



# Transforming Lives...One life at a Time ....

Our journey began in 2005. Since then, we have ensured that thousands of underprivileged children from rural communities in India have completed their secondary education.

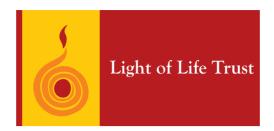












# **Light of Life Trust**

The Founder of Light of Life Trust, Villy Doctor along with a few like-minded people came together and started Light of Life Trust, with the vision to transform the lives of rural communities. It's mission is to break the generational cycle of poverty, one life at a time.

Following a need assessment study of the local community in Karjat, the flagship division Anando was launched in the year 2005 with 25 children in Karjat Tehsil, Raigad District, Maharashtra State, based on the belief that no child should be forced to drop out of school.

In 2009, the second division Jagruti was initiated by establishing a livelihood and skill development programme for women and young adults. In addition primary health care service and an environment conservation programme has also been initiated.



#### **Vision**

To transform lives of underprivileged rural communities in India.



#### **Mission**

To break the generational cycle of poverty, one life at a time.

#### **PROGRAMMES**



Education



Livelihood



Primary Health Care



#### **SDG GOALS ALIGNING TO OUR MISSION AND VISION**

















Ashdin Doctor Managing Trustee, Light of Life Trust

At the light of life trust we believe in breaking the "Generational Cycle" of poverty in rural india. Where children are born into homes that have been poor for generations and do not know how to exit this vicious cycle. We realised that one of the first steps of breaking out of this cycle was through Education. However, not education in the way we normally think about it. Education for these children is not about passing grades or clearing exams. It is about truly learning and internalising what is being taught.

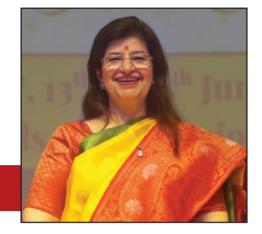
In the Anando program we focus on the secondary students and upwards. We receive so many students who are still learning their ABCs. Hence our focus is not just basic education. But it is divided into three categories.

- 1) Real learning: giving children the extra classes they need to learn the subject well.
- 2) Life skills: skills children will need to grow and thrive in life. How to make friends, how to be disciplined and many more.
- 3) Employability skills: How to work and get a job that will break them out of the generational cycle of poverty.

When you support the Anando program you are not just changing the life of that one child. But the life of their current family and their future generations.



## From, the Founder's Desk



**Villy Doctor** Founder, Light of Life Trust and Satyavati Spiritual Foundation

Dear Friends,

It brings me immense joy to welcome you to Sur Sangam – a celebration of hope, harmony, and humanity. Sur Sangam is a soulful fundraising concert celebrating 100 Years of Raj Kapoor, the legendary showman of Indian cinema and will feature renowned artists Padmashri Suresh Wadkar, Sanjeevani Bhelande, Chirag Panchal and Mukhtar Shah and will consist of ever-green melodies. This concert is raising support to help 1,000 underprivileged children return to school.

As we gather this evening, we are united by a common dream: to help 1,000 underprivileged children return to school and reclaim their right to a brighter future. Each note sung, each rupee raised, brings us one step closer to transforming lives — one life at a time.

Light of Life Trust was founded in 2002 with a single mission: to break the generational cycle of poverty through education and empowerment. What began as a small initiative has today touched over 6.5 lakh lives across 1648 villages in 9 states of India. At the heart of our work lies the Anando programme — our flagship education and life skills support initiative that nurtures vulnerable rural children from Grade 8 to EMPLOYABILITY through its holistic 3E approach of "Educate, Empower & Equip for Employability".

Many of these children are first-generation learners, facing unimaginable odds. All students in our Anando division come from families with a household income of less than Rs 4,500/- per month and it gives me immense satisfaction to note that over 5000 Anando beneficiaries are sustaining themselves and their families.

Your presence today is a powerful affirmation of faith - in us, in our mission, and most importantly, in the potential of every child.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our donors, supporters, artists, volunteers, and team members who have made this evening possible. Together, we are not just funding education; we are building futures, igniting dreams, and lighting lives. Let the music of compassion play on - louder than ever.

With love and Blessings,

**Villy Doctor** 

Founder Light of Life Trust

# **OUR LEADERSHIP**



Villy Doctor
Founder
Light of Life Trust

# **Board of Trustees**



Mr. Ashdin Doctor Managing Trustee



Ms. Gayatri Ruia



Mr. Jitendra Mehta - Trustee



Mr. Punit B Anand - Trustee

# Senior Management



Mr. Pradeep Koppikar CEO, Emeritus, LOLT



Mr. Ramesh Daswani CEO, LOLT



Mr. Pradip Roy Hon. Consultant, LOLT



Ms. Kamal Damania COO, LOLT

#### MEMBER

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC UNDERTAKINGS
CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE
AND INDUSTRY



#### MILIND DEORA

CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION
RAJYA SABHA

16th July, 2025

Subject: Congratulations on the 20th Anniversary of Light of Life Trust

Dear Dr. Villy Doctor,

Please accept my warmest congratulations on the remarkable milestone of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **Light of Life Trust**. Your tireless dedication and visionary leadership over the years have transformed countless lives, and your commitment to empowering rural communities through education, livelihood support, and holistic development is truly inspiring.

I would also like to extend my best wishes to Mr. Ramesh Daswani, CEO of the Trust, and to every member of your team. Their collective efforts, driven by compassion and purpose, have made a profound impact and continue to shape a brighter, more inclusive future.

Wishing you and the entire Light of Life Trust family continued success in all your endeavours.

Warm regards,

Milind Deora Member of Parliament

Dr. Villy Doctor Founder, Light of Life Trust Mumbai



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Adv. Makarand S. Narwekar B.Com., LL.B.

MUNICIPAL COUNCILLOR Member : Education Comm.

24th Aug, 2025



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Education is the most powerful tool to change the course of a life. In rural India, where opportunities often feel out of reach, even a single chance at learning can unlock dignity, livelihood, and hope for generations.

I have seen how the work of Light of Life Trust has given thousands of children not only classrooms and books, but also the courage to dream beyond their circumstances. Each child who goes back to school carries with them the promise of a stronger family, a stronger community, and ultimately, a stronger nation

As I look towards the vision of a Viksit Bharat 2030, I believe education must remain at the heart of every effort to uplift our people. It is not charity; it is nation-building. I deeply admire

Light of Life Trust for two decades of tireless service, and I wish you the very best for the journey ahead.

