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Stephanie Urchick



RID 3291  
**Rotary**  
Garden Reach



# Light

## WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

May 27th, 2025 - Vol. 47 No. 42

2313th Regular Weekly Meeting  
Today is COTS FOR RY 2025-26  
Attendance: 25

Greetings on Birthday  
May 29th : PP Dr. J K Singh

We welcome PDG Ravi Sehgal to our COTS RY 2025-26

### How to Raise Politically Aware Children in India? Study Shares Guide for Parents & Teachers

Kuviraa, a nonpartisan organisation found that schools and parents were reluctant to speak to their children about politics. In a study done with UCLA social welfare department, they highlight the gaps in raising socially aware young people in India.

Growing up as a young girl in Mumbai in the 1990s, nobody spoke to me about politics nor did I have a safe space to ask questions or discuss policy issues. Unlike adolescents today, we did not have access to the internet or social media.

My journey towards political awareness started in my early 20s and I only wish it had started earlier. I started thinking a lot about how women were represented in politics when I had the opportunity to work closely with the Delhi government in 2018. I saw only a handful of women around me, but the ones that I did see were extremely inspiring.

If we want to bridge the gender gap in politics, I believe that it is important to create a safe environment for young girls to have political discourse. They also need to have access to neutral political information, and with that goal in mind, I started to research women's representation in Indian electoral politics and began our work at Kuviraa.

Kuviraa is a nonpartisan initiative that works to build political leadership and civic action in adolescent girls across India. Our goal is to make politics accessible for young people and create spaces for dialogue.

I wanted to understand what young Indian girls thought of politics and if they were even interested in getting involved. Although there was some research done in the global context, we found no data on political interest or engagement among Indian adolescents to start off with.

Through interviews with adolescent girls, parents and school leaders, we learnt that politics was not an aspirational career choice for many in India because of the stigma attached to it.

We found that schools and parents were even reluctant to speak to their children about politics. Some teachers whom we interviewed told us that we were welcome to speak to the students about policies but not politics as it could be divisive.

To improve political representation and engagement, we need to spark political interest and civic action at a young age. For this, we wanted to understand the scale of the problem and decided to conduct a study with researchers from the University of California, Los Angeles' Department of Social Welfare.

Sara Wilf, the lead researcher on this study, explains how the study aims to fill the knowledge gap between gender disparities in political interest and engagement across adolescence and young adulthood in India.

"I was thrilled to work on this research with Kuviraa and their brilliant volunteers who care so deeply about this issue. I'm excited that this study both gives practical recommendations for parents and educators to increase female political engagement, and identifies many pathways for future research into a topic that is critical for equity and democracy," Sara adds.

#### Key research findings

Our report '*Talk Politics to Me*' unpacks the concept of Gendered Political Socialisation, which sheds light on the complexities of gender disparities in political interest and its influence by factors such as family, social media and news, among other important insights.

A mother of a 14-year-old girl from New Delhi says, "We avoid discussing politics with her because of how badly it is covered in the news and its tendency to address issues through the lens of social justice."

Many girls may encounter perceived limitations in their political aspirations due to gender stereotypes and societal expectations. Conversely, boys may be encouraged or empowered to take risks, leadership roles and engage more actively in politics. Addressing such influences at an early age is crucial to foster inclusive political participation.

We also had a school trustee from Chennai tell us that a class 10 student from their school aspired to be the Prime Minister of New Zealand as she saw Jacinda Adern as a role model. I thought it was extremely sad that young girls in our country think it is more achievable to become the Prime Minister in a country other than their own.

A 16-year-old girl who took our survey adds, "Due to the misconception that only men can be politicians, a lot of women don't put a thought into becoming a politician."

#### Recommendations for Parents and Caregivers

Here are a few recommendations for what parents, schools and caregivers can do to increase political interest and engagement among adolescents:

**Create safe spaces for dialogue on politics at home and school:** We found that youth had higher political engagement if their parents encouraged them to participate in politics. Young men are more likely than young women to be socialised by their parents and society to think about politics as a career path which may be one reason, we see a lower political participation of women beyond voting.

We interviewed a father of a 15-year-old girl from Mumbai who said that he uses events that change the course of the world to discuss political issues and takes opposing views than his daughter to encourage her to read more so she can form a strong argument against him.

Hajer Sharief, a Libyan peace and human rights activist, introduces a simple yet transformative idea – parents can teach their children about political functioning by giving them a say in how their households are run, in the form of regular family meetings where everyone has an equal say and learns to negotiate their demands and put across their feelings. This way young people, both boys and girls, learn similar skills and have the same space to discuss and deliberate.

**Create structured opportunities for girls to lead and highlight women politicians:** Schools play an important role in supporting the political development of young children and through such activities, they can increase their interest in civic action. 'Action civics', where students learn important civic skills and then lead their own initiatives, has been shown to increase a student's sense of civic competence and agency (LeCompte et al., 2020).

Kuviraa's flagship 'Ambassador Program' gives girls an opportunity to participate in mock elections through a campaign simulation exercise and creates a platform for them to interact with women political and civic leaders across parties and government levels.

