



# Rotary Club of Madras South The Golden Journey

# 50



*Rotary Club of Madras South:  
The Golden Journey  
(1960-2010)*

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## Preface



**H**ow time flies! It looks like yesterday that President Bowmick requested me to be the Chairman of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations Committee. I accepted the challenge, as

I had some ideas based on my experience as the Silver Jubilee Secretary of RCMS and also the Chairman of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations Committee of Ad Club Madras in 2006-07. And we are already approaching the end of the golden jubilee year, which saw some great action on the part of Southerners.

We could afford to think of an ambitious plan of action because of the generosity of two charter members, Rtn. Ramakrishna Raja and Rtn. R N Veerappan, who had committed Rs.5 lakh each for the celebrations, months before we even started thinking of an action plan. For me it was half the job done. Because the balance of the ambitious budgeted amount was contributed by a number of other Rotarians, who shared the enthusiasm of the charter members to celebrate the occasion in a grand manner.

After several meetings, the golden jubilee committee came up with a plan of action for the year which consisted of (a) A Take Off Nite (b) A mega fund raising programme (c) Implementation of 50 community service projects small and big (a brainchild of Rtn. PP B B Vengatesh) (d) A Grand Finale called Golden Memories Nite.

Rtn. R T Chari came up with a brilliant idea of a monthly get-together on the last Tuesday of every month in which members with their spouses of 4 to 5 other city clubs would be our guests. Rtn. Chari walked the talk by agreeing to partially sponsor the get-togethers. The project was appropriately titled RCMS-Tag Fellowship get-together.

The grand Golden Memories Nite witnessed a special AV that I helped produce on the history of the Club, and also the release of a special souvenir edited by Rtn. Magdoom Mohamed featuring messages received from several dignitaries of the Rotary world and a brief history of the club.

It was decided to release the club's ambitious Golden Jubilee Commemoration Volume on June 30, 2010, a day significant in many ways. It is the club's Charter day, the last day of the current Rotary year (when Rtn Bowmick will chair his last function as the club's 50<sup>th</sup> president), and also the gala Installation Nite of the next President! This publication – now in your hands – is special. It traces the club's evolution over half a century, discusses its major projects in words and pictures, brings alive the memories of senior members, and details special projects of the golden jubilee year.

This Golden Jubilee Volume has been truly Rtn. PP S R Madhu's baby. The club is extremely lucky to have such a senior and highly respected journalist to bring out this most prestigious publication, tracing the golden history of the club. While thanking Madhu for the excellent job done, I would like to record my thanks to Rtn. Bowmick and the members of RCMS for giving me the opportunity to be the chairman of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations Committee of this wonderful club.

**R V Rajan**  
Chairman,

Golden Jubilee Celebrations Committee



## *Foreword*

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**F**ifty years is a very short span of time in history, but long enough to leave an imprint on an organization like our Rotary Club. It is specially so when this half century has been a period when the Rotary movement took great strides, with far-reaching programmes of service on a global scale.

The basic principles of Rotary – fellowship and service – have been the guiding principles of Rotary Club of Madras South. As we celebrate our Golden Jubilee we can look back with satisfaction all the Service Projects, big and small, undertaken by our Club. We remember with nostalgia all the members who participated for its success. Our contribution to Rotary Foundation and Polio Immunisation efforts has been commendable. All our members, like myself, feel greatly privileged and proud to have been part of this history.

This book, conceived by Rtn S.R.Madhu and put together with the co-operation of other members, will help to record the heritage of our Club. It will inspire future generations of Rotarians to strive for greater achievements. I wish to congratulate Rtn Madhu, I would also like to compliment Rtn P. Bowmick on his leadership as President during the golden jubilee year and Rtn PP R.V.Rajan as the Chairman of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations Committee.

**– Ramakrishna Raja**



## *A word from the President*

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The journey began in 1960.

The formation of Rotary Club of Madras South and its inauguration on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1960 was a landmark in the growth of Rotary movement in this part of the world. Today on June 30<sup>th</sup>, our Club Charter day, we complete 50 glorious years of Rotary service.

Our 49 **Past Presidents**, 21 of whom are still present in the Club, constitute the backbone of our Club. They have been the pillars on which our Club stands. They are ever present to support the President and the Board in all their endeavors.

Though we are 50 years old today, we have a healthy mix of maturity and youth. Our average age would be 45 – 50 years, and this will set the foundation for our Club for the next 50 years. We have constantly sought to bring in fresh talent and ideas to keep the Club solid and dynamic.

It has truly been a wonderful journey for me this year. At the beginning of the year, we had prepared ambitious plans for the Golden Jubilee Year. Incredibly, all of them have been carried out. I must say with all sincerity, that every single member of our Club has contributed his mite to the Club's Service and Fellowship projects.

I will retain wonderful memories of the three splendid functions this year relating to our Golden Jubilee – **The Take-Off Nite, The Golden Memories Nite and the Singing Stars Nite**. They are described in this book in words and pictures. **PRIP Rtn. Wilf Wilkinson** graced the first function with his presence. To our intense delight, **RIPN Rtn. Kalyan Banerjee**, who will soon be RI President, attended the first two functions, and was lavish in praise of our Club.

This year, **Rtn. R.T.Chari**, our senior member, came out with a new initiative of a series of lectures and performances by eminent artists in association with our Club. The **TAG – RCMS Golden Jubilee Fellowship Get-together** conducted nine meetings, with dinner and fellowship with some 25 city Rotary Clubs attending these meets. A tremendous idea, which generated great fellowship among the Rotarians of our district.



Our Community Service Director, **Rtn. B B Vengatesh**, set himself a very ambitious goal: 50 Community Service Projects this year, to commemorate our 50 years in Rotary. Believe it or not, he made light of the task, and ended up completing 60 projects. A splendid achievement.

Our Charter Members, **Rtn. Ramakrishnan Raja and Rtn. R.N.Veerappan**, have served as beacons of light and inspiration and as towers of support to our Club. My good friend and mentor, **Rtn. R.V. Rajan**, was the Golden Jubilee Chairman. He brought to our Club's celebrations this year all of his formidable experience as a planner and achiever in advertising. No wonder every one of them was a triumph.

Likewise, **Rtn. S.R. Madhu**, a fastidious journalist, took up the enormous task of a coffee table book on the eventful half a century of our Club. This elegant publication should serve as a source of both reference and inspiration to club members. To all these senior members, my grateful thanks on behalf of our Club.

All my Board members were energetic and whole-hearted in their support. I'm sure they enjoyed this year as much as I did. Our **Club Secretary, Rtn. Som Dev Goyal**, was meticulous and systematic in everything he did. He has been a bulwark of support to me throughout the year.

It has indeed been a unique honour to serve our Club as its 50<sup>th</sup> President. I would like to thank my wife **Rooma** for giving me tremendous support throughout the year and would also like to thank all the members for their co-operation. It has indeed been a great learning platform and I do hope I have met the expectations of my members. Rooma & I wish all Southerners success and joy on all fronts – Rotary, profession and family.

**P Bowmick**

President (2009 -10)

Rotary Club of Madras South

June 30, 2010.



## *Editor's Note*

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What did cricketer Vijay Merchant, industrialists S P Godrej and G D Naidu and Hindi film actor David have in common? They were all Rotarians. And when they were in Chennai, they would make a beeline for the Rotary Club of Madras South and attend its weekly meeting.

Naidu invariably got a special welcome – because his driver always followed him, with a big bag of delectable papaya from Naidu's organic farm in Coimbatore. The fruit was cut by the hotel staff and distributed to our members.

And did you know this? In 1967 (43 years ago), our club “adopted” Cowl Bazar, the village near Meenambakkam airport, and electrified its streets. Mr M Muthuswamy, a Tamil Nadu Minister, was so impressed that he urged other Rotary clubs to emulate us and adopt more of the 13,000 panchayats in the state.

Such luminous anecdotes are part of the 50-year-history of Madras South, which this book celebrates. It is a book of history, project facts, anecdotage and nostalgia.

Commemorative books are often rich in history but end up on reference shelves, without being read. This book on the other hand is meant to be read and enjoyed. It seeks to give an idea of the drama and excitement of Rotary – not merely through the many photographs of service, fellowship and celebration, but also through the personalities described and the memories recalled.

Further, in an age where very often people live long but institutions don't, this book provides some clues about what makes for institutional longevity.

The book was hard work. Which book isn't? But it was easier in one respect than other institutional histories I have helped produce — it was more about people, less about technical achievements in agriculture or fisheries or industry. It was more difficult in another respect: Rotary is an organization of volunteers. The doers and achievers in Rotary are used to doing and achieving – but not to documenting what they do. Steering them in this direction wasn't always easy.





I would like to thank the elder statesman of our club, Rtn PDG Ramakrishna Raja – ever a source of information, knowledge and support — whose dream it was to ensure a worthy golden jubilee celebration. And Rtn R V Rajan, golden jubilee chairman, who did a tremendous job with all functions this year, and said it would conclude with a coffee table book. He never interfered with my prerogative as editor in bringing it out but provided strong support – he wrote several articles himself, mobilized photographs and facts, organized nitty-gritty assistance, and was a fund of ideas and club information.

I must thank a few others. Rtn A Sridharan brings to mind what I once heard about someone else: “If you ask him for a gallon of tiger’s milk, he’ll say, fine, when do you want it – today or tomorrow?” I suspect that his answer will be the same if you want a live tiger. He gave me CDs of photographs, photo prints, a few bound volumes of our bulletin, “The Southerner”. He drove me to the godown of a demolished factory that was said to harbour archival material of our club. We did get some useful material, though it wasn’t the gold mine I had hoped.

I thank Rtns Somdev Goyal, B B Vengatesh, R Srikanth, R T Chari, T P Imbichammad and S Balakrishnan, for their ready assistance with photographs or other inputs, and Rtns V Sriram, R Seshadri, N Venkateswaran, Anil Kumar, P V Laxminarayana and his wife Sita, Renjit Joseph, Magdoom Mohamed and A G Shankar for articles.

Finally, a big thank you to artist-photographer-film-maker S Jayaraj. His command over the graphic and print medium makes me accept an assignment like this with confidence – I know I can organize the text and leave the beautiful part to him.

My compliments and thanks to Rtn M S Nagarajan and his printing press Nagaraj & Co. – a byword for quality, reliability and speed throughout the 30 years I have known him.

May I thank the president and all members of our club for the pleasure and education this book has given me. If you enjoy going through it, I’ll be delighted.

**– S R Madhu**



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## *Section 1*

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# *History*





## 1 Down Memory Lane...

by Rtn R Ramakrishnan

Charter Secretary, Rotary Club of Madras South

**We reproduce on these pages an article that appeared 25 years ago, in the silver jubilee souvenir of Madras South. It provides fascinating glimpses into the first 25 years of the club.**

The formation of the Rotary Club of Madras South in 1960 and its inauguration on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1960 can be called a landmark in the growth of Rotary movement in this part of the world.

For Rtn. Gov. K Gopal Rao and his friends in the Rotary Club of Madras it was not an easy task to gain acceptance for the idea of a second club in the city of Madras. In the words of Gov. Gopal Rao, it was the hard and sustained work of then Rtn. Pres. A R Narayana Rao, Past Pres. K V Srinivasan (Gopal Rao's Special Representative) and Rtn. R P Sarathy which made possible the unanimous decision of the Rotary Club of Madras to cede part of its territory within the corporate limits of Madras city. Gov. Gopal Rao considered the starting of our club as the project which gave him the maximum satisfaction and his hope that this new club would be a pace setter for the Rotary movement in Dist. 320 was not belied.

The later part of 1950s saw the growth of entrepreneurial development in India, and the name 'Guindy Industrial Estate' was synonymous with this growth. Many of us, some young and others middle-aged, started factories in the new Industrial Estate in Guindy in the southern outskirts of Madras. The Rotary Club of Madras South drew its membership mainly from this area and the adjoining Adyar and Pallavaram. The Club was inaugurated on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1960 in the Library Hall of the Guindy Industrial Estate with 24 members. The Charter President was Frank Bradbury Pratt and the Charter Secretary was Ramakrishna Raja.

In appreciation of the efforts put in by Gov. Gopal Rao, Rotary International admitted our club in a record time of 11 days. Our Charter was dated 30<sup>th</sup> June 1960, the last day of office of District 320. Within a couple of weeks of



*Opposite page: The Japanese Consul General, and his wife with Southerners. Occasion: Gift of a Japanese rail station to the children's park in Guindy. Above: District Conference in Colombo (1961). Chief guest: Sir Oliver Goonatileke, Governor-General of Sri Lanka. Southerners Bradbury Pratt, Ramakrishna Raja, N R N Iyer, P S Chandramouli and MA Kazi are in the pic. Below: District Governor P Peer Mohammed (1968-69) during his official visit to our club.*



inauguration of our club, we shifted our venue to Hotel Oceanic where we regularly met till October 1968, when we moved to Hotel Saveria. Again, we moved to Hotel Chola on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1979 where we presently meet. The Charter was officially presented to us on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1960 at a function presided over by PDG D C Kothari.

Right from its inception, Madras South earned a name for itself as a very active club. We were complimented on the atmosphere of enthusiasm, plenty of fellowship and sympathetic realization of service ideals. RI President for 1959-60 Harold Thomas had given his theme for the year as 'Build Bridges of Friendship – Personalise and Vitalize'. Our club, chartered on the last day of the Rotary year 1959-60, perhaps formed the last bridge of friendship built during that year to take the Rotary movement marching ahead to greater glory in service to mankind and fellow-beings.

Over the years, the club has had a glorious record of service and well-balanced activity in all the avenues of service.

### Club Service

Fellowship has been the hallmark of our club and we have always been known as a very friendly club. We have won the District award for 'Best Fellowship' on a few occasions. But more than this, the number of visiting Rotarians who have come to us year after year is standing testimony to the quality of our fellowship.

The programmes in our club have been very interesting and this has also contributed to better attendance in our club meetings. We have laid great emphasis on attendance by our members and the attendance rules have been very strictly adhered to.

Our weekly bulletin was indeed a trend-setter in our District. At a time when small clubs did not venture on this, we boldly started with a weekly bulletin. Over the years our bulletin became very popular with Rotarians not only in our District but also in all parts of India. Most of the senior Past Governors and some RI Presidents have contributed articles to our bulletin. Our Editors over the years have taken on this responsibility with great distinction. A special mention must be made of Rtn. PDG S R Govindarajan who in the first few years set the tone for our bulletin and the late Dr Ramaswamy who



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1. Rtn PDG Ramakrishna Raja with several members of the club.
2. Rotarians from the RC of Omiya at the children's park in Guindy.
3. At the RELF (Rotary Electrical and Electronic Fair).
4. Rtn C V George and wife May George at a conference in New Delhi where George represented the RI President.
5. Rtn Ramakrishna Raja at the Rotary Club of Tokyo in December 1960.



carried it to great heights of glory. Ramu devoted so much of time and effort to our bulletin that sometimes we wondered if this was his full-time job. Our bulletin continues to be very popular with our members as well as with other Rotarians.

Good fellowship and strict adherence to the rules of attendance, classification and membership over the years has made ours a very close-knit club. Our members have been well- informed on Rotary, and the Rotary Information Committee has always been headed by senior members.

Rtn ANS during his year as President duplicated the President's workbook and gave it to all the members. To many of us this workbook continues to be a fine source of Rotary information.

### **Vocational Service**

Rotary's classification principle of club membership closely identifies a Rotarian with his occupation or vocation. This casts upon a Rotarian a very special responsibility in regard to this avenue of service. Our club and its members have had a fine record of service in this avenue.

Right from the beginning we have been conducting vocational guidance clinics in various schools. In November 1965 we were very actively associated with the Rotary Club of Madras in conducting the Business Relations Conference in the social context of business. Rotarians from District 320 and 317 covering the whole of South India and Sri Lanka attended the conference. The participants in this conference were men of great stature drawn from various walks of public life from all over India. PDG M V Arunachalam and the late PDG C V George were the Presidents of the two Rotary Clubs in Madras. The success of the conference was in a large measure due to the organizational work of Rtn. PPR K Swamy who was the conference secretary.

An Employer- Employee Seminar was jointly organized by Madras, Madras South and Madras West Rotary Clubs in May 1969.

It has been a regular feature of our club to confer the Distinguished Service Awards on persons who have exemplified themselves in public service. Some of the eminent persons who have been so honoured by our club are

Mrs. Annapoorani Veerappa Chettiar in 1976, Lt. Col. G S Gill in 1978, Mrs. Rao and Mrs. Narayanaswamy in 1979, Mr. Raghupathi in 1980, Mrs. Amy Boid in 1982 and Mrs. Menaka Parthasarathy in 1984.

We had conducted a number of courses on Computer Sciences by way of introducing youth to this new expanding field of Science. We also assisted the Centre for Studies on Science, Technology and Industrial Development (CESSTID), Madras, in the publication of a Science and Technology newsletter meant for school children. Visits to places of work of Rotarians and conducting our meetings there have been a regular feature.

### **Youth Service**

Every Rotarian is an example to youth. Rotaract Clubs sponsored by our club have been successful and active. To commemorate the Governorship of C V George we instituted the C V George Leadership Award at St. Paul's High School, Vepery, where George had his school education. From 1974 this award has been given to an outstanding student of that school. We assisted some youth from our adopted village, Cowl Bazaar, to undertake a cycle trip around the State of Tamil Nadu. Yet another innovative project was initiated by Prof. Hegde in 1978. Our club made travel grants to youth to travel in a distant part of our country on their own. This encouraged the adventurous spirit of youth and helped in national integration. Many of our vocational service activities have also laid emphasis on youth.

### **Community Service**

Community Service, which has been called the heart of Rotary, encourages Rotarians to apply the ideal of service to their own neighbourhoods. Our club's record in this avenue has been long, sustained and varied.

During our very first year, we donated wood-working machinery to the Stree Seva Mandir's home for the destitute women. In 1962-63, to commemorate the first Asian Presidentship of Rotary International, we donated a hall to the Seva Samajam Boys' Home at Pallipattu and named it the 'Laharry Hall'. In 1963-64, a bus shelter of a unique design was built in front of the Colle of Engineering, Guindy. We dedicated this to the memory of PDG Hassan Marikar, an alumnus of this college, who met with his end in an air crash the day after his participation in an intercity forum organized by our club in





Madras. In 1964-65 we donated industrial sewing machines to the Velacherry Welfare Association. We also set up a workshop for handicapped and disabled children. Blind children of St. Louis School used to be taken regularly to YMCA for swimming lessons.

For some years, films for children were screened at the Andhra Mahila Sabha Orthopaedic Centre. At the VHS, we sponsored a Stroke Rehabilitation Centre and a project for juvenile diabetics. With the association of the VHS we have been conducting blood donation camps. We donated hearing aids and an auto meter to the CSI School for Deaf at Santhome. In ecology, we have initiated check up of diesel buses with the help of experienced automobile engineers. In 'Road Safety' we published a booklet 'For whom the signs stand' and distributed them through the traffic police. With the active help of Swallows in India, we took up a dairy extension scheme at Amoor village, and we later helped in starting a fodder farm. For this, we received help from Dist. 682 at the rate of \$ 1 per Rotarian of the District and the amount received was Rs.12,500. A sheep cooperative was started near Kelambakkam with our seed money. We were actively involved in the construction of cyclone-proof houses at Salluvan Kuppam with funds received from Canada from Dist. 701 and CIDA.

The one very significant ongoing project of our club is the adoption of the Village Cowl Bazar. This village is situated behind the southern end of Madras airport. We constructed a school and gave the village protected with water supply. For some years, one of our doctor- members used to go there every week and look after their health problems. The children of the school are regularly provided with uniforms. Every year, our club helps the school celebrate its annual day in a grand manner.

We improved the facilities at the Children's Park in Guindy by putting up a treetop house. With the help of the Omiya Rotary Club, Japan, we built a model Japanese Railway Station at the Children's Park.

Rtn. Desikan persevered in corresponding with clubs all over the world to collect dolls of various countries. They are yet to be housed properly.

Last year we published a booklet titled 'Guidelines to Telephones' edited by Shri M R Pai which was an instant success.



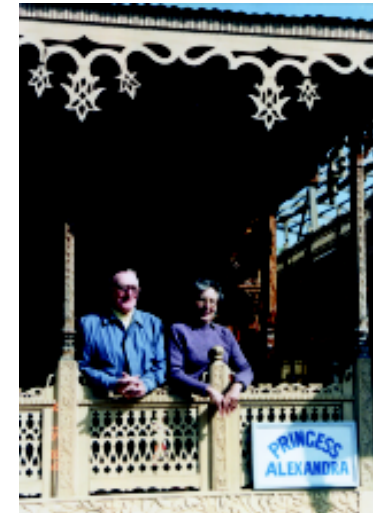
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1. Annettes of our club enjoying fellowship
- 2 & 3. Southerners with families at outstation picnics.
4. Rtn Dana Bergh and wife Caroline at a houseboat in Kashmir.
5. Southerners on an educational trip to the space station at Sriharikota, courtesy Rtn R T Chari's contacts.



### International Service

This service begins with Rotarians adopting a world view grounded in the realization that human beings are truly dependent on each other for survival and that each man's community is part of a world neighbourhood.

Our club has been active in this avenue right from the beginning. On our Charter Night we attained the 100% plateau in Rotary Foundation and NRN Aiyer was the first Paul Harris Fellow of our club. We now have in our club 12 PH Fellows and we are now on a 2600% plateau in Rotary Foundation.

We have taken active part in international contact programmes. We have hosted many exchange students and GSE team members. We have received financial help for our projects from Rotarians in UK, Japan, Australia and USA. We have also channeled help from Australia under IPAC to many worthy causes in Madras. Our Stroke Rehabilitation Project received 'angina' tablets (a wonder drug at that time) from Japan through the Omiya Rotary club. We have actively helped the Measles Immunization Project undertaken at the District Level under a 3H programme.

We have not always been on the receiving end. We sent an Indian plough to the agricultural museum in Detmodl, W. Germany. We gave a scholarship to an American student studying Bharata Natyam at Kalakshetra. Our member Dr. N Jayaraman has rendered service as a dentist under the 3H Programme on two occasions to Hongkong and Philippines.

Two of our members were leaders of GSE Teams from our District. Rtn C V George led the very first GSE team to USA and Prof. Hegde led a GSE team to Dist. 612, USA, in 1978. We are also happy to have three former members of GSE teams as our members. Our members have taken very active part in looking after visiting GSE teams. RVMK Prasad was honoured by the team from Oklahoma and was made Hony. Lt. Governor of that State in recognition of his services to promote better understanding between the people of our two countries.

In 1974 we sent a colour film of Kumari Kamala on Bharata Natyam to the Omiya Rotary Club. We had also sent the club colour slides of our community and of our club to a Rotary matching partner in the US. A pre-recorded tape of a special programme with messages and songs were sent to Australia's Rotary clubs.

### Inner Wheel Club

Inaugurated on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1963, the Inner Wheel Club of Madras South was chartered on 23 August 1964. They have been a support to our club in all its activities. They have carried out a number of community service projects on their own. Personalized service has been the hallmark of their activities.

Some of the major projects undertaken by the Inner Wheel Club: family planning in the slums of Adyar and Kotturpuram in association with VHS, running classes for mentally retarded children, reading for the blind, taking children from the Cancer Institute out for picnics, tree planting, classes for boys and girls working as servants to teach them the 3Rs, scholarships for deserving students. They gave TV a full-fledged programme on the Inner Wheel movement.

Members of the Inner Wheel Club of Madras South are very active at the District and Association levels and have held many senior positions.

Notable among them is Mrs. Suman Karpur, who is the Vice President-elect 1985-86 of the Association. She was earlier the Secretary of the Association. At the District level she has served as District Chairman and as Secretary. Mrs. Nirmala Desikan is the District Vice Chairman-elect 1985-86, she has been the District Editor and Treasurer. Mrs. May George has been an Extension Chairman for the District.

Inner Wheel members continue to actively support Rotary Club of Madras South in all its major projects.

### General

When we look back at the birth and growth of our club and its 25-year journey, we cannot but remember the Rotarians of outstanding leadership qualities who are not with us now. C V George and Dr. Ramaswamy were legends in their own time. George was the Charter Member of our club and was the first Rotary District Governor from our club. A person of great personal charm and dedication to the ideals of Rotary, he was indeed a guiding light in all our Rotary activities. He had held very important posts both in the district and in Rotary International. Dr. Ramaswamy entered our club later. He took up his role in Rotary with a crusading spirit. He devoted so much of his time



and effort to Rotary that he was a model Rotarian. His interests were varied and he was full of life, but Rotary was his prime interest.

We miss these two Rotary friends, but we are proud of their association with us and their contribution to the growth of our club.

Three of our charter members have been honoured by being called upon to assume leadership of the Rotary Trust to which we belong. The first was the late PDG C V George, one of the most dedicated Rotarians, who was entrusted with responsibilities in the international arena as well. The second, PDG S R Govindarajan, though not a member of our club at the time of his becoming a Governor, is still a charter member of our club. The latest is the election during our Silver Jubilee year of our PP Ramakrishna Raja as the Governor Nominee of Dist. 323 for 1986-87. This is ample testimony to the leadership this club has provided to the Rotary movement and the recognition of this fact by the District.

Finally, in its Silver Jubilee year, our club was able to start another club in Adyar. The Rotary Club of Adyar was inaugurated on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1985, and it is awaiting its charter.

We have planned a number of activities during this Silver Jubilee year. The major one, RELF'85, has been a success beyond our dreams. This Rotary Electrical and Electronics Fair was a vocational service activity of our club and resulted in a substantial surplus. This is to be utilized for the starting of an Institute of Computer Science and for initiating vocational based programmes in our new adopted village, Tiruvidanthai. We are also planning a celebration on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1985, the exact day on which 25 years back we started on our journey in Rotary.

The motivation and leadership for these Silver Jubilee activities have been provided by President B Gopalswamy, Secretary R V Rajan, PP A N Srinivasa Rao (Chairman,



*Installation of Rtn Ramakrishna Raja as club president in July 1968. Seated: Rtn PP R P Sarathy and Rtn PDG K V Srinivasan of RC of Madras. Standing: PP Ugamraj Mootha (Secretary), P Vijay Kumar, V Muralidhar (partly hidden) and President-elect Dr S Ramaswamy.*

Silver Jubilee Committee) and Rtn. Imbichammad, Chairman – RELF'85. Every Rotarian and Rotarianne of our club have given their full support in terms of time and other resources to make the Silver Jubilee great success.

This is the saga of service of the Rotary Club of Madras South during the last 25 years. This may be a short period in the life of a Rotary Club, but it is long enough to prove its usefulness. We believe that we have proved our worthiness. We do look forward with confidence and hope to do whatever we can to further the high ideals of Rotary, as we step into the next quarter century of our existence.

*Left: The RELF exhibition organized by Madras South gave our club a huge reputation in the district*



## 2 After the silver jubilee

### *The vibrant second quarter century of Madras South (1985-2010)*

by **S R Madhu**

During its first quarter, Madras South was led by builders and pioneers. In the second half, the innovators took over. The club now pulsates with a new energy – the can-do, will-do spirit displayed by its younger members, many of them former Round Tablers.

The club today blends youth and experience. It sports many professions and businesses. It's a microcosm of India, with members from north, south, east and west.

It's a more complex world today. The explosion of knowledge, the technology boom, the all-pervasiveness of Internet, the visual opulence of television – these have impacted on everything including Rotary. It's a world of I-Pods and blackberries, pen-drives and DVDs, of one-day and T-20 cricket, of privatization and globalization. And there's the gradual dawn of the Indian century – software power, overseas acquisitions, high GDP growth, Bollywood's charisma, the unique allure of Indian classical music and dance.

*Southerners at a family picnic.*



The collective impact of such phenomena is quite visible on Rotary membership, fellowship events and service projects, on national and international alliances and co-operation. Indians travel today as they never did before – for education, jobs, foreign partners and alliances, conferences – and pleasure. The Rotary world is shrinking. Rotary *is* a global village.

In the early days of Madras South, celebrities from afar (industrialists, cricketers, film stars) chose our club for making up Rotary attendance; regular meetings, we are told, went beyond regular hours, resounding with laughter and chat. Often, more than 100 Rotarians attended a meeting, much to the delight and surprise of speakers, with visitors exceeding club members.

Today, fellowship is perhaps even more boisterous at Madras South than in the early years – but it speaks in a different idiom: family picnics to Ooty, Coorg, Mysore, Kumarakom etc; a Rajasthani Nite, Kerala Nite, Punjabi Nite, Bridal Nite, Mexican Nite, Spooky Nite etc. all in Chennai; and many small family get-togethers called “firesides” every year.

Many years ago, the club presented a “Down melody lane” of old Tamil and Hindi hits for members. Talented young singers belted out the hits, a professional orchestra lent emotional bite, the audience went wild. The masterminds: Rtns R T Chari and V R Anil Kumar. That old idea of Madras South is now the hottest fund-raising idea all over Chennai. Even teenagers take you down a “memory lane” ride and lighten your purses.

### **Service projects**

A detailed presentation of our many and varied service projects would read like a catalogue. I have therefore attempted a quick, selective and subjective narration, sometimes going back and forth in time, and between one avenue of service and another! It's a combination of vignettes and flashbacks. Warning: there are many omissions. Excuse: Readability. A second excuse: Some major projects are described on other pages.

If Cowl Bazar was a highlight of our club's first 25 years, **Thiruvидanthai** was a highlight of the second. You had to drive some 40 km from Madras on the new Mahabalipuram Road to reach this village, which is famous for the 1,000-year-old Nithya Kalyana Perumal temple. Our club adopted Thiruvидanthai in 1985 (to convert our Rs 5 lakh surplus from RELF 85 into good deeds).





Over the years, we left many footprints in the village: a medical centre, a windmill, drinking water facilities, a grocery shop, bus shelters. The Rotary Foundation gave us a grant of US \$18,000 for income generation activities in the village – bee-keeping, rabbit-rearing and the planting of cocoanut trees.

Such was the impact of our club on Thiruvidadanthai that people from a neighbouring village visited then president Rtn P V Laxminarayana (1985-86) in his home, garlanded him, presented him with a box of sweets, and requested that we adopt their village too. “We couldn’t take on any more burdens,” says PVL, “so like Kamaraj, I just said ‘Parkalaam’” (which means “let’s see” in Tamil).

Madras South helped usher in the **expo revolution** in this part of the country. In fact, some Rotarians refer to Madras South as the club of big exhibitions. After the spectacular success of RELF (1985), our club was asked to help the district’s own fair, Rotaexpo. Rtn T P Imbichammad, assisted by Rtn R V Rajan, made a success of it.

The next two exhibitions (**RONEX**, on the environment, in 1990, spearheaded by Rtn R V Rajan, and **Autovision** in 1995, on the automobile industry, the brainchild of Rtn V R Anil Kumar) were major successes too. These were followed by **Qualitech** and **Rotaking** in 1996, **Tech-20** in 1997, all of which made a mark. My favourite of course (since I took part in it) was **Rotakids**, initiated by Rtn Shyamala Jayaprakash – a great lover of kids. This rollicking kids’ carnival created a record in public interaction with Rotary – drawing nearly a lakh of visitors (both kids and adults) in the course of three exhibitions – two in 2000, one in 2002. (The photo feature inside displays the cutest of pictures.) **Rotafest** was organized in 2008.

To go back in time. Three innovative projects were carried out in 1991-92, when Rtn C Venugopal was the president. **ROSY** (Rotary Scouts and Youth Camp) brought 100 scouts aged 16 to 18 to Chennai from different parts of the country for a 5-day camp at Anna University. Under a “**100 skills**” project, a hundred unemployed women were given training in stitching. Under the project “**100 eyes**”, a hundred eye surgeries were performed at Vijaya Hospital, Vadapalani. The same year, we honoured an industrial VIP, and conferred the “For the Sake of Honour” award on Mr Suresh Krishna, industrialist.



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1. The late Rtn V Chidambaram was strongly committed to Makkal Palli Iyakkam – a literacy-cum-non-formal education drive for poor children.
- 2 & 3. Scores of medical and blood donation camps have been carried out.
4. Windmill at Thiruvidadanthai, one of many projects in that village.
5. Assistance has been provided to old-age homes.
6. Rtn Hans Setz from Switzerland is greeted by our club. In January 2000, we hosted 21 Rotarians from six countries for five days.

Opposite page: Madras South has helped many schools and orphanages.



Let me hop on to **vocational service**. It triggers self-help and development better than any other Rotary avenue of service, because it enables “better participation by the poor in their own development,” to steal UN phraseology. In 1992-93 began Madras South’s systematic foray into vocational service, thanks to then president Rtn Shiv Kumar. Ever since, we have helped hundreds of young unemployed men and women with cashable skills in airconditioning, refrigeration, autorepair, electrical technology, computer hardware, tailoring, driving – you name it. Our partners: Anna University and the Stenographers’ Guild for men, the Andhra Mahila Sabha in Mylapore for women.

In fact, the periodic certificate-distribution ceremony for young women at **Andhra Mahila Sabha** is very popular with most Southerners. One reason: a sumptuous high tea. Main reason: It does us good to see that we have helped to satisfy the aspirations of so many poor women for a better life. The Rotary Club of Melville, Australia, sponsored several of our vocational courses in recent years, with Rtn Tamilselvan serving as channel.

Madras South’s two **matching grant projects** – in co-operation with Rotary clubs in West Germany and Switzerland respectively – related to vocational education of women. They happened during 1999-2001 and 2002-04. The partner clubs were the Rotary Club of Black Forest (West Germany) and the RC of Zurzach-Brugg (Switzerland).

As a tribute to Rtn V Chidambaram – one of the gentlest and most affable of men, who was our president in 2002-03, and was cruelly felled by cancer a few years later – let me mention two projects close to his heart. One was our **assistance to Gnanadeepam** (lamp of knowledge), which runs a school for mentally challenged children in Pammal, a suburb of Chennai. In 1998, we gave the school’s founder Mrs Uma Dhandapani a Distinguished Service award. We also donated a rainwater harvesting system, a computer system and a sewing machine to Gnanadeepam at different times.

Another worthy cause was the **Makkal Palli Iyakkam**, a literacy-cum education support movement, in which we were active between 2002 and 2005. We started an RCC at Taramani on December 1, 2003, and it gave us a volunteer force. We provided tuition for students from the slums of Taramani, held English conversation classes, and conducted quiz contests for the Tamil Nadu Science Forum in English (called “Janta Mantar”) and in Tamil (called “Tulir”)

On the subject of **education**: In 2004-05, our club strengthened and renovated the Adi Dravida Primary School, Meenambakkam, with a Rs 2.4-lakh project to construct a toilet block and a noon-meal scheme kitchen. President Rtn A Sridharan mobilized 35% of the cost from Round Table.

This project was part of the “Schools-to-Smiles” initiative of District Governor Benjamin Cherian to honour Rotary’s centenary year. (He sought to help, renovate or strengthen 100 corporation schools in one year.)

**Computers** are today integral to education. Through our member Rtn R Srikanth, we have mobilized the support of the Ford Business Centre for several computer-donation projects. We gave four computers to the Rotary Club of Arni, which trains economically backward girls at a computer centre. The gadgets were handed over on that club’s installation day, 3rd July, 2007.

We also donated some 30 computers to the Rotary clubs of Polur, Arcot, Chetpet, Arni Fort, Eagle Town, Vandawasi, Kalvai and Cheyyar, thanks to Ford.. The previous year (2006-07), our club set up a computer centre at the Corporation Girls High School, Saidapet in association with Ford Business Service Center. Fifteen computers, tables, chairs, air-conditioners and other items were provided.

**Assistance to tsunami-affected fisherfolk. 2004-05.** In the wake of the December 2004 tsunami, the club assisted two fishing villages – Nayanar Kuppam and Pudhunedu Kuppam – in co-operation with the Samvit Sagar Trust of the Sudhananada Ashram. We donated some 1,100 kg of fishing gear (at a cost of about Rs 3.5 lakhs) to 212 families of Nayanar Kuppam and 68 families of Pudhunedu Kuppam. We also facilitated the donation of some 15 motorized fishing boats to the fishing communities (valued at more than Rs 15 lakhs) by Action Aid and the Rotary Club of Madras Midtown.

