

**SPEECH ON GOVERNOR'S LECTURE ON VALUES AT MALAYSIA  
DIST.3310 ON 16/17<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2014**

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DG Ghim Bok Chew/ Lady Phyllis  
RI President Representative PDG Lin Chun Chao, Lady Shu Lin  
The school of distinguished past R.I. Officers, my colleagues and friends,  
I wish I could greet each one of you by your name, R.I. staff David and  
My Brothers & Sisters in Rotary

It's a pleasure and a joy to be with you at this Conference of Dist.3310 in Penang

You know, I just love Malaysia – you the people, the friendliest in the world, the place, as beautifully Asian as you can dream of, your delicious food – I could go on eating here all day and have already started doing that, taking some time off for speaking to you this morning. And while I've been to Kuala Lumpur many times in the past, this is my first visit to Penang, a place I had read so much about in those romantic English novels about the far east in my college days. And it certainly lives up to them all. Thank you DG Ghim Bok Chew for your invitation extended almost a year back in Singapore, to talk about Values, here today on the Governors lecture – I'm honored indeed. And when I see that I'm following in the footsteps of illustrious predecessors like Past President Bhichai Rattakul, I get a bit worried and challenged. And so I calm myself : Don't worry so much Kalyan. You are invited to talk about Values. And as a Rotarian of some 42 years, Rotary's values are what got you into Rotary in the first place. And then again, as an Indian and as an Asian, we have our own way of living upto and cherishing the values that are kind of inculcated into us right from our childhood. So, Kalyan just share your thoughts and ideas. And that my brothers and sisters, is what I plan to do this morning, if you will allow me, just share thoughts and experiences even if you sometimes find them a bit disarrayed.

Let me however, before I proceed, remark on how pleased I am today to see so many comrades and kindred souls among your past officers, Past Governors Hoc Beng and Philbert Chin are household names in South Asia.

Haji Zainie Abdaul Aucasa was of course your Governor in a famous year in 2011- 12. Kalima and I can name each one of you separately and individually, each of you, a special brother. And DG Ghim Bok, thank you for your invitation and for making perfect arrangements to make my short stay so comfortable. I wish I had had the good sense and the time to stay on here to enjoy your hospitality in this lovely place. But I guess I'll have to wait till you invite us again.

Well, back to business.

Long, long before I became a Rotarian, in my childhood, I used to live with my Grandmother, a typical Indian family matriarch, and also with my parents, in our 300 year old home – its still there, today – in Serampore near Calcutta or Kolkatta as its now called and every morning, late, around 11'Oclock, our home would be visited by a group of men, seeking alms and food. But they weren't beggars but rather mendicants, wearing turbans and loose saffron cloths like Buddhists wear, playing little cymbals in their hands and singing ballads, thanking God for all that he has given us. They never asked for anything, but when they came, and stood outside the home, singing, Grandmother would give me a rupee coin (about 2 cents today) and ask me to give it to them. They would receive the alms, and sing a few more lines to bless me and our home before moving on. And I loved doing it and would look forward to it, every day. Years later, I realized that what my Grandmother was doing, was really teaching me, inculcating in me, the joy and the pleasure of giving – giving humbly, giving gracefully and giving joyfully. It was a lesson that helped me to become what I did. It was life forming.

Today, as Rotarians, we help do in India, free open heart surgeries on children from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh. Their parents too are paid for to travel, and the children come, the operations are done by the best specialist surgeons in the top hospitals, who are paid concessional charges by Rotary and then they all go back recovered and happy.

A few years back, a young 8 year old boy from Pakistan was operated on in Delhi and soon, he recovered fully. On farewell day, there was a small send off function. The

Rotarians spoke, the parents shed tears of joy and it was time to go. Then this 8 year old boy comes up and says: Can I say something? We look at one another, the organizers, and said ok, just 1 minute. So, this boy says: My name is Syed. I was born in Pakistan. I am going back with a new life from Hindustan. I got the gift of a new life. Long live Hindustan/ Long live Pakistan.

Well, like all neighbours everywhere India & Pakistan have their little problems too, but when a 8 year old boy paints the picture of what CAN be, you forget everything and stand up and cheer. And we did talk about the value of giving.

One of India's greatest sons has of course been Mahatma Gandhi. Someone once asked him for a message for an occasion. Gandhi looked at him and said simply: my life is my message. And indeed it was. And is. And will always be. Can any one of us come even near to saying anything like that? And if not, may be we could look at living our lives a bit differently.

Once, in the 1930's during India's freedom movement, the British had jailed Gandhi for several months. His wife, Kasturba would come and visit him for ½ an hour every day during visiting hours. One day, there was a new security guard in the visitors room and when he saw Gandhiji's wife come in, he left the room, respectfully, so that the 2 could talk in private. Half an hour later when he returned, there were Gandhi and Kasturba, holding hands sitting quietly but not uttering a word. 'Sir, is something wrong?' asked the security guard. No, nothing is wrong, my dear man, said Gandhi. But I'm sure you know that jail rules don't allow prisoners to talk to visitors if no warden is present. But you were not here. And so, today, we just sat quietly.