**Identify structural sexism and how it impacts all genders:** Structural sexism and gender stereotypes can influence young minds into thinking that certain fields are only for men or that women cannot be good leaders.

Dr. Emily Setty, who has conducted a research on misogyny influencers on social media, suggests that adults need to offer young men the opportunity to play a positive role in identifying problems with misogynist beliefs, as well as developing other ways to view their place in society. Pune-based Equal Community Foundation, conducts a 'behaviour change program' that raises gender equitable boys by equipping them with peer support and leadership skills through a series of structured interventions in communities across India.



PEACE AND CONFLICT  
PREVENTION / RESOLUTION



DISEASE PREVENTION  
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ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY  
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A **Club Officers Training Seminar (COTS)** in Rotary is a training program designed to educate club officers on their roles and responsibilities within the Rotary organization. It's a crucial part of ensuring clubs are functioning effectively and that officers have the knowledge needed to lead and manage their clubs.

### **Key Elements of a COTS:**

#### **Training for Specific Roles:**

COTS should address the specific roles of club officers, including president, secretary, treasurer, and other key positions.

#### **Rotary Policies and Procedures:**

The training should cover Rotary policies, procedures, and guidelines relevant to club operations.

#### **Best Practices for Club Management:**

COTS can provide guidance on effective club management, including member engagement, fundraising, and project planning.

#### **Mentorship and Support:**

COTS often involve mentorship from experienced Rotarians or district leaders to provide ongoing support to club officers.

#### **Sharing of Knowledge and Experiences:**

COTS can be a platform for clubs to share their best practices and learn from each other.

### **Benefits of COTS:**

#### **Improved Club Performance:**

Well-trained club officers are better equipped to lead and manage their clubs effectively, leading to improved club performance.

#### **Increased Member Engagement:**

COTS can help club officers to better understand their members' needs and engage them more effectively in club activities.

#### **Enhanced Rotary Impact:**

By equipping club officers with the necessary skills and knowledge, COTS help Rotary clubs to have a greater impact in their communities.

### **Conducting a COTS:**

#### **1. Planning:**

Identify the needs of the club officers and the topics to be covered.

Develop a training agenda and schedule.

Select trainers who are knowledgeable and experienced in Rotary matters.

#### **2. Preparation:**

Prepare training materials, such as presentations, handouts, and case studies.

Arrange for a suitable venue and facilities.

#### **3. Delivery:**

Present the training materials in an engaging and informative manner.

Facilitate discussions and Q&A sessions to address any questions or concerns.

Provide opportunities for practical exercises and role-playing.

#### **4. Follow-up:**

Provide ongoing support and mentorship to club officers.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the training and make improvements as needed.







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## Thalassemia Awareness Program – May 8th, 2025

On the occasion of “World Thalassemia Day” the members of Interact Club of Julien Day School, Howrah in guidance of Rotary Garden Reach organised an awareness program in the school auditorium. Julien Day School, Calcutta & Kalyani had participated along with Frank Anthony Public School.

The Chief Guest of the event was PP Rtn. Subhojit Roy of Rotary Calcutta Metro City, the Emeritus Volunteer for Thalassemia in our District 3291. Rtn. Subhojit began this noble endeavour in the 1997, when he was the member of Rotary Garden Reach. Rtn. Subhojit spoke on the awareness and apprised the students and their parents about the disease in a very simple way. Everyone in the auditorium appreciated his deliberation.

We are thankful to the school Principal of the school for giving us the opportunity to host the awareness program. Members attended were President Rtn. Biswajit Saha, PP Tanu Roy, Rtn. Tamal Ray and PE Bandaru Mohan.





## Empowering rural youth in Bengal with Bosch's help

During its endeavour to improve employment opportunities for the youth, particularly those from rural areas and lower middle classes, Rotary Calcutta Presidency, RID 3291, identified the Bosch Bridge Program, which is a CSR initiative of Bosch India in partnership with Rotary in India.

“This programme, which is part of the GoI's Skill India Mission, is designed to skill unemployed youth and prepare them for the workplace. When we learnt about the unique initiative, with some help from RID 3192 PDG Jeetendra Aneja, we understood the significant impact this programme has made — training over 15,000 students and facilitating their placement through Bosch's network,” says Dr. Rina Malpani, Past President of the club and the moving spirit behind this project.

A gynaecologist by profession she has inherited the passion for community service from her late father, also a Rotarian, who had done community service through Rotary during his 30 years in the organisation. She oversees as managing trustee her family trust — the Tarachandra and Shanti Maheshwari Trust — which runs a project to empower women from lower social strata, and also sponsors the education of an odd deserving student.

She was hopeful that if her club could put a project in place to get skilling of unemployed youth under the Bosch Bridge Program, the trained youngsters would get an opportunity of employment through the 3,000 companies that Bosch has tied up with to absorb such trained talent.



But she soon found that there was no Bosch Bridge Centre in Eastern India. Turning this problem into an opportunity, the Rotarians of her club began scouting for ways to establish one such centre in or around Kolkata. After attending a Bosch workshop in November 2024, they identified Mallikpur in Baruipur district, a 45-minute drive from Kolkata, to put up such a centre.

