

THE TURNING POINT

SOME THOUGHTS ON
ADULT EDUCATION

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY
SEPTEMBER 8, 1992

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Preface

The setting up of the National Literacy Mission in the year 1988 was the fulfilment of a long-felt need of our people. NLM has been able to give a new impetus and vigour to the literacy and adult education activities in the country. It is a mission with a clear vision - that of a literate and learning society.

Also today in 166 districts of the country total literacy campaigns are going on for eradication of illiteracy involving all sections of the people - students, teachers, youth, women's organisations, voluntary agencies, employers, trade-unions, para-military forces and others. In the total literacy campaigns it has been our endeavour to secure people's participation in literacy and learning effort.

International Literacy Day, every year provides us the opportunity to take stock of what we have done so far and to plan for the future. It is also an occasion to pledge ourselves afresh to work with missionary spirit to achieve the goal of total literacy.

'**The Turning Point**' talks of the various aspects of the literacy campaigns in the country under the auspices of the NLM. We are happy to bring out this compilation of articles on the auspicious occasion of International Literacy Day for the benefit of all concerned.

We are grateful to all our contributors for their valuable views and suggestions. We also regret our inability to include all the articles received for want of time and space in the present publication. We shall however be using these in our future publications.

I am thankful to Shri G. Sivaswamy, Consultant and Dr. S.P. Sharma, Deputy Director for editing the articles and all members of our Publication Unit for its printing.

The wisdom and advice of our contributors expressed through their articles should serve as a guide to all of us working in the field of literacy and adult education. Views and suggestions to improve the publication are most welcome.

8 September, 1992

A.K. BASU
(DIRECTOR)

Contents

1. Literacy - Evolution of a Governmental Programme into a Movement — <i>T.S. Sundara Rajan</i>	1
2. The Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi - What it is and What it is not — <i>M.P. Parameswaran</i>	7
3. National Literacy Mission - Present Status and Strategies for the Eighth Plan — <i>R.K. Saini</i>	12
4. The Total Literacy Campaigns: Strengths and Weaknesses — <i>Malcolm S. Adisheshaiah</i>	18
5. Choice of Language for Literacy — <i>C.J. Daswani</i>	22
6. Go One More Step, N.L.M — <i>G.P. Jain</i>	24
7. Basic Literacy Primer and Teacher's Guide - Important Points in the Development Process — <i>Satyen Maitra</i>	28
8. Learning Outcomes - The Central Concern in Total Literacy Campaigns — <i>R.S. Mathur</i>	34
9. Moving Up the Learning Curve — <i>Roda Mehta</i>	42
10. Beyond Literacy Campaigns — <i>T. Sundararaman</i>	45
11. International Literacy Scenario — <i>Prem Chand</i>	50
12. Total Literacy Campaigns — An Unwritten Chapter in Indian History — <i>Lakshmidhar Mishra</i>	54

LITERACY - Evolution of a Governmental Programme into a Movement

— T.S. Sundara Rajan

Background

There have been isolated and voluntary efforts for adult literacy and adult education (AE) in the pre-Independence era, but the most significant development occurred after the formation of popular Ministries (1936) in the Indian Provinces when Adult Education was accepted for the first time as a definite responsibility of the government and adult literacy was organised as a movement. The CABE (Central Advisory Board of Education) in December 1938, appointed an Adult Education Committee under the chairmanship of the Bihar Education Minister, Dr. Syed Mahmud, who, in his address to the Committee, declared:-

"No Government can make any appreciable headway with its schemes for the promotion of socio-economic welfare of its people unless the people are prepared to meet the Government half-way and offer it responsive cooperation."

This key-note statement emphasised simultaneously the need for assumption of responsibility by the government and for shaping a movement of adult education.

Subsequently in 1944, the CABE proposed a Complete Scheme of AE identifying the target age-group of 10-40 years, a one-year time-span, training of AE instructors, support of cultural forms, involvement of voluntary agen-

cies, and recognition to the pedagogic importance of libraries. "These were bold policies for the forties, and more than forty years later, they are mostly reflected under the National Literacy Mission." ¹

A sub-committee of the CABE headed by Shri Mohan Lal Saxena was set up in January 1948 to report on AE. In its report, the Committee said that although both literacy and general education formed part of AE, yet greater emphasis should be laid on general education to enable every Indian to participate effectively in the new social order. This concept of General Education was further developed by the Union Education Minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who termed it Social Education which was accepted by the CABE (1949) as the goal for the education adults. The concept of Social Education included Literacy, Extension work, General Education and leadership training. Added to this was Social Consciousness which included the inculcation of a spirit of social solidarity and a consciousness of the vital importance of planned development.²

A report was submitted in 1963 on Social Education by a Committee on Plan Projects (headed by Shri BN Jha, Vice-Chancellor of Jodhpur University). The Committee inter alia observed -

Adult literacy is largely a matter of leadership... The function of leadership in literacy is

three-fold: providing the literacy movement a prestige which it badly needs, integrating literacy ideologically into the concept of new India emerging from the old making literacy into a popular movement, and harnessing people's energy to fight out illiteracy."³

The idea of taking the literacy movement to the masses and to make them accept it as their own was first experimented in 1959 in district Satara, of Maharashtra. The annual average figure of persons becoming literate in the district rose from 3,000 in 1959 to 1,09,000 in 1960-61. The campaign was extended to the other districts and during its peak in 1961-63 as many as 25 districts were covered and a total of 10,08,100 persons in 1,109 villages were made fully literate.

The Mohim (campaign) aimed at total eradication of illiteracy in the age group of 14-50, providing library services and other material for retention of literacy and all-sided development of villagers through social education centres. The campaign lasted for 4 months and was conducted by a Village Level Committees.

The Education Commission (1964-66) acknowledged the achievements of the Mohim which had "exploited the local village patriotism to eliminate illiteracy from the village and required the teachers and all local educated men and women to work for literacy." The Commission went on to observe, "Adult Education is by nature a voluntary activity; the basic driving force is, therefore, the individual motivation of the adult." This is to be read with Homer Kempfer's observation that "Basic internal motivation for literacy is the result of slow growing environmental pressures and rising personal aspirations."⁴

Giving the dialectics and the scenario, the Education Commission propounded the doctrine of mass approach. "The essence of the Mass Approach", observed the Commission, "lies in a determined mobilization of all available educated men and women in the country to constitute a force to combat illiteracy and an effective organization and utilization of this force in a well-planned literacy campaign. This approach is unorthodox but not untried."

The NAEP (National Adult Education Programme) 1978, represented a major initiative in the field. According to the NAEP document, "No country perhaps with the exception of China faced the problem of illiteracy of the magnitude we are facing. And hardly any country has had such a long tradition of respect for learning and knowledge or the vast resources which we have." The document proposed that "The aim then would be to strive for a learning society in which life-long education is a cherished goal." The concept of life-long education accords with an old saying -

आचार्यात् पादं आधत्ते
शिष्यः पादं स्वमेधया
पादं सब्रह्मचारिभ्यो
पादं कालक्रमेण तु

(One receives a quarter of one's education from the teacher; a quarter through one's own capabilities; a quarter from fellow-pupils, and a quarter over the course of time).

The NAEP was chiefly based on the establishment of AE centres in villages and urban slums where learning was imparted in groups. It created a base for AE. But considering the magnitude of the problem of illiteracy, its intensity and extent of spreading was limited.

There has been an evolutionary shift in the perception of education, It has gradually become an investment rather than as a mere social service. While education helps in enhancing human resources, literacy can be viewed as one of the factors contributing to the development of a nation's human capital. The classic LEARNING TO BE⁵ identifies the real objectives of the struggle against illiteracy and states that "the aim is not simply to enable an illiterate person to decipher words in a textbook but to become better integrated into his environment, have a better grasp of real life, enhance his personal dignity, have access to sources of knowledge which he personally may find useful, acquire the know-how and techniques he needs in order to lead a better life." It goes on to recommend that "mass literacy campaigns are justified so long as they help the people participate in changing their environment". Strongly urging the exploitation of the visual image and the spoken word in support of mass campaigns, it is observed that they "provide a short cut for communicating information which it would be wasteful not to use.... The fact is that audio-visual methods can also pave the way - by imparting practical information and prompting social action - to greater cultural awareness, stimulating the desire for learning and for acquiring other styles of communication, including that of written expression.... A truly modern education, from the level of elementary literacy training to the top levels of higher education, should integrate word, sound and image".

Total Literacy Campaigns

The Decennial Census 1991 saw India cross the 50% level of literacy rate and reach for 52.11%, as contrasted with the rate of 18.33% in 1951. (The rates for 1951 applied to popula-

tion of age 5 and above, and for 1991 to population of age 7 and above.) This remarkable improvement has however to be viewed against the fact that the absolute number of illiterate persons rose from 234 million in 1981 to 352 million in 1991. There had to be, therefore, a better and more viable alternative to the centre-based approach which was the core of the NAEP 1978.

The break-through came with the launching of the NLM (National Literacy Mission) in 1988 with the time-bound objective of imparting functional literacy to 80 million persons in the 15-35 age-group by 1995. The creation of the Mission represented political commitment at all levels reflecting a national consensus on the need to harness all social forces and channelise the energies of the people towards a qualitative change in their own lives. While the 1991 Census did reflect a purely quantitative, and significant, achievement, the achievements of the NLM (over the short period of its functioning to date) have to be assessed in qualitative terms.

The single most significant gain of the NLM is the positive value association that literacy is beginning to receive. This has made for a great leap for literacy activists and administrators traversing from a climate of apathy and cynicism to a feeling of hope and optimism that change for the better is possible and achievable.

The NPE (National Policy of Education) 1986 calls upon the whole nation to pledge itself to the eradication of illiteracy and for the Central and State Governments, political parties, mass organisations, media, educational institutions etc. to commit themselves to this cause. The NLM will be geared to the goals of national integration, environmental conservation, small-family norm, women's equality, universalisation of primary education, basic health etc.

Management Structure for the Mission Mode

The NLMA (National Literacy Mission Authority) is an autonomous wing of the Government (in the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development), vested with the necessary executive and financial powers. Its functions include the scrutiny and approval of proposals for TLCs (Total Literacy Campaigns), funding and facilitating the campaigns in partnership with the States (which are to bear one-third of the approved budget of the TLCs), policy and planning, cultural and media mobilisation for literacy, leadership training, development of literacy materials, research, monitoring and evaluation etc.

The NLMA Council is headed by the Minister of HRD, and includes other Ministers, leaders of major national parties, Members of Parliament, besides educationists and voluntary agencies. The Executive Committee of NLMA is headed by the Union Education Secretary and holds its meetings at regular intervals.

The creation of this empowered structure has given the NLM the freedom and flexibility to innovate, experiment, reach out to people's groups and work with them in partnership for eradication of illiteracy. The NLM is created as a societal mission and its efficacy rests on mobilisation of social forces and harnessing the findings of systematic research.

Total Literacy Campaigns - The Breakthrough

At the time the NLM was pondering the alternatives to the NAEP, the KSSP (Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad) volunteered with a proposal for total eradication of illiteracy in district Ernakulam, Kerala. The campaign was launched on the Republic Day 1989. The campaign was marked by a complete unification of

interests between the district administration headed by the Collector and the volunteer groups spearheaded by the KSSP. The environment for this campaign was created in a manner that impelled people from all walks of life to come forward and assume responsibility for the campaign work over a defined time-frame.

The Ernakulam success was followed up with the launching of TLCs covering the remaining 13 districts of Kerala, and about the same time in districts of Dakshina Kannada and Bijapur (Karnataka), Chittoor and Nellore (Andhra Pradesh), Midnapur and Burdwan (West Bengal) and the UT of Pondicherry. The launching of these TLCs has had a snow-balling effect and, as of June 1992, TLCs have been approved extending over 156 districts (with full or partial coverage).

There are two striking features to the campaigns. Firstly, they are area-specific, time-bound, cost-effective and result-oriented, which is in sharp contrast with the traditional centre-based model. Secondly, many campaigns have integrated other important social and developmental issues like total immunisation, the small-family norm etc.

Innovation and Experimentation

The strategy for TLC is not based on a 'bureaucratic' decision but evolved out of the daring experiment attempted in Ernakulam. The years 1989 and 1990 saw the launching of some experimental programmes like the mobilisation undertaken through Gandhian and Sarvodaya agencies, the paidal jathas, and the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Jatha (Oct-Nov'90). A three-pillared organisational structure for a district TLC has been evolved, consisting of (i) participatory committees at all levels from the district down to the village panchayats, (ii) a core-team of full-time

workers, and (iii) government officials. This exemplifies an interactive and communicative process of management and monitoring. The use of folk media came to be accepted as necessary for conscientisation and delivery of 'modern' and 'progressive' messages through the TLCs.

These initiatives at mass mobilisation for TLC in selected districts led the NLM to develop the strategy of persuading the State Governments to allow a direct interaction with the district collectors to assume responsibility for a TLC. At the request of NLM, the States nominated identified district collectors to attend a series of orientation conferences which were organised with the single objective of convincing the collectors that, as the principal officer of the districts, they could and should take up TLCs.

Zilla Saksharata Samitis

The TLCs are implemented by the ZSS (Zilla Saksharata Samitis, or, District Literacy Societies) especially registered for the purpose and usually headed by the district collectors. The ZSS has representation for educationists, district officials, social activists and voluntary agencies. The Executive Committee of the ZSS is supported by task-specific sub-committees consisting of a mix of officials and literacy activists made responsible for Environment Building and Literacy Survey, Training, Production of Literacy Materials, Monitoring, Finance & Administration. Funds are paid direct to the ZSS by the Centre and State in the ratio of 2:1 against the approved budget of the TLC. There are similar participatory committees at all the levels, the block/mandal, sub-block and village panchayat.

The broad-based and participative structure of the ZSS has made for a forum in which

political parties, NGOs, organisations of women, students, teachers, artistes and writers can come together and effectively contribute to the literacy campaign. The Antar Bharati in Latur (Maharashtra), SWACH in Dungarpur (Rajasthan), the RK Mission in Murshidabad (W.Bengal), SUTRA in Sirmour (H.P.), Samudaya in Raichur (Karnataka) are some of the activist organisations which are thus involved. These apart, the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti provides management, pedagogic and mobilisation support with its activists drawn from local teacher communities, trade unions and other NGOs.

Standards of Attainments

A new technique of learning, called IPCL (Improved Pace and Content of Learning) was introduced by the NLM after interaction with adult educators, linguists, field activists and State Governments. The new pedagogy has a three-fold objective, namely, (a) to provide learning materials which would enable learners to achieve sufficiently high levels of 'usable' literacy, (b) to enhance motivation of learners to learn further by enabling them to perceive their achievements, and (c) to instil greater accountability through a systematic evaluation of learning outcomes. Local-specific materials conforming to these principles are systematically produced and used in the TLCs to enable learners achieve the pre-determined levels of functional literacy.

Technical Support

In order to assess the adequacy of preparatory work undertaken in the districts prior to formal approval of TLC proposals, and to assess the subsequent progress, teams consisting of members of the NLMA EC, officials of the NLM, and State officials are sent out on visits to the districts for interaction with the

core teams working there and to discuss details of mobilisation and motivation, training, teaching and learning, management and monitoring etc. The NLM is also attempting to evolve an arrangement to involve educationists, evaluators, social activists and media experts as Literacy Consultants for TLCs. This is necessary (i) for securing an independent and professional opinion on TLCs, (ii) for assessing the soundness of a TLC proposal before approving it, and (iii) for providing support for timely mid-course remedial action.

Use of the Mass Media

The enormous financial investment in the establishment and expansion of facilities for radio and television warrants an increased accommodation for programmes on literacy. Both the All India Radio and the Doordarshan are already broadcasting spots and features and documentaries on the theme of literacy, some times on specific TLCs, but a formal and clear policy formulation in this respect is of crucial importance so as to prioritise educational needs over the standard considerations of commercial entertainment.

Coordination with Development Programmes

The TLC strategy has room for flexibility to the ZSS to identify their thrust areas and induct them with the TLC. A variety of experiences has emerged. Midnapur took up total immunisation along with TLC; Chittoor and Nellore have incorporated in the literacy campaign messages on abolition of bonded labour and payment of minimum wages; in Jalna, the innovative scheme of Mahila Swastha Sanghas has been taken up, with 10 literate women in every village to join the literacy campaign; the

Raichur TLC has a special focus on the Devadasi women in the district. Examples are galore, and every one of them oriented towards development and one or the other of social issues of the locality. It has been the involvement of the district collector as the leader of literacy which has facilitated this confluence of efforts and forces. Under the TLC, the collector is enabled to interact with the people as a natural community leader, losing himself in the milieu and securing their acceptance. Each TLC district has recorded fascinating episodes of the participative campaigning for literacy, nugget examples of self-perceptions of individual achievement and advancement, and almost a surge of revived nationalism working to liberate the illiterate fellow-citizens. The TLCs have admittedly promoted a feeling of participation and a satisfaction of giving on the part of anyone who cares, triggering off a positive action on the part of all sections of the citizens, in the noble Upanishadic tradition, Datta, Daamyata, Dayadhvam - (Sacrifice, Restraint, compassion). **The NLM 'doctrine' of mass mobilisation has thus the most favourable prospect of getting translated into a viable programme through the TLCs. Properly nurtured and supported, the TLCs could well constitute a salutary and new experience for the nation.**

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The Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi

What it is and What it is not

— *M.P. Parameswaran*

The Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi, known in short as BGVS is, in many ways, a unique organization. It is a voluntary organization and yet it is not so. Its activists come from the ranks of people's science movements, writers, teachers, doctors and the like. For them work is not employment but a mission. For them every working day is a "holy day", every "holiday" is a "working" day. For them the slogan is not statuesque or establishment, but change and movement forward. They have joined the movement on their own, voluntarily, without any special monetary inducement. The only inducement is the opportunity for work and the joy derived out of it. BGVS has got all the functional qualities of an ideal voluntary organization; dynamism, flexibility, accountability, creativity and commitment. Yet it is not a voluntary organization in the traditional sense. It has been sponsored and is being fully supported by the Government of India - the National Literacy Mission. It functions as an informal arm of the NLM.

Genesis of BGVS

The BGVS was born from the happy union of the experience of the People's Science Movements and the Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha - 1987 (BJVJ) on the one side and the political administrative will of Shri Sam Pitroda, at that time Advisor on Technology Missions to the then Prime Minister late Shri Rajiv Gandhi

and Shri Anil Bordia, the then Education Secretary. Having understood and appreciated the effectiveness of the BJVJ 1987 which was sponsored and catalysed by the National Council for Science and Technology Communication, Department of Science and Technology, in communicating to people and propelling them to action. During the very first meeting the General Council of the National Literacy Mission Authority together with the then Minister for Human Resource Development Shri Shivshankar urged to the cause of literacy and plan and execute a jatha similar to the BJVJ but more massive one for literacy. The People's Science Movements, on their side, had already become convinced that the matrix of science can be woven only on to a fabric of literacy. The Kerala Sastra Sahitya Prishat, one of the oldest of the PSMs has already been associated with literacy work, since the NAEP days. In fact it had even prepared a programme of action, in 1978, to make Kerala fully literate within five years. Later in 1986 it prepared a revised programme of action. The two programmes together had within them all the essential features which were to make the historic Ernakulam Total Literacy Campaign a success.

The concept of the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Jatha 1990 was born out of this discussion in the General Council of the NLMA. The author of the present paper, who had been the Nation-

al Convenor for the BJVJ-87 was entrusted with the job of preparing a draft proposal for the same. As a member of the General Council of NLMA and its Executive Committee and on its behalf, he prepared, with the help of his colleagues in the People's Science Movement, a programme to initiate a massive churning process in the nation. It was named as Bharat Gyan Vigyan Jatha. The Programme envisaged to:

- * Interlink, informally, all the literacy efforts in the country, both governmental and non-governmental, big and small and create among them a feeling of being partners in one and the same national mission.
- * Instil into the field activists enthusiasm and excitement without which adequate motivation cannot be generated among the learners.
- * Develop an informal machinery for rapid information transfer and mutual reinforcement among literacy workers at all levels.
- * Reach to every corner of India a call to stamp out illiteracy from the nation.
- * Communicate to the broadest audience a perspective on literacy and scientific awareness both through the jatha and through activities prior to it and after it.
- * Create a demand for literacy centers and adult education centers where they do not exist.
- * Nucleate, motivate and inspire new local level groups, voluntary organizations and individuals to take-up the task of eradication of illiteracy and creation of scientific awareness amongst the people.
- * Strengthen and consolidate the work of already existing groups and voluntary or-

ganizations which are working for the creation of scientific awareness and literacy and to create a favourable climate for such activities to flourish.

The quantitative objectives set out at that time can be summarized as follows:

- To launch approximately 500 district level jathas, one in each district in the country, starting on 2nd October 1990 and continuing till 14th November 1990. Each jatha would cover 100 to 150 centers and at each point there would be street plays and songs and poster exhibitions, melas, slide shows, etc. which would convey the objective of the jatha.
- To organise approximately 5 to 10 padayatras from each of the surrounding villages to cover at each of the 100-150 points (centers) in a district.
- Preparation and dissemination of necessary software in the form of booklets, video and audio cassettes, posters and slides.
- Dissemination of songs, plays and lectures evolved by identified groups/organizations, discussed and finalized.
- Nucleating organizational structures at national, state district and local levels to implement the above activities and involve all socially conscious individuals, groups, voluntary organizations, youth and women's movement, students and teachers organizations, educational and research institutions, peasant organizations, trade unions, etc. in these tasks.

The Executive Committee approved the proposal. However it observed that the target set is extremely high and that even fifty per cent achievement will be considered as very good. Some of the members also expressed the

doubt that being an ephemeral event how much the jatha would be useful for actual literacy work. Later events were to prove that these misgivings were out of place. It was also decided to register a society under Societies Registration Act to carry out this project. The Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi comprising of communicators, educationists, academicians, social workers, people's science activists, government officers etc. was formed in December 1989 with Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, the world renowned educationist as its chairperson. Since then BGVS has been working as an informal field arm of the NLMA, in close cooperation with it.

