

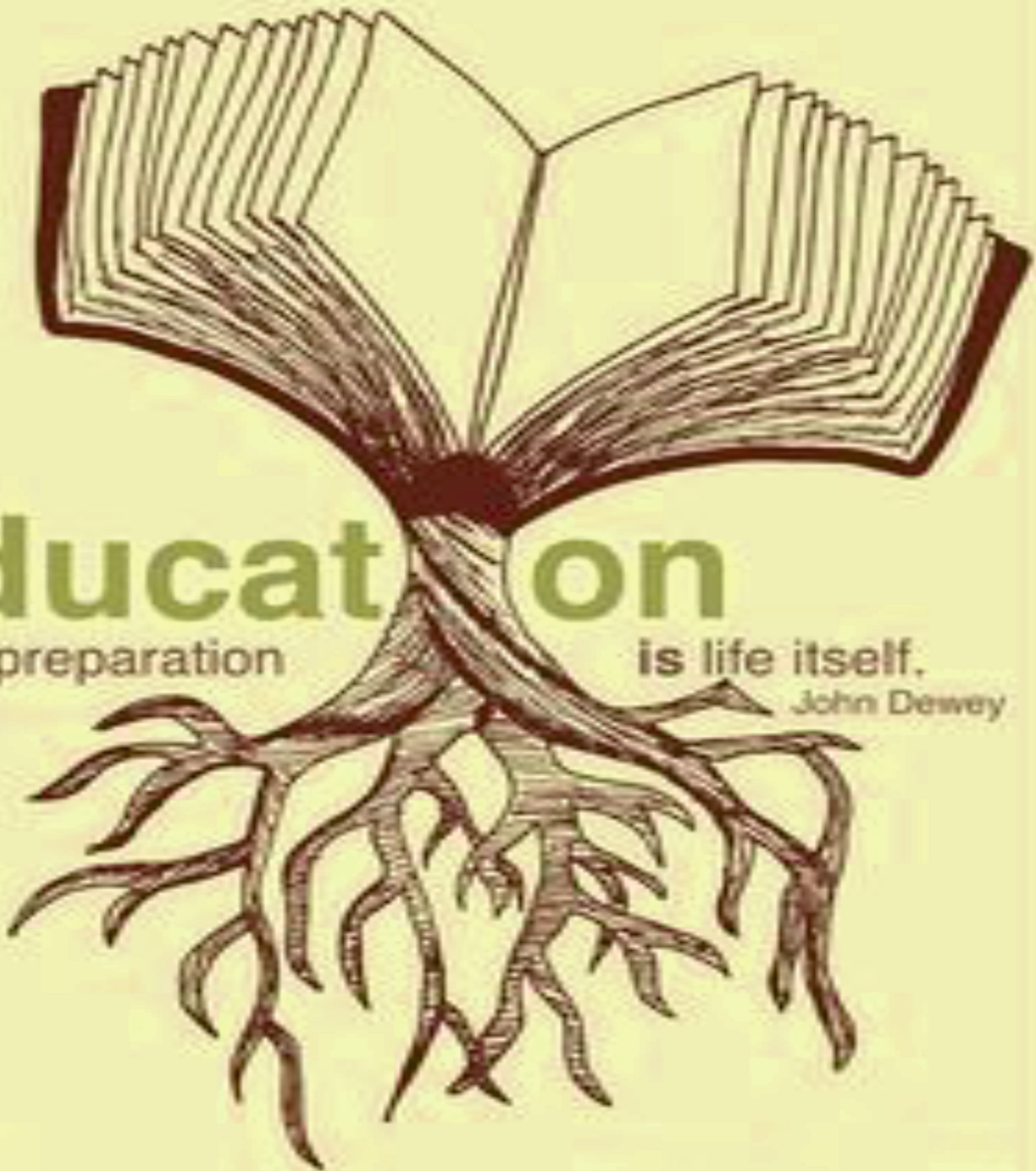


**"YOU ARE THE
LIGHT
OF THE WORLD..."**

RID 3291, Zone-16
Rotary
Garden Reach



2325th RWM



Educ at on

is not preparation
for life

is life itself.
John Dewey



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Greetings on Birthday

Sept 2nd : Swaroop, Son of PP Subir Singha Roy, Sept 6th : PP Naresh K Jain
Sept 8th : Dr. Minu Jha, Wife of PE Dr. BN Jha