“For this, we partnered with the Awareness Foundation for Environment and Skill Development, an NGO that is working in the area of women's empowerment to set up such a centre,” she adds. The Rotarian explains that this NGO owns a sprawling farmhouse, spread over an area of nearly 3–4 acres in Mallikpur, which was also the right location to identify

rural youth who would benefit from this training. Bosch allows a maximum of 25 youngsters in one batch where eight weeks of theory classes and four weeks of practical skilling take place, which includes internship and training on how to write a CV for a job application, and mock interviews are conducted.

PP Mitra, who is part of GoI's Skill India initiative, and who owns the farmhouse, allotted three classrooms for the Bosch course, provided the computers required for the training, and Dr. Rina's Trust agreed to pay the trainer's salary — around ₹16,000. Her club members helped to identify 23 youngsters for the course.

When asked how the trainees were identified, Rina smiles and says, “Often, for such projects, it is easier to find the money than the deserving beneficiaries. But our club members helped and we were able to find these youngsters.” They were looking for those who had passed their Class 12, but found to their surprise an odd







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graduate also opting for the Bosch course. The main reason for this is the huge difficulty in finding suitable jobs, and the 60–70 per cent recruitment and a starting salary of around ₹15,000 were incentives to join. The one-time fee charged is only ₹1,000; many colleges offer this Bridge course at a fee of ₹15,000, says Rina.

The training centre in Mallikpur was inaugurated by RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury, who is credited with having played a major role in setting up Rotary's partnership with Bosch. Over a three-month programme, the students will receive instructions in computer basics, spoken English and soft skills which are essential tools for today's job market. "They are taught etiquette, how to speak, how to behave and Bosch ensures 60–70 per cent placement opportunities upon course completion, because they have a tie up with around 3,000 companies who are looking for such skilled workers."

There are standards set for the trainers also; trainers are certified through an intensive four-day programme conducted by Bosch and must pass an examination to qualify. The training kits and standardised course curriculum are supplied by Bosch at no cost, as this is part of the corporate's CSR initiative.

The Awareness Foundation, which works in the area of women's empowerment, is in partnership with Singer in design and tailoring course. They also offer basic courses in jewellery design and beauty care.

Interestingly, Rina's NGO has also set up a skilling centre for women in collaboration with Singer in Tiyaali, about 50 km from Kolkata. "I started it when I was president of my club in 2023. This offers a six-month tailoring course, and those successful are given both certificates as well as sewing machines. We also help them to get jobs. In my own small way, I help as I have ties with two or three companies who always need such skilled workers. I play golf with the owner of a company that manufactures garments for industrial use, and I approached him on the possibility of employing these women. Those who manage to get a job start with a salary of ₹15,000–20,000 which is a good deal for them."

Rina also knows Shailendra Gupta, owner of Geeta's Circle, a boutique in Kolkata; "he is a Rotarian too (from Rotary Calcutta) and he gives us the waste fabric from his boutique which we use while training our women. We had also organised a small fashion show for them, and two of our women walked down the ramp."

On the streak of social service in her, Rina laughs and says, "I probably got it from my father; he was a very active Rotarian and though he might not have donated big money, he was very active and I remember him rushing diligently every Sunday to administer polio drops to children."

She puts on record her appreciation for Roychowdhury, "who played a key role in forging the Rotary-Bosch collaboration, and has been a guiding force behind this effort" and Club President Abha Lunia who was instrumental in marketing and handling critical project details.

Next on this club's agenda is starting yet another Bosch Bridge course centre in the region. "PDG Aneja has asked us to look into this and next year, when I will be assistant governor, I will work hard to expand this skilling project which is the need of the day to make our youth adequately skilled for the job market," adds Rina.

She is most happy about the fact that of the 23 youngsters at this Bosch centre in Mallikpur, the majority are women. Not all of them attend classes regularly, because many of them also have to do some work to earn some money. "This is the reality of their lives and we have to work around it. But we are sure that with collective effort and vision, this initiative will truly transform lives, empower communities, and create a lasting impact," she adds.



## Minutes of the 2312th RWM held on May 20th, 2025 at BNR Officers' Club, Garden Reach

1. President Biswajit welcomed the members and requested them to rise for the National Anthem. As a mark of respect, the President requested all members to observe A Minute of Silence in memory of the tourists who lost their lives at Pahalgam.
2. The President discussed organising a medical camp at Kalikapur on June 8th, 2025. A letter will be sent to Balananda Hospital and Research Centre for necessary assistance. Upon confirmation from BBHRC & Susrut Eye Hospital will be approached to confirm their participation.
3. The President emphasised the importance of maximum member registration for the District Training Assembly scheduled on May 25th, 2025 at Dhonno Dhanyo Auditorium. 12 members have confirmed their registration so far.
4. The Club Secretary conducted the Club Business.
5. Minutes of the last RWM was confirmed. President Biswajit terminated the meeting.



# Learn & Lead

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