Adv. Mr. Makarand Narwekar

M. S. Narwelcon







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When a child in a small village holds a pencil for the first time, it is not just the beginning of education; it is the beginning of possibility. That possibility can ripple outward, changing not only the child's life but the rhythm of the entire community.

**Light of Life Trust** has spent two decades turning such moments into movements. Their work reminds us that progress is not measured only in statistics, but in the quiet confidence of a young girl who knows she belongs in a classroom, or the steady determination of a boy who sees his future beyond boundaries.

The importance of education cannot be overstated. It gives dignity, independence, and the power to dream. As we move towards a brighter tomorrow, I believe this mission will continue to spark transformation across rural India, one child at a time.

With admiration and respect, I extend my best wishes to the Light of Life Trust family on this milestone.

Warm Regards

Market.

Mrs. Harshita A. Narwekar Former Corporator Ward 226 – Colaba

















# **Our Divisions**

#### **ANANDO**

#### **Anando Programme**

Aims to ensure rural underprivileged school children complete Std X.

#### Anando Plus Programme

Post Std X students supported and guided to make career choices.

#### **Anant Programme**

Creates a platform for selected Anando beneficiaries to Evolve, Enhance and Exhibit their talents.

#### Anando School Empowerment Programme

Improve Quality of Education in rural schools by working with the school authorities and teachers.

#### **JAGRUTI**

#### Livelihood and Skill Development Programme

Equip underprivileged rural women, girls and unemployed youth through livelihood training programme.

#### **Primary Health Care Programme**

Provide services to remote rural villages and tribal hamlets having no access to any kind of medical facilities.

#### **Environment Conservation Programme**

The aim is to create sustainable livelihood for small farmers by providing them fruit bearing plant saplings.

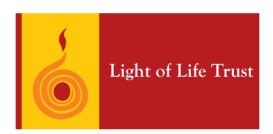
#### **AANGAN**



Setting up operation of a Hospice & Palliative Care Centre to provide care and comfort to terminally ill, in Uttan Village Bhayander, Mumbai City.



# Breaking the generational cycle of poverty - One life at a time!



Light of Life Trust, an NGO established in 2002 and registered under Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950, is founded by Villy Doctor, with a vision to transform the lives of underprivileged rural communities.

Organization's Commitment to SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

The organisation has pioneered two divisions that reflect its commitments to SDGs formulated by the United Nations

#### **ANANDO**

Started in 2005 the division supports probable school dropouts by equipping them with skills to become independent and productive through the holistic 3E approach,

- Educate
- Empower
- Equip for Employability

#### **JAGRUTI**

Started in 2009, the division supports the holistic development of underprivileged rural communities through three major programmes

- Skilling and livelihood training
- Primary healthcare
- Environment conservation

# **Beneficiary Impact**



#### Suraj Dhanaj

After losing his father, Suraj's education seemed impossible. His mother worked as a domestic help while his brother left school to earn. Supported by Light of Life Trust's Anando program, Suraj overcame setbacks, completed his studies with distinction, and even taught at LOLT. Today, he works as an Executive Officer at Axis Bank, supporting his family and inspiring others.

#### Diraj Aade

From Light of Life Trust's Manora Centre in Washim, Diraj Aade achieved an impressive All India Rank 1250 in the UPSC-conducted ESIC exam. Soon to join as a Nursing Officer, he proved that dedication and perseverance can overcome rural challenges. Diraj's success is a shining example for young aspirants, showing that with focus and guidance, big dreams can be realised.



#### Aditi Kasarekar

Aditi Kasarekar, from Mangaon in Maharashtra's Konkan region and a beneficiary of Light of Life Trust's Goregaon Centre, dreamed of becoming an officer. Despite financial struggles and pandemic delays, she persevered with determination. In 2025, her hard work paid off as she cleared the MPSC with an outstanding Rank 44, earning the post of Deputy Collector and inspiring rural youth.

#### Surekha Sagar Mohape

Surekha Sagar Mohape, from Parhe, Murbad Tehsil, Thane, turned her life around through Light of Life Trust's Sewing & Tailoring Course. Once a farm labourer, she completed training in 2022, received a setup kit, and started her own tailoring shop. Now earning ₹500-₹600 a day, she supports her family financially, has gained respect, and feels deeply fulfilled.





#### **Ankita Baburao Waghmare**

Ankita Baburao Waghmare, from Light of Life Trust's Manora Centre, belongs to a tribal family in Washim. Despite hardships, including her father's alcoholism, she excelled academically and built confidence through LOLT activities. With support, she pursued higher studies and cleared the police recruitment exam. Today, Ankita proudly serves as a Lady Constable in Pune, earning ₹40,000/month and inspiring others.

# **LOLT Impact**



1498
Villages Reached



ANANDO
217072
Beneficiaries

Beneficia

Anando Programme



ando School Livelihood

ment Programme Development F



JAGRUTI 409240 Beneficiaries

Livelihood & Skill Medical Mobile Unit



Environment Conservation Programmes





## **LOLT Presence** Uttarakhand Rajasthan **Bihar Madhya Pradesh** Angul Nandurbar ( Odisha OAkola O Washim Chandrapur Ahmednagar O Julnu Mumbai Maharashtra ੁ Raigad Goa

Ramesh Daswani, CEO Light of Life Trust

## Bridging the Education Gap: Real Lives Behind Rural School Dropouts in India

In the quiet corners of rural India, school often ends too soon. Children start with hope, but poverty, responsibilities, and social barriers often push them out before completing education. Despite India's gains in enrolment, the transition to secondary schooling remains a challenge. According to UDISE+ 2023–24, the secondary dropout rate has risen to 14.1%, and only 45.6% of children complete Class 1–12. In states like Bihar, Assam, and Karnataka, the numbers are worse

#### Why do children drop out?

The reasons are layered. Poverty is the biggest factor many children are expected to work in fields, do daily-wage jobs, or care for siblings. For girls, cultural norms, early marriage, and safety concerns add extra hurdles. If families can afford to educate only one child, it is usually the boy. Infrastructure gaps deepen the problem: some schools have just a few teachers handling multiple grades, no proper toilets, or even electricity. These shortcomings signal to children and parents alike that school is not worth the struggle.

