verma

(President, Rotary Club of Delhi South) and R'anne Punita Taneja (Rotary Club of Delhi South and Executive Board Member, Vimukti Sanstha).

Districts 3011 and 3056 collaborated for this initiative. The event was graced by District Governor Rtn Pragya Mehta (Dist. 3056), whose encouragement inspired all present. Rtn Amit Mittal, President of Rotary Club Jaipur City, extended generous local support. Together, we move one step closer to a cervical cancer-free future.



DIWALI FELLOWSHIP WITH FESTIVE SPLENDOR

October 16, 2025

Rotary Club of Delhi South (RCDS) celebrated its Diwali Fellowship with great enthusiasm on 16th October 2025 at the Main Banquet Hall, Vasant Vihar Club, New Delhi, where members and guests came together to share warm greetings and festive cheer.

The joyous evening was illuminated with lights, music, dance, laughter, and the spirit of togetherness that symbolizes the RCDS family. Attendees relished a delectable spread of chaat, snacks, drinks, and dinner.

President Rtn. Kaval Verma extended heartfelt Diwali wishes for happiness, prosperity, and divine blessings of

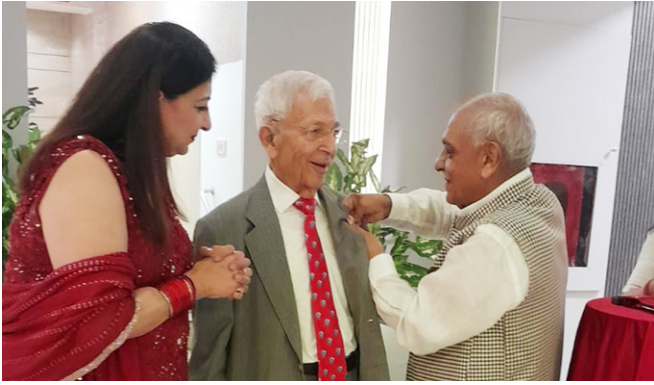
Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesha to all members and their families. The event, attended by 64 Rotarians along with spouses and guests, stood as a testament to unity and fellowship within the club. Special appreciation was expressed to the organizing team Rtn. Ila Jain, Dr. Shweta Javali, Rtn. Naman, Rtn. Raman, Rtn. Shailen Verma, and President Kaval for their dedicated efforts in making the celebration a grand success.

The evening concluded with gratitude, camaraderie, and the distribution of festive gifts, leaving beautiful memories for everyone present.





FELICITATION CEREMONY FOR PHF RECOGNITION PINS



Rotary Club of Delhi South held a felicitation ceremony to honour members who received their Paul Harris Fellow (PHF) and multiple PHF recognition pins for the Year 2024-25.

The event celebrated their commitment to The Rotary Foundation and their spirit of giving that fuels Rotary's humanitarian work worldwide. The members who received the pins are:

- **Rtn. Arjun Mehta – PHF +5 (Blue Stones Lapel Pin)**
- **Rtn. Vinod Poddar – PHF +5 (Blue Stones Lapel Pin)**
- **Rtn. Amar Nath Goyal – PHF +3 (Blue Stones Lapel Pin)**
- **Rtn. Deepak Kapoor – PHF +2 (Blue Stones Lapel Pin)**
- **Rtn. Kriti Makhija – PHF +2 (Blue Stones Lapel Pin)**
- **Rtn. Rajinder Sehgal – PHF +8 (Red Stones Lapel Pin)**
- **Rtn. Vaneeta Kapur – PHF +3 (Blue Stones Lapel Pin)**
- **Rtn. Sanjeev Krishan – PHF +1 (Blue Stones Lapel Pin)**



PDG Rtn Hemant Ahuja presented the pins to the members. RCDS President Rtn Kaval Verma congratulated the recipients for exemplifying Service Above Self and inspiring others to contribute toward a better, more compassionate world.

The felicitation concluded with applause and gratitude — celebrating not just the pins, but the purpose and passion they symbolise.



FOOD DISTRIBUTION DRIVE AT SANKALP

October 17, 2025

AREA OF FOCUS : COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

On 17th October 2025, PP Rtn Anil K. Agarwal, R'anne Kiran Agarwal and their family organised a food distribution drive at our NGO partner — Sankalp Literacy Centres. It was a heartwarming act of service and compassion, reflecting the true spirit of Rotary.

The smiles on the children's faces said it all — a simple yet powerful reminder of the joy that comes from giving.