(The club received a donation of Rs 6 lakhs for tsunami relief from the Pittsburgh Venkateswara temple in the US, through the contacts of Rtn Sam Manipadam.)

In co-operation with the Tamil Nadu Science Forum, 42 street plays and films were shown in tsunami-affected areas to aid social rehabilitation of victims.

**Medical relief and services** have been integral to our community services work throughout our history. We have conducted scores of medical and blood





donation camps at schools, orphanages and old age homes; limb donations through Mukti; helped fund, equip or strengthen hospitals (VHS Hospital, Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Medical Trust, Sankara Nethralaya, Cancer Institute).

We helped VHS Hospital (1971) with equipment for its physio-therapy unit and later (2001) donated a pain-relieving interferential therapy unit, complete with bed and trolley. Diagnostic equipment worth over Rs 3 lakhs was donated to the Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Medical Trust for a laboratory in Thiruvanniyur in 1992. Several free eye-surgeries for the poor are conducted every year at Sankara Nethralaya – India’s top eye-care hospital – through interest on a corpus of Rs 5 lakhs provided by us. Rotarians like R T Chari and R S Falore have been major donors for medical causes in their individual capacity.

A major initiative by us was the formation of MDA India (Muscular Dystrophy Association India) in February 5, 2000 – a support group for victims of muscular dystrophy, an incurable hereditary muscle disease that usually affects children. The group, consisting mainly of parents and relatives of victims in Tamil Nadu, served as a forum for physical, financial, technical and moral support to victims. MDA India has since made good progress, as an article elsewhere in this issue reveals.

**Medical Centre: 2008.** Despite hundreds of service activities, the club waited long for its first permanent project. It materialized in 2008, with the



*Above: RC of Gummidipoondi Industrial City, one of the clubs Madras South gave birth to. Inaugurated in 2005 by RI President-elect Wilf Wilkinson. Left: Tsunami relief-joint effort by a few Rotary clubs. Below: Dana Bergh Hall at Anna University. It is an energy-environment centre, inaugurated in May 2009.*

Saradambal Neelamegam Rotary Madras South Medical Centre. It is a low-cost diagnostic centre in a multi-purpose medical clinic that caters to the very poor in and around Koyambedu, a bustling locality of Chennai.

**Dana Bergh Hall, 2009.** Our club’s second permanent project, the Rs 45-lakh Dana Bergh Hall, came into being at Anna University, Chennai, in May 2009. The ambitious project materialized more than 20 years after it was first proposed, overcoming many problems and challenges. It is a joint project of our club and the university’s Institute of Ocean Management.

**International Service:** One of the most spectacular and innovative activities in the





history of our club was **Vintage 60, an international Rotary get-together** of 1960-born clubs. In January 2000, 21 Rotarians and Annes from seven countries came to Chennai to celebrate the birth of the new millennium, and the 40<sup>th</sup> year of their clubs and ours with members of Madras South. The visitors enjoyed home hospitality from our members, visited our service projects as well as tourist and cultural attractions. The event was a major contribution to international goodwill, there were several project spin-offs as well.

An immediate spin-off was an unusual Rs 6 lakh matching grant project at the **Ceyrac Trust** complex in Gokulapuram, near Maraimalainagar. The complex consisted of a school, a vocational training centre and an orphanage that is home to several hundred children. Following our Vintage 60 project, and our high profile in Europe, our club was chosen to implement a package of new facilities and amenities at Ceyrac Trust — such as an autorickshaw ambulance, an electric generator set, classroom furniture, toilet accessories, library books and toys. We formally handed over these facilities to the Trust at a well-attended function on Independence Day, 2000.

Funds for the project were provided by three Rotary clubs in France, UK and Poland (the Rotary Club of Guingamp, France; the RC of Melksham, Wiltshire, UK, and the RC of Zamosa, Poland) which have had a long history of co-operation among themselves. They agreed on Madras South as the implementing agency for the project.

Vintage 60 was extraordinary; but there were several earlier examples of international co-operation. Over the years, clubs or Rotarians from Japan, Australia, US, UK and France have interacted with us. Four members of our club (C V George, K S Hegde, Vijay Kumar, T P Imbichammad) have led GSE teams. We have hosted a number of visiting GSE teams. We constantly strengthen the Rotary Foundation and presently have some 80 Paul Harris fellows.

The club received assistance every year over a period of 15 years from the IPAC (International Project Advisory Committee of Australian clubs). Much of this assistance was provided to children of Seva Samajam, Pallipattu (one of its halls was named Laharry Hall after the first Indian president of Rotary International) and the Beatitude Leprosy Colony, Madhavaram.



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1. One of our many RYLA camps for the Corporation Girls High School, Saidapet.
2. Rtn S N Gupta, one of our 80-odd Paul Harris fellows, with Governor W Anand.
3. A "treasure hunt" – an exciting fund-raiser.
4. Fellowship, Rajasthani style.
5. Our vocational service training has helped hundreds of unemployed youth with jobs and incomes.
6. Doing our bit to eliminate polio.



**Youth Service :** The club serves youth through its three Rotaract clubs for colleges (College of Engineering, Guindy; A C College of Technology, Guindy; and the Asan Memorial College) and four Interact clubs for schools (Corporation Girls Higher Secondary School, Saidapet; Asan Memorial Higher Secondary School, Greames Road; Sri Sitaram Vidyalaya Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Ramakrishnapuram; and the Anna Gems and Science Park School, Guindy.) The Rotaract club of CEG, Guindy, has been remarkably dynamic and has executed several noteworthy service projects over the past few years. We conduct several activities, including an annual Ryla at the Corporation Girls High School, Saidapet.

Through these clubs, we give youth a platform for leadership training, personality development and communication skills.

**Cricket tournament. 2000 & 2001.** In 2000 & 2001, the club conducted an under-14 cricket tournament, to encourage excellence in cricket at the youngest level, as well as to promote Rotary awareness among schoolchildren. Eight schools took part and 19 matches were played in each year. Don Bosco was the winner in 2000 (besting Padma Seshadri in the final); San Thome Higher Secondary School was the winner in 2001 (beating St. Bedes Anglo-Indian Higher Secondary School in the final). The tournaments provoked much excitement among the young cricketers, their siblings, teachers and school principals.

**Club Service:** Speakers of high caliber are organized at Madras South week after week – providing meat and substance to the club’s regular meetings. Topics have covered every area of human endeavour.

During the late 1990s, our club launched “Operation new blood” to induct new members – an initiative of Rtn R V Rajan that has given the club new ideas and new leadership.

The club’s website [www.rotarymadrassouth.com](http://www.rotarymadrassouth.com) and its newsletter, Southerner are a regular source of information and a tool of bonding.

### Golden Jubilee Year

It has been an outstanding year on all fronts. Nearly 60 community service projects; nine family fellowship evenings at Rtn R T Chari’s Tag Center involving as many as 25 Rotary clubs; three splendid functions – a Take-Off



*The “Take-Off Nite” was one of our grand Golden Jubilee celebratory events of 2009-10. The entertainment part of the programme was handled entirely by the club’s Anns.*




Nite, a fund-raising Singing Stars Nite, and the many-splendoured Golden Memories Nite on February 20, which climaxed the year’s celebrations. These are covered on other pages in words and pictures.






Finally, what makes any organization successful? What makes it thrive and flourish after 50 years, in an age when institutional longevity is low? Is it money? Is it talent? Is it brains? It is perhaps what one thinker referred to as the “magical alchemy of intangibles”. Such intangibles as harmony, energy, passion in pursuing goals.






Madras South now embarks on its second half a century. Will it be bigger, brighter and bolder than the first? Of course! It was Madras South’s Rtn PDG C V George who said: “Rotary expects us to be pilgrims to the future, not prisoners of the past.”








## 3 The Fifty Presidents





1		<p><b>Frank Bradbury Pratt</b> 1960-61</p> <p><i>Friendly, dignified, the quintessential fellowship man.</i></p>
2		<p><b>J R Mullick</b> 1961-62</p> <p><i>Entrepreneur . Initiated community service activities.</i></p>
3		<p><b>Dr. S K Bharat</b> 1962-63</p> <p><i>Leather technologist. Initiated vocational service activities.</i></p>
4		<p><b>Prof. S R Govindarajan</b> 1963-64</p> <p><i>Educationist. Distinguished Rotary journey began with Madras South. Became district governor.</i></p>
5		<p><b>C V George</b> 1964-65</p> <p><i>A legend. Club's Charter member and a role model for many. The first district governor from our club.</i></p>





6		<p><b>Majid A Kazi</b> 1965-66</p> <p><i>Innovative technologist from the world of cinema.</i></p>
7		<p><b>Prof. K S Hegde</b> 1966-67</p> <p><i>Technical education administrator par excellence.</i></p>
8		<p><b>A N Srinivasa Rao</b> 1967-68</p> <p><i>Innovator. Made a mark with his "President's workbook".</i></p>
9		<p><b>R Ramakrishnan</b> 1968-69</p> <p><i>Club's charter secretary. Grew with the club to become a Dist. Governor and a senior statesman of Rotary.</i></p>
10		<p><b>Dr. S Ramaswamy</b> 1969-70</p> <p><i>"Southerner" was his passion .Took Madras South to the far corners of the Rotary world.</i></p>

11		<p><b>S R Das</b> 1970-71</p> <p><i>Debonair. Generous. Ever-ready to lend a hand.</i></p>
12		<p><b>Ugamraj B Mootha</b> 1971-72</p> <p><i>The Rajah of Alandur, who gave the club a stylish Rajasthani touch.</i></p>
13		<p><b>N.R.N.Aiyar</b> 1972-73</p> <p><i>The stick-to-the-manual purist, the club's first PHF. Stentorian voice.</i></p>
14		<p><b>C N Alwar Chetty</b> 1973-74</p> <p><i>Fellowship was his forte.</i></p>
15		<p><b>B A Chandran</b> 1974-75</p> <p><i>Wonderful fellowship man, remembered for his booming laughter.</i></p>







16		<b>P Rajagopal Menon</b> 1975-76 <i>Subdued and understated. But Geetha gave the club its musical tradition.</i>
17		<b>K Ramanathan</b> 1976-77 <i>The engineering professor who became a successful entrepreneur and Rotarian.</i>
18		<b>SRMPL Subramanian</b> 1977-78 <i>He used the right tools (SRP) to run the club. Active Rotarian even as octogenarian.</i>
19		<b>P Vijaykumar</b> 1978-79 <i>Equally effective in Rotary and business. Punjab's gift to Chennai. Witty speaker. Great company.</i>
20		<b>K.R.Ramachandran</b> 1979-80 <i>The brown saheb with the colonial touch.</i>





21		<b>Dr. N Jayaraman</b> 1980-81 <i>The dentist with a keen sense of humour. Served Rotary under 3-H programme in Hong Kong and Philippines.</i>
22		<b>R V M K Prasad</b> 1981-82 <i>This businessman from Guntur; active in film processing and auto ancillaries, led the club with quiet dignity.</i>
23		<b>N Venkateswaran</b> 1982-83 <i>Successful businessman. Keen interest in meaningful projects. Brought sincerity and commitment to Rotary.</i>
24		<b>J Vedamuthu</b> 1983-84 <i>A low-profile doer, both as corporate executive and as Rotary president.</i>


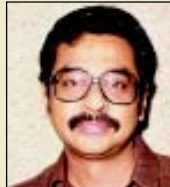


25		<b>B Gopalswami</b> 1984-85 <i>Ever on the phone to keep members on their toes. Brought glory to the club in its silver jubilee year.</i>
26		<b>P V Laxminarayana</b> 1985-86 <i>Auditor-accountant, generous with heart and purse, service-minded. Always gives 100% to the club.</i>
27		<b>S N Bhatt</b> 1986-87 <i>Jovial Gujarati businessman. "Majama" was his creed. His granddaughter Tanvi Shah recently sang "Jaya he" with A R Rehman in "Slumdog Millionaire."</i>
28		<b>R N Veerappan</b> 1987-88 <i>Charter member. Ever-smiling and affable. His home is the club's favourite venue for fellowship parties.</i>







## The Fifty Presidents





29		<p><b>C S Ram</b> 1988-89</p> <p><i>Chemical engineer, active in the security business, dabbled in real estate as well.</i></p>
30		<p><b>R Ramamurthy</b> 1989-90</p> <p><i>This vibration damper man enhanced the club's vitality.</i></p>
31		<p><b>R V Rajan</b> 1990-91</p> <p><i>The eternal optimist. Brings gung-ho spirit and the glitz and glitter of the ad world to the club. Busy golden jubilee chairman.</i></p>
32		<p><b>C Venugopal</b> 1991-92</p> <p><i>The big boss who succeeded in carrying out a few innovative projects.</i></p>



33		<p><b>B Shivkumar</b> 1992-93</p> <p><i>Diligent, witty, fine speaker, specialized in vocational service, brought corporate discipline to the club.</i></p>
34		<p><b>M.K.Kannan</b> 1993-94</p> <p><i>A walking encyclopedia on Rotary. Many district governors depended on him. Won some coveted awards.</i></p>
35		<p><b>V R Anil Kumar</b> 1994-95</p> <p><i>A many-faceted talent. A creative entertainer. Architect of the Autovision expo, the club's German connection. and the Golden Jubilee song.</i></p>
36		<p><b>S Subramanian (RGN)</b> 1995-96</p> <p><i>Successful accountant, effective president. A reliable soldier for any cause.</i></p>

37		<p><b>B Narayan</b> 1996-97</p> <p><i>The marketing man who could sell anything.</i></p>
38		<p><b>A G Shankar</b> 1997-98</p> <p><i>The management man who became a web master, Equally articulate in English and Tamil.</i></p>
39		<p><b>Natarajan Nagoji</b> 1998-99</p> <p><i>His talent for musical fellowship was tapped by both our club and the district. A busy and effective President.</i></p>
40		<p><b>Shyamala Jayaprakash</b> 1999-00</p> <p><i>Our club's only lady President. Runs many schools and colleges. Masterminded Rotakids. Networking is her strength. Soft corner: Kerala.</i></p>



41		<b>S R Madhu</b> 2000-01  <i>Writer-editor. Helped document UN agencies, the American Embassy and Rotary. Brought the club speakers from far and near.</i>
42		<b>S Balakrishnan</b> 2001-02  <i>A gentleman-President, succeeded with the soft touch. Executed some good projects.</i>
43		<b>V Chidambaram</b> 2002-03  <i>Sincerity, humility, grace and dignity were his watchwords. Genuine commitment to service.</i>
44		<b>R Chandrasekar</b> 2003-04  <i>Entrepreneur. Outgoing. Facile in Tamil. Happy in young company.</i>

45		<b>A Sridharan</b> 2004-05  <i>Dynamic doer and go-getter. Can make anything thrive – vegetables in his farm, fellowship, Round Table, or Rotary.</i>
46		<b>Rajesh Sahi</b> 2005-06  <i>German connections, bonhomie and fellowship were his mantra. Champagne flowed during his year.</i>
47		<b>Prasanna Varma</b> 2006-07  <i>Royal Kerala pedigree, accountant, a man of few words. But his Anne became the Voice of the District.</i>
48		<b>B B Vengatesh</b> 2007-08  <i>Calm, efficient, well-organized. Famous as Round Table achiever. Can convert chaos to order with his pocket gizmos.</i>

49		<b>C Tamilselvan</b> 2008-09  <i>Tamizh orator with a PhD in chemistry.</i>
50		<b>P Bowmick</b> 2009-10  <i>Landscapist with a yen for Bengali sangeet and fellowship. Piloted the Golden Jubilee year.</i>



## 4 *Inner Wheel Club of Madras South – 47 years of service and friendship*

by Sita Laxminarayana

The Inner Wheel Club of Madras South is the very first Inner Wheel club in all of south India. It was set up in 1963, thanks to the vision and foresight of the late Rtn PDG S.R Govindarajan. The Charter President and Secretary were Mrs Annapoorni Veerappan and Mrs Sankari Das respectively. We are fortunate that three of the Charter members are still active – May George, Ulagammai Veerappan and Sugandhi Muralidhar.

During the past 47 years, we have carried out service projects worth Rs 50 lakhs benefiting more than 50,000 people. We have also helped set up an Inner Wheel club in the Rotary Club of Adyar. Three of our members have held high office. Suman Karpur has been President of the Inner Wheel Association for all of India, while Sita Laxminarayana and Shanti Kannan have served as Inner Wheel District Chairman.

### Some highlights of our projects over the years:

- During the mid-1970s, we helped Beatitude Institute by constructing twin buildings in Madhavaram for a centre to rehabilitate cured leprosy patients. The centre now houses some 75 persons. It also encourages self-help: the women earn money through useful occupations like envelope-making and bag-making.
- In 1995-96, the Egmore Eye Hospital renovated its children's ward. We helped furnish the ward by providing cots, beds, cradles and other utility items. The dump yard for medical waste was cleaned and converted into a beautiful garden and play area for children. The child inmates and their parents enjoy the utility. This project was possible with the help of members Viji Jinadas, Vasanthi Mahendran and Manjula Pragasam.
- During the 1990s, in association with Mukti – an organization in Chennai that provides artificial limbs and calipers free of charge to polio victims



*Above: Strong inputs to Rotary's Polio Plus campaign. Below: The club has helped renovate the children's ward of the Egmore Eye Hospital.*



and victims of amputation – we helped children at the orthopedic centre of the Andhra Mahila Hospital, Adyar, with calipers. This project went on for six or seven years.

- Some modest service projects are ongoing – like donation of rice for the Birds Old Age Home and donation of milk for inmates of Goodwill Foundation, a placement centre for visually challenged girls. Many of our members provide reading services for blind students and writing services during examinations.
- We try to help cancer-affected children to overcome the trauma of the disease and recover quickly. We visit the pediatric ward of the Cancer Institute, Adyar, and give the children enjoyable outings – taking them to the beach, to the circus, to magic shows. We entertain them with cartoon films. We have donated curtains to the hospital and apparel and footwear to the kids. We have repaired the wash area of the ward, provided now sinks and taps and renovated the flooring.
- The building at the NKT National Boys High School, Triplicane, was in a poor shape. We gave the school a new look by organizing new tiled flooring, laboratories and a borewell. We also donated an Aquaguard machine to make available safe filtered drinking water for the children.
- We made a small effort toward the greening of Chennai, by planting avenue trees in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Seaward Road at Valmiki Nagar and also in Besant Nagar. The owners of the houses were more than happy to take care of the trees. Those streets are unrecognizable now – with huge trees that provide shade and shelter and visual relief.
- We have organized three major fund-raising programmes. In 1999, when Mrs Nirmala Madhu was the president, we held a concert at Narada Gana Sabha, featuring four top Carnatic music vocalists – S Sowmya, Sudha Raghunathan, P.Unnikrishnan and Sanjay Subramaniam.
- Four years ago, during the presidentship of Mrs Anjana Vengatesh, we organized another musical programme – 40 years of SPB – at which the great singer performed, besides a few other music and film celebrities. Mrs Vijaya Thayanban of our club, who has excellent contacts with the film industry, was one of the architects of the show. We collected about

Rs 11 lakhs, and used the money to help Vivekananda Vidyalaya with a laboratory, a play area and toilets. These amenities enabled the school to win affiliation to the CBSE system.

- In January 2010, in co-operation with the Rotary Club of Madras South, we organized Singing Stars, a grand fund-raising programme at the University of Madras auditorium. Movie stars Sarath Kumar and his wife Radhika were the chief guests. Several bright young singers regaled the audience. The programme enabled us to donate Rs.10 lakhs to the VHS Hospital at Taramani, to repair and rebuild its geriatric ward. Once this block is ready, club members will visit the inmates every week and offer them home-made food and magazines.
- In the year 1999-2000, we organized Bal Utsav 2000, a programme under which medical camps were held for 2,000 children of various orphanages in Chennai.
- High school education for young girls who can't afford school has been a priority. Example: Tuition was financed for 25 children from Oorukkuppam. Many of them passed the exams.
- Another simple but useful service: organizing talks on health and hygiene for schoolgirls from standards 5 to 10. Dr. Sheela Mohan and Dr. A Srivatsa gave these talks. They won the trust of the girls, who opened up and asked them many questions to clear doubts they had.

*Left: Many Inner Wheel members have made a mark in music and the arts.  
Right: Assistance is provided to the disabled.*







Top: The club's 46th Charter Day function. Below: The club organized the dazzling Singing Stars fund-raiser jointly with Rotarians. Club members including president Vijaya Thayanban handed over a cheque for Rs 10 lakhs to VHS Hospital.



- Fellowship has been strong throughout, with frequent picnics. Our members make a mark in music, and stand out at cultural programmes or contests, often winning the first prize. When Doordarshan started out in Chennai, the Inner Wheel Club of Madras South was prominent – a garbha dance at the inauguration by our members was telecast live. We are keen and sharp at quizzes too. Neela Govindaraj, Shanthi Kannan and Sita Laxminarayana have invariably won prizes in every quiz programme.
- On its 45<sup>th</sup> Charter Day (August 1, 2007), the club held a seminar on alternative systems of medicine. Dr Lalitha spoke on reiki and aromatherapy, Dr Mohana Krishnaswamy on music therapy. Tamil Nadu's Minister for Health, Poongothai Aladi Aruna, presided. On the occasion of the 47<sup>th</sup> Charter Day, on August 18, 2008, a seminar was held on “Carnatic and Western music – yesterday, today and tomorrow.” Madurai G S Mani spoke about Carnatic music and beautifully demonstrated some ragas. Satish Chakravarthy, pianist and composer and son of Vijaya Thayanban, spoke about western music. Nalli Kuppuswamy presided.
- On October 15, 2008, a seminar was held on “The furious earth”. The former dean of Anna University, Mr. A.R. Santha Kumar, spoke on “Natural disasters” (earthquakes, tsunami, tornados, hurricanes and volcanoes) and safe techniques for building construction.
- The ISO programme of our club is very popular in the Inner Wheel fraternity. We have conducted two Antakshari contests, they have drawn many members from other clubs. Our members Kalarani, Bethica Das and Prabha Rajan have won prizes in cookery, fancy dress and other competitions. Many illustrious speakers have addressed our club on an array of subjects.
- Our club functions like a close-knit family. We enjoy serving society, and each other's company as well.



## 5 The Probus Club of Madras South

*Now 16 years old, the Probus Club started by the Rotary Club of Madras South in Besant Nagar gives senior citizens in the Adyar area a platform to meet and bond, and to discuss social problems and solutions.*

Our club was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Madras South and came into being on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1994. Under the presidentship of Shri Saranathan, Rtn. V R Anil Kumar was a source of great support to enable the club to grow and stand on its own legs. The club drew up its constitution and determined its objectives, which were as follows:

- Promote fellowship. Arrange regular monthly one-hour meetings on every second Monday evening.
- Identify and discuss social problems, concerning the local area in particular, to assist in finding a solution



- Draw up and implement viable schemes for the welfare of the under-privileged living in and around Adyar.

In 1995, the Club adopted the Orur-Olcot Kuppam Primary School which was then in a totally dilapidated state. It needed improvements on many fronts, the surrounding area needed a face-lift too. Prof. R C Narayanan took charge of the project. His team drew up a phased plan to improve matters. A compound wall and an iron grill gate were the first priority. This measure created the ambience of a regular school that was made functional.

Rotary Club of Madras South stepped in along with other donors, to provide funds for improving the drainage and sanitary systems of the school. The Probus Club got constructed over the years, pucca RCC buildings with classrooms, separate toilets for boys and girls, improved drinking water facilities and a kitchen facility for mid-day meals. The school owes its health today to the Probus Club.

*Left: Inauguration of the Probus Club of Madras South on August 7, 1994. Mr C Subramaniam, former Union Finance Minister, was the Chief Guest. Below: An Independence Day function at the Orur Olcott Kuppam primary school, which the Probus Club has assisted in many ways.*





Madras South also helped the Probus Club to celebrate Republic Day and Independence Day at the school, through cultural shows and sports events. The Inner Wheel Club of Madras South offered prizes and refreshments to the children on such occasions. Medical camps were organized too.

Some Probus Club members were requested to assist the state government's high-level committee on corruption. The club takes part in interactive sessions in schools to discuss and improve discipline and punctuality.

The club has 30 members today. We have come some way since 1994. Meetings are no longer held in the residences of members but in a community hall. PowerPoint presentations are common. We look forward to strengthening the club further and to playing a useful role in society.

The Club's office-bearers this year (2009-10) are:

President	Dr C Rajagopalan
Vice President	Dr R V Pathy
Secretary	Mr N Srinivasan
Treasurer	Col. A Krishnaswamy
Imm. Past President	Mr A K Sathyanarayana

— Col. A Krishnaswamy



*Left: Rtn V R Anil Kumar of Madras South, who helped establish the Probus Club, with Mr C Subramaniam. Above: Rtn Shyamala Jayaprakash addresses students at an Independence Day function.*

### Rtn P V Laxminarayana, RIP



“How's the golden jubilee book coming on?” Laxminarayana would ask every other day. He kept sending me e-mails about the early days of Madras South – including a bullet-point list of all that our club had done in Thiruvindanthai. Death snatched him away from our midst on June 23, 2010, just a few days before he could see the book. His last deed was to send Madras South a cheque.

If the cliché “heart of gold” applies to anyone, it would be PVL. He was ready to help any cause. He had a kind word for everyone. Professionally a chartered accountant, he was a builder in many ways. An accident some years ago had hindered his mobility, but not his professional acumen, his mental agility even at the age of 70, or his interest in Rotary or current affairs. Our sincerest condolences to Sita and his entire family.

— SRM



## *Section 2*

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# *The five avenues of service*



## 6 *Sardarjis, farms and firesides – The rollicking fellowship at Madras South*

by R Seshadri

‘Satsri Akal Sirji’ – a young and dashing Sardar greeted PDG Rtn. Ramakrishna Raja several years ago at a family fellowship event he was hosting at his plush Poes Garden residence. None of the Rotarians had arrived yet. Rtn. Raja was a trifle taken aback at this early uninvited guest.

The perfect gentleman that he always is, Rtn. Raja just smiled and asked, “What can I do for you?” The Sardar informed him that he had come to oversee the arrangements for the fellowship event to follow. The puzzled look on PDG Raja’s face at the audacity of this Sardar is still etched in my memory; the Sardar was none other than ‘yours truly’ in disguise (with turban and beard) for the Fancy Dress Nite which was the theme of the fellowship that evening!

Since I was a relatively new member of the club at that time (also in charge of fellowship activities during Rtn Natarajan Nagoji’s presidentship if I recall correctly!) it was not surprising that PDG Raja could not recognize me! And later I was given the first prize for the best dressed (disguised?) Rotarian of the evening! Truly a memorable beginning to my long and happy journey in Madras South, known for its unique, spirited and bonding fellowship events, the envy of many a club in the district!

While the Presidents of the club have changed every year, what has remained unchanged is the emphasis on monthly fellowship events that bring the Rotarians (both old and new) and their families together! Almost every fellowship is theme-based, and over the years we have had several memorable events at varied locations.

These events are either Saturday evening happenings, or day-long picnics at a Rotarian’s farm (belonging to Falor, Sridharan or Sandilya, to name a few). The Falor farm picnics have been my favourite as I enjoyed not only the



*Above: Rtn R S Falor’s farm is a favourite fellowship haunt of our club. Below: One of the many “fireside” evenings conducted by club members.*



ambience (with a mini-swimming tank to boot!) but also the delicious Rajasthani cuisine served fresh and organized by the Marwadi team of Rotarians – Mootha, Goenka and Falor.

The themes have varied, limited only by the imagination of the fellowship convener. Over the years, the club has hosted region-specific theme evenings like Kerala Nite, Rajasthani Nite, Punjabi Nite, Chettinad Nite, Mexican Nite... with the cuisine dominated by the specialty of these regions! What's heartening is the spirit of the club's Rotarians and Anns (many of them senior citizens!) sportingly donning the attire of the region! Other gala nites come to mind – Musical Nites, Annettes Nite, Down Memory lane, Bridal Nite, Spooky Nite and Back to School, apart from the grand Take Off Nite and the Golden Memories Nite held during the golden jubilee year.

I vividly recall the Spooky Nite when the entire Vasan House near the Music Academy (now demolished!) was converted into a virtual Bhoot Bungla with ghosts at the entrance (hidden in the dingy and dark corners) scaring Annettes and Anns out of their wits as they entered!

Back to School was another memorable evening early in the golden jubilee year. Several of our Rotarians and Anns literally went back to school clad in ill-fitting school uniform (perhaps that of the Annettes) and recorded for posterity in the golden jubilee song video!

One of the highlights of the fellowship nites (when organised outside a Rotarian's home) was gastronomic, invariably organized by the club's No.1 foodie, the boisterous hug master, Chettiar Sridharan!

The fireside evenings is another unique concept in vogue in our club (reminiscent of the stiff upper lip British practice of a few good friends getting together for drinks and dinner around the fireplace). A nice cosy evening of chat, drinks and dinner every month at a Rotarian's home for a few fellow-Southerners. The idea is to get Southerners to know each other better. Result: Some great friendships!

While Mythili and I have hosted a few such fireside evenings in my home, and have thoroughly enjoyed the experience, I must admit it is the 'ever-green' Big Brother Rtn. Rajan and Ann Prabha right next door, whose firesides have often brought out the hidden singing sensations in our club! Of course the 'all male cooking' evening that Rajan has hosted a couple of times is another innovative fireside practice.



*Above: Christmas carols entertain Southerners. Below: A memento for fellowship evening host Rtn R N Veerappan from Rtn S S Bothra.*





Above: Members are delighted with Santa Claus – Rtn Rajesh Sahi.  
Below: Rtn M S Rajasekhar and wife Kala at another fellowship event.



In the past, the club used to host an average of 6 to 7 fireside evenings during the year. But during the presidentship of Rtn. Sridharan (Chettiar) when I was the fireside convenor, the demanding President insisted on a minimum of 18 fireside evenings that year! A tall order. But I'm happy that I managed to co-ordinate 15 firesides, a record of sorts till then, later broken by Rtn. Bowmick (the fireside convenor when Rtn. B B Vengatesh was the President) with 24 firesides that year – a tough act to follow!

Another unique tradition of Madras South, the fellowship basket, seems to have fallen by the wayside in the recent past. The idea was to stimulate interaction between two Southerner families who didn't know each other very well. But often, the Rotarian holding the basket used to take the easy way out by calling his best buddy over for drinks, thus diluting the 'spirit' of the concept! One hopes that the fellowship basket tradition soon becomes a part of the annual fellowship bouquet.

During the golden jubilee year, the redoubtable Rtn R T Chari organized a series of unique fellowship-cum-entertainment evenings at his Tag Centre – I think about nine over the year. I understand that this project is being described in another article.

It was RI Founder Paul Harris who said:

***'Fellowship is wonderful,  
It illuminates life's pathway,  
Spreads good cheer,  
And is worth high price...'***

I am sure the fellowship and bonding will only get better in Madras South's second half century!



The author as a Sardar at a fancy dress meet of the club.  
He won the top prize!

– R Seshadri



## 7 *When Southerners leave Chennai ....*

*A breezy witty recall of the out-of-town family fellowship picnics organised by Madras South in recent years.*

by V Sriram

Outstation fellowships have become a tradition of sorts in our Club. Begun sometime in the 1990s it caught on in the next decade and became something to really look forward to. Some of the most wonderful places that our club members have been to within the country include Coorg, Kumarakom, Tiruvananthapuram, Ooty, Mysore, Yercaud and Wyanad. For a long time Rtn Renjit Joseph was more or less Permanent Secretary, Department of Outstation Fellowship if such a designation could be said to exist in RCMS. The Wyanad trip was handled by Rtn Mukund Vedapudi.

The *modus operandi* in all these trips was more or less the same. A recee trip by the organising group was followed by some intense haggling on rates with the hotel which had the misfortune to be selected by us. We always got some fantastic deals though this sentiment may not have been reciprocated by the hotels. Imagine catering to a large group of (largely) middle-aged Rotarians who suddenly imagine themselves to be 20+ which they are anyway at heart!

Following the haggling, the details would be circulated and those interested would confirm their participation. The final numbers always exceeded the initial estimate and there have been occasions when the hotel initially identified would not have sufficient rooms and so neighbouring hotels too would be pressed into service. This more or less ensured that we were fair to all concerned and the distress of catering to us was shared by all.

The train journeys to these places were great fun by themselves. With an RCMS banner hanging outside the compartment in which we were to travel (RCMS usually had its own compartment and if there were a few outsiders these usually vanished to other coaches once our fun and fellowship began),



*Photographs on these pages show picnics by club members in Mysore, Ooty, Coorg and Kumarakom.*

you were invariably welcomed by Rtn Sridharan and his warm hugs (reciprocated in full measure by all the Anns), Renjit anxiously ticking off the names of those who had reported and others such as Mani P Sam helping people find their seats.

Not that it mattered, for after sometime everyone moved off into their own groups and by the time the train started the whole coach would have the atmosphere of one large festive party. On one side Neeta Sahi would be relating the most non-vegetarian of jokes to a most receptive audience of which Rose would be the loudest and most enthusiastic listener followed closely by Sara and Sarada. In another cubicle, the liquid refreshments would have begun to flow with Jayaprakash, Prasanna Varma, NV Balasubramaniam and RV Rajan leading the celebrants. The Annettes, based on age group, would be huddled in various places over the latest i-pod, DVD player or cell-phone. The younger lot would be playing games.

Food, when it came, would be of an all-encompassing range. The staple fare of various types of rice would have been organised by Renjit and Co with an unconfirmed rumour that Sridharan sampled them for perfection. But others would have brought plenty of eats and these would make the rounds. As the





night progressed, the elderly and the very young would be off to sleep while the rest would party on till the early hours of the morning.

We would be invariably met by buses and vans to take us to our destination. Everyone would want to get into the bus in which Rtn Gupta was travelling; his non-stop entertainment comprising a series of 'breaking news' announcements about Rotarians and Anns on board, unmindful of Kusum's warning glances, would invariably raise the roof. Not that the other vehicles fared badly. There would be plenty of music and at times dancing too. And so we would arrive at our destination, the resort(s) that drew the short stick so to speak.

Once we came, the place would more or less be ours. There would be a series of short outings. Some of these stand out in memory. The visit to the Ananthapadmanabhaswami temple in Trivandrum, the coffee plantation in Yercaud (where every Ann bought a coffee filter and God knows what happened later), the long and arduous trek down a hill in blinding mist with a terrified Rtn Seshadri dragged along by an intrepid Mythili, the lighting up of the City Palace in Mysore, the backwater ride at Kumarakom... Oh! Such wonderful moments. Many of these visits would be in the first week of October to coincide with Mahatma Gandhi's birthday and hence a long weekend. This would also coincide with Ann Sarada's birthday and a cake would mysteriously materialise, never organised by her husband.

The evenings were invariably given up to fellowship, games and dancing. With Rtn Somdev Goyal's i-pod providing an inexhaustible fund of songs, Rtn Bowmick's song books giving the lyrics and the dulcet or bass and in any case most musical voices of several Rotarians and Anns, we never had a dearth of song.

The games were a different story altogether. With Neeta in charge, there could be terribly bawdy ones such as the Queen of Sheba which in one visit had Sridharan playing the Queen most gamely. Even a simple game like tambola could become a hilarious one under Neeta's baton. With Rtn Rajesh calling the numbers, a quarrel with Annette Sakshi was inevitable and before long mother and daughter would be involved in a big argument over something or the other. As for dancing, that would take place with almost everyone being involved. Sometimes talents would be discovered unexpectedly. Rtn Ramaswami's dance in Kumarakom stands out in public memory.