Health and nutrition are silent barriers. Malnourished children often miss classes and fall behind. The pandemic worsened the gap without smartphones, internet, or electricity, thousands of rural children were completely left out of online learning.

Yet, there is hope. Organizations like the Light of Life Trust (LOLT), founded in 2005, are helping children return to school. Its flagship initiative, Project Anando, supports dropouts through academic tutoring, counselling, life skills, sports, and yoga. Over three to five years, children are nurtured back into mainstream education.

The results are inspiring. LOLT has touched 398,000 lives across 1,498 villages, established 93 community learning centres, and supported nearly 193,000 students through secondary education (Annual Report 2023). Each number represents a child reclaiming their future.

But such efforts need collective strength. Governments must ensure schools have qualified teachers, safe facilities, and hostels for girls. Scholarships and health support should be integrated into education. Communities too must recognize education as a pathway out of poverty. Technology can be a game-changer, but only if electricity, connectivity, and devices reach rural villages.

This is not just about schools it is about shaping India's future. Without higher secondary education, rural youth remain trapped in low-skill jobs. India dreams of becoming a developed nation by 2047, but that dream depends on keeping children in classrooms today.

Two more years of schooling can mean everything: the difference between child labour and college, early marriage and independence, struggle and opportunity. When one child drops out, it isn't just their loss it's ours too.



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**Premium Inflight Entertainment** 



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#### **Empowering Rural India Through Secondary Education**



In India's journey toward inclusive development, secondary education is not just a phase it is the gateway to opportunity, identity, and empowerment. For rural children, this transition can be life-changing, yet it remains the most fragile link in their educational journey. The ANANDO initiative by Light of Life Trust addresses this exact juncture, where dropout rates peak and dreams are often paused due to poverty, distance, or social barriers. As an educator and changemaker, I deeply resonate with ANANDO's mission. It does more than just bring children back to school it brings them back to hope. It nurtures their emotional, social, and academic well-being and walks with them toward a future filled with dignity. At Symbiosis Open Education Society, our philosophy mirrors this

vision. From the Symbiosis Community College in Paud, Pune offering skilling programs for school dropouts and underprivileged youth, to the Women in STEM initiatives our flagship programs in new age engineering skills that empowers thousands of rural and semi-urban women through training in engineering, green jobs, industry 4.0 we believe that education must be relevant, inclusive, and life-ready.

Through the Symbiosis Centre for Corporate & Professional Learning (SCCPL), we are also pioneering Global Capability Centres (GCCs) across Pune, Mumbai, and Hyderabad. These centres train students on real time life skills, offering industry partnerships, employment linkages, and hands-on experience. Additionally, our CSR and philanthropic initiatives have touched over 6,000 lives, providing training in areas like geriatric care, digital literacy, engineering, sustainability, e-mobility, green jobs and food processing, across underserved areas of Maharashtra. What we've seen time and again is this: when you invest in a child's secondary education, you do not just change their future you uplift families, transform communities, and inspire generations.

Let us invest in education not as charity, but as nation-building.

We should mobilize as educators, corporates, institutions, and citizens – to create a society where every child, regardless of where they are born has the right tools to thrive. Rural education is not just a developmental priority, it is a moral imperative.

"When we invest in secondary education for rural children, we are not just lighting one lamp; we are igniting a chain of possibilities that can illuminate generations".





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**Since 1945** 



**Geetika Joshi** *Education Officer, Uttarakhand* 

# Cold floors and bright eyes: the long walk to learning in Uttarakhand

By the time the first bell rings, fingers are already stiff from cold. High in the hills of Uttarakhand, winter mornings are fierce. Frost lingers on rooftops, and clouds cling to pine-covered slopes. Yet many children in these mountains start their school day sitting on bare, damp floors, wrapped in thin sweaters, fingers stiff from the cold. Morning arrives early in the mountains.

Inside many government primary schools in Uttarakhand's hills the air feels especially cold. Classrooms often have cracked walls that let wind whistle through. Tin roofs drum each time a gust rolls down the valley. Floors stay damp long after the last patch of the seeping rainwater is gone, so students spread old grain sacks in a circle and sit huddled together to keep warm.

A few districts away a head-teacher once asked her class to rise every half hour and stamp their feet just to wake the blood in their toes. On another ridge a parent brings a jug of water from home because the tap on campus froze last winter and never worked again. Toilets with missing doors stand silent, a place no child wishes to visit. There are days when one teacher covers five grades, moving from alphabet drills to long division with only a single chalkboard between the entire school. Families do their best, yet some wonder if it is wiser to send children to relatives in the plains, even though that means growing up far from the hills they call home.

This mixture of harsh weather, hard terrain, and limited funds writes the same story across Uttarakhand. It plays out in hill-stations near Almora in the green terraces of Pithoragarh where and the same in Dehradun, despite the capital's cosmopolitan cafes and elite schools. The scene – rarely - changes from valley to valley. A cold floor. A broken door. A bright child trying to trace letters while shivering.

A quiet question that sparked a plan

Ten years ago I, then Deputy Education Officer Tarikhet, stood in one such room with my young son near the outskirts of Ranikhet in the Almora district. I asked him, half in jest, if he would study there. He looked at the cracked plaster, then at the grey floor, and fell silent. His silence felt heavier than words. On the walk back I made a promise

to myself to change this, because he said he could never study in this school if it did not look like his. I knew that even if public help was slow to reach every school then the public itself would lend a hand.

That decision grew into Rupantaran, a word that means transformation. The plan was clear. Pair what the government can supply with the strength of the community. Teachers gave part of their pay. Carpenters offered skills at cost. Villagers and Parents carried bricks up steep tracks where jeeps could not pass. Shopkeepers sent paint tins and nails.

First came a new roof that no longer leaked. Then a layer of warm tiles over bare concrete. Fresh plaster sealed the gaps where the wind once whistled. Two bright windows faced the rising sun. Children painted a sun and a rainbow above the doorway, and their parents lined the path with flowering plants. On the very first day in that renewed room pupils arrived early and lingered late, because the classroom now felt like a place made for them.

