

Shikshagraha Awards 2026: Call for Nominations to Honour Education Leaders

Category: Business

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The Shibulal Family Philanthropic Initiatives (SFPI) has announced the launch of the second edition of the Shikshagraha Awards, with nominations officially opening today. Instituted to spotlight leadership in education, the Shikshagraha Awards will honour individuals across India who are building an equitable and inclusive education ecosystem, especially for underserved communities.

These prestigious awards are part of the Shikshagraha movement, a nationwide initiative dedicated to improving one million public schools by 2030. Anchored in the belief that leadership lies beyond formal titles, the awards recognise those who tirelessly champion the cause of equitable access to education from within and beyond the classroom.

Last year's winners embody this spirit. In Tamil Nadu, Xavier Chandra Kumar, a government school headmaster, revitalised a neglected school by introducing counselling, medical camps, and inclusive practices that bridged caste divides. In Bihar, Ranjan Kumar raised school enrolment by 169% through community partnerships and bold learning initiatives. Rajitha N, a supervisor from Karnataka, improved early childhood education across tribal belts, building trust in areas where public systems struggled. And in Bhopal, 17-year-old Muskan Ahirwar earned a special mention for running a public library that now serves 100+ children daily, an initiative she began at the age of nine.

The Shikshagraha Awards are more than recognition; they

amplify stories, inspire action, and build a collective movement for education equity. They aim to reflect the diverse leadership driving the education equity movement by encompassing two broad domains:

- **Leaders within the Formal Education System:** Educators, school leaders, government officials, or institutional actors working within established structures, such as schools, education departments, or academic support bodies, who are creating systemic change from within.
- **Leaders outside the Formal Education System (Community):** Grassroots changemakers, including community organisers, parents, volunteers, or local champions, who are working directly in underserved contexts to expand access, inclusion, and quality in education.

Awardees will receive a financial prize of INR 10 lakh (disbursed over two years), a trophy, a certificate of excellence, and visibility on platforms like InvokED, a global dialogue on education leadership where the awards will be presented on February 6, 2026.

“If last year’s nominations were anything to go by, the Shikshagraha Awards are inspirational in more ways than one. They spotlight the quiet courage, relentless commitment, and everyday innovation that fuel our nation’s classrooms. With this second edition, we aim to reach deeper into the corners of India. Our goal is to discover and celebrate those unsung champions who dedicate themselves to education equity, often without recognition. Their stories deserve to be seen, heard, and honoured,” said **Mr. SD Shibulal, Co-Founder, The Shibulal Family Philanthropic Initiatives (SFPI) and Co-Founder and Former CEO, Infosys.**

The nomination process is rigorous, evaluating candidates on continuous improvement, collaboration, innovation, equity-

driven actions, and real-world impact. Anyone-students, colleagues, or community members-can nominate a changemaker. Self-nominations are not accepted.

"Evaluating nominations for the Shikshagraha Awards is hugely humbling and inspiring. We look for individuals who are not only deeply committed to making education inclusive but are also innovating, collaborating, and improving constantly, even in tough circumstances. It's not grand gestures, but small, significant steps that create meaningful change. Each story we read reflects ownership and caring on the ground, and teaches us that individuals and communities investing energy and imagination is a key to a better future for children in India," **Dr. Subramanian Rangan, Professor of Strategy & Management, INSEAD; Member, Board of Advisors, ShikshaLokam, and Jury Chair, Shikshagraha Awards.**

Forms are available in English, Hindi, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam at shikshagraha.org/awards. Nominations close on August 15, 2025.

About Shikshagraha

Shikshagraha is a people's movement aiming to improve 1 million public schools in India by 2030, ensuring every child has access to quality education and the opportunity to dream and succeed. The movement brings together diverse stakeholders-government, civil society, markets and media, to collaboratively address the challenges in the public education system through a micro-improvement approach. By working alongside local actors, fostering collective action, and employing data-driven strategies, Shikshagraha aims to create an inclusive learning environment where every student, regardless of background, gender, or abilities, can thrive in the 21st century. Shikshagraha is being co-built by Shibulal Family Philanthropic Initiative with Mantra4Change as an anchoring implementation partner.

