

Address of Past RI President Bhichai Rattakul
As the RI President's Representative
At the Conference of District 2700,
Fukuoka City, Fukuoka, Japan.
12 – 13 April, 2014
“Engage Rotary – Change Lives”

District Governor **Motoaki Anai**, and my Fellow Rotarians,

Although this is not my first trip to the Great City of Fukuoka, my appearance at this time in Fukuoka is like coming back home, especially the opportunity to meet with many old acquaintances during the time I spoke at the Rotary Club of Fukuoka many years ago.

It was at that meeting that my relationships with Past RI Director Naoyuki Suenaga, and Past Governor Tomio Hirohata, and many of you here have grown to such an extent that my wish has always been that one day I shall be back to renew the comradeship, the thoughtfulness and kindness that the Rotarians of Fukuoka have accorded me when I was here.

But, it also took almost a decade before my dream becomes a reality, and now as I stand before you now may I say how grateful and happy I am to see you at your district conference. Above all to get to know you, district governor Motoaki Anai, in such an environment full with goodwill and understanding more than I deserve.

To this end I am most grateful to you, and of course to all the Rotarians who have taken me as your friend and

treated me so warmly from the moment we landed in Fukuoka.

This is not only an honour that I am here to represent President Ron Burton and his lady, Jetty... but a privilege that is not easily given to any one.

The responsibility entrusted upon me by President Ron Burton, therefore, is a very important and a serious one which I shall try my best to do my utmost to play my small and humble part to make your district conference a success.

With less than three months left of this Rotary year and the new Rotary' Theme..... emerges, naturally many will forget the current theme of President Ron Burton, ***“Engage Rotary- Change Lives”*** when the new Theme gains its momentum in a few months from now.

This is not uncommon. I believe every Presidential's Theme is important and has a deep meaning on each individual. But, here it is up to what each individual thinks and believes, and the desire to make that Theme works to uplift the livelihood of the people...whether he is rich or poor.

But, whatever one thinks about the rationale behind each Theme, our only goal will always be ***“Service Above Self”***, and our mission will always be to ***“Do Good in the World”***.

My fellow Rotarians, Rotary as a Movement continued to grow in many countries, especially in the sub-continent of India.

The year under President *Tanaka*, and the current year under President *Ron Burton* have been years with many changes in the operation of the secretariate.

I think the working style of the new General Secretary, John Hewko, is very much different from that of the former General Secretary Ed Futa. and with the re-organization of the administration I think more changes and more new ideas will gradually emerge..

Whether it will be a positive or negative we will soon know.

At this point you will find some interesting information regarding some decisions made by the Board and the Trustees of The Rotary Foundation.

1) All district governors are *encouraged* to appoint a district New Generation committee. The committee shall work with the district Interact, Rotaract, RYLA, Youth Exchange, and any other committees as determined appropriate by the governor. *District New Generations committee are encouraged to facilitate district recognition for clubs and/or individuals who advance the principles of New Generations and empower and engage young people.*

2) The International Institute which in the past holds its meeting in conjunction with the international

committee will *no* longer take place automatically, but will depend on the matter of finding a suitable venue. The one which should take place in conjunction with the Sydney convention will *not* be held.

3) AS for the Rotary Peace Centres Major Gifts Initiative Goal; the Trustees reaffirm their decision 92, October, 2000 which declared the *Rotary Centres* for International Studies to be a *major educational priority* for the Rotary Foundation, and establish a new goal of *US \$ 125 million* by 30 June, 2015 to more fully cover Rotary Peace programme cost.

4) At the Council on Legislation meeting in April last year there is one item that I personally don't feel too happy about it...and that is regarding membership which the Council on Legislation has adopted that, a Rotarian having interrupted employment or *having NEVER worked* in order to care for children or to assist the spouse in their work, *can* be active member of a Rotary Club!!

This to my mind has gotten rid of the classification principle entirely as well as other qualifications.

I think the trend in Rotary as far as membership is concerned is that all what Rotary hopes for is *members* and *more members*, and is heading for the *elimination* of the fundamental principle of Rotary all together .

I am afraid that very soon Rotary will become like any other club we can find anywhere. It will loose its

charm and its spirit...the heritage that had been brought down by our forefathers.