Word moved and Rupanataran in 10 years has become a beacon of hope for the young generation of Uttarakhand studying in government primary schools. Over the years Rupantaran and the faces behind it have reshaped more than two hundred and fifty government schools. Each one tells a different success story. A school near Almora now has a reading corner with bilingual storybooks resting on low shelves. Near Ranikhet, young children are excited to come to school early in the chilly mornings because they have fun smart-classes. A rocky ground in a Kashipur school, once a patch of broken stones, is now a basketball court. What changes first is attendance. Children no longer fear the cold floor, so they come even on cloudy days. Parents are more involved because the school looks cared for. Teachers who once felt alone say they now feel part of a collective effort and are teaching with increased motivation. The deeper change is harder to measure. It shows in a girl who raises her hand without hesitation, in a boy who stops hiding his workbook behind his knees, in the shared laugh when a new map of India lights up on a classroom wall.

#### The climb that still lies ahead

The mountains are wide, and the needs remain great. Winter winds still rattle loose roof sheets, and rain still seeps through cracked ceilings in schools that have not yet felt the warmth of change. For every classroom newly bright with colour, another waits in faded paint and half-light, hoping for its turn.

This is where each of us can step in. Whether you share time, skills, or resources, your support adds strength to a community already working hard with what it has. No gesture is too small: every rupee, every volunteer hour, every shared story nudges another school toward safety and dignity. Together, we can carry this work up the next ridge—and then the next—until every child in Uttarakhand opens a book in a room that shelters both body and hope.



# PROJECT AAAAAAA

Hospice and Palliative Care



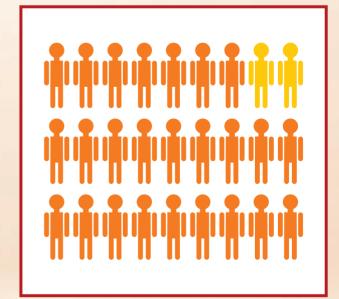
Each year the number of people in India who need Palliative Care is estimated at

5.4 Million

**But only** 

1-3%

of those with serious conditions have access.



#### **ICMR Report:**

Cancer patients in India are projected to increase from 26.7 million in 2021 to 29.8 million in 2025. A 12 percent rise in cancer cases in India by the next five years.

"Home to one-sixth of the World's population, India has a huge burden of suffering from life-limiting diseases. Less than 2% of its population has access to pain relief and palliative care." Mr Rajagopal, Director, Who Collaborating Centre for Policy and Training on access to pain relief and founder-chairman, Pallium.

#### Terminally-ill patients also deserve care like any other patient

In India the need for Palliative care is estimated at 5.4 million a year.

Terminal illnesses are always scary, and the patient and family need help coping with the new reality. These situations makes relentless physical, emotional and financial demands.

Every chronic life-limiting illness calls for Palliative Care – the beneficiaries can be children, adolescents, middle aged or the elderly.

Palliative care impacts not only the patient but also immediate caregivers. There are very few facilities available in & around Mumbai that are fully equipped to offer residential care.



Mumbai, Maharashtra and other parts of India.



## **Target Population**



Adults & children irrespective of religion income, disease type, or age with any chronic life-limiting condition inneed of palliative care.

#### **Project Goals**

#### Need -

To establish a Hospice, given the limited number of facilities available in and around Mumbai – despite there being large number of terminally ill who continue bearing the pains silently before they breathe their last.

#### **Objective** -

To provide residential care and comfort to terminally ill with medical support.

Addressing physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.

### Methodology

#### Assessment

Assess and reassess patients for physical, emotional, social and spiritual distress

#### **Addressing needs**

Address spiritual, psychological and social needs

#### Identification

Identify patients who could benefit from palliative care

#### Relief

Relieve pain and other distressing physical symptoms

#### Achieving goals of

Providing holistic support to patients and caregivers

## Holistic Approach To Healing















## **Facilities at the Proposed Centre**

01

Medical, Nursing, Psychological, Social and Ppiritual support with appropriately trained staff.



Integration of care between the consulting /referral hospital.

02

Providing basic necessities – such as food, utilities, mobile telephone, travel subsidy and lending of equipment.

07

Essential medications, including oral morphine.

03

A 24 - Hour Telephone support service

08

Involvement of community, social workers and volunteers and ongoing staff training. This would be an interdisciplinary team.

04

Home-Care Service where patients stay in their own homes and are cared for by their families.

09

After Discharge service by home-care team.

05

Inpatient and Day Care service.

10

Residence Facility for Family members of the patient.



# **Akhil Shahani** MD shahani group

#### Why Higher Secondary Education Is a Game-Changer for Rural India

In many villages across India, school ends with Class 10 especially for girls. After that, the path to higher education is often blocked by poverty, distance, or tradition. But higher secondary education (Class 11–12) can completely change a young person's future. Take Rani, a teenager from a tribal village near Nashik. Her parents planned to marry her off at 17. But thanks to the support of a local NGO, she enrolled in a nearby junior college. She later trained as a nurse and today, she earns enough to support her entire family. Rani's story is not just about education—it's about escaping a cycle of poverty.

#### The Bigger Picture

India's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), the percentage of youth in higher education, is 28.4%. Among Scheduled Tribes, it drops to just 21.2%. In some backward districts of eastern India, it's even lower, sometimes below 10%. This means that the majority of rural youth are being left behind. Without access to Class 11–12, they can't qualify for good jobs or vocational training. They remain trapped in the same low-income opportunities as their parents.

#### What's Stopping Them?

#### 1. No Nearby Colleges

In many rural areas, students have to walk five kilometres or more to reach the closest school. For girls, safety becomes a serious concern, and many simply drop out.

#### 2. Not Enough Teachers

Government schools in villages often lack trained teachers for subjects like physics, chemistry, and economics. Without these, students can't even apply to most degree programs.

#### 3. Too Expensive to Continue

Even small expenses travel costs, textbooks, school supplies can be too much for low-income families.

#### 4. No Access to Online Learning

During the pandemic, education moved online. But many rural students didn't have smartphones or internet access. They were simply left behind.

