

APPRECIATIVE AUDIENCE CAPTIVATED BY PRESIDENT KAMALA



IIW President Kamala was invited to speak at the Rotary International Convention in Los Angeles USA June 16th 2008 by RI President Wilfred Wilkinson. This was the first time that an IIW President has had this opportunity to speak in depth about IIW. 18000 people attended the Convention and Kamala spoke at the second plenary immediately after the inaugural so she was heard by the majority of those attending. After her speech many Rotarians and their spouses expressed an interest in Inner Wheel so we are hoping for great things, particularly in the USA following this fantastic response!

What did she say to enthuse the crowds?

In the January of 2007, the same week when a woman in United States began her historic bid for the US Presidency, I was asked by a Rotarian why the Inner Wheel still persisted in remaining a separate entity. “You women could do a lot more if you join as Rotarians then you can ever do as an all women’s organization” he said!! I just smiled and walked off. I was a guest in his district and I have heard this statement often enough not to get too upset. But I must confess that I have since regretted not voicing my thoughts. So let me therefore begin by thanking RI President Wilfrid Wilkinson for giving me this great opportunity to present here my remarks on Inner Wheel.

Click on the link to read the rest of the speech.

Inner Wheel began almost two decades after Rotary, thanks to the vision of Mrs. Oliver Golding who observed the enormous amount of help that the wives extended to their Rotarian husbands in all their Rotary work. Realizing that women coming together in their own capacity and under their own banner would bring in a greater synergy of action and a special touch that would benefit their community, Margaret Golding initiated the move to begin a club for the wives of Rotarians. And so the Inner Wheel Club of Manchester was born on the 10th of January 1924 with 27 members. In 1934 the Association of Inner Wheel Clubs of Great Britain was formed which transformed into the Association of Inner Wheel clubs in 1947. And when International Inner Wheel was established in 1967 there was no looking back!

Today we have clubs, Districts, Associations and National Councils with an International body at the top of the administrative pyramid. With a membership of almost 100,000 members in 102 countries and geographical regions worldwide we are one of the largest woman’s organizations of the world with a consultative status at the UN. Our application is pending with the Council of Europe and we should get it through shortly.

Our Organization continues to be vibrant with 50 more clubs added this year and a special tilt towards New Generation Clubs and Daughter Clubs lowering the average age of our organisation. We have just added a new club in Brazil, which is a very significant

move into South America. If I have one regret it is that in the USA – the birthplace of Rotary, Inner Wheel is not growing though the Inner Wheel USA does have a very successful Foundation raising money for prosthetic limbs. I hope the Rotarians in USA will help regenerate Inner Wheel on this soil.

For our Inner Wheel members do so much for the community. Motivated by the vision of our founder Margaret Golding – a Vision of women coming together in friendship to personally serve their community and develop International understanding, members take on community based socio economic projects that benefits the very needy. Our community projects are not necessarily geared to be women centric but we do give priority to the social, economic and educational needs of women and children. At every International Convention that we hold once in three years an international Project is decided on. Our current International project is the education of the girl child and along with the UNICEF all the Inner Wheel clubs around the world are coming together for a major educational commitment for the girl child

Strictly speaking we are not an offshoot of Rotary, as we are governed by our Constitution and are headquartered at Sale, a Suburb of Manchester in the United Kingdom

But Rotary is our inspiration. Our symbol is also the Wheel. Inner Wheel. Districts take the Rotary number without the zero; our clubs take on the names of the Rotary that sponsors them. Inner Wheel continues to have very strong emotional ties with Rotary and our special symbiotic relationship helps Rotary and Inner Wheel clubs of the world work together on many projects for the well being of their community. However we differ from the Rotary in that our community service canvas is not large. We rarely handle big projects. But what we pride ourselves is our personalized service and the detailing that we go into. We could possibly make Wheel chairs for Children. But we are content to knit the quilts and make the teddy bears that go out with the Wheel Chairs that the Rotarians produce. We could only afford to build a few homes for Tsunami victims but our members still sit with the affected women, getting them off their feet with donations

of sewing machines and other possessions that they lost. I could say so much more but time does not allow me to get expansive.

In recent years we are constantly facing questions on whether we are relevant anymore especially in the context of the Rotary admitting women into Rotary. To me there seems no, problems on this score. While earlier we only admitted wives of Rotarians we have now expanded our membership to encompass the women folk of Rotarians unless the laws of a land prohibit this. We have no problems with lady Rotarians being Inner Wheel members too and we do have many such members.

We are happy being all women as we share a special bonding that is difficult to explain. We welcome professional women into our midst but not only because they are successful professionals. We welcome them as someone who can combine a woman's heart with her professional skill to help the world. In Inner Wheel we women are not competing in a man's world but are happy to admit that we love being women. For as Suzanne Brogge the famous Danish writer said, "if a woman can only succeed by emulating men, I think it is a great loss and not a success. The aim is not only for a woman to succeed, but to keep her womanhood and let her womanhood influence society" .

We members of the Inner Wheel, like you Rotarians, believe that our greatest happiness lies in helping others. As the great Indian teacher, Swami Vivekananda said "If in this hell of a world, one can bring a little joy and peace for a day, into the heart of a single person, that much alone is true". I do hope that my presence here, the presence of Inner Wheel on this platform would be a constant factor in the years to come. Can I use this opportunity to stretch my hand to you Rotarians in friendship and say as Past RI president Raja Saboo once remarked "with goodness as our creed, humility as our highway and peace as our lasting purpose" work together for the common good.