Well, we talk of integrity, honesty, personal values. But does not true integrity show what you truly are or what you do, in the dark, alone, when no one is looking? That's what values and character are all about, are they not?

Let's move on and talk about the concept of values and morals in Rotary, as we know them.

Indeed, perhaps more than anything else, what really strikes us most is something we don't always think about in our own club or in our own district and that is this incredible diversity of Rotary, and the opportunity to make friends and be friendly ourselves, starting from right down there, at our own club and district levels, from where each one of us comes.

You know, I have often wondered at the genius of our founder, Paul Harris — at this incredibly simple idea of good people, honest people, getting together in friendship, bonhomie, and goodwill. And when these people come from different backgrounds and have lived their lives doing different jobs, would not the effect and the impact of their coming together be more exciting and more vibrant and help get all of them closer together because of the very excitement of the diversity?

Indeed, when someone asks what Rotary is, and we are not always sure about our answer, I believe we need to tell them simply about those things that have kept Rotary strong even after more than 100 years. Tell them about our core strengths: about service, about fellowship, diversity, integrity, and an obvious off shoot, leadership.

Indeed, we have always lived by our core values, the roots of the Rotary tree that make our branches spread far and wide and strong, through its more than 34,000 clubs. It is a big tree and growing, specially here in Asian and we have to see how can we make it grow bigger.

But while fellowship and diversity are our strengths, what really characterizes Rotarians, is our focus on integrity, our commitment to high standards of ethics in our businesses and professions, and the morality and the values we uphold in our daily lives. I believe we do this better than any other organization, in the world, through our Avenue of Vocational Service. And, I believe it is important that Rotarians serve as role models in our communities, and that it must start with each one of us here in this room this morning. The high standards we set — and the level to which we follow them — determine our credibility.

In dealing with Vocational Service, we begin with the very first line of the second object of Rotary: “High ethical standards in business and professions.”

In those early years of the last century, just about the time when Rotary was born, barons of business proudly trumpeted. “Business is business. The public be damned.” The society was inundated with self-seekers who were unrestrained in their practices to amass wealth or power. Honesty is good but we have also to be practical, in our world, they said.

In such selfish and narrow business conditions, Rotary dealt with this sensitive subject of ethics with courage and conviction. In 1910, at the first Rotary convention in Chicago, Arthur Sheldon, known as the father of vocational service, said that “business is the science of human service” and that “he profits most who serves his fellows best.” How true this maxim was. And it still endures.

Or does it? We see today great corporations reduced to nonentities. We see shareholder values tumble. We also see regulators and facilitators of services in the society succumbing to temptations. More recently, we have seen the debacle of the giants in the financial sector bringing wave after wave of suffering to those who have lost their money, their jobs, their security, their future, sometimes, their lives. And, I don't think, I need to take any names. Take them as said.

Rotary's doctrine of ethics thus becomes all the more relevant today than at any time before.

You will often hear, “Evil present in the society gets reflected in any organization, and Rotary is no exception.” “Rotary is not for preaching.” Ethics is good to talk about but not practice. Real life is different. It's for real.

Really?

Please tell them, if you will: “Ethics is not outdated. Integrity and honesty have not been redefined.” Ethics is not confined to business or profession alone – it reflects in totality

and moves in tandem with family values. The fruit never falls far from the tree, and our children will be what we are or what we do. Lets never forget that.

A story is told of one father, who was taking his two little boys to the circus. At the ticket counter, he was told of the entrance charge:”Rs.50 for you and the same for any kid older than six.”

The father said, “the younger one is three, and the other is seven, so I guess, I owe you Rs.100, including me.”

The man at the counter exclaimed, “Hey, Brother, did you just win a lottery or something? You could have saved yourself fifty rupees telling me that the older one was six; I would not have known the difference.”

The father replied.” Yes, that may be true, but the kids would have know the difference. And would have always carried it with them.”

At times, I have been confronted by the question “What is ethics?” and so I submit an exercise for our actions, the age-old question. “How would we feel if we were in the other person’s shoes?”

- Would we act the same way if we were to be reported on the front page of the Wall Street Journal? Or the paper our friends read?
- Would we do it if our children picked up the same behavior?
- Would we change our mind if the person on the receiving end of our non ethical behavior, was a loved one?
- And the simplest of all: what would our mother think?

My dear brothers and sisters, The Four-way Test is very much relevant even today. Please make clubs and members realize that mere essay competitions and plaque distributions in schools are not enough, nor in framing the words of the test and hanging the plaque in workplaces. The real test will be: “How much am I able to apply it to myself?”