#### The Bright Spots

Despite the challenges, there are organisations working hard to turn the tide:

- **Pratham Education Foundation** helps dropouts especially girls return to school through their "Second Chance" program in states like Maharashtra, UP, and Bihar.
- Educate Girls mobilizes entire villages to ensure girls stay in school. Their local volunteers, called Team Balika, provide ongoing support right up to Class 12.
- Barefoot College in Rajasthan trains rural women in skills like solar engineering and digital literacy, helping them earn a livelihood even if they dropped out after Class 10.
- Agastya Foundation brings mobile science labs to remote schools, sparking curiosity and learning among children who've never seen a real lab before.
- **Katha** uses storytelling to bridge learning gaps and helps students stay in school through creative, inclusive education.

#### What More Can Be Done?

#### Governments can:

- Build junior colleges closer to rural settlements
- Provide bicycles, hostels, and scholarships to make access easier
- Ensure every school has trained subject teachers

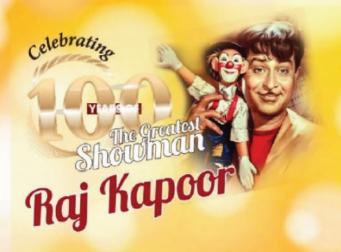
#### Private organizations and entrepreneurs can:

- Set up affordable, tech-enabled rural colleges
- Offer CSR-backed scholarships to deserving students
- Convert underused Panchayat or Anganwadi spaces into learning centres

#### Why It Matters

India has over 500 million people in the working-age group. But without education beyond Class 10, most rural youth will remain in low-skill, low-pay jobs. If we don't act now, we risk losing our demographic dividend and our dream of becoming a developed nation by 2047. Higher secondary education is more than two extra years of school. It's a chance. A future. A lifeline. Let's not waste it.









# **Light of Life Trust**

presents

# Sur-Sangam

A concert with a cause, sending rural children back to school



SUPPORTING PARTNERS















RADIO PARTNER

**MEDIA PARTNERS** 



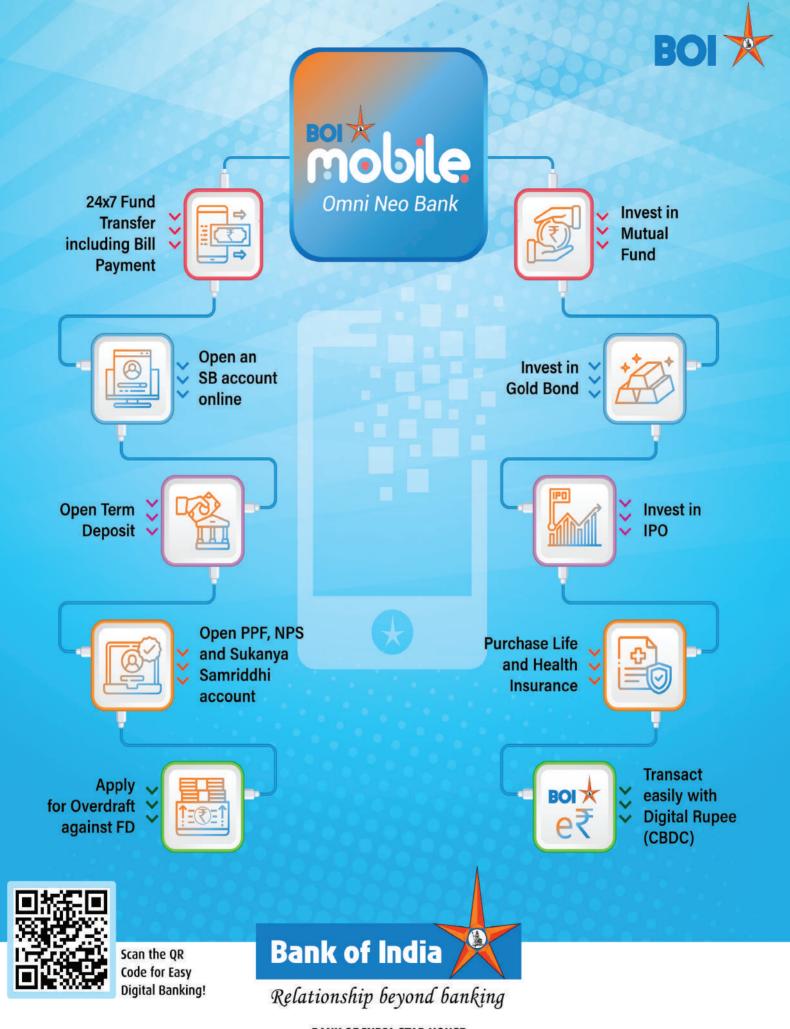












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It is so heartening to note that Light of Life has once again embarked on a meaningful journey to bring underprivileged rural children back to school through the ANANDO programme. Rural communities live below the poverty level, so children usually start work early in life and refrain from going to school, not out of choice but out of necessity. Working children share the burden of family life, contribute to family income and care for younger siblings. The other reason why most of these children are unable to attend regular school is due to the lack of access to resources. For these children, education is never a right, it is a dream rarely dreamt as child labour, mendicancy, trafficking and child abuse are the realities they live with.

If enough people care, together they can and will, bring about change, is a dictum I firmly believe in. Organisations like the Light of Life Trust orient the scope of their activities from a holistic perspective, simultaneously widening their network and collaborating with other change agents involved in the process of community building and empowerment. Giving back to society and our community is what is inculcated in our schools and so students invest time and energy to uplift their lesser fortunate peers in rural environs. Our students have participated in the Light of Life programmes to provide educational material and digital devices to children living in the hinterland since Covid times. This merits the most enduring lesson for them regarding the need to participate, engage, donate to, build and actively shape rural communities.

While we face unsurmountable odds, which may overwhelm us looking at the magnitude of the work yet to be done to bring rural communities out of the pit of marginalization, it is reassuring to use the David and Goliath analogy. Many times the giants that stand in our path are obstacles to turn into opportunities. Most giants will not disappear with a David-like slingshot. Instead, we can learn to leverage them through community effort put in by our current generation of students.



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#### The Importance of Secondary Education in Rural India: A Focus on Maharashtra

Secondary education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of young individuals and thus the progress of a nation. In rural India, particularly in a state like Maharashtra with its vast geographic and socio-economic diversity, secondary education acts as a critical bridge between basic literacy and higher education or employability. It is a decisive stage where foundational knowledge is transformed into practical skills, life awareness, and future aspirations.