BGVJ and Thereafter

The Bharat Gyan Vigyan Jatha took place in 330 districts and visited in all about 40,000 villages. It was a massive churning process and one can confidently say that the cream that emerged from this churning process constitute the back bone as well as the heart and the brain of the great literacy movement that is sweeping the subcontinent presently.

Today India is witnessing a movement, unprecedented in its history; both in character and in magnitude. That, during forty years of independence could not be achieved is now being achieved. Today we can hope that illiteracy can be eradicated from this country. The problem is not small. But the effort too is not small. Nearly four million volunteers, without being paid any thing at all, are now helping to make nearly 40 million illiterates literate and even beyond. In a country, where increasingly everything is being measured in terms of money, the emergence of patriotism and humanism as can be witnessed from the tireless efforts of these volunteers is a silverline, a ray of hope. Interestingly enough,

science movements have played a cardinal role in this. They knew that the matrix of science can be woven only on to a fabric of literacy.

The Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, initiated this chain reaction with the Total Literacy Campaign in Eranakulam district and subsequently in the entire state of Kerala. The Pondicherry Science Forum, the Tamil Nadu Science Forum, the Andhra Pradesh Jan Vignana Vedika, the Madhya Pradesh Vigyan Sabha. . . all these organizations followed suit.

They provided the initial core of activists for the BGVS, which has since grown several times. Today literacy has become a people's movement which is characterized by:

- * **a massive and total area approach**
- * **involvement of the entire community in some form or the other**
- * **predominantly voluntary nature**
- * **clear objectives and a sense of excitement**
- * **close cooperation of bureaucracy with voluntary workers**
- * **very high commitment**
- * **changes in the social outlook of the participants**
- * **shift from cynicism to optimism, and**
- * **shared joy**

This optimism is contagious. BGVS, it can be said, is mainly responsible for this new turn of events.

True, such a tremendous movement will have its impact on the society. Different segments of the society will, naturally respond differently to this. Our Constitution, in the Directive Principles of the State Policy has directed the State to provide universal and compulsory education to all up to the age 14

with in ten years. Till now we have not achieved it. Consequently the number of illiterate persons has been growing all the time. There were both objective and subjective reasons for it. Illiteracy and poverty are the two sides of a coin. This has been recognized even in the 1978 NAEP document. Similarly are, poverty and riches. And during the entire post-independence period many have been poorer. It is one and the same process that leads to this. Illiteracy of the majority as a congenial condition for this process. Naturally, those interested in the continuation of this process will feel threatened by the literacy movement. So long as it remained a rhetorical movement, their interests were safe. When it became a real movement they began to feel threatened. Naturally this would lead to actions on their side. The literacy movement that is spreading over the nation like a wildfire is now being attacked on several platforms.

One target of attack is the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi. It is being attacked on two grounds (1) by attributing party politics to it which is purely a figment of imagination and (2) by attacking its role as the informal arm of the NLM. The fact that many Zilla Saksharatha Samithis have registered themselves as district BGVS because of the goodwill this name enjoys, has been also, a source of irritation for many. Some State Governments have compelled the District Collectors, who normally head this samithis, to change the name.

BGVS is not a political organization. Its members include people from all walks of life including government servants. Its activists have different convictions. But this does not pose a problem so long they have the conviction that illiteracy can be and will be eradicated from the soil of India. Any attempt to politicize literacy movement, any attempt to reap electoral political dividends from literacy work will

kill the spirit of a people's movement for literacy.

The second target of attack is the campaign model for literacy. In the early phases the practicability of such campaigns, especially the availability of voluntary instructors, was being questioned. People of India gave a fitting answer to these questions. They are coming forward in millions. In the process a totally new system of pedagogy, training, monitoring etc. is evolving. Being in the thick of the movement BGVS developed considerable expertise in all these areas. Those to whom illiteracy provided employment and a "permanent" source of income feel threatened by this development. However literacy is no longer a topic for seminars and an area for employment. It has become a chain reaction. There may be, and will be, direct and covert opposition to the literacy movement. But today no body can stop this movement. The new character of BGVS enjoins it to:

- * identify joint and network committed individuals and organizations so as to build a people's network to provide grass-roots support to total literacy campaigns.
- * work among the people and interact with officials, intellectuals, teachers, political parties, voluntary groups, trade unions and service associations and people from all walks of life so as to continuously build an environment that welcomes, encourages and facilitates total literacy campaigns.
- * assist in planning and conduct of all aspects of literacy campaign-environment building, training and monitoring – in such a way as to ensure that the spirit of a people's movement is preserved and strengthened.
- * contribute to the evolution of the district literacy organizations and to build the BGVS organization in the district and state

level in such a manner that literacy campaigns become the beginning of a sustainable process. Such a process should lead to post-literacy immediately and subsequently to universal elementary education, women's development, a health movement, a cultural awakening and eventually empowerment of the people. With the knowledge, organization and confidence gained from total literacy campaigns and subsequent programmes, these processes should lead to a more democratic society where people can decide the course of their development.

Our country is in a grave crisis: economic and ethical, moral and political, social and cultural. Mounting tensions

have reached a breaking point. Conflicts take place at the slightest provocation, in the name of the caste and religion, language and culture. And they easily escalate into fratricidal riots. Under such conditions the positive and optimistic environment created by the sheer magnitude of this cooperative effort offers a ray of hope. In face, reports from districts traditionally known for caste excesses indicate substantial relaxation in tension, mainly because of the intensity of cooperation demanded by literacy work and the joy they derive out of such work. Any act which will hamper the growth of this movement will be unpatriotic.

National Literacy Mission — Present Status and Strategies for the Eighth Plan

— R.K. Saini

Literacy in India is primarily understood in terms of census literacy. In census, a person is deemed to be literate if he/she can read and write with comprehension in any language. This also closely corresponds to the UNESCO definition of literacy. In the context of the literacy and adult education programme which is being implemented by the National Literacy Mission, literacy is an entry point to an understanding and awareness of a much wider world of information, communication and skills. It is an essential tool for communication and learning, for acquiring and sharing of knowledge and information and a pre-condition for individual's evolution and growth as also for national development.

National Literacy Mission

Eradication of illiteracy has been one of the major national concerns of the Government of India since Independence. A number of programmes had been taken up in this direction in the post-independence period culminating in the launching of the National Literacy Mission in May, 1988.

The Mission was conceptualised and built on an objective assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the earlier programmes. The important aspects of the Mission include:

- a new sense of urgency, seriousness and emphasis with fixed goals, clear timeframe and age-specific target groups;
- firm belief that adults can be made literate according to certain pre-determined norms within a stipulated time limit (200 hrs.) and that it is not too late to learn;
- emphasis on the close nexus between literacy of adult parents and enrolment of school-going children, on the one hand and literacy and infant-mortality, immunisation and child-care on the other;
- a societal mission which believes that literacy is not the concern of one ministry or department or agency but is the concern of the whole nation and all sections of the society;
- emphasis on institutionalisation of post-literacy and continuing education in a big way;
- a technology mission also in the sense that besides, emphasis on improvement of teaching/learning environment, it lays stress on improvement in the content and process of teaching/learning on a continuous basis;

- envisages creation of an effective mission management system to ensure achievement of the mission objectives within a broad framework of flexibility, delegation, decentralisation and accountability;
- emphasis not on mere enrolment of learners but on attainment of certain pre-determined norms and parameters of literacy, numeracy, functionality and awareness.

In quantitative terms, the Mission seeks to impart functional literacy to 80 million illiterate persons in 15-35 age-group by the close of 1995.

In qualitative terms, functional literacy implies:-

- * **Self reliance in 3 'Rs;**
- * **Participation in development process;**
- * **Skills improvement to improve economic status and general well being;**
- * **Imbibing values of national integration, conservation of environment, women's equality, and observance of small family norm etc.**

Thrust Areas of NLM

- (a) **Area Approach** : Under this approach a compact area is selected for complete eradication of illiteracy in a given time frame, with thrust on attainment of predetermined norms of literacy and numeracy and not on enrolment. The learner is the focal point in the entire process and measurement of learning outcome is continuous, informal, participative and non-threatening.
- (b) **Improved Pace and Content of Learning (IPCL)** : The three factors which are

critical in literacy learning are programme duration, programme content and visibility of results. Keeping these factors in view, a motivation - centered technique, namely "the Improved Pace and Content of Learning (IPCL)" has been designed. The new technique provides for 3 integrated primers, each primer integrating in itself basic literacy/numeracy lessons, work book, exercise book, details of evaluation of learning outcome etc. Progression in learning from one primer to the other heightens the motivation of the learners and provides for an inbuilt mechanism for self-evaluation.

- (c) **Environment Building** : Organisation of 721 major jathas and 1971 local jathas by the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti and paidal jathas organised in 1098 blocks in five states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Assam by the organisations of the Gandhian and Sarvodaya workers during 1990-91 have helped in putting literacy firmly on the agenda of the national programme, sensitised the literate and the educated to take up literacy work with a sense of pride, and social obligation and helped in dispelling doubts, reservations and misgivings about literacy. They have also helped in motivating and mobilising the community of learners for literacy, enabled them to perceive their need for literacy and internalise the need for their individual and collective well-being. They have also helped to a greater extent, in bringing about a close integration between literacy and development, literacy and science, literacy and environment. Such environment building efforts including activities like wall writings, street plays, publicity

through radio, T.V. and newspapers, folk and traditional arts continue to be strengthened with a view to motivating and mobilising both the literates and illiterates to work for eradication of illiteracy. The BGVS will organise the second round of country-wide jathas in December, 1992.

(d) **Total Literacy Campaigns** : After experimenting with successive and alternative models of adult literacy and education programmes, we have now settled down to a model which has given us lot of hope and faith that illiteracy can be overcome in a time-bound manner with planned and coordinated efforts and with mobilisation of people belonging to all sections of the society. Systematic and planned efforts have been made to arouse and awaken the unlettered masses and generate in them a positive demand for literacy and numeracy and to provide a delivery mechanism for access to literacy, which is simple, inexpensive and credible. It is in this context that campaigns for total literacy have been thought of as the alternative strategy to the traditional centre-based programme. Starting with Kottayam city in Kerala in April-June, 1989 and in Ernakulam district in December-January 1989 such campaigns for total literacy were launched and successfully conducted in the entire state of Kerala and UT of Pondicherry, Goa and the districts of Bhavnagar, Gandhi nagar, Birbhum, Hooghly, Burdwan, Midnapur, Dakshin Kannad, Bijapur, Wardha, and Sindhudurg. Such campaigns are presently being implemented in 156 districts (partially or fully) through 96 projects in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh,

Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, U.P. and West Bengal.

The characteristic features of the total literacy campaigns which make them unique in relation to other programmes are:

- * **area-specific, time-bound, volunteer-based, cost-effective and outcome-oriented;**
- * **These are implemented through the Zila Saksharta Samitis, which are registered under the Society's Registration Act under the leadership of the District Collector/Chief Secretary, Zila Parishad;**
- * **TLCs catering both to the demand syndrome and the supply mechanism. In other words, a positive demand of the people for literacy is generated first before the delivery mechanism is provided;**
- * **culture of equality is pervasive in a TLC. It is implemented in the nature of a people's movement where every one owns, contributes and participates;**
- * **though meant to impart functional literacy, TLC can also be at the same time a campaign for the universal enrolment and retention of children in school, immunisation, propagation of small family norms, protection of maternity and child care, women's equality and empowerment, and peace and communal harmony etc;**
- * **a people - oriented well-knit management structure at the district, talukas/block, mandal, panchayat or village levels. These management committees mostly consist of non-govern-**

ment officials and function in a debureaucratised, decentralised and participatory manner which has enabled them to obtain the participation of the people at the grossroot level.

About 50.00 million potential learners and 5.00 million volunteers are actively involved in the total literacy campaigns which are going on in different parts of the country. The focus in all these campaigns is on women, particularly in the rural areas and persons belonging to SCs/STs mainly because it is in these areas and in these groups that illiteracy is most persistent.

Involvement of Non-Government Organisations

The Central Scheme of Assistance to Voluntary Agencies has been revised to conform to the principle of area approach for total eradication of illiteracy. The principal strategy in implementation of the programme through non-governmental organisations is to be volunteer-based total literacy campaigns in a specific area in a given time-frame. The detailed guidelines regarding the manner in which the voluntary agencies would be required to execute literacy programmes have been issued and the proposals have started pouring in.

Involvement of Students

The number of students from schools and colleges/universities participating in literacy activities increased from 2.00 lakhs in 1986-87 to about a million during 1991-92. Majority of the volunteers in the TLCs taken up in different districts were also students. Whereas the Boards of Secondary Education in the States of Orissa, Maharashtra and West Bengal have taken decisions to involve school stu-

dents in literacy activities as apart of their work experience, the Central Board of Secondary Education has launched a Special Adult Literacy Drive (SALD) in all its affiliated schools for students in classes IX to XII. It is proposed that students are also involved in the literacy programme following the area approach. In other words, each school/college interested in taking up literacy programmes would be advised to adopt a nearby area which could be a village or group of villages or slums for eradication of illiteracy in a given area instead of students taking up the programme in a sporadic manner.

Post-Literacy and Continuing Education

The 50 million learners enrolled in total literacy campaigns all over the country would soon be acquiring the threshold level of basic literacy and numeracy and unless immediate arrangements are made for providing facilities of post-literacy and continuing education, there is a threat of their relapsing into illiteracy and the efforts made to enable them to acquire basic literacy proving infructuous. With shift in the strategy of imparting literacy from the traditional centre-based approach to the mass campaign approach, it is felt that Jana Shikshan Nilayams as a strategy designed to cater to the post-literacy and continuing education needs of the neo-literates of the centre-based programme, cannot be uniformly applied particularly in the area/district covered by the TLC. It is also felt that there are wide variations in the levels achieved by those who are supposed to have become literates and there was enough evidence to suggest that a substantial proportion of persons who acquire literacy skills through the Total Literacy Campaigns tend to relapse into illiteracy.

Other Developments

In the recent past, following developments have taken place in the area of adult education and literacy:

- The Eighth Plan document has attached the highest importance to the programme of universalisation of primary education and adult literacy and education.
- A Sub-committee of the National Development Council has been constituted under the chairmanship of Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh which is expected to suggest ways and means for making the literacy programme more effective.
- A Sub-group of the Executive Committee of the National Literacy Mission Authority has been constituted under the chairmanship of Shri Satyen Maitra, Hony. Director, Bengal Social Service League, Calcutta to suggest measures for making the post literacy and continuing education more effective so that the incidences of relapse of neo-literates into illiteracy is reduced to the minimum. The Committee has already formulated its report which is under consideration of the Government.
- A Sub-group of the Executive Committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of Dr. R.H. Dave, formerly Director, UNESCO Institute of Education, Hamburg to suggest norms and criteria for learner evaluation as also for total literacy declaration. This group has also submitted its report which is also under consideration of the Government.
- The Cabinet Secretary has written letters to all Ministries/Departments, Chief Secretaries of the State Govts./UTs to relieve the persons working in government

offices, autonomous bodies, central and state government undertakings to work for TLCs on secondment basis.

Strategies for the Eighth Five Year Plan

According to the 1991 census, the total illiterate population in the country (including J&K and Assam) was 336.00 million. Even though the break-up of illiterate persons in the age group 15-35 is not yet available, it is estimated that the percentage of the illiterate persons in the age-group 15-35 is roughly 1/3 or 33% of the total illiterate population. Thus, the estimated number of illiterate population in the age-group works out to 112 million. It is further estimated that about 8 million persons in this age-group would have become literate by the end of last financial year through the total literacy campaigns which are already on in different states. Thus, the number of illiterate persons in the age-group 15-35 at the beginning of Eighth Five Year Plan is estimated to be 104.00 million. Out of this, about 83.50 million adult illiterates are estimated to be in 270 districts, in the States of Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, where the total literacy campaigns have either not been taken up so far or have been taken up only partially.

During the Eighth Five Year Plan, the main strategy would be on adoption of area approach in all programmes of adult education. In addition to about 156 districts which have been covered by total literacy campaigns either fully or partially, total literacy campaigns would be taken up in 200 additional districts (including districts with partial coverage) with the objective of achieving total

literacy in 75% districts in the country i.e. 80.00 million persons would be made literate during the Eighth Five Year Plan period through the total literacy campaigns. The remaining 24.00 million persons would be covered through voluntary agencies, Nehru Yuvak Kendras, school/college students, other agencies interested in taking-up the programme, following the area approach. The planning for coverage of illiterate persons through the total literacy campaigns and other programmes will undergo a slight change if ultimately it is found that the actual number of illiterates as on 1.4.91 is more than 112.00 millions.

Each total literacy campaign would be followed by a post-literacy campaign which will continue for atleast two years after the conclusion of the total literacy campaign. The number of total literacy campaigns and post-literacy to be implemented during each year of

the Eighth Five Year Plan is expected to be as under:

Year	No. of TLC	No. of Post-Literacy Campaigns
1992-93	50	50
1993-94	50	110
1994-95	55	170
1995-96	60	230
1996-97	602	95

Besides 30,000 JSNs functioning through various agencies, about 20,000 additional JSNs would be sanctioned and made operational to meet the post-literacy and continuing education needs of the neo-literates coming out of the programmes other than the total literacy campaigns.

During the Eighth Plan (1992-97), funds amounting to RS.1400.00 crores in the central sector and Rs.407.64 crores in the state sector have been provided for literacy and adult education.

The Total Literacy Campaigns: Strengths and Weaknesses

— *Malcolm S. Adishesaiah*

The Total Literacy Campaign is based on some presuppositions which seem to be anti-education and therefore anti-literacy.

The Time Dimension Problem

The first is the time dimension associated with the Total Literacy Campaign. That campaign aims at making an illiterate adult literate in 150 to 200 hours of learning, comprising 5 to 6 months. Against this specified and specific time dimension with which the Total Literacy Campaign is associated is the wisdom distilled over the ages, over the centuries, that Education is a permanent activity, that Education is lifelong, that Education begins at one's birth and continues till one's death. Does the time limitation of the Total Literacy Campaign stands in contradiction to this quintessence of Education, being in a sense timeless. This contradiction is also posed because the Total Literacy Campaign is part of the National Literacy Programme which aims at (i) making parts of the country fully literate before the end of the current Eighth Plan, and (ii) our entering the twentyfirst century as a totally literate country.

All education, which is timeless, is also timebound. Learning at school is divided into yearly offerings and periodic evaluations of the attainments with regard to such offerings. This methodology of dividing up the learning

process into specific time periods, with learning attainments set for each such period continues throughout the learning and research endeavour, at the undergraduate, post graduate and doctoral levels. In-fact the possibility of experiencing education throughout one's life as a permanent, life long activity, is dependent on completing successfully these time bound educational attainments. In that sense, the time dimension of the Total Literacy Programme, under which the first phase of literacy is to be completed by illiterate adult in the first two months, with the help of a carefully graded text for that stage, of being introduced to the world of alphabets and numeracy; followed by the second phase which continues over the third and fourth months, again aided by a reader which can help the subject to read simple words and directions, and write one's name and do elementary counting; and going on to the third phase, comprising the fifth and sixth months when reading and writing abilities and the use of numeracy are developed further to certain set norms, such as reading 30 words per minute, writing at 7 words per minute, doing simple calculations; all this is in fact in the basic central educational tradition. Thus is there not only no contradiction between the time bound Total Literacy Campaign and the learning imperatives. The successful completion of the six months programme is the only sound means of

continuing onto the next phase centered in the Jana Shikshan Nilayams and further on to participation in reading rooms, libraries, seminars and lectures, which is the heart of the life long learning complex. The Total Literacy Campaign is the only key that can open the doors to the illiterate adult of coding and decoding the signals represented by language, vocabulary, along with the numerator and the denominator of one's daily life.

The Mass Programme

Education is a 1:1 relationship. From the ancient times of the Guru-Shishya system of learning relationship to the crowded classroom of today, learning for it to occur involves the encounter of the object with the subject, of what is being taught with what is being learnt, of the teacher with the student. This is behind the principle of the teacher - students ratio by which the effectiveness of the learning process, the efficiency of the education system is judged everywhere. Is there then a contradiction between this 1:1 relation which is the fountain-head of all education and the Mass Programme techniques that the literacy effort is forced to adopt? The illiteracy problem is in all countries massive, going upto 90-95 per cent in small countries, like Papua New Guinea, Mali, Raunde and running into millions in large countries like India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Brazil and Nigeria, and so the literacy programme has had to be a mass programme to deal with this mass problem. The Total Literacy Campaign attempts to resolve this dilemma between the 1:1 relationship which all education is and the Mass Programme that adult literacy calls for, by (a) breaking up the mass of the illiterates into small manageable units comprising villages, and districts and (b) getting each person in the

village and district to take his/her place and do his/her share in the literacy effort. The first is expressed in the Total Literacy Campaign's unit of operation being everywhere the district, of which there are 452 in the country, and in turn the district breaks down its operating unit into the village and cluster of villages. The second expression of getting every illiterate adult man and woman taking his/her place and doing his/her share in the programme from the very first initial stages is done through the Jatha, in which every participant continues to do so till that objective of universal participation is attained.

Thus the 1:1 relationship which is the basis of all learning is preserved in the Total Literacy Campaign by the individual in the village or town becoming in the early stage his/her own tutor. This combined student - teacher role which the jatha helps each illiterate adult participant to develop is later, when the 6 month learning programme begins, further concentrated in the relationship of the instructor, or Prerak and the learner, which is in effect a 1:1 relationship.