Lighting hearts with kindness — that's the real sparkle of Diwali!



DIWALI BHANDARA AT THE EARTH SAVIOURS GURUKUL

October 20, 2025

AREA OF FOCUS : COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



On Diwali Day 20th October 2025, hearts were truly illuminated as members of Rotary Club of Delhi South shared a warm Bhandara with the senior citizens and differently-abled residents of The Earth Saviours Gurukul.

The joy on their faces, the blessings in their eyes, and the quiet gratitude in their smiles reminded us what the festival of lights truly stands for — compassion, togetherness, and the power of giving.

"As we served food and spent time with them, we realised that no diya shines brighter than the one lit in another's heart" said President Rtn Kaval Verma. "It was a humbling experience — one that filled us with gratitude, peace, and a deeper sense of purpose".

Service Above Self — the truest celebration of Diwali.

A RENEWED FIGHT AGAINST LEPROSY

In India, Rotary members dispel myths and promote treatment

By Kamala Thiagarajan

On the outskirts of India's capital of New Delhi, the satellite city of Gurugram is a bustling technology and financial hub that's home to some of the country's largest companies, upscale residential developments, and popular entertainment districts. In the shadow of that wealth, there also lies a community of people with leprosy — one of hundreds that persist in India even though the disease is not highly contagious and is easily curable today.

A Gurugram businessman and Rotarian, Tridibes Basu, first visited the settlement several years ago. He knew such places existed yet was unprepared for the scale of poverty and suffering he encountered. "People were living without access to health care, clean water, and basic sanitation," he says. "Most of them had to beg for a living, because the very mention of leprosy sparked fear. It was seen as a curse and no one wanted to hire someone suffering from it."

Global efforts to eliminate leprosy have made tremendous strides



Ganga Kalshetty smiles at a friend in a leprosy settlement in New Delhi. At the time this photo was taken, in 2015, she had been diagnosed with early signs of the disease.

Image credit: Chandan Khanna/AFP via Getty Images

in recent decades, with a 95 percent reduction in symptomatic case prevalence and the disease's disappearance from much of the world. However, India remains one of the few strongholds of the disease, with around 100,000 new leprosy cases detected every year, roughly half of the 200,000 cases recorded globally.

Also known as Hansen's disease, leprosy is caused by a bacterial infection that often starts with numb patches of discolored skin and can progress to destroy nerves and muscles. It's curable with a multidrug therapy donated by the pharmaceutical company Novartis and provided for free through the World Health Organization. But if not treated in time, even patients who are cured can be left with serious permanent disability and disfigurement, leading to social ostracism and stigma so intense that some people in India self-exile in the country's more than 700 leprosy "colonies."

"Leprosy is one of the world's oldest diseases, but in many parts of the world, the greater suffering comes not from the illness itself, but from the stigma and discrimination that follows. Though curable, those affected are too often isolated, misunderstood, and denied basic dignity," says Nayan Patel, a longtime Rotarian in England who is an ambassador for Lepra, a UK-based international charity that diagnoses, treats, and rehabilitates people with leprosy.

Because the leprosy bacteria cannot be cultured in the lab, it's a challenge to study and remains something of a mystery. Scientists believe it is spread by droplets from the nose and mouth. But it is not highly contagious and around 95 percent of the population is naturally immune and able to fight off infection. Still, stigma, misinformation, and fear remain.

Basu, a member of the Rotary Club of Delhi South, saw the outcomes of this firsthand on his visits to the leprosy settlement in his home city. There he became friendly with a man in his 50s who stood out for his cheerful disposition and the fact that he was one of the few people there with a well-paying job, as a security guard at a nearby establishment. One day, Basu learned the man had lost his job and started needing a wheelchair. Six months later, he was bedridden. "His condition had grown progressively worse," says Basu, who became his Rotary district's chair for leprosy control and alleviation in 2024. "I learned that once he started working, he had stopped taking his medication, a common problem we see among patients who just aren't aware enough of how to manage their condition."

In 2019, Basu's club and two others, Delhi South End and New Delhi, formed an alliance with Lepra, the charity, to raise awareness about how to identify early symptoms, to advocate, and to support those with disability caused by the disease. Soon the Rotary Club of Delhi Regency Next joined as well.