THE STORY OF AMINA AND THE MARKET

Amina lives in a small village. She works very hard on her farm and in her home, but she cannot read or write. Because of this, she faces many struggles:

1. Money Problems

When Amina sells her vegetables in the market, buyers sometimes give her less money than promised. She cannot check bills properly or keep records of her sales. Sometimes, she even forgets who still owes her money.

2. Health Problems

When her children are sick, the doctor gives her medicine, but she cannot read the instructions. She worries: "What if I give the wrong amount?" This makes her anxious and dependent on others.

3. Everyday Difficulties

She cannot read bus signs, so she often asks strangers. She cannot write her name, so she uses her thumbprint on forms. She cannot read letters, so she misses important news.

A NEW BEGINNING: LEARNING TO READ & WRITE

One day, Amina hears about a free basic literacy camp in the village. At first, she is shy. She thinks: "Am I too old to learn?" But the teacher says: "It is never too late. Education is for everyone."

So Amina joins. Slowly, step by step, she learns:

- ❖ **Reading** – first letters, then words, then short sentences. Now she can read shop signs, bus numbers, and even her children's school notes.
- ❖ **Writing** – she learns to write her name, then short sentences. She can now sign her name proudly instead of using her thumbprint.
- ❖ **Numbers** – she practices counting, adding, and subtracting. Now she can check her money in the market and keep a record of what she sells and spends.
- ❖ **Life skills** – she learns about hygiene, clean water, and how to prevent common illnesses. She also learns about her rights as a woman and a citizen.

A CHANGED LIFE

After a few months, Amina feels like a new person.

In the **market**, no one can cheat her anymore. She calculates prices confidently. At **home**, she reads medicine labels and helps her children with homework. In the **community**, she attends meetings, speaks up, and even helps other women learn. In her **heart**, she feels respected and proud: she no longer depends on others for everything.

LESSON

Basic education and literacy are not only about reading and writing. They are about **freedom, confidence, health, better income, and respect.**

Amina feels proud. She says: "*With education, I am not blind anymore. Now, I can see the world.*"



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ENVIRONMENT

Let's say YES to 1:2:3

M Muruganandam, RI Director, 2025–27

Friends,

Rotary is, at its heart, a family of members. This is where everything begins. When our membership is strong, our projects, contributions and service to communities becomes stronger and more impactful. I often picture Rotary as a magnificent chariot, the wheels of which are our members. Strong wheels make the chariot run smoothly; but if the wheels are weak, the journey slows down. That is why membership must always remain our first priority.

In the third month of this Rotary year, let's embrace a simple but powerful idea: Say YES to 1:2:3. For every 1 Rotarian, let's engage 2 Rotaractors and 3 Interactors with our clubs. When we inspire young people today, they will see Rotary as their natural next step tomorrow. This is how we ensure sustainability, create continuity, and keep our movement full of energy and life.



Let's step back and look at the bigger picture. India today is the **second largest Rotary country** in the world. That is something to be proud of! But we can't stop here; we have to move forward. If each of our 4,800+ clubs simply brings in one new member every alternate month, that is six members in a year. Multiply that, and together we will welcome **28,800 new Rotarians this year alone**. This way, our four zones will cross a historic milestone — 2 lakh members by 2025–26 and, and 2.25 lakh by 2026–27. Such a powerful message to the Rotary world on the strength and unity of India's Rotarians!