And if it rained, as it did most of the time at Wyand, we had Gupta to keep us entertained. He could organise anything – talk shows, a such-ka-samna kind of confessional programme, an antakshari or even a non-stop joke session. We did have disasters occasionally. But these were mercifully minor. Rajan once fell and hurt his back quite badly. At Wyand, the leeches invariably attached themselves to the more attractive Anns and had to be detached with salt or cigarette butts. Our Rotarians were most chivalrous.

The return journey would invariably be as boisterous as the onward one. We would be sorry that the trip was over but we would go home relaxed and ready for the daily battle. It was always thanks to organisers like Renjit who made perfection a passion and ensured that even the smallest detail was not overlooked. And we would invariably look forward to the next outstation visit. Over the years, some of us would even get non-Rotarians to join and they too loved these trips. They would be amazed at the warmth our Club exuded and the way we made non-Rotarians feel at home.



## 8 *Southerners love quiz contests (and sometimes the quiz master)*

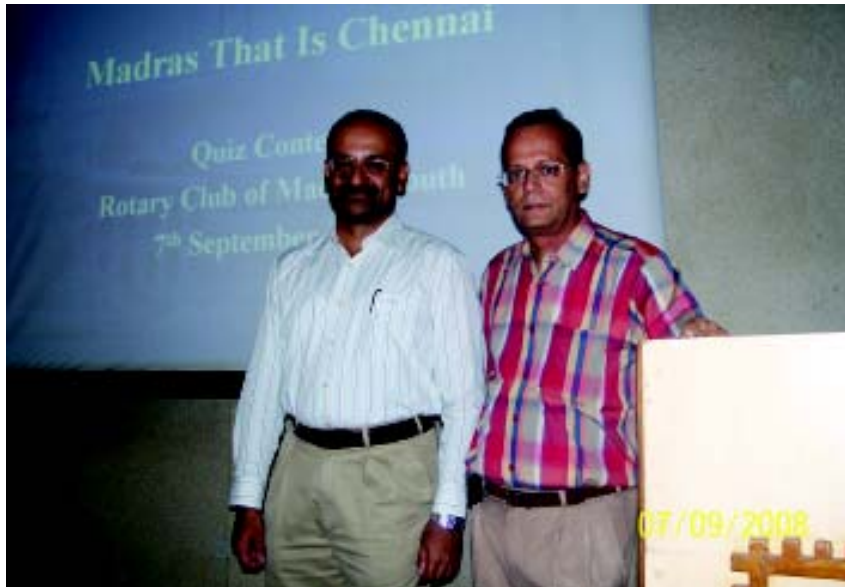
by V Sriram

What is it about quizzing that excites everyone, adults and children? Or, to use Rotary-speak, Rotarians, Anns, Annettes – and grand-annettes as well if such a term can be coined?

Our club has more or less institutionalised the Rotary Quiz as part of the annual entertainment and it has as in most other activities of our club provided some good, clean and wholesome fun. In the early years it was Rtn Seshadri's baby, but during the past few years Rtn Sriram V too may claim paternity.

We have had general quizzes and thematic quizzes and in the latter, the only topic we have had so far is Chennai/Madras, the city that we love to live in

*Quizmasters V Sriram and R Seshadri*



and complain about. The methodology has been fairly simple so far. We announce a quiz, keep procrastinating on the questions till the last minute, curse freely and then put together the whole show which has so far been widely acclaimed (if you can say praise by 70 Rotarians is wide acclaim) though some Anns have complained that the quality of questions is pretty basic. But then, in all humility, we must say we never aimed for Mastermind and our prizes are not in the KBC category.

Talking about prizes, we have had just about anything – from pencils (courtesy Rajesh Sahi), to plastic containers and in the year when BB Vengatesh was President, a conscientious Ann Anjana got a whole lot of healthcare, dental care and cosmetic items as gifts. These were greatly appreciated. But the prizes hardly mattered. What everyone enjoyed most were the banter, the vociferous arguments on questions and the big fights if the score was miscalculated.

The venue has been Tag Centre for quite a few years now and a grand venue it has proven to be. Good acoustics, seating comfort, air-conditioning, a wide screen and all the modern gizmos. Our Rtn Chari scrimps at nothing. (Plus of course the “fellowship” and dinner that follow.) And so there we assemble. As each Rotarian, Ann and Annette arrives, their names are written down on slips of paper and placed in three containers (one for Rotarian, the second for the Ann and third for the Annette). The teams are allocated members by a draw of lots from the containers, the first lady of the club usually doing the honours. Each team usually contains two Rotarians, two Anns and two Annettes with the latter two doing most of the thinking while the Rotarian usually does all the domestic chores such as writing down answers, trying to listen in on the arguments at the neighbouring table and see if the answer can be overheard, try and argue for more time etc.

Behind the teams sits the audience, three to four rows deep and filled with the greatest enthusiasm. On some occasions highly gung-ho members of the audience (our Rtn PV Laxminarayana's name like that of Abou Ben Adhem leads all the rest) would shout out answers even before the question was asked and would have to be reined in. It is for these reasons that the quizmaster invariably needed to have extra questions stashed away and that is one reason why quizmaster Sriram has been balding rapidly. You would not be wrong in saying he has balded.





*Left: The Srikanths and a guest at a quiz fellowship, Right: Rtn V Sriram and Sharada with Avinash and Abhinav – adjudged the best-dressed family.*

But between him and Seshadri they always ensured a hi-tech quiz with audio, visual and film clips. And given the enthusiasm of the audience each round of questions always included two questions exclusively for the audience. The Tag projector could on occasion be temperamental but it invariably wilted under the impact of Rtn Chari's disciplinary eye and behaved itself. Ditto for the audience which could always be quelled with a stony "Quiz Master's decision is final".

Rtn Seshadri, given his ad- background/ could be safely counted on to come up with some crazy ideas and these were usually great hits. One year we had a round on identifying Rotarians based on shots of their rear. For some it was the back of their head but Sridharan was game to have his posterior photographed and was identified at once by several Anns. Another year we had Rotarians and Anns singing out the Radio Mirchi signature line and their voice had to be identified from the recording. In yet another year we had wedding photographs of our Rotarians and the couple had to be identified.



By a strange quirk of fate, several Rotarians got their own wedding photos to identify. And blow us all if Rtn NV Bala kept mum when his team got his wedding photo. The question passed on and was correctly identified by someone else. A storm broke over Bala's head and he explained that being the gentleman that he is, he thought he should not give his team an unfair advantage. But Ann Lakshmi was not convinced. Seshadri was also a great source for television ads and clips of famous personalities and these made for very good questions.

The Chennai quizzes were fun in their own way. They were held to commemorate Madras Day which falls each year in August. And who would have thought that our own dignified PDG Rtn Ramakrishna Raja was familiar enough with Madras Bhashai to know what Mary meant? (Mary is a female Peter, for the uninitiated). The song and dance sequences from Tamil films in which Chennai featured were very interesting too. The Chennai quiz has of course proven a wee bit difficult for those among our Rotarians who are new to the city but they have gamely tried their best.

The choice of scorer for the quiz was a difficult one. One year, at Falor's farm, our Rtn Balakrishnan let his mind wander even as he kept the score, and Anns and Annettes had to be restrained from doing bodily violence to him. Since then we have had Rtns Renjit and Mani P Sam. Amity has ever since prevailed though many a Rotarian is known to run and virtually breathe down the scorer's neck each time a round ends.

The quizzes have always ended with fellowship and dinner and the latter sees animated discussions on the positives and negatives of several questions. Quite a feast of reason and flow of soul.



## 9 *Chennai has great speakers, and most of them have addressed Madras South!*

by S R Madhu

This is a true story about Carnatic music wizard Sanjay Subrahmanyam. Soon after 9/11 devastated New York, he applied for a US visa – he had been invited to sing at a series of concerts in American cities. The U.S. visa officer in Chennai called him for an oral interview.

The American told Sanjay Subrahmanyam “You say you are a singer. Please sing a song.” Sanjay was astonished. Recovering, he sang an *alapana* “which Ariyakudi and Musiri would have approved of”. But the visa officer was not impressed. ‘Sing a song with words,’ he told me.... I then sang a Thyagraja kirtana. I apparently convinced him that I was indeed a singer. I got the visa.”



*Carnatic music vocalist Sanjay Subrahmanyam who spoke at our club.*

After Sanjay landed in the US, the immigration officer told Sanjay: “You are a singer, what kind of music do you do?” Carnatic music, Sanjay said. “Is that like jazz?” asked the officer. No, said Sanjay, wondering whether he would have to demonstrate his prowess once more. Fortunately not, he was let in.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam narrated this anecdote at a talk given to our club nearly seven years ago. Sanjay is one of 250-odd speakers I have arranged for the Rotary Club of Madras South as programme committee chairman for the past 12 years – 1998 to 2010. I have enjoyed every minute of it.

In 1997, I joined the Rotary Club of Madras South. The following year, Rtn Natarajan Nagoji, then president of my club, asked me to become the club’s

programme committee chairman. What’s that, I asked. “You’ll have to organize speakers every week for the club,” he said. “How wonderful!” I thought. I said “Yes” before Nagoji could change his mind. I have held on to this portfolio ever since – including 2000-01 when I was president of my club.

It’s not difficult to get good speakers in Chennai. This is a metro, it is a happening city of six million people, a film capital, a city soaked in music, theatre and cinema, a city with a varied and impressive heritage. It’s hyper-active politically, vibrant economically and socially.

Chennai has top professionals in every discipline, plus businessmen and entrepreneurs small and big. It has a large government bureaucracy plus a little army of ex-IAS officers from all over India who have settled here. It has men and women achievers, and a few lakh aspiring youth with stars in their eyes and fire in the belly.

Chennai has top Rotarians too! Plus Lions and Round Tablers. A rich mine of speakers and doers worth harvesting!

Further, Chennai is a loquacious city: people love to talk – even if it doesn’t quite match Kolkata (where talking is pastime no.1). And Chennai has no dearth of problems of every kind that need to be discussed and solved. So, finding speakers in Chennai – the problem is one of abundance, not one of scarcity.

Here are glimpses into some of the best speakers Madras South has heard during the past 12 years.

### Some great speakers: medical care

The first speaker I organised was **Dr Arjun Rajagopalan** of the Sundaram Medical Foundation. He is a top doctor and medical administrator, and a computer wizard – but his passion is public speaking, and he is wonderfully articulate. He has addressed our club three times – about the cost of medical care zooming out of control, about current medical trends, about unethical promotion of drugs and other health-care devices. He held us spell-bound, as he always does everywhere.



Medical topics are ideal for the 20-minute format of Rotary clubs. All of us are interested in health and well-being. There are specialists and good speakers for every ailment, in fact for every organ of the human body! When doctors tell us about how to prevent or treat heart attacks, cancer, diabetes, cholera, malaria, TB, jaundice, polio – or what to do with problems concerning your back, your skin, eyes, ears, hair, teeth, limbs, kidneys, prostate – they command a ready audience provided they speak well.



*Dr Arjun Rajagopalan.*

**Dr Shriram Bharadwaj** gave us a wonderful talk on plastic surgery. I remember his charming humility. When I phoned him, he said, “I’m doing a surgery right now, may I call you after some time?” I said of course. He spoke beautifully. **Dr K Ganapathy** gave us a hypnotic presentation on the marvels and mysteries of the brain. **Dr K Ramasubramaniam** of Apollo dealt with Chikungunya. **Dr Krishna Srinivas** spoke on neurology, **Dr Sheela Mohan** unveiled the mysteries of genetics.

**Dr Hiramalini Seshadri** spoke about the wondrous healing power of music. “Even animals and plants are moved by music,” she said. “It can make cows yield more milk or plants grow better.” She remarked: “The impact of music can be seen from the womb to the grave. Music can reduce stress, induce sleep, strengthen bonding within a family and within a community, it can make death less painful, it can even reverse the process of aging.”

**Dr K P Misra**, known for his sparkling wit, addressed us twice – unfortunately, he has left Chennai and returned to his home state of Orissa.

**Dr R Jayaraman** spoke to us about combating cancer. **Dr Suniti Solomon** addressed us twice, once on AIDS, later on how citizens should pay a little to support the cause of making ambulances available for medical emergencies, particularly road accidents. **Dr Saranya Nandakumar** gave us an excellent talk on “Joys and perils of being a doctor”. (She has written a popular book, “What’s up, doc?” on her experiences as a doctor).

Alternative systems of medicine are equally effective with Rotary audiences. We heard **Cliff Saldanha** give a hypnotic presentation on pranik healing. He

said he was an active sportsman, he had been injured so many times. Were it not for pranik healing, he wouldn’t even be able to walk. We have had talks on yoga, on Reiki, on the art of living, on Tai Chi (by Swati Iyengar, who later joined our club as member).

I must mention one of the most amazing speakers I have heard – **Shihan Husaini** on Karate. Husaini has a stentorian voice that can be heard across floors – his presentation was a combination of theatre and fiery oratory.

**Vijayalakshmi Panthaiyan** gave us a remarkable talk on “Alpha mindpower.” She said most of us use only the left side of the brain. “Alpha mindpower” enables you to use the right side as well. “Practice of Alpha meditation for just 15 minutes every day can improve your memory, sharpen your brain, and make you a ‘creator of circumstances’ rather than a ‘creature of circumstances’”. I recommended Panthaiyan’s name to several Rotary clubs, once to Tata Consultancy Services who wanted an inspirational speaker – feedback has always been highly positive.

**Dr N Shalini** gave us a gripping talk on stress management. **Prof Kumar Babu**, formerly head of the department of psychiatry from Stanley Medical College, entertained us with a very witty talk on “Maximizing your potential”. He is easy to access and likes sharing his expertise.

### Music, dance, movies and the arts

RC of Madras South has always been musically inclined. Some delightful talks and demonstrations on music were therefore a hit at our club. In 1997, we invited **Anooradha Sriram** to address a joint meeting of four clubs. I phoned Anooradha several times to schedule the meeting; she was courteous but evasive. But I got her husband Sriram Parasuram on the phone and followed up by calling on him. The talk was on. Anooradha spoke beautifully about her career in music, her research at a US university where she came in touch with Sriram, she also gave us snatches of several songs. The audience was sorry when the talk was over, they would have liked the meeting to go on a little longer!

Two other excellent talks with song snippets were given by Carnatic music vocalist **S Sowmya** and by pop singer **Shuba Kailash**. I have already



mentioned Sanjay Subrahmanyam's talk, which was full of humour. He said that just before any trip to the US, several relatives and friends materialize suddenly, with packages to be taken to their relatives in the US!

**Trichur Ramachandran**, his wife **Charumati** and daughter **Subhashri** gave us for the first time a simultaneous performance by three artists. It was a *jugalbandi* with a difference. Trichur focused on Hindustani music, his wife and daughter Subashri sang Carnatic. That was a memorable evening which many still remember. Singing star **Manu Narayan**, of *Bombay Dreams* fame, gave us a scintillating talk on the success of Indians in American theatre. He also gave us a memorable rendering of the play's theme song.

**Actress Suhasini Maniratham** took us on a tour – not of the glamour world of cinema but the incredible world of rural India. She had been interviewing and profiling rural women of Tamil Nadu for a TV channel, and she spoke to us about her experiences, some of them unbelievable. She told us that in some parts of our state, the wives are far older than the husbands. In fact, the wife carries her “husband,” still a kid, on her shoulder! Winds of feminism may be blowing in urban India, but rural India is still centuries behind, Suhasini said. On the other hand, some rural women are as aware and intelligent as her urban counterparts. (This was a joint meeting with the Rotary Club of Adyar, its then president Aruna got Suhasini to speak.)

We heard a marvelous talk on M S Subbulakshmi by **Gowri Ramnarayan** – journalist, a singer herself, and related to M.S. She was moist-eyed when she recalled her association with the legend. Gowri said MS had donated about Rs 7 crores to various causes – about Rs 2 crores more than India's most respected industrialist J R D Tata.

A young amateur singer named **Rakesh Raghunathan** sang half a dozen melodious Hindi and Tamil songs at a regular meeting. Recently, **Madurai G S Mani** gave us a lovely talk on Carnatic music and film music.

The golden boy of Carnatic music criticism, **V Sriram**, is a member of our club. This engineer-cum-business manager-cum computer expert is also one of the most natural speakers I have come across, with a fluency, wit and persuasive flair that are remarkable, and a memory for dates, names and places that's uncanny. He is much in demand in the city for talks on Carnatic music; he spoke a couple of years ago on Devadasis, the subject of one of his

books. During our golden jubilee year, he spoke to a joint meeting of four Rotary clubs on “Chennai, crazy Chennai”. I have recommended Sriram's name to several other clubs. He sweeps audiences off their feet everywhere.

Another charming speaker – fluent, forceful, with an excellent command of subject and language – is **Dr Chithra Madhavan**, an expert on temples and temple architecture. She conveys her passion with controlled calm. She gave us an engrossing slide presentation on temples of south India.



*Dr Chithra Madhavan.*

There have been splendid talks on dance as well. **Vidya Bhavani Suresh** gave us an eloquent dance demonstration titled “Appreciating Bharata Natyam,” and later, another talk on “Appreciating the fine arts”. Vidya is versatile – a chartered accountant, a writer, dancer and musicologist and director of a dance academy. She speaks with the verve and conviction that's possible only with genuine knowledge. She castigates dance teachers who ask five-year-old girls to emote romance and romantic love. This can impact on a child's thinking and psyche, she says.

**Leela Samson**, the director of Kalakshetra, made a gracious presentation on what dance means to her, relating her experiences and observations, also discussing the work of Kalakshetra and the forces that inspire this great institution. Dancer **Sujata Srinivasan** gave us a delightful peek into her life in the US – where she serves as a busy wife and mother, and finds time to run a dance school for both American and Indian pupils. Sujata accepted my invitation to speak though she had to leave for the US immediately after the talk – she drove for the airport from Hotel Savera!



Likewise, **Sumitra Nitin**, talented Bangalore-based singer-dancer-computer

*Singer-dancer Sumitra Nitin*



professional, spoke on “Music, dance and motherhood,” regaling us with her many and varied experiences. She said she was an indifferent student of Carnatic music as a child, until an M S Subbulakshmi tape electrified her. Her most challenging computer assignment was to design software for a Danish slaughter house. A Danish newspaper interviewed her and headlined the story “Hindu vegetarian does software for Danish slaughter house!”



*Sangeeta Iswaran.*

**Sangeeta Iswaran**, dancer and social activist, gave us an absorbing talk on her experiences as a dancer in bridging communities and countries. The late **Gemini Ganesh** gave us a peppy, witty talk way back in 1998. A couple of years ago, **Dr K Hariharan**, a first-rate filmmaker and head of the Prasad Academy, spoke provocatively and with professional and anecdotal flair on “Bollywood, Kollywood and Hollywood”.

He said “We make 1,000 movies, Hollywood can make only 15 movies at such a cost. But make no mistake, we are not a cottage industry. We use state-of-the-art film production, editing and processing equipment – which only top Hollywood film-makers can afford.” Film historian and humorist **Randor Guy** spoke thrice at our club, sharing with our members many stories, anecdotes and jokes on movie and theatre personalities of yesteryear.

### Education

The best talk I have ever heard on education was by **Dr V Vasanthi Devi**, a former Vice-Chancellor and chairperson of numerous committees on education and women. She spoke with passion and deep anguish about the state of primary education in India. She thundered, “No country has failed as deplorably as India in creating a literate society. A hundred million children are not in school ...India, the knowledge superpower and world leader in software, houses half of the world’s illiterate people and two-thirds of the world’s child labour. Everyone is guilty – governments, the corporate world, the elite of society.”

She added: “Just a miniscule percentage of the population is the standard-bearer of a ‘shining India’. An elite-ruled and elite-governed education system is indifferent to the education of the masses. While centres of excellence like the IITs compete with the world’s best, the public school system is dismal. Many primary schools in India have just one teacher. The elite doesn’t worry, because ‘our’ children don’t suffer, ‘their’ children can be offered a few crumbs. While some schools are mansions of privilege and profit, wretched one-room hovels reflect the deprivation of rural India.”

**Bhavani Raghunandan**, principal of Vidya Mandir, and **Prema Raghunath**, formerly with Vidya Mandir but now an education consultant, spoke about values, discipline and quality in school education. **Dr P V Indiresan**, formerly director of IIT Madras, gave us a witty thought-provoking talk on how reservations impair quality in education, perpetuate backwardness and help neither education nor the deprived. **Rtn N Krishnan** gave us an excellent talk on IITs. An IIT Kharagpur alumnus, he attended the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this institution two years ago. He gave us many quotes and anecdotes relating to eminent IITians.

More recently, **Dr V C Kulandaiswamy**, former Vice-Chancellor of Anna University, spoke about higher education in India. He said our country needs 2,500 universities by 2020, as against the few hundred we have now.

### Industry, business, management, economics

Industry, business and management are natural subjects for Rotary clubs, considering all the tycoons and entrepreneurs who are members!

**Mr V Balaraman**, formerly managing director of Pond’s, now a consultant, gave us a fascinating talk on leadership. HR wizard **Rajan Srikanth**, who has advised companies all over the globe, gave us a gripping PowerPoint presentation on attrition and retention of staff.

**The late S Ramachander**, former head of IFMR (Institute of Financial Management and Research) and a prolific author and consultant, highlighted the “myths and mysteries of management,” He said: “Management is not an exact science. Making it sound like one is a fraud.” He made the interesting point that Germans don’t have a foothold in India because of our reckless





approach to time. “We don’t factor in the cost of time, this frustrates Germans.”

**Mr C Sarat Chandran** of the Indo-Australian Chamber of Commerce spoke about “Fifty years of management education in India.” While expressing pride in the fact that India is suddenly the toast of the word, he made the point that India’s much-vaunted management gurus have not given the world a single Indian brand. He said technology rather than management (IT, outsourcing) is what has done India proud.

In 1998, industry and business in India were stagnating because of the sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the west following our nuclear test. But **Dr James Daniel Paul**, economist, gave us an optimistic and well-documented talk on “Strengths of the Indian economy”. He said India had the strength and resilience to bear the sanctions, they would have to be lifted anyway. He was proved right.

Noted economist **Venkatesh Athreya** unveiled for us the mysteries of the Chinese economy. He said that despite China’s free market reforms, the government was still the main driver of the Chinese economy. **Mr S Sundararajan**, who spent 30-odd years with the IMF and then became a consultant to several governments, explained the esoteric world of Islamic banking. I’ll always remember that I invited management consultant S Ramachander as a guest to this lecture, and he wrote about the subject and the talk in *Hindu Businessline*.

**Rtn M Keshav** gave our club a witty management talk with a difference. He said the simple world TEA summed up three golden rules for personal effectiveness – time, energy and attitude. “You must regulate, monitor and audit your time, your energy and your attitude.” He addressed us again on the topic “Act, don’t react.”

More recently, economist and chartered accountant **R Venkatesh** startled club members: he said the collapse of the US economy is inevitable, it is a matter of when rather than if. He questioned the rationale of globalization, which he described as a one-size-fits-all prescription – supposed to be equally good for rich and poor countries, for exporters and importers, for extravagant and frugal economies. He said American profligacy fuels the world’s prosperity. The world will pay a heavy price one day for the lopsided nature of the international economic system.

## Governance

**Mr B S Raghavan** has been one of the best speakers at our club. Twice he analysed the Union Budget for us, on another occasion he spoke about the cancer of corruption. He is cogent, forceful and thought-provoking, with a searchlight mind that illumines the truth.

**Mr N Vittal**, former Vigilance Commissioner, lauded the potential of “citizenpower”. At a more recent meeting, he talked about the Gujarat model of governance, pointing out that Narendra Modi’s people-centric policies and personal integrity ensured his re-election despite the formidable forces ranged against him.

**Mr R K Raghavan** spoke to us about police reforms – conveying the anguish of all thinking people over the way politicians have consistently opposed professionalization of the police force. They want the police to serve only their vested interests.

**Mr G V Ramakrishna**, one of India’s most respected IAS officers, talked about the Indo-US nuclear deal, taking it apart in a cool, detached and clinically efficient manner. He said the nuclear deal didn’t stand scrutiny if one applied the yardstick of cost-efficiency, But a contrary view was expressed in another meeting by **Mr L V Krishnan**, former director of the physics group at the Kalpakkam plant. He said that India’s serious energy shortfalls made the nuclear deal necessary.

**Dr Prateep Philip**, IG of Police explained the rationale and the tremendous potential of the Friends of the Police movement, for lowering crime and improving law and order.

This year, **Mr M G Devasahayam** addressed us about urban development. He said urban planning doesn’t exist in India. Chandigarh was a planned city, but planned by foreigners. It became an elitist city that shut out the poor while it should have been inclusive. Likewise, **Mrs Tara Murali**, architect and social activist, deplored the one-dimensional approach to urban planning,



*Dr Prateep Philip,  
Inspector-General of Police*



with no coordination among the various authorities or departments concerned with governance. She says piecemeal solutions will not help; a holistic plan designed for better living is essential.

### National security

**Mr B Raman**, formerly with RAW, gave us an informative but disturbing talk on India's many security challenges. He said India had lost more civilians and military men to terrorism than the rest of the world combined.

Talking about Manipur, he said this small state had the world's highest concentration of heroin addicts. Incidence of AIDS was high and public disaffection with the government was strong. Political redress, not suppression, was the right policy in Manipur – as was successfully demonstrated by Rajiv Gandhi in Nagaland and Mizoram. He said that Naxalites were active in eight states of India, and in fact formed a nexus with the Maoists in Nepal. He was distressed that strategic long-term thinking on security challenges was totally absent in India.

**Mr T Anantachari**, former Director-General of the Border Security Force, said India has 22 land and sea neighbours and faces grave security challenges. But awareness and action are lacking on the part of both policy-makers and the public. He revealed that India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru thought India didn't need an Army, and the police could guard our borders! Mr Anantachari was very critical of the fact that millions of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants live in India. Most of them have bribed their way to Indian citizenship, in collusion with unscrupulous politicians who see them as a vote bank. It is Bangladeshis who decide today who will rule Assam, Mr Anantachari said. **Dr Gita Madhavan** (the first lady to have acquired a PhD on the topic of terrorism) gave a well-documented talk on terrorism, its history, its manifestations.

### Media & Communication

**Mr N Ram**, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu*, castigated the Government of India for its decision to go nuclear, at a meeting of our club in 1998. He spoke on another occasion on Indo-Pakistan relations. Mr Ram's speeches

*TV journalist Alaphia Zoyab spoke at our club, was later picked for a GSE team to Denmark. Below: Alaphia in Washington DC, interviewing a Senator on the night Mr Barack Obama was elected President. She now serves Amnesty International.*



are clinical, incisive and meticulously crafted – just like his writings.

**Mr. P. C. Ramakrishna**, the best-known “voice” of Chennai, gave us a first-rate talk on communication and mis-communication.

NDTV correspondent **Alaphia Zoyab** gave us a superb talk on TV reporting. She spoke about her coverage of the Kumbakonam school fire (“a heart-breaking assignment”), the Sankaracharya arrest and court trials (she was shocked at the “nakedly manipulative” conduct of the police during the entire period, the “life-altering” tsunami of December 2004, the “passion, anger and drama” of the strike by Tamil Nadu government employees, the floods of 2005 when she had to wade through knee-deep filthy water.



Likewise, **Anooradha Ananth** (now with NDTV Hindu, then an anchor with SS Music) gave us an effortless and beautifully articulate presentation of her TV career. Alaphia and Anuradha are two talented and charming young women – and do they know how to communicate!

**Mr Ravi Bernard** of Jaya TV and **Mr B S Raghavan** discussed media and social responsibility at a joint meeting of our club with the Rotary Club of Madras North. Mr Barnard said a media scholar had in 1956 propounded four theories of the press (the authoritarian theory, the libertarian theory, the social responsibility theory, the Soviet communist theory). But what governed Indian media today was the theory of corporatism. Most television media



had money as their sole objective – not education, not entertainment. He recalled that Coca Cola once cancelled sponsorship of a TV programme because the blue colour was prominent – it was the colour of Pepsi!

Mr B S Raghavan on the other hand, was more optimistic. He said that Indian media were by and large more responsible and less sensational than the media of the US and Europe, because of 10,000 years of tradition. We are a pluralist society, a polyglot country. Neither the media nor our politicians could afford to antagonize any section of society. It had to respect the lakshman rekha.

**Indu Balachandran** provided a riot of laughter with her talk on humour in advertising. She put together a PowerPoint presentation based on humorous ads in print and television. She showed the audience a placard she had brought with a single injunction – “Laugh!” She didn’t need the placard.

Veteran adman **S A Ayer** gave us a moving obituary of ad wizard David Ogilvy, a personal friend of his. **R V Rajan** introduced us to the intricacies of rural marketing, **R Seshadri** gave us a passionate deep-felt talk on advertising, while **Chandu Nair** bared the mysteries of marketing.

We heard a stimulating presentation by **R Jeevanandam** and **Ms Nitya Balaji** on their NGO outfit “Nalamdana”, which uses street theatre, audio tapes, tele serials, video films and jigsaw puzzles to promote information and action on health issues – notably AIDS, maternal health and child health. Nalamdana has conducted hundreds of street plays which have reached out to more than a million people.

Chennai’s ace blogger **Kiruba Shankar** had us glued to our seats a few weeks ago with a delightful talk on “blogs, bloggers and blogging”. He urged everyone to take to blogging. It costs nothing, it can make you famous, it can help you professionally. He said he had not applied or been interviewed for a single job: his

*Jayanand Govindaraj gave us a presentation of his best photographs, including this one of cheetahs in Kenya.*



blogs got noticed and inspired job offers. Sunil Saxena gave us a wide-sweeping talk on “the media yesterday, today and tomorrow.”

Photographer **Usha Kris** showed us some of her best slides many years ago (factories, temples, tourist attractions round the world). More recently, **Jayanand Govindaraj** gave us glimpses into the wilds of Kenya, some unusual urban landscapes, even street life in Mylapore.

### Expatriate Speakers

Several expatriates have addressed our club. US Consul-General, **Mr David Hopper** painted a rosy, upbeat picture of Indo-US relations, American consul **Ragini Gupta** spoke about her diplomatic stint in Pakistan before her Chennai posting. She said the ruling military establishment there was somewhat suspicious about a woman of Indian origin representing the US, but gradually warmed up to her. They turned out to be wonderful and hospitable hosts. Ragini said Pakistan’s judiciary and media are almost as free as in India, and give politicians a tough time. She blamed the media of both India and Pakistan for aggravating distrust and animosity between the two countries.

**Ms Nancy Reisig**, HR chief of Ford in Chennai, gave a lovely talk about her four years in India. She said she would always remember the sights, sounds and smells of India – the bangle shops in Hyderabad, the tinkling of puja bells every morning in her neighbour’s house, the flower garlands of Chennai, the large containers of multi-coloured spices and lentils. She was impressed by the reverence for elders, the attachment to family, the strength of spirituality – “which was evident everywhere, not just in the temples of Thiruvannamalai” India’s diversities never failed to amaze her. She was intrigued by Indian English – expressions like “good name,” “do the needful” or “prepone” – some of which were so logical that they had become a part of her own vocabulary!

Four visa officers from the American consulate (most recently, **Mr Mark Mishkin**) addressed us at different times about US policies on visas and trends and patterns in visa applications and how they were dealt with.

**Mr Paul Martin**, political-economic adviser at the consulate, discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the American economy. He said that with just 5%



of the world's population, the US accounted for a quarter of the world's output. Its GDP was more than twice that of second-ranking Japan. The strength of the US economy was its competitiveness, this in turn was on account of four factors. It adapted quickly to change, it was knowledge-based, it attracted the best talent worldwide, it had a sound regulatory framework.

Zambia-born US-based writer and humorist **Melvin Durai** gave a 20-minute talk at the rate of a joke a minute (almost). He said, "Almost anywhere in the world, you can find a store called Patel Brothers. That makes me wonder: What are all the Patel sisters doing? Why must the brothers have all the fun? But just go into any Patel Brothers store and who do you think is doing all the work? The Patel Sisters."

He said an NRI could stand for non-resident Indian or non-returning Indian. "But when my wife calls me an NRI, she means "non-romantic Indian." He said the saris and salwar kameezes of Indian women cover skin, but Melvin asserts their main function is to afford protection from mosquitoes.

**Mrs Peggy Dwyer**, an American married to an English oil-drilling expert, regaled us with her talk on "India through American eyes". Equally charming were the American cakes she baked herself and distributed to us at the meeting! **Ms Paula Hall**, an American businesswoman who had lived for a year in Chennai, said she not merely loved Chennai, she felt homesick for it when she was in the US!

Another American, **Patrick Davenport** (who runs a leather goods firm, is a partner in a furniture company and runs a delicatessen in the American International School) said he felt completely secure in Chennai, he couldn't say the same about his home town Detroit. He deplored the fact that there are foreigners in Chennai who don't know where Mylapore is, who haven't seen Fort St. George – "they don't know what they are missing".

**Dr Gabrielle Landwehr** of Max Mueller Bhavan, who describes herself as a "cultural gypsy" talked to us about Indo-German relations.

### Chennai & Living in Chennai

Chennai, its problems, challenges and lifestyles interest all of us.

**Mr S Muthiah**, historian and chronicler of Chennai and peerless Heritage warrior, gave us a characteristically well-researched talk on traffic and transportation in Chennai, pulling up the authorities for poor road planning and the road-users (both pedestrians and motorists) for lack of discipline.

**Mr Bharat Jairaj** of the CAG (Consumer Action Group) was first-rate. He addressed our club twice – once on consumer action and the CAG's activism, later on the CMDA's master plan, its strengths and weaknesses. He urged everyone concerned, including Rotarians, to make the effort to read the CMDA's master plan, discuss it and convey their views and suggestions to the CMDA. We did so.

Our club joined in the splendid initiative of **Mr Muthiah, Mr Vincent D'Souza, Mr V Sriram** and others to observe a Madras week in August every year. In fact our club usually observes a Madras month – with three or four lectures on Chennai.

**Geeta Doctor**, writer, art critic and food connoisseur, gave us entertaining insights on "The changing face of Chennai" with some delightful personal anecdotes. She said she visited Karaikudi in the 1960s to do a story on Nattukottai chettiaris for the *Illustrated Weekly of India*. Much to her discomfiture, the Chettiaris she spoke to were bare-bodied, as is their custom; they didn't address her when she shot her questions, they addressed her husband. But she did get her story in this indirect fashion! Geeta said she had bought her present spacious home in Chetpet for Rs 1.2 lakhs from a neighbour who owned 81 bungalows! Now it seems like a steal, but it was a lot of money some decades ago.

Geeta Doctor said there are three things Chennai badly needs – a beautiful well-maintained beach; a Buckingham Canal and a Cooum river that look the way they looked decades ago; and a hub of art and culture like New Delhi's India International Centre.

The **Prince of Arcot, Nawab Mohammad Ali**, spoke about "Chennai, the gracious city". He said that unlike other cities, Chennai always exemplifies



communal harmony. He praised both the character of Chennai (it is quiet and calm, not violent and volatile like other Metros), and the city's people (for their intrinsic fairness and decency). He was critical, however, of the indifference to cleanliness in the city. He said everyone – the government, the institutions of Chennai, and the people – should share blame for what our city looks like today.

On another occasion, **Mr Ajay Kumar Nahar**, a Jain entrepreneur born and bred in Chennai, spoke about “Rajasthanis in Chennai”. He gave us amusing and informative insights into the lifestyles and business practices of Rajasthanis. Ms Anuradha Uberoi, behavioural psychologist, talked about “Punjabis in Chennai”. She said she moved to Chennai from Punjab because of marriage to a Chennai businessman, now she doesn't feel at home anywhere else.

### Miscellaneous

A few other speakers in brief. **Mr Karti Chidambaram** made a forceful speech on youth and national development, He urged the middle class to take to politics and make it better, instead of running down politicians all the time.