#### Empowering through education:

In rural areas, secondary education empowers youth, especially girls, by opening up pathways to self-reliance and informed decision-making. It fosters awareness about rights, health, hygiene, and civic duties, thereby promoting responsible citizenship. In Maharashtra, several districts like Gadchiroli, Nandurbar, and Palghar still face challenges such as early school dropouts and child marriage. By ensuring access to quality secondary education, these social evils can be curbed, leading to better health outcomes and increased gender equality.

#### Breaking the poverty cycle:

For many families in rural Maharashtra, education is the only sustainable route out of poverty. Secondary education increases the probability of gainful employment and reduces dependence on agriculture or unskilled labour. Programs like the Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MSRLM) are aligned with the goal of skilling and empowering youth, and secondary schooling forms the base of this empowerment process. When students complete Class 10 and 12, they gain eligibility for vocational training, ITI courses, or competitive exams for public sector jobs.

#### Enhancing employability through skill development

The future of work is rapidly changing, with automation, digitization, and entrepreneurship becoming key. In this context, secondary schools in rural areas must go beyond rote learning and focus on digital literacy, financial education, and soft skills. Maharashtra's recent push to integrate skill-based training and digital classrooms in Zilla Parishad schools is a welcome move. With the introduction of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, there is a stronger emphasis on multidisciplinary and practical learning at the secondary level, which can revolutionize rural education if implemented effectively.

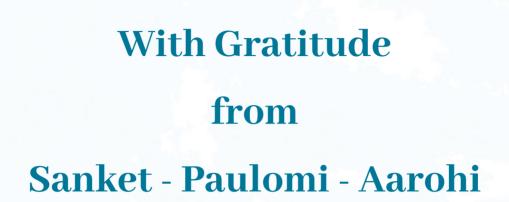
#### Challenges and the way forward

Despite the significance, several challenges persist: lack of trained teachers, poor infrastructure, inadequate transportation, and socio-economic pressures. Girls often bear the brunt, facing mobility restrictions and safety concerns. While the government has implemented schemes like the mid-day meal scheme, free bicycle distribution program, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), the implementation needs stronger community involvement and monitoring.

Public-private partnerships, community-led school management, and increased investment in rural education infrastructure can accelerate change. NGOs and social enterprises working in education, such as Pratham and Teach for India, have already shown scalable models that can complement government efforts. This can be concluded that the secondary education is not just an academic milestone; it is a transformative force for rural communities. In Maharashtra, leveraging education to bridge the rural-urban divide, foster equality, and prepare youth for future challenges is not a choice it is a necessity. A focused and inclusive approach to strengthening secondary education in rural areas will lay the foundation for a more equitable and prosperous society.



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**Prof. R.S.S. Mani**Co-Founder, ITM Group of Educational Institutions
Life Coach and Catalyst for Educational and Social Impact Projects for over Four Decades

#### Importance of Secondary Education in Rural India

Rural India today is undergoing a quiet but powerful transformation. With expanding roadways, rail networks, and even access to air travel, the once-isolated heartlands of the country are now more connected than ever before. The internet has reached the doorsteps of many villages, and the influx of consumer durables smartphones, smart TVs, and more, has changed the way people live and think. This connectivity has had a direct and visible effect on aspirations. Families in rural India now dream of a better lifestyle, international-quality education for their children, and a future filled with dignity and opportunity. But these dreams are often blocked by one harsh reality: the limited quality of education, especially at the secondary level. While schools do exist in most rural areas, the quality of teaching and infrastructure remains basic, if not inadequate. Secondary education, which plays a pivotal role in shaping a student's academic and personal future, is particularly weak. This gap has a cascading effect: students drop out between primary and secondary school, unable to see a clear or meaningful path ahead.

If we are to truly unlock the potential of rural India, we must urgently focus on improving the quality of secondary education. And this improvement must go beyond better classrooms or updated textbooks it must touch every part of the educational experience. To begin with, we need to start early. By the time students reach Grade VIII, they should already be aware of the range of career paths available to them. It's no longer just about becoming a doctor, teacher, or government employee. The last decade has opened up opportunities in digital design, data analytics, social entrepreneurship, environmental sciences, and dozens of emerging fields. Unfortunately, many students and their parents remain unaware of these possibilities. Career awareness must become an integral part of the secondary school curriculum. Equally important is engaging parents in this journey. When families understand the value of continued education, they're more likely to support their children through it.

Another area of deep concern is communication. Many students from rural backgrounds are intelligent, capable, and hardworking, but they often struggle to express themselves confidently. This lack of effective communication holds them back, especially when they reach interviews, group discussions, or even college admission stages. That's why we must integrate life skills training from Grade VIII onwards, emphasizing spoken English, public speaking, attentive listening, and collaborative teamwork. These are not "nice-to-haves." In today's world, they are essential building blocks of success. As students in rural areas become more aware of urban life, many aspire to be part of that world. They are drawn to the quality of life they see in towns and cities. To bridge this cultural gap, education must also include exposure to urban values and norms not with the aim of replacing their roots, but to prepare them for the world outside. Understanding how to carry oneself, how to

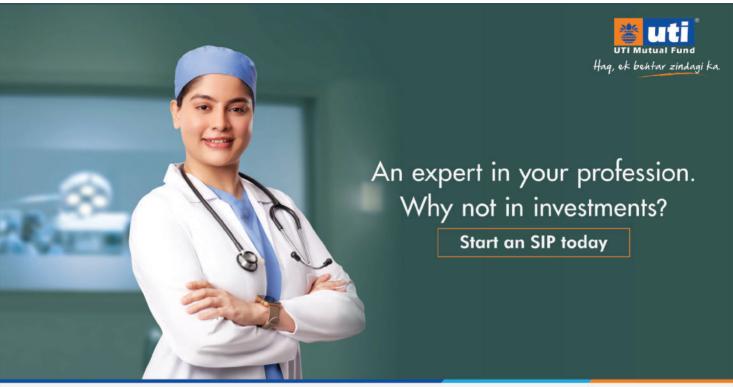
communicate across cultures, and how to blend traditional wisdom with modern expectations is a skill in itself. Perhaps the greatest equalizer of our time is digital literacy. In a world where technology drives every aspect of life and work, students who cannot navigate digital tools are at a severe disadvantage. Rural youth must be taught how to work with software tools, understand coding basics, use the internet effectively, and engage with platforms like ChatGPT and other emerging AI technologies. Mastery in digital skills will not only open doors to employment but also allow them to participate in the global knowledge economy. To make all of this a reality, we need more than government programs we need a people's movement. The scale of intervention required is enormous, and one of the most promising ways to address this is by building strong partnerships with NGOs, universities, and motivated individuals. NGOs, backed by CSR initiatives, can play a powerful role in organizing training programs and skill development camps. Their grassroots networks allow them to reach even the remotest corners, bringing in both funds and field-level volunteers. College students and university faculty can also contribute meaningfully by engaging in internships and teaching fellowships across rural schools. These experiences not only benefit rural learners but also shape future educators into more socially aware and empathetic professionals.