This RAG analysis will tell us where we stand today and help leaders to plan for the future.

- o **Red zone:** clubs with fewer than 25 members
- o **Amber zone:** clubs with 25–50 members
- o **Green zone:** clubs with 50+ members
- o **Super Green:** clubs with 75+ members

I urge every Club President, District Governor, Regional and Zonal leader to pledge to hand over the leadership baton to your successor after scaling at least one zone. When you show positive growth and better numbers that is a clear, measurable and lasting legacy you can be proud of.

Also, while focusing on recruiting new members, we must also work equally hard on retaining existing members. Every club and district is responsible for making Rotary meaningful to its members. When people feel connected, when they see their contributions creating real change, they stay. When our youth experience the joy of service through Rotaract and Interact, they see Rotary as their future. And when our clubs remain strong and vibrant, our impact on society multiplies many times over.

So friends, let's join hands and hearts to make this happen. Let's keep the Rotary wheel strong, steady and turning true.

Say YES to 1:2:3. Say YES to growth. Say YES to Rotary.

How India's 1st Muslim Woman Teacher started a 'Beti Padhao' Movement in 19th Century

Working in tandem with Savitribai Phule, Fatima had to not only take on high caste Hindus but also faced fierce opposition from orthodox Muslims who opposed the idea of equal education for all.

Are you in favour of education for girls? To even ask this question in today's socio-political milieu seems ridiculous, considering that this is not only enshrined in our Constitution but supported by mainstream public discourse.

There are numerous government programmes and schemes dedicated to the education of the girl child, irrespective of class, caste or religion. Admittedly, there are parts of this country where this idea and subsequent socio-economic progress is actively discouraged. However, more than 150 years ago, it wasn't even a part of the mainstream socio-political discourse, and in fact, those pushing for it were met with intense hostility and social boycott.

Those with even a cursory knowledge of the history behind education in India will have heard of Savitribai Phule, who valiantly fought against the oppressive hierarchies of caste and gender to challenge untouchability and educate girls, among other critical social interventions.

Along with her husband Jyotirao Phule, they fought against caste discrimination, the scourge of untouchability and worked towards the emancipation of women and reform of Hindu family life in present-day Maharashtra during the



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19th century. They were among India's first major social reformers.

But how many people know about the Muslim woman who made Savitribai's bid for girl education possible? Not many, one would argue, and that isn't their fault considering little is known about her life history.

What we do know is her name was **Fatima Sheikh**, and she is widely recognised as the first woman Muslim teacher in India, who also worked with Savitribai to establish the first school for girls at her own house, alongside her brother Usman Sheikh in 1848.

The story begins with the Phule couple attempting to educate members of the lower caste communities, particularly their women, at their home in Pune.

Considering that education at the time was the preserve of only upper caste men, the very thought of educating women and lower castes was anathema, and the Phule couple were given the choice of either stopping work or leaving their home. They chose the latter but were offered refuge by Fatima and Usman at their home in the Ganj Peth area of Pune (then referred to as Poona).

At a time when everyone including their own kin abandoned these social reformers, Fatima and Usman not only gave them an opportunity to rekindle their ambition to uplift those on the margins but also sheltered them.

At the Sheikh household, Fatima helped Savitribai to set up the first school for girls in Pune called the **'Indigenous Library.'**

According to archives from the era, it was Usman (inspired by the Phules) who encouraged his sister to not just educate herself but also spread its gospel to all members of society.

Not only was Fatima risking the wrath of caste Hindus, but also orthodox Muslims, as both groups at the time were deeply opposed to the idea of equal access to education. Nonetheless, this didn't deter Fatima, who not only undertook training alongside Savitribai but also soon after began teaching others.

"Defying all norms, Fatima and Savitribai set up the school and even went to a training institute, to become professional teachers," says this account from *Feminism in India*. They were soon joined by social reformer Saguna Bai, who helped Savitribai open another school and would subsequently go onto chart her own education movement for the marginalised.