We have had a few very interesting talks on travel and tourism. **V Sriram** told us about his business trip to Saudi Arabia, where many myths and misconceptions were shattered. Mr **Gautaman Bhaskaran** of *The Hindu*, told us about Japan, **Mr V Sreenivasan** about China. Photographer **Usha Kris** gave us slide show of her travels to Mexico.

**Ms Vidya Reddy**, executive director of Tulir – which raises awareness and promotes action to prevent sexual abuse – gave us a stunning talk on “Child sexual abuse: breaking the silence.” **Ms Nina Reddy**, executive director of Savera and the lady who has made this hotel a red-hot profit machine, spoke on “The hospitality business”.

**Ms Nina John** gave us a scintillating talk on “Women entrepreneurs”. At one time, she said, women entrepreneurs were identified only with pickles, powders and pappad, Today they were into everything – banking, IT, the beauty business, biotech, event management, manufacture. Among the entrepreneurs she mentioned were Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Shahnaz Husain, Ekta Kapur, Nina Reddy, Lata Mohan, Preeta Reddy, Kiran Rao, Jayashree Hattangady, Hemu Ramiah, Ritu Nanda, Ritu Beri, Rina Dhaka, Vinita Jain,

Shoba Ponnappa, Sucharita Kumar, Anita Kaushik, Vandana Luthra, Anjali Mukherjee, Anita Ramachandran.

**Ms Ranjini Krishnamurthy**, UN consultant, made an elegant presentation on women's empowerment. **Ms Dharini Krishnan** spoke on “towards a healthier lifestyle”. Our grandfathers enjoyed sound health, we don't, she remarked. Her recipes for good health: “Home-cooked food, a balanced diet, regular exercise, relaxation through yoga, music, family togetherness.”

**Rtn Habibullah Basha** discussed his experiences as a lawyer and his views on law and justice. **Ms Geeta Ramseshan** spoke about the citizen and the law. She said that in law, unlike other professions, your own competence does not determine success. According to Justice Douglas of the US Supreme Court, “A judgment depends 90% on emotion, 10% on rationalization of that emotion.” She described the government as the biggest litigant in India. It was partly responsible for the huge backlog of cases in courts. Some other reasons: not enough judges, antiquated laws, prohibitive cost, the lack of access in the legal system.

**Mr A Vaidyanathan** spoke on interlinking of rivers – he thought the idea was dangerous and impractical. **Mr Sekar Raghavan** told us about the need for rainwater harvesting and how it could be done. **Mr G Datattri** spoke about the greening of Chennai. **Mr R Swaminathan** about environmental engineering, Ms **V R Devika** and **Dr V Padma** (“Mangai”) about the folklore of Tamil Nadu. **Mr Venkatesh Salagrama** from Kakinada painted a grim picture of rural poverty in India.

I must end with the first talk every year at our club – it is by Past District Governor **Dr C S Ramachandran**. He explains and elucidates the Rotary theme of the year, with style and wit.

The speakers at Rotary Club of Madras South have brought us varied subjects, viewpoints and styles. I hope the members of our club enjoyed listening to them, as much as I enjoyed arranging the speakers.



Dr C S Ramachandran



## 10 The World of the Web

The first website of Madras South was spun and uploaded by me in 1999-2000. This 2-page website was one of the earliest websites in RI district 3230. It was expanded and made into a complete site in 2004-05 with information on the club's activities, projects, members and bulletin.

A few years ago, the site caught the eye of Mrs Premila Narasimhan, an Indian-American scientist based in the US, and she wrote to our club.

It transpired that she wanted to set up a memorial in Chennai to perpetuate the memory of her husband. She ended up donating Rs 25 lakhs to our club for our medical centre. The Saradambal Neelamegham Rotary Madras South Medical Centre was formally inaugurated in 2008.

The first website of RI 3230 was uploaded in 2000-01, during the Governorship of Rtn P T Ramkumar.

### How many websites in all? Nearly 207 million!

In March 2010, Netcraft, an Internet monitoring company, reported that there were 206,675,938 websites with domain names and content, compared to 18,000 in August 1995.

The web has caught all of us and there is no escape. It is everywhere. We had better learn to make use of it wisely. At one time, the question used to be posed "Are you awake or dreaming?" Now it is "Are you in the real world or the virtual world?"

Rotary Club of  
Madras South

[www.rotarymadrassouth.com](http://www.rotarymadrassouth.com)



There are dangers lurking in cyberspace. Just as we have learnt to live with murders, wars, and rape, we must survive hacking, phishing, cyber stalking and electronic vandalism.

Of the 207 million websites, here are half a dozen that you may find useful or interesting:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com>

<http://www.cnet.com/>

<http://oneworld.com>

<http://www.onesentence.org>

<http://www.rottentomatoes.com>

<http://www.basic-digital-photography.com/index.html>

– A G Shankar



## 11 *Bringing light and education to Cowl Bazar*

*“Even the RI President hailed the Cowl Bazar project – it marked the first time that Rotary anywhere in the world had ‘adopted’ a village.”*

**Cowl Bazaar**, a small village abutting the runway of Meenambakkam Airport, was “adopted” by Madras South in 1967, at the initiative of Rtn. Dietrich Schnebel, a German businessman of our club who lived in Pallavaram, and his wife, a missionary.

Cowl Bazar was founded some two centuries ago by an Englishman named Cowl, according to legend. The village had a population of about 1,300 (1961 census) and an area of 300 acres. It was known for quarry labourers, flowers and flower vendors. It had a primary school with a thatched, leaky roof. It was run by the local panchayat.

Madras South’s first activity in the village was a permanent structure to house the school. May George, a civil engineer and wife of Rtn. C.V. George, came up with a unique parabolic design for the school, using low-cost reinforcing materials for the concrete roof. This building attracts attention even today.

The club also constructed a platform around the community well in the village to prevent water stagnation, and an overhead tank. Health camps, piped water, and a TV set followed – Madras Governor Mohanalal Sukhadia “inaugurated” the

television set. Club members visited the school on special occasions, “I visited Cowl Bazar every year for more than 10 years on the school annual day, and presented Rs 1,000 for prizes for the kids,” says Rtn P V Laxminarayana.

Even the RI President is said to have hailed the Cowl Bazar project – it marked the first time that Rotary anywhere in the world had “adopted” a village. Rtn Dana Bergh and his wife visited the project too, and made a spot donation of US \$400.

Madras South was associated with Cowl Bazar for more than 12 years. The club withdrew because of rivalry between different groups in the village. Further, many members felt that the club had done enough there, it was time to move on and let the village population take over.

*All illustrations by the late cartoonist Sama of Kalki, a friend of our club and particularly of Rtn Dr S Ramaswamy. The Music Academy’s famous musical-instrument logo was created by Sama.*

*Minister M Muthuswamy addresses Cowl Bazar residents.*



## 12 This was about Cowl Bazar – published 43 years ago!

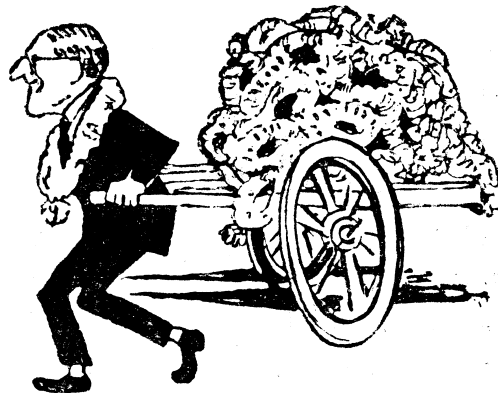
*Edited excerpts from a pamphlet brought out by Madras South 43 years ago. It's about the inauguration of street lights in Cowl Bazar village through Madras South on November 16, 1967. Read in particular what Minister Muthuswamy said about our club.*

At a meeting held at Cowl Bazaar village near Pallavaram, on Monday, 16th November 1967 at 7 pm, Thiru M Muthuswamy, BA, BT, Minister for Local Administration, Government of Madras, switched on the street lights, thereby bringing brightness to a village, which was until that day steeped in darkness.

This was a red letter day in the history of a village that is located far from the main road, amid greenery and multicoloured shrubbery.



*Guests submerged by garlands.*



*A cartload of flowers for Rtn Dietriche Schnebel.*

The local panchayat had made fine arrangements in its own simple and sincere way. The whole atmosphere was one of happiness and satisfaction. Seated on the dais were Rtn ANS, our president; community service director Rtn. Dietrich Schnebel; Minister Muthuswamy; Thiru P Sivasankaran, Member of Parliament for the village constituency; and the commissioner of the panchayat union, Mr. Nagasundaram.

This village lives by growing flowers. The guests on the dais were literally submerged by garlands. There were garlands of fragrant white jasmine, lovely red roses and golden yellow chrysanthemums. Rtn. Schnebel had a small cartload of flowers to carry home.

Mr Nagasundaram thanked the Rotary Club of Madras South for its munificent help. He said the club planned to provide better roads, drinking water, medical and educational facilities. Club president ANS had promised to award prizes and arrange a film show in the village on Children's Day, November 14, 1967.

Mr P Sivasankaran, MP, hoped the club could also help another village in his constituency, Ottiampakkam, which had no street lights or other amenities.

*President A N Srinivasa Rao spoke in beautiful Tamil.*





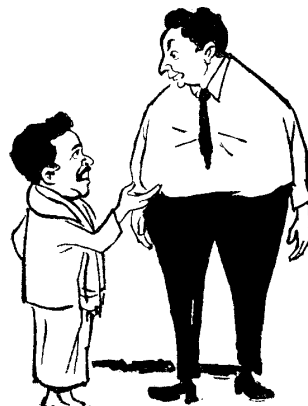


Rtn P S Chandramouli, horticulturist, offered the villagers vegetable seeds at cost.

Rtn. Director Schnebel said the club would do its best for the village through its contacts and influence. On a personal note, he said he had lived in India for 15 years; he was as much an Indian as everyone else.

Speaking in beautiful Tamil, President ANS explained the ideals of Rotary International and its four avenues of service. He announced that Rtn. P S Chandramouli, a leading horticulturist, had promised to give vegetable seeds at cost to the villagers and advise them on vegetable cultivation.

He hoped that service in this “flower village” would blossom and spread its fragrance far and wide.

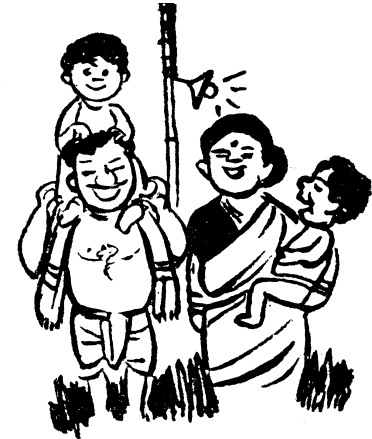


The *piece de resistance* of the evening was the Minister’s speech. Mr Muthuswamy said, “Rotary Club members have detailed the service they intend doing. We have 13,000 more panchayats. If only other Rotary clubs in the state take up such work, how easy will the government’s task become!

“It is a matter of pride for me that the Rotary Club of Madras South have thought of such service. Service to humanity is service to God. When I came here I was afraid that I would be flooded with petitions and complaints. There has been none.

“I see your panchayat president sitting there with a smile because he has got hold of bigger people than me, he does not need my help. If your village gives whole-hearted cooperation to these broadminded Rotarians, your conditions will improve automatically.

“I am sure that with Rotary’s help, your village will become as beautiful as the city of Madras, if not better. Many more such functions will follow. I am sure Chief Minister Anna will be present at one of them. It will be his privilege to compliment our Rotarian friends for their selfless service.”



“The panchayat president has caught hold of bigger people than me,” said the Minister, referring to our club.



## 13 *Making a difference to Thiruvidanthai*

*An array of amenities and services was provided in a village that had none.*

Say “Thiruvidanthai”, and senior members of the club get starry-eyed and come up with a bagful of memories. They recall it with pride and affection. This coastal village of 1,200 inhabitants is famous for its 1,000-year-old Adivaraha or Nitya Kalyana Perumal temple. But the village had almost no infrastructure to speak of till our club intervened.

In 1985, Madras South’s silver jubilee year, the club “adopted” the village. A phased programme of community service projects was initiated, thanks to a surplus of Rs 5 lakhs from RELF.

*Community hall and vocational centre at Thiuruvidanthai.*



*One drinking water well was renovated, another constructed.*

The club followed a methodical approach. It conducted a door-to-door survey to ascertain the needs of the villagers, also to acquaint them with Rotary. A coordinator, Mr P K Pavithran, was hired to visit Thiruvidanthai regularly (he did so almost every second day) and supervise progress. Madras South implemented several projects in the village. Over a period of six years, Rtn K.Gopalakrishnan and his wife Chitra spent several weekends at the village to speed up work and trouble-shoot as necessary.

### **An array of amenities and services**

- **Drinking water:** The club renovated an existing well at Therkupattu. and constructed a new one, using village labour. A piped system was introduced for drinking water, and inaugurated on December 19, 1986.
- **Health care:** A mini-health centre was set up in co-operation with VHS Hospital with two full-time para-medical workers. An immunization camp and a Polio Plus campaign were conducted earlier.
- **Community hall:** A community hall-cum-vocational centre was set up. Rtn R S Falor helped construct it. It also housed a TV room and a recreation room. A TV set was provided.





*Villagers at a function organized by the club.*

- **Primary education:** The poorly equipped village school got some badly needed furniture – tables, chairs and benches. The children got books and uniforms.

Says Rtn N Venkateswaran, “Before we gave the village a borewell, we pumped water from a well on the other side of the East Coast road, where one of the villagers owned the land. Rtn K V Murthy from our club donated a 15,000-litre steel water tank. It was brightly painted and bore the name of our club. Good publicity for our club!”

The projects relating to the mini-health centre and community hall were formally inaugurated on June 28, 1988. A grocery store and a cycle repair shed were also set up. Women were taught chalk-making and envelope making.

### **Grant from Rotary Foundation**

Rotary International was so impressed with Madras South’s work in Thiruvudanthai that in 1989-90, we received a grant of US 18,750 from the

Rotary Foundation (then equivalent to about Rs 3 lakhs) for income-generation projects at Thiruvudanthai, mainly rabbit-rearing and bee-keeping.

Training was provided in rabbit-rearing to 12 volunteers from Thiruvudanthai and Therkupattu; six of them bought rabbits, rabbit sheds, cages and equipment. Two other persons were imparted training in bee-keeping. Ten bee-boxes conforming to ISI standards were fabricated and supplied to the village, and bee colonies were established. A trained teacher took tailoring classes. Some of the village women were provided training in tailoring and embroidery in Chennai. Women trained were given loans for sewing machines.

### **New Rotary village**

The village panchayat decided to expand the village by distributing 12 acres of land on the southern end of Thiruvudanthai, till then used to graze cattle, among the residents. This became known as the Rotary village. Every family was allotted a plot of 5 cents (60’ x 40’), Madras South constructed five borewells and hand pumps to make drinking water available to the Rotary village. The approach road to the expanded village was gravelled.

Subsequently, a windmill came up, courtesy the Tamil Nadu Energy Development Agency; an overhead water storage tank was sponsored by Madras South. A Rotary Village Corps (RVC) was formed in September 1989 with Mr E Devaraj as chairman to shoulder the responsibility for development schemes.

The new Rotary village was formally inaugurated by DGN Rtn Viswanatha Reddy on February 24, 1989. Mr S Guhan, Adviser to the Chief Minister, was the chief guest. The panchayat chairman and the RVC chairman thanked Madras South for all that they had done for the village. Rtn R Ramamurthy, then president of Madras South, and other members planted coconut seedlings and distributed plastic pots to every plot-owner on the occasion.

The RVC proposed a few more projects – which were completed and inaugurated at a multi-activities day on April 21, 1991. These included additional tap connections, construction of two bus shelters, utensils for the community hall, repair and painting of the overhead tank with labour provided by the villagers. Rtn President R V Rajan handed over the projects to the village.





Madras South phased out its Thiruvadanthai project after the multi-activities day. Says Rtn Rajan: “We got out of the project because of the villagers’ apathy in using and maintaining the facilities. For every small and big problem they faced, they expected our members to rush to them with help. When the windmill broke down for some reason, they never bothered to repair it.

“An important lesson I learnt from Thiruvadanthai is not to give anything free to anybody. People don’t value what they get as freebies, they expect more.”

But looking back on this project today, 25 years after it was launched, what we attempted and achieved there seems phenomenal – even if it didn’t generate self-reliance as planned.

– S R Madhu

*Top left: Windmill constructed by the Tamil Nadu Energy Development Agency at the club’s instance. Left; Inauguration of Rotary village. Above: Entrance to the famous 1,000-year-old Nitya Kalyana Perumal temple of the village.*



# 14 Madras South – A Pioneer and Trend-Setter in Exhibitions

by R V Rajan

Exhibitions! No exaggeration: Madras South has widened the frontiers of Rotary in tapping this ultimate multi-purpose tool of promotion.

Starting with the club's silver jubilee year 1985, when RELF – the Rotary Electrical and Electronics Fair – created waves, RCMS has organized more than half a dozen exhibitions. These have promoted industry, boosted industrial development, burnished the public image of Rotary and raised funds for RCMS.

Madras South's success with RELF made other Rotary clubs in the district follow suit. In 1991-92, Governor B. Vishwanath Reddy tapped our expertise to help conduct ROTAEXPO 91 at the district level.

What are the various thematic exhibitions conducted by Madras South?

*RELF 85 (inaugural audience below, stalls at right) stimulated industrial development as well as interest in Rotary.*



## RELF 85 – An Electronics Wonderland (12-21 April, 1985)

RELF'85, the Rotary Electrical & Electronics Fair, was held in Madras on 12-21 April, 1985, as a technology-cum-trade fair for the public, with 10 pavilions, 75 stalls and as many as nine seminars. It was a part of the silver jubilee celebration of RCMS, and the largest ever vocational service project undertaken by Rotary in our district till then.



Rtn. B Gopalaswami was the club's President that year, and Rtn. A N Srinivasa Rao was the chairman of the Silver Jubilee Committee. The exhibition was masterminded by Rtn. T P Imbichammad, chairman of RELF 85, with able support from Rtns K K Vishwanathan, N Venkateswaran, R T Chari, R.S.Falor & R V Rajan who was also the club secretary.



The fair was held on the spacious Congress grounds in Teynampet and was inaugurated by the then Tamil Nadu Governor, Mr. S L Khurana. The State's Minister of Industries, Mr. K Rajaram, presided. Rotary district governor P V Purushotaman, Mr B B Vijayaraghavan, chairman of ELCOT, and Mr M G K Nair, chairman of Indian Bank, were other distinguished guests.



The seminar attracted strong public, industry and media response. Here's a summation of RELF's many-pronged impact,



based on the assessment of Rtn Imbichammad in the club's silver jubilee souvenir.

**A. Modern technology on display:** Fibre optics, laser video discs, microprocessors, 'live' computers, specialized electronic and electrical devices and appliances, hi-tech audio and video products – RELF 85 showcased all these. India was then on the threshold of a new technology age, especially in electronics; the fair gave professionals and laymen alike glimpses into the products of leaders like Philips India, Solidaire and HCL, as well as the small-scale sector.

**B. Technology Information:** The fair opened the windows to the vast wide world of technology information. It presented not just new products, but catalogues and documents, a book exhibition and nine high-level seminars – on establishment of institutes for computer science, “electronics for the next decade”, women entrepreneurship, “material technology and brand” (electronics), entrepreneur development, career guidance, ancillary development, bank computerization, consumer protection.

The US information pavilion and the Bharat Electronics Ltd. pavilion provided continuous video shows. Leading computer companies arranged special audio-visual programmes and demonstrations every evening.

The fair brought together experts, scientists, government officials, industrialists and professionals and the public, and enabled vital interaction.

**C. Ancillary Development:** This was one of the seminar topics. Small-scale units took part, along with industrialists and government agencies. The Indian Telephone Industries and Bharat Electronics Ltd. presented information counters on ancillary development. Aspiring entrepreneurs got to know about possible new businesses and business products.

**D. Consumer Protection and Awareness:** Consumer awareness on quality and safety standards was promoted by a seminar organized by the industries department of Tamil Nadu, which discussed new laws and regulations on the subject.

**E. Research and Development:** Even as technology explodes, R & D is vital to harness it for national development. On the other hand, industrialists must gainfully tap the facilities of technology institutions. At the fair, the IIT, the College of Engineering, Guindy, and the Electronic Research &



*PDG S R Govindarajan at a RELF seminar. Right: PP A N Srinivasa Rao.*

Development Establishment displayed their wares. Industries could tap these to sponsor their own R&D programmes.

**F. The role of the Government:** The Tamil Nadu government's departments and commercial undertakings used RELF'85 to educate the public on their role and activities. So did the Government of India's agencies, such as the Department of Electronics, the Free Trade Zone Authority, the Electronics Trade & Technology Development Corporation. They bought exhibition space and took part in the seminars.

**G. Entrepreneur Development:** RELF'85 sought to further the entrepreneurial spirit. Two high-level seminars on the theme evoked good response. One of these, co-sponsored by the Indian Bank and State Bank of India, was devoted to women entrepreneurs. The seminars on ancillary development and on material technology were a source of information and inspiration for aspiring entrepreneurs.

RELF 85 yielded a surplus of over Rs 5 lakhs for RCMS, a record for those days. The money was used to launch an integrated uplift programme at Tiruvidanthai village and to start a computer training facility at Stella Maris college.



## RONEX'90, Environmental expo (7-10 December 1990)

“Preserve plant earth” was the RI President’s call, and Madras South organized the environmental expo Ronex’90 in response, during the presidentship of Rtn R V Rajan. The exhibition was co-sponsored by Anna University, Indian Bank and the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board.



Held at the Anna University campus, RONEX 90 was a multi-event project covering all avenues of Rotary service. Each event promoted awareness on environmental protection.

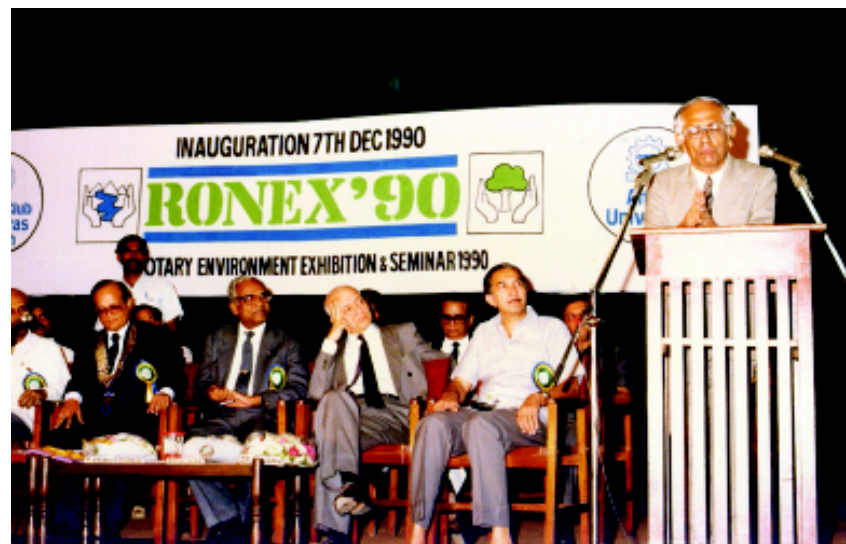
1. An **inter-collegiate quiz and oratorical contests** on environmental protection were held a week before the exhibition. Several colleges were represented. Mr N Ram of *The Hindu* was one of the judges for the oratorical contest.
2. The **Ronex'90 walkathon** on December 8, from YMCA, Nandanam, to the Anna University campus in Guindy, a distance of about 4 kms. Nearly 4,000 school students from various city schools took part, carrying

*An environmental walkathon by 4,000 school students for RONEX.*



placards and banners on environment protection. The procession included ACC and NCC cadets and scouts. The walkathon on the busy Mount Road captured public and media attention. Television featured the event prominently.

3. An **essay contest** was held for school students who took part in the walkathon.
4. A **national seminar on environment protection** covered a range of subjects including water pollution, air pollution and noise pollution. Eminent personalities from educational institutions, industry and the government presented papers. There was vigorous discussion. Recommendations for action were forwarded to environment-related agencies.
5. A **hi-tech exhibition** with 36 stalls enabled industries, universities and government agencies to showcase their products and efforts in environment protection. Pollution-measuring instruments, remote sensing devices, anti-pollution projects and alternative sources of energy were displayed or publicized.





6. A **general exhibition** for the public conceived by Rtn. A Jagannatha Rao of the club, an active environmentalist, was executed in co-operation with the Madras Snake Park, the Madras Naturalists Society and volunteers from selected schools. A 20-minute film ran throughout the exhibition, and visitors were given a printed leaflet. The American and Russian consulates took part, with their own film shows, and books and exhibits on the environment (some of which were available for sale). The exhibition emphasized the role of the public in environmental protection.
7. **Vocational Service Award:** Two eminent environmentalists, Dr. Amulya Kumar Reddy and Mr. Mohamed Hussain, were presented with Distinguished Service Awards at the inaugural function on December 7. The Chief Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Government State presided. An expert from UNIDO delivered the keynote address. Many Rotarians and Anns and some eminent citizens took part.

RONEX 90 generated a surplus of about Rs.1.25 lakhs. The amount was used as seed money for the Dana Bergh Centre, which was to materialize in 2009.

An example of excellent teamwork, Ronex'90 was ably led by Rtn. PP B Gopalaswamy, with active support from Rtn. K S Jayaraman and others. The project generated wide publicity, the highlight being two 10-minute features telecast by Madras Doordarshan on December 11 and 25.

### **Autovision'95: Showcasing the auto industry (28 January-2 February, 1995)**

Autovision 95 was a many-faceted exhibition showcasing the latest models, products and developments in technology and innovation concerning the automobile industry. The brainchild of Rtn V R Anil Kumar, president of the club, Autovision 95 was held in the Anna University campus, and inaugurated by Mr M Chinnaswamy, Minister for Industries, Government of Tamil Nadu. A week's postponement caused by unexpected heavy rains in Chennai did not dampen the enthusiasm of industry or government, or the 35,000 visitors who thronged the 5-day expo.



Autovision 95 was held in association with ACMA (Automotive Companies Manufacturers Association), southern region, and co-sponsored by the Indian Bank, Anna University and the Institute of Automobile Engineers (India).

Leading automobile manufacturers like Ashok Leyland, Telco and Premier Automobiles put up pavilions and showed their latest models. Some 100 stalls displayed the wares of auto ancillary units, including those not previously available in India. Top corporates such as Rane, MRF, and JK Tyres were active participants in the fair. The Government of Tamil Nadu pavilion demonstrated and publicized the infrastructure facilities available in the state. A special ACMA pavilion housed 33 stalls of members such as the TVS, the Amalgamation group and the Rane group. Members of the Vintage and Classic Foundation of India displayed more than 10 vintage cars.

A one-day seminar on 'Prospects for the automobile industry in Tamil Nadu' drew heavyweight personalities of the state's automobile sector as well as senior government officials.





The steering committee of Autovision 95 was chaired by Rtn. PP Vijaykumar and had several RCMS stalwarts as members. Like RELF 85 and RONEX 90, Autovision not merely strengthened the club but the public image of Rotary as well, besides netting Rs.2.5 lakhs for the club's community service projects.



The significant long-term impact: Autovision 95 persuaded Ford Motor Co. to set up a major manufacturing unit in Chennai.

### Qualitech 96, Promoting quality control (24-26 January, 1996)

Qualitech 96 was a logical follow-up to Autovision. Its theme: 'Quality through testing and calibration'. The idea was to promote quality in the automobile industry with the help of testing and calibration instruments. Rtn S Subramanian was the president of Madras South at that time. The fair was held in the MIT campus of Anna University in Chromepet in association with MIT, Anna University and Tanstia-FNF. Co-sponsors: the All-India Manufacturers Organisation, Tamil Nadu, and the MIT Alumni Association.



Several companies and institutes who helped design and manufacture technology equipment participated in this exhibition. They were from plastics, textiles, process equipment and other industries. A seminar held on the occasion was inaugurated by Mr Joseph Satyanarayana, Director General of STQC, Government of India. A number of experts on quality technology spoke.

A brainchild of Rtn. K.S.Jayaraman, Qualitech 96 reinforced the club's commitment to fostering stronger academia-industry interface. It netted a modest profit as well.

### Rotaking 96: Highlight on consumer durables, 4-6 October 1996

Rotaking 96, an exhibition-cum-sale of consumer durables. was conducted by our club between 4 and 6 October, 1996, at the Raja Muthiah and Rani Meyyammai Halls in Egmore, Chennai. It was held in partnership with Viveks, the largest consumer durable retail chain in Tamil Nadu, where Rtn B.Narayan, then president of the club, was employed. Rtn PP SRMPL Subramaniam was the chairman of the steering committee.

There were more than 75 stalls from leading consumer durable companies. They displayed the latest in audio-video systems, refrigerators, washing machines, dish washers, micro-ovens and home appliances etc. More than 15,000 people visited the exhibition, which was inaugurated by Justice A.R. Lakshmanan of the Madras High Court.



The club netted a modest surplus from this exhibition as well.

*Qualitech inauguration (right). Many companies exhibited auto calibration equipment (below).*



### Tech-21 – The future of technology (1996-97)

This exhibition highlighting “The future of technology”, was meant to provide a peep into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was held at the campus of IIT Madras; Prof R Natarajan, director of IIT, evinced keen interest in the exhibition.

Tech 21 presented some 70 technology stalls and a few seminars at which papers were presented by both academics and industrialists. The seminars, including one on elevator technology, were sponsored by Otis Elevators. Rtn B Narayan Iyer was the president of Madras South at that time; the moving spirit behind the exhibition was Rtn K S Jayaraman, while Rtns

A G Shankar, M V Sriprakash and R Chandrasekar provided useful assistance.

“The exhibition was designed to be a technology education and promotion effort in co-operation with IIT rather than a fund-raiser;” says Narayan Iyer. But a surplus did materialize, and Rs 50,000 was donated to the Dana Bergh project.

### Rotakids – January 2000, October 2000, January 2002

(see the following article)

### Rotafest 2008: Fun and games festival, 12-13 January 2008

Adults like fun and games too! Rotafest offered the public two days (12-13 January, 2008) of games, contests, amusement, entertainment and food and refreshments. There were music shows and contests, “try your luck” stalls, play stations, and many prizes. Rotafest targeted mainly young adults and kids.

Some 20 companies dealing with computer training, Internet services, career planning and education, entertainment electronics, consumer durables, two-wheelers, mobile phones and toys took part. As with earlier exhibitions, a series of advertisements generated wide interest, while the actual exhibition secured good press coverage.



Rtn B B Vengatesh, who was closely associated with the earlier exhibitions, particularly Rotakids, was the club president at the time. The organizing committee was led by Rtn Magdoom Mohamed.

Thanks to Nokia, which sponsored the event, Rotafest generated a surplus of about Rs 7.5 lakhs, which was used for the club’s medical diagnostic centre that came up at Nerkundram.

### Exhibitions and the five avenues of service

A well-organized Rotary exhibition promotes bonding and united action among club members (Club Service). It stimulates industry and government (community service), It strengthens know-how and skills (vocational service). It promotes knowledge and job opportunities for the young (Youth Service). It draws foreign companies and stimulates international cooperation (International Service).



## 15 “Rotakids” – the super carnival for kids of all ages

(29-30 January, 2000,  
21-22 October, 2000,  
5-6 January, 2002)



Rotakids, organized thrice by the Rotary Club of Madras South – in January 2000, October 2000 and January 2002 – was a chaos of fun, a kids’ carnival that gave adults a kick too. It drew record crowds to Egmore’s stately Rani Meyyammai Hall.

Rtn Shyamala Jayaprakash (president in 1999-200) loves kids, and Rotakids was her baby. What did Rotakids achieve? She says: “We gave kids a wonderful time. The stall-owners did good business, whatever their business – fun and games, CD-Rom, computers, TV or books. Food and drink stalls were always crowded. And we made some money for our projects.”





Entry to Rotakids was free for kids, a nominal fee for adults. Many visitors made a beeline straightaway for the face-painting lady experts, and emerged after a 10-minute job, with faces glowing in flamboyant colours and designs. (At the second Rotakids, Governor P T Ramkumar got fully into the spirit of Rotakids with his son; both got faces painted; both beamed with delight.) Some parents struck deals with the artists for their kids' birthday parties.



The kids on the other hand wandered from one fun stall to another – whether it was shooting targets, lucky dips, “bouncing castle” or karaoke (dance in harmony with music). Some kids battled villains and foes in rollicking video games. A giant clown from Kishkinta walked to and fro, shaking hands with admiring kids and bemused adults. There were quiz shows, music and dance shows, contests and prizes galore. In fact, every kid got a surprise gift.

Quiz master V Sriram moved around asking the kids questions. He was a veritable Pied Piper of Hamelin, because quiz-savvy kids kept trailing him.

Parents accompanying the kids, on the other hand, looked for long-term gains. They scoured the stalls for books, CD-ROMs, computers, TV, video cassettes, video games.

I remember feeling dazed on the evening of the second day during the first Rotakids – we were invaded by wave after wave of eager, boisterous, fun-loving kids. I was at once proud of our club's impact, and worried about how we would handle such a crowd. At a certain point, crowd entry had to be regulated. Those entering the hall had to wait till the numbers inside became manageable.

What's fun without food? Fanta and Coke and Limca went by the gallon, dosa and samosa and pizza by the ton. There were ice creams to indulge the sweet tooth.



In preparation for Rotakids, members targeted schools with pamphlets and met principals. Many of them were happy to co-operate, and put up Rotakids flyers on their notice boards.

Said Shyamala “Rotakids would not have been possible without two great soldiers, Sridharan and Vengatesh.” They led a team of marketing Rotarians who booked stalls, chased potential sponsors, organized prizes for the games, coordinated with Rotarians for ideas and inputs and donations in cash or kind.

While contacting companies, the marketing team’s pitch was “You have huge sales opportunities. Further, kids and parents will forever associate your company and products with an ambience of fun and joy.” This pitch worked. Many leading computer, Internet, electronics, health, food, books, publishing, toy and consumer goods firms displayed products and services at one or more of the three carnivals.

Rtn R V Rajan and his Anugrah advertising agency designed all the banners, pamphlets and ads, and organized publicity. Stall and pavilion construction was outsourced to Expovision, who specialize in exhibitions. Annes and Inner



Wheel members handled the cash flow from the ticketing stalls. Rtns Rajesh Sahi and G. Raghupati organized the gifts for various contests, and managed the crowded gifts stall.

All three editions of Rotakids (under the presidentship of Rtns Shyamala, S R Madhu and S Balakrishnan respectively) were tremendous learning and bonding experiences for club members. In terms of public impact, the first edition, which had the advantage of novelty, was the most resounding success. The effort put into all three events was perhaps identical.

I thought Rotakids exacted a heavy toll on members in physical, mental and emotional energy. One could say with the benefit of hindsight that a wider time gap between one carnival and another would have helped. Maybe now, after a gap of eight years, it is time to resume this great kids’ carnival, and appeal to a new generation of kids. It’s a call for future presidents to take. But Rotakids has left an indelible footprint in the history of Madras South.

– S R Madhu



## 16 *Combating muscular dystrophy*

**M**uscular dystrophy is an incurable hereditary muscle disease that usually affects children, often leading to early death.

Madras South got involved in muscular dystrophy by happenstance. Dr. Guenter Scheurbrand of the Rotary Club of Black Forest, Germany, our matching grant partner in the vocational education project for women, is an expert in muscular dystrophy. When he visited Chennai during the mid-1990s, Rtn V R Anil Kumar arranged a talk by him on muscular dystrophy at the the Kanchi Kamakoti Childs Trust Hospital, Dr V Viswanathan, a paediatric neurologist at the hospital, and Dr Kalpana Gaurshankar coordinated the talk.