Rotary has a profound statement: the Declaration for Rotarians in Businesses and Professions. It is an undertaking every Rotarian ought to make.

An architect friend of mine had spent his career designing homes and building them for a major housing company to sell in Mumbai where I come from. Incredibly, construction cost there are among the highest in the world. My friend went to his boss and one day after 35 years of service and said he wanted to retire to spend more time with his family. He would miss his fat paychecks but he would manage to get by. His boss was sorry to see him go, but asked him to design and build just one more house as a personal favor. It would take about 4-6 months, as they often do in India, and though my friend agreed, his heart was not in the work. As a result the design was inferior, the materials used were poor, and the workmanship was shoddy. When the house was done the boss came to inspect the place. "This is your home." He said to my friend, "this is the company's gift to you for your years of hard work", and then handed him the keys.

Well, what a surprise! And what a shock! If my friend had only known that he was building his own house, he would have done it so differently. Now he would spend his life in a home he had not cared to build properly!

And so, it is with many of us. We sometimes build our lives in a distracted way, reaching instead of acting, willing to put up with less than the best. Then, with a shock we look at what we have created with a lack of commitment and integrity and find that we have to live in a home that we could have built better. That is what vocational service does for us. Almost unnoticed, it helps us live our lives as Role models. Quite surprisingly that's what makes Rotary unique.

The fact is, most people favor morality – or so many of them would not pretend to have it. The difference is between knowing the path and walking it. The path is not easy. But Rotarians are not ordinary people. They just need the will, the determination to walk their talk. And remember, knowledge without action is like water in bucket with a hole.

It is very significant that one of the priorities of the RI Strategic: Plan today, is to emphasize Rotary's unique vocational service commitment. It is crucial that to be able to influence others through business and vocational associations – one has to be ethical first, and then to lead by personal example. In Gandhi's words, "A man or a woman is the sum of his actions."

Let me give another example: Past R.I. President Raja Saboo tells the story of his wife, Usha Saboo.

When we shifted to Chandigarh from Calcutta, at the foothills of the Himalayas, he says, Usha's interest in gardening was further enhanced and she grew exquisite flowers, which would always get maximum prizes in competition. After a few years, she found that as soon as there were her entries, other competitors would withdraw. Soon, she realized that this was not what she wanted. She made her seeds and seedlings available to all garden lovers, shared her experience and expertise, and invited them to our garden.

From Usha, I learned the value of sharing vocational skills and spreading out the resultant joy. I recommend that you listen to your spouse or partner – they are full of wisdom. It is not flattery, it is reality.

Our world is full of nongovernmental organizations working for humanitarian causes. Then there are many organizations espousing ethics and values. But there are very few that are equally focused on ethics based profession/ vocation on one hand and humanitarian service on the other. Rotary is one such organization.

In the wake of the deteriorating business and professional environment, the world is looking for people who are ethically sound and committed to social responsibility.

Rotary is already strong in community service and international service. Can Rotary become equally strong in vocational service? Can you and I give Rotary a new identity through this powerful combination? Can we start the process of infusing renewed enthusiasm for ethical standards in Rotary? I believe we in Asia – in



Japan, in South Korea, in India and Malaysia and this part of South Asia, are uniquely and traditionally equipped to do just that, and we are into it already. Isn't that's why I am here today.

If we can, Rotary will be recharged, ready and relevant to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. And people will be lining up to join us.

The word, Vocation originates from the Latin word *vocare*, meaning "to call." Your and my vocation calls us to contribute our talents, share our knowledge, and spread the richness of our success.

In India – we often have our gurus – who give us spiritual guidance, who mentor us. Once I asked my spiritual guru, "Swamiji, the time I spend, the positions I get, the business I have to sacrifice at times for Rotary, is that all worthwhile?" His reply was simple, "it is, if it makes you a better person."

Speaking for me, I can never repay Rotary. And on my last journey whenever that is, my hands will not be empty – they will be filled by what Rotary has given me, thanks largely to vocational service.

Ask yourself, "Does Rotary make you a better person?"

Travelling through the Vocational Service avenue is like a life journey. There are no shortcuts, nor is it a highway. It is a street that passes through towns, villages, communities where people meet people; where you will meet people, you will lift them up and, in turn, they will help you climb up the hill, to the top. This journey will shape your character, invoke the genius that inhabits you, and offer you opportunities to realize your full potential.

In this journey, dare to walk on the abandoned avenue, Vocational Service; overcome the hurdles and make the avenue alive with the resounding words *responsibility, credibility, accountability*.

Your identity will not merely be the photographs in the district directory or the glowing compliments in the publications for your club. Your identity will be the footprints you will leave on the sands of time – footprints of perseverance, courage, resilience, action, planted firmly, that winds of change will not be able to erase.

Good Luck. God Bless.