A Dilemma

Having said all this about the Total Literacy Campaign conforming to the life long learning imperative, the 1:1 interaction of all education, the Total Literacy Programme, like the School Programme, faces a dilemma which stems basically from the fact that each illiterate adult, like each school child, has his/her own learning path and capacity. it is therefore not surprising that in the Total Literacy Campaign, a district like Kottayam in Kerala or Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu all the illiterate adults are able to attain mastery of the first elementary phase which is the introduction to the 3'Rs which the first text earlier

referred to represent, while most of them (about 60 to 70 per cent) state they are not able to follow the second and third texts with their small and close print and complex subject matter. The dilemma here is, given the lack of resources and time and the need to make available learning (the 3 'Rs) to all the illiterates in the shortest possible time, how can literacy become total in reality, which means reaching out to the majority, if not to every individual. Is there a danger of this dilemma being overlooked, the differing learning times required by certain persons being ignored, in the pressure to establish and achieve uniform norms for the entire country and its 400 million illiterates? Is the answer to this dilemma a call for further study and research, to develop a system of "educational decentralization", where, within the time and resources pressure, literacy can follow the learning ability of the illiterate rather than it being the otherway around, the illiterate being forced to follow a normative learning path.

Functional Illiteracy

The Mass Programme of Functional Literacy breaks down into the 1:1 learning relationship. This is important against the dilemma just referred to, as well as the problem of what the developed countries call "functional illiteracy"; which confronts them increasingly. Last year when presenting the five UNESCO literacy awards on the International Literacy Day, I said: "A third comment that I wish to make is that the submissions this year show that in the literacy field increasingly, the distinction which exists in the economic field between the advanced countries and the lagging countries, is being replaced by all countries - both the economically advanced and the economically lagging - being on the same footing (in regard to literacy). There is one submission this year (from an economical-

ly advanced country) which recounts how the faculty of reading is being restored to those who have lost it in accidents and speeded up for those who speak hesitantly. Thus the problem of functional literacy is common to all countries and the literacy programme is having to address itself to it everywhere". We are worried at the slow progress of the Total Literacy Campaigns in the districts for the large number of drop outs which is more than 40 per cent in some village areas. Also at the fact that only 50 to 60 per cent of those tested at the end of the six months, are able to read, write and count, without realising the greater insidious danger which functional illiteracy represents.

Link with Primary Schooling

It is related with another lacuna in the Total Literacy Campaign, that is absence of relationship with the programme of universalising primary education. In Pudukottai district which is about to be declared a totally literate district in Tamil Nadu, the number of children outside the primary school is nearly 40 per cent of those who should be in it. And that is the seed being sown for the increase in the future cohorts of the illiterates. We are doing in many of our districts without bearing in mind its close relationship with the primary schools Kerala, from where we borrowed this model of the Total Literacy Campaign, had developed universal enrolment linking with Adult Education drive.

The Learning Process

Further, both in the Total Literacy Campaign running in our districts and the universalising of our primary education system in those districts, too much of a concentration is on attaining certain quantitative targets as noted earlier. These targets are necessary and unavoidable. But what they represent is the

learning of the 3 'Rs and accompanying skills. We have yet to ensure that in both programmes - primary schooling and adult literacy - the learning process is such that real learning is taking place. There is no such assurance at present. In fact when we, in Tamil Nadu tried to recruit for the Total Literacy Campaign at the 7th and 8th months of post literacy learning, some Preraks with the Elementary Education qualification (which is completion of Standard VIII in the State of Tamil Nadu), we found to our horror that not one of the seven young girls whom we interviewed could read a simple text, nor understand the meaning of what they were aiming at reading. And so we are now paying as much attention to devising means of identifying the actual learning that is taking place in the Total Literacy Campaign

and the Primary Schools, as in each of them attaining their targets within the time set.

The Gift and the Promise

The Total Literacy Campaign and its counterpart the Universal Primary School, is a gift and a promise. It is a gift that our long lost and long suffering poor villagers and urban slum dwellers are discovering for themselves, and using to attain self sustaining development. What we from outside the village and urban slum can do is to provide both the programmes with the technical skills and the irreplaceable incentives in a fuller life - of work, employment, concern for the environment, and lessening inequality - that is the promise of the programme, and which must be fulfilled.

Choice of Language for Literacy

— C.J. Daswani

Multilingual Reality

In a multilingual country like India, language plays an important part in the day-to-day communication between the people speaking different languages. It is well known that there is not a single district in India that is monolingual. This means that multilingualism is a fact of life. Every individual understands a number of languages or dialects and every individual may, in fact, be using more than one dialect or language in his/her day-to-day communication

In urban and semi-urban areas, people use more than one language, often mixing various languages in their oral communication. Different languages are often assigned specific communicative roles so that an individual may use his/her mother tongue at home, a local language for speaking to people in the workplace and a standard regional or second language for communicating through writing. Very often the use of these languages is determined by the communication situation in which the individual is located.

Language of the Adult Illiterate

An adult illiterate in India is as multilingual as his/her literate counterpart. An adult illiterate uses several dialects or languages in different communicative situations. Although, he/she is not able to read or write any language, the complexity of the linguistic reper-

toire of an adult illiterate is as extended as that of a literate.

In rural areas an adult illiterate may not actually speak many dialects or languages, but understands several varieties of the local dialects, as well as the spoken standard language of larger communication. For instance a rural adult illiterate may use his/her dialect at home or in the neighbourhood, but understands the other dialects spoken in the local settings.

A rural adult illiterate male often travels to neighbouring villages and towns and communicates with other people speaking different dialects and languages. He may employ a local standard spoken variety for such intergroup communication. If he travels to the district headquarters he also comprehends the standard language spoken by the literate population there.

Dialect Vs Standard

The purpose of an adult literacy programme should be to impart to an adult illiterate information and education in the most effective manner possible. At the same time, the function of literacy training should be to make a neo-literate independent so that he is able to read a wide range of printed materials available in the area. This would entail that a neo-literate should be able to read without difficulty the local newspapers, magazines and books related to his field of

interest. At present, in all the States, most newspapers and other materials are written and published in the standard regional languages.

It must be realised that while the goal of literacy training should be to equip the learner to read various materials in the standard regional languages, it would be difficult if a literacy programme introduces a learner to the written standard language right from the beginning. A literacy programme, therefore, should be based on a sound comparison of the local dialect and the standard regional language. Such a comparison would reveal those areas where the learner is likely to encounter problems in acquiring the standard variety.

Particularly, it may be the case that the dialect and the standard language differ most in vocabulary and in certain features of syntax. Such differences should be taken into account when literacy material is produced so as to gradually take the learner from the dialect to the standard. It may, therefore, be necessary to write the initial literacy materials in the local dialect followed by simple readers in the standard language.

Use of dialect

Since an adult education centre is not merely a literacy centre, it is envisaged that both the instructor and the learners would communicate orally in a variety of topics, which are meaningful and relevant for the learner. In all oral discussions and presenta-

tion, an attempt should be made to use the local dialect as far as possible. Some part of literacy training should be devoted to making a learner aware of the use of language and, therefore, the instructor may, where necessary, point out the differences between the local dialect and the standard variety without making value judgements on either.

Reducing the dialect to writing carries a built-in consequence of the dialect becoming standardised. Once this standardisation takes place, there is likely to be some resistance to the transition from the standardised dialect to the standard regional language. This is a natural process of language development and an instructor should not insist on the use of the standard language if the local sentiment is likely to be in favour of the standardised local dialect. Communication needs will eventually determine the status of the dialect and the standard language. All encouragement should be given to creative use of both the local dialect as well as the standard language as far as possible.

Standard Language

In all likelihood, the demand for the standard language will come from the learners themselves; since the learners will quickly perceive the advantages of learning to read and communicate in the standard language. Once such a demand is made, the instructor will find it easier to make the transition from the local dialect to the standard variety.

Go One More Step, N.L.M

— G.P. Jain

In the erstwhile princely state of Aundh (Maharashtra) all schools were shut down in 1939 and students sent home to teach their illiterate parents and neighbours for as many hours a day as they were spending in schools. The result was stunning. In three months, half the people of the state learnt to read and write. Not even a rupee was spent for student teachers!

This exercise met with unexpected success because the Raja and Rani themselves went out to sing literacy songs in streets and teach illiterates. Two lessons may be drawn from it. The first that seemingly endless task of universal adult literacy can be completed in a few months' time and second that motivators should be none other than top brass, that is, top politicians and top bureaucrats.

By a rough estimate, each of our 451 districts have sufficient quantity of senior school students (of 10th, 11th and 12th classes) and collegians than the desired instructor-learner ratio of 1:10 demanded for universalizing adult literacy. Why, then, does our land continue to suffer the monstrous indignity of holding more than half the world's total illiterate population? Why don't we purge ourselves of the scourge that has remained with us for decades in one academic session, and earn the world's encomium of being its largest literate country?

It is not a pipe dream. But to make it come true, N.L.M. must alter its priority. Simple

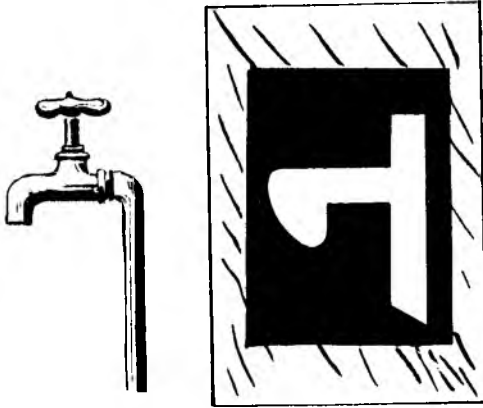
literacy should receive precedence over functional literacy. In other words, the ability to read and write simple sentences should be achieved throughout the country as the first milestone. Numeracy and other essentials of functional literacy can wait.

Another essential thing to do is to revamp the existing primers and have them subscribe to one single formula or innovative technique of equating the letters of the alphabet with physical objects within the knowledge of the learner, which look similar in shape as well as sound. Learning by this method, distinguished from the rote method, is fast, easy and pleasant. It has, in fact, the underpinning of a joyful game.

Adults have a vast repertoire of words, but they cannot read or write what they speak. Literacy to them means levelling of the hurdle obstructing familiarity with the straight lines and circles of the written alphabet.

Illiterate adults have an uncanny way of relating days and dates of the calendar to events in their own life or life around them. For example, if you ask them when a particular event took place, they would look askance about the specific date or year, but would soon recall a birth, death or marriage in the family about the same time or a pleasant or unpleasant visitation of Nature or some other unforgettable event.

Taking a cue from such behavioural response, all letters of the Hindi alphabet have been made identifiable by objects similar in shape and sound known to learners. For illustration, alphabet ऋ looks like the water tap or ऋल in Hindi and has the same sound (ill. 1). Show the learner the image of the object and



Ill. 1

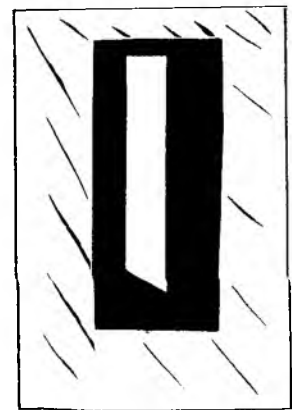
following it that of the alphabet. Even the densest person will waste no time in deciphering the alphabet, because the object and alphabet show close similarity of shape as well as sound. It is easier to move from the known to the unknown and from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Learning thus becomes a joy, instead of a painful grind or even a demeaning exercises requiring wrestling with the alphabet such as the adult sees his/her child or grandchild doing.

Take another illustration. Alphabet प looks like a hand fan or पंखा in Hindi (ill. 2). It becomes a child's play for the adult to pull out of a jumble of alphabets the desired ऋ or प by comparing the contour of the subject with that of the alphabet.

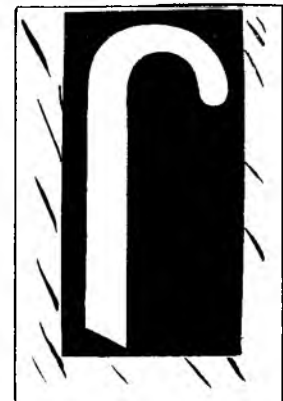
Identifying thus the 31 most used 'akshars' in Hindi should not take more than a week or 10 days. In the same manner, 10 'matras' may be identified, again relating to objects similar



Ill. 2

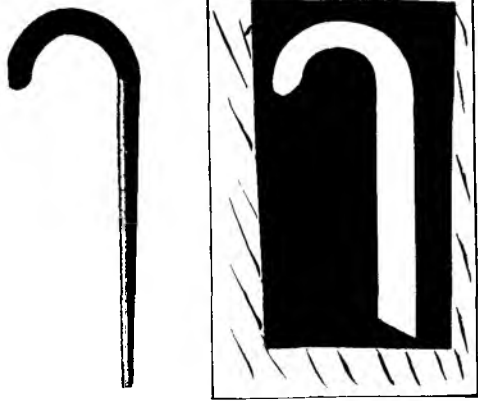


Ill. 3

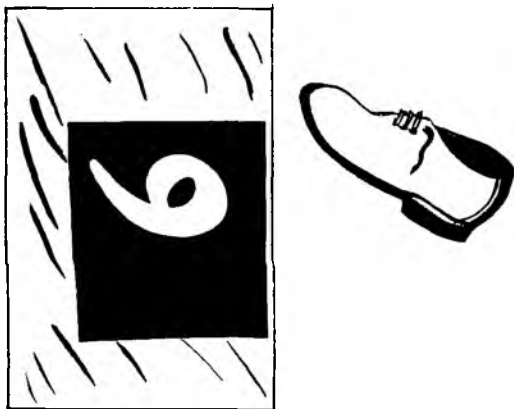


Ill. 4

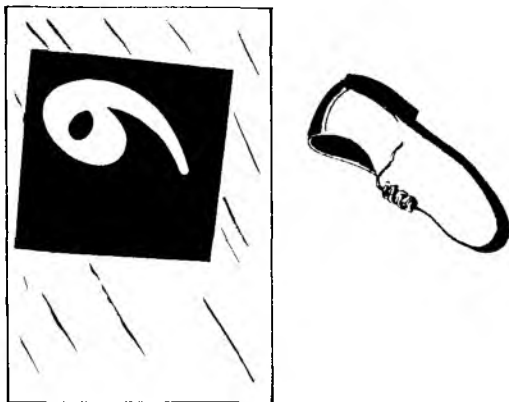
in shape and sound, known to the learner. The 'matras' of ण is related to a wooden staff or डंडा (ill. 3), the matras of ण, ण to a walking cane or हड्डि (ill. 4 & 5) and the 'matras' or ष, ष to



III. 5



III. 6



III. 7

shoe or जूता (ill. 6 & 7). Learning thus to identify the 10 'matras' may not again take more than a week.

After about two weeks the learner is ready to read and write small words by identifying and joining the 'akshars' with 'matras' slowly in the beginning and speeding up after gaining confidence. At the end of four to six week, spending an hour a day on learning, the adult becomes passably literate. From here on learning will be self-guided.

To saddle simple literacy simultaneously with numeracy, arithmetic and other components of functional literacy, though essential for a complete literacy person, would be a drag and counter productive. The learner may lose his heart for learning and/or confidence in his capacity to learn. The result: he may soon be seen scurrying out of the classroom, never to return.

UNESCO also distinguishes between literacy and functional literacy. It defines a literate as "one who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life" and a functionally literate as "one who is able to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading writing and calculation for his own and the community's development."

To universalize adult literacy, we must take the first step to simple literacy and, following it, proceed to functional literacy encompassing arithmetic and a wide spectrum of knowledge, securing for the learner his spurs as an active and useful member of the community.

If efforts at generating literacy are to be held off from falling into a limbo, the clear distinction between literacy and functional literacy has to be recognized and preserved. Universal simple literacy can be achieved in

less than two months with the aid of the object-alphabet association method. Blending of the known object with the unknown alphabet will take away most of the pain inherent in the traditional learning method, and also cut down drastically on the time consumed and money spent. This method has been used successfully in several parts of the world. In India, it was used with good results in some Uttar Pradesh villages in the past year.

Student volunteers may be asked to teach for two months during their summer vacation, when adult learner in villages have very little farm work. But, if deemed necessary, Government should be ready to invest one academic session to this task. In the materialistic West, young men and women are encouraged to gift a year or two of their young life for voluntary missionary work among the backward and disadvantaged in their own land or overseas in return for a small stipend for subsistence. Can young Indians with hallowed national tradition of idealism and heroic self-sacrifice keep back, especially when the stakes are so high?

But the simmering embers of voluntary service need to be stoked into a raging fire by, I repeat, top politicians and bureaucrats, in the first instance. The gauntlet will be picked up by many in time at lower levels. The national will to succeed must descend from the heights of 'gangotri', roaring down through the lowlands.

NLM has already let the learning period be sliced from one year to six months and cost per learner from Rs 400 to nearly Rs 75. Concentrating or zeroing in on simple literacy achievable in two months will give a mighty push to the mired vehicle of adult literacy and heave it over the intractable hump. After it, we would be able to say as did a German farm woman years ago in reply to my question whether she could read and books laid on her mantelpiece: "Your question is like asking me whether I can breathe!"

A final roadblock to the fast spread of adult literacy in our country is the lack of motivation among learners and instructors to come to the classroom and stay still the last day of the learning period. An incentive in some form or shape is necessary. For learners, for example, it may be group insurance bought by NLM, entitling a rickshaw-puller, a cart-pusher or a labourer who comes to a literacy class to medical expenses in the event of injury, and his immediate family to a maintenance allowance in the even of death. The breadwinner who is unable to save for the 'rainy day' will find the incentive irresistible.

For student instructors, the incentive may be a percentage of bonus marks awarded at the next examination or weightage in obtaining admission to a coveted course or securing a job.

No price is unaffordable to bring the light of literacy to a darkened land.

Basic Literacy Primer and Teacher's Guide - Important Points in the Development Process

— Satyen Maitra

Introduction

All the learning/teaching materials in the non-formal education programmes need to be prepared with great care because (a) one is not dealing with captive audience; (b) the potential learners shoulder a number of responsibilities which occupy most of their time and thoughts and (c) the motivation in the illiterate to become literate is rather poor as they belong to a largely pre-literate society.

The primers in non-formal education must (1) enable the learners to progress quickly in a short period of time; (2) be able to rouse and sustain the interest of the learners to stay the full course; (3) be in accord with the psychology of the learners; (4) include topics relevant to their life; (5) help the learners to follow the lessons easily and the instructors to teach easily; (6) develop literacy skill and functional content areas progressively in a particular primer and then continue the process in the following two primers; (7) facilitate easy evaluation in literacy and numeracy.

Profile of the Target Group

The target groups for this workshop* are the adolescents and adults in those less advanced regions of Asia and the Pacific, where the literacy rate is about 50% or more and where the illiterates are poor, under-

nourished, unhealthy and suffer from various disabilities - social, economic and political - which keep them in a state of dependence and prevent their active participation in the development process. At the same time, they may be illiterate but they are also wise and widely experienced with a large vocabulary at their command. These are some of the positive factors which help in the construction of the right kind of primers for them.

Objectives

Before any educational programme is taken up, objectives must be defined. Here, the objectives can be viewed as both short term as well as long term. The short term objectives are that through the use of three levels of primers broadly following the APPEAL model - basic, middle and self-learning - the learners will reach the point where they will have acquired enough proficiency in literacy to meet the demands of reading, writing and counting in their life without any external help. Another expectation is that the learners will gain enough understanding in the process of acquisition of literacy about some of the important areas in their life, such as health, nutrition and family welfare so that, to some extent, they will be able to improve their quality of life.

The long-term objective is that through post-literacy and continuing education, the creation of a body of autonomous self-reliant learners who will be rational individuals, responsible family members in a learning society and be active agents in the development of the country.

Survey

It is not the purpose here to give a detailed account of survey tools and procedures. Human beings are extremely complex and only a part of what they are may emerge out of even a careful survey. So, instead of depending wholly on survey to learn about the learners, it will be better if the primer writers are already acquainted with the life of the learners. In that case the survey will be an additional help to identify some broad problems. The broad problems then can be short-listed - so that only about four or five can be selected for gradual development of certain concepts through the three levels of the primers. The problems and issues need to be split up to be built into lesson units. Only those problems should be selected where an effective educational intervention is possible. However, the primers should not concentrate exclusively on the problems but should be 'mix' of relevant issues interspersed with other entertaining and interesting items. It should always be borne in mind that the primers must have a 'drawing' or 'pulling' power to claim the interest of the learners.

Primer Construction

It can be undertaken in a small workshop with one or two writers who have some experience of the focus group and who have the requisite technique of writing simply but effectively, an illustrator and a linguist. Topic specialists can be contacted if and when neces-

sary. In the workshop, certain decisions have to be taken, viz.-

- (a) Is the primer going to use standard spoken language? Experience has proved, dialectical variations are not very important and by and large the learners want to be made literate in the standard language because of its definite functional value. Only if there are different languages, then there may be an argument for constructing a primer in those languages provided (i) there is a sufficiently large number of illiterates in that language and (ii) a strategy is adopted to link it up later with the standard language at some point in the literacy situation.
- (b) Is the primer going to serve both the adults and the adolescents or should there be two different sets of primers?
- (c) Is the primer going to be an integrated one where in one book, reading, writing, arithmetic exercises and self-evaluation are combined or are there going to be separate work-books and numeracy books?
- (d) Is the workshop going to construct only the basic level primer or should it address itself to the construction of middle and self-learning levels following the APPEAL model? The basic level primer is the first important stage, but it needs to be closely linked with the two subsequent primers to yield the desired outcome.
- (e) The expectations from the primers can only be fulfilled if there is scope for discussion and dialogue on the issues raised in the lessons. What arrangement can be made to ensure the participation of the resource persons for the purpose?
- (f) The primers need meticulously planned Teacher's Guides to relate to all the users'

manuals. Should there be three separate Teacher's Guide for the three primers?