Suppose we can make these interventions consistent and widespread. In that case, we'll not only provide rural youth with access to quality secondary and higher education, we'll also inspire many of them to give back. After receiving training and building successful careers, some will return to their roots, bringing fresh knowledge and new opportunities to their communities. Of course, the biggest challenge lies in the sheer geographical spread of rural India. But we have a secret weapon: technology. With the right platforms and the right people, we can reach millions. We can train teachers remotely, deliver lessons digitally, monitor learning outcomes using data, and create interactive communities of learners and mentors across distances that were once considered impossible to cover.

There is no quick fix. But there is a clear path. We have the infrastructure, we have the intent, and most importantly, we have the aspirations of millions of young Indians waiting to be fulfilled. It's time we meet them halfway with quality education that prepares them not just to survive, but to shine.







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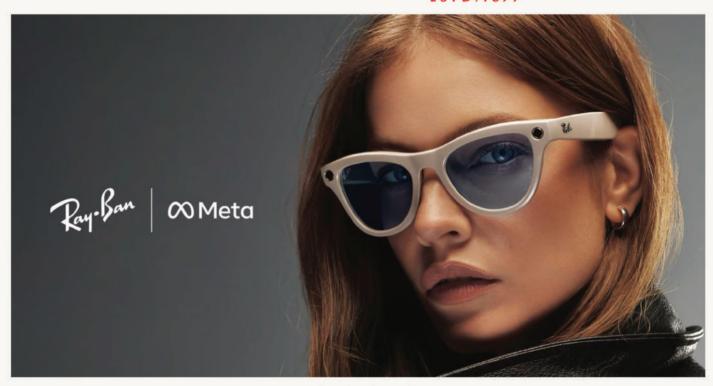
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#### Living on the Edge: Gangi Village's Struggle and Its Quiet Hope

High in the Garhwal Himalayas, tucked away in the Bhilangana block of Uttarakhand's Tehri Garhwal district, lies the little-known village of Gangi. If postcards could capture paradoxes, Gangi would be among them, breathtaking in its natural beauty, yet burdened by years of developmental neglect. Flanked by mighty peaks, rivers, and ancient forest paths, this village is both blessed and isolated. During most of the year, Gangi remains largely cut off from the outside world not because of choice, but because of the lack of essential infrastructure and support. As per the 2011 Census, Gangi had 386 residents across 65 households. Today, that number is believed to be closer to 700 people spread over 120 homes. But numbers alone can't capture the lived experience of this place the daily struggle of its people, the resilience with which they endure, and the haunting silence that comes with knowing the outside world rarely hears their voices.

There is a quiet crisis unfolding here. Young people, in search of opportunity, are migrating out. Not because they want to leave, but because staying back means surrendering to a life of fewer choices. Families who have lived here for generations are contemplating giving up the only life they know — their land, their heritage, their identity. The reasons are many. Most urgent among them is the absence of all-weather road connectivity. Reaching Gangi requires navigating steep and narrow mountain paths that become treacherous during monsoon or winter. This isolation affects everything from accessing healthcare during emergencies to transporting crops or attending school. A permanent road would not only connect the village to nearby markets, hospitals, and schools but would also restore a sense of dignity and possibility to its residents. Healthcare, too, is a distant reality. For even basic medical care, villagers must travel hours, often on foot, risking lives in the process. The simple presence of a nurse, basic medicines, or a visiting doctor could mean the difference between life and death in remote settings like these. Education is another quiet casualty. While a basic school exists, it lacks resources, staff, and the ability to educate students beyond primary levels. As a result, many children drop out or are sent away to distant towns, a decision that strains families and severs children from their communities. With the right support, upgraded classrooms, additional teachers, and digital tools, the local school could become a cornerstone of hope.

There's also the question of water and sanitation needs so fundamental that their absence is often hard to believe. Access to clean drinking water through gravity-based supply systems and improved sanitation facilities can drastically reduce waterborne illnesses and raise the standard of living. Agriculture, once a strength of the region, now struggles without the support of modern techniques or access to reliable markets. With the introduction of terrace farming methods, cold storage facilities, and organic certification, Gangi's farmers could reclaim their land's full potential not just for survival, but for prosperity.

Electricity has only recently reached Gangi, bringing with it the first wave of modern possibilities. But without consistent mobile and internet connectivity, the digital world and the opportunities it holds remains mostly out of reach. Reliable power and digital access can transform lives, opening new avenues for education, healthcare, commerce, and communication.

Amid all this, there is hope grounded in action, not just intention.

Since 2009, the Darshnanand Nautiyal Foundation for Rural Development (DNFRD) has been working tirelessly to transform not just Gangi, but the wider Ghansali region. Founded by Sudhir K. Nautiyal, a native of Ghansali who spent three decades in the textile industry before returning to serve his roots, the foundation has become a vehicle for rural renewal. Through DNFRD, over 1,500 youth have received vocational and skill-based training in partnership with the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, under the Ministry of MSME. In 2009, they established the Uttarakhand Vocational Training Centre in Ghansali, offering programs in garment-making and computer education. These skills have helped youth, especially women, access livelihoods and gain independence.

The foundation also runs an English-medium school in Ghansali, fully accredited by the state board, educating children from nursery to Class 12. This school is a rare gem in the region providing quality, value-based education that would otherwise be out of reach for rural families. Between 2014 and 2017, DNFRD also operated a Common Services Centre that brought Aadhaar registration, PAN cards, and digital services to the doorsteps of villagers a step towards digital inclusion long before it became a national priority. Yet for all their work, the scale of need remains vast. Gangi and villages like it still stand at the edge not just geographically, but developmentally. It will take more than one trust or one individual's passion to rewrite their future.

What Gangi truly needs now is attention. Not pity, not charity but sustainable, systemic support. This means government bodies stepping in with infrastructure projects that connect and empower. It means NGOs collaborating, sharing resources, and amplifying each other's efforts. It means private sector partnerships that invest in rural potential as a national priority, not a CSR checkbox.

But perhaps most importantly, it means recognizing Gangi for what it really is a living, breathing part of India's cultural and ecological fabric. A village that carries within it centuries of tradition, community, and connection to the land. If supported with care and vision, Gangi could evolve into a hub for eco-tourism, a model of organic farming, or a center for mountain education and conservation. In every stone-built home and every terraced farm, there lies a story waiting to unfold if only we are willing to listen.







HIMALAYAN ENGLISH SCHOOL





## Dr. Manjit Kaur Chauhan Professor & HoD, Dept. of Resource Management, SNDT Women's University, Juhu, Mumbai.

#### Community Participation in Strengthening Primary Education for the Poor

Education opens doors to opportunity, yet for many underprivileged children in India, these doors remain difficult to access. Poverty, social challenges, and limited resources often keep children away from school, denying them the chance to learn and grow. Over the years, government initiatives like the Right to Education Act and the Mid-Day Meal Scheme have made important strides, but lasting change requires something more active involvement of the community.

When parents, teachers, neighbours, and local leaders come together, education becomes a shared mission. Community participation not only ensures that children are enrolled in school but also helps them stay there. Parents begin to value education as a tool for progress, schools become more accountable, and children receive the encouragement they need to thrive. From volunteering in classrooms to supporting school activities, the role of the community cannot be overstated.

For 20 years, LoLT NGO has been working hand-in-hand with communities to make this vision a reality. Through awareness programs, learning support centres, teacher training, and parent engagement, we have seen remarkable transformations. Children once at risk of dropping out are now completing their schooling with confidence and aspirations for the future. Families that once doubted the importance of education now proudly celebrate their children's achievements.

Their journey has not been easy, but it has been deeply rewarding. Each of their milestone reflects the collective effort of people who believe that education is every child's right. As it marks 20th anniversary, I congratulate them for the partnerships that made progress possible; partnerships with parents, educators, and communities who share our dream.

They have proven that education is more than books and classrooms; it is hope, empowerment, and the promise of a better tomorrow. With the support from society and philanthropist they will continue to strengthen primary education for the children who need it the most.

Best wishes and Congratulations on completion of 2 decades of changing life of underprivileged children and their families.

Education is the most powerful tool for breaking the cycle of poverty. Yet, for millions of underprivileged children in India, access to quality primary education remains a challenge. Poverty, lack of resources, and social barriers often lead to low enrolment, irregular attendance, and high dropout rates.

Over the years, government initiatives such as the Right to Education Act, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, and the Mid-Day Meal Scheme have helped improve school access. However, real transformation happens when communities actively participate in shaping and supporting their children's education. Parents, teachers, local leaders, and NGOs working together create an environment where every child feels encouraged to learn and succeed.

Community participation strengthens accountability in schools, mobilizes resources, and ensures that children not only enrol but also continue their studies. School Management Committees, volunteer teaching support, and awareness programs about the importance of education have made measurable differences in many underserved communities. Parents who were once hesitant now attend school meetings, contribute ideas, and encourage their children to pursue education.

LoLT NGO has been at the forefront of this mission for the past 20 years. Through grassroots efforts organizing remedial classes, creating child-friendly learning spaces, training teachers, and involving parents—we have seen first-hand how education transforms lives. Children who might have dropped out now dream of becoming teachers, doctors, and entrepreneurs. Their success stories are a testament to what can be achieved when communities unite for education.

As LoLT celebrates 20th anniversary, they certainly feel that education is not just the responsibility of schools or governments; it is a shared responsibility. I too believe that, with continued community participation and support, every child, regardless of background, will have the opportunity to learn, grow, and build a brighter future.

Best wishes and Congratulations on completion of 2 decades of changing life of underprivileged children and their families.



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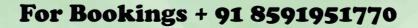




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## From Villages to Visionaries: How Universal Ai University is Transforming Rural India with AI and Sustainable Education

As India marches toward its ambitious goal of becoming a developed nation by 2030—what we proudly call Viksit Bharat it's clear that this transformation cannot happen without including our rural communities. Empowering the youth in villages and small towns with quality education and technology is essential for building a stronger, more inclusive India.

At **Universal Ai University (UAi)** India's first university focused on Artificial Intelligence and also its first Green Business School—we are working to close the urban-rural gap through purpose-driven, tech-enabled education. Located in Karjat, Maharashtra, just outside Mumbai, our university is committed to shaping not just successful graduates, but responsible leaders who want to uplift the world around them.

#### Bringing AI and Opportunity to Rural India

Many young people in rural India still lack access to the kind of education and technology that could change their lives. At Universal Ai University, we're solving this challenge through hands-on, community-focused programs. One of our flagship initiatives is the **SMART Project (Students Making A Real Transformation).** Run in collaboration with the Light of Life Trust, this program sends students into tribal and rural areas to work directly on real-world issues in:

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#### Transforming Lives: The Impact So Far

Our commitment to inclusive and sustainable education is already showing strong results.

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- 15,000+ rural lives impacted through community programs
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- Sustainability and ethics are woven into our curriculum, so every student graduates with a strong sense of responsibility toward society and the planet
- 45% of our campus energy needs are met through renewable sources, like solar panels
- Our eco-friendly campus includes rainwater harvesting, solar energy, and electric vehicles
- 30+ student-led projects use AI to solve real problems, aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)
- Our AI-powered ESG system helps track and improve our efforts in equity, inclusion, and environmental care

This blend of education, AI, and sustainability is helping us create a new generation of socially conscious changemakers.

#### **Education That Builds the Future**

At Universal Ai University, we believe education must go beyond textbooks. It should prepare students to become leaders who care not only about profits and personal success but also about people and the planet.

Our vision is simple: to empower rural India through world-class education, technology, and purpose. We're not just educating individuals we're nurturing visionaries who will lead India into its future as a developed, inclusive, and sustainable nation.

As we look ahead to 2030, we're confident that this is how Viksit Bharat will be built—from the ground up.









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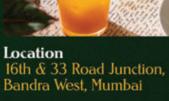
















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