One thing led to another. We formed a support group known as MDA India for victims of muscular dystrophy in Tamil Nadu, The group was inaugurated on February 5, 2000. Consisting mainly of parents and relatives of victims in Tamil Nadu, MDA India served as a forum for physical, financial, technical



*MDA India school for muscular dystrophy -afflicted childrem inaugurated in August 2000 by Deputy Chief Minister M K Stalin. Above: Interacting with the patients.*



and moral support to victims. The group provided wheelchairs, orthopedic belts and foam seats to victims, funded drug trials for cure and relief, interacted with government and other agencies, and raised public awareness.

The club organized fund-raising and entertainment events for MDA India (a music concert by kids from the Abaswaram Ramji troupe in 2001, a play by Crazy Mohan in 2002, a laughter evening by S V Sekhar in 2003). In 2001, it took 24 children afflicted with MD on a picnic to Mahabalipuram. In 2002 (October 15), the Indian cricket team interacted with the MDA children. The children enjoyed chatting with Sachin Tendulkar, Saurav Ganguly, Anil Kumble and Javagal Srinath – so did these celebrities. The event was organized by Shakthi Foundation in co-operation with MDA and Madras South.

The club's direct role in combating muscular dystrophy ended in 2003, but MDA India, under Dr Viswanathan, is active on many fronts.

For example, a school for children afflicted with muscular dystrophy was started in August 2009 by MDA India and inaugurated by the Deputy Chief Minister, Mr M K Stalin. It's the first of its kind in India, with five large classrooms whose walls display cartoon characters. The gates, the floors, the bathrooms and washbasins are specially designed and wheelchair-friendly. The school has 20 children at present. The number is small because parents find it difficult to transport wheel-chair-bound children. The MDA runs a



*Left above: Medicine kit for this kid from Rtn A Sridharan of Madras South. Below: Film-maker Rajeev Menon and MDA India's Dr V Viswanathan (left) with a kid. Above: Actors Napoleon and S V Sekhar entertain the kids.*

van to pick up and drop the children back, but the parents find it difficult even to carry children to the van or help them out.

The MDA holds a clinic once a month on a Sunday where patients are examined by a team of specialists. Other medical initiatives: an influenza virus vaccination program and a muscle biopsy and DNA analysis. The children are given spirometers and "cough-assist devices" to ease breathing. Custom-made wheel chairs (each costing Rs 6,000) are made by an NGO named Worth Trust. Every year, a number of wheelchairs are provided free of charge to patients. Fun trips for the children and entertainment events like a ventriloquism show are organized a few times a year.

Madras South is glad that its initiative on muscular dystrophy has led to systematic work and expert attention in combating the disease and in alleviating its trauma. The website [www.mdaindia.org](http://www.mdaindia.org) provides more information about muscular dystrophy and about MDA India.

– S R Madhu





## 17 *Schools to Smiles, The Rotary centenary project*

Rotary's centenary year 2004-05 was honoured in many ways. District Governor Benjamin Cherian conceived the project "Schools to smiles". During the year, the district's Rotary clubs sought to help, renovate or strengthen 100 corporation schools.

Our club "adopted" the Adi Dravida Primary School, Meenambakkam, and strengthened and renovated it with a Rs 2.4-lakh project to construct a toilet block and a noon-meal scheme kitchen. President Rtn A Sridharan mobilized 35% of the cost from Round Table India.

"Before our project, the schoolkids used to relieve themselves in the gutter opposite the school near a tea shop – and had hot water thrown on them by

*In 2004, Madras South "adoped" the Adi Dravida Primary School in Meenambakkam (below). A kitchen and a toilet block were constructed. At right: Before our assistance. Below: Rotary Governor Benjamin Cherian inaugurates the facility.*



the tea shop owner," recalls Sridharan. "Our toilet block was a huge relief for them. Likewise, mid-day meals used to be cooked in the open in unhygienic surroundings, and our kitchen was a boon."

The principal of the school remarked later that our project had helped improve attendance at the school as well as the general well-being of students.



## 18 *Helping fishers after the tsunami*

by R Srikanth

*The December 2004 tsunami turned the world of many fishers upside down. Here's the story of what Madras South did – and how – to help the residents of two fishing villages on the way to Mahabalipuram. The writer, Rtn R Srikanth, interacted regularly with the fishers for more than two years after the tsunami.*

The tsunami struck on 26 December, 2004. Our club's first act of assistance was through RI district 3230, which mobilized clothes and utensils.

We later contributed Rs. 50,000 to the district tsunami relief fund and Rs. 40,000 to the fisherwomen of Oorur Kuppam to rebuild a fish market managed by them.

We decided on more systematic and long-term help, to the extent possible. A three-member team – M V Sriprakash, Sam Manipadam and myself – was assigned by President Sridharan to the job.



*At Nainar Kuppam village (left), Swami Easwarananda (above) facilitated our tsunami relief work.*

We decided to approach Nainar Kuppam village, some 22 km from Chennai on the East Coast Road. The villagers weren't too receptive initially, but Swami Easwarananda (of the Sudhananda ashram which runs the Samvit Sagar Trust) helped us interact and communicate with them. We did a needs assessment through a door-to-door survey and concluded that the fishers' immediate need was to resume their livelihood and stand on their own legs. This meant new fishing boats and nets to replace those that had been totally damaged.

Sriprakash and myself struggled to understand the fishing lingo. There are different types of fishing gear to catch different types of fish. There are active nets and passive nets, there are different nets for shrimp or sardines or silver belly. The fishers wanted the pachaikutti valai, not the kavalai valai – the first one would help them catch fish throughout the year, and this net was in short supply.

Sriprakash did a great job communicating with the gear manufacturer, Adam Fishing Net Company. We didn't know how to order – should the net be in metres or kg? Mr Subramaniam of Adam Fishing Net guided us and we ordered 1000 kg of pachaikutti valai – this would mean 4 to 5 kg of net for





*Our club distributed nets, boats and materials worth more than Rs 12 lakhs to fisherfolk families in two villages.*

each of around 200 families. The nets were distributed on February 19, 2005 – within 50 days of the tsunami.

Nainar kuppam actually had 300 families, but 100 of them had given up fishing. We decided to distribute the nets to the active fishers. But the others

were upset, and the day we distributed the nets at Easwarananda's ashram, there was huge commotion. I tried hard to pacify the families that weren't getting nets. Rtn R Seshadri, our treasurer, wrote out cheques in a jiffy to pay for the boats and ents. Rtn Sridharan too moved fast. Two boats too were made available to the village.

We had made friends with the villagers. On March 5, we went out to sea with the fishers – to understand them and their life better, and also to ensure that our relief was put to good use. Fishing activities resumed. We called our Madras South colleagues from the sea. Some of the responses were :

“Please come back safety.” “What secret is the sea telling you?” and the more practical “Bring some fish for me.”

Our contacts with the fishing village helped channel more benefits to them.

In June 2005, seven more boats were distributed to the fishers of Nainar kuppam, courtesy the Rotary Club of Madras Midtown.

The other fishing village we assisted with fishing nets was Pudhunedhu Kuppam (near Thenpattinam village), 82 km away from Chennai. With





support from Aid India, we distributed some boats as well in April 2005. Swami Easwarananda accompanied us on all our trips to Pudhunedu Kuppam, he was kind enough to provide us with breakfast (hot upma).

I visited Nainar Kuppam the village about once a month for a couple of years, sometimes accompanied by one or more Rotarians. Rtn A G Shankar came once and wrote about our project on our website. President Rajesh Sahi came once or twice. Unfortunately, I don't remember catching many fish any time. Thenpattinam village was much farther, visits there were not practical.

We did some motivational help in Nainar Kuppam – filling up forms for relief funds, coaxing the villagers to abstain from liquor, reorganizing their auction shed, urging their children to go to school. We perhaps had some limited success with such effort.

We also tried to promote thrift and savings among the villagers of Nainar Kuppam and the practice of insurance. But this was tough. Fishers are used to the moneylenders in their own village or their neighbourhood, who are always available and accessible, even if their rates are usurious. Organized systems like banks and insurance companies are outside the fishers' comfort zone.

We had to rest content therefore with what we had done. In terms of numbers and money, we helped some 212 families of Nayanar Kuppam and 68 families of Pudhunedu Kuppam with fishing gear and boats worth a total of Rs.3.5 lakhs. We also facilitated the donation of some 15 motorized fishing boats worth more than Rs 15 lakhs through Action Aid and the Rotary Club of Madras Midtown. We helped the residents of Vilambur kuppam (near Kadapakkam) as well, with some 80 kg. of fishing nets.

Madras South, my company Ford Motors, and I made many friends among the fishers – and this is one of the intangible positives of our intervention following the tsunami.

*We also gave kitchen utensils (above, handed over by Rtn Prasanna Varma) and a cheque for Valli of the local fisherwomen's association.*



## 19 Dana Bergh Hall at Anna University – A 15-year dream comes true

On May 25, 2009, the Rs 45 lakh Dana Bergh Hall of the Anna University's Energy Environment Centre was inaugurated by Dr. P. Mannar Jawahar, Vice-Chancellor of the university. It is a joint project of Anna University and the Rotary Club of Madras South, and brings a 15-year-old dream to reality.

The three-storeyed Dana Bergh hall is a versatile facility to promote the coastal environment. The ground floor is used for classroom lectures, meetings and conferences, and round-table discussion. (A mobile partition enables two classes to be conducted simultaneously.) A state-of-the-art greenhouse research laboratory is planned on the ground floor.

The first floor is meant for a modern library with text books, journals and multi-media materials on coastal and marine science engineering and technology and coastal management. A dining and refreshments centre may come up on the second floor.



Rotary Club of Madras South can use the hall for its service projects as well as for regular meetings, for Rotaract and Interact clubs, for celebrating World Environment Day, for joint projects with schools and colleges, corporates and international agencies, after telling IOM in advance.

The club's partner at Anna University is the 12-year-old Institute of Ocean Management (IOM), headed by Dr R Ramesh, which fosters research, training, education and consultancy services on ocean management. Dr. Ramesh says the Institute is one of India's major sources of expertise for ocean and coastal management. The Dana Bergh Hall is an additional facility for IOM's many research projects,

Anna University has spent about Rs 30 lakhs on the hall. Madras South has spent about Rs 12 lakhs and is committed to spend another Rs 3 lakhs – mainly for LED (light-emitting diode) lamps on the hall ceiling of the ground floor, and for furniture.

### *What is special about the building?*

The unique pyramid-shaped Dana Bergh hall has been built on the basis of a prize-winning design in a contest for students of Anna University's School





Above: A name plaque of the Dana Bergh hall is unveiled in the presence of university officials and Madras South members. Below: Anna University Vice-Chancellor Dr P Mannar Jawahar and Prof R Ramesh greet guests.



of Architecture and Planning. It has a low centre of gravity that ensures stability; the external structure is made of steel, while the entire structure uses energy-efficient materials. Illumination on the ground floor will be through energy-conserving LED (light-emitting diode) lamps.

The international character of the Dana Bergh hall was highlighted on the inaugural day itself, when a three-week Indo-US summer course on coastal environment was inaugurated. Some 15 American students and 10 Indian students took part. The course was organized jointly by IOM, Anna University and the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, USA.

**Who was Dana Bergh? What did he have to do with our club?** Way back in 1986-87, when Rtn Ramakrishna Raja was the Governor of our district, Rtn Vijay Kumar of our club visited the US as head of a Rotary GSE (group study exchange mission).

There, Rtn Vijay Kumar met Rtn Dana Bergh of the Rotary Club of Burlington, Vermont — a war veteran and ex-Naval officer who had taken part in the testing of the atom bomb, and who was traumatized by the devastation caused by use of the bomb.

Dana Bergh and wife “Brownie” paid a return visit to India during March-April 1989 as guests of Madras South. They toured our projects. They were delighted with both Madras and Madras South and expressed interest in supporting a club project. Tragically, however, Dana Bergh died of cancer six months later – on 17 December 1989.

In 1990, Madras South held a successful exhibition (RONEX 90) and a seminar on the environment in co-operation with Anna University. The grand success of RONEX 90 led to discussions about a permanent energy-environment centre.

**American co-operation:** Support was obtained from the Rotary Club of Burlington and from district 7850 to which it belonged, following an appeal from Rtn PDG Ramakrishna Raja. District 7850 donated Rs. 3.85 lakhs for an energy centre, including a personal contribution of Rs 1 lakh from Brownie in honour of her husband’s memory. This provided the seed money for a Dana Bergh energy environment centre. The *bhoomi puja* of the centre was performed at Anna University on 7 October, 1994.





Above: A memento for Rtn K S Jayaraman. Below: Overseas students being welcomed to the hall.



**Contribution of government departments:** The centre stimulated support from a number of central government departments. The Ministry of Human Resources Development contributed Rs 5.75 lakhs, equipment worth several lakhs of rupees was provided by the HRD Ministry, the All-India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) and the Ministry for Non-Conventional Energy Sources. RC of Madras South made available (besides the initial seed money of Rs 3.85 lakhs) some Rs.2.15 lakhs – mainly the proceeds of RONEX 90 and two other exhibitions – Tech 21 and Roto Expo.

*What was the original concept of the Dana Bergh energy centre?*

*Why did the project take so long to materialize?*

The vision behind the project was grand. The Dana Bergh centre was meant to show how solar, wind and biomass energy could be tapped to save conventional energy. It was to serve as an education, research and testing centre for non-conventional energy. It was to be equipped with a windmill, a solar panel and a biomass plant as well as with a library, laboratory and administrative offices. It was to be a hub of action and research, useful not merely for students and professors but also for corporates and national and international researchers.

Dr M Anandkrishnan, then Vice-Chancellor of Anna University, was one of the enthusiasts of a Dana Bergh energy centre. However, its high cost and complex character perhaps deterred later Vice-Chancellors, who had other priorities, and did not push for implementation of the Dana Bergh project. It languished, the building stagnated, cost estimates zoomed.

In 1998, Rtn N Venkateswaran of our club gave the project new life by mobilizing a donation of Rs 5 lakhs through the ICICI (then headed by his brother N Vaghul).

But delays persisted. While many Southerners gave up hope on the project, Rtn K S Jayaraman – known for patience, perseverance and doggedness – didn't. He pursued ideas and contacts with Anna University, waiting for circumstances to get better. And they did!

The Institute of Ocean Management was expanding, and Dr Ramesh felt that the Dana Bergh centre could be utilized for the IOM. Using his personal equation with Dr Ramesh and the present Vice-Chancellor, Rtn Jayaraman





*The Vice-Chancellor and faculty interact with students of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. Below: Speakers at the function and the overseas students.*



pressed the view that a project which began with such high expectations ought to materialize – especially in view of the time, effort and money already expended on it. They assented. The IOM made some funds available, perhaps additional funds were released by Anna University. Construction was resumed.

Dana Bergh's concept and aims have been modified. The actual focus will be on the environment rather than on energy.

The Dana Bergh centre sports the Rotary emblem, the emblems of Anna University and of the Institute of Ocean Management. A decorative plaque or wooden board "Anna University and Rotary Club of Madras South: joint initiative" greets visitors.

#### ***The May 25 inauguration***

The Vice Chancellor, Dr Mannar Jawahar, inaugurated the centre and the hall, and complimented IOM and RCMS on the venture. The chairman of the Chennai Port Trust, Mr S Suresh, delivered a presidential address. Dr P V Sundareshwar (South Dakota School of Mines and Technology) spoke about the Indo-US summer course on "Coastal environment" being conducted jointly with Anna University. Rtn PDG Ramakrishna Raja recalled his memories of Rtn Dana Bergh and the genesis of the project. Dr R Ramesh, President Tamilselvan of RCMS, and Rtn K S Jayaraman also spoke. Rtn W S Anand, incoming Governor of district 3230 at that time, felicitated Anna University and RCMS.

Madras South can be justly proud of the energy environment centre, which makes a worthy contribution to an important area of development in India – national and international research on the coastal environment.

– S R Madhu







## 20 Rotary Madras South Medical Centre

*Our club's first permanent project, a medical centre in Nerkundram near Koyambedu, Chennai, was inaugurated in March 2008, when Rtn B B Vengatesh was the president. As community service director this year, he continues to monitor the project. In this interview, he talks about the genesis and progress of the project.*

**Q: Madras South has acquired a permanent project, a medical centre near Nerkundram. How did this project begin?**

The need for having our own long-term permanent project was felt a few years ago. Our member, Rtn Dr. Ravi Viswanathan, has been running a charitable medical centre with a diagnostic centre at Nerkundram. He wanted our club to support it and take it to the next level.



*Sophisticated equipment for the club's medical centre at Nerkundram was inaugurated by District Governor Rtn A Subramaniam and Mrs Premila Narasimhan, our donor. Opposite page: An inscription in honour of the late C S Narasimhan of Swadesamitran was unveiled.*



The centre is located on Poonamallee High Road with enough space for expansion and good potential to serve people in the area. It was ideal for our club to tie up with. The Saradambal Neelamegam Rotary Madras South Medical Centre came up in 2007. (Saradambal Neelamegam is the mother of Dr Ravi Viswanathan.) It was formally inaugurated in in March 2008 by the then District Governor, Rtn. A.S.Venkatesh, and Mrs. Premila Narasimhan, an NRI who lives in the U.S. The centre is administered by a trust.

**Q: What are the facilities of the project? What equipment does it have? How many staff, full-time and part-time?**

The centre has basic lab equipment and ECG. A generous donation of Rs 25 lakhs by Mrs. Premila Narasimhan enabled us to procure and install a GE X-Ray machine and a Toshiba Colour Doppler (ultrasound) at the centre. The centre has a lab technician, an X-ray technician, a sonologist and three support staff.

The equipment part of the centre is known as "Smt. Premila Narasimhan and Swadesamitran C S Narasimhan Centre."





*Governor Subu and Southerners go through a photo display on the Nerkundram project and Madras South.*

A corps committee of the club – with myself and Rtns Suresh Arunachalam, A Sridharan and R Srikanth as members – meets twice a month to discuss progress and ways to promote the centre.

***Mrs Premila Narasimhan, project donor, lives in the US. What's the genesis of the co-operation between our club and Mrs Narasimhan?***

Mrs Premila Narasimhan is the wife of the late Mr.C.S.Narasimhan, the owner and founder of Swadesamitran, the Tamil journal which played a stellar role in India's freedom struggle. She lives in the US and is a research scientist at the Columbia Hospital in New York. Mrs Narasimhan wanted to assist an institution in Chennai to perpetuate the memory of her husband, Mr C S Narasimhan.

Mrs Narasimhan got to know about our club from our website. She wrote to me (and to some other Rotary clubs in Madras as well). I responded, and this correspondence led to co-operation.

(Swadesamitran was India's second vernacular newspaper, and the first in Tamil. It was founded in 1801 by G Subramania Iyer, who also founded the

Hindu earlier. The great Tamil poet Subramania Bharati, one of the heroes of the freedom struggle, served on the staff of Swadesamitran. The paper wound up in 1985. – SRM)

***On an average, how many patients come every day to the centre?*** Currently we have some 10-15 patients coming every day. We are working towards increasing it to at least 40-50 patients / day

***Have you carried out any other activities at the centre?***

We have conducted three medical camps during the last year. In all camps ultrasound screening was conducted. One of the camps was conducted by Chettinad Hospitals, of which our own Rtn Dr.Pradeep Nayar is the chief cardiologist. Patients were screened for heart diseases.

***What are the achievements of the project? What are the problems or challenges?***

The key achievement is that we have put in equipment worth Rs 20 lakhs in a very short time. It makes possible ultrasounds of the whole abdomen, the upper abdomen and the thyroid neck. A pelvis scan can also be done. Costs are far lower than at other laboratories.

The challenge is to get good sonologists to run the equipment and to increase awareness of the centre so that more people benefit.

***Has the recently formed RCC (Rotary Community Corps) helped the project? In what way?***

The RCC will help to increase awareness of the centre among doctors and people living in the neighbourhood. They have been assisting in the medical camps and other activities of the centre.

***What are the plans for the future?***

The immediate plan is to ensure that the facilities are used well and that the weak and the underprivileged of society benefit from the centre. Once we achieve this, we want to add more equipment and facilities and provide patients with world-class diagnostic services.



## 21 Vocational Service

by G Raghupathi

Vocational Service is the best development trigger, the best engineer of self-help, among Rotary's five avenues of service – it enables “strong participation by the poor in their own development”, to quote the UN.

This has been Madras South's experience as well. Skill training provided by us has led unfailingly to jobs and incomes.

In 1992-93, Rtn Shiv Kumar launched Madras South's systematic foray into vocational service, through courses in the repair of airconditioners and refrigerators in co-operation with Anna University. Several hundred young men have since been trained in the two trades – for which market demand is high. Some of them have obtained lucrative jobs in the Middle East, enabling a dramatic shift in living standards.

*Below left: Distinguished Service award presented to Dr K Sridhar of the Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Medical Trust. Right: Skill training for young men and women.*



To commemorate the Rotary centenary year in 2004, training was provided to 100 youth in co-operation with the Stenographers Guild. (Eighty persons including 20 boys were trained in “executive secretaryship, 20 boys in computer hardware.)

The Rotary Club of Melville, Perth, Australia, has supported our vocational training activity for many years. Rtn Ross Rainbird of the club has been a regular visitor to Madras South.

Likewise, we have sponsored numerous training courses for women at the Andhra Mahila Sabha in Mylapore – through its P. Obul Reddy Vocational Training Institute, which is a tremendous resource in women’s empowerment. The courses relate to stitching; tailoring; power sewing; computer awareness; data entry; even car driving. “The women are

1. Memento for Rtn Ross Rainbird of the Rotary Club of Melville, Australia, our vocational training donor.
2. Tamil Nadu Governor Bhishma Narain Singh hands over Rotary’s “For the Sake of Honour” award to industrialist Suresh Krishna (April 1992), as President Rtn C Venugopal applauds.
3. Trainees at the Andhra Mahila Sabha gather round their instructor.
4. Mr David Friedman, managing director of Ford India, was conferred the “Best Employer-Employee Relations Award” by Madras South in 2004. It was presented by Mr N Ram of The Hindu.
5. Rtn President V Chidambaram (2005) hands over the “Best Policeman” award to a lady constable.
6. A nurse of General Hospital, Chennai, receives a Vocational Service award from the hospital dean, Dr J Mohanasundaram.



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placed immediately in jobs, because of the demand for qualified young women,” says Mrs Srilakshmi Mohan Rao of the institute.

#### Vocational Service Awards

In 1991, the club honoured industrialist Suresh Krishna with the “For the sake of honour” award. Dr K Sridhar of the Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Medical Trust (1993-94), Mrs Uma Dhandapani of Gnanadeepam (2002-03), Dr Balaji Sampath of Aid India and the Tamil Nadu Science Forum (1996-97, for meritorious services in literacy and education) have been among the winners of the Distinguished Service award. We honoured Mr S Kannan of the Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Medical Trust with the award for “Excellence in community service”.



In 2004, Madras South presented Ford India with an Employer-Employee Relations Award. It was handed over to the Managing Director of Ford India, Mr David Friedman, by Mr N Ram, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu*. District Governor Benjamin Cherman was the chief guest.

With very few exceptions, the club’s practice has been to honour several humble soldiers of society – postmen, policemen, bus drivers and conductors, teachers, headmasters, and nurses. The award-winners are selected by professional associations.

At a memorable Republic Day function in 2010 at the General Hospital, eight staff nurses and two hospital workers were conferred Vocational Service awards by our club. Dr.J. Mohanasundaram, the Dean of the hospital, handed over the awards.



*Above left: Training in computer awareness. Left: The award-winning nurses and hospital workers of GH Hospital. Above: A news story in “The Hindu” about vocational training by Madras South.*



## 22 *Our two Matching Grant projects*

*Earlier in this decade, some 150 young women moved into a new world of hope and dignity, thanks to two matching grant projects carried out by Madras South in co-operation with clubs in West Germany and Switzerland. This article details the two projects and how they came about.*

The two Matching Grant projects obtained by our club in its 50-year history have both been for vocational education.

In 1999-2000 and 2000-2001, Madras South executed a US \$18,000 matching grant project: scholarships for 69 young women for two-year courses in engineering, computers, nursing and textile technology at 11 leading polytechnics of Chennai.

Our partner: the RC of Hochschwarzwald (Black Forest), Germany. We provided US \$2,794 for two years, the Black Forest club made available \$ 5, 834. Rotary International provided a matching grant of \$ 8,628.

Details of the 69 students (they were identified by the principals of 11 polytechnics.)

- 28 students of nursing (Indian Red Cross Society, Egmore)
- 21 students of the Government Polytechnic for Women, Taramani
- 8 students at the Institute of Ttile Technology, Taramani
- 5 students at the Institute of Chemical Technology, Taramani
- 1 student each at six other polytechnics in Chennai.

On November 23, 1999, cheques worth a total of about Rs 3.17 lakhs were presented to the 69 girls at the Government Women's Polytechnic in Taramani by Rotary Governor Rekha Shetty; by Rtn Guenter Scheurbrandt, past president of the Black Forest project; by Rtn Shyamala Jayaprakash of Madras

*Right: These young women got scholarships during 2003-04. under the second matching grant of our club. Function held at Dharmambal Polytechnic. Governor Sv Rm Ramanathan, Rtn V R Anil Kumar and Rtn R Chandrasekhar, then president are in the picture.*

South; by Rtn V R Anil Kumar, also of our club; and by the German Consul-General in Chennai.

### **The Black Forest connection**

How did the Black Forest connection come about? Way back in the 1960s, a German professor from the Black Forest area, Mr Achim Bopp, was teaching at IIT Madras. His wife was helping a few servants at IIT households by meeting the cost of their children's education. When the couple returned to Germany, Mrs Bopp continued the assistance for the servants' children year after year, and a few friends of the couple pitched in with more money.

The Rotary Club of Black Forest came to know about this assistance and thought of a bigger project to help the under-privileged in India. In 1997-98, Rtn Guenter Scheuerbrandt, incoming president of the RC of Black Forest, contacted Rtn Governor K V Chari of RI district 3230 asking him to identify a club in Chennai. Governor Chari contacted Rtn A G Shankar, president of Madras South, and he confirmed our club's interest.



Says Rtn V R Anil Kumar of our club “As luck would have it, I was about to visit Frankfurt, West Germany, in connection with my business. I contacted Rtn Guenter. He came all the way to Frankfurt from Hochschwarzwald to meet me.”

On his return, Rtn Anil Kumar briefed Rtn A G Shankar, president of the club. Mrs Bopp had wanted to help students in the age group 6 to 10. But the club felt it would be more useful to provide vocational education to older girls so that they could support their families. RC of Black Forest accepted the idea. That’s how the matching grant project was born.

In August 2000, a second instalment of more than Rs 3 lakhs was distributed to these students by Governor P T Ram Kumar, Rtn Anil Kumar and by president Rtn S R Madhu.

*November 1999: One of 69 girl students receives a scholarship cheque from the principal of Dharmambal Polytechnic. By her side is Rtn V R Anil Kumar.*



*Rtn Shyamala Jayaprakash, then president of Madras South, hands over a scholarship cheque to a polytechnic student. Our club carried out two matching grant projects for vocational education of women – during 1999-2001 and 2002-04 – in co-operation with the Rotary Club of Hochschwarzwald (Germany) and the RC of Zurzach-Brugg, Switzerland respectively.*



### Enter Zurzach-Brugg

The vocational education for women project was appreciated by all, and Madras South wanted to continue the project.

In January 2000, Rtn Hans Setz of the RC of Zurzach-Brugg, Switzerland, was one of the Vintage 60 international visitors to Madras South. He was keen on assisting our club and its target groups. He got his club’s approval for a matching grant project to continue our club’s effort in vocational education of women.

The project materialized. RCMS contributed \$1,500, Zurzach-Brugg contributed \$4,500, and RI International provided a matching grant of US 6,000.

Some 65 girl students were helped to pursue two-year courses in 2002-03 and 03-04. They represented a wider range of disciplines than those under the first matching grant.

The two matching grant projects show the strong interest of international donors in women’s empowerment. Viable projects to improve women’s education or skills, it is believed, will raise family incomes and alleviate poverty.

– S R Madhu







## 23 Youth Service

Our Youth Service work focuses on our three Rotaract clubs (formed in colleges) and our four Interact clubs (based in schools).

The Rotaract clubs belong to the College of Engineering, Guindy, at Anna University; the A.C. College of Technology, Guindy, Anna University; and the Asan Memorial Arts and Science College, Pallikaranai.

The Rotaract Club of CEG, Anna University, is known for its vitality. Its service and cultural projects do us proud. (See the article that follows, an interview with the president of the club).

*A sampling of activities (opposite page and this page) at the four Interact clubs of Madras South.*





Our interactors belong to four schools – the Corporation Girls Higher Secondary School, Saidapet; the Seetharam Vidyalaya, West Mambalam; the Asan Memorial Higher Secondary School, which runs both matriculation and CNSC streams; and the Anna Gems and Science Park School, Guindy.

Over the years, we have carried out several projects at the Corporation Girls' Higher Secondary School, Saidapet, including an annual RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Award). This year, Madras South organized a large tree-planting campaign in the Corporation Girls' School as well as the Anna Gems School.

The Sitaram Vidyalaya, West Mambalam, conducts a commerce fair every year that attracts 600 to 700 students and parents from other schools. They create models to improve awareness and knowledge about banking, foreign exchange, stocks and shares, India's economy and so on.

– R Chandrasekhar

*Left, above: Award for a Rotaractor. Left, below: Leadership change at an Interact club. Below: Rotaractors greet then Madras South president B B Vengatesh.*



## 24 “Rotaract has been a great teacher”

– An Interview with Rotaractor M Anand

**What Rotaract meant for me: An interview with Anand Mohan, president, Rotaract Club of CEG, Guindy.**

**Q: What made you become a Rotaractor? What has it meant to you?**

**Anand Mohan:** I still remember the first day of college, when many seniors surrounded me and asked me to join Rotaract, paying Rs.100 as fee. Past President P.Udayanand briefed me in detail, and persuaded me to join this wonderful movement. Through Rotaract, I have met people from different walks of life, organized events, rendered service, learned time management. It has been a hectic four years, and Rotaract was a great teacher.



Anand Mohan

This year in particular was challenging. As president, I was deep into our regular projects – Sangarsh, Phonenix, Vizhithuru. Besides classwork and study, we had to meet event sponsors, talk and bargain endlessly with them. We worked together and with Rotaractors from other clubs. I’ve become more outgoing, more confident, more assertive.

**Q: How did you organize all these events and projects? It must have been so time-consuming. Even we Rotarians find it difficult.**

**AM:** We formed a number of teams: core team, event management, contacts with sponsors, logistics, public relations. Everyone reported to the project chairperson. The teams were changed for every project so that everyone gained experience in every area.

**Q: How many members did you have?**

Our Rotaract Club is the second largest in Asia, with some 1,000 members. This is about one-fourth of the CEG, which has 4,000 students. But I would say that only about 60 members are very active. A recruitment drive is done every year targeting the new first-year students, and we pull in some 300

freshers. We point out that Rotaract is part of an international movement of 6,500 clubs with nearly 150,000 members.

**Q: What’s the single most important gain from the Rotaract experience?**

**AM:** That’s easy to answer: communication skills. There’s so much interaction with so many people at so many levels that Rotaractors become effective communicators. The movement is also a career booster. In every job interview, I was asked what I did in Rotaract. Companies are always looking for good communicators. Technical knowledge is important of course, but it’s often communication skills that make the difference, and Rotaract made this difference. In a nutshell, I am truly grateful to Rotaract. Being a Rotaractor is something I’ll always be proud of.

**Your project Sangarsh is often in the news. How many years has it been going on?**

**AM:** Sangarsh is perhaps our most prestigious project, born in 2003. It is an annual community service project. We raise funds and then serve a needy organization. Over the years, we have helped the physically challenged, the mentally retarded, HIV affected children, cancer patients and polio- affected children.

**Please tell me about the Sangarsh projects over the years.**

**AM:** The first Sangarsh, in 2003, was just a humble initiative to help the physically challenged students of our college. We raised money from students and staff of the college and gave the disabled students six motorized vehicles worth Rs.75,000.

**Sangarsh 2004:** We organized a play by Crazy Mohan in the Music Academy, and donated Rs 50,000 to the Cancer Institute, Adyar.

**Sangarsh 2005:** We helped blind students of the Little Flower Convent and the Government School for the Blind, Poonamalle, by donating audio books including text books. They were obtained from Vizhiyagam in Madurai, the only audio library for the visually challenged in India. The fund-raiser was a programme at the Music Academy on March 20, 2005.

**Sangarsh 2006:** We donated an ambulance to the Community Health Education Services, Chennai, which caters to more than 40 HIV-affected





children. The fund-raiser was a music show by the Lakshman Shruti orchestra, plus a concert by Harini, Srilekha Parthasarathy and other singers. Also a dance show by John Britto's Dance Company. We roped in a corporate sponsor, Xansa.

**Sangarsh 2007:** We focused this time on Samarpana and Rasa, two institutes that cater to mentally challenged and spastic children. (Samarpana runs residential and day care centres. Rasa runs a school for both children and adults, and conducts rehabilitation programs through music, dance, drama, theatre and story-telling.) We donated an audio visual library to Rasa, and some money for a Samarpana building fund. Funds were raised through a music concert by playback singers Ranjit, Saindhavi, Rahul Nambhiyar and Sangeetha, and dance shows by John Britto's dance company as well as by CEG's own dance troupe "The Solomon Twisters".

**Sangarsh 2008:** We supported the CSI Home for polio rehabilitation in Kanchipuram, which looks after some 100 patients in the age group 8-18 years, most of whom are destitutes or orphans. We organized a music concert by playback singers Ranjit, Devan and Naresh Iyer on March 20, 2008, at Kamaraj Memorial Hall and raised Rs.3 lakhs. We used the money to renovate the home: we repainted the building, installed a new sewage system, set up a computer lab to teach simple applications and a basic DTP system to help the institution to generate income.

**Sangarsh 2009:** We renovated Karunai Illam, an orphanage in Madambakkam (East Tambaram), founded in 1996. It maintains more than 100 orphans. The home was in dilapidated state; the asbestos-and-tar roofs made life impossibly tough in bad weather. We organized a musical fund-raiser on March 28, 2009, at the Music Academy. Playback singers Benny Dayal, Krish and Suvi Suresh performed for a 1,400-strong crowd, A sum of Rs. 3.75 lakhs was raised for the cause. The renovated Karunai Illam was declared open on August 22, 2009, by the Vice-Chancellor of Anna University, Dr. P. Mannar Jawahar. Several Rotarians from Madras South attended.

**Sangarsh 2010:** The cause we supported this time was Shelter, a home for some 35 HIV-affected kids, in Kolathur: we sought to renovate the building of Shelter, which was run down. We organized a musical concert with playback singers Benny Dayal, Krishna Iyer, Srimathumitha, Sucharita, Suvi



*Opposite page: Excited audience roars approval at the Music Academy, at annual fund-raiser of the CEG Rotaract club named "Sangarsh". Above: In 2009, the club renovated Karunai Illam, an orphanage in Meenambakkam, thanks to the musical fund-raiser. The hut (right) was transformed into a brick-and-mortar building for more than 100 orphan inmates.*



Suresh and MK Balaji on March 27, 2010, at the Music Academy. We netted a sum of Rs. 4 lakhs, and gave the money to Shelter. Renovation work has started.

**Q:** *Most impressive indeed, congratulations. I'm told you also conduct career guidance programs for schoolchildren.*

**AM:** Yes, we call it **Vizhithiru** (keep awake) It is again an annual project, the aim is professional development of higher secondary school students.

It started in 2002 as a career guidance program under the name "Chennai 12". The name changed to "Panorama" the following year, it was conducted for students of standards XI and XII. Panorama 2004 covered time and stress management, besides counseling for engineering and medicine.

The Vizhithiru avatar of the programme was born in 2005. We Rotaractors conducted career guidance simultaneously in 20 corporation schools of Chennai. In 2006, we did career guidance and organized various contests as



well. “Vizhithiru” was honoured with the “Best Professional Development Project” award by the District Rotaract Council the same year. In 2007, Vizhithiru covered both Corporation and matriculation schools, went on for two days and helped more than 1500 students. Vizhithiru 2008 was held at the Vivekananda Auditorium and drew 800 students.