Writing the Primer

Writing needs to be given very careful attention. The recognition of letters begin with the primer. The lesson units needs to be constructed in such a manner that the learners can read simple words and sentences from the very beginning. That gives them a sense of achievement and quickens their rate of progress. In addition, the learners are getting acquainted with certain concepts and ideas which may interest them and attract their attention. Here, we backtrack to what had been discussed earlier about the objective of the literacy primers. It is not only the acquisition of self-reliant literacy, but also to enhance awareness and develop functional skills. To achieve all these, certain exercises need to be undertaken. These are:

- * Frequency Count: In all the languages, certain sounds (phonemes) and corresponding letters (graphemes) are used much more frequently in building up of words and sentences. These should be identified and used in making up the lessons from the start.
 - * There are certain key words which are important for the content areas. These key words can vary. They can be so general and neutral that they are hardly noticed. But some have the quality of jolting the learners and rousing their interest. It means in other words that the learners become aware of these words and like to explore them a little more deeply. It is not possible to find such words in every lesson but even a few will keep the readers' interest alive.
 - * An attempt should be made to select those key words which are composed of the frequently used letters. This will make for a congruence of literacy learning and development of interest in the content areas which is the aim of the primer.
 - * The initial lessons, the first three or four, will be the tricky ones, because with just a few letters, it will be difficult to construct interesting lesson units. But as the stock of letters increase, it becomes possible to prepare richer contents with an enhanced literacy skill.
- There are a few important points regarding primer construction:
- * No lesson unit should admit any letter which has not been introduced earlier or is not a part of the present lesson.
 - * Even in the basic primer, an attempt should be made to make the lessons readable and interesting. These should not be a string of didactic "do's" and "don'ts". The reading exercises should contain questions and queries generating discussion.
 - * Each lesson should have enough of drilling exercises. The learners should be encouraged to read words and sentences formed with new letters learnt and the letters learnt previously. Each new letter introduced should occur at least 6 or 7 times in the words and sentences. The words formed should be such that they are easily comprehended by the learners and are written with the compass of their experiences.
 - * The lesson units should, as far as possible, be cognitive
 - * Impart some affective aspects which touch their minds and psychomotor and help them to do something. All the lessons cannot be constructed like this, but even if a few are, the relevance of the primers will increase.

Pre-primary Stage – Experience Charts

One of the chief aims of this programme is quick acquisition of literacy. Since the learners know the language, their chief obstacle is recognition of letters - the visual symbols or graphemes which represent the sound symbols or phoneme. It is a question of relating phoneme to graphemes. Before the primers are started in the literacy centres, it may be a good practice to introduce experience charts. These can be the blow-ups of the captions of the first three or four lessons. The captions can also be written on a blackboard. The teacher reads them slowly and makes the learners repeat after him but does not at the moment attempt to teach the letters separately. It helps to familiarise the learners with the shape and appearance of the letters. The familiarisation speeds up the learning process when the primer teaching commences, because the learners are looking at something which are not strange to them.

Self-reading

It must be kept in mind that the final objective of the programme is to make the learners self-reliant in literacy so that they can rightfully take their place and contribute in a learning society. But this self-reliance has to be slowly nurtured and developed even from the basic primary stage. Necessarily, the basic primary stage is more rigidly structured and sequential and the approach necessarily is 'teacher centered'. But here also it has to be interwinded with an approach which should encourage the learners to practice self-reading as much as possible. In the middle level and the self-learning level, the instructor will have to be trained to plan for his gradual withdrawal from a dominant position and

learn to function more as a help, a support and a facilitator. Of course, there will remain areas in arithmetic and also in reading and writing, where the instructors' role cannot be diminished, but a conscious approach has to be taken to make the learning process much more 'learner centered'. If that does not take place, there will be too much of rote learning and memorization, which will distort and emasculate the programme.

Illustration

Good illustrations are essential parts of a primer. They serve various purposes if they are assigned specific roles and are not put in haphazardly.

- An illustration should accompany each caption which contains the message and is used for literacy instruction. The illustration should help in understanding and decoding the message.
- The illustrations can also be used for introducing topics for discussion in an organised manner.
- The illustrations must present the existential situation of the learners as truly as possible.
- The illustrations should match the visual literacy of the learners and should not be difficult for the learners to interpret.
- Colours must be used judiciously. Too much of colour can be distracting. Even black and white illustrations can be quite effective.

Editing

When the draft copy of the primer has been prepared, it must be carefully edited. Language, layout, type faces, arrangement and distribution of the matter, the technical soundness of the topics are all important parameters

of editing. Help of the layout artists and topic specialists may be necessary.

Field Testing

The draft primer can be photocopied in the requisite number of copies for field testing. The testing must be done by people who are active in the field of adult education. It must be done in a way which would elicit true response from the would-be learners. Testing must be done about the illustrations also. The sample for field testing should be chosen carefully. If there is a mis-match between the testing materials and those who are being tested, the results would be misleading.

Evaluation

Each primer should have 3 in-built evaluation schedules to test the progress of the learners with regard to both literacy and comprehension. These evaluations should not be treated as tests or examinations and should be primarily used for self-evaluation by the learners. This will help the learners to assess their own performance in a non-threatening way and in the process gain self-confidence. In all, there should be $3 \times 3 = 9$ evaluation schedules in the three primers. The final evaluation can also be external, but should be done by people who are acquainted with the literacy programme and the psychology of the grown-up learners. In addition, the reading, writing and numeracy competence of the learners can be assessed through various learning games. The whole process and methods of evaluation should be conducted in a manner which will be convivial to the learners, free from any fright or apprehension.

Apart from learners' evaluation, there should be evaluation of the different components of the whole programme in respect of

materials, training, competence of the instructors and the supervisors. Finally, there should be impact evaluation to find out whether the programme has succeeded in the behavioral change of the learners in a way which would be beneficial to them, their families and their communities.

Utilization

It is no use producing excellent learning/teaching materials and even a well constructed Teacher's Guide, unless there is a scope for their utilization on a large scale. To do that, there should be political will and commitment and involvement of the administrative machinery to undertake the eradication of illiteracy programme in a given area. Fragmentary uncoordinated approaches have been utterly wasteful.

In a recent International Symposium of Adult Education organised by the UNESCO and Osaka University, it was stressed that there should be a National Adult Education Authority in each country with a clear statement of objective and a general outline of the programme. The first task of this authority is to create a positive environment for adult education in the country and then mobilize men and resources to accomplish the task. It is only then production and utilization of materials on a large scale becomes justifiable and meaningful.

The Teacher's Guide

ATLP (APPEAL Training Materials for Literacy Personnel) has stressed the importances of relevant training for the teachers. If the learning/teaching materials do not have a clear objective and a logical structure of steps to reach that objective, training also becomes a haphazard irrelevant exercise introducing and

dwelling on topics which have little practical value for the teachers. But, with a planned curriculum, a well formulated syllabus, the preparation of the right kind of learning/teaching materials, the thrust of training should be on the effective utilization of the materials - not only in the area of literacy but also in the areas of awareness and creation of functional skills.

A great lacuna which existed earlier and still exists was just some sort of induction training - an one shot operation - which the teachers found woefully inadequate to deal with the nitty-gritty of teaching. So they took the line of least resistance and fell back on how they had been taught in the formal schools and not on how they have been taught to use the methodology now. So, there was a hiatus between the learning materials and the teaching method. There was another great deficiency. There was no time-frame to follow in regard to reading, writing, arithmetic and discussion. In this laissez-faire approach, some components were badly neglected. the whole literacy process became lop-sided. There were many other defects, but the main shortcoming was that it was not systematic.

The Teacher Guide for the use of basic literacy materials should overcome all these deficiencies. Each lesson in the primer is taken up separately and a detailed direction about two the lesson is to be presented is given,

following a time-schedule. Reading, writing, arithmetic and discussion are all covered. Any teacher will find the Guide much more useful than some vaguely remembered observations made by the trainer ages ago. All the lessons in the primer, in entirety, should be incorporated in the Guide, so that the teacher does not have to refer to the primer separately. This makes it possible for the teacher to assess the performance of the learners at the end of the learning session; whether the targets set for the day in terms of literacy, numeracy and discussion have not been attained. For this, a systems approach, as indicated in ATLP is helpful. There can be a systems approach to the total programme and there can be a systems approach to each lesson unit or a manual in respect of input of materials and teaching aids, process of interaction with the learners and the output of what has been learnt. The teacher can then decide whether the objectives for the day have been a bit too ambitious, whether the inputs have been properly introduced, whether the process of interaction can be made a little more attractive and acceptable, so that the expected outcomes become possible.

A good Teacher's Guide is indispensable for this programme. It can make up for the deficiencies or even the absence of a training course!

* This Paper was presented in the First Sub-regional workshop on the Basic Literacy Reading Materials in Asia & the Pacific - Calcutta, India 14 - 25 July 1992.

Learning Outcomes — The Central Concern in Total Literacy Campaigns

— *R.S. Mathur*

During the last two years of the Seventh Five-Year Plan we all have witnessed the adoption of an approach to literacy promotion which has excited the whole nation. The approach has shown tremendous potential, promise and also success in various parts of the country to check further growth of illiteracy and promote the attainment of the goal of 'total literacy' in a specified area through Mass Campaign in a time-bound period.

This is not to say that mass campaign approach was never tried out in India before. We have had mass campaigns for literacy in the thirties and again in early sixties (the latter only in Maharashtra). The significant aspect of both the campaigns was lack of attention to the levels of literacy and numeracy achieved. While neither of the two campaigns involved much financial expenditure, they did involve great investment of human resources - the time of workers as well as the learners. If, as seems likely, those campaigns did not, in any significant fashion, change the living and working conditions of the people, we have to make sure that those mistakes are not repeated.

Parallel is often drawn between the Indian literacy campaign and the campaigns launched in Tanzania and Ethiopia. Such comparisons are vacuous. Tanzania and Ethiopia,

whatever be the limitations of their situation, have envisioned literacy campaigns as part of fundamental socio-economic and socio-cultural transformation. These literacy campaigns were organised in a single party political system, which had the authority to compel all citizens to participate in the literacy programme. The situation in India is quite different. We cannot always hold out a promise of better future for the literate people, for the simple reason that mass education is not accompanied by redistributive justice and dismantling of age-old social, economic and political power structures. If, therefore, young people in India are to pursue their literacy courses to a satisfactory level, it has to be out of respect for learning, assertion of personal will and a motivational environment created by mass mobilisation. The situation is full of ironies and contradictions. And yet the Government, non-government organisations, and masses of people in several parts of the country are bracing themselves for a massive literacy campaign.¹

The National Literacy Mission (NLM) has laid down specific levels of literacy to be achieved by all learners. Even where short duration campaigns are being launched, and workers as well as learners are impatient to conclude the literacy campaign as early as possible, an insistence is being made on achievement of the prescribed levels of reading,

writing and arithmetic. Indeed, there is constantly a danger that rhetoric and euphoria will have the better of the literacy campaign, to a disregard of systematic application of teaching and learning processes and consequently non-attainment of satisfactory levels of achievement by the learners.

An attempt is therefore being made here to raise some of the questions concerning methods and procedures of evaluation of learning outcomes which may be agitating the minds of the organisers of TLCs. As a result, it is possible that at some places, in the absence of fuller understanding of these factors, ad-hoc, unsystematic and technically unsound measures and practices to evaluate the learning outcomes may be or are being followed and the TLC image may fall into disrepute. Before we move to the specific questions relating to evaluation of learning outcomes, it may be worthwhile to list some of the broad guiding principles which should help us in formulating answers to fundamental issues and questions concerning evaluation of learning outcomes in TLC situations.

We, all are conscious that 'Total Literacy Campaigns' involve large sections of the population and are massive in character; they are characterized by complexity of operations; there are contextual variations in their management structures and programme setting, there is a lack of uniformity in the understanding, appreciation and practice of pedagogical requirements suiting to programme design and consequently, substantial ad-hocism in various components of programme implementation prevails - more so in the area of assessment of learning gains and evaluation of learning outcomes. There is obviously a need to recognize and follow in the conduct of learner evaluation certain guiding principles enumerated below:

Guiding Principles

- (a) The evaluation procedure and methods should be simple, intelligible and non-threatening to permit their large scale use. Any complexity would result in non-acceptance and non-use.
- (b) The procedures should be systematic and progressional and not ad-hoc. They should permit some comparability.
- (c) The scheme of evaluation should be technically sound and based on scientific criteria and accepted standards and norms.
- (d) The evaluation process, and particularly the testing design, has to be aligned to the norms of literacy attainment prescribed under NLM. Any deviation from these norms would mean serious injustice to the learners.
- (e) The test construction could remain flexible, yet conforming to a commonly accepted design.
- (f) To enable a proper and effective system of learner's evaluation, it is essential to identify broad elements of learning and design a blue print which would help in evolving a number of parallel tests. This would permit the building of appropriate capabilities in the testing teams to carry out evaluation and at the same time build an element of 'externality'.
- (g) The mode of testing or administration of the test has to be such which helps in discovering the degree of learning rather than the failure. It should encourage learners to come and participate in evaluation and not discourage them to run away from the testing situations. 'Test anxiety' may affect the performance and show a shortfall in the achievement level of

learners. Evaluation should therefore be treated as an occasion for festivity, for celebration, for enjoyment and not to degrade or humiliate the learner.

Having agreed on the guiding principles, it has to be ensured that these get built into the methodology of learner evaluation. Once it is done, it will be seen that it could facilitate its large scale application. The answers to the questions that follow will explain how a seemingly difficult task could be carried out with proper understanding, sufficient ease and reasonable degree of technical soundness.

What should be evaluated?

The objective of the National Literacy Mission is to impart functional literacy to eighty million illiterates in 15-35 age group by 1995. In concrete terms, 'functional literacy' implies:²

- * **achieving self-reliance in literacy and numeracy;**
- * **becoming aware of the causes of deprivation and moving towards amelioration of these through organization and participation in the process of development;**
- * **acquiring skills to improve the economic status and general well-being; and**
- * **imbibing the values of national integration, conservation of the environment, women's equality, observance of small family norm, etc.**

While thinking of evaluating the attainments of learners, it is obvious that all the objectives mentioned above ought to be evaluated. Ideally, it is essential that during learners evaluation, all the three elements

mentioned below get evaluated and we should find out whether the programme enabled the learners:

- * **to develop the desired levels of reading, writing and numeracy (literacy);**
- * **to raise their functional capabilities with regard to their personal, economic and social life (functionality); and**
- * **to acquire awareness regarding their personal and social predicament (awareness).**

Practical considerations demand that while 'functionality' and 'awareness' constitute important elements of functional literacy, and would require to be evaluated the present stage of the programme, in TLC areas (short duration, variance in level of Volunteer Competence) suggests that it may be enough for the present to evaluate the learning outcomes in literacy (3 Rs) and assume that these will automatically develop gradually, if they reach NLM norms. Moreover, if tests included in the package of materials are used and preserved these would indirectly indicate the changes in areas of 'awareness' and 'functionality'. Similarly, while testing for literacy, the passage meant for Reading could be so written and questions on Comprehension so framed as would indicate the possible level of awareness of the learner. This underlying inter-relationship of the three components and their inseparability suggests that with any single component being mastered, the probability of the learner not acquiring the other abilities would be very rare. It is also well known that awareness is not 'constant'. To determine the change, one may have to resort to other methods of evaluation which may go against the principle of 'simplicity' and may not be 'technically sound', if carried out imper-

fectly. Nevertheless, testing situations could be created to indirectly assess and estimate the gains in these areas. This, however, will have to be content-specific and contextual and may vary from place to place in relation to what was taught.

As far literacy is concerned (which is the immediate goal of TLCs), it has to be tested with total rigour and no person should be declared literate unless he/she has reached the NLM norms. Tools and instruments for evaluation of learning outcomes should be such as help us in knowing what the learners could learn, rather than what they could not learn.

In short, efforts in TLCs should be specifically directed to determine the gains of learning in literacy, but wherever feasible, other components could also be tested. Test in literacy is however, a must and has to be conducted with all seriousness and rigour.

How should evaluation be done?

The methodology of evaluation of learning outcomes has to be systematic and technically sound without being complex or complicated. As said before, in order to ensure large scale use and application, it has to be simple, easy and intelligible to users. The steps and procedures suggested here may therefore encourage their use and hopefully, these would not be avoided or ignored.

Step 1

Periodic Progress Evaluation

It is a known fact that one-time, terminal or summative evaluation causes unnecessary tension, anxiety and entails a threat element. On the contrary, continuous, in-built system of evaluation reduces these undesirable effects and also helps in optimizing the results and

outcomes. This has been one of the prime considerations in including tests at regular periodicity in the package of materials designed under Improved Pace and Content of Learning (IPCL) pedagogy. The IPCL package treats learner evaluation as an exercise in self-evaluation for the learner and for the Instructor/Volunteer as a device for diagnostic evaluation to adjust her/his pace of teaching with learners' progress and performance. The expectation in a scheme of learner evaluation is that the Tests (1 to 9) provided in 3-part Primers will be used during the teaching-learning process and contribute to an improvement in the quality of output and reduce the chances of shortfalls in performance levels. It is, therefore of utmost significance that completion of these tests by the learners is insisted upon by TLC authorities. Apart from serving this academic requirement, these tests also constitute an important record of learner's performance, progress and final achievement.

Step 2

Terminal Achievement Test

As indicated above, the matter of evaluating the performance of adults has to be approached with great caution. Experience suggests that any form of disapproval shown towards adult learners tends to discourage them so that they drop out of literacy courses. This can pose a problem since society and employers expect a certain standard of literacy to be reached. So how can a satisfactory level of literacy be reached if you cannot criticise adults? It is now believed that, if the learning objectives have been clearly agreed at each stage of a literacy course by both the learner and teacher, adults are capable themselves of noting their progress and of putting right their shortcomings. Thus informal self-evaluation is particularly appropriate for adults and is a

good way of involving them in their own learning.³

However, apart from self-evaluation, sometimes evaluation of the achievement of the learners in the presence of outsiders also becomes necessary and therefore cannot be totally ruled out. While it is desirable that the terminal test/final test is given by the volunteers/instructors. Some people do not place a high value on such tests and doubt about the veracity of the results of these tests. In such situations it is useful to associate outsiders like school teacher, Village Pradhan, Postmasters in the conduct of evaluation and their very presence may help in giving greater credibility to the test results.⁴ The last test in the IPCL package (T-9) serves as the final test and a person who completes this test and performs equally well in reading, writing and numeracy can be regarded as having become literate as per NLM norms because the tests are in consonance with these norms. However, it is essential that all learners should take the test, complete the portions in the primer which will serve as a useful record for any future reference and further verification, if necessary.

Step 3

Evaluation of learning outcomes by external teams

In mass literacy campaigns, on account of involvement of several thousands of volunteers and lack of total belief in their objectivity in testing the learners, it becomes necessary to also associate external evaluators to determine the efficacy of the campaign and degree of the success in making the people literate. These teams are generally composed of members who are knowledgeable in evaluation

techniques and methods and have worked with adults earlier also. However, their exposure to field realities may not be equally adequate. They, therefore require some guidelines about the manner in which tests can be prepared which are comparable throughout the country - What items could be included in the test papers, what may be the scoring pattern, what weightage should be given to different elements of literacy skill and how much score should a learner obtain in each of these skills so as to qualify himself/herself to be a literate person and what should be the minimum score, out of the maximum fixed which should be acquired by a literate person in the test.

We will take up each of these points one by one:

1. Test Construction

While tests can be designed in numerous ways, one major consideration in our context should be that it has to be based on the competencies laid-down under NLM and the alignment with each of the sub-competency under reading, writing and numeracy had to be perfect. The tests items have to be chosen in such a manner that they are in consonance with the elements of learning involved in each sub-competency. In this sense, it may be preferable to design a test parallel to the one included in the primer as T-9. However, for the sake of uniformity, some common principles of test construction have been enunciated in the Report of Dave Committee constituted by Executive Committee of National Literacy Mission Authority and it may be advantageous if these are followed for universal application. What has been suggested by this Committee is in the nature of a 'blue print', on the basis of which hundreds of tests with identical difficulty level could be prepared by the evaluators.⁵ Thus, in

a district, one could prepare as many tests as one desired without losing the element of comparability.

2. Weightages

Under literacy, three components are involved namely reading, writing and numeracy. Reading is more than decoding letters and words on a page. Reading is understanding, absorbing, wondering at, getting lost in the story or the information which the letters and words convey.⁶ It is therefore considered that reading is the most important and highly used skill, particularly by those who are learning literacy. Therefore, while giving weightages to different components, it may be worth consideration that reading should be given a slightly higher weightage than the other two components of writing and numeracy. Assuming that if the test is divided into three parts and the maximum score assigned to the test is 100, perhaps it may be possible to assign a score of 40 to reading, 30 to writing and 30 to numeracy. However, while judging the performance of the learners it is also necessary to observe that they develop fairly reasonable degree of competence in all the three skills. Hence out of the total score assigned to reading, writing and numeracy, they should obtain a minimum of 50% in each. Thus, if a person secures less than 20 out of 40 in reading, and less than 15 out of 30 in writing and numeracy each, she/he may not be considered to have become literate.

3. Cut-off points

The analysis and interpretation of test results has to be done with lot of care and

caution. It will be unfair for the learners to be categorised into **pass** or **fail** because each learner who has attended the programme and participated in the teaching-learning process is expected to gain something. What is that something? The test should be such which indicates this. The learner may not become a proficient literate and may not have reached NLM norms but where has he/she reached in the learning continuum needs to be understood and the change noted. Therefore, what is proposed here is that the description of achievements of the learners should be by ranges of scores obtained by them so that even if the persons are not classified as literate, their extent of learning may be determined. The principle which guides us in this regard is that the test results should indicate what the learners know and how much they know rather than what they do not know? The following ranges are therefore proposed:

- a) 50% or below
- b) Between 50 and 59%
- c) Between 60 and 69%
- d) Above 70%

However, it also needs to be admitted that while those securing above 70% in the literacy test would only qualify to be literates, the others could be regarded as falling far below NLM norms, would need substantial help to reach NLM norms and some remediation, respectively. It may further be mentioned that these ranges may need further examination after giving them a fair trial in the field. The experience of trying out these in some districts of West Bengal, however, gives us confidence and hope that these are working fairly satisfactorily and can be adopted for wider use and application on a country wide scale.