Fifty five years ago, at the age of 33. That was the year I was invited to help organizing the second Rotary Club in Thailand of which I became one of the 44 charter members of the club.

Although more than half century has gone by, and I am now the only one charter member left , I can still recollect the very first day of my membership and my first attendance at the regular meeting of the club.

It was an incredible experience, just as I hope that being a Rotarian of a Rotary Club will also be an incredible experience.

It did, and it does even after fifty five long years!

Fifty five years ago my fellow charter members and I were not only gearing up to be good Rotarians, but also gearing up to fulfill our mission to ***Do Good in the World.***

Many did before they passed away.

But, all of them are now gone... leaving me... the only charter member left with the new and now 90 members joining the club later to carry on the tasks and the promises we solemnly made back in 1958.

I am sure many of you here have had the experiences I mentioned above, and I make no apology for repetition for I truly believe that the process of learning to be a

good Rotarian is a process of repetition ...an ever lasting one, and we go about it day after day, and all of us need reminding , I think, more than we need being taught.

It would be so very dull if everything had been learned and if we were without challenges and without reminders.

This is a story of water and a boy by the name of **“Darm”**.

My friends, have you ever realized that those who have never been short of drinking water, like all of us here, will never realize the value of just one drop of *safe* drinking water?

“Darm” who had never seen his father, and was not raised by his mother who left him when he was only 7 months old,

“Darm” was left with his grandmother. They lived in a broken wooden shack along the railway track.

The grandmother being illiterate scraped a living by collecting and selling vegetables found in the nearby swamps. She could hardly earn a dollar for a full day work, but she was determined... not only for her own survival, but for the survival of the most precious thing she has ever had...*her very own flesh and blood.*

At the age of five, **“Darm”** was determined to go to school like other kids who lived nearby. He begged his grandmother, and she excitedly agreed to, for after all

what will the future be for the boy if he does not have any proper education.

And there they were on the first day of the new school year. An old lady, skinny and dark-complexioned, walked through the school gates with a small scrawny, paled and scared looking lad who had rash and wounds all over his tiny body.

It was at the school that the teachers and other children noticed that “*Darm*” was often ill, afraid of strangers, and often missed school.

Rumours were circulating that the child's father had died of **HIV/AIDS!**

Was the child also a victim of this disease?

The teachers decided to find out more by visiting his “home”.

Inspecting the shack where the grandmother and the grandson lived, they discovered that there was no water supply.

Apparently, the neighbours had told them that it was permissible to connect to their water supplies, but had left the poor woman to *pay* for *both* water bills.

With no money the water supply was cut off.

Water *is* life, and the rain never came!

The grandmother and the child were desperate!

Somehow, they must find some source of water...any kind of water, but where can they find one?

With no other choice, they *did* finally find one!

Water from the community *sewage* outlets!

By using sandbags to block the community water and sewage outlets, skimming off water for drinking when the silt and muck had settled...had prolonged their lives.

But, drinking water from the sewage outlets had caused “*Darm*” with diarrhea, rash and wounds over the body, weight loss and skin diseases.

The little boy was classified as being risk. His case, somehow was made known to the local Rotary Clubs who immediately contacted the municipality, and the hospital.

The operation to “*Engage Rotary – Change Lives*” started to take shape.

The installation of water supply took place a few days later, and “*Darm*” was tested for **HIV/AIDS**...the result of which proved negative.

A happy ending for “*Darm*”, and his grandmother who no longer had to make her living by going out into the swamps each day searching for food.

A Rotarian who owns a small factory in the community gave her a job as a maid in the factory until this very day.

These Rotarians are really “*Engaging Rotary and Changing Lives!*”

But, my fellow Rotarians, the story of “*Darm*” did not end here. It is here because of a lad by the name of “*Darm*” that the Rotarians saw the great need of clean drinking water for people and the children in many parts of the country.

With the appeal made by our Immediate Past RI President *Sakuji Tanaka*, the focus on “*Peace Through Service*”... which was his great effort to bridge continents and linking people around the globe, had awakened the consciousness of the Rotarians to action by caring the needs of others *above* their own.