Deepak Kapur, a member of the Delhi South club who, as chair of the India PolioPlus Committee, played a pivotal role in India achieving polio-free status a decade ago, was surprised during a meeting with Lepra representatives in 2019 to learn that leprosy was still a problem. "I had always thought that leprosy was relegated to the pages in history books, and the last I'd heard about it was in the film Ben-Hur," says Kapur. "I was shocked."



This story originally appeared in the October 2025 issue of Rotary magazine.

Students of a leprosy vocational training center in Noida, New Delhi, India, learn skills to become IT professionals.

Image credit: Bijaya Hembram/The Leprosy Mission trust India

Working with Lepra, Rotary members began to tackle relief efforts in India under what Kapur calls "the four pillars." First was an effort to create awareness of leprosy among the public and dispel myths to let people know it is curable and is not spread through casual contact. "We spoke about the nature of the disease," says Kapur. "For instance, not too many people know that the government of India gives the multidrug therapy for free to patients. And within 72 hours of its administration, the person who's taking it stops being a spreader of the disease."

They extended their awareness drives to health care workers, including some doctors. So far, they have trained 500 of India's community health workers, the frontline force of trusted community members who deliver basic care, to identify signs of leprosy.

Finding cases was the next priority. Through clinics and awareness drives, they did community outreach to identify individuals with signs of leprosy who may have been unaware or afraid to seek treatment, encouraging them to get care. The disease can be hard to diagnose and is often missed. It also has a very long incubation period with symptoms sometimes emerging up to 30 years after exposure.

In the fourth pillar of the plan, the Rotarians helped those left disabled. For instance, they arranged for ulcer management and mobility aids like specialized footwear and wheelchairs, as well as reconstructive surgery, Kapur says.

The Rotary partnership expanded to collaborate with the Leprosy Mission Trust India, which runs 15 hospitals across the country, as well as residential homes and vocational training centers that help around 1,200 people find jobs each year.

Through a center in the city of Noida, east of New Delhi, the Rotary clubs have worked with the nongovernmental organization to train around 120 people affected by leprosy and other disabilities to qualify to work as cosmetologists and IT professionals.

One of the first students to enroll was Disha Santhosh, 17. She grew up in a leprosy settlement in the Dilshad Garden area of Delhi, one of the largest of its kind in India and home to thousands of people affected by leprosy and their family members. Here most households face persistent financial hardship. Her father was affected by leprosy, but he had long been the sole breadwinner, working tirelessly as a plumber to provide for the family. To meet even basic needs, her father had to take out a loan, deepening the family's financial crisis. But through the training center, Santhosh completed certification in cosmetology in March and is now employed, offering a vital lifeline to support herself and her parents.

Though leprosy stubbornly persists, there is hope for prevention. A possible vaccine called LepVax is in development and has shown promising results in preclinical tests against the *Mycobacterium leprae* bacteria that causes the disease. But until a vaccine materializes, much support is required.

"As Rotarians, committed to service and inclusion, we must come together to raise awareness, support early diagnosis and treatment, and challenge the harmful myths that still surround leprosy. Let us unite to end both the disease and the injustice," says Patel. "Together, we can restore hope, dignity, and opportunity."

We applaud the Foursome Leprosy Warriors:

- PP Rtn Tridibes Basu • PP Rtn Pradeep Bahri
- PDG Rtn Deepak Kapur • PP Rtn Deepak Kapoor.



Through a center in the city of Noida, east of New Delhi, Rotary clubs have worked with the Leprosy Mission Trust India to train people affected by leprosy and other disabilities to work as IT professionals and cosmetologists.

Image credit: Bijaya Hembram/The Leprosy Mission trust India

CERVICAL CANCER VACCINATION DRIVE AT INTERACT SCHOOLS

October 30, 2025

AREA OF FOCUS : DISEASE PREVENTION & TREATMENT



On 30th October 2025, Rotary Club of Delhi South, under the leadership of Rtn Vandana Bhalla, continued its steadfast commitment to protecting young lives from cervical cancer by conducting two successful vaccination camps at Gyan Bharati School and Birla Vidya Niketan.

Both sessions were meticulously organised in collaboration with the school administration and medical partners, ensuring smooth execution and student comfort. Across both institutions, more than 200 boys and girls received their second dose of the HPV vaccine — an important step toward long-term immunity and eradicating this preventable cancer.

The camp also featured brief awareness interactions with students and parents, reinforcing the importance of early vaccination and community health responsibility. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to President Rtn Kaval Verma, Rtn Shailen Verma, R'anne Rita Bhasin, Rtn Ajay Kumar, R'anne Sonali Kaushik, and R'anne Sandra Sobti for their dedicated presence and hands-on support throughout the day. Their commitment ensured a well-coordinated and compassionate environment for all participants.