This year, Vizhithiru 2009 was conducted for 763 Government school students at the Vivekananda auditorium, Anna University. We got good speakers to talk about career options, exam-related stress and time management, and bank loans for further studies. Lunch was provided and games conducted to bring out literary skills. We gave every student a kit – note pad, pen, a Q & A booklet a formulae sheet

#### ***What about that other event, Phoenix?***

**AM:** Yes, that’s a cultural extravaganza. More than 2,000 members of 50 Rotaract clubs all over Chennai take part. It’s a joint initiative of the Rotaract Clubs of Anna Adarsh College for Women, College of Engineering, Guindy and Women’s Christian College. Phoenix highlights current problems – global warming and water conservation, for example. Phoenix 2009 focused on education. A number of events profiled different facets of education.

Phoenix enables young Rotaractors to showcase their talents on a bigger stage in front of celebrities. A sum of Rs. 18,000 was donated for the education of three children from Sevalaya, an NGO.

The Rotaract Club of CEG conducts some other campus events as well – such as quizzes, cricket tournaments, workshops. We visit orphanages and spend weekends with children there. We organize periodic membership drives to strengthen our numbers.

#### ***Would you like to mention some key Rotaract colleagues who helped you in your various projects?***

Rtrs S. Gopinath, Vinay Radhakrishnan and R. Gowtham helped out with Sangarsh. Rtrs. G. Pennarasi ( Secretary 09-10), Shyam Balaji and T. Radhakrishnan were very active in Phoenix. Rtrs P. J. Karthick, D. Vijaya and P. Revathy stood out with Vizhithiru. All these Rotaractors have completed their third year in engineering, and will serve on the board of Rotaract next year.



*Installation of new office-bearers at the CEG Rotaract club.*

#### ***What can Rotarians do for the Rotaract movement?***

**AM:** There should be joint Rotary-Rotaract projects. Both can benefit. We have managed to do Rs 4-lakh projects. If we join hands, we can execute bigger projects and help bigger causes. Further, you Rotarians would be able to advise us on tackling business, vocational, and professional challenges.

#### ***You have completed your engineering course. What do you plan doing now? You should continue to take part in Rotary!***

**AM:** I have obtained a job with GMMCO Ltd., a dealer of Caterpillar. The firm deals with marketing and renting of diesel engines and earth movers. I will be in Chennai for a few months, final posting will then take place.

I would certainly like to continue in Rotary. There are community-based Rotaract clubs as well (besides college-based Rotaract clubs) which are meant for graduates and professionals. I would like to join a community-based Rotaract club – and who knows, some day a Rotary club as well.



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Photo feature

## *Madras South and the RYLA*

**R**YLA stands for “Rotary Youth Leadership Award”. But it is actually a one-day or two-day youth camp. Participants enjoy a number of varied activities – yoga, tai chi, quiz, health talk, inspirational talk, elocution or debate, music, dance, Antakshari. Speakers are drawn from Rotary, there also doctors and other professionals.

What does a Ryla do? It’s fun-and-games. It teaches physical fitness. It helps self-confidence, It imparts communication skills. It discovers talent.

Madras South has organized a RYLA many times. But during the past six years, it’s being done regularly for students of the Corporation Girls Secondary School, Saidapet. A private bus takes them to the SIRD complex in Maraimalai Nagar. It’s a State Government facility, some 80 km from the city, which offers living rooms and air conditioned classrooms,. The girls leave, all charged up and excited, around 6 a.m on the first morning and return around 6 pm the next day.



*Photographs on these pages capture activities and moods at the 2-day RYLA for girls of the Corporation Girls High School, Saidapet*





“The Ryla camp made many changes in me,” says S Priya, president of the Interact club, about the Ryla camp organized on October 10-11, 2009.

The Ryla usually concludes with a campfire. Participants look back on what they experienced, what they learned. The photographs on these pages provide glimpses into the Ryla.

*Resource persons at the RYLA are Rotarians as well as professionals from many disciplines.*





## 26 A Youth Service project of 1991

### ***ROSY Camp – a great initiative in national integration and leadership training***

In 1991, Madras South made waves (not just in Rotary but in the wider community) with the innovative ROSY (Rotary Scouts and Youth) Camp organized at Anna University, November 25 through 29. It was the brainchild of President Rtn C Venugopal.

More than a hundred boy scouts aged 16-17 came together from different parts of the country for this 5-day camp which was designed to promote national integration and leadership; and impart training in public speaking, crisis management and physical culture. Organized by Madras South, the camp was co-sponsored by the Government of India's Department of Youth Affairs, the Indian Bank, and the Bharat Scouts and Guides.



The ROSY Camp had the following elements:

- a cycle rally on the morning of November 25;
- a panel discussion on national integration;
- a star-studded inaugural ceremony on the evening of Nov 25.
- Yoga every morning; demonstrations of fire-fighting, games and contests, music and dance, or camp fire in the evening
- Talks by a galaxy of star speakers, discussions, quiz programmes and entertainment from Nov 25 through 29. The topics: leadership, personality development and public speaking; the art of management; interviews and interaction; career guidance and entrepreneurs; modern developments; face to face.
- Speakers and faculty for the various sessions included Dr P Devadatta, Dr Nancy David, Dr Muthu Chidambaram and Dr Surya Kumari of

*Entertainment at the 2-day Rotary and Scouts Youth Camp, which was an exercise in national integration, leadership training, communication skills and physical fitness.*



the Mother Teresa Women's University; Dr S Natarajan, director of the IIT; Dr Sarvapalli Gopal, historian; Mr S A Subramani, chairman of the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation; Mr K Ravindran (former DG of Police); Dr K Ganesan, principal of the Vivekananda College; Prof K R Seshadri, Prof K V Narayanan and Prof Balaraman of the MIT; Mr N K Sharma, Principal, Sishya; Rtn Rekha Shetty (on "drug addiction"). Rtn P M Jose, Asst Gen Manager of Indian Bank; Dr S Sriraman Srinivasan, Regional Director of the Indira Gandhi Open University, Madras, Rtn SRMPL Subramaniam of Madras South; Prof Ashok Jhunjunwala and Dr S S Gokhale of IIT; and Dr R Nagaswamy, former Director of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu.

- A valedictory function on the evening of November 29.

For the **cycle rally** (Nov 25), participants carried placards on national integration and cycled from Fort St. George to Anna University. They set out at 8 a.m., seen off by Mr M Gopalakrishnan, Chairman, Indian Bank; and arrived before 9 a.m. at the university, to be received by the Director-General of Police himself, Mr S. Sripal.



**Inauguration (Nov 25):** This was held on the evening of the first day. The Governor of Tamil Nadu, Mr Bhishma Narain Singh, delivered the inaugural talk. The guest speakers were Mr M Gopalakrishnan, who delivered the keynote address; Mr Justice S Natarajan of the Supreme Court (retd); Mr N Ram, then Associate Editor of The Hindu; DGN Rtn R Ramakrishnan;



Mr T R Jagadeesan, Director of Anna University; Mr G Viswanathan, Minister for Food, Tamil Nadu. Rtn President C Venugopal welcomed the guests.

**Valedictory function (Nov 29):** This was another gala affair. The Tamil Nadu Minister for Law, Mr K A Krishnaswamy, delivered the keynote address. Justice A S Anand of the Supreme Court and Rotary Governor Vishwanath Reddy were other special speakers. PDG Ramakrishna Raja delivered the valedictory address. President Veugopal welcomed the gathering.

At the valedictory function, members of Madras South put up an entertainment programme on marriages of India. It was a delightful dance drama on the different types of Indian weddings, with Rtn A.G.Shankar as the "Sutradar" (story-teller). It was a smash hit with the audience.

The ROSY Camp was a great success. For many of the boy scouts, it was the experience of a lifetime. The event received wide media publicity.

Rtn K S Jayaraman played a major role in executing this project, while Rtn P V Laxminarayana was very active too.

*Left: The ROSY Camp began with a cycle rally. Participants carried placards on national integration and cycled from Fort St. George to Anna University. Above: Rtn C Venugopal, then president of Madras South, receives a distinguished guest.*





## International service

## 27 Madras South organizes unique international get-together

by S R Madhu

It happened more than 10 years ago, in January 2000, but is etched forever in our memory. PDG Ramakrishna Raja described it as “the most exciting event in the history of our club”.

From January 9 through 13, 2000, 21 Rotarians and Annes from seven countries – Argentina, Australia, France, Malaysia, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK – were in Chennai, guests of individual Southeners. All the visitors were from clubs born in 1960, like Madras South.

*Opposite page: The visiting Rotarians at Anna University. They are briefed about the Dana Bergh project by Rtn K S Jayaraman. Other pages show visits to Madras South projects as well as tourist attractions.*



During a whirlwind week, seven Southerners provided home hospitality. The club organized five memorable days of fellowship and goodwill, tourist outings, cultural entertainment and visits to service projects. “We are overwhelmed,” said Rtn. Betty Ashburner from UK. “Please visit Sweden”, said Rtn. Olof Madebrink. The handsome couple from Switzerland, Rtn. Hans Setz and wife Karin, were quite fascinated with the community service projects they visited.

At the first ice-breaking function **on Sunday, January 9**, the club presented the visitors with information kits about the city of Chennai, about our club, and our service projects in particular. The kit included a special souvenir, a Madras South T Shirt. Briefing the visitors about India and Chennai, Rtn. Anil Kumar said, “Ours is a country of unbelievable contrasts. Whatever one says about India, the opposite is also true”.

Rtn. R V Rajan presented an audio-visual on India.

That evening, the visitors met club members along with their Anns and Annets over fellowship and dinner at Hotel Quality Inn Aruna. The hosts wore ethnic costumes. Rtns. N Nagoji and R Seshadri organized games, entertainment and music.

**Monday, January 10:** The visitors toured the immortal rock temples of Mahabalipuram and paid a visit to Dakshin Chitra, which is a museum cum exhibition centre of the cultures of South India. Rtn. President Shyamala Jayaprakash and Rtns. M K Kannan and N Nagoji escorted the guests on the tour.

That evening, six club members hosted six groups of visiting Rotarians and Southerners to dinner at their homes. Rtns. R V Rajan, S R Madhu, S Balakrishnan, Kalyani Raman, R N Veerappan and Arokiadass were the hosts. The visitors relished the home-cooked Indian food and their glimpses into Indian homes.

It happened to be the birthday of Rtn. Haroldo Scarpeccio of Argentina. Rtns. B B Vengatesh and Anant Seshan secretly arranged a birthday cake for Haroldo during the dinner at the home of Rtn. S R Madhu. Haroldo cut the birthday cake and members applauded. “It’s like home,” said Haroldo, much moved. Adding to his delight was the presence of young Bernat, son



of the club's Spanish member, Rtn. Josep Masferrer. Haroldo and wife Ann Gladis speak only Spanish, and Bernat's presence made two-way communication possible.

**Tuesday, January 11:** Early in the morning, the visitors acquainted themselves with a community service project of the club at the Orul Olcott Kuppam School, Besant Nagar, executed in co-operation with the Probus Club of Madras South. The kids performed a drill and presented a dance as the visitors clicked away. The Probus Club of Besant Nagar, set up by our club, organized the function.

That afternoon, Ann Nirmala Madhu, President of the Inner Wheel Club of Madras South, escorted the visitors on a brisk and productive shopping tour. They visited the Santhome Church and the Kapali temple and bought silk ties and shirts, sarees, table linen, wooden inlay artifacts and handicrafts at Radha Silks, Kalpa Druma (on Cathedral Road) and Fab India. The ladies, quite predictably, fell in love with the sarees. Karin Setz bought a stunning maroon sari which she wore the same evening.



The shopping put the visitors in the right mood for a rousing cultural evening at the Asan Memorial School. Girls from the school presented folk songs and dances.

One of the highlights of the entire event followed: the regular club meeting over high tea at Hotel Savera, attended by leading luminaries from the Rotary District. Every visiting couple spoke for three minutes each. The visitors were euphoric about their experience in India. Any apprehensions they had felt earlier about being strangers in a distant land had been dispelled, they said.

Governor Rekha Shetty said the club's initiative had added a new dimension to the Rotary movement's concept of international fellowship and understanding. The Rotarians from Switzerland and France handed over donations worth a total of about Rs.1.5 lakhs to President Shyamala for the club's service projects.

**Wednesday, January 12**, was in some ways the most important of all, a tour of select service projects of the club. The visitors took a look at the Dana Berg Rotary Energy Environment Centre coming up at Anna University.

The visitors were then driven to SEED (Society for Educational and Economic Development), which runs three amazing social welfare complexes in Sriperumbudur, Utkottai and Irungattukottai, which are located within a radius of 10 km. SEED welcomed the visitors, each of them by name, with banners and nadaswaram. A R Palanichamy, SEED's founder, briefed the visitors and took them round the three complexes.

The visitors were greatly impressed by SEED's work and spent more than two hours at the three complexes. More than 300 destitute kids (many of them are children of life-term convicts abandoned by society) are looked after by SEED, which runs a primary school, a vocational training centre, an agricultural farm and a dairy farm, and an industrial training centre.

The visitors then drove to Kanchipuram. After lunch at Saravana Bhavan (Jenny Hamel of France described her masala dosa as "the most delicious stuff I have ever eaten") they observed the operations at a traditional silk-weaving centre. Shopping followed – who can resist the lure of Kanchipuram silks?



Wallets lightened, the visitors went to the Kailashnath temple and were quite fascinated with the renovation work there. They watched mesmerized as the group of traditional artisans mixed and applied the intricate paste used for the renovation – an amalgam of lime, cement, jaggery and kadukkai seed. Olof and Elizabeth Madebrink piled the artisans with questions.

Rtn. M V Sriprakash, International Service Director of Madras South, was the driving force behind the "Vintage 60 Clubs Meeting". He had spent more than a year corresponding with a number of 1960-born clubs. The result: a splendid event.

#### **Our international guests and their Madras South hosts**

1. Rtn Hans and Karin Setz. Rotary Club of Zorzach Brugg, Switzerland.  
Hosts: Rtn Ramakrishna Raja and Rajalakshmi.
2. Rtn Olof & Elizabeth Madebrink, Sweden, Rotary Club of Kalmar Nykel, Sweden.  
Hosts: Rtn Shiv Kumar and Gita.
3. Rtn Haroldo Scarpeccio & Gladis. Rotary Club of Los Parejas, Santa Fe province, Argentina.  
Hosts: Rtn Anant Seshan and Sumitra.







4. Rtn Neveu Yves & Marie. Rotary Club of Rennes-Nord, France.  
Hosts: Rtn Natarajan Nagoji & Nandini.
5. Rtn Terry Parer & Jennifer. Rotary Club of St. George, Queensland, Australia.  
Hosts: Rtn Sanjeev Gupta & Sunita.
6. Rtn Jean-Francois Hamel & Jenny. Rotary Club of St. Pierre sur Dives, Normandy, France.  
Hosts: Rtn Mani Sam & Sarah.
7. Rtn Henri Delekta & Christiane. Rotary Club of Chateau-Thierry, France.  
Hosts: Rtn M V Sriprakash & Sheela.
8. Rtn Betty Ashburner & Audrey. Rotary Club of Brownhills. UK.  
Hosts: Rtn R. Chandrasekar & Padmini.
9. Rtn Colin Devlin. Rotary Club of Gosnells (near Perth). Australia.  
Host: Rtn Rajesh Sahi & Neeta.
10. Rtn Pierre Gojard & Magali. Rotary Club of Chateau-Thierry, France.  
Hosts: Rtn Ravi Viswanathan & Uma.
11. Rtn Balachandran & Visalakshi. Rotary Club of Sitiawan, Malaysia.

### Feedback from the Visitors

*“Coming to India was a childhood dream”*

*– Liz & Olof Madebrink, Sweden*

First of all, thank you for this wonderful trip to India. Now, back in Sweden, we often think about the wonderful days we had in your city, Madras.

During my childhood I had a dream of going to India. This is because one of my best friends had lived in India for 11 years, since his father worked with a Swedish company in India.



I often thought of India. Then suddenly one day in November 1999, my club received an invitation to visit India to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of your club and my club. What a splendid idea. I could hardly believe it. Going to India, and being hosted by an Indian family!

Welcome, welcome, welcome, said the e-mail from Rtn. M V Sriprakash. Our trip was like a dream from start to finish. We were lucky. We had a wonderful host couple (Shiv Kumar and Gita) who did everything for us. When I say everything, I mean EVERYTHING. We got a wonderful room in a fine house, the best food, a car with chauffeur! Thanks a million, Gita and Shiv Kumar. And I'll also remember that morning when I played tennis. It was something to remember. Best greetings to your tennis friends!

We also thank the Rotary Club of Madras South for all that you did for us. We'll never forget all those meetings with singing, dancing, eating, shopping, sightseeing, swimming and so on. But what we will remember most of all are the fantastic Rotary service projects your club is working with. The schools and the teachers and the pupils. It was so fantastic. I was glad and proud to be a Rotarian when I saw all the work you are doing.

### *“Impressions of an Indian journey”*

– *Hans & Karin Setz, Switzerland*

The invitation from the Rotary Club of Madras South had an exotic ring to it. A grey office morning in Switzerland was brightened with visions of another world of warm friendship. It arrived unexpectedly in the form of an e-mail from Rtn. Sriprakash. So why not hit the response button and accept the kind invitation? To an unknown and mysterious continent?

That magnificent journey is now again into the past – and is unreal once more. Memories take the place of dreams.

My wife Karin and I tremendously enjoyed the Indian experience. We weren't sure of what to expect. But the welcome from the Rotarians of Madras South was overwhelming. It wasn't a travel agent waiting for us at the airport, but ex-District Governor Ramakrishna Raja himself in person with wife Rajalakshmi. It was like coming to our own family.

Our Indian experience was different, unique. From the very first day when we sang a Swiss country song at the evening fellowship, to the last sightseeing programme on the final day. Visits to extraordinary places like Dakshin Chitra, Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram were combined with deeply moving trips to Rotary project sites.

It was inspiring to see how one could help the less privileged of society through Rotary. The efforts of Madras South to help the poor and the needy deserve financial support. I'm sure all the visiting Rotarians will try hard to obtain funds from their respective clubs for such projects.

The India trip has meant exciting new friendships and broader horizons. We would like to thank you with all our heart. We hope to meet again soon.

### *“You should be proud of your achievements”*

– *Colin Devlin, Australia*

I felt honoured to be a part of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the Rotary Club of Madras South. It was a pleasure indeed to be your guest, to meet your families and fellow Rotarians from so many countries at one go.

On return to Australia, I presented your club banner to my President and gave him a brief report of my experiences in Madras. I also talked about the India trip at my club. I mentioned

- The impressive sights in and around Madras. Your country is so rich in history. Your magnificent forts, palaces, temples and tombs are a source of wonderment to me. Australia's earliest buildings are just over 200 years old.
- The wonderful hospitality extended by your club and by your host families. You were so generous to us and made us feel so welcome. I personally appreciate very much the hospitality of Rajesh and Neeta Sahi and their extended family. Their care for me went far beyond beyond what was necessary or expected. I am very grateful.
- Your progressive and vital club and your inspirational community projects. You should be justifiably proud of your achievements. I will seek my club's permission to contact your International Director



Rtn. Sriprakash, about some support for a community project in Madras.

- My travel experiences in and around the fascinating cities of Mysore, Bangalore, Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Udaipur, Panaji and Mumbai. I am grateful to Rajesh for his help with train reservations in Madras. I had no difficulties with Indian Railways.

One of the highlights of my trip occurred on 23 January at Agra Cantonment railway station. I witnessed young children receiving polio vaccine. Polio Plus was launched as a worldwide Rotary project about 14 years ago. This was accepted as the major project of my club in 1987-88 – my year as President and I have maintained a personal interest in its progress. I have seen photographs and television images of this magnificent project in action, but I did not expect to ever have the opportunity to see first-hand the drops falling into an upturned mouth. It was quite an emotional experience.

To the Rotarians of Madras South I extend my sincere thanks for your excellent birthday party and wish you and your club a happy and successful 2000.

*Inmates of SEED welcome the visitors.*



## From the architect of Vintage 60

### *“International Service has acquired a new meaning”*

by **Rtn. M V Sriprakash**

*Abridged and edited from a speech by the International Service Director, R C of Madras South, at a club function in Chennai on January 12, 2000 to felicitate the visiting Rotarians from seven countries.*

Today, international service – an avenue of Rotary service that is considered difficult to implement – has acquired a new meaning. A few 1960-born clubs have cut through layers of officialdom and red tape to reach out to one another. The Rotary Club of Madras South has touched the Rotary Club of Chateau Thierry. Rtn. Ananth Seshan of Chennai, hardly a week old as Rotarian has touched a senior Rotarian from distant Argentina, Rtn. Haroldo Scarpeccio.

This meeting sends a message to Rotary International that we ordinary Rotarians and our families have discovered that intangible thing known as the Rotary spirit. Ten Rotary couples have traveled thousands of miles to come here.

Apart from the presence of 21 Rotarians from seven overseas countries, our initiative has led to a unique cooperative project. It's between our club and the 1960-born Rotary Club of Guingamp, France. They have sent us a fax saying they would like to help the Ceyrac Trust, an NGO at Gokulapuram about 50 km from Madras, which runs a school for the rural poor and for disabled children. The Guingamp club will co-operate in funding with a club in Poland (Rotary Club of Zamose) and one in England (Rotary Club of Melksham). Our club will monitor the project.

I'm overwhelmed by this development. We thank the three Rotary Clubs from France, Poland and England for their concern about education of rural children in Chennai, also for their confidence in us. When completed, the Ceyrac Trust's project will be a tribute to the Rotary world.

Rotary International may one day evolve into groups strung together by cause (global causes such as education, health, poverty, hunger, environment and so on), not by geography. We should identify more 1960-born clubs, network with them, join hands across the globe, and give meaning to this vague concept of universal brotherhood.



*Section 3*

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*The Golden  
Jubilee Year*



## 28 *The Golden Jubilee song*

*(Ponn Vizha song)*

Golden Jubilee chairman R V Rajan was particular about a special song to commemorate the golden jubilee, a song that would be played at functions throughout the year.

He requested Rtn V R Anil Kumar, a past president and a driver of many musical ventures of the club, to script the song and compose music for it. Anil now lives in Mysore and has joined a Rotary club there, but all of us regard him as a lifelong Southerner.

Rtn Anil Kumar drafted the script in Mysore, e-mailed it to Rajan, president Bowmick and a few others, and incorporated a few suggestions. The tune captivated one and all – it had flow and rhythm, and most important, a spirit of *joie de vivre* that was infectious.



Gopal Rao, a talented young singer who has sung in many advertising films, was commissioned to sing the song. He rehearsed the tune (given to him in a CD) at home before coming to the studio.

“I love the tune,” said Gopal Rao. Even as he sung in the recording studio, the Rotarians listening outside the recording area – Anil Kumar, Rajan, Bowmick, Madhu – knew that they had a winner on their hands.

The Ponn Vizha song was first played during the Takeoff Nite, and again at every golden jubilee function, including of course the climactic “Golden Memories Nite” of February 20, 2010. Here is the song.

### Script of the Golden Jubilee song

*It's time to celebrate a golden moment  
It's time to raise a glass and say hurrah  
Rotary Madras South has reached a milestone  
in its path of service with a smile.  
Ponn Vizha, say hurray, Golden Jubilee you say,  
Ponn Vizha say hurray  
It's a golden journey all the way.  
To serve the community is the goal  
Service through fellowship is the rule  
Lend a hand to help the ones in need  
Its service, service all the way indeed.  
Ponn Vizha, say hurray, Golden Jubilee you say,  
Ponn Vizha say hurray  
It's a golden journey all the way.  
Rotary Madras South has shown the way  
Fellowship is there to hold its way  
Hand in hand and side by side we move  
It's service and fellowship all the way.  
Ponn Vizha, say hurray, Golden Jubilee you say,  
Ponn Vizha say hurray  
It's a golden journey all the way.*



## 29 *Fifty community service projects in one year*

*The story of how Rtn B B Vengatesh spearheaded the execution of 50 community service projects to honour our club's half a century.*

How best should Madras South celebrate its golden jubilee year? Rtn B B Vengatesh came out with a daring idea: 50 community service projects during the year.

It sounded ambitious, but the 50-project goal for the year was achieved quite comfortably, in fact exceeded. President Bowmick and the club's board were very supportive of the cause, says BBV.

*Left: Toys were donated to Spastic Society. Right: A blood donation camp was held jointly with the Rotary Club of Adyar at the Fourts Medical Centre, Perungudi.*



The largest of the projects is the Rs 8 lakh Rotary Club of Madras South Golden Jubilee Science Lab at the 105-year-old P S High School North, Mylapore. An old 1,000 sq.ft school hall was refurbished. Madras South organized new flooring, water pipelines and gaslines, equipment, electrification and furniture.

Other projects aren't large in terms of money, but what's gratifying is their reach (they support many good causes, several institutions) and the wide participation (Southerners, Anns, Rotaractors, Interactors, other Rotarians).

A number of these projects are remarkable for their sheer simplicity: Southerners celebrate their wedding day or birthday by sponsoring lunch or dinner for the inmates of an orphanage, old age home or the like. Several Southerners said "Yes" immediately when they were sounded.. Most of them would like to repeat the good deed in future.

Institutions helped in this way were Sivasakthi Home, Alapakkam ( that houses about 50 mentally challenged men and women); the Netaji Mercy Home, Velachery (which provides succour to some 25 orphans); the Sri Matha Trust of Cancer Institute in Adyar (which has nearly 300-400 inmates on a rotating



basis); the Mercy Home, Velachery, Kilpauk (that shelters some 120 old men and women); and the Goodwill Foundation of India, Aminjikarai (that offers a home to some 25 blind girls).

An interesting project was a corpus fund of Rs 2 lakhs created jointly with the Rotary Club of Madras for annual prizes to the top three students of two corporation schools. Madras South has selected the Corporation Girls High School, Saidapet. The Rotary Club of Madras will select a school from next year.

“The idea of all the projects is to make a wee bit of difference to the lives of the under-privileged,” says BBV. He adds: “People often tend to focus on what they do not have. It’s more positive and healthy to focus on what they do have, and make a difference to society with it.”

The club’s Anns played a major supportive role. First Lady Rooma Bowmick got many Anns involved in identifying and sponsoring projects.

Some other projects:

- 130 bottles of blood were donated at two camps conducted with the help of two of our Rotaract clubs (Asan Memorial and College of Engineering, Guindy).
- An ultra-sound and diabetes screening camp was conducted at the Nerkundram medical centre of Madras South.
- A heart and ultrasound screening camp was held at the Nerkundram centre. 105 patients were screened. Expertise was provided by Chettinad Hospitals, where our own member, Rtn. Dr. Pradeep Nayar, is the chief cardiologist.
- An ENT medical camp was conducted at Arikampet village (off Thirumullaivoyal) by AVM MERF (an organization run by Dr.Ravi Viswanathan and Ann. Uma), assisted by the members of our Rotary Community Corps. 23 people were screened. Tonsils removal, hearing aids and thyroid surgery were recommended for some of the patients.
- A medical camp was conducted jointly with the Rotary Club of Adyar at the Fourts Medical Centre at Perungudi. Chettinad Hospitals provided the medical inputs.



*A drinking water borewell was dug by the club at St. Augustine school, Chintadripet. Above: The school thanks Madras South. Below: Children of the school. Right: A montage of service activities – medical camps, computer training for the disabled, toys for Spastic Society kids, mathematical aids for a school, annadanam.*





- A sum of Rs 75,000 was contributed to Project Blossom for five leprosy-treatment surgeries.
- A sum of Rs 33,000 was donated to the NGO Sahayika through the Annes of our club for treatment of cancer patients.
- A sum of Rs.15,000 was donated to Sahayika to treat the wife of an auto-driver suffering from cancer.
- LED lights were provided for the main hall and the lobby of the energy-environment centre at Dana Bergh Hall, Anna University.
- Three tree sapling projects. One at Vellore prison was carried out in cooperation with the prisoners and the Vellore Rotary club. Rtn K S Jayaraman helped with the contacts. Tree planting was also done at the Corporation Girls High School, Saidapet; and at the Ann Gem Park High School, Kotturpuram.
- A borewell for drinking water was installed at a cost of Rs.25,000 at the St. Augustine School, Chindatripet. The project was coordinated by Rtn. Asha Marina of our club.
- Books worth Rs.10,000 were presented to the library of the Balaguru Chettiar Vivekanada Vidyalaya, Veerapuram – supported by Ann Nirmala Madhu and Mukund Madhu.
- A power sewing machine at a cost of Rs 6,000 was donated to some residents of Kollur village, in a joint project with the RC of Gummudiipoondi Industrial City.
- A sum of Rs.6,000 was donated to the children of “We Can” a centre for autism, for purchase of stationary. It was organised by Anns Rooma Bowmick.







*Support to a medical centre, a sewing machine for women, planting of saplings at Vellore prison in co-operation with the Vellore Rotary Club.*



- A tailoring machine was donated to Nightingale Trust at Tirumulaivoyil in cooperation with our RCC .
- Toys were donated to children of Spastic Society – an initiative of Anns Rooma Bowmick and Mythili Seshadri.
- Vengatesh described the entire experiences as “humbling”, Recalling the borewell project at St. Augustine School, Chintadripet, he said that though the school is in the heart of the city, it is not easily reachable. The project made a real difference to the children. He was also touched by the blessings and prayers and good wishes received from those who benefited from the projects. “You can’t put a price on this,” he said.

— Magdoom Mohamad & S R Madhu



## 30 A Grand Take-off Nite

August 4, 2009 – it was a grand Take-Off Nite! The meticulous planning paid off. The dais was tastefully decorated, there was a buzz in the 300-strong audience (which had Rotarians in suits, Annes sporting every colour of the rainbow). The Chief Guest, RIPP Wilf Wilkinson, and other dignitaries, were ushered in with music while the audience rose and clapped.

The “Voice of the District” Raji Verma rendered the invocation song, President Bowmick welcomed the audience. Rtn. R V Rajan, Chairman of the Golden Jubilee Committee, briefly outlined the year’s special programmes and presented the special ‘Pon Vizha’ song written and composed by Rtn. PP Anil Kumar).

There were three special outstation guests: members from 1960-born Rotary clubs of other districts. They were Rtn. Dr. Veeranna S Jatti from Rotary Club Jamakhandi (Dist. 3170), Rtn. Vedvrat Nigam from Rotary Club of Lakshimpur Kheri and Rtn. Dinesh Kumar Gujral from Rotary Club of Rohtak. Brief recorded video interviews with them were played on the screen. The visitors were touched by our hospitality, and seemed a bit overwhelmed by the grandeur of the event.

Rtn. Ramakrishna Raja, Charter Secretary of our club, and one of the main catalysts of the golden jubilee celebrations, spoke about his long association with the club. Listening approvingly was the other Charter member, Rtn R N Veerappan. The District Governor, Rtn W Anand was present. The surprise guest of honour: none other than Rtn. PRID Kalyan Banerjee (who was subsequently elected as RI President Nominee for the year 2011-12). Despite pressing engagements, Kalyan flew in at the last minute, reflecting his high regard for Rtn. Ramakrishna Raja.

Rtn. RIPP Bill Wilkinson is no stranger to our club. He had visited us in 2006-07, when Rtn. Prasanna Varma was our president, to inaugurate our creation, the Rotary Club of Gummidipoondi Industrial City. He had the audience in thrall with his graciousness and wit. Rtns Kalyan Banerjee and W Anand complimented the club on its achievements.



RIPP Wilf Wilkinson and Governor W Anand light the lamp at the Take-Off Nite. Also in the pic below: Rtns R V Rajan, Ramakrishna Raja, P Bowmick, R N Veerappan.



**ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS SOUTH  
GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION  
TAKE-OFF NIGHT**



The business part of the meeting over, a sparkling entertainment programme ensued, masterminded by the first lady of the club – Ann Rooma Bowmick. The highlight: group songs and group dances. Every item was excellent, reflecting the club’s cultural talent. Mr. Venkatachalan Thayanban, music composer and husband of Vijaya Thayanban, President of the Inner Wheel Club of Madras South, directed the music along with his team.

The entertainment began with a spirited musical tribute to Michael Jackson by Chandini Nagoji, the talented singer and DJ and daughter of Rtn Natarajan Nagoji. She sang the song “Make it a better world”. Followed a vibrant dance item *Mera dholna* from the film “Bhool Bhulaiya” choreographed by Ann Rooma Bowmick. Four Annette-apsaras danced their way to the hearts of the audience: Shwetha Seshadri, Preeti Marina, Asha Jabhak and Anupama Varma.

A group song in English ‘Top of the world’ was rendered by a group of Rotarians & Anns led by President Bowmick.



*Iraivan varuvan* – a Tamil song on Rotary, scripted and composed by Vijaya Thayanban – was then rendered by members of the Inner Wheel Club of Madras South.

Next to follow was a vivacious dance item – a combination of the hugely popular Hindi hit *Kajra re* and the Tamil song *Dandya attam adalam*. Anns Shardha Sriram, Jaya Kathare, Uma Viswanathan and Anjana Vengatesh performed the hip-gyrating number, as the audience whistled away.

*Janeman janeman* from the film “Choti si bath” was the next racy number – rendered by another group of Rotarians and Anns, led ably by Nagoji. The same group then sang the final song, the golden jubilee (Pon Vizha) number, with many in the audience joining in.

“The rehearsals for all these items at Tag Centre were great fun too,” the performers said.

The crowd being larger than expected, the fellowship bar switched to the adjacent hall – a last-minute decision by Rtns Sridharan Chettiar and Mukund Vedapudi who coordinated this part of the evening. Some in the audience who found the decibel levels of the dance music rather high, moved away to the bar. But many, including a few senior members, danced with abandon with their partners. A mischievous comment: they didn’t mind the loud music because they couldn’t hear it. The buffet table was rich and loaded and relished by one and all.

Rtn. PP Vijay Kumar served as emcee, assisted by Rtn. PP Anil Kumar. Both Kumars added spice to the evening. Rtn Magdooom Mohammad and Rtn Shyamala Jayaprakash, assisted by Rtn B B Vengadesh, did a fine job with the stage and the décor.

In sum, Take Off Nite was a great show. No wonder it was the talk of our Rotary district for days after the event. A prominent report on page 3 of “The Hindu” the very next morning carried the message far and wide.

— R V Rajan

*Opposite page: Musical togetherness – Rotarians and Annes. Left: After the Take-Off – Southerners and guests.*





In aid of their Community Service Projects  
Rotary Club of Madras South  
Inner Wheel Club of Madras South

Present  
**Singing Stars**

AIRCEL

NOKIA  
connecting people

TITAN

KOSAT

## 31 *Singing Stars – A mega fund-raiser*

**A**greed: We needed a mega fund-raiser for our golden jubilee year. Not agreed: What should it be?

President Bowmick thought of a joint fund-raiser with the Inner Wheel Club of Madras South, because its president Vijaya Thayanban and her music director husband Venkatachalan Thayanban have excellent contacts with the film world. At a joint Rotary-Inner Wheel meeting, Mr. Thayanban mooted the idea of “Singing Stars” – simply, film stars who sing.

The Thayanbans moved fast. They got actor Sarath Kumar, president of the South India Cine Actors Association, and his equally popular star wife Radhika, interested. It was hoped that these two stars would serve as a magnet for other singing stars. As the idea evolved, we thought of bringing in also the current crop of young and popular playback singers.

Before the big day on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 at the spacious University Centenary hall, Mr Thayanban had managed to rope in 20 celebrity singers.

### **The programme**

Sarath Kumar, Shakti, Andrea, Madhumitha and Sandhya were the singing stars. The beautiful Andrea sang *Malai neram*, a melodious song from her recent film. Sarath belted out his favourite song *Unnai arinthal* from an MGR film. Benny Dayal danced around the stage with his fast number ‘Taxi Taxi’.