President Tanaka believes that the more the Rotarians empathize more deeply with the difficulties of other people, the more they feel greater drive to *reach* out, to do what they can to help others live more happily.

As a result, hundreds of Water Purification System Stations, with the financial help of the Rotarians around the globe, especially from Japan, were set up throughout that particular region of the country.

Million bottles of safe drinking water were immediately provided to those who had no way to get

away from the floods during the worst landslides and severe floods never before seen in the country.

Over and above this because the school where *Darm*” was studying had never had a library before , a great ambition crops up in the mind of the whole district to set up library for the pre-kindergarten kids in every province in the Northeast of the country in order to lay a strong foundation for these young lads to read and write correctly at a very young age so that when they grow up they would continue to have the habit and love of reading books, especially to be able to speak their own language correctly.

And with the blessing of the Ministry of Education...particularly through the Matching Grants and the WCS programmes with clubs in Japan, and Taiwan, the promotion of literacy programme was enthusiastically launched.

Very soon, more than 250 libraries were set up at schools and small communities across the region and equipped with more than 80,000 copies of books.

Not only the students, most of them pre-kindergarten kids and teachers, but the parents and the public have visited and are making use of these facilities to the fullest...so much so that the first two years since the project was launched, 400 teachers who were brought in by Rotary for the special training of this programme were not enough to cope with the demand. And now with the more advanced technology being used and with the help of the Rotarians in Australia Rotary has now

trained almost a thousand teachers for this particular programme alone!

What seemed to be an innocent beginning with “*Darm*” the little lad has become a huge phenomenal undertaking that is benefiting and uplifting the quality of lives of thousands upon thousands of people.

But, my fellow Rotarians, there are more...many, many more “*Darms*” in this world than you could imagine.

“*Darm*” whose lives remained to be touched by our hands, and felt by our hearts.

“*Darm*” whose fate has brought him to Rotary and had awoken Rotary's conscience to take action.

Unfortunately, we have only less than 1.3 million Rotarians to “*Engage Rotary and Change Lives*”, while there are tens of million of people who are waiting for us to stretch our hands and our hearts out to care for the hardships they face, and to try to uplift their livelihood in any way we can.

Yes, in Rotary service is much more than a sideline or an occasional pursuit.

It is a way of life!!

It is obvious, therefore, that we must try to recruit more members into our fold.

While, having more members is vital to the survival of our organization, we must never forget that the *qualifications* of the new members we invite in must meet what Rotary hopes for.

When I talk of “*Darm*”, I am thinking of *Mr. Nobuyuki Tsujii* who was completely blind since birth who is the world re-nowned *Blind Pianist*.

Mr. Tsujii is a very genius man. Although, completely blind he has never given up hope that one day he would emerge as the world's best pianist which he is now.

Mr. Tsujii is one of the millions handicapped people everywhere. But, he is a very exceptional one whose genius has done so much good for the world.

This is just one case to illustrate the hardship of the handicapped people and what Rotary can do to help these unfortunate people.

We can't make everyone like Mr. Tsujii, but we can *Engage Rotary* and *Change Lives* to someone no matter how small and how big the case is.

The story of *Darm* is a good example!

Twenty Eight years ago in 1985 when we started the programme to eradicate Polio, I was invited to serve on the international committee for three years.

The committee members and myself were getting ready to tackle the first fundraising campaign in the history of Rotary and the biggest commitment, by far, that Rotary had ever made.

Even then we knew that it wouldn't be quick and easy. However, if we had known then that we would still be working in 2014... 29 years after the first launch of the programme, to finally finish the job, I am not sure that the Rotary would have agreed to take up the challenge!

But, we knew then...back in 1985, as we know now in 2014 that we could do it.

And we knew then , as we know now , what success would mean...to the children of the world, to those crippled adults, to the generations that would follow them, and to the generations of Rotarians who would be inspired by our success to achieve even more.

MY FELLOW ROTARIANS, ONE OF THE BASIC ELEMENTS IN MAKING OUR ORGANIZATION MORE ACCEPTABLE WHICH IS OUR OVERALL HEALTH IS OUR COMMITMENT TO VOCATIONAL SERVICE.