This initiative is part of our continuing mission to safeguard youth health and empower families with knowledge — one vaccine, one child, one school at a time.



Letter of appreciation for the Cervical Vaccination Camp

Dear Esteemed Members of the Rotary Club of Delhi South / Medical Team of Max Smart Hospital

We extend our heartfelt gratitude for your invaluable support and dedication in conducting the HPV second dose vaccination drive at our school.

Your commitment to prioritizing the health and well-being of our students is truly commendable. Thanks to your tireless efforts, the vaccination drive was conducted smoothly and successfully, ensuring that our children are protected and cared for.

The professionalism, warmth, and compassion displayed by your team made the entire process comfortable and

reassuring for our students and their families. Your service goes beyond medical care—it is a gift of hope, protection, and a healthier future for our community.

We are deeply grateful for your partnership and the spirit of service that Rotary embodies. It is through such noble initiatives that we can create a safer, healthier environment for the next generation.

Thank you once again for your time, expertise, and unwavering commitment to community welfare. We look forward to continued collaboration in the future.

With sincere appreciation and warm regards,

The Interact Club, Gyan Bharati School

ROTARY INDIA NATIONAL CSR AWARDS 2025

On 24th October 2025, the Rotary National CSR Awards were held at Four Points by Sheraton, with meticulous planning and execution of our District Governor Rtn Dr. Ravinder Gugnani.

The event brought together Rotary leaders and corporate partners, where our donors were recognised for their invaluable contributions and continued support toward Rotary's humanitarian initiatives. President Rtn Kaval Verma and PP Rtn Pramod Agarwal attended this inspiring evening celebrating partnership, purpose, and impact.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Naman Agarwal	09 Nov
Vivek Narayan Gour	10 Nov
Rajiv Gujral	13 Nov
Mini Agarwal	15 Nov
Sheetal Dhawan	25 Nov
Rohit Sadana	27 Nov
Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa	28 Nov



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Davinder Kaur & Inderjeet Singh	08 Nov
Punita & Devendra Taneja	17 Nov
Sandra & Raman Sobti	17 Nov
Rekha & Vinod Poddar	21 Nov
Ashima & Pravin K Agarwal	22 Nov
Sanghamitra & Tridibes Basu	22 Nov

SOME ASPECTS OF INDO - IRANIAN CULTURAL SYNTHESIS

The Birth and Development of Urdu is a wonderful example of Indo-Iranian Amalgamation.

Urdu emerged in the late medieval period, rooted in the interaction between Persian-speaking elites and local populations in the Indian subcontinent. The very term "Urdu," derived from the Turkish word for "camp," reflects the diverse backgrounds of the soldiers and traders who interacted in these environments. This setting fostered a linguistic environment where Persian and local dialects converged, leading to the birth of a new language. One of the most fascinating aspects of this amalgamation is evident in manuscripts, such as the rare manuscript of the Ramayana that begins with "Bismillah," housed in the National Museum of New Delhi. Many manuscripts are adorned with Iranian symbols of nature, flora, and fauna, further highlighting the artistic and cultural exchanges between the two regions.



Indo-Iranian symbols can be seen in the intricate designs and motifs of structures built during the Mughal era. The incorporation of Persian elements into Indian architecture reflects a shared aesthetic sensibility that transcended religious and cultural boundaries. The linguistic development of Urdu is intricately tied to its Persian heritage. The works of poets like Tulsi Das demonstrate this connection, as his version of the Ramayana incorporates numerous Persian words. Urdu's lexicon reflects the diverse influences that have shaped its evolution, including Arabic, Turkish, and local dialects. The amalgamation of Indo-Iranian cultures is also evident in music, where many musical instruments and lyrical traditions have crossed cultural boundaries. Instruments like the sitar and tabla, alongside the rich poetic forms of ghazals and qawwalis, showcase a blending of Persian and Indian musical heritage.

Food and textile heritage provide additional insights into this cultural fusion. Culinary practices are evident in the use of spices, cooking techniques, and popular dishes like biryani and kebabs. Similarly, textiles often feature patterns and designs influenced by Persian artistry,

As we explore this cultural heritage, we gain a deeper appreciation for the shared narratives and experiences that unite us, celebrating the vibrant tapestry of human expression that transcends borders.

By **R'anne Sanghamitra Basu**