Through her time with Savitribai, Fatima had taught in all the five schools that the social reformer couple had opened, and continued to do so until 1856 when Savitribai was afflicted by illness and was compelled to move back to her mother's house. We don't know much about her life post-1856.

"When Fatima and Savitribai started going to schools which were established by Jyotiba, people from upper caste community used to harass and abuse them. They were stone pelted and sometimes cow dung was thrown at them as it was unimaginable for the upper-caste community to see lower castes of the society getting educated. Fatima Sheikh and Savitribai didn't pay attention to these hindrances and continued their work," writes Siddhant Mohan, editor of *Two Circles*. Aside from such hostility, there are even reports that some had attempted to take their lives.

Despite the challenges before Fatima, she maintained her pursuit of approaching every household in her neighbourhood and community, asking families and encouraging them to give their girls a shot at a decent education, irrespective of faith.

Having said that, there isn't too much historical or archival material to ascertain what happened to Fatima after 1856, and even the question of when she was born remains up for debate although her birth anniversary is celebrated across social media forums on January 9. With no real male figure in Fatima's life aside from her brother, there are indications that she went against the norm of marriage and subsequent patriarchy and orthodoxy she would have to endure. Nonetheless, her work with Savitribai isn't disputed, and one can only imagine the kind of resistance she faced.

Members of the depressed classes celebrated **Dalit History** month, and on that occasion an internet archive Dalit History said:

"The friendship between Fatima and Savitri was one of respect, compassion and synergy. Throughout their time together, Savitri would often mention her in her letters to Jyotirao with affection and concern. Their friendship lives today in the form of the work they have done in creating both foundation will and actual structures for the upliftment of the marginalised."





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Fortunately, there have been attempts to recognise her work and contribution. Aside from her association with the Phules, the Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production and Curriculum Research took cognisance of her contribution in their textbooks in 2014.

Fatima Sheikh played a crucial role in ensuring that children, irrespective of gender, caste or religion, had access to education, and the results are there for everyone to see.

Literacy is a human right

Holger Knaack, TRF Trustee Chair

Education is the most powerful tool we have for changing the world, and during Basic Education and Literacy Month, I want to remind everyone why our work matters.

Education breaks the cycle of poverty, opens doors to opportunity, and empowers individuals to transform their communities. But education doesn't exist in a vacuum. We must also address peace, health, clean water, economic opportunity, maternal and child health, and the environment.



This is why Rotary has these areas of focus. Lasting change requires a comprehensive approach. When we collaborate across these areas through The Rotary Foundation, we raise up communities sustainably and with dignity.

Today, I have asked Lynne Paradis from the Rotary Club of Red Deer, Alberta, to share her passion for literacy:

"I believe that literacy is a human right. When I joined forces with the Rotary Club of San Ignacio, Belize, over a decade ago, we set out to improve reading instruction, but we had no idea how far this journey would take us.

Literacy Alive! has been supported by eight Rotary Foundation global grants since 2011. Using a straightforward approach based on phonics and science, we updated how teachers teach and focused on how students really learn. We collected data on

reading skills improvement over six months.

After demonstrating that teachers had integrated new practices into daily instruction, the project snowballed. The Belize Ministry of Education took notice.

Today, over 1,300 teachers have been trained and more than 20,000 students have benefitted. We've achieved over 90 per cent success rates, with many students making more than a year's worth of improvement in just five months.

The programme is now compulsory in Belize primary schools. What moves me most is hearing teachers say how confident they are that they can change students' lives.

Our greatest success is working ourselves out of a job. When local educators take the lead, we know lasting change is underway."

Lynne's story exemplifies the power of Foundation grants. Through partnerships spanning six Rotary clubs and three countries, **Literacy Alive!** reminds us how good Rotary is at creating systemic change.

When our members' passion meets Foundation support, we don't just improve individual lives, we change entire communities. By supporting the Foundation, you can put your passion to work this month and every month.