Hot young singer V V Prasaanna floored the audience with a fantastic fusion number, a composition of his own. Female singers Pop Shalini, Sunitha Sarathy and Janaki Iyer, and male singers Harish Charan, Venkat Prabhu, Krishna and Krish delighted the audience with their favourite numbers.

Vijay Athiraj of tele-serial fame was the Master of Ceremonies. He was fluent, slick and witty. Mr. Thayanban’s Pallavi orchestra provided the background music.

An important interlude. The Inner Wheel Club of Madras South led by Vijaya Thayanban presented a cheque for Rs.5 lakhs to Dr. E S Krishnamoorthy (son of ex-Southerner Dr. Krishnamoorthy Srinivas, the neuro-physician),



*Pictures on these pages capture the razzle-dazzle of Singing Stars Nite.*





secretary of VHS, as the club's second installment towards the renovation of the hospital's geriatric ward.

### **The organization**

The Inner Wheel team led by Vijaya Thayanban put up a terrific programme. The Madras South team (R.V.Rajan, B B Vengatesh, A Sridharan, R Chandrasekhar and fund-raising convenor Prasanna Varma) organized the logistics, stage décor, publicity, ticket sales. President Bowmick kicked off fund-raising by getting in Nokia as the main sponsor. Vijaya Thayanban managed to get Aircel and VIT Vellore as associate sponsors.

Southerners and the Inner Wheel ladies tried to outdo each other in roping in sponsors. Result of the healthy competition: an impressive list of corporate logos on the stage backdrop. As for media coverage, Vijaya got Kalaingar TV as sole television partner and Radio Mirchi as the radio partner. Rtn R Seshadri helped get OOH to sponsor out-of-home publicity free and also managed a concession for ads in the Hindu.

On D-Day, Southerners and families and Inner Wheel members turned up in large numbers. Good public attendance too. We did a good deed: free passes to students from Goodwill Foundation and Saint Augustine School. They thoroughly enjoyed the show.

In sum, "Singing stars" was a splendid success. Rocking entertainment plus funds for our community service projects – Rs. 10 lakhs in fact, being our share of the surplus, a record in our history.

**– R V Rajan**



## 32 Madras South-Tag Center Initiative

*25 Rotary clubs celebrate our golden jubilee with music, laughter and fellowship*

When our club was discussing and debating ideas for a grand golden jubilee, Rtn R T Chari came up with a characteristic out-of-the-box idea to involve other Rotary clubs as well. He suggested a series of entertainment-cum-fellowship evenings including dinner at Tag Centre, once a month for about eight months. Participants in most of these programmes: members and families of not merely Madras South but also three or four other Rotary clubs. A different group every month.

Result: nine splendid get-togethers for 25 Rotary clubs besides ours. Fellowship extraordinary!

Here is a brief note on the nine events, the nature of entertainment, and the participants. One of the events was a service project at Vishranti, an old-age home.

The audience was welcomed with spicy samosa and cold drinks or coffee. The programme began – on this evening, as on the other evenings of the series – with a brief welcome by President Bowmick and a replay of our special golden jubilee song, composed by Rtn V R Anil Kumar. Most members of other Rotary clubs hadn't heard the song before and were very appreciative. Then the two guests of honour took over.

At the end of the programme, visiting Anns were in for a surprise. On entering the hall, their names had been entered. The name of one Ann from each club was picked for a special prize

**Date:** August 25, 2009

**Topic:** Humour in Rotary

**Speakers:** Rtn P Vijay Kumar & Rtn Dr C S Ramachandran.

**Guest clubs:** RC of Madras South West, RC of KK Nagar and RC of Gummidipoondi Industrial City.



Rtn P Vijay Kumar

Rtn Vijay Kumar and Dr CSR are both pastmasters in the art of humour. They have stimulated more laughs with jokes and gags than perhaps any other Rotarian. "The most wasted of all days is one without laughter," said E E Cummings, and for many, this evening made up for many days!

I tried giving a sample joke or two here – but these jokes are better heard than described in print!



Dr CSR

**Date:** September 29, 2009

**Speaker:** Madurai G S Mani

**Topic:** "Classicism in Tamil film songs"

**Guest clubs:** – RC of Adyar, RC of Besant Nagar, RC of Meenambakkam and RC Chennai Towers.

Musician-scholar-teacher G S Mani is known for his encyclopedic knowledge, his mesmeric voice, his razor-sharp diction. His CD "Karnataka Isaiyum cinemavum", is a jewel. It cites some of the most unforgettable Tamil film melodies based on Carnatic music and discusses the ragas on which they are based. The maestro himself sings snatches of every song before discussing it. Incredibly, his rendering of each song is often better than the original, and more lucidly, sharply, clearly enunciated. music companies. He has performed on AIR for more than 50 years.



Madurai G S Mani

On this evening, Madurai G S Mani held the audience in thrall. He discussed classical music – both Carnatic and Hindustani – and its virtues. He said "This is your heritage, let it thrive." Accompanied by his wife, and his sister-in-law Revathi Krishnan, the maestro discussed a number of ragas, and sang both Tamil and Hindi film songs based on them.





**Date: October 27, 2009**

**Speaker: Rtn S R Madhu**

**Topic: The golden age of melody in Hindi films**

**Guest clubs: RC of Madras East, RC of Madras Silver Beach, RC of Madras T. Nagar, RC of Anna Nagar Aaditya.**

It was an evening of sheer enchantment. The audience relived the 1950s, the golden age of melody in Hindi films. They were treated to a video presentation of 30 immortal Hindi film songs of 1950s that displayed the musical genius of composers like Naushad and C Ramachandra and playback singers such as Lata Mangeshkar and Rafi.

Tag Center resounded with the songs of such blockbusters as Barsaat, Anarkali, Awara, Andaz, Babul, Shri 420, Baiju Bawra, Nagin, Mother India, Do Anken Barah Haath and so on.

In a short introduction to the subject, Rtn S R Madhu – who has a passion for Hindi film songs and has interviewed a number of Hindi playback singers and film stars in his journalism career — said that the songs of the 1950s were special. They were spurred by musical genius, with emotion expressing itself through a fusion of creativity and imagination. The music transcended all barriers. The songs of “Awara”, for example, captivated Russians, Arabs and Pakistanis as much as they did Indians.

Before every song, the speaker narrated little-known anecdotes and tidbits concerning the film, the composer and the playback singers.



*Rtn S R Madhu*



*Videos of songs by Talat, Mukesh, Lata, Rafi and Manna Dey captivated the audience.*

**Date: November 10, 2009**

**Speaker: Rtn Mohan Raman**

**Topic: The life and times of Nagesh**

**Participating clubs: RC of Madras Central, the RC of Madras Vadapalani, the RC of Chennai East RA Puram, and the RC of Madras Central Aaditya.**

Nagesh acted in nearly 1,000 films between 1959 and 2008 –mainly as comedian, also as character actor, occasionally as villain. “Server Sundaram” (a rags-to-riches film which showcased his histrionic skills as hero), the visually opulent “Thillana Mohanambal” and the religious epic “Thiruvilaiyadal” are among his best-loved films.

Film and TV actor Rtn Mohan Raman (100 films, 5,000 TV episodes) is an unconventional management trainer – he uses cinema to illustrate concepts in management and behavioral science. He said that 2009 marked the golden jubilee of Nagesh’s career. It was therefore apt that Madras South should honour Nagesh in its own golden jubilee year. The speaker regaled the audience with a multimedia presentation on Nagesh – biography, anecdotes, gags, stills, film clips.



*Rtn Mohan Raman*

**Date: December 8, 2009**

**Speaker: Randor Guy**

**Topic: Golden melodies from Tamil cinema, 1930s to 1960s**

**Guest club: Rotary Club of Madras**

This was another musical treat, this time from Tamil films, with video clips of song sequences of Tamil films from the 1930s to the 1960s. Songs featured the voices of M S Subbulakshmi, M L Vasantakumari, P B Srinivas, S P Balasubramaniam, Susheela, Raja, Jikki etc. Commentary for each song (facts, tidbits, anecdotes) was provided by the one and only Randor Guy – journalist, author, film historian, documentary film-maker, popular speaker and raconteur.



*Randor Guy*



**Date: January 26, 2010**

**Speakers: Mr P K Doraiswamy & Mr K R Natrajan**  
(Senor members, Triplicane Humour Club)

**Topic: Humour!**

**Guest clubs: RC Madras West, RC Madras Midtown,**  
**RC Madras Nungambakkam, RC Chennai Galaxy**

“Against the assault of laughter, nothing can stand,” said Mark Twain, and the adage was proved to the hilt on Republic Day. Gales of laughter swept Tag Center as Mr P K Doraiswamy and Mr K R Natrajan of the Triplicane Humour Club let loose an unrelenting barrage of gags.



*K R Natrajan & P K Doraiswamy*

Mr P K Doraiswamy is 77, and it was obvious what keeps him so fit: laughter. He drew from his vast fund of jokes on many sources including his experiences with the Andhra Pradesh government as an IAS officer. He was the Chief Secretary when Mr N T Rama Rao was the Chief Minister, and NTR apparently provided as much ammunition for humorists as he did for cartoonists. Engineer-entrepreneur K R Natrajan was equally effective.

**Date & time: March 14, 2010, 10 a.m**

**Event: Community service-cum entertainment programme at Vishranti, old-age home on Palavakkam**

**Theme: Video presentation – select song sequences and episodes from famous Tamil films**

This was a service-cum-entertainment programme with a difference. Rtn R T Chari decided to brighten the lives of the old



women of Vishranti, Chennai’s most respected old-age institution. Set up in 1978, it houses and feeds some 170 old and destitute women, gives them succor, comfort, recreation and dignity in their last years. It is also a training centre for geriatric-care givers. It was set up by Savithri Vaithi, niece of legendary social worker and freedom fighter Ambujammal.

The old women reacted with delight to the skillfully crafted 90-minute video programme of Tamil film songs and episodes put together by Rtn Chari with the assistance of Mr T S Gopal.

Some highlights of the programme:

- Ellam inba mayam — the bewitching song rendered by music legend M L Vasantakumari in the film “Manamagal” and filmed on Padmini, then 18 and at her ravishing best, and sister Lalitha.
- A song sequence from “Sakuntalai” featuring the one and only M S Subbulakshmi as singing star.



*Left: Rtn R T Chari talks to Vishranti inmates (and Southerners) about the entertainment show prepared for them. Above: Audience enjoys the show; Close-ups of two inmates; Mrs Rangi Chari hands over packets of refreshments to the old ladies.*



- An unforgettable duet from the old hit “Thooku Thookki” filmed on Sivaji Ganesan, Padmini and Lalitha. It is an amusing song *Kurangilurunthu pirandavan manithan* (Man evolved from the monkey).
- Sequences from “Thillana Mohanambal”, one of the great hits of Tamil cinema (about the romance between a nadaswaram vidwan and a Bharata Natyam dancer – roles played by Sivaji Ganesan and Padmini).

Rtn Chari introduced the programme. The Vishranti inmates were each presented with a packet of refreshments after the programme.

**Date:** March 23, 2010

**Speaker:** Rtn V Sriram

**Topic:** Chennai, the crazy city

**Guest clubs:** RC of Madras Ashok Nagar, RC of Madras North West, RC of Madras Aarch City, RC of Madras North, RC of Guindy.

Rtn V Sriram is renowned for more than Carnatic music history and criticism (though that's his forte), He is also a Heritage enthusiast and Chennai-watcher, with an uncanny eye for the odd and the eccentric and the idiosyncratic – in people, places or things.

*Rtn V Sriram on “Chennai, crazy Chennai”. Right: Musician Vijayalakshmi Subramaniam, daughter Harini and her team.*



No wonder the Sriram-Chennai cocktail had the audience in splits.

**Date:** April 27, 2010

**Event:** “Buddies Nite”

**Highlight:** Hindustani ragas, classical music and film music – demonstration and video presentation by Vijayalakshmy Subramaniam



This was the annual Buddies Nite, the once-a-year event at which Southerners invite friends and prospective members of the club to join us at an entertainment event and savour the pleasures and the spirit of Madras South.

The entertainment highlight of the evening was a musical presentation by Vijayalakshmy Subramaniam, famed Carnatic music exponent. She took up a number of Hindustani ragas and sang film songs in Hindi and Tamil along with daughter Shankari, to show how the ragas had been used in films. They were accompanied on the keyboard by Harini Ramakrishnan and on the tabla/mridangam by Venkatasubramanian.

Some of the popular songs rendered in Hindi were *Hum ko man ki* (Guddi), *Tora man darpan kahalaye* (Kaajal), *Chandan Sa badan* (Saraswati Chandra), *Abhi na jayo chhor kar* (*Hum Dono*), *Kaheen Deep jale kahin dil* (Bees Saal Baad) and *Beeti na bitaayi raina* (Parichay). Some of the popular Tamil hits she chose were *Nila Kaigiradhu* (Indra), *Malare Mounama* (Karna), *Enna Satham* (Punnagai Mannan), *Kalyana thenila* (Mounam Sammadham). *Nalandaanaa* (Thillana Mohanambal) Sivaranjani.

Needless to say, the presentation was hugely popular. Vijayalakshmy and her team wove a web of magic, and the audience was spell-bound.



### 33 A person who exemplifies service:

#### *Rtn K S Jayaraman and “Service before self”*

*This year, our club for the first time conferred a Distinguished Service award on one of our own members – Rtn K S Jayaraman. His wide-ranging work with Rotary is summarized below in his own words.*



“Service before self” is the Rotary motto. I was exposed to the concept long before joining Rotary – by my father, who had to bring up five brothers and a sister, besides his own family. It meant a lot of sacrifice and hard work.

I have been in Rotary for 45 years – for the first 19 years (1963-84) with the Rotary Club of Mettur Dam, and for the past 26 years (1984-2010) with Madras South. My wife Uma was the charter president of the Inner Wheel Club of Mettur Dam. When I moved to Madras in 1984, Rtn PDG Ramakrishna Raja told me that I should join only Madras South!

**MGR & the Rotary scout jamboree in Mettur:** I think Rotary and the scout movement have something in common – the idea of service. In Mettur, I became vice-president of the Boy Scout Sancheri Educational District. I tried to get scouts into Rotary.

In 1982, I organized a statewide scout jamboree through the RC of Mettur Dam. Chief Minister M G R was the star participant. (“When is the CM coming?” was the word on everyone’s lips.) Every Minister was present, and many government officials. It was a one-week jamboree. Some 2,500 scouts took part. Lots of activities – tree-planting, camp fires, talks, meditation, demonstrations.

MGR was very pleased with the jamboree. He announced that the Tamil Nadu government would multiply its assistance to the state’s Bharat Scouts and Guides 10-fold! It would go up from Rs 35,000 per year to Rs 3.5 lakhs. Governments have come and gone since then, but every government has honoured MGR’s word.

During Rotary year 1977-78, the district organized its annual PETS (Presidents-elect training seminar) in Mettur. The RC of Mettur Dam made all the arrangements. It was an unforgettable event, and my club got a lot of encomiums.

**Extension for RC of Mettur:** I did some extension work for the Rotary Club of Mettur Dam. I helped start a club in Hosur, another in Dharmapuri. Both these clubs are active and thriving. In fact, the Hosur club has given birth to three more clubs. But ironically, the mother club (the RC of Mettur Dam) itself got moribund and wound up in the 1990s. I was very sorry when I heard about it in Madras. Some district governors have urged me to help revive Rotary in Mettur, but it hasn’t been possible.

Some police officials I knew in Mettur (Latika Saran, for instance, who inaugurated the Inner Wheel Club of Mettur Dam) moved to Madras, just as I did, and our Mettur connection has helped.

**Rural vs urban Rotary clubs:** My feeling is that rural Rotary clubs – or Rotary clubs in small towns or in suburbs of cities – are better than urban clubs. Members work harder, are more committed. Reasons? Maybe small towners have more time, face less professional pressure, and interact better with one another, than Chennai-ites or Mumbai-ites.

Example: Take the Rotary Club of Gummidipoondi Industrial City, which I helped start for Madras South in 2007. A US \$27,000 matching grant project is getting off the ground, under which furniture – 240 tables and benches – is being provided to six or seven schools in or around Gummidipoondi.

This project was made possible through contributions from four entities – our RI district 3230; the RC of Interquest, Colorado, USA (I lived in Colorado for a year in 1985 and used to attend the meetings of this club regularly); RI district 5470 to which this American club belongs; and Rotary International. (Note: the matching grant was officially announced on April 15, 2010, at a meeting of the Gummidipoondi club).

All members of RC Gummidipoondi Industrial City worked together for this project. They bought the wood for the furniture, and members or their companies contracted the work to various carpenters.





**Jayaraman & Madras South:** I have helped out with many activities of Madras South, and have enjoyed every minute. I'll mention just a few.

**RONEX 90**, our exhibition on the environment, was held in 1990 in co-operation with Anna University when Rtn R V Rajan was the president. It lasted a whole week – the exhibition for about four days followed by three days of seminars. Industry in Tamil Nadu took active part in both. I mobilized some 250 scouts who staged a dramatic march from Saidapet to Guindy where the exhibition was held.

Dr M Anandkrishnan, Vice Chancellor of Anna University, felt that we should do something enduring for the environment and not stop with an exhibition. The idea of an energy-environment centre was mooted. It was later decided to name it after the late Rtn Dana Bergh. But there were many ups and downs, many twists and turns, many Vice Chancellors came and went, so did 15 Madras South presidents. Our club had given up hope about the Dana Bergh centre materializing. But the Rs 45-lakh project did come into being in May 2009, thanks to Dr R Ramesh of the Institute of Ocean Management, Anna University, and Vice Chancellor Mannar Jawahar.

Some other Madras South projects I have assisted:

**Autovision**, the automobile exhibition, was organized in 1995, when Rtn V R Anil Kumar was the president. It was an outstanding success. Anna University provided halls for the exhibition free of charge (they don't do that any more.)

**Qualitec** (Quality testing and calibration for the automobile industry) was a natural successor to Autovision. I felt that such an exhibition was needed because quality testing services were not available in Chennai then. The late Rtn Chidambaram provided office assistance and secretarial help. Some 20 corporates took part. Foremen-level technicians of various companies were given training as well. The exhibition generated a profit of about Rs.1.25 lakhs, of which Rs 50,000 was donated to MIT for setting up a testing laboratory.

**TECH-21** was an exhibition on “The future of technology” held in co-operation with IIT Madras, whose director, Prof R Natarajan, was a friend of mine. This exhibition too, made a small contribution to our projects – Rs 50,000 for Dana Bergh.

I helped the birth of the **Rotaract Club of AC Technology**. There was some scepticism at that time about Rotaract clubs, but this has turned out to be a very good Rotaract club, I got Mr N Ram, editor-in-chief of *The Hindu*, to inaugurate the club.

**RCC:** The Rotary Community Corps is an organization of volunteers who are not Rotarians but are committed to the ideals of Rotary. RCC's main strength as an implementing mechanism: villagers know the RCC members and listen to them. Co-operation from the target group is easier and better.

In Mettur, the RCCs I set up did very good work, in organizing polio camps for example.

During mid-2009, I helped set up an RCC at Nerkundram for our medical centre there. It has 23 members including 10 women, most of them young and with some NGO experience. A few of them have been trained by CSIM (Centre for Social Initiative and Management), Chennai. The RCC has helped organize a couple of medical camps at Nerkundram.

**District projects:** I have helped a few district governors in carrying out special development initiatives – relating, for example, to the environment, Project Hunger and water management.

For **water management**, I organized district-level seminars and other activities relating to water conservation, water recycling and rainwater harvesting.

**Project Hunger:** Under a 3-H grant (Health, Hunger, Humanities) during the reign of District Governor Viswanatha Reddy, I worked with the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation and a few NGOs in carrying out surveys in Dharmapuri district, and in promoting health awareness and education.

**My Clean India:** District Governor- elect G Olivannan has asked me to head this Australian-funded initiative for the next Rotary year. I will be urging and motivating schoolchildren to “adopt” various communities and strive for a cleaner India.

– Interviewed by S R Madhu



ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS SOUTH



Golden Memories



### 33 *Golden Memories Nite – class and grandeur*

It was an evening to remember. The Golden Memories Nite on February 20, 2010, held appropriately at the city's classiest hotel, the Taj Coromandel, marked the splendid finale of our club's golden jubilee year. The glitterati of Rotary came from far and near.

Rtn. RIPP Kalyan Banerjee, elected as the RIP Nominee for 2011-12, was the chief guest. Rtn PRID O.P.Vaish, District Governor Rtn W.Anand, and Rtn George Cherian, President of our parent club, the Rotary Club of Madras, were the guests of honour.

The programme started at 6.45 pm, 15 minutes behind schedule, because of a delay in getting possession of the hall. But visitors were blissfully unaware of the tension – they were busy with the welcome drink and with meeting old friends.

Southerners, of course, past and present, were there in strength – including 33 past presidents. Annes were clad in golden yellow. There was a galaxy of past District Governors, some of them from outside Madras.

*Opposite page: Music by Rotarians and Annes. Below: A record of Golden Memories Nite – for history and posterity.*





The first highlight of the evening was a crisp 15-minute audio visual presentation on the club's history, prepared by Rtn R V Rajan with help from Rtn. S R Madhu. It inspired generous appreciation from Southerners and others. Rtn. Ramakrishna Raja then recalled his 50 year association with the club. The club honoured the 33 Past Presidents in the audience with a special memento. Anns May George, Shanti Kannan and Alamelu Chidambaram received mementos on behalf of their late husbands.

Rtns. Kalyan Banerjee, O P Vaish and W ANAND felicitated Madras South. Rtn. PP K S Jayaraman was honoured with the first ever Distinguished Service Award of the club for a member. The audience gave him a standing ovation. A poignant moment – it would have inspired many a young Rotarian. There was another special presentation: Rtn. Ramakrishna Raja handed over a special Rotary pin to Rtn. Kalyan Banerjee – the pin he had received from Nitish Laharry, the first Indian to become RI President.

Southerners and families once again displayed their cultural talent during a brief entertainment programme, this time steered by Rtn. PP Shyamala Jayaprakash. It started with the group song 'It is a beautiful day..', the words cleverly tweaked to suit the occasion by Rose Joseph and sung by the Annes of the Club led by Rose herself.

**Adho andha paravai pola**, the triumphantly joyous 1965 song from the Tamil film "Aayirathil Oruvan" starring MGR, the late Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, was then rendered by a group Annes and Rotarians including the youngest member of the club Rtn Giridhar. The mother-daughter duo of Jaya Kathare and Akanksha boldly attempted to recreate one of the most beautiful and visually spectacular dances in the history of Indian cinema – **dola re dola re** from the Hindi blockbuster "Devdas"

Raji Verma, recently crowned "voice of the district," sang the melodious **Kannamoochi Enada** from the film "Kandukonden Kandukonden". It was the song that won her the Voice of the District Award at the district music contest earlier this year. The surprise of the evening was the song **O paloma** sung by Rtm Mukund Vedapudi along with wife Sheila and daughter Manveena.

This item was included at the last minute. Reason: to give Asha Kathare some time to change costumes! She had figured in the earlier dance and was



Top left: The "Dola re" song presented by Jaya and Akanksha Kathare. Right: Rtn Kalyan Banerjee addresses the audience. Above left: Rtn PDG Ramakrishna Raja hands over a very special Rotary pin to Rtn Kalyan Banerjee. Right: Rtn R N Veerappan honoured.

also a part of the next group dance – a 'Dubba Koothu' item based on the popular ghana song **Where is the Party tonite?** made popular by actor Simbu (Silamabarasan). The dance team: treasurer Rtn R Balachandran and his wife Bhuvaneshwari, Sharada Sriram, Uma Ravi, wife of Rtn Ravi Vishwanathan, Jaya Kathare, Rtn Suresh Arunachalam and Rtn Jawahar Nichani. They emoted and jived with gusto to the rhythm of the fast number.

Rtns R.Seshadri and Natarajan Nagoji, the emcees, steered the programme, and kept up a steady stream of anecdotes, barbs and wisecracks. Fellowship and dinner followed – super and sumptuous, like the rest of the evening.

The Golden Memories Nite was the crowning glory of 2009-10. A great landmark for the club, an occasion extraordinary for every Southerner.

– R V Rajan



## *Section 4*

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# *Nostalgia*



## 35 *Cartoonist Sama and Madras South*

During the late '60s and early '70s, cartoonist Sama (of Kalki magazine) delighted Madras South members and speakers with his cartoons and caricatures. Every speaker was presented with a caricature of his before the meeting was over. Rtn Dr S Ramaswamy (president in 1969-70) used to bring out 16-page editions of Southerner every week, full of cartoons by Sama, and bagged the district's Best Bulletin award several times.

Here's a sampling of Sama's cartoons.



Rtn C V George responds to the news of his election as District Governor with "tears of joy"!

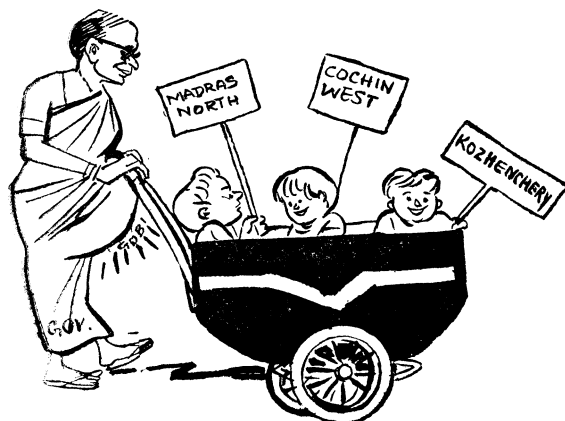


Rtn Dr S Ramaswamy and his fan club!



The hard-working Rotary president (in turban) and his take-it-easy secretary behind him in the imaginary village of Poiyyur created by Rtn S Ramaswamy. He wrote several articles about Poiyyur, a parody of the world of Rotary.

District Governor A Rajasabhai (1969-70) added several new clubs to our RI district.



A President has so many tasks, he doesn't know where to begin!



## 36 Early Members of Madras South

*Rtn PDG Ramakrishna Raja briefly recalls and comments on some of the early members of Madras South.*

**Rtn C.V.George:** He took over as the fifth President of our club in 1964-65 and made a huge impact. He led the very first GSE team from our district – it was to a district in Pennsylvania, USA. He went on to become the Governor of Dist 320 in 1973-74. He held many RI assignments; he was the first Discussion Leader at the International Assembly from our district. But for his untimely death, he would have risen much higher in Rotary International.

**Rtn S.R.Govindarajan:** Prof. SRG was the fourth President of our Club (1963-64). Soon after his presidency, he had to leave the Club because his workplace changed and it was no longer “south of Adyar river”. In those days Rotary membership was based on where one stayed or worked, and



territorial conditions were applied strictly. He was responsible for starting the RC of Madras West, he was the Charter President. But he never forgot his Rotary baptism in Madras South.

**Rtn Dr. S.Ramaswamy:** Ramu was a person with tremendous energy and a great flair for journalism. He took over as Editor of “Southerner” when SRG left the Club and took it to great heights. Southerner used to be circulated to some 350 Rotarians including our members, district officials and Rotary leaders in other parts of India and even abroad, many of whom contributed articles as well. He created a character, Poyyur Zamindar, and through him spread the message of Rotary week after week. His friend, cartoonist Sama of Kalki, did eye-catching cartoons. Ramu died young in a car accident.

*Left: Rtn PDG C V George and May George greeted in Chennai on return from a conference in New Delhi, where he represented Rotary International. Right: The district assembly in 1972 was sponsored by Madras South.*





Let me mention a few others:

**Prof K.S.Hegde:** President 1966-67 was a Professor of Electronics & Communication when he joined our Club. He later became the Principal of CEG and Director MIT. He was also the Vice Chancellor of the University of Mysore for a term. Shivaram and Vasanthy Hegde's spacious home in the CEG campus used to be venue for many memorable fellowship events.

**Rtn A.N.Srinivasa Rao:** ANS was the President in 1967-68. He played a key role in the initial years in spite of his preoccupation with the Small-Scale Industry Association where he was active at the national level. The Presidents' Work Book he presented to every member of our Club was valuable.

**Rtn Frank Bradbury Pratt :** Charter President, Englishman working as a division head in the English Electric factory in Pallavaram. He helped make Madras South a well-knit and cohesive group. A bachelor, he was very friendly and hospitable.

**Rtn Dietrich Schnebel** was a German. He was running a small factory producing casings for sausages based on a technology developed by the CLRI. They used to collect guts of sheep from slaughterhouses and clean them to produce the sausage casing. I was told that the natural product from sheep guts were better than synthetic material. He was exporting the casings to West Germany.

I remember that at a Rotary function in which he was present, the representative of East Germany took part. The West German Consulate reprimanded Rtn Schnebel for this.

He lived in one of the old houses in Pallavaram between the railway line and the Trunk Road. He was very familiar with the area, and suggested our adopting Cowl Bazaar for community uplift. He himself took active part in the project. We met in his house whenever we visited Cowl Bazaar. He and his wife lived a simple life with their two children.

On one of his business trips to Germany, he was driving on the Autobahn near Bonn. He did not notice a barricade and ran through it. It was a fatal accident. His wife and children were here then. Some members helped the family to return to Germany.



*Opposite page: This historic picture of club members was taken in 1985, on the occasion of the silver jubilee celebrations. Above: A meeting of the club during 1968-69, when Rtn Ramakrishna Raja was the president.*

**Two other expatriate members: Prof Hans Georg Meyer,** a Professor of Electrical Engineering at IIT Chennai. He and his wife hosted many fellowship dinners at the IIT.

**Rtn Gosta Rundberg** from Sweden was the Hony Consul for Sweden. He worked for the Swedish typewriter company FACIT. He regularly attended club meetings but did not take much part in any of our projects.

**J K Mullick:** He was from the Punjab, and ran an aluminium unit at the Guindy Industrial Estate. He also ran a hair-cutting saloon and a dry cleaning unit in Mount Road on a building next to VST Motors! Asked why he went into this business, he said "The hair-cutting saloon in the building went on sale, and I bought it – that was the only way I could get into this property on a vital location." Unfortunately, there was a real estate deal on Sterling Road about which there were questions, and Mullick was said to be involved with it. It perhaps wasn't a big deal, but Rtn C V George felt that Mullick should resign to uphold the high traditions of Rotary. So he left the club.



## 37 *Some stalwarts of our club*

*Rtn R V Rajan looks back on some of the old-timers.*

**N.R.N.Aiyar:** Aiyar was the first new member to be inducted into the club after its charter. He had a booming voice which he would use to bulldoze his ideas in any discussion. Being a Company Secretary he had read up the constitution of both Rotary International and of own club, and he would cite chapter and verse at the drop of a hat. If he was present at the meeting to pass the annual accounts, you could be sure of fireworks. Whenever he was asked to speak, his first act would be to turn the mike away or switch it off and say "I'm sure you don't need this." He was the first PHF of our club, President in 1972-73 and a hundred percenter all his Rotary life.

**Wg Com. Bala Manivelu:** A hard core fellowship man. If he was around, you could be sure of peels of laughter from members because Manivelu would keep them entertained with his Army jokes. He and his charming wife were popular at all Rotary get-togethers. Manivelu was a fantastic Master of Ceremonies as well, regaling the audience with his ready wit.

**Lt.Col. Venugopala Menon:** Another army man who was famous for his army jokes at get togethers. He along with his wife Parvathi (a popular freelance journalist) used to plan and execute all the games at our family gatherings. Venu was also active in community service activities of the Club. For a no. of years he was the main link between the Australian Clubs and our Club in getting sponsorships for students of Seva Samajam, Pallipattu and donations for the Beatitude project for the rehabilitation of Lepers. In recognition of his dedicated services to the Club he was made a PHF by the Club in the year 1990-91.

**R.Desikan:** A past president of Round Table India Desikan was a quintessential anti-establishment man. Always questioning the way a club was being conducted, or the way the district was squandering money organizing mega district conferences, with each governor trying to outdo his predecessor. In fact his lead article on the subject in the Southerner, released at the time of a District Conference, became very controversial. During the silver jubilee year of our club, he was happy to accept the position of Charter

President of the Rotary Club of Adyar that our Club sponsored. His wife Nirmala, an active member of the Inner Wheel, rose to become District Chairman.

**V.Muralidhar:** A charter member of the club who never became President. A friendly soul. Introduced the club's first lady member Shyamala Jayaprakash.

**S.Subramanian.** A retired government official, Subramaniam was a longstanding and dedicated Rotarian, A past president of a mofussil club where he started his Rotary journey, he was known for his rich collection of Rotary literature. He was always the first to arrive for any Rotary meeting. Introduced his son-in-law, PP R Chandrasekhar, to the club.

**Dr C V Krishnaswamy:** His beach house in Neelankarai was a popular venue for family get-togethers. One particular year, there was a fancy dress party going on with a generous supply of booze. Members young and old were shaking their legs on the dance floor. Suddenly, an agitated watchman entered the party area and announced that a police jeep had come and that a sub inspector was making his way towards the party area. Suddenly the revelries stopped and you could see Rotarians with glasses running around to hide them and women looking ashen with fear writ large on their faces.

In walks a sub-inspector in uniform, hatted and booted and stick in hand and asking for the owner of the house. CVK walked meekly towards the inspector. The SI could not control himself and burst out laughing while removing his cap. Lo and behold! It was our own Rtn A.S.Siva in the garb of a sub inspector – it was a fancy dress party! Needless to say, everyone heaved a big sigh of relief. The Rotarians went back to their fellowsip and Rtn Siva walked away with the first prize in the fancy dress competition!



*Senior Rotarians, past and present. From left: R Desikan, P V Laxminarayana, Suresh Tantri, S V Narayanan, R V Rajan.*



## 38 *A stalwart of recent times* – *M K Kannan*

*He was our president in 1993-94, district secretary in 2000-01*

Rtn M K Kannan passed away on 15th July 2008, about two years ago.

It is very easy to eulogize Kannan -- a legend in his lifetime; a man of great principles; a great Rotarian; an encyclopedia of Rotary information; always punctual; always there for you.

Joining Rotary in 1979 in Delhi, Kannan was an active Rotarian right through his Rotary years, and a great support to every president and every Governor – always “just there” to provide the rule or reference or a tip.

“My feelings today are the same as when I lost my father 20 years ago. Kannan and I shared a very special relationship in Rotary” says PDG P T Ramkumar. I am sure everyone who came in contact with him will express similar About his computer proficiency. He was as



comfortable in the company of Dell or Compaq or Pagemaker, as he was with GML or bye-laws. He attended a basic training programme on PC usage, and later learnt a lot by using MS Office, Photoshop, Pagemaker, Open Office. His presentations at Rotary meetings and conferences were a class apart. He extensively used Excel, with complicated macros! He was one person who was very cool when he had to mail merge – it is a job even “regulars” find a bit tough,

Some months before his death, he called me to check why his computer was slow. I cleaned and tuned it and said it needed more memory. Within a few days, he had added memory, replaced the CRT monitor with an LCD monitor, and bought a new scanner.

– A G Shankar

*Rtn M K Kannan. At our club (top left), at a Club Assembly (left), at a District Conference (above).*





## 39 1985 – a year to remember

by R V Rajan

I joined Madras South in 1977 when Rtn. SRMPL Subramanian was the President, but wasn't active for the first seven years – being extremely busy with the Round Table Movement. My exit from Round Table after crossing age 40 coincided with the start of the silver jubilee celebrations of RCMS. My good friend Rtn.R.Desikan, on behalf of the incoming Silver Jubilee President Gopaldaswamy, persuaded me to become the silver jubilee secretary. I was initially reluctant, but glad I accepted – I really got to know Rotary.

I've been with Madras South for 33 years; I would rate the silver jubilee year as one of the best in the club's history. Rtn. Gopaldaswamy had put together a great team and ensured that the right man got the right job. He managed to get Rtn. PP A N Srinivasa Rao to chair the Silver Jubilee committee. He also drew up an ambitious plan of action for the year. He was constantly on the phone, following up on jobs assigned to various members. He was a good leader.

