

GOVERNOR DAVID RANDS, FIRST LADY ANNE, PDG BARRY PHILPS & JENNIFER, REVERED RI OFFICERS AND THE FORMER FIRST LADIES, MY FELLOW ROTARIANS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING THE DISTINGUISHED ROTARIANS OF THIS PREMIER DISTRICT.

I BRING YOU GREETINGS FROM THE WORLD PRESIDENT KALYAN BANERJEE AND HIS WIFE BINOTA - WHO HAS ASKED ME CONVEY THERE BEST WISHES FOR A SUCCESSFUL AND A MEANINGFULLY CONFERENCE.

I AM A BELIEVER IN DESTINY FOR I BELIEVE THAT IT IS DESTINY THAT A MAN CALLED PAUL HARRIS BORN YEARS AGO TOUCHED YOUR LIFE AND MINE IN SUCH A WAY THAT TODAY, I FEEL FROM YOU THE WARMTH OF A FAMILY IN SPIITE OF THE FACT THAT WE HAVE NEVER MET BEFORE. THIS IS THE MAGIC OF ROTARY – A SPELL THAT BINDS 1.2 MILLION AROUND THE WORLD IN 20,000 COMMUNITIES ACROSS 214 COUNTRIES.

I BELONG TO THE SIKH RELIGION AND WHENEVER A SIKH LEAVES HOME HE SAYS A PRAYER WHICH TRANSLATES THUS “ O LORD WILL IT SO THAT ALL THE PEOPLE THAT I MEET DURING MY TRAVELS HELP ME COME CLOSER TO THEE AND BRINGS OUT THAT IN MY CHARACTER WHICH IS DIVINE”. AS I TRAVEL AROUND THE ROTARY WORLD I THINK OF THE BOND THAT BINDS US ROTARIANS TOGETHER = FRIENDSHIP, FELLOWSHIP, GOODWILL, UNDERSTANDING AND ABOVE ALL SERVICE - AND I KNOW, THAT IF EVER I AM GOING TO LEAVE MY FOOTPRINTS IN THE SANDS OF TIME IT WILL ONLY BE THROUGH SERVICE IN THE COMPANY OF MY FELLOW ROTARIANS.

AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE ROTARY INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AT EVANSTON IS A DISPLAY OF THE 214 FLAGS OF THE ROTARY WORLD. THEY ARE SYMBOLS OF PRIDE, OF IDENTITY AND OF BELONGING. BELONGING IS IMPORTANT TO ALL OF US. WE BELONG TO FAMILIES TO TEMPLES TO CLUBS,

TO COMMUNITIES AND TO COUNTRIES. ONE OF THE GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS OF ROTARY OVER ITS 107 YEARS OF HISTORY HAS BEEN TO CREATE THE UNITY OF THE ROTARY FAMILY. A SENSE OF BELONGING THAT HAS INSPIRED US ALL TO BELIEVE THAT WORLD UNDERSTANDING AND PEACE IS AN ACHIEVABLE GOAL FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.

FORGET FOR A MOMENT ALL THAT ROTARY HAS ACHIEVED IN ITS LONG HISTORY - FORGET WHAT IT DOES ANNUALLY THROUGH ITS MEMBER CLUBS. PICTURE IT ONLY AS A WORLDWIDE ASSOCIATION WHICH HAS THE CAPACITY TO UNITE – WITH IN ITS MEMBERSHIP - THE RACIAL, RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES OF THE WORLD. - IN THAT PICTURE YOU SEE A WORLD IN MINIATURE - A WORLD IN HARMONY - A WORLD AT PEACE. IT IS THERE FOR ALL TO SEE. IT IS EVIDENT THAT HUMANITY CAN LIVE AS ONE GLOBAL SOCIETY AND BE MORE THEN EQUAL TO WHATEVER CHALLENGE CROSSES ITS PATH.

BUT TODAY WE ARE HERE TO CELEBRATE THE SPIRIT OF ROTARY AND I KNOW YOUR GOVERNOR HAS METICULOUSLY PLANNED THE CONFERENCE AS I HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH HIM AND APPRAISED OF THE PROGRAM.

DAVID HAS ADVISED ME ABOUT WHEN I AM REQUIRED TO SPEAK. WHICH ACTUALLY REMINDED ME OF 1969 WHEN I FIRST JOINED ROTARY IN THE TOWN I GREW UP. I REMEMBER AT ONE OF THE FIRST FEW MEETINGS I ATTENDED I WAS SUDDENLY CALLED UPON TO BE THE MAIN SPEAKER – AS THE CLUB HAD A TRADITION OF CALLING UPON THE NEWEST MEMBER TO SPEAK SHOULD THE DESIGNATED SPEAKER NOT ARRIVE FOR SOME REASON.

TAKEN COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE I ASKED A SENIOR ROTARIAN ON MY TABLE - WHAT SHOULD I TALK ABOUT? HE THOUGHT FOR A MOMENT AND

THEN SAID "TALK ON SEX". SEX I ASKED?? YES YES JOINED IN OTHERS ON MY TABLE - MANY OF THEM WERE MY OLD CLASS MATES WHO EGGED ME ON

SO WHAT WAS THERE TO DO I STOOD UP AND ANNOUNCED THAT MY TALK WOULD BE ON SEX. I GOT A ROUND OF APPLAUSE IMMEDIATELY. ENCOURAGED BY THE RESPONSE I LAUNCHED ON MY SUBJECT AND LOW AND BEHOLD GOT A STANDING OVATION AT THE END.

THAT NIGHT I BOASTED TO MY WIFE THAT I HAD BEEN THE MAIN SPEAKER AT MY CLUB MEETING AND GOT A STANDING OVATION.

WHAT DID YOU SPEAK ON – SHE ASKED. SUDDENLY TAKEN A BACK EH. EH I SPOKE ON SAILING – I SAID.

NEXT DAY AT THE GROCERY STORE FROM THE CORNER OF MY EYE I SAW AN OLD CLASS MATE WITH A BIG GRIN HEADING TOWARDS US. I TRIED TO PUSH RITA TOWARDS THE EXIT BUT HE CAUGHT US.

YOUR HUSBAND GAVE A GREAT SPEECH AT THE CLUB LAST NIGHT - WELL SHE SAID I AM GLAD IT WAS WELL RECEIVED BECAUSE ACTUALLY HE HAS NOT BEEN DOING IT FOR LONG.

HE HARDLY HAS ANY EXPERIENCE, I SAW MY FRIENDS EYE BROWS RISING - IN FACT HE HAS JUST DONE IT TWICE AND THE FIRST TIME HE DID IT HE FAINTED.

ENJOY THE CONFERENCE. RITA AND I ARE TRULY PRIVILEGED TO BE HERE.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL.