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Chief EditorMs. Susan
Alexander**Typing &
Design**Mr. Maitaraj
Subba**Printing &
Circulation**

Mr. Bijay Sapkota

story of my life

An Account of how literacy changed my life
*Srijana Gajmer, XII Sc A, Winner of senior level story writing contest,
organized by UNESCO Club*

'Come on, faster, the breakfast is getting colder', screamed my mother and the cannon balls reached my ears on time.

'I'm just in a minute', I replied. That didn't impressed my mother so well and to my mistake she was there for chastisement.

I was particularly that stubborn kind of little creature who used to fear SCHOOL as much as a graveyard. In fact I droved out a common thing between them, both being so horrible and torturing. Corruption had guarded my home well and every morning I needed to be bribed to go to school. Sometimes money and sometimes fake and true promises.

'Did you complete your homework?', 'Come on ! how is your hair?', 'Where is your school badge?', 'Did you drink milk?', 'Carry a handkerchief !'. My mother used to blast my ears continuously with this dangerous questions for which I had no reply.

Back to school every thing seemed normal until the teacher had entered the class. I used to be either fighting or drawing. That was the scenario of my first pre-primary days. My teacher used to flood time after another and give gruesome lectures and demonstrations, sometimes sing and play. Once there was a reading competition and by luck or ill luck, I was chosen to represent the class. After a strenuous practice when I finally climbed the stage, I looked down. I began shivering and no word came out of my mouth. I was totally lost and confused. I cried the whole day at my failure and promised never to do it again.

Days after, my father left for abroad and only me and my mom were at home. With nothing to do, we were just watching television and my mother went to boil milk for me. Suddenly there was a crashing noise in the kitchen and my mother spilled the boiling milk on her leg. On hearing that, I went towards the kitchen, took a look and went back to get an ointment. On opening the drawer, I saw a wide range of tubes and I was in topsy-turvy for the right ointment. I knew the word 'burn' was to do with a red, hot scar and when I went through the tubes I saw something with 'burn', that was burnol, an ointment for burns. I took it in a wild guess and applied on her leg. My assumption and the word burn saved the day.

School marks and test were really great pests. I hated books and loved drawings. Years after, again to my astonishment, I was selected for inter-house extempore speech, debate and poem recitation competition in the same year. From my earlier experiences I learned that confidence is what mattered and with my heart full of confidence and head-full of knowledge, I climbed the same stage and bombarded the stage. I won the best titles in all the three. Then I realized that my confidence is my key and literacy is my luck. I realized and faith in myself that I can do anything and everything under the shade of a literate umbrella.

My mother reminded me once, how her parents were fooled, simply they didn't have the crown of literacy. My grandparents were fooled and did a gold for bronze kind of exchange. Being illiterate they were nearly going to sign the land papers in favour of somebody else. But like in a fairy tale, my father dropped into the scene and saved the possession.

Literacy has been and is a 'radar' that navigates, deflects and focuses ourselves and helps us in every phase of life. We can help others too as it helped us. Even the hint of literacy is important and valuable. Once, I helped a man to read his bus ticket number and show him the address. Another day I helped an old woman to dial numbers and call her son. With literacy, I can help others as it has also helped me. Literacy makes me confidence and if I have not got chastisements for my nagging, my life would have been doomed. I can believe in myself being literate.

Madam Dechen was a terrorist for me. As soon as I heard the vroom.... Of her car, I went inside and pretended to study. Once she caught with my drawing and again caught hold of my ear. I didn't let that punishment discourage me, only to achieve an international award for designing later on one fine day that was the day which changed my life. One teacher announced the topic for essay writing competition and told strictly 'to be done'. At home I started my writing and the next day I gave for editing. My essay flew to Australia and back to Bhutan. An invitation was sent for me. That piece of writing changed my life for good. The limitations and drawbacks in me needed to be changed and this gave me opportunity to prove I am not inferior to any one. My circle of friends increased and they sought any kind of help from me, be it moral or active. Those literate resources told me, I am good and I can do better, even better than the best. That was just the beginning of few other prestigious victories.

Reading Books

Jamyang Chuki Choden, VII
Winner of sub-junior level essay,
organized by UNESCO Club.

Books are the eyes through which we can see the world and it is same like the flowers in the beautiful garden. When we read books, we need to concentrate, if not we will not understand the story properly. We can even reach to the fairy land through reading books and we can get knowledge too.

We should open the books always, if not the doors will be closed. We need to open our books through the year. As the saying goes 'books are the quietest and the most constant of friends'.

When I open the books I feel like I am in the story just acting. In my opinion, I think that books are like our friends which we can read at any time like when we feel bored and when we are alone in the house. We should love to read books and when we read books they make our life better. When we read books we learn new words.

So we should love to read books other than tearing the books and giving to others. I love to read books mostly written by Grid Blyton.

Literacy is a basic right

Namgay Choden A, IX

Winner of junior level essay writing contest organized by UNESCO Club.

Literacy basically means the ability to read and write. To be able to do this would be unlocking every possible door to view the world beyond what we see and to express our voices from within. Once born as a human, every one of us has the right to be literate. Gender discrimination, pollution, diseases and the thing called ‘unhappiness’, why do these exist? Illiteracy could be the answer too. Literacy is also common and civic sense.

As quoted by President Bill Clinton, “Literacy is not luxury, it is a right and a responsibility”, to be literate, there are no barriers, no racism and no limits. A farmer ought to be literate as he has to handle his farm skillfully and methodically; a little girl of seven till an old woman of seventy-five ought to be literate, and a blind boy ought to be literate as he also has the right to live like other normal boys. We frequently come across millions of news, happenings and gossips around us but without us being literate, it would be impossible to grasp these information. Today, every job vacancies are for only those who know how to read and write, from a post of a personal secretary to a cashier in a restaurant. A person becomes independent as he would not need anybody’s help to do certain things which he had never done before if he is literate.

“Acquiring literacy is an empowering process, enabling millions to enjoy access to knowledge and information which broaden horizons, increases opportunities and creates alternatives for a better life”, Kofi Annan. Literacy provides us the concrete idea of a better living for ourselves and others along. Literacy teaches us about life skills: coping up and adopting to a new environment, about one’s emotional and physical wellbeing till saving a life. As an illiterate person, he would not be able to read the simplest things which we take for granted, like a name of a shop from where we get the grocery. What would he be able to earn from a low paying employment as the last option? If he has an emergency how would he be able to dial the numbers on the phone or leave a note for someone? Nobody deserves to live a life of that of an illiterate person.

I, as a literate student can interact with other people from different ethnics and cultures with a universal language; teach others who do not know about what is science and it’s truth; write in forums and newspapers about my ideas and feelings towards the government, departments and leaders; know about the ever changing changes taking place and keep in touch with history and

the future that is yet to come. It is only me and I can know so much I can read and write. I would be glad if everybody could do that like me.

Literacy evokes the hidden potential inside someone weak. Hellen Keller was blind and deaf but some how learnt to read and write. She went out to become one of the most remarkable people in history and her book inspired millions on patience and optimism. Literacy arises realization and wisdom when a family decides that their daughter should be sent to school along with her brothers: when all the people from a village would take their children to be immunized: when people would learn the value of choosing the next right democratic leader of their country; that corruptions cause their motherland to collapse ,under developed: and when people would truly understand that they cant eat money'; when only a tree would be left on the earth. literacy widens one's insight towards different details through communications.

Our society is moving on to a century of challenges and competitions. For the next generation of mankind to survive, he would have to go through loads of obstacles and the worst of the kind would be illiteracy. Literacy is the key to stand ahead. literacy is the medium through which man can be empowered and the road to human progress. literacy can end, poverty, diseases, death and sufferings as people would have the right concepts and the right attitude. Literacy gives us an opportunity to raise our voices and actions towards injustice and crime. Literacy is a basic human right and it could make a big difference in the world.

How Peking became Beijing

An extract from LANDS AND PEOPLES, 2, Page-402, GROlier EDUCATIONAL

The world's oldest continuously used language' Chinese is spoken and written today by more people than any other language. Chinese writing goes back more than 3,500 years, to a time when major events were recorded on bone and shells.

Chinese is written in ideographs, or "characters", that represent word meanings rather than sounds. As a rule, a single character stands for each word. While written Chinese is uniform throughout the country, spoken Chinese varies from region to region. Yet the spoken dialect of one region is often incomprehensible to the people of another.

The Chinese written language now contains over 40,000 characters. A well-educated person might recognize 25,000 words, although no more than 5,000 are in common use. The difficulty of mastering written Chinese has contributed to China's high rate of illiteracy. In 1990, about 250 million Chinese were either totally or partially illiterate.

Language Reforms. To help more people learn to read and write, the government developed a three-part programme of language reform. In 1956, the government adopted as the common spoken language of China a Beijing dialect known as Thongua. Puthongua was in use throughout China by 1977, although hundreds of regional dialects continued to be spoken.

A second language reform was the adoption of a simplified method of writing that reduced the number of strokes needed to form characters. Characters became easier to learn and write.

A third language reform was the creation of a new writing system that uses a Romanized alphabet. Known as Pinyin, it was encouraged mainly to help spread puthongua in regions where other dialects are spoken. So far, however, its use has not become widespread. Most Chinese prefer to write with their traditional characters. However, pinyin has replaced more familiar spellings in China's English-language publications. The U.S government has adopted pinyin spellings for all names of people and places in China. And that's how Mao Tse-tung became Mao Zedung and Peking became Beijing

MY NEW HOUSE

Karma Selden, VIII

My parents got transferred to Sarpang in May this year. I was in school and I had never been to Sarpang. When I finished my Half Yearly Exams, my parents came to get me. While traveling, I was curious to know how my new home looked liked.

I asked many questions to them about Sarpang.

Finally, When I reached there, Sarpang was a small town; not so crowded. There was peace and happiness all over the peoples faces. The place was pleasant. It was very green. My new house was very beautiful. At night, I

could see the fireflies. I really loved that place.

I am waiting for the school to end for the long winter break. I will go there once again and meet my family, make new friends, roam around and live for three months in my new house.

GLOBAL DAYS (September)

September 8	:	International Literacy Day
September 16	:	International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer
September 21	:	International Day of Peace.
September 27	:	World Maritime Day

It came, We saw, It went

Damchen Tenzin, Priyanka Pradhan, Leki Choden, Thinley Dorji (Class X)

Tuesday Morning. July 21, 2009

We weren't aware of the solar Eclipse until the Talk Back System announced about it. The Geography Department made us all aware of Solar Eclipse as well as the safety measures to take. We were all curious about the sun being eaten up by the moon tomorrow. We were all gossiping in the hostel about the eclipse. We were locked up in the hostel and started gossiping. "Once there was a demon who felt so hungry and couldn't find any thing to eat. He saw the sun and thought it was an orange. Then he flew towards it to eat. When the sun reached the demon's throat, a religious king beheaded the demon and the sun came out again", said Leki Choden of class X.

But Priyanka, a class X student said, "It is the moon that comes in between the sun and the earth and it casts a shadow over some parts of the earth". Sonam Deki of class X said, "...when an eclipse starts, you will notice a gradual drop in temperature and at total eclipse, the sun will be one million times dimmer than its usual shine". She also said animals will start behaving like they do at night as the moon starts eating the sun. Leaves of trees during partial eclipse will also bear crescent shaped shadows. After gossiping all about this we went to bed, with excitement, fear and apprehension.

Wednesday Morning. July 21, 2009

On that day, we all woke up early in the morning, and we were excited as well as curious to see the sun but unfortunately we were asked not to look at the sun because if we happen to look at the sun directly, we will be blind. So to avoid that no one from our hostel got a chance to look at the sun but witnessed the solar eclipse on the television for almost 4 minutes. Some of them were peeping through the windows and some witnessing it on television. Suddenly the moon cast a shadow on Earth and the morning turned into mid night. We experienced this wonder at about 6:58 am. In mythology, it is said that if we chant prayers during the time of eclipse, we will be blessed with harmony throughout our lives. So, many students chanted prayers. After a while, the sun started appearing and the day started again with birds chirping and the cocks crowing. It was a wonderful experience we all had. We should consider ourselves the luckiest ones to have witnessed the total solar eclipse as it occurs once in a blue moon.

Interesting Facts

Sonam Dechen, VIII

1. Human adults breathe 23,000 times in a day.
2. In every country in the world, the life span of woman is noticeably longer than that of men.
3. An owl can turn its head in a complete circle.
4. Iceland is the world's oldest functioning democracy.

“BHUTAN IS A POOR NATION INHABITED BY RICH PEOPLE”

Inputs from inter-house debate (English)

Chhimi Wangmo, Nagendra Kafly, X

A very exciting morning started with the debate competition between Nobgang and Sangachokor. Both the teams started with zest and zeal. One of the team said, “Our country is one of the poorest countries in the planet, yet the rate of economic growth is one of the highest. But the Bhutanese economic growth rate is not as high as we boast compared to our neighboring country which is the second most populated country in the world. Furthermore it has become one of the few countries in the world to start its own nuclear energy. So, it is a slip of tongue that we say our country is richer than our neighboring country. Instead we should say that the standards of living in our country is better than that of India. And we should also remember that 65% of our budget comes from other countries which is a shame. Though our people are rich enough to buy foreign vehicles, but where is the money to maintain the roads on which these vehicles run. There is no doubt that people’s standards are better in this country, as we know, rich means the condition when people have surplus amount of food, good clothing, better shelter and enjoy a luxurious life”.

Another participant debated by asking a question, “Did you know that even the poorest country in Africa has three airports and more than ten universities; where as Bhutan has only one national airport and a university? So how can we say that our country is rich? Therefore all the facts sum up and tell us clearly that our country is a poor nation, inhabited by rich people. We are here in Ugyen Academy paying fifty two thousand Ngultrums plus the pocket money our parents give us sum up to over a hundred thousand Ngultrums annually. So, I guess we are rich people”.

But an opponent opposed by saying that. Bhutan has been rated as the happiest country in Asia by

the Business Week magazine. We are rich in cultural heritage and biodiversity of natural resources with over 65 % of forest cover. Poverty is not a major and miserable problem on a large scale in our country as compared to many African nations, Afghanistan or even India. It is true that we are on our way to development but it does not mean that we are poor. Big trade relations and industries are not necessarily required to maintain the economy. If our people are poor, it means that they are not happy. And we can clearly see that our form of government has changed from the age old monarchy to the constitutional democracy. Why had it been done? It was done because people were not happy with that system and it was changed. It is democracy now but we do not see the real signs of a democratic country.

There was a news about a homeless family in Thimphu. The family was living in the streets. Does it indicate that our people are rich? Another news talked about the conditions of people in the eastern part of Bhutan. Very old woman with a small child had to live on her own with nothing but maize (Kharang) flour to eat and that also uncertain about their next meal; if she ate in the morning she didn’t know where would her next meal come from. This shows that people are poor and not rich. Our country is a small country with a small population but the annual income that flows into our country is quite large. That income is enough for our small country. Enough does not mean poor, it means rich. I too accept that our country is developing but remember, there is a very rapid rate of development as seen in the last few decades. So, you can say that our country is under developed but not poor.

Uff ! that two hours left us with a big question hovering our heads, “Is Bhutan really a poor nation inhibited by rich people”.

12 AUGUST, 2009 : INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY
SUSTAINABILITY: OUR CHALLENGE. OUR FUTURE.

Sustainability does not only refer to maintaining environmental balance and renewal. **Sustainability encapsulates three facets of life: the environment, society and the economy.** We live our lives in the overlaps and intersections of these facets, and our actions and attitudes help shape them. Their changing shapes in turn affect the way we are able to live our lives. The negative effects of unsustainable behaviour are not easily contained. As has been proven by the global crises in food, the economy and the environment, the concept of the global village has gone beyond being a useful analogy to being a hard reality, making clear the need to **adopt a global sense of social responsibility.**

With these things in mind, as the energizers of today and the holders of tomorrow, it is imperative that youth **embrace the challenge of sustainability in its fullness** as they help pave the way forward through the 21st century and beyond. Youth action, inclusion, and their full participation are key to developing today's world for the generations of today and tomorrow and central to a sustainable existence.

The 'Exotic woman'

An extract from 'The Luminous Life of Rabindranath Tagore', P. 54-56

Victoria Ocampo was born in 1890, in an aristocratic Argentinean family. She was married in 1912 and was divorced in 1922. To free herself of the oppression of loneliness, she sought refuge in the world of favourite writers. ..

Tagore's *Gitanjali* moved her deeply. In 1924, she wrote an essay '*The Joy of Reading Tagore*' in the magazine *La Nacion*. Only a few days after the essay was published, Tagore arrived in Buenos on November 7.... The doctors had advised the poet should abandon his plan to cross the Andes and go to Lima. They told him to rest for several days in the courtyard, before he was well enough to board another ship.

Upon learning these developments, Victoria proposed to Elmhirst, Tagore's Secretary, to take him to San Isidro, a suburb about 20 miles from Buenos Aires and spend a few days there. She rented a garden house from a relative, for Tagore to live in. From its piazza and the hall on the second floor, one could see the river. The garden was laden with a profusion of fragrant blossoms. Victoria's first acquaintance with Tagore, although very brief, had delighted and impressed her considerably. Tagore spent almost two months in the garden house in San Isidro.

Tagore called Victoria by the Bengali equivalent of her name, Bijaya. He dedicated his collection *Purabi*, which was published in 1925., to '*The Lotus Palms of Bijaya*'. Thirty poems in this collection were written in San Isidro. In 1939, he wrote, "...Those unforgettable days, and her tender and compassionate care have been enshrined in my poems; they may well be among the best I have written."

Don't Quit

Jigme Sonam, IX

When things go wrong,
As they sometime will,
When the road you are trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have a sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit-
Rest if you must, but don't quit.
Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about
When he might have won had he struck it out.
Don't give up though the pace seems slow-
You may succeed with another blow.
Success is failure turned inside out-
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems so far;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit
It's when things seem worst that you mustn't quit.

YOUTH

Darsana Wilson, VII

The strength of a nation depends on the quality of youth. They are the builders of their nation. So youth needs proper guidance and wholesome education. That is why, it is very important that the youth should be active, hardworking, obedient, cooperative, and they should respect the laws of the nation.

But among youth, we can see many problems. Some of the common problems our youth are trapped in are alcoholism, smoking, substance abuse, hooliganism, etc. Many of the youth turn to these bad habits because of their family problems which includes divorce, alcoholism and gambling habits among parents. Even peer pressure, study stress, etc. can sometimes drive the youth into these difficult-to-leave habits.

Teachers, Parents and the government have crucial responsibilities to guide the youth and to canalize their strength into making them someone in the future.

A dose of hardship is necessary.

Mr. Prakash Chhetri, Science Teacher

Persons who are brought up the hard way are the successful ones in later life. They develop a resistance to hardship of all sorts. A child who has been accustomed to thinking everything will be done for him by parents and the pocket money is his birth right will become a 'softie'. The day he starts earning his livelihood in a large town, he will find he lacks toughness and courage. Alexander Fleming, the great scientist, as a child used to walk every morning four to five miles to school in rain and snow. He used to say in later life that those early years had given him health and tenacity. Comfort softens men; difficulties strengthen them. That doesn't mean children should be treated harshly; it means they should not be taught life is a Garden of Eden because that is not true.

Tomorrow, as yesterday in spite of automation, nobody will succeed without work. For if, by some strange miracle, the lives of men suddenly were easy and leisurely, then boredom would become unbearable and the incidence of mental disease would be greater. Of course, there is a limit to the difficulties men can put up with but a reasonable dose of worries does no harm to any one.

On the contrary, let us not complain if we have a friend who is hard to please. Small quarrels, if not too frequent are beneficial. They wake us up and compel us to reconsider a situation. So, let us not fear obstacles. Let us face them for human life is not a garden of roses nor is it the valley of sorrows; it is the sanctuary of work.

**"THAT SINCE WARS
BEGIN IN THE MINDS OF
MEN, IT IS IN THE MINDS OF
MEN THAT THE DEFENSES
OF PEACE MUST BE
CONSTRUCTED..."**

The Story of Pencil

Paulo Coelho
Brazilian author born in 1947.

The little boy was watching his grandfather writing a letter. At a certain moment he asked: "Are you writing a story that happened to us? And is it by any chance a story about me?" The grandfather stopped writing, smiled and said to his grandson: "I'm writing about you, that's true. But the pencil I am using is more important than the words I am writing. I hope you are like it when you grow up."

The boy looked at the pencil with curiosity, but did not see anything special about it. "But it's just like all the other pencils I have ever seen in my life!".

"It all depends on how you look at things. There are five qualities in it that if you can manage to keep in yourself will make you a person always at peace with the world.

The first quality: You can do great things but you must never forget that there is a hand that guides your steps. This hand we call God, and He must always guide it according to His will.

The second quality: From time to time I need to stop what I am writing and use a sharpener. This makes the pencil suffer a little, but in the end it becomes sharper. So, learn how to bear some pain, because they will make you a better person.

The third quality: The pencil always lets you use an eraser to rub out what was wrong. Understand that correcting something that we have done is not necessarily bad, but rather something important to keep us on the path of justice.

The fourth quality: What really matters in the pencil is not the wood or its outer shape but rather the lead that is inside it. So, always take care of what happens inside you.

Lastly, **the pencil's fifth quality:** It always leaves a mark. In the same way, know that everything you do in life will

Purpose of UNESCO Clubs

UNESCO is the UN's agency which encourages world wide cooperation in education, science, culture and communication. The UNESCO Clubs are mainly educational in character, providing opportunities for people to prepare themselves to take part in the benefits of culture and science. It is a centre for life long education. It aims to get its members to think and to work with open-mindedness and an understanding of other people. The activities of UNESCO are truly represented by UNESCO Clubs.

One of the main purposes of UNESCO Clubs is to develop understanding and support of UNESCO's programmes and activities among their own members and among the public at large; they are by no means limited in scope. Their interest extends to the entire family of United Nations agencies and bodies and beyond that to international relations and international cooperation as a whole. By bringing together people who are already interested in world problems and their solutions, the UNESCO Clubs provide invaluable assistance to UNESCO and the National Commissions in public information activities.