IT CERTAINLY WAS NOT OUT OF IGNORANCE THAT VOCATIONAL SERVICE WAS ACCEPTED AS THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF ROTARY MEMBERSHIP.

YES, WE DO WHAT OTHERS DON'T, BECAUSE VOCATIONAL SERVICE SETS ROTARY APART FROM ANY OTHER ORGANIZATION.

ITS CLASSIFICATION PRINCIPLE MAKES IT SO UNIQUE THAT THE WORLD RECOGNIZES IT AS "ROTARY'S TRADEMARK".

IT IS ROTARY'S FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTIC WHICH GIVES EACH ROTARIAN THE PRIVILEGE OF EXPRESSING ONE'S COMMITMENT TO ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF WHICH LIFE IN SOCIETY IS ALWAYS IN NEED.

IT REMINDS A PERSON OF HIGH ETHICAL STANDARDS WHICH A PERSON SHOULD OBSERVE IN HIS OR HER PROFESSION, AND IT GIVES A PERSON A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY THAT HE OR SHE PROBABLY NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT BEFORE JOINING ROTARY.

IS THERE ANY BETTER AND FINER CONCEPT THAN VOCATIONAL SERVICE IN ROTARY THAT ROTARY CAN OFFER WHICH VERY FEW ORGANIZATIONS DO?

IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD THIS SUBJECT MAY SOUND SO DRY, BUT TO MY MIND IT IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE IMPORTANT FOR COMPANIES, ESPECIALLY FOR GOVERNMENTS TO CONDUCT THEIR BUSINESS ACCORDING TO AN ETHICAL CODE AND FOR

POLITICAL LEADERS TO HAVE THE HIGHEST INTEGRITY AND HONESTY!

I AGREE THAT IN TODAY'S WORLD WHERE COMPANIES AND EVEN GOVERNMENTS ARE STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE, AND WHERE BUSINESS AND POLITICAL LEADERS ARE UNDER PRESSURE TO DELIVER THE BEST NUMBERS, THEY CAN OFTEN BE EASILY LURED INTO LOWER MORAL TERRITORY.

IN THE RECENT SUB-PRIME MORTGAGE CRISIS, WHILE MANY FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS WERE DOING BUSINESS LEGALLY...AND MAY BE EVEN ETHICALLY...IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER THOSE BANKERS HOLD ON TO HIGH STANDARDS OF PERSONAL INTEGRITY.

ALL OF US HAVE SEEN IN THE RECENT PAST COMPANIES CONDUCTING BUSINESS UNETHICALLY CAN BE RUINED BY SCANDLES AND CAN ULTIMATELY COLLAPSE.

SIMILARLY, BUSINESS LEADERS WITHOUT PERSONAL INTEGRITY CAN BE TAINTED FOR LIFE.

INTEGRITY AFFECTS RELATIONSHIPS. IT AFFECTS HOW PEOPLE REGARD YOU AND WILL EVENTUALLY DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THEY WANT TO DO BUSINESS WITH YOU.

IN ROTARY, INTEGRITY IS BUILT ON A SET OF PRINCIPLES, WHICH WHEN FOLLOWED MAINTAIN THE HIGHEST MORAL STANDARDS IN ANY INDIVIDUAL. THESE PRINCIPLES INCLUDE VALUES SUCH AS HONESTY, LOYALTY, GENEROSITY AND TRUST.

IN MY PRIVATE LIFE AS A BUSINESS MAN AND AS A POLITICIAN, I HAVE BECOME CONVINCED THAT VOCATIONAL SERVICE IS THE AREA IN WHICH WE AS ROTARIANS CAN ACT BEST AND CONTRIBUTE MOST TO IMPROVE OURSELVES AND THE SOCIETY IN WHICH WE LIVE.

THE CONCEPT OF VOCATIONAL SERVICE MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED HEAVILY TO ITS POPULARITY AND GROWTH A FEW YEARS AFTER THE FORMATION OF ROTARY IN 1905.