Step 4

Test without threat: mode of administration

The mode of administration of a test makes all the difference. It can become most threatening if it is organised in a very formal and tense situation. It can also become a pleasant activity if the external element is kept to a minimum and the groups or the individuals are allowed to take the tests in an informal setting. But it all depends on the manner in which the organisers of evaluation are trained. Therefore if the training is properly organised and if the participants have understood the spirit and the approach to evaluation, they will ensure that it does not become threatening but remains an activity which is free from fear, anxiety and tension. Any procedure or tool of evaluation cannot as such make the process a joyful exercise. Therefore, those who have to administer the test and engage themselves in learner evaluation, require proper orientation so as to make it an exercise without threat.

Who should do evaluation?

In TLCs, we are committed to the ideology of internal evaluation. It is expected that literacy workers and development agents, would pay serious attention to internal evaluation. Such evaluations absorb relatively fewer resources and can be used immediately to improve the effectiveness of literacy projects, programmes, and campaigns. Literacy workers should leave external evaluations to outsiders, who may do them to fulfill their own special policy and political needs. Indeed, if literacy and development workers have conducted their own internal evaluations, they will be better able to collaborate with external evaluators. The experience of organising

several projects, programmes and campaigns in different countries and of conducting evaluation workshops for literacy workers in Latin America, Asia and in African countries like Tanzania, Kenya, Botswana, Malawi and Zimbabwe during the last decade confirms the faith in internal evaluation.⁷

Moreover, it should be pointed out that external evaluations are by no means inherently objective; and internal evaluations are by no means naturally lacking in credibility. Both internal and external evaluations can be highly political and, therefore, suspect. On the other hand, both internal and external evaluations can serve important purposes in the context of special needs. There may be instances when external evaluation is necessary for making policy and planning decisions at some levels of decision-making. Most of the time, however, it is internal evaluation that makes sense, enabling practitioners to take control of their program and helping them to grow in the process.⁸

While recommending internal evaluation of the learning outcomes it is being suggested here that external evaluation could be resorted to on a sample basis only to verify facts and establish credibility for the programme as well as for the achievements made in the total literacy campaigns.

Education for All

In the World Conference on 'Education For All' one of the tenets was that apart from access and participation, achievement of satisfactory standards of learning should be emphasised in literacy and continuing education programmes all over the world so that wastages are minimum and results are more permanent. It is in this context that evaluation of learning outcomes is being emphasised and

the TLCs would have to address themselves to this vital question so that the achievements made by them are genuine, reliable and acceptable.

If after all this discussion is over, all of us concerned with TLCs do not do self-analysis and initiate a multiplication process, then we will belong to the group (as referred to by Indonesians) - NATO group "No Action Talk Only".

To sum up, it may be useful to remind ourselves of the following quotation from United Republic of Tanzania

"We view basic education for all, as an issue of survival or death. Either we win this war or we perish". The challenge must be faced and with confidence, our hopes can be realized.

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Moving Up the Learning Curve

— *Roda Mehta*

The National Literacy Mission has been more than a learning experience. Ever since the Department of Adult Education laid out its brief, the Mission has continuously evolved into a full-fledged communication and research exercise and with remarkable success.

But, it indeed needed a lot of brainstorming all along the way:

- * To make 80 million adults between the age of 15 and 35 years functionally literate by 1995; and
- * To achieve this by generating a "mass voluntary movement" in the country. In fact, one that didn't rely on the government as the sole catalyst.

The route suggested was to build a positive value association with literacy; to prepare and motivate learners to accept the learning process; and to motivate the educated to offer themselves voluntarily for the each-one-teach-one or teach-few programme.

The Methodology

Urban areas in four States - Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa and Gujarat - and three metropolitan cities were identified for the communication exercise. The first step involved travelling into the districts of Sabarkantha in Gujarat; Unnao and Barabanki in Uttar Pradesh, Sikar in Rajasthan; and to the cities

of Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Aligarh, Jaipur, Bombay and Delhi.

We spoke to as many people as we could - personnel at the State Education Departments and Resource centres; administrators at universities, voluntary agencies and youth bodies; and instructors, trainers, supervisors, learners and potential learners who still needed to be enrolled. We attended day and night centres and training programmes for instructors and for supervisors. We met with village pradhans as well as villagers.

And so began the process of distillation. At the same time, we came to understand the method by which the adult literacy movement had to be generated.

The Concept of a Mass Movement

A "mass movement" had to ignite itself within a very short span of time - three months at the outset. Once the momentum built up, the perceived value of literacy had to be quickly felt and disseminated with the delivery system responding to all enquiries, offering active encouragement and guidance during the 150-hour learning process. Otherwise, the heightened energy that was created would dissipate rapidly.

The observation had an implication on the target set - that is 10 million illiterates to be made functionally literate each year for five years. Obviously, this pace won't be feasible.

It would more likely be a smaller amount in the initial years and then multiply exponentially later. The total target would be achieved this way.

transformation route the Adult Literacy Movement would take in India, with its momentum spurred by voluntary efforts and not relying on the government as its catalyst.

In fact, our field visits also raised some major issues on the brief itself:

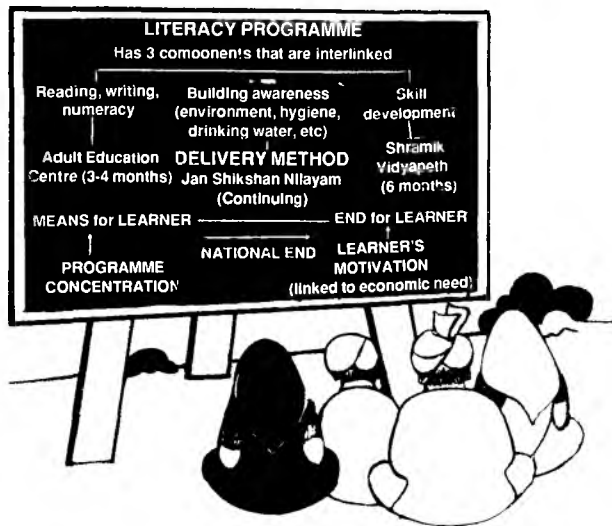
* Who are the key target segments among illiterates and neoliterates?

According to the brief, they were urban worker, women and poor, and rural farmers/labourers, women and scheduled castes/tribes. Our field visits revealed the need to redefine this group in a different order of priority. The first group was categorised as women (including SC/ST) in the age group of 15 to 17 years, unmarried; 15 to 20 years, married; and 20 years to 35 years, married.

The reason for segmenting women by age and marital status was that the motivation for a young married girl to become literate was higher value placed on a "literate bahu". For a married woman, the motivation was singular - to give her children a better future.

However, the reason for segmenting this further by age was because (sadly) by the time a woman reached 20 years she was a mother of two or three. She believed that her "life was over". So, her motivation to become literate was very low.

The second group in order of priority was men (including SC/ST) in the age group 15-20 years and 21-35 years. The reason was that the younger men still aspired to do better while men over 21 years were fatalistic and negative in their approach. They seemed unlikely to adopt the programme. The exception was the SC/ST men who perceived literacy as the only means of release from their conditions of deprivation.



A Mass Movement Cannot be Structured

It cannot be planned formally, it has to spring out of the action taken for the programme. This can happen in one of the two ways. First, it can be led by an individual for a common cause that has widespread appeal seeping downwards (as happened with Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and indeed even Robin Hood).

On the other hand, the ignition can be provided by an individual who responds to a call. The movement would then grow from the conviction and belief of many such individuals who influence their environment and their group. Which, in turn would change a community, create ripples in a state, and finally galvanise a Nation. We believed this was the

In addition to these two groups, we recommended that children between 9 years and 14 years - who were school drop-outs - should also be covered if the programme was to succeed. Otherwise the inflow into the tank of illiterates in the 15-35 years age group would be faster than the outflow.

In summary then, the order of priority was women (15-35 years), and men and women (SC/ST, 15-35 years old); children (9-14 years); and men (15-25 years).

* Was there a divergence in programme means and learner's ends?

We observed that the learner's interest lay in skill development with the aim of improving his or her economic status; reading, writing and numeracy that aided this process was all that was desired. On the other hand, the concentration of the literacy programme was in imparting the 3 Rs while the national objective was to build awareness for economic, social and civic advancement.

Beyond Literacy Campaigns

— T. Sundararaman

It is still too early to evaluate the impact of total literacy campaigns at the national level. Nevertheless from available experience and evaluation reports one can safely surmise the following achievements:

- A considerable increase in educational awareness as a result of the entire campaign. The campaign elements that create this awareness include not only the teaching-learning process in which millions are involved but also the thousands of rallies, padayatras, public speeches, publicity through media and above all the use of cultural forms in the 'kala jatha' mode, that communicate the message of literacy and education for all.
- The development of literacy and numeracy skills in millions of illiterate every year and empowerment of those people who usually belong to the weakest sections of our society.
- The creation of a large voluntary force with varying degrees of training. Even if such a force is not permanent, the social impact of the mobilization of lakhs of youth in the prime of their life for such a patriotic task has its great positive relevance, taking into consideration the disturbing trends which are developing in contemporary Indian society.
- The creation of participatory structures at the village, panchayat, block and district levels which allows the wide participation of

different sections of people in a developmental programme and provides them with an experience of organisation and mobilisation. The skills, confidence and optimism generated by such participation is itself a valuable force.

- The new experience and precedence that it provides for various government officials, especially the collectors and senior district officials to work with people in a non-bureaucratic participatory mode.
- The improvement in performance in fulfillment of various related developmental targets either as part of its integration into the campaign strategy or as an unintended outcome. For example, campaigns have reported massive increases in school enrolment, total immunizations and achievement of family planning targets.

Despite the impressive list of such achievements these outcomes are limited by a number of factors. Many of these arise out of the short duration or the relatively restricted focus of the campaign.

The major limitation of the campaign is the fragile nature of literacy that it provides to the neo-literate. Thus a significant number remains semi-literate. Many of them even remain uncovered.

Another major limitation of the campaign is the relatively transient nature of the voluntary force as well as participatory structure

that are created as well as their weakness in terms of knowledge, skills and organisational experience.

A third major limitation arises from the fact that though literacy is a pre-condition for development both individual and social, such development does not automatically flow from literacy. The levels of knowledge, skills and organisations necessary for development, especially in view of the prevailing inequities and the active play of numerous vested interests that perpetuate social, economic and cultural backwardness, is much higher than what is achieved by a literacy campaign.

Unless subsequent programmes and participatory action is planned for, there is a real danger that much of the benefits gained by the campaign including the excitement and awareness generated, will be subsequently lost. Equally important is that even if it is retained, the tremendous potential for further development that these campaigns create is altogether missed.

To some organisations and individuals, especially those not involved in the campaigns, these limitations become a reason for decrying the campaign. This is unfortunate for these campaigns do represent solid advances by the people in the midst of a number of disturbing trends. What is needed is a greater unity and mobilisation to consolidate, plan for and work for building upon whatever achievements have been made. Otherwise it would only represent another lost opportunity for various committed sections who are working for a positive social change.

It is, with this understanding that the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti is working to develop various strategies beyond the literacy campaign.

Some of the campaigns that can or indeed must be taken up after all the literacy campaigns are the post-literacy campaigns, the library movement, campaigns for gender equity and for universalisation of elementary education. Others like health and local area planning need more preparatory work but are also possible to be initiated in the near future.

The Post-Literacy Campaign

This programme aims to help the neo-literate to stabilise and upgrade his or her literacy and numeracy skills and become more capable of autonomous learning. It also help them apply their newly-acquired skills for their daily needs. Equally important, it assists them in acquiring the skills, knowledge and organisational experience necessary for a better participation in the development process.

The learning strategies envisaged for it include the neo-literate covering a post-literacy text designed to stabilize their literacy skills and help them become autonomous learners. The provision of adequate quantity of pedagogical and context wise appropriate neo-literate reading material in the form of newspaper, periodicals and books and a strategy to ensure their utilization is another bulwark of the post-literacy strategy. Unstructured learning opportunities provided by creating a 'literate environment' by the use of literacy wall-writings, posters etc will also help. Special programmes for specific clientele groups e.g. non-formal education courses for children, vocational training courses for young adults, income generation schemes for weaker sections, further upgradation of courses for sections which seek entry into the formal educational stream may also be built into the programme.

The entire post-literacy programme must impart the neo-literate, a multiplicity of media methods and a programme of non-formal education that may help them to provide with a better understanding of the world, nature, science and the society, and the optimism that can transform their collective action for transformation and Development..

The Library Movement

An integral part of the post-literacy programme and yet in some ways distinct from it, is the concept of a library movement. It played a vital role in our independence movement as cultural centres for charge, especially in the states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. Unfortunately after independence, it survived only in Kerala. There is much to be learnt from that experience. Today, in the wake of the literacy campaigns, there is a scope for building up a library in every village and hamlet, not only for the neo-literate but for the village as a whole. The limited experience available so far also indicates a good response for such a move. However much work is needed for preparation of suitable books in a wide range of subjects. Larger state-funded libraries could be made available at every panchayat, perhaps as a part of this campaign.

Campaigns for Gender Equity

A majority of the participants of the literacy campaign - both learners as well as volunteer teachers - are women. The teaching learning process has provided self confidence and skills to both the learner and the volunteer teacher. To many it has been their first experience of a social role or working for women's organisation.

Programmes that generate awareness about gender equity, that mobilize women

against inequities and discrimination, help them to organize and find self employment or enhance their income are all possible in the post-literacy period. However, the task of training a suitable women's leadership for these programmes and the actual implementation of such strategies have yet to be initiated.

Universalization of Elementary Education

A participatory strategy for integration of UEE in the Total Literacy Campaigns has remained elusive due to many factors. Infact the problems and the tasks of UEE are so much larger. The thrust in the emerging plans are however directed to

- retraining the primary school teachers to energize the school atmosphere, making teaching and learning an enjoyable process, and to make the curriculum locally adaptable and relevant. This itself will help to reduce wastage in primary education by both reducing drop-outs and ensuring higher attainment levels.
- mobilizing the community to create a demand for better access and quality of primary education. This will not only help to utilize available local resources in a better way but will provide additional available resources in the community. This will also facilitate the teaching learning process as well as ensure total enrolment, better retention and optimal functioning of non-formal education.
- Micro planning - on the basis of village level child survey and ensuring that a child by child strategy is evolved by the community with such an educational system that every child goes to school, is retained there or at

least has an access to qualitative non-formal education.

Such a 'campaign' for U.E.E. will be of a longer duration requiring different and variety of mobilisational strategies than the campaign for literacy.

Campaigns for Health

A number of health targets especially immunisation, control of water-borne diseases by the provision of safe drinking water and sanitation measures, eradication of certain endemic diseases e.g. guinea worm or leprosy etc., may be achievable through time-bound participatory campaigns. Specific inputs into certain areas like nutrition and maternal and child health care may lead to a perceptible measurable change in the health status of the population. Programmes in these areas have suffered because though technical inputs are usually available, the necessary societal will and understanding has not been generated for successful implementation of these schemes. The post-literacy campaign situation offers unique possibilities for implementing innovative programmes with the full participation of the people. Various models for such an approach have been worked out by various people's science movements, though they are yet to be projectized or field tested.

Local Area Planning

Campaigns for developing local action plans for sustainable development based on resource mapping and optimum land and water utilization are currently being tried out by the Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad. Though such planning requires larger technical inputs and organizational work, the potentialities it offers for alternative development

strategies that benefit the majority of the population is immense.

Unanswered Questions

The postulation of so many possible campaigns and action plans in the post-literacy and beyond literacy phase also brings with it a number of new question and problems.

Will the voluntary force and participatory structures created by literacy be sustainable?

Will the conceptual and technical inputs needed for such action plans be available in time to make use of the opportunities?

Will the nature of whole-hearted administrative co-operation that literacy secured be available for such programmes?

Will the vested interests, who are alarmed by the literacy campaigns tolerate further campaigns?

Will the political will be available to carry through these programmes?

There are no easy answers to these questions.

Indeed already a number of post-literacy programmes are floundering due to a lack of political will.

However there are also enough indications that there are administrators and voluntary organisations who are coming forward to plan and lead further programmes.

Perhaps the only answer that we can be secure in, is that such programmes that necessitate further mobilisation, organisation and participation of the people will gradually build

up the knowledge, skills, organisational experience, confidence and optimism of people at the village level. It will provide them with the understanding of science and society and causes of their deprivation and sufferings, that is needed to transform their lives.

Though one need not claim any exclusivity to these processes as the determinants of change. However, it is clear that new possibilities have been created to the extent that such change is possible.

International Literacy Scenario

— Prem Chand

Introduction

Problem of illiteracy is mainly dependent on factors like population growth, progress of primary education and adult literacy programmes. While higher growth rate of population affects literacy adversely, faster progress of primary education and adult literacy improves the literacy situation. Economic development normally has positive effect on literacy through decrease in population growth and increase in investment on primary education and literacy programmes. Population growth, enrolment ratios at primary stage and literacy rate are considered very important elements of social indicators of development. There is no conflict between growth and human development. Literacy is one of the basic needs of human development.

Population Growth

Estimated population of world in 1980 was 4.45 billion, it increased to 5.29 billion by 1990. The average annual growth rate of population during this period was 1.8 percent. Population of the world is expected to cross 6 billion mark before the end of this century. Growth rate of population was higher in case of continents of Africa (3.0 percent), Asia (1.9 percent) and

Latin America and Caribbean (2.1 percent). Growth rate of population during 1980-90 was only 0.6 percent in case of developed countries and it was 2.1 percent in case of developing countries. Arab States with a population growth rate of 3.0 percent and some other countries including India contributed to the higher rate in the case of Asia.

Global Literacy Position

According to Unesco's estimates and projections as assessed in 1989, the number of adult illiterates aged 15 years and over in the world for 1990 was estimated at 962.6 million (Unesco 1990). The Unesco estimates and projections based on actual country data supplied by the United Nations Statistical Office, have however, estimated the number of illiterates aged 15 and over for 1990 at 948.1 million (Unesco 1991). It has been estimated that the literacy rate of this age group was 73.5% for the world in 1990. Past trends indicate that till 1985 the number of illiterates continued to rise despite increase in literacy rates from 61.5% in 1970 to 70.6% in 1985. These estimates also indicate that the increase in the number of illiterates has stabilised by

1990 and a declining trend has been set in motion as may be seen from the following data:

Table: 1 Estimated Illiterate Population and literacy rates for the population 15 years and over

Year	(in millions)	
	No. of Illiterates	Percentage of Literacy
1970	890.1	61.5
1985	949.5	70.6
1990	948.17	3.5
2000	935.4	78.2

Economic Development and Disparity in Literacy Rates

According to these estimates, literacy rate of the developing countries was 65% for 1990 as compared to 96.7% for developed countries. Southern Asia with a literacy rate of 46%, Sub-Sahara Africa with 47.3% and Arab States with 51.3% are main regions of low literacy. The above analysis brings out that there is a strong positive co-relation between economic development and the rate of literacy as is clear from the literacy scenario of the developed and developing countries. This relationship is also established by the fact that the literacy rate in the economically most developed countries is 96.7 percent whereas in the economically least developed countries it is only 39.6 percent. From Asia only two countries, namely Japan and Israel, are included among the developed countries, whereas six countries of Asia namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar and Nepal are included among the least developed countries.

Gender based Disparity in Literacy Rates

Disparity in literacy rates is based not only on the economic factor but also on gender con-

siderations. As compared to the literacy rate of 80.6% for males aged 15 years and over, it was projected to be only 66.4% for females for the year 1990 for the world as a whole. This shows a difference of 14.2 percent. Projections for the year 2000 show that this gap is expected to reduce to 12.8 percent by the year 2000. It means that this disparity is likely to continue for a few more decades. The literacy scenario of the developed and developing countries including the least developed countries also shows that with economic development not only the literacy rate improves, but the disparity in literacy rates based on gender also diminishes. Disparity in the literacy rates of males and females of developed countries is only 0.5 percent (Male 96.6 percent and female 96.1 percent) whereas it is as high as 19.9 percent in case of developing countries. It is still higher in the case of least developed countries, at 23.5 percent. Even among the developing countries, this disparity is still higher in the regions where the benefits of development have not reached the womenfolk due to social, religious and other considerations. The disparity in literacy rates of males and females is estimated at 26.3 percentage points for Arab States and 26.9 percentage points for Southern Asia. 28 countries of Africa, 14 countries in Asia and one country in Oceania were having more than 20 percentage point disparity in illiteracy rates between males and females.