**BELIEVE
THERE IS
GOOD IN
THE WORLD**



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This Bihar man's 30-Day reels changed the future of a School in Sikkim

Sometimes, all it takes is one person's determination to spark change in the most unexpected corners. In a small mountain village in Sikkim, Ashwani Thapa began a 30-day journey that would soon transform the lives of dozens of children.



Sometimes, change doesn't come from massive organisations or big campaigns. It begins with one person, one camera, and a whole lot of heart in the world of social media, which is flooded with endless content.

Ashwani Thapa from Bihar chose to create something meaningful. And in just 30 days, he changed the lives of dozens of children in the remote mountains of Sikkim.

A hidden school in the mountains

Ashwani was casually scrolling through social media when he stumbled upon Grace Academy — a tiny school nestled in Sardong, a quiet village in Sikkim.

The school is founded by Lakpa Dhava Sherpa, a former mountain guide who gave up his trekking career to teach the children of farmers, daily-wage workers, and single mothers. He even turned his own cottage into a hostel for 21 kids.

But what Ashwani saw when he volunteered broke his heart: no library, no clean water, no proper lights, and yet the children came every day with glowing eyes and big dreams.

A camera, a cause and one viral idea

Instead of feeling helpless, he picked up his camera and started vlogging his everyday moments at the school where he taught maths, laughed with the kids, and lived among them. His daily reels weren't fancy, but they were full of soul.

And soon, the internet noticed. Within a month, his raw, heart-warming videos helped raise Rs. 10 lakh for the school through donations.

A heart-warming gesture and a hopeful future

One child, in particular, left a mark on Ashwani — **Samnima, the youngest in the hostel.**

"She kept giving me flowers; she has all my heart," he said in one of his vlogs. His vlogs capture not only the struggles but also the joy, resilience, and unbreakable spirit of the children.

Today, Grace Academy is being renovated with a new building, computer lab, and playground in sight. All thanks to a 30-day journey powered by kindness and content creation.

Ashwani proved something powerful: when used with intention, social media can transform lives, uplift communities, and spark real change.



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Minutes of the 2324th RWM held on August 26th, 2025 at BNR Officers' Club, Garden Reach

1. Acting President PP Dr. JK Singh called the meeting to order and members were asked to rise for the National Anthem.
2. PP Tanu apprised members that a Committee has been formed comprising:
P Tanu Roy (Chairman)
Ex-Officio:
President Rtn. B. Mohan, PN Shubhayan Sengupta & PP Sanjay V. Bhatt
Members:
IPP Biswajit Saha, Rtn. Abbas A Haldar, Rtn. Amar Saha & Rtn. Santosh Singh
The Committee will finalise the details of the do and circulate the same among members.
3. In the absence of Project Chair, the matter was deferred to the next RWM. It was resolved that discussions shall be taken up only after the Project Chair presents project details and updates.
4. Members resolved that mosquito nets will be distributed among RCCs. A few members made voluntary donations towards pre-pujo garments distribution. A suggestion by PP Tapan was placed to extend support to Balananda Hospital by donating bed sheets and pillows as sought by them.
5. The Secretary conducted the club business.
6. VP PP Dr. JK Singh confirmed the minutes of the last meeting and terminated the meeting.

Rotary
District 3291



UNITE
FOR
GOOD

1st Presidents, Secretaries,
Assistant Governors (Admin), Zonal Secretaries Meet

— ইচ্ছাশক্তি তীর্থে —



SATURDAY & SUNDAY
13 September & 14 September 2025

VENUE
SONAR BANGLA, TAKI

WE MEET EVERY TUESDAY AT 7.30 P.M. AT B.N.R. OFFICERS' CLUB, GARDEN REACH, KOLKATA - 700 043
CONTACT : PP TANU ROY • Mobile : +91 98317 28880 / roytanu@hotmail.com
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