The silver jubilee year saw our club achieve many firsts:

- A record 12 new members were added during the year.
- Our Charter Secretary Rtn. Ramakrishna Raja was elected as the DGN for the year 1986-87 at the district conference held in Salem during the silver jubilee year.
- The club adopted Thiruvидanthai village for an integrated development programme.
- We sponsored a new club for the first time – Rotary Club of Adyar with our bulletin editor Rtn. R Desikan as the Charter President.
- Our club conducted RELF 85, the mega exhibition-cum-fundraiser, and netted a record surplus of Rs.5 lakh.
- Youth Service acquired a special status during the year; it got a director-in-charge for the first time, and he proceeded to conduct an inter-city forum on youth service.



*One of the highlights of 1985 – RELF*

- Under International Service, we made a special audio-visual presentation on yoga, featuring asanas by Rtn. Vijay Kumar. The presentation was sent to foreign clubs.
- 35 mm slides to illustrate the annual secretary's report – used for the first time, not only in our club but in the entire district.
- A silver jubilee audio-visual presentation “Down memory lane” which I put together, and a special souvenir, were released on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1985 – the date of inauguration of our club.

An anecdote concerning RELF 85. A crisis erupted immediately after its inaugural session. Stall holders in the “general” section of the exhibition were up in arms because the chief guest did not visit their stalls, there being no power in that section. The electrician quietly vanished from the scene; the stall-holders trained their anger on Rtn Srinivasa Rao, chairman of the Silver Jubilee committee. Fearing that he might be manhandled, we whisked Srinivasa Rao away to the showroom of Solidaire TV, the company of which he was the chairman. Venkateswaran, Anil Kumar, myself and a few other Rotarians tried to pacify the crowd.





*A musical drama organized by our Annes during the club's early years.*

The same evening I got into serious trouble because of an accident in front of the exhibition grounds. Around 10 p.m, I was returning to the grounds after attending a dinner hosted by the district at Hotel Connemara. I had to check arrangements for the seminar to begin the next day. Those days there used to be a gap in the median on Anna Salai in front of the grounds. As I was taking a U-turn, a motorcyclist speeding along Anna Salai hit my car and got thrown off, while his vehicle skidded some distance before it hit a lamp post. I sensed serious trouble. But District Governor P V Purushotaman, who was following my car, saw what happened. He asked me to proceed to the ground, saying he would handle the situation. Fortunately the driver of the vehicle escaped with minor scratches, though his vehicle suffered some damage.

After parking the car inside, I joined Puru and others to sort out the matter. To my relief, the driver was all apologies for speeding, he asked us not to make it a police case. He said he was returning home from a printing shop with the proof of his wedding invitation card, he was worried that his family might consider the accident as a bad omen and cancel the wedding. I agreed



*Another fellowship event from our early history.*

to pay him a small amount of money to repair his vehicle and we settled the issue amicably.

But I wonder what may have happened to me if Governor Puru had not taken charge. A leader and crisis-handler indeed!

The silver jubilee year stood out for the breadth and depth of activities, both special and routine. Those days there were no photocopiers, no emails, no mobiles, no courier service. My office had to send out over 5,000 mails by post or hand delivery to send messages out. Further, it was a difficult time for me professionally too – my ad agency was going through a major crisis and was up for sale, my own future was uncertain.

But the silver jubilee year was a fantastic learning experience. I worked with stalwarts like B Gopalaswamy, A N Srinivasa Rao, T P Imbichammad, N Venkateswaran, Vijay Kumar, R T Chari and C S Ram, and I got to know many other Rotarians. The year brought me close to Rtn. Anil Kumar: we need to celebrate the silver jubilee of our friendship!



## 40 *Nostalgic Recalls*

*Fellowship sustains Madras South. Service projects give it meaning. But nostalgia endows it with magic. A few members recall the most memorable moments or events from their Madras South experience.*

### *Vijay Merchant and G D Naidu loved Madras South! And we adored Naidu's organic papayas!*

by N Venkateswaran

*This industrialist has been with Madras South for 40 years.*

**About club meetings:** Did you know that ace cricketer Vijay Merchant, industrialists Adi Godrej and Lalchand Hirachand, and cine actor David used to spend Tuesday evening at our club while visiting Chennai from Bombay? Cricket fans of today get starry-eyed when someone says “Vijay Merchant” – it’s incredible that he used to attend our club meetings as a visiting Rotarian. It’s like Tendulkar or Gavaskar attending our club meeting today!

And industrialist G D Naidu came from Coimbatore, always with a package of delectable papaya – which he asked the hotel to cut and distribute! (Rtn R N Veerappan adds, “Mr Naidu would always pointed out that the papaya was grown in his own organic farm.”)

So popular was our club that we often had 30 to 40 visiting Rotarians for club meetings, sometimes even more, and some 100 members at a single meeting! Fellowship went on long after the President adjourned the meeting.

**Joining Madras South:** Those days recruitment to our club was a rigorous process. I was interviewed several times over three months to become a member – it was worse than job interviews!. The club was very strict too about attendance and ethics. (One member was told to quit the club because he had violated the four-way test!)

**An anecdote about our project in Cowl Bazar village.** Who should inaugurate the pipeline system we had constructed for drinking water? The village had two rival political factions, and they squabbled on whether a DMK or ADMK leader should do the honours (MGR was the Chief Mnister then). We said we would get the Governor to do so. The villagers agreed, they thought we were referring to Governor Mohanlal Sukhadia, who had inaugurated a few projects in the village earlier. But we got the Rotary Governor to do so!

### *Bhangra, cabaret and books!*

by P Vijay Kumar

*This Punjabi Chennai-ite is known as much for wit and joviality as for his feats in business and Rotary. He calls his years with Madras South “the best years of my life”. He left us in 2005 because of business and frequent international travel, but joins us whenever he gets homesick!*

My years with Madras South were the best years of my life! I had some tremendous experiences.

**I was ruled unfit for Rotary:** In 1967, Rtn A N Srinivasa Rao proposed my name for membership of Madras South. There were then only two Rotary clubs in Chennai. Getting into either was difficult – you had to be a leader of your profession in the territory of your club. Applications were scrutinized by an eagle-eyed membership committee.

Prof P S Hegde promptly rejected my application, he ruled that I was not fit to be a Rotarian. (He had been my professor at the College of Engineering, Guindy, and



*The Vijay Kumar cabaret*



I wasn't exactly a favourite of his.) Rtn Srinivasa Rao was upset. He took up my membership as a challenge. He told anyone who expressed doubts about me: "If you are fit for Rotary, so is Vijay Kumar". I got in. And remained there till 2005!

**Bhangra, Cabaret, Rotary songs:** Members of Madras South were asked by then Governor R Ratnam to provide entertainment at his District Assembly at Connemara Hotel. Rtn B A Chandran took up this pleasant task with gusto. Enthusiastic Southerners and their Annes held several bhangra rehearsals with coaching by dance master Vishnu ji from the DAV and Adarsh schools.

On the big day, eight or 10 of us lusty-looking Punjabis in our colourful lungis and laingas, turbans and chunnis, shook up the stage interspersing the bhangra action with lungful-loud beats of "Hoi, Hoi, Hoi Hadipa". So much lungpower that Rtn C.V.George's lungi came off ! But thankfully it was just before the curtain came down. The audience shouted for an encore. No way, said George, once is enough!

The bhangra was repeated on demand later, with even greater fanfare, at the District Conference at Guindy Engineering College. Rtn B A Chandran staged a Punjabi wedding here, complete with decked bride (Anne Nirmala Ramachandran) and turbaned bridegroom (Rtn KK Ramachandran) on a horse! Yes, a horse on stage !! Half way across the stage when the bhangra was to end, no lungi fell off – but the horse decided to relieve himself and messed up the stage!

In later performances at other district get-togethers, some Madras South members dressed as girls, danced can-can and butterfly and did a boat song dance. One of these shows was in Salem at Gov. P V Purushothaman's district conference, if I remember right. The Can-Can artists did their job with zest, kicking their legs up as far as they would go, amidst whistles and catcalls from the audience.

Our fame had spread, and Rotarians from other clubs joined the Madras South fun gang of Rtns B A Chandran, myself, Madhav Karpur, Dr N Jayaraman, R V M K Prasad and C V George. We were joined by Chandru Thadani from RC of Madras. K Ramesam from Madras West and A K Sastry from Madras North. Anne Sankari Das sang the famous Lily Marlene song (rendered by Marlene Dietrich for World). Annes Vijaya Jayaraman, Pandu



*Rtn PP Vijay Kumar led an all-women GSE team to RI districts in USA and Canada. From left: Ponnamma Joseph, Pushpakala Raman, Vijay Kumar, (Ann) Santosh Vijay Kumar, Christine Macedo and Shanti Gopalakrishnan.*

Prasad, Suman Karpur, Savithri Jagannatha Rao and my wife Santosh danced the Bhangra.

There was even a cabaret for an Inner Wheel function at the Madras Race Club (Anne Kusum Chandran wanted this.) I had to be dressed up as a sexy cabaret girl. This was a challenge. Rtn Chandru Thadani and his Anne Saju took up this responsibility. Saju dragged me to Naidu Hall to fit me with a XL size bra. I was as embarrassed as the sales girl of Naidu Hall. Further, I got into Naidu Hall's mailing list and started receiving literature on bras, lingerie etc.

Rtn Wg Cdr Bala Manivelu was always there to fill the gaps in any entertainment programme with his jokes. At one programme, he did a Tamil rendering of Mark Antony's "Friends, Romans, countrymen" speech. It was hilarious.



Last but not the least, Rtn Srinivasa Rao stole the show when he appeared in a fancy dress competition as Cleopatra. It was a job keeping Rtn Alwar Chetty (the charming Rotarian with a glad eye) away from him.

**Jan Draper & library books:** Lest people associate me only with Bhangra and cabaret, may I point out that I strengthened many school libraries in Chennai with a few thousand books! It happened through the courtesy of Jan Draper, a teacher from Canada, who visited Chennai as part of a GSE team in 1987, when Rtn Ramakrishna Raja was the governor. She visited the Bala Mandir project of Madras South and developed an attachment to our club.

We started getting loads of books, or rather crates of books, from Jan in Canada. She obtained them from Canadian students who normally wasted or discarded books of the previous year. When word spread that she was donating books to poor students in India, other students and teachers gave her their books, so did publishers.

I remember clearing large crates of books from Canada through the Customs on half a dozen occasions. Many of the books were not appropriate for a rural primary school, so we gave them to select high schools in Chennai.

### ***James Bond show in the Arabian Sea!***

by **Renjit Joseph**

***He is the Mr Fellowship of our club – he has organized several outstation picnics in recent years.***

Coorg, Kumarakom, Ooty, Mysore, Yercaud, Wyanad, Colombo – our club's outstation picnics to these places (starting in 1998) have been great successes in fun, fellowship and bonding.

Dramatic moments? Let's take the one to Kumarakom (2004). Some 60 Rotarians, Anns, Annettes set out by houseboat on a three-hour Kumarakom-Alleppey sightseeing trip. They were to eat lunch in between on an island – the tour operator was to serve lunch there. But heavy rain and wind forced a change of plans, and a mid-journey lunch halt was not possible.

The tour operator was informed by cell phone. He took another boat and transferred hot lunch mid-sea in large vessels to the Rotarians' houseboat. It was like a James Bond movie operation – and the lunch was out of this world!



*Rtn Renjit Joseph – he has a yen for fellowship.*

In Kumarakom, I saw one member of our club getting dumped into the hotel pool by a group of Anns. His closeness to the Anns is legendary. Perhaps we should study his DNA.

### ***When we financed buffaloes!***

by **P V Laxminarayana**

***(One of the most senior and most popular members of our club)***

**Meetings:** When it's Tuesday, it's Madras South! That's the slogan for most members. It was so way back in the 1980s when the subscription was about Rs 150/half year. It's also the slogan now, when the subscription is more than 40 times that amount. Once a Rotarian, always a Rotarian.

**Mementoes for the 500<sup>th</sup> & 100<sup>th</sup> visiting Rotarians:** During the early 1970s, Madras had only five Rotary clubs. We used to meet on Friday evening at Savera. No Rotary club met on Saturday or Sunday, Friday was the last make-up day. Therefore every Friday we used to have 50-60 visiting Rotarians from other clubs. Often, we had 100 members at a meeting, much to the



delight of the speaker. We used to give mementoes to the 500th visiting Rotarian of the year, the 1000th visiting Rotarian and so on.

**Our first fund-raiser:** When Rtn Ramanathan was our club president in 1976-77, we attempted our first fund raising project – Rajasthani folk dances. We sold tickets worth Rs 65,000 and made a net profit of Rs 35,000.

**Train journeys promoted Rotary:** Our member Rtn. S R Das made friends with a couple, K K Viswanathan and wife Devi, in a train. It was a productive train journey: Viswanathan became our club member. And Rtn Viswanathan's own great contribution to our club was that he introduced T P Imbichammad (Bicha) to our club. Bicha and Rtn A.N. Srinivasa Rao were the main drivers of RELF, which gave our club a huge reputation in the Rotary district.

**Madras South and buffalos:** Rtn. B.A. Chandran was our president in 1974-75. One innovative project: those days, banks gave a villager a Rs 900 loan to buy a buffalo if he came up with margin money of Rs 100. At a meeting in Cowl Bazar, Rtn Chandran passed a hat round, collected Rs 5,000 and handed it over to the village munsif. "Give the money to 50 persons, so that they can all buy buffalos with bank loans," the munsif was told. Result: 50 villagers got buffalos. They managed to repay the bank loan with the milk they obtained.

### *“Rotary has enriched me with friendship”*

by **Rtn R T Chari**

Rtn R T Chari joined Madras South in 1975. His cultural and philanthropic initiatives are famous. A few examples are the once-a-month lectures of the South India Heritage Programme, the Tag digital archive at the Music Academy, the diabetes research centre at the VHS Hospital. He has sponsored or supported numerous causes in community, vocational and youth service through the Rotary Club of Madras South over the past 35 years, the latest being the Madras South-Tag Center family fellowships this year. Asked about his association with Rotary, Rtn Chari says that more than anything else, it has given him some great friends. "If I'm asked to name my greatest friends, most of them would be Rotarians."

### *Rotary service brings you closer to God!*

by **R V Rajan**

*Our Golden Jubilee chairman is a deeply religious person.*

**Thiruvaidanthai project:** We served not only the residents of Thiruvaidanthai but its resident God as well – the 1,000-year-old Adivaraha temple. The *mahakumbhabishekham* of the temple was celebrated in 1992. Rtns A.N.Srinivasa Rao, K.R Ranganathan and myself were roped in as members of the organising committee. Rtn Ranaganathan donated a lakh of rupees for renovation of the Hanuman temple located outside the main temple.

**Preparing for the golden jubilee:** During a morning walk at Elliot's Beach with Rtn V R Anil Kumar, the idea of a special Past Presidents' nite to stimulate preparations for the golden jubilee came up. We thought of it as a modest event, but the idea snowballed. It was a big show at Tag Centre on 2 February 2008. It was a sentimental event, and hugely enjoyable.

Ninety Rotarians and Anns, past and present, turned up. The honour list included Rtns Srinivasa Rao, B A Chandran, B Gopalaswamy, Dr N Jayaraman, R V M K Prasad, C S Ram, R Vasu, Vijay Kumar, R Desikan, S V Narayanan, Suresh Tantri, B Shivkumar, S R Balakrishnan, Ram Mani, P Thiruvengadam, Dr Krishnamurthy Srinivas. Also spouses May George, Suman Karpur and Parvathi Menon (of deceased Rotarians). PDG Ramakrishna Raja and PPs Vijay Kumar & Shiv Kumar spoke.

**Dual loyalties:** Professionals including admen like myself sometimes face a dilemma. Both sides in a contest approach them for help. That happened to me many years ago. I gladly said yes when Rtn Ramakrishna Raja asked me to produce a promotional brochure for him as District Governor candidate. Some time later, my good friend in Round Table, Indu Chandok, approached me on behalf of Rtn P V Purushotaman, who was also standing for Governor, and asked for similar assistance. I directed him to an artist, as it would not be proper on my part to take up the job.



## *It was a year of music and harmony!*

by Rtn Natarajan Nagoji

### *What else do you expect from the Kishore Kumar of Rotary?*

He is a singer himself, and recalls the musical harmony during his year as president (1997-98). “We had joy, we had fun, we had seasons in the sun.”

Some highlights:

- The first outstation trip (to Coorg) after very many years.
- We organized a terrific Down Memory Lane, thanks to Rtns R T Chari and Anil Kumar. It was repeated several times later, but like the law of diminishing utility, wasn't the same again. Also an Antakshari with dumb charades, a musical tambola, a “musical Anns” entertainment event instead of the usual musical chairs: Rotarians went round Anns instead of chairs.
- Inducted a few fine members.
- We identified the 1960-born clubs to invite for the Vintage 60 of the following year.
- Asked Rtn S R Madhu to serve as Programme Committee chairman. Twelve Presidents after me have done the same!

## *The Rotakids lady was a hit!*

by Rtn Shyamala Jayaprakash

### *The only lady president of Madras South – and till recently, the only lady member as well.*

I was invited many years ago to join Rotary – not Madras South, but some other club. 90% of its members were ladies. But my friend, the late Rtn Muralidhar, invited me to join Madras South. He said I would be the first and the only female Rotarian. That seemed interesting. I have no regrets about my decision. Now, there are two more female Rotarians – Asha and Hema. Am sure they'll have a lot of fun too.

I joined when the average age of 60. Now the average has gone down. We have all become good friends, irrespective of age. This happens only in Rotary.

When I was the president in 1999-2000, Rtn Rekha Shetty was the governor.

A project close to my heart was one for kids – Rotakids. It made waves – among us, among Rotaractors and Interactors, schoolkids and parents and the public! I had two soldiers who helped – Vengatesh and Sridharan. Without them, Rotakids would not have been a success. Enjoyed the experience, and

*Rtn Natarajan Nagoji weaves musical magic (left). Rotakids, which we organized thrice in 2000 and 2002, casts a spell on kids (right).*



all of us learned a great deal. About so many things – police, traffic, stalls, sponsors, publicity. The police asked – Why so many kids here, what’s happening? We created a lot of hype. Citibank was a sponsor and we made some money.

Another project very close to my heart was **Vintage 60**. All of us want to experience such an event again. Sriprakash organized it, only he can do it. We got some funds after Vintage 60, direct and indirect – and a matching grant project as well. RYLA got revived during my presidency.

### *He was in two GSE teams*

#### **Rtn. T P Imbichammad**

#### ***Rtn R V Rajan talks briefly about Bicha’s role in Rotary and Madras South***

He’s popularly known as Bicha. He started his Rotary career with RC of Madras West in 1973. In 1985 he joined Madras South. In between, he did some spectacular things in Bangalore. As President of the Rotary Club of Bangalore Indira Nagar in 1983, he won 23 awards – a record for a club which was just two years old.

Another record. In 1972, before becoming a Rotarian, he was selected as a young professional to join a GSE team that went to Kansas, USA. In 1995, he led a GSE team that went to Perth, Western Australia.

Madras South is fortunate that he joined us in 1985. That was our silver jubilee year. He was promptly roped in as the chairman of RELF 85, a major exhibition-cum- fund raiser, the first of its kind in our District. His experience with a similar project in Bangalore came in handy. RELF 85 was a runaway success. Bicha and Madras South were both the toast of Rotary.

It was Bicha who prepared for RELF 85 a detailed checklist of activities., including the format for seven seminars. Using his contacts in industry and government, he got many eminent people to take part in the seminars. He was in the steering committees of both RONEX 90 and AUTOVISION 95.

Rtn. PDG B Vishwanatha Reddy requested Bicha to take charge of a district exhibition, Rota Expo 92. This expo was virtually managed by Bicha, with some assistance from me as secretary.

He was one of the 12 Rotarians worldwide (and the only Indian) honoured by RI as ***People who made the difference*** at the RI Convention held in Birmingham in 1985. This was for the outstanding work he did as president of the Rotary Club of Bangalore Indira Nagar.

My first experience with a Muslim wedding was when Bicha’s elder son Kunhamed got married in Kozhikode. We were treated like royalty, Vegetarians were specially looked after. Southerners can’t forget the mega fireside get togethers at his palatial home in Defence Officers’ colony. Even without fellowship (!) the spirit runs high.

Bicha is not very active in the club now, because of his involvement with a Muslim Education Trust which runs hundreds of schools and colleges. But he has always been helpful and supportive whenever approached. I regard him as a great Rotarian and as a wonderful friend.

### ***“Involve yourself in Rotary, you will be rewarded”***

by **U B Mootha**

***”The four-way test is on a plaque on my desk. I see it every day.”***

If you are smart, you’ll get interested in Rotary and get Rotary interested in you. You’ll lead a richer life. That has been my own experience.

I was inducted into Rotary by Rtn S R Govindarajan. In 1971-72 I became President. The Governor of Tamil Nadu then was my friend K K Shah. I asked him to do the honours. He said, “OK, for you I’ll do it.”

I think that’s the first time a Rotary President was being installed by the State Governor, not the Rotary Governor. Many policemen were at Saveri for my induction!

A core group of Rotarians helped me with service and fellowship – members like Ramakrishna Raja, Veerappan, Vijay Kumar, Srinivasa Rao. Our main project then was at Cowl Bazar. We constructed a building with an unusual design, we carried out functions there on the school annual day and Independence Day.

To raise funds for Cowl Bazar, I organized a dance programme at Abbotsbury. A thousand people attended the programme, and we raised Rs 25,000, a tidy







*How popular was our hospital in Cowl Bazar? Cartoonist Sama answers.*

sum in 1971. We constructed a water tank to provide drinking water to people of the village. We donated a sewing machine to the Andhra Mahila Sabha.

Every year we received a few awards from the district. Invariably, our newsletter edited by Dr Ramaswamy was the best in the district. In fact there's no award that we haven't won.

We were known for fellowship. At any meeting, if there were 35 members, we had 40 visitors. Everyone loved to attend our meetings. And if we went to any other club, we were received very warmly.

I have now been a Rotarian for 47 years. I can tell younger members that Rotary is a way of life. You must involve yourself. I keep the 4-way test plaque on my desk. I see it every day, it's now a part of me.

My advice is : think big. Go in for large projects and carry them out. No one can recall small projects. In the process, the club becomes bigger too.

Rotary has a great tradition, so does our club, in both fellowship and service.

That tradition continues. We always felt like a large family.

## *“I was exhilarated, yet worried”*

by S R Madhu

*“The five images that stand out in my mind...”*

1. **January 29, 2000.** The second day of the first Rotakids carnival at Raja Muthiah hall. We were invaded by an army of boisterous kids. They kept coming and coming! It was exhilarating – but worrying too. How could we manage this Army? Shyamala's team of troubleshooters got cracking. Solution: Let 10 kids get in only after 10 kids get out. Chaos averted. Call it kid management.
2. **Vintage 60,** held in January 2000. This was our biggest International Service event, in fact the most spectacular event in our history till then. Our club played host for a week to 21 foreign Rotarians from seven countries. We did nothing else for five days! I still have the Swiss Army knife that Rtn Hans Setz gifted me after a dinner at my place. The visitors were bewildered at Madras traffic! And quite awed by many other things – the sari shops, the Dakshin Chitra artifacts, the Kailash Nath temple in Kanchipuram which was being renovated.

*The Dana Bergh hall was a triumph of our club's sincerity and persistence.*



3. **2000 and 2001.** Dharmambal Polytechnic. I remember 60-odd young women queuing up to collect scholarship cheques for their professional courses. They were going up in life. So were their families. The UN has many names for such phenomena: women's empowerment, social equity, poverty alleviation. But it was quite simply a proud moment for all Southerners.
4. **1998.** A Down Memory Lane programme of Hindi and Tamil film songs at Savera. Pure magic! I was swept off my feet. Four talented singers were giving us some great melodies from the past. And a professional orchestra too! Put together by Rtns R T Chari and Anil Kumar. The event was recreated several times later, but this one was the best.
5. **May 2009.** The inauguration of the Dana Bergh Hall at Anna University. A project full of problems and challenges had finally materialized after 15 years. The magnificent never-say-die persistence of Rtn K S Jayaraman made it possible.

### *“We have an excellent mix of experience”*

by **B B Vengatesh**

*You can expect him to be cucumber-cool even if a volcano erupts around him – provided you give him his laptop.*

- I was first invited to join the Rotary Club of Ambattur. But I fell ill and the idea fizzled out. Till Sriprakash asked me to for my bio, and in 1997 I ended up with Madras South.
- For six years, I wore both Round Table and Rotary hats. Sometimes, I was with Round Table early in the evening, and switched to Rotary from 6.30 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.
- At one time, our club directory had just names and addresses. As a new member I couldn't match names and faces. In 1999-2000 (during Shyamala's year as president), I suggested that we add photographs as well and allot one page to each Rotarian. The idea caught on. Gradually, more features were added. Today's directory carries substantive info about members and the club's plans and activities.



*Children small and not-so-small have loved our fellowship trips.*

- We worked hard for Rotakids. The idea was to ignite the enthusiasm of kids. We distributed hundreds of free passes to schools. But like film-makers, we weren't sure whether the show would be a hit. When Raja Muthiah Hall opened its doors on January 29, 2000, there were some 500 kids waiting to enter! And some 40,000-50,000 kids visited us in two days.
- I was the Secretary when Sridharan was the President (2003-04). We had a great time.
- I became the President in 2007-08. I wanted some younger members to be active. Magdoom Mohamed, who had joined just the previous year, was made the Editor of the Southerner. He turned out to be one of the best editors of recent years.
- Southerners will remember that outstation trip to Mysore. Renjit, Sridharan and I made a preparatory trip and visited 10 to 15 hotels before finalizing one. That was a delightful experience. The firesides have also been a great success.
- When I was the president, I got an e-mail query from a lady in the US. I was apparently the only one of some 15 club presidents who responded.



That e-mail correspondence led to a substantial donation, and we were able to launch a well-equipped medical centre.

- The community service projects of this year. I was chatting with Srikanth, and the idea of members celebrating their wedding or birth anniversaries through a service project came about. Southerners seemed to love the idea. These and many others – we ended up doing nearly 60 community service projects this year, including those done through Rotaractors and Interactors.
- Our club has an excellent mix of experience. I did some research and found out that of the 65 members of our club, some eight members have been in our club for more than 40 years; eight more have served between 25 and 40 years; 19 have been in the club for 10 to 25 years, 13 for between six and 10 years, and 17 for less than five years.

### *The silent Samaritans*

Rtn R N Veerappan, Rtn R S Falor

Rtn R N Veerappan, one of the two active Charter members of the club and President in 1987-88, is known for his broad beaming smile and his ever-ready hospitality – and a low profile. His spacious bungalow at Chittaranjan Road has seen more Madras South fellowships than any other venue. His generosity, like that of the other Charter member, Rtn Ramakrishna Raja, facilitated a Golden Jubilee celebration to remember.

Rtn R S Falor hasn't held major office at Madras South, but is active through support to service projects (like the corps fund we gave Sankara Nethralaya to enable free eye surgeries every year) and fellowship (his farm on East Coast Road hosts at least one major get-together every year).

### *Catch Rotary prospects informally first!*

by **Mukund Vedapudi**

*He's the incoming President. Hear, hear!*

A few years ago, Sridharan invited me to a Rotary meeting. I had just turned square from the Round Table. I entered Sabha at Saveria, walked in, stopped



*Annes of our club old and new. Picture taken at a 2008 get-together, a prelude to the Golden Jubilee celebrations.*

short, thought “What am I doing here?!” Everyone looked serious, busy. Feeling out of place, I slunk out after some time.

Time passed and this time Prakash invited me. I wasn't really interested but got cajoled into going. This time it was a family participation evening at Rtn Ramakrishna Raja's home. The music started. Our daughter Manveena had joined one of the Annette dance groups. She danced like, non-stop. That sealed our decision.

Member prospects should I think be first invited to a family participation event or a community service activity. Informal ambience and strong interaction. Easier for a newcomer. A formal meeting can then follow.

We are having a great time at Madras South. So does Sheela. Nobody has any agenda and all are equals. My stint as family participation director has helped me to learn more about our members.



## 41 *Being a Rotarian – Hong Kong vs Madras*

*Rtn NV Balasubramanian is perhaps the tallest member of our club. He is conspicuous at the weekly meetings of Madras South, also at our club's service projects and fellowship evenings. This professor of computer science, along with wife Lakshmi, lived in Hong Kong earlier, and was with the Rotary Club of Kowloon for eight years before joining our club in 2001. Here, he recalls his days with the Rotary Club of Kowloon – and, at our request, compares the Kowloon experience with that in Madras South.*

The Rotary Club of Kowloon was born in 1948, and is 12 years “senior” to the Rotary Club of Madras South. It celebrated its golden jubilee in 1998. It is the second oldest club in Hong Kong district, just as Madras South is the second oldest in ours. It has about 65 members, like Madras South. Both clubs reflect the ethos of their city and country.

What's the ethos of Hong Kong? It's a city where the system works, where people mean what they say. An appointment on Tuesday at 6 p.m. means exactly that – not five minutes earlier or later. While driving on the road, if you find yourself on a wrong lane, you can't turn as you like, you'll have to keep going straight, maybe for miles. As a pedestrian, you can't cross the road anywhere, you do so only at a pedestrian crossing, that too only when you see a green light.

### **What happens at meetings**

No wonder Rotary in Hong Kong is very businesslike. Members turn up for the regular weekly meetings in business suits. Sergeants-at-arms wear sashes. At Rotary clubs in Madras, on the other hand, formal apparel is reserved for special occasions. It would be odd if all members were suited and booted at every meeting.

The calibre of speakers at the regular weekly meetings, and the quality of talks, is equally good in Hong Kong and Madras. But the range of topics is rather narrow in Kowloon. Since Hong Kong is business-centred, most topics are business-related. In Madras, the range of subjects is vast and varied.

Incidentally, I wish more Anns would attend meetings at Madras South.

*Dr NV Balasubramanian receives a memento from Governor Benjamin Cherian.*



Kowloon meetings are held in the afternoon. Fellowship from 12 noon, lunch at 12.30, the meeting proper from 1 p.m. There's no free lunch: you pay the equivalent of about Rs 2,500 for it. At Madras South, of course, a pleasant evening high tea (which our membership subscription pays for) precedes the regular meeting.

The frequent interaction we have at Madras South with Interact and Rotaract members did not exist in Kowloon. Once a year some Rotarians attended the inaugural sessions of Rotaract or Interact clubs, and that was it. At Madras South, the Rotaractors from Guindy Engineering College visit our meetings often to inform us about their projects and request our support and presence.

Our annual RYLAs at the SIRD campus in Maraimalainagar for the girls of Corporation High School, Saidapet, are unique. That campfire for example is such a wonderful and memorable event.

### **Induction of new members, attendance**

Induction is a rigorous procedure in Kowloon. Take mine. I attended four meetings as a Rotarian's guest, then got a thorough briefing by the Immediate Past President in his office, then went through a protocol-loaded procedure at the regular meeting, when I formally received Rotary paraphernalia including booklets and documents. Induction at Madras South is systematic too, but a relatively lighter affair.

Participation in district conferences is compulsory in Hong Kong. You don't have the option of staying away, as in Madras.

I was a board member of the RC of Kowloon for many years. As secretary I used to spend four to five hours to prepare the minutes of these meetings. When attendance of any member dipped below 50%, a mentor was appointed



from the board to visit the concerned Rotarian and probe his absenteeism. If his explanation was not satisfactory, his membership could be terminated.

Let me recall one tough situation I faced in Kowloon as Secretary. Members could object to a new member (this is so in Madras South as well). On one occasion, a Rotarian phoned me, objecting to a proposed candidate because a certain action of his had been unethical. I asked the Rotarian to give me his objection in writing. The President too, asked the concerned Rotarian to give his objection in writing. Since he failed to do so, the new member was inducted. My friendship with the “objector” was somewhat strained for about a year.

### **Fellowship substance and style**

There’s a huge difference – in fellowship substance and style – between Kowloon and Madras South.

At Kowloon, three fellowship events are spread over the Rotary year. A dress code is prescribed: dinner jacket, bow tie, cummerbund, and shiny black shoes. Such events start with cocktails and end with dance. Annes usually don’t take part, so they don’t get to meet each other often.

At Madras South, fellowship events are more exuberant, more frequent, and more inclusive. They are held at farmhouses (of Rtns Falor, Sridharan and Sandilya, for example) or residences (Veerappan). There are ingenious themes like Punjabi Nite, Kerala Nite, Rajasthan Nite, Bridal Nite, Spooky Nite. There are grand musical evenings and innovative entertainment projects at Tag Centre. We have had fantastic fun-filled picnics to Coorg and Kumarakom and Ooty and other places.

The Anns of our club have become great pals, they often organize their own fellowships, even take the initiative for some service activities. This kind of closeness did not exist in Kowloon.

Of course we did have fun in Kowloon too. For one fellowship event, we had block-booked the front two rows for the Broadway play *Les Miserables*. In our regular meeting that week, many of the artists joined us, and we interacted with them. One of the fund-raising events at Kowloon was a *virtual* horse race in the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club. Many previous races had been videotaped and indexed; these were randomly retrieved to give us information about the horses, and we placed bets on them!



*Fellowship in Madras South has more zing than that in his Hong Kong club, says the author. More opportunities for service to his own Anne.*

### **Service Projects**

Our main project in Kowloon focused on a small clinic which we set up to attend to sailors who had glaucoma. For some reason, this eye disease became less troublesome in course of time. So the clinic was converted into a child health assessment centre, mainly to cater to the poor. It’s a diagnostic centre, it doesn’t treat patients, no medicines are dispensed. This diagnostic centre is the pride of the Kowloon club. Of course, we do have other service projects too – we donate to a number of charities.

Madras South’s service projects are more varied. There’s nothing in Kowloon like the Dana Bergh project, or the vocational service training at Andhra Mahila Sabha for women, or the Vintage 60 project.

However, both Kowloon and Madras South are fine clubs, and I’m fortunate to have been associated with them.

– N V Balasubramanian



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*Looking Ahead*

We have had an awesome golden jubilee year. Some grand functions. Some great service projects. Some super fellowship. And a sumptuous coffee table book to tell the world all about us.

The golden jubilee year will be a tough act to follow. The 50th year was naturally special. But the 51st year is very special too – We launch our second half century.

The first 50 years is history. Let us now make history.

Getting new and young members with fire in their belly is vital.

And more lady Rotarians. Why? Because they are different. Better brains (very often!). Better finesse. Better perspectives.

Our Vocational Service projects have promoted self-help in young men and women, and moved many families above the poverty line. Let's capitalize on our great work here.

Community Service is a large empire.

We can bring greater depth, more width, to our work.

Youth Service: What youngsters are capable of is mind-boggling.

Let's interact more with Interact. And get more Rotaract into Rotary.

International Service: let's make waves again.

Club Service? Vibrant meetings. Rocking, rollicking fellowship.

The family outstation trips have done wonders – But take it from me. You ain't seen nothin' yet.

“Think big”, says a senior Rotarian.

So the 2010-2011 team will be big. In fact, the entire club.

Let's go.

— Mukund Vedapudi





This publication celebrates 50 years of the Rotary Club of Madras South. It provides history, project information, nostalgia and glimpses into the many-splendoured golden jubilee year (2009-10), in words and pictures

Left: Past District Governor Ramakrishna Raja receives an award as Charter Member of the club from Rtn Kalyan Banerjee, President-elect of Rotary International. Middle: Club President Prodyot Bowmick admires an exhibit at a commerce fair put up by the Interact Club of the Sriram Vidyalaya Matriculation Higher Secondary School. By his side is Mrs Leela Parthasarathy, principal of the school. Right: Musical presentation by Anns of Madras South during the 'Golden Memories Nite', February 20, 2010.



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