Higher Illiteracy Areas/Countries

An analysis of the illiteracy situations among the 102 developing countries of the world indicate that there are only 3 countries which have illiteracy rate of less than 20 percent. Another 23 countries are such where the illiteracy rate ranges between 20-40 percent, 14 countries have illiteracy rate of 40-50 percent. 34 countries have illiteracy rate of more than 50 percent for the population aged 15 and over. Some of the important countries having

more than 50 percent adult illiteracy rate in 1990 were Angola, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Siera Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Uganda in Africa and Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Yemen in Asia. This analysis indicates that the concentration of the problem of high illiteracy is mainly in the continents of Asia and Africa. Country-wise analysis on the basis of the number of illiterates indicated that the major part of the problem of illiteracy of the world exists in 10 most populous countries of the developing world. About three fourth of the illiterates of the world reside in these 10 countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Each of these countries were having more than 10 million or more than 1 percent of the world's illiterates aged 15 years and over in 1990. Percentage of illiteracy, number of total illiterates and percentage to the world's illiterates in respect of these ten countries is given in table 2 below:

Table-2 Countries with 10 million and more illiterates aged 15 years and over in 1990:

Sr. No.	Country	Illiteracy Rate	Number of illiterates (in million)	Percentage of all illiterates to world Total
1.	India	51.8	280.7	29.6
2.	China	26.7	223.7	23.6
3.	Pakistan	65.2	43.5	4.6
4.	Bangladesh	64.7	42.0	4.4
5.	Nigeria	49.3	28.7	3.0
6.	Indonesia	23.0	27.0	2.9
7.	Brazil	18.9	18.4	1.9
8.	Egypt	51.6	16.5	1.7
9.	Iran	46.0	14.6	1.5
10.	Sudan	72.9	10.1	1.1
	Sub-Total		705.2	74.4
	World total	26.5	948.1	100.0

The above table indicates that about three fourth of the world's illiterates are con-

centrated in these ten countries. Even though, there are countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sudan, among these ten countries where the illiteracy rate is higher than India, yet in terms of number of illiterates India has the distinction of having the world's largest number of adult illiterates. 281 million out of 948 million of the world's illiterates representing about 30% are in India. India and China taken together represent more than half (53.2%) of the world's adult illiterates. No country other than India & China has more than 50 million or 5 percent of the world's illiterates. Problem of illiteracy of the world is thus closely linked with the illiteracy of these two countries in particular and the above ten countries in general.

Conclusion

UNESCO's programme of Education For All aims at reduction of adult illiteracy rate to about one half of 1990 level by the year 2000; with sufficient emphasis on female literacy to significantly reduce the current disparity between male and female illiteracy rates. The projections of illiteracy by the office of Statistics Unesco basically using the trend analysis indicate (Table 1) that the illiteracy rate is likely to decrease from 26.5 percent in 1990 to only 21.8 percent in 2000. This analysis therefore shows that if the total of education for all by 2000 is to be achieved, the existing trend will need to be improved substantially, particularly by the high illiteracy areas/countries of the world and the countries having large gender disparity in the literacy rates.

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Total Literacy Campaigns — An Unwritten Chapter in Indian History

— Lakshmidhar Mishra

The National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched on 5th May, 1988 by the former Prime Minister - late Shri Rajiv Gandhi at a formal function held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA), having two wings, namely a Council and an Executive Committee, was formed in June, 1988.

Two months later in a meeting in August 1988, Shri K.R. Rajan, the then Collector and District Magistrate, Ernakulam exuded a lot of confidence that Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) was possible, feasible and achievable in India and that a beginning could be made in Ernakulam.

Despite initial reservations, the proposal was supported by the NLMA and the State Government and a campaign for total literacy in Ernakulam was launched on 26th January 1989. The campaign, which was implemented by the Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, was a collaborative effort of the District Administration and Non-governmental organisations and was successfully concluded in December 1989.

On 4th February, 1990 Ernakulam was declared as the first fully literate district in the country. Out of 1.85 lakhs 1.35 lakh

potential learners reached the NLM levels of literacy and numeracy thus raising the rate of literacy of Ernakulam District from 77% to 98%.

It is on this day that a campaign for total literacy was also launched for the whole of Kerala State by the then Prime Minister of India - Shri V.P. Singh, who had earlier launched the International Literacy Year (ILY) on 22.1.1990, reinforcing the solidarity and support of Government to NLM.

Successful accomplishment of TLC in Ernakulam and taking up the TLC venture for the whole of Kerala State, with so much of political will and commitment acted as a powerful spring-board and spurred several State Governments, District Administrations and Voluntary Organisations to launch similar initiatives in the direction of total literacy.

The entire process was facilitated by formation of a Non-governmental organisation called "Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti" in August 1989 reinforced by a countrywide Caravan for Literacy during October, 1990 known as Bharat Gyan Vigyan Jatha sponsored and executed by the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti and another Caravan for Literacy in five States of

The views expressed in this paper are entirely those of the author and not that of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, Government of India.

Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh sponsored and executed by the Gandhian and Sarvodaya organisations.

The two caravans taken out at one of the most difficult periods of India history, had succeeded to a large extent to spread the message of literacy and science for self-reliance and to create the desired churning in favour of literacy and lifelong continuing education to inculcate a national, secular and scientific temper alongwith values of rational concern such as national integration, small family norm, women's equality and conservation of environment. These will remain as two important milestones in the history of literacy and adult education in India and the world.

As already mentioned, Ernakulam had an infective effect on other districts and TLCs in Bijapur and Dakshina Kannada in karnataka, Burdwan and Midnapur in West Bengal, Karaikkal, Mahe, Yanam and Pondicherry in the UT of Pondicherry and the State of Goa followed in quick succession. During the last three and a half years since launching of the TLC in Ernakulam, the number of TLC projects and TLC districts has grown progressively and as on 1st August 1992, as many as 106 projects (including combined projects of some cistricts in a state) involving 165 districts have been approved by the Executive Committee of the NLMA for being covered under TLC, which is an impressive indication by any account.

While the State of Kerala and the UT of Pondicherry were declared as fully literate on 18.4.1991 and 30.11.1991 raising the rate of literacy to 93.5% and 89.5% respectively, the districts of Bijapur and Dakshin Kannada in Karnataka; Chittoor and Nellore in Andhra Pradesh; Burdwan, Midnapur, Hooghly,

Birbhum, North 24-Parganas and Bankura in West Bengal; Sindhudurg and Wardha in Maharashtra, Gandhinagar and Bhavnagar in Gujarat, Pasumpon and Pudukottai in Tamil Nadu and Narsingpur in Madhya Pradesh have also concluded the first phase of their total literacy campaign, some successfully and some not so successfully.

While some have declared themselves as fully literate in a formal ceremonial function, some have simply closed the first phase of TLC and have started the post-literacy and continuing education phase after having shared the outcome of the first phase of the campaign with the people on whose mandate they had launched the campaign.

In all, 17 projects in 33 districts have been approved for post-literacy and continuing education, while about ten proposals for basic literacy and post-literacy (five each) are awaiting the approval of the Executive Committee, NLMA.

There have been several interesting and inspiring fall-outs of these campaigns (both TLC and PLC) which will be enumerated at a later stage.

What has been listed above is just not a catalogue of dates and events nor a calendar of months and years when certain events were launched and certain activities took place. Each one of them represents an important milestone in the history of development of adult literacy and education in India and will continue to stand erect, evoking powerful memories, generating new hope, faith, conviction and optimism and spurring millions to action in a new direction.

Historians and politicians, alike social scientists and economists as media and communication experts, could study these events and activities and could record them as important chronicles in the history of mankind out

of the distilled wisdom which they might derive out of the TLC experiment.

Regretfully TLCs on the whole have not found their way into the corridors of history in the same manner in which comparatively less important and rather insignificant events centering round the lives of Emperors and Kings, Generals and Ambassadors, Zamindars and Middlemen, Courtesans and others have found place.

What could be the reason?

The question is complex and there could be no straight and simple answer.

Education is One Which Liberates

It is well-known that education is not an autonomous system; it is a sub-system of the broader socio-economic and political system. To the extent, it is able to influence the structure and operations of the total system, it can be a tool of liberation of men, women and children, who are often prisoners of the system. This is how, lot of faith and hope has been reposed in education from time to time as an agent of bringing about a qualitative change in the lives of millions.

Education is one which liberates. Thus goes the ancient adage.

In reality, however, education has been the victim of the total system and is hardly in a position to influence the former in order to channelise it in a positive and reformative direction. The sectarian, divisive and disruptive forces which affect the total system do not spare the educational system; the same fads, taboos, mercenary interests, diehard obscurantist ideas and practices which blur the vision of the total system and rob it of its elan vital also devitalise the education system and are responsible for its degeneration.

Instead of bemoaning the progressive deterioration in educational standards and its total devitalisation, it may be worth-while to ponder over ways and means of restoring the centrality of education and according it its rightful place so that it can ensure the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation.

In countries like Myanmar, Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam and Ethiopia, an attempt was made to restore and primacy of literacy and education through rather unconventional and unorthodox means. In these countries, there was a revolution which put an end to the tyranny of the prevailing dictatorial system and which, in turn, brought about a radical change in the social, economic and political system. Education and literacy were the offshoot of that historic change. They were prompted and facilitated by the change and they came to occupy the centre-stage. Immediately, in the wake of change of Government, it was thought and rightly so that these countries which have been groaning under the wheels of colonialism and imperialism and had been economically ruined by years of misrule, can be put back on the rails of progress and development only if the pride and patriotism of the people could be evoked.

It was also thought that there could not be a better weapon to do so than the mass education and literacy. Mass education and literacy were to be imparted in a campaign mode which involved democratisation of the entire educational process through establishment of a common school system for all races and classes, backed by a common curriculum and common medium of instruction.

It implied injection of a new awareness and consciousness based on political liberty and social and economic equality.

It meant that one who knew could share with the other and particularly the women and other disadvantaged groups, who have been deprived of the access to educational opportunity due to forces and circumstances beyond their control.

It also implied imparting skills of economic production to the masses to prepare them to build the foundations of individual and collective self-reliance.

As history has documented it, in Vietnam, backs of buffalos and brick-kilns became slates and blackboards as also shade of the trees and harvesting yards where the peasants and agricultural labourers thresh the rice. The juice extracted from the plants and the trees became the ink. In Vietnam rains and floods, and in Nicaragua volcanic eruptions and red-hot lava, contaminated water and gushing streams did not deter scores of learners and volunteers from plunging into the campaign for total literacy which was also a campaign for social regeneration and national reconstruction.

It restored the national pride which was badly mauled by years of colonialism; it created a new society which values and prizes the literacy and education as tools of social action. It reinforced this faith and belief that you can do it and you have to do it for your sheer survival and for the survival of your dear nation and the countrymen.

Literacy and Education

Before proceeding to analyse the relevance of total literacy in a campaign mode which was successfully carried out in countries like Myanmar, Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam and Ethiopia and drawing a worthwhile parallel, as may be appropriate to our requirement, it may

be useful to examine the nomenclatural identify of literacy and adult education and whether they should be treated as co-terminus or parts of a larger system or independent entities.

To state it rather firmly and without any ambiguity, **literacy and education are not repetitive or co-terminus**; they may be parts of a larger system but certainly they have a uniqueness and identify of their own.

To state it with further precision and clarity, literacy is a minimal, though very important, entry point; it provides a gateway to the world of information, communication, modernisation, innovations and skills. Most significantly the life-skills, vocational-enterpreneurial skills, communication-skills, survival-skills etc. It is essentially a tool for communication and learning, for acquiring and sharing of knowledge and information and a pre-condition for individuals' evolution and growth.

Research studies and human cognitive development have established beyond doubt that literacy enhances our 'critical consciousness' and enables us to think, analyse and reflect the existential realities of the situation in which we have been placed.

- * It enhances our cognitive faculties.
- * It promotes objectivity, capacity for clear perception, clear thinking and logical and coherent analysis.
- * It promotes a sense of history and helps to combine individuality with universalisation of education.
- * Literacy certainly includes readings, writing and arithmetic skills but it goes beyond alphabetisation. It is something deeper than mere mechanical skills of reading and writing.

* Understood in its broadest perspective, literacy could free us from the narrow confines of our individual pride and prejudice, ignorance, fads and taboos and direct our creative energies to flow unhindered towards a search for and discovery of the true meaning of our existence.

It is a kind of open sesame which enables men and women to transcend the barriers of their restricted lives and establish an easy outreach with the wider world of information, communication, modernisation innovations and skills.

If literacy is a sub-structure, adult education could be a super-structure.

If literacy is an entry point, adult education is its continuum in the direction of lifelong learning.

Adults in 15-35 age-group, who constitute the most productive and reproductive segments of the society and whose acquisition of a literate status is crucial to the survival of our nascent democracy, are certainly not fools or goofs, they are intelligent, mature, sensible and often sensitive. They have a world of information and wisdom with them which may not be adequate or foolproof but could certainly be tapped for many a productive endeavour and could be profitably used to our advantage.

Education of such an adult has to be viewed somewhat differently from education of a child, who is in one of the most formative years of a human being and has, therefore, to be based on certain guiding principles.

The first and the most important guiding principle is that **every adult, who is not literate, is first a human being and then a learner**, having the same hopes and aspira-

tions, weaknesses and failings as any other human being.

- He/She operates in an environment which is not amenable to any precise regulation and which generally has not been very positive and supportive of his/her education.
- Remaining illiterate is not a matter of his/her discretion or volition but due to circumstances (social, economic and cultural) often beyond his/her control.
- It is only when we bring ourselves down to the level of a potential learner and speak to him/her in an intelligible language, the gap separating the teacher and the learner could disappear and the urge and motivation to learn could acquire a new form.

The second guiding principle rests on understanding and internalising **the nexus between the demand and the supply syndrome.**

- No worthwhile programme of literacy can be launched without generating a demand for literacy and without creating a climate which will be positive, supportive and appreciative of literacy.
- Demand generation must precede delivery and demand should be generated in as simple and natural a manner as possible.
- Harnessing the folk culture and tradition could be one of the ways by which the potential learners could be aroused and awakened and an emotive bond established with literacy.

The third important guiding principle is based on **an objective understanding of the interface of literacy, adult education and development.** These are undoubtedly dialectically inter-related. **Paulo Friere**, the Brazilian revolutionary and adult educator

had, as a matter of fact, redefined development and redirected the efforts of many adult educators working for social change. Being highly critical of most development efforts, he had proposed an alternative paradigm based on the development of 'critical consciousness' as different from the state of 'naive consciousness'.

Julius Nyrere, yet another outstanding adult educator and the former President of Tanzania, had also perceived this nexus between literacy, adult educator and development with great deal of clarity, imagination and vision.

- It is quite true that literacy perse, and even adult education at a fairly advanced stage, may not lead to a radical or qualitative change in the lives of individual learners. It may not lead to an end of the status of landlessness, assetlessness and bondage but they can certainly be a tool of 'critical consciousness' and in that sense can be an important tool to induce or stimulate change - social, economic, cultural and even political.

The fourth guiding principle is related to **the level of literacy and the stage at which post-literacy and continuing education should begin.**

According to a statement made by Madam Helen Butt, the level of literacy is as important or even more important than the content of literacy.

- We need a level which is reachable, which can be precisely and scientifically defined and which is sufficiently high to ensure retention and application. Such level can also be described as a switch-over from the syndrome of guided-learning to that of a self-reliant learning.

- Post-literacy and continuing education can begin only at that stage when the fragile level of literacy has been replaced by a self-reliant level i.e. one where the need for guided-learning has been fully dispensed with.
- It is important that there is a simultaneity in planning for both basic literacy and post-literacy programmes, so that there is no avoidable interregnum and the latter commences quickly at the close of the former with of course adequate preparations.

Yet another principle which is important in our context is related to **the issue of language.**

- Unlike most other countries, we are in a **multi-lingual situation where** in addition to 18 languages listed in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, we have as many as 1642 dialects, many of whom are spoken by large groups of people. No literacy or adult education strategy can be meaningful if it does not take cognizance of this multi-lingual situation and does not proceed to respect the linguistic identify and preferences of the adult learners.
- It is in this context that bilingualism becomes an important principle in any teaching-learning process, both for children as well as for adults. Bilingualism implies learning literacy in the dialect spoken by large groups of people at the initial or incipient stage of literacy and providing a bridge at an appropriate stage for switch-over from the spoken dialect to the state's standard language.
- Yet another important aspect of this principle is that since all spoken dialects may not have a script of their own, the script of the state's standard language may be

adopted, so that the process of learning literacy through that script becomes easier for every basic learner.

Evaluating the Campaign Approach

It is in this perspective of a correct understanding of the inter-relationship between literacy, adult education and development that we may proceed further to critically analyse the rationale and efficacy of the campaign approach.

It may be stated straightway that there is nothing new or innovative in this approach; it is a continuation and renewal of the approach obtained even in the pre-independence era.

In the 20s, 30s and 40s, when the country was reeling under the weight of an oppressive colonial era, the rate of literacy was barely 5% and in terms of absolute number, the country had millions of illiterates, who were also victims of social discrimination and economic deprivation.

How could they unite and fight the colonial regime and obtain freedom for the country when they themselves were not free from the shackles and fetters of ignorance, illiteracy and bondage.

It is this predicament of millions of people which had haunted the conscience of the Father of the Nation and which had made him to utter those historic words with a lot of anguish. **"It is a matter of sin and shame that millions in India continue to be illiteracy; they have to be liberated"**.

Popular Ministries which were formed in the provinces in 1937, under the act of 1935, responded to the call of the Father of the Nation and launched Mass Campaigns for Total Literacy as well as adult education programmes.

These were small, isolated and scattered efforts with a limited coverage. There were, however, several silver linings.

- Illustratively, in Bihar a campaign, which in the words of Dr. Frank Laubach can be said to be the "most impressive Government campaign conducted in India in that time" was under the inspiring leadership of Dr. Syed Mahmud.
- In the city of Bombay, the literacy movement was launched under the auspices of the Bombay Adult Education Committee under the chairmanship of Shri B.G. Kher, Premier and Education Minister.
- The Mysore University unit launched a literacy campaign in 1940 and the Mysore State Literacy Council was born in 1941.
- Dr. Frank Laubach inspired a large number of teachers in Moga in Punjab and launched a campaign for "Each One Teach One" which gave rise to literacy leagues in almost all the districts of the State.
- The campaign oriented movement for basic literacy during this period also gathered momentum due to Granthshala Movement in Kerala and Village Library Movement in several parts of the country which provided the much needed spurt for post-literacy and continuing education.
- It is interesting to note that Chakravarty Rajagopolachari (popularly known as Rajaji), the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu had, in clear recognition of the need for post-literacy and continuing education, wrote a primer for neo-literates known as "Thambeeve" and also short stories for neo-literates "Kuttikathaigal".

People of the status like Shri Harisarvotham Rao and Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh in

Andhra Pradesh, Dr. Syed Mahmud in Bihar, Shri Morarjibhai Desai, Shri B.G. Kher and Shri J.P. Naik in Bombay, Dr. Frank Laubach in Punjab, Sir M. Visversvaraya in Mysore, Dr. Wealthy Fisher in Uttar Pradesh and Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta in Rajasthan (popularly known as Bhai Sahib), had acted as pioneers in the field of adult education and are known for their monumental contribution.

In its range and ambit, the programme has grown over the years at a remarkably rapid pace and there have been experiments with one model after another in quick succession, such as, Gram Shikshan Mohim in Maharashtra in the late 50s, Farmers' Functional Literacy in the late 60s, Functional Literacy for Adult Women (FLAW) and Non-Formal Education programme for the youth in the early 70s, Polyvalent Education for urban slum dwellers, industrial workers and their family members under the caption of "Shramik Vidyapeeth" in the 60s and 70s, National Adult Education Programme in the late 70s and now National Literacy Mission in the late 80s and 90s.

Alike in the field of institutionalisation of and experimentation with one model after another, there have been changes in the content and process of literacy and adult education programmes from year to year. Each one had its own peculiarities of strategy and methodology and strengths and weaknesses in operationalisation.

Illustratively, **Gram Shikshan Mohim** was one of the first experiments to take literacy to the masses by way of A Movement. Launched initially in the district of Satara in Maharashtra in 1959, it covered as many as 25 districts of the State during the period 1961-63. In these districts, the annual average fig-

ure of persons becoming literate increased from 3,000 in 1959 to 1,09,000 in 1961.

In the State as a whole, a total of 10,08,000 persons in 14-50 years age-group in 1109 villages were made literate. The Mohim aimed at total eradication of illiteracy, provision of library services and other materials for retention of literacy and all round development of villagers through social education centres.

Even the Kothari Education Commission (1964-66) had acknowledged the achievements of the Mohim that harnessed the local village patriotism to eliminate illiteracy from the villages and required the teachers and all educated men and women to work for literacy.

The enthusiasm and the tempo generated by the Mohim could not, however, be sustained due to want of adequate back up support and services, particularly in the field of post-literacy and continuing education and there was large scale relapse of neo-literates to the old world of illiteracy.

Notwithstanding this major weakness, the Mohim continues to be an important silver lining in the history of adult education in India.

The Farmers' Functional Literacy, Functional Literacy for Adult Women and Non-formal Education for the Youth in the 60s and 70s were essentially sectoral or departmental programmes confined to few Ministries of Education, Agriculture, Information and Broadcasting. Their scope and ambit was limited in as much as no serious effort to achieve nationwide coverage and promotion of literacy on a universal scale was either conceptualised or accomplished through these programmes.

The National Adult Education Programme launched on 2nd October, 1978, undoubtedly represented a major initiative in the field and a radical departure from the sectoral and departmental approaches in the past. It was intended to be a Mass Programme involving all sections of the society with a view to making 100 million illiterate adults literate over a period of 5 years i.e. 1978-83.

The NAEP document was crystal clear in its perception and insight. It said "**No country perhaps, with the exception of China, faced the problem of illiteracy of the magnitude we are facing and hardly any country has had such a long tradition of respect for learning and knowledge or the vast resources which we have**". It proceeded to add "The aim then would be to strive for a learning society in which life-long education is a cherished goal, a goal which is enunciated in our scriptures.

Intended to be a Mass Programme, the NAEP, however, remained a traditional centre-based approach programme (which was also honorarium based, hierarchical and Government-funded and Government-controlled). **Undoubtedly, it imparted a national and holistic dimension to adult education programme**, which has been later recognised in Kothari Review Committee Report submitted to Government in April 1980, and created an infrastructural base for adult education.

Given, however, the magnitude of the problem of illiteracy, its intensity and spread were limited and given the dangers of too much of centralisation in a governmental and hierarchical mode, it failed to evoke any positive initiative and interest in the minds of numerous Government functionaries and least

succeeded in stirring the imagination and critical consciousness of the unlettered masses to come forward and participate in the literacy programme.

The programme became a victim of its own hierarchy and out-moded rules and procedures and failed to inspire the policy formulators, opinion moulders, representatives of the people, etc.