IN UNFOLDING THE STORY OF ROTARY FROM IT'S BEGINNING, THE BASIC AND ORIGINAL IDEA OF SERVICE TO ONESELF AND ONE'S FELLOW CLUB MEMEBERS IN BUSINESS GAVE WAY TO THE HIGHER IDEAL OF SERVICE AND HELPFULNESS TO OTHERS IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE...AND EVENTUALLY, SERVICE TO ALL MANKIND.

IT WAS AT THAT POINT THAT THE EMPHASIS WAS CHANGED...FROM "GETTING" TO "GIVING" AS ROTARIANS LEARNED THAT BUSINESS GAINS FLOWED APPROPRIATELY TO THOSE

WHO DEMONSTRATED THEIR INTEREST IN HELPING OTHERS.

LET US PONDER HERE FOR A WHILE AND ASK OURSELVES...

“ARE WE HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION TOWARDS VOCATIONAL SERVICE?

“ARE WE PRACTICING AND IMPLEMENTING VOCATIONAL SERVICE IN OUR CLUB AND OUR COMMUNITY IN THE HOPE TO MAKE THE ORGANIZATION A RESPECTABLE ENTITY?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU THINK, BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT VOCATIONAL SERVICE IS THE MOST PRECIOUS THING WE HAVE EVER HAD IN ROTARY!

PRESERVE IT AT ALL COST! PRACTICE IT WITH ALL YOUR HEART!

A STORY WAS TOLD ABOUT THE GREAT SCULPTOR, GUTZON BORGLUM WHO WAS PREPARING A BUST OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

SO INTENSE WAS HIS CONCENTRATION HE INSISTED ON REMAINING ALONE IN HIS STUDIO. HE WOULD ALLOW NO ONE TO VIEW OR COMMENT ON HIS HANDIWORK.

AS DAYLIGHT WOULD FADE INTO TWILIGHT, HE WOULD COVER HIS ENDEAVOUR AND ONLY

THE STONE CHIPS ON THE FLOOR GAVE MUTE EVIDENCE OF HIS LABOURS.

IN THE EVENING THE CLEANING WOMAN WOULD SWEEP UP THE DEBRIS.

FINALLY, THE BUST WAS COMPLETED, AND AS BORGLUM STOOD AND CONTEMPLATED THE FINISHED STATUE, THE CLEANING WOMAN CAME IN AND SAW THE MASTERPIECE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

SHE WAS AWED AS SHE REMARKED, "MR. BORGLUM, HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT MR. LINCOLN WAS IN THAT BLOCK OF MABLE?"

THIS ANALOGY TELLS THE STORY OF MANY A MAN AND WOMAN ENTERING INTO ROTARY MEMBERSHIP.

WHEN FIRST THEY JOIN, THERE IS NO WAY OF ASCERTAINING THEIR POTENTIALS.

AS THEY DEVELOP AND BECOME EXPOSED OF ROTARY'S PHILOSOPHY, INVOLVED IN ITS WORK, RUB ELBOWS WITH THEIR FELLOW MEMBERS, THEY SEE THEMSELVES AS SOMEONE WHO NEVER EXISTED BEFORE...A ROTARIAN!

THE UNFORMED STONE IS THE MAN. THE CHISEL AND THE ARTISTRY COULD BE VOCATIONAL SERVICE.

VOCATIONAL SERVICE IS INDEED THE HEART AND SOUL OF ROTARY!

My friends, I don't come to you with any conviction that Rotary has all the answers, or that it can solve *all* the problems.

Certainly, Rotary is not a religion, but I have found it to be the most active organization I know for bringing together men and women who normally would not normally come and sit down with one another, to cross borders and prejudices and interests, to cross the lines of professions and social critics that they would not normally move out of or into.

I suggest to you that the fact that Rotary has gathered you here is most significant. I suggest that if it had done nothing more significant than that, it would have more than justified itself...you all who come from all over this great prefectures of Fukuoka, Saga and Nagasaki and sit down together in confidence and understanding.

This in itself is a significant reason for Rotary!

But, it is not only sitting down together, talking to each other and eating together. It is working and serving together, “Engaging Rotary and Changing Lives” together, that is significant!

I sincerely hope and pray that you will continue to always bear this in mind, and whatever the future Theme of Rotary will be you will always...

Engage Rotary and Change Lives!