

Presidential Theme

# Be a gift to the world



Rotary 

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**K.R. Ravindran**  
2015-16 President  
Rotary International



Our time on this earth is finite, and it's always shorter than we think. How do we want to spend it? Will we give of ourselves to others, so that the world will be richer because we passed through it? Or will we spend our days, as the famous Indian

poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote, in stringing and unstringing our instruments, while the song we came to sing remains unsung?

The glory of Rotary is that it helps us find a way to sing that song. It guides us on a path to living richer, more meaningful lives, by encouraging us to focus our attention on the things that matter — and helping each of us find our own way to be a gift to the world.

If we ask ourselves what characteristics we value most in our friends, most of us would answer similarly: integrity, trustworthiness, caring, compatibility. Our friends are not necessarily the people who are most like us but the ones who complement us, who bring out the best in us. That, to me, is precisely what we can find in Rotary.

Rotary is a way to bring out the best part of ourselves, and let it guide our lives. Too often, we spend our days in pursuit of the goals that should matter least. We focus our attention on our own achievements and our own gain; we devote endless energy to the accumulation of material things. Yet at the end of our lives, no one will remember us for the cars we drove, the clothes we wore, the titles

we carried, or the offices we sat in. We will not be admired for the efforts we poured into making our own lives richer or our own status higher. In the end, our worth will be measured not by how much we acquired, but by how much we gave away.

Will we avert our eyes from suffering, or will we alleviate it? Will we speak words of compassion, or will we act on them? Will we be content only to take from the world — or will we give to it?

In the 2015-16 Rotary year, our theme will be *Be a Gift to the World*.

Every one of us has something to give — whoever we are, whatever our place in life. We can give our talent, our knowledge, our abilities, and our effort; we can give our dedication and our devotion. Through Rotary, we can take these gifts and make a genuine difference in the lives of others and in our world.

It is said that we are born with our fists clenched, but we die with our hands open, and that our talents are the gift that God gave us. What we make of our talents is our gift back to God.

Equally we come into this world grasping at everything, but when we leave it, we leave all material things behind as well. Through Rotary, we can leave behind something real and lasting.

Our time is now. It will never come again.  
*Be a Gift to the World.*

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ravi". Below the signature is a long, horizontal blue line that tapers to a point on the right side.

K.R. "Ravi" Ravindran  
President, Rotary International, 2015-16