It did attempt degovernmentalisation by encouraging involvement of voluntary agencies which in implementation of the programme on a large scale but a target-oriented approach without an effective screening mechanism to screen and certify the credentials of implementing agencies brought discredit to the programme and became its major causality.

It was also short-lived in as much as the programme was subjected to a review in October, 1979 even before it could barely complete one year of its existence. Even though the review brought out several positive aspects of the programme and made several positive recommendations to impart it a new strength and resilience, it could not retrieve the same euphoria with which it was launched on 2nd October, 1978.

The critical consciousness about the limitations of a traditional Government-funded and Government-controlled programme like NAEP (which was also honorarium-based) was reinforced with submission of as many as 56 Evaluation Study Reports which had a catalogue of debits and very few credits to the programme on the one hand and also due to the projections made by the World Bank and UNESCO about the magnitude of problem of illiteracy of the country in terms of percentage as also in absolute number on the other.

The Radio broadcast of late Shri Rajiv Gandhi on 5th January, 1985, putting women's education centre-stage in the conceptualisation and formulation of the National Policy of Education and according a very high priority to literacy and adult education as an area of national concern therein, and a detailed Programme of Action laying down the strategy of implementation of NPE, were also positive indicators of the direction in which the new Government wanted to go and stimulant to the future course of action.

The NLM is partly a by-product of the National Policy of Education - 1986, but largely the outcome of an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the NAEP by the Institutes of Social Science Research and Management; it derived its inspiration and strength from the new urge for application of the findings of scientific and technological research to improve the environment and pedagogy of literacy learning.

In terms of content, it tried to imbibe and assimilate values of national concerns which were reflected in the National policy of Education and in terms of process, it tried to impart a new sense of urgency and seriousness by adopting the mission mode of implementation of a hitherto Government programme.

Soon after the Mission was launched by late Shri Rajiv Gandhi on 5.5.88, all of us, including Shri S.G. Pitroda, the then Adviser to PM, Incharge of all Technology Missions, who continues to be so now, started, in all earnestness, the exercise to translate the laudable objective of the Mission into a reality.

We did lot of introspection and asked questions to ourselves as to how a programme which was traditional in character for nearly

three decades could be converted into a people's movement.

It is not, as if nothing happened after launching of the Mission. The Advisor to PM on Technology Missions - Shri Pitroda had indeed assumed the gauntlet on his shoulders immediately after the formal launching. He used to take the Mission Directors to the State Capitals, to the district and block headquarters to have a direct inter-personal communication with the political leaders, the administrative bureaucracy, media and the people in a climate of total openness and critical reflection.

There was a lot of learning through sharing to search for a workable strategy in the direction of a goal which we had set for ourselves.

Immediately in the wake of the launching, the National Literacy Mission Authority was constituted with two wings, namely the Council and the Executive Committee, the former headed by the Minister of Human Resource Development and the latter by the Education Secretary.

State Literacy Mission Authorities were also formed simultaneously and State Mission Directors were appointed.

All the ongoing conventional programmes were given a critical look, reviewed and revised. A number of joint study teams went round different States and Union Territories, districts, blocks and villages to gauge the mood of the people, to spread the message of the Mission with clarity and conviction and to create a climate for a people's movement for literacy.

Some of the significant developments which had taken place both before and after in the wake of launching of NLM could be chronicled in a historical perspective as below:

- * Launching of "Sampoorna Saksharata Abhiyan" by Gujarat Vidyapeeth - 1.5.1988.
- * Launching of a campaign for total literacy for Coimbatore by Adviser, Technology Missions on - 11.5.1988.
- * Launching of Mass Campaigns for Total Literacy in 20 taluks @ 1 taluka per district in Karnataka in a massive convention of VAs and NGOs at Nanjangoud (Mysore) on 7.11.1988.
- * Initiative taken by Dr. (Miss) Bengalee, Vice Chancellor, Bombay University for a Mass Programme of Functional Literacy with the help of teachers and students of Bombay University on 15.8.1988.
- * Initiative taken by Committee of Resource Organisations (CORO) for launching a Mass Campaign for Total Literacy with the help of student and non-student youth volunteers in Dharavi BARC belt on 15.11.1989.
- * Literacy as a movement of the people (LAMP) - Convention organised by Dr. B.V. Parmeshwara Rao of Bhagavatula Charitable Trust, Yellamanchilli in Bangalore from 1st to 3rd July, 1989.

Lot of communication with the States, UTs, districts, etc. took place. Lot of solidarity, rapport and bonhomie was established but the government-funded and government-controlled programme did not become a people's movement. Despite best possible intentions and efforts, literacy continued to be the stereo-typed conventional centre-based programme. Voluntarism and mass mobilisation remained a far cry. Outcome oriented results, which are also measurable and deliverable within a prescribed time span, were elusive.

The first opportunity came in April, 1989 when the efficacy of the campaign approach

was demonstrated for the first time in Kottayam city of Kerala. It was also demonstrated that small is beautiful. The district and the city had the highest rate of literacy in the country (81% and 97% respectively). There were only 2000 persons in 6-60 age-group to be made literate. The Collector and District Magistrate, Kottayam, succeeded in mobilising 200 volunteers from NSS Unit of Mahatma Gandhi University for forging a link with the 2000 potential learners to make them fully literate within a period of 3 months (April - June, 1989). The city was declared fully literate on 25.6.89 and the story of this first great experiment in total literacy has been encapsuled in shape of a book - **How we did it in 100 days** - written by Shri A.J. Alphonso, the Collector of Kottayam.

What started as a time-bound one-shot affair, though on a modest scale in Kottayam, soon grew into a massive movement, first in the district of Ernakulam, then in the whole of Kerala State, Gujarat, Pondicherry and now in 106 projects involving 165 districts. The methodology which was adopted in Ernakulam and later in the whole of Kerala State was unique in many respects, which need to be listed. These are:

- * Massive approach - entire district taken in one go.
- * Total coverage to the point of saturation - no member of the society, literate or illiterate, could escape from the impact of the campaign for total literacy.
- * Transformation of literacy work from avenues of employment to a duty/obligation tinged with pride and patriotism.
- * Meticulous spatial and temporal planning as in a war for mobilisation and deployment of human and material resource.

- * Integration of people's enthusiasm with administrative machinery on the one hand and a professional project structure on the other.
- * Delinking the implementing machinery from governmental bureaucracy to increase dynamism and flexibility and at the same time ensuring accountability by stringent monitoring by the people themselves.

The total literacy plan for Ernakulam was launched on 26.1.89 with the following prophetic words:

"There are no prospects for a literate Kerala within an illiterate India. Kerala has to play a leading role in making the whole of India Literate. This is imperative for the progressive of Kerala. Only by eradicating illiteracy from its own soil and sharing the experiences and excitement there-from that Kerala can play this role".

Doubts and Criticisms

Why are people indifferent to literacy?

Why is there so much of cynicism and scepticism towards literacy?

Why is it, that people, after so many silver linings on the horizon, are indulging in endless debates and disputes on literacy

- "Is it necessary?"
- Is it desirable?
- Can literacy not wait?
- Can't the resources meant for literacy be diverted towards elementary education?"

Such endless debates go on in the outside world to the total exclusion of millions of learners and volunteers participating in the literacy programmes with boundless enthusiasm and commitment.

It is quite natural that these and many other questions should agitate those who are actively engaged in conceptualisation, planning and actual implementation of the Mission at the national, state and district levels as also at the grass root level.

Before we squarely address ourselves to these questions, it may be interesting to understand some of the doubts, disputes, misgivings and reservations in somewhat greater detail so that we can also simultaneously counter them with all the force at our command, not so much with a view to silencing the critics, cynics and skeptics but to restore the primacy and centrality of literacy and to put the Mission and its objectives, strategy and methodology in a proper perspective.

To start with, both before and after the Mission was launched by the former Prime Minister - Late Shri Rajiv Gandhi, questions were raised about the status of the Mission in a manner which is a sad reflection of our thinking and ethos.

The Mission was being linked by many to the handwork of a particular political party in power, even though the late Prime Minister had stated in so many clear and unambiguous words, " This is not the Mission of any particular Ministry or Department or Agency; this is the concern of the whole nation. Literacy should be viewed by the people as important as drinking water and immunisation".

After sometime, when the Adviser to PM on Technology Missions started playing the role of a nodal institution to intensively monitor and coordinate the activities in all the National Technology Missions, similar confusing and disturbing questions continued to be raised linking the Mission to be the handwork of an individual.

It was clarified again and again that a National Mission cannot be the handwork of a particular individual or even groups of individuals. A Mission is a national endeavour and time-bound search for a new identify of literacy, a new expression of the cultural energy and creativity of the people and the outcome of accumulated research and wisdom and, therefore, cannot be equated with just one individual or one political party or one political personality.

When the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) proposal was received from Ernakulam, this was straightway dismissed as an attempt to carry coal to the new castle. It was clarified that even though the rate of literacy in Ernakulam was high (as high as 77% according to the 1981 Census), the Ernakulam model, if successful, could have a very good spin-off effect in as much as it would inspire and motivate several other districts that total literacy is not something which is utopian, but something which is possible and achievable.

After the Ernakulam experiment was successfully concluded, it started acting as a powerful stimulant for several other districts, alike in the North as well as in the South. In other words, one K.R. Rajan could nucleate many potential Rajans who came forward to assume the leadership for similar experiments with lot of enthusiasm and self-confidence that they can also do it as good as Rajan could do. The fact that all districts are not uniformly placed and endowed and that there is a great deal of geographical, topographical, socio-economic and cultural diversity obtaining in different regions, in different districts and even within the same district, did not undermine their enthusiasm to go ahead with the idea of TLC.

It is true, that it was comparatively easier to launch the campaign experiment in Ernakulam than in other districts but this, by itself, did not imply exclusion of other districts nor did it imply exclusion of the poor, the deprived and disadvantaged people of less endowed regions. All that was simply intended, simply was

- the concept of Total Literacy in a Campaign mode, treating the district as a unit was comparatively new;
- a countrywide awareness of all the parameters of success of a campaign cannot straightway be generated; and
- **we should try it out**, in an area where it was likely to succeed better.

By now, it is matter of history that Ernakula did succeed admirably well in the wake of that success, TLC for the whole State of Kerala, for the UT of Pondicherry, Goa and several districts of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa, Assam, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan, were taken up in quick succession.

All of them cannot be said to be the exact replication of the Ernakulam model, even though they have derived a lot of inspiration and strength from the latter adapting the essence of the Ernakulam experiment profitably to their advantage.

What exactly is the essence of that experiment?

It means that despite social heterogeneity, caste and stratification factor and despite numerous divisive and disruptive forces, there are number of good, well-meaning, conscientious and progressive minded people in the

society, who can be mobilised and whose support can be harnessed for literacy work.

It means that like minded people can come together, think together, plan together and act together for a common cause like literacy. It also means that notwithstanding the euphoria of the stock market, notwithstanding the call of the God of Mammon and numerous corrupting mercenary forces obtaining in the society.

There are still people who have retained the spark of altruism, the impulse of voluntarism and who are willing to work for others without any expectation of award or reward or incentive as teacher, trainers, evaluators and environment builders. They are willing to part with a portion of their energy, ingenuity and skill in favour of those who do not have them, who have been deprived of them for no fault of theirs and yet who are in need of the same.

Once such innate goodness in human beings is recognised and the basic premise is established that voluntary work for literacy is possible and feasible with the help of a number of good samaritans, it is not difficult to build a super-structure on the sub-structure. This super-structure, however, need not be a skyscraper; it needs to be a structure which is simple, inexpensive, with few layers, credible and accountable, open and accessible to all. The importance of the structure, however, remains in as much as a campaign for total literacy is essentially a short-duration endeavour and if the results are to be achieved in a process which is extremely difficult and complex, the entire effort has to be a planned, coordinated, systematised with well-structured effort. There must be close monitoring, supervision and coordination so that we get to know that the right things are happening at the right time, in the right manner and if

anything has gone wrong, the correctives need to be applied instantaneously; so that there can be no let up or slip-off. It also means that the results sought to be achieved are not only deliverable but also measurable in clear, precise and scientific term.

After the new approach i.e. TLC started gathering momentum, every increase in the number of TLC districts was accompanied by a near increase in the number of cynics and skeptics. The first attack came from those who are protagonists of elementary education. Their guns were targetted against so much of concentrated attention to adult literacy, to the exclusion of elementary education in the formal system.

Some of them were undoubtedly well-meaning and had years of track record of dedicated service in the field of basic education. In a sense therefore, they were justified in discouraging efforts to sweep the floor when the tap was on. Some of their attacks were also equally ill-conceived and ill-designed. Universalisation of elementary education, non-formal education for non-school goers and school drop-outs in 9-14 age-group and adult literacy are inextricably interwounded; one is as important as the other. They are, as a matter of fact, mutually supportive and inter-dependent programmes, one supporting and reinforcing the other. This nexus has been recognised in reports of successive Education Commissions, Kothari Review Committee on Adult Education (1980), NPE Review Committee headed by Ahcarya Ramamurthy, NPE Review Committee headed by Janardan Reddy, NPE (1986) as modified in 1992 and the POA (1986) as modified in 1992 and is otherwise known as the '**Dual Track**' Approach. In the districts where TLCs are being taken up, there has been a planned and systematic effort to carry children in 9-14 age-group alongwith adults in the first phase of the campaign, while creating

better conditions in the formal school system for enrolment of children in 5-8 age-group.

In majority of the TLC districts, there is a realisation that children who are enrolled in the first phase of the campaign alongwith adults would be in need of a more stringent and systematic non-formal education spanning over a period of one and half years, is the minimum to reach the minimum levels of literacy. This consciousness is reflected in the Action Plan for TLC as also in the actual implementation at the basic literacy and post-literacy stage in several districts and therefore, the criticism levelled against TLC, that it ignores and belittles the early childhood and elementary education with over-riding preference for adult education is rather unfair and unfounded.

In our scheme of development, family is treated as the lowest unit and a family comprises of parents, adolescents and children. There can be three types of situations in a family in relation to literacy.

- In the first category both parents, adolescents and children are illiterate. In such a situation, no worthwhile interaction can take place amongst the family members.
- In the second category, the parents are illiterate but the children are literate. The latter, in such a situation cannot communicate to the former on the same wave-length.
- In the third category, the parents may be literate but due to peculiar circumstances, children may have been deprived of the access to educational opportunity. Such a situation may be more of an exception than rule.

In the Dual Track Approach which we have adopted for ourselves in the National Policy of Education and the Programme of Action for-

mulated there-under, what we are saying is that parental illiteracy and child illiteracy go together and no learning society can be created in any household by sending children to school while parents remain illiterate or by imparting functional literacy to adult parents and not sending children to school.

Creation of a learning society is essentially the outcome of constant inter-activity between parents and children which ensures learning by sharing and, therefore, there is no question of permitting one at the cost of the other or to the exclusion of the other, but promoting both together with the same urgency, same seriousness, same emphasis and same thrust.

If as a result of the cultural campaign, as an integral part of the campaign for total literacy, parental demand for enrolment and retention of the children in the formal school system has been generated, the demand has to be met regardless of the financial implications, otherwise the entire experiment will be counter-productive and the gap between parental illiteracy and child illiteracy will get widened.

The Collector and District Magistrate in most of the TLC districts occupies a pivotal position. As chairperson of the Zila Saksharata Samiti, he/she acts as the principal mobiliser and coordinator of the campaign and provides the leadership and overall direction to the pace, tempo and rhythm of the campaign. This is quite natural as every campaign is a short duration affair, where both the process and outcome are important and where it is imperative to unite and coordinate a number of defused and uncoordinated elements and forces who would otherwise tend to act at cross-

purposes. Who else is better placed to unite and coordinate these inchoate and uncoordinated elements than the head of the district administration? We are, however, not looking at the Collector and DM in a TLC as one who will be the regulator of a mechanism or the controller of the destiny of others but as one who will be the first amongst the equals, who will be able to carry a number of discordant elements and make them think together, plan together and act together, so that there is some symmetry and harmony in an otherwise highly heterogeneous society.

This calls for lot of modesty and humility, lot of respect for the dignity and equality of all beings, lot of catholicity and tolerance. It may not be uniformly forthcoming from all District Collectors but wherever these characteristics are present, they will contribute most towards the success of the campaign and where the style of functioning is highly personalised, arbitrary and authoritarian, it is bound to be counter-productive.

Criticisms have been levelled that Collectors and DMs are principal instruments of maintenance of law and order, peace and tranquility; they also constitute the focal point of coordination of all development efforts in a district. Excessive pre-occupation of the Collector and DM with the total literacy efforts in a district could result in a situation where other components of development may get sidelined or neglected and, therefore, according to them, it is doubtful whether such overriding priority to literacy promotion efforts on the part of Collector and DM urges well for the district. Such criticisms are as unfair and unfounded as they are in the case of earlier ones.

In whatever manner we may look at it, literacy creates motivation and awareness

which results in acquisition of skills necessary for development. Literacy also creates conditions for acquisition of a critical consciousness of the ironies and contradictions of the society in which we live. Literacy provides certain competencies to the youth required for productive participation in the affairs of the family, of the society and the larger affairs of the Nation.

Access to literacy stimulates the desire for training in diverse skills and motivates the poor and the deprived to intensify their efforts to break-out of the poverty cycle to adopt more effective modes of production and distribution.

Access to literacy heightens political awareness and would enable people to participate more effectively in civic affairs and affairs of the body politic - both local and national.

It would promote democratisation of the working of Government and NGOs, local self-governing bodies, voluntary agencies and would improve the quality and content of conducting the entire democratic process through Parliament, Legislative Assemblies, Corporations, Municipalities, Notified Area Councils, Panchayats, etc.

More than anything else, access to literacy would also ensure access to the development parameters such as access to credit, access to seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, access to water both for irrigation purposes as well as drinking, and access to a world of information of direct interest and relevance to the learners (healthy, family welfare, immunisation, nutrition, maternity protection, child care, small family norm, etc.).

Viewed in this perspective, literacy becomes the key to the entire development effort, not merely by expanding the flow

of information but by way of promoting awareness,, empowerment and eventually leading to formation of organisation of the unorganised and strengthening of the entire collective bargaining process.

It is important that access to information in matters of public policy in the areas of age of marriage, age of employment, prohibition, untouchability, dowry, etc. is viewed as important as access to acquisition of vocational skills. Literacy being an important tool of acquisition in both, it assumes paramount importance for all development departments and development functionaries. They need to own literacy as their own programme and as the key to the success of their programmes.

Attention to literacy promotion efforts cannot, therefore, be wished away in the name of maintenance of law and order, peace and tranquility nor in the name of departmentalism. There have been two principal banes of our entire development effort -

- targetitis i.e. fixing artificial targets in terms of number and making the entire planning process revolve round the game of numbers; and
- viewing development in terms of water-tight compartments such as health, hygiene, sanitation, agriculture, animal husbandry, veterinary, etc.

Since a human being is one and indivisible, we cannot afford to divide a human being in the name of different development departments and functionaries which will not only amount to compartmentalisation but direction of a living being.

As a matter of fact, literacy can be an important uniting factor to forge a practical and

useful link between different development departments and human beings who are the beneficiaries as well as participants of the entire development process.

Several doubts have been raised in the past and even now that literacy can ill-afford to level or unite divergent elements and forces in a society which is hierarchical, stratified and caste-based. It has also been observed that illiteracy is synonymous with poverty, deprivation and economic backwardness while literacy is synonymous with affluence, rank and status in society. Nothing can be farther from the truth.

It is true that those who are high up in society generally come from the landed aristocracy and by virtue of their power and position and capacity to garner resources, they may look down upon the need for and relevance of literacy as an important entry point for the poor, the deprived and the disadvantaged. They may even dissociate themselves from literacy promotion efforts and demonstrate their hostility to it.

While launching a campaign for total literacy, one cannot wish away the harsh socio-economic realities obtaining in an inequitable system surrounded by all pervasive poverty and deprivation.

The campaign may not put an end to the state of landlessness or assetlessness or bondage. The campaign can, however, unleash several good, positive and progressive elements of the society and bring them together to work for literacy as a movement of the people and in that process, may appeal to their good conscience that they owe in no uncertain terms an obligation to those who are less fortunate but whose sacrifice has in no small measure contributed to the total evolution, advancement and growth of the society. It may so happen that as a result of social churning,

which may be caused by the cultural campaign for literacy, there may be an attitudinal change even in the minds of those who are otherwise averse or indifferent to literacy.

Such a process may be a slow and gradual one but judging by the trend of development taking place in some of the TLC districts, it is quite likely that the campaign could act as a powerful tool to induce certain changes which are healthy and in the larger social interest. Undoubtedly, all such efforts will have to be backed-up by simultaneous measures for land reforms, for asset distribution and reduction of economic disparity and for creation of certain outlets which will promote democratic participation of all sections of the society.

This brings to our mind certain mistaken notions relating to people's empowerment.

This is an important concept which has been laid down in the NLM document and is an object to be cherished and achieved through total literacy efforts.

Empowerment of the people basically means that people are enabled to understand and internalise the causes and factors of social discrimination and economic deprivation; they are also enabled to perceive their strengths and weaknesses vis-a-vis the strength and weaknesses of the diverse elements of the society which surround their day-to-day lives.

Efforts which go to promote empowerment of the people cannot, therefore, be treated as subversive or a sign of belligerence. If that is so, all that is being done in the NLM will have to be negated or given a go-bye.

People's empowerment becomes all the more important in the context of women, who have been for successive generations sidelined or marginalised and who remain at the mercy of the menfolk despite their enormous

capability for hard work, unguinity and their contribution to the development of the family, the community and the nation as a whole.

The moment they are enabled to think, reflect, critically analyse and question the aura of false consciousness surrounding their lives, it will unfold vistas of a new vision for them. Once they are aroused and awakened and perceive the importance of organisation, they will come together and constitute a cohesive force which will be a formidable one.

This unity and solidarity will make possible the liberation of the women-folk from the numerous fads, taboos and diehard conservative ideas which have confined their lives to a cocoon like existence and reduced them to commodities. This way of conscientising women to organise themselves has been attempted through WDP in Rajasthan and is being tried out, though selectively, through Mahila Samakhya, a Dutch assisted project in 10 districts of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat with many positive fall-outs.

NLM Achievements

Having made an attempt to respond to some of the oft-repeated criticism or rather misgivings about the NLM and the new campaign approach for total literacy, it will be appropriate now to turn attention to the latest status of the Mission and share with the readers some of the ground level achievements.

The most important strength of the campaigns lies in the fact that it provides an ambience of political parties, representatives of the people and cross-sections of the society to come together, plan and work together in a common direction despite internal contradictions or ideological differences.

The campaign has also proved that learners, despite caste, class and gender divide, can learn and today nearly 55 million learners are learning with the help of about 5 million volunteers with a lot of zest and self-confidence. They can see for themselves the pace and progress of learning. They can retain and apply the benefits of learning to real life situations.

It is a most satisfying experience to see people belonging to multiple strata of the society such as small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers, share croppers, rural artisans, fishermen and women, beedi workers, leather workers, tribal collectors of minor forest produce, are learning together, sharing the same concern, the same excitement and joy of learning.

A widow of 65 years in Mehbubnagar district finds in the slate and pencil a silent companion in a dark and lonely corner of her existence, deriving lot of solace and comfort from reading and writing.

Campaigns in this sense have promoted social and emotional integration. They have also promoted linguistic integration and communal harmony. Learners, who are domiciled in a State and who have assimilated the history, geography and culture of that State, are willing to learn in the State standard language (in preference to learn through their mother tongue) so that they can identify themselves better with the mainstream. About 5 million volunteers, about 2.5 to 3 lakh master trainers, about 15 to 20 thousand resource persons and about 1000 key resource persons are rendering voluntary service of a scale and quality which was not witnessed before.

Majority of them are student volunteers around 60% while about 40% of the volunteers come from the non-student youth belonging to a varied strata of the society, such as tailors,

carpenters, mechanics, primary school teachers (serving and retired), ex-servicemen, bank employees, employees of public sector undertakings, government employees, employees of cooperatives and elders - all imbued with a new pride and patriotism, a new spirit of service and sacrifice.

A leprosy afflicted middle aged person in the district of Midnapore, who at one time was ex-communicated from the society (for being a victim of leprosy), now discovers in teaching a new elixir of life.

Such stories can be recounted in good number.

Several volunteers have succeeded in mobilising scheduled caste and minorities women to break the barriers of purdah and transcend the shackles and fetters of a conservative society to join the literacy class; many others have succeeded in motivating the learners addicted to alcohol to give up drinking.

There are numerous instances (in Midnapore and Burdwan TLC in West Bengal) where wife is the volunteer teacher (VT) while husband is the learner and vice-versa. Hindu volunteers have been teaching Muslim learners and vice-versa; there are volunteers belonging the SC and ST while learners belong to upper-caste, for former representing one of the finest specimens of dedication. The campaign has converted nisidhapalli (red-light areas) to pavitrapalli (decent and civilised colony). The activity in a learning centre itself remained unaffected by the fury of communal riot affecting the whole village and eventually helped in defusing the communal situation.

In several villages of Andhra Pradesh, where the campaign has been successfully conducted, untouchability and feuds on account of

cast and stratification bedevilling day-do-day existence are issues of the past.

Teaching-learning process has created and reinforced an awareness of the needs, rights and obligations. This awareness has manifested itself in terms of enrolment and retention of children in the school system, immunisation of pregnant mother and their children, health, hygiene, environmental sanitation, children, ORT and small family norm. Yet another strength of the campaign is that women are participating in the teaching-learning process in much larger number (about 70%) and with much greater enthusiasm than men. They are more vocal, more articulate and more assertive than before.

Through literacy, they have been able to perceive the generative sources of their disadvantage and are guarding up their loins to fight these sources.

Hundreds of women's groups in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have been made aware of the evils of bootlegging and have been raising their voice against alcoholism. A number of grass root level institutions, such as village and panchayat level committees are emerging through which the learners can transform themselves from the status of passive beneficiaries to that of active participations of the process of development and manage their own affairs with strength, courage and confidence. Some of these institutions have struck deep roots and have acquired the capability of managing the formal school system, NFE and AE programmes.

As more and more districts get covered by the TLC, the governmental bureaucracy gets closer to the people; it becomes more positive, sensitive and empathetic.

As Shri Poromesh Acharya, a distinguished historian and management expert and member, Executive Committee, NLMA writes:

"The strongest point of the West Bengal programme, as we have observed, is the perfect coordination between the administration and the panchayat. In every district that we have visited, we noticed that the District Collector and the Sabhadhipati of the Zilla Parishad were working in unison. The District Collector and his team became whole-time workers. There is, for the first time, that the entire district administration went to the people instead of the people coming to them. It was a unique exposure for them and they enjoyed it. I saw District Collectors walking through the muddy roads, their hair greyed with the dust. There was hardly any difference between a political worker, a volunteer and an administrator. All the barriers got broken. This was no mean achievement.

The campaigns have also produced a unique confluence of creative forces and energies. Creative writers, thinkers, artists, environmentalists and women activists have come together to write songs, slogans, nukkad natak, role-plays and simulation exercises and to render them soulfully in myriad forms in different parts of the country. Every activity in the campaign in general and in the learning centres in particular acquires the shape of a festival. Whether it is Independence Day or Republic Day or Ganesh Chaturthi or Sarswati Puja or Onam or Pongal or Durga Puja or Diwali or World Literacy Day (8th September) or World Population Day (16th July) or World Environmental Day (5th June) or World Women's Day (8th March), every activity is converted to a mass festival and every mass festival is celebrated in such a manner that the

celebration is harnessed to the advantage of literacy. They arouse and awaken the whole community for literacy work. A good number of songs, slogans, drama, eloquence, essay and poster competitions on literacy are being held on these occasions which bring out the ingenuity, creativity, innovativeness, and resourcefulness of individuals and groups.

Evaluation of TLCs

The narration in the preceding paragraphs is only a miniature of numerous positive indicators on the impact of TLCs on attitudes, approaches and consciousness of individuals as also on the overall quality of their day-to-day life.

We have been generally speaking of two types of evaluation in relation to a TLC district i.e. (a) evaluation of learning outcome and (b) programme evaluation or impact evaluation.

Successive evaluation studies of the TLCs which have been conducted so far Ernakulam (Kerala), Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura, Hooghly, Midnapore and North 24 parganas (West Bengal), Sindhudurg and Wardha (Maharashtra), Shittoor and Nellore (Andhra Pradesh), Durg and Narsingpur (Madhya Pradesh), Muzaffarpur (Bihar), and Bijapur and Dakshin Kannada (Karnataka) have primarily concentrated on the number of persons actually made literate and numerate in terms of the levels laid down in NLM document. Some of them have thrown some light on the bridge or partnership built between the Government departments and functionaries, representatives of the people, social and educational activists, media and communication channels, etc.

There are two reports to have come to light so far which have thrown some light on the sociological impact of total literacy campaign.

These are (a) Sociological impact of Total Literacy Campaign - the case of Midnapore conducted by Shri Chandan Dasgupta of Tata Institute of Social Sciences; and (b) Towards developing a conceptual framework for sustaining literacy based on some field experiences conducted by Ms. Nitya Rao of National Institute of Adult Education.

There is also a third study captioned "Total Literacy Campaign in West Bengal' a Study of Midnapore, Hooghly and Birbhum conducted by Shri Poromesh Acharya and Associates of Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, which is primarily a study on the soundness, adequacy and effectiveness of planning, preparations and execution of the TLC though it does throw some light on the impact of the campaign on the level of general awareness of the people, their motivation and participation in the campaign.

It would be useful to critically examine the findings of these studies with reference to the objectives of the NLM. People's empowerment is the most important objective of the Mission in qualitative terms. The objective has thus been stated:

"Functional Literacy implies becoming aware of the causes of their deprivation and moving towards amelioration of their condition through organisation and participation in the process of development."

"Functional Literacy implies acquiring skills to improve the economic status and general well-being."

Who are the people and what is people's empowerment? In ordinary parlance, people would mean all categories of persons working and living in an area who would be the beneficiaries of all development programmes.

For our purpose and the context in which functional literacy has been used the NLM document refers to people or certain target groups who constitute the rural poor, the deprived and the disadvantaged. They constitute the small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers, the share croppers, the rural artisans, the fishermen and women, the leather workers, the building and construction workers, the forest labourers, salt workers, the contract labourers, migrant workers. They are not uniformly placed in terms of employment and wages, but there are two common threads running through their predicament. These are (a) they are victims of malfunctional and dysfunctional middlemen and work in a situation which is akin to bondage for all practical purposes; and (b) they are not aware of the viciousness of the phenomenon. They do not know what they do not know.

If 'critical consciousness' is an important index of true development according to **Paulo Friere**, they lack that critical consciousness which can enable them to understand their strength and weaknesses vis-a-vis the strength and weaknesses of their adversary(s) and which can also enable them to acquire the wherewithal to grapple with the hostile forces and eventually overcome them. Let us analyse the extent to which TLCs have fostered this critical consciousness and to what extent this is being used as a tool of people's empowerment.

Two examples may be taken from Ms. Nitya Rao's study of TLC in Pondicherry and Pudukottai. To quote from the study on TLC Pondicherry:

"The response from women was tremendous at all levels during the campaign. There is widespread, almost universal

male alcoholism in the State, making men's contribution to household income almost negligible. Women work very hard to support their families and, therefore, aspire for better employment opportunities and earnings. Development programmes specifically for women, like DWACRA do exist in the State but no purposive effort to integrate it with the literacy movement has been made whether in terms of identifying the most needy beneficiaries or even in terms of developing DWACRA groups around learning groups which could facilitate the growth of a common group purpose."

Analysing the present sorry state of affairs in Pudukottai Arivoli Iyakkam and the factors contributing thereto, she writes:

"The inability to address local problems on the spot and work out solutions for the same has led to a decline in enthusiasm over the months. To take an example, twice there were floods in a fishing hamlet whereby three rows of houses got washed away. The people wanted financial assistance for housing but this issue was not taken up. Similarly, the fisherwomen take the catch to the fish market in the morning and again return there to work for contractors in the afternoon as their earnings are very low. An attempt to introduce the Fish Aggregation Device to increase collection/production was made. However, privately owned launches came and smashed these devices. The other method of increasing earnings by plugging the holes at the marketing end through organisation of marketing collectives was not discussed or attempted."

The above example is indicative of the viselike grip of middlemen (contractors) which drive the people - the poor, weak and disadvantaged to a state of penury and desperation.

The middlemen act as agents of the principal employer in matters of recruitment of migrant labour, in matters of payment of nominal advances (more as a tool of allurements than as a positive incentive), in matters of supply of raw materials, often of poor quality, collection of the finished product, rejection (Chat) on the ground of poor finish, sale of those finished products of alleged poor quality and appropriation of the sale proceeds to their full advantage (as in the case of beedi workers), denial of remunerative price to the workers for their hard labour and product of their labour (both by way of cheating in weightment and calculation, particularly in piece rates relevant in brick kilns and stone quarries, taking full advantage of ignorance and illiteracy of the workers) so on and so forth. They virtually rule the roost. The fishermen and women who receive the advances from these middlemen for purchase of boat and net for deep sea fishing, do so often at a discount and are forced to part with a major share of their produce (catch) to the middlemen - a practice which is akin to the theory of unequal exchange in Economics or bonded labour system under section 2 (g) of the Bonded Labour System Act. Same is true of all other categories and sub-categories of unorganised rural labour masses. They lack the power to individually bargain for their irreducible barest minimum (for sheer biological survival) against organised onslaughts and vested interests which are too powerful for them. As the wily middlemen thrive and prosper by manipulation and cheating at the expense of the poor, the latter sunk in loans, debts and advances to slide lower and lower on the scale of humanity.

Is there a way out? Organisation of the unorganised rural poor into aggregations, informal groups, formal formations like coopera-

tives is certainly a way out but can be meaningful only if the following two conditions are fulfilled i.e. (a) the entire process of organisation must be preceded by meticulous planning and systematic execution, by orientation, conscientisation and awareness building through literacy; (b) government cannot bring about organisations of the rural poor but can certainly act as a catalytic agent to enable and facilitate the entire process with empathy and sensitivity and not view the process as a threat to status quo.

In the context of Pudukkottai Arivoli Iyakkam, Ms. Nitya Rao cites two case studies on the process of organisation of the rural poor, one very encouraging and the other not so encouraging. To recount the first:

"Father Anthonisamy of the Holy Redeemers and also on the Executive Committee of the Arivoli Iyakkam believes in learning by doing. He conducted a debt survey amongst a Arivoli group and found that 85% of the learners were in debt. Through the Holy Redeemers, those paying more than 10% interest per month were redeemed immediately. The same amount apportioned into principal, interest and savings is deposited in the group that was organised. In one area, this thrift and credit group has even taken a space and employed the volunteer to maintain their records and accounts. Almost all the money collected is being revolved amongst the members, in the form of small loans. Such an initiative, by actively involving the people in finding solution to their problems, has not only generated discussion and awareness about the whole issue of debt, interest rates, savings but has also motivated the group members to explore the various alternatives available to them, made them realise the importance of maintaining

records and hence desirous of strengthening their own cognitive skills."

The example of the second category which is not so encouraging is narrated by Ms. Roa is below:

"An attempt has been made to develop village level committees. As a part of this, women's sub-committees have been formed. Women are more forthcoming, as this gives them an opportunity to interact in society and gradually bring about changes in social and more particularly, gender relations. They, however, desire some financial assistance in terms of seed money for progressing towards a situation of economic independence as well. This aspect has, however, not yet been worked out, leading to some frustrations. The women, therefore, have also not gained the confidence to take up social issues like alcoholism and face social conflicts due to their position of economic dependence."

It is evident that the objective of NLM in terms of promoting 'participation' through organisations of the 'people' has not been fulfilled to any worthwhile extent even though sincere efforts have been made in that direction.

Let us turn to Pudukottai, the second case study of Ms. Rao to see if there is any concrete answer to this dilemma of people's empowerment.

Pudukottai, which a year ago, was a small and comparatively unknown, comparatively under-developed district, is today something more than a geographical expression. It is vibrant with a new spirit, a new ethos, a new identity. Pudukottai along with Pasumpon Muthuramalingam Thevar (PMT) district has earned the unique distinction of being the first fully literate district in Tamil Nadu. It was

declared so on 11.8.92 by Governor of Tamil Nadu - Dr. Bheesmanarian Singh at a special function held at Pudukottai parade ground.

There are a host of exciting, soul-stirring and inimitable features in Arivoli Iyakkam, Pudukottai. They transcend the limited frontiers of mechanical reading, writing and arithmetic and encompass the process of making a complete man or woman or child. It is impossible to recount them.

In terms of forming organisations or collectivities of the people, using the literacy campaign as a tool to forge the solidarity of the people in general and women in particular and promote their empowerment, however, it has few parallels. Whether it is training 60,000 women to learn cycling while learning to read and write or it is organisation of women quarry workers or women gem cutters and gem polishers or women potters or women palm basket weavers, each has its unique innovativeness.

Behind the entire effort to organise the unorganised, the less privileged and deprived sections of society lies the imagination and ingenuity of many committed activists and organisers but one person stands out clear and distinct. She is Sheila Rani Chunkath, the energetic articulate and dynamic Collector of Pudukottai and also the Chairperson of Arivoli Iyakkam. Almost anything and everything which centred round Arivoli bears the indelible stamp of her personality, transparent sincerity and total commitment to Arivoli. To quote a small fraction of her initiative to organise the women quarry members of Pudukottai as recorded by Ms. Rao:

"The district has about 450 quarries and 4500 women quarry workers. Last year when the quarries were brought in for auction, the contractors refused to bid at

the offset price as they wanted to depress the price further. The Collector, however, organised the workers into groups of 20 women each and gave them the quarrying rights at nominal rates for period of 3 years. Currently, there are about 150 such women's groups. They were provided loans of Rs. 1,000/- each from Indian bank for purchase of tool kits, uniforms and initial working capital. They take a daily wage of between Rs. 20 to 30 and then share the profits every week. Men can also work in these quarries on daily wages. The workers, mostly women, have gradually learnt to write out their own bills and receipts and maintain their production accounts. Two of the group leaders, Vasantha and Sholai showed us their accounts. They were totally illiterate and have learnt this only through attending the Arivoli classes. They also collect all the members of their groups for the classes. Some are not too interested still, as they feel exhausted after their hard day's work and prefer to go to sleep. Gradually, however, more are getting motivated. They want to understand their production accounts, in order to avoid conflicts over distribution of wages and profits, to read their loan and savings pass books and so on. By knowing to read and write, the contractors and transporters can also not cheat them."

One can draw several interesting and useful lessons from the two examples of Pondicherry and Pudukottai.

In Pondicherry, the campaign was sponsored and supported fully by Government at the initial state. It is as a result this support that the first phase of the campaign in the basic literacy stage could be brought to its logical and successful conclusion.

Puduvai Arivoli Iyakkam became the symbol of hope, pride and resurgence for many other States/UTs. As, however, the campaign acquired the character of a mass movement and became a tool of empowerment of the masses, it was perceived as a threat to the sacrosancity and constitutional inviolability of private property rights and the status quo. It is at this crucial stage that the campaign has almost lost its momentum as a movement of the people and has got into a jam. It could have matured into one of the finest movements of Indian history but sadly these lofty expectations have been belied.

Pudukottai TLC experiment stands on its own and in sharp contrast to that of Puduvai Arivoli Iyakkam. Every campaign is primarily a movement and secondarily a programme but it has to be conceptualised, planned, initiated and implemented in a well-structured and well-coordinated manner, so that the desired results are achieved in a short time.

It is here that Government functionaries have a major role to play, not so much as a control mechanism but as a catalytic force, enabling and facilitating mechanism. Such a role was played admirably by the District Administration, Pudukottai and more particularly by the Collector and Chairperson of Arivoli Iyakkam. Organisation of 3000, out of 4500 women quarry workers, into cooperatives and giving the quarries on lease to them is a case in point. This was an unusual, unconventional and extra-ordinary step. This required lot of grit, courage and determination which the energetic Collector, Pudukottai had possessed in abundant measure. Once it was made known that she was empathetic and sensitive to the genuine needs of the poor and her commitment to alleviation of their plight through organisation was made known, others followed suit.

This is how the Assistant Director (Mines) at the District headquarters, who would have ordinarily followed the conventional approach in matters of grant of lease, was found sensitive to the women's need at every step.

As Ms. Rao writes, "Seeing poor, rural women struggling hard to break out of their social barriers and overcome economic hurdles, seems to bring out the goodness and desire to help in Government officials and ordinary people as well".

It was, however, not all a smooth sail. As the contractors felt deprived of their quarry rights and hence profits, they refused to allow trucks entry into the area. The threat continues and help from law and order authorities has to be sought time and again. But the problem arising out of the threat is not intractable or unresolvable as the sympathy of an empathetic administration lies with the quarry workers, the poor SC women who deserve help.

CONCLUSION

In a pluralistic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural country like ours, where conditions vary widely from region to region, from district to district and even within the same district, it will be a travesty of truth to say that only one approach, far less the campaign approach, should be adopted and implemented for uniform results. Those of us who have been with the Mission since its inception have accepted the limitations of a uniform social policy being valid for the whole country at one point of time. Instead of advocating the inflexibility and sacrosanctity of any policy or any approach, we have all along made ourselves amenable to new ideas and suggestions and have advocated a policy of learning by sharing in a climate of total openness and flexibility.

It is acknowledged that neither the spread nor the impact of the campaign strategy is uniform, being far less dramatic. Like any other social policy, the campaign is also the product of a particular point of time or milieu or setting and it has to weather all the storms and vicissitudes of that time. It cannot get away from it. Having said this, however, we will not be doing justice to the campaign approach if we do not acknowledge its rationale and force. It needs to be told and retold with full conviction that after having experimented with successive and alternative models of literacy and education over a time-frame of more than 4 decades (1950-92), we have now settled down to a model - the campaign mode of total literacy which has given us lot of hope, faith and conviction that this is one model which can assure us of the right results in the right time in the right manner in the most participative, democratic and cost-effective way. The freedom and spontaneity with which people have taken to this mode, the cultural renaissance which it has generated, the literacy friendly environment which it has created and sustained and the glitter of hope, excitement and joy which it has left in the face of millions of learners and volunteers, are all factors which have renewed and reinforced our commitment to this mode. It has, however, to be remembered that campaign is a mode and not the goal. Total Literacy is our goal, our polestar, the cynosure of all eyes. The paths may be more than one but all of them must lead to the primacy or centrality of that goal. There cannot be any compromise with this supreme truth. Even if we have suffered some reverses due to extraneous factors or circumstances beyond our control, our faith in the efficacy of the approach which is now fairly well-proven and well-tested must remain un-

shaken. Since success in areas of social policy and their execution is rather elusive and not uniform and is also short-lived, it was all throughout being contended that stories of such success which are also stories of absorbing human interest must be documented for history, failing which posterity will not forgive us for not telling the strategy we chose ourselves and the direction in which we have moved so far. We have certainly not achieved any miracles through the campaign approach and we have to traverse a rather long and thorny path to reach the ultimate goal but every single milestone (be it Kerala or Burdwan or Pudukottai) must remind us of the hurdles crossed and the trials and tribulations awaiting ahead. There is no question of giving up or

surrendering in the midst of this long journey to eternity. To conclude in the words of the Kattopanishads:

"उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्यवरान् निवोधत

क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया

दुर्गं पथस्तत् क्वयो वदन्ति"

Arise, awake (O Man) ! Realise (that Atman) having approached the excellent (teachers). Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, difficult to cross and hard to tread - so say the wise.

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