Literacy and Social Change: From a Women's Perspective

Mi Shiknar: I Will Learn

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The presentation will cover the following points:

1. The demand for literacy by women from the Bombay slums, the reasons for this event, and an analysis of self-generated literacy programs.

2. Changed perceptions of literacy: from traditional schooling to functional education. Gradual development of a specialized curriculum that dealt with everyday survival needs of participants. Literacy perceived as the key to breaking the code to city life.

3. Literacy and social change within communities: women organized to stop generations of domestic violence, alcoholism and gambling using non-violent means by asking for access to information on redress procedures, legal avenues and the media. Communal conflict resolution and a shift in power equations.

4, Problems of recruitment, training and staff development within the campaign. programs: success rates, environments that fail, and those that aid success.

5. Results of self-generated literacy: Women discovering the existence of personal rights, changed socialization practices, heightened self-confidence, increased assertiveness, awareness of legal and administrative procedures.

6. Literacy as planned by learners, with the help of the state breaks away from traditional imposed literacy programs, patriarchal thought, religious prescription and constructs a philosophy of development, education and personal rights that is inclusive and empowering.

LITERACY AND SOCIAL CHANGE: FROM A WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE

Background

The year 1990 was the international year for Literacy. Bombay was teeming with programs developed by educational institutions, international and national agencies. The government was heavily into publicizing progress and encouraging people to get involved in programs to make India one hundred percent literate. Radio and television programs mushroomed in local languages. In short. Literacy was the key word and everyone from colleges of social work to municipal schools was involved. CORO for Literacy was one such agency. Their members also conducted a television and radio show and trained people from other agencies. They received extremely good responses to their programs and on the basis of that they went out and contacted communities.

Two communities, Prakashnagar and Shantinagar contacted CORO because they had specific goals to accomplish. The leaders from the women's clubs at Shantinagar approached CORO because they had recurring problems with domestic abuse related to dowry and alcohol in their community and needed help in resolving them. They had already asked for help from local schools and municipal offices, but to no avail. They were pleased when CORO agreed to give them the support they needed. Prakashnagar had a history of illicit liquor dens and gambling with related problems, such as violence. The women wanted to change this and create a better future for their children. Their chosen tool for introducing change in their community was literacy, using the very people they wanted to protect (their children and young men), as teachers and volunteers.

Kherwadi and Khernagar are two communities that were a part of a program organized and supervised by a local college of social work. It was called "Each One Teach One" and involved training children from local municipal schools to teach their parents. They used the same kits as the other communities because they were developed by the state. These groups were diverse in terms of their composition; there were people from all over India unlike Prakashnagar and Shantinagar where the population was Maharashtrian. The literacy kits were in the mother tongues of all the participants. This group of learners never met each other and learned in the privacy of their homes. There were very few men enrolled as learners in all the communities.

Women's literacy

In India often the choice of becoming literate is denied to certain groups of people by not offering it, not informing them of it's existence (or utility) or by making the choice for them. In Indian society, groups that have been consistently excluded are women (of all castes and classes), the poor and those belonging to lower caste groups. Women in particular have been historically kept away from formal education (Ghosh, 1989; Desai and Krishnaraj, 1987; Oak, 1988); leaving the oral tradition as their sole access to information. Formal education has been the privilege of upper caste males, giving it high social and spiritual value. Being literate has become synonymous with being educated and associated with power and privilege, the domain of Indian elite, by virtue of birth into a caste or membership within a biological group. Thus the connection between literacy, education and power as well as the consequences of not having either continue to be a source of concern to those without.

Within the Indian context while education is generally valued, living circumstances often decide its availability and use. For example, women living in Indian villages reported not being as concerned about being literate prior to their move to urban surroundings. They explained that in villages being literate was not crucial to their everyday existence. "Survival was important, who has time for literacy? Where was the need for it?" was the recurring refrain. Awareness of the connections between power and literacy, literacy and change were not in their conscious.

Women in the zopadpattis (slums) of Bombay however, expressed their awareness of being isolated, left out of the mainstream of city life. They spoke of their feelings of powerlessness because of illiteracy and their extreme dependence on others to live in the city. For the women interviewed, literacy was a lifeline, an entry card to the city club. It was seen as the way to validate not experience, but existence. Until they moved to Bombay however, being literate was not an issue of concern. Giroux in Freire and Macedo (1987) explains Freire's perceptions of the process of becoming literate as the first step towards being "... self-critical about historically constructed nature of one's experience."

Dissatisfaction with their living conditions had women complaining to people who would listen: almost always other women in similar situations. Awareness of the nature of their problem and critical of their personal lives gave women common ground for lengthy discussions. However, awareness while the first step, was not enough. In their case awareness meant surfacing and voicing thoughts that had always been in their minds, suppressed. In some cases having a modicum of education did not necessarily mean a lifestyle different than that of others with no schooling. They perceived and understood the difference between them and their unschooled neighbors but were as powerless as them in their everyday lives. Events such as domestic abuse, dowry deaths, alcoholism and "The Year of Literacy" acted as catalysts, galvanizing communities into self-determined action.

Self-determined literacy begins with an agenda. A list of needs to be met, lacks to be remedied lie at the start of an independent process. This list is drawn up from the experiences of learners. For example in one community, women had wanted to write a petition to the police, protesting the presence of illegal liquor dens within their community. One of the leaders of this group of women used this opportunity to effectively demonstrate the impotency of being illiterate when they could not write the petition, much less sign one written for them. These needs then get translated into a list of goals such as signing names, learning about petitions (their existence), legal rights, riding buses, calculating interest on loans and reading religious books.

Previously, these same lacks were considered markers of identity. Learners tend to describe themselves as being "deaf", 'blind", an experience with some international validation (Varavarn, 1987). The need or lack appears to engulf the totality of the individual. In fact all definitions of literacy typically begin with a description of illiteracy, often referring to it as a malaise that needs eradication (Wiesinger, 1973; Ramdas, 1987). The approach is the same: twenty, thirty years later, illiteracy is still being treated as if it were an illness to be diagnosed, analyzed and treated in the same manner as the campaigns to eradicate smallpox or polio. Most definitions whether put forth by the UNESCO (1978) or by adult literacy organizations (Matshazi, 1987; St. John Hunter, 1987) include a perceived lack of some essential life skills that make living incomplete.

Illiteracy is perceived as a reflection of social, political and economic reality (or inequity) within a society. (Ramdas, 1987, 1990) explains that in India, illiteracy is the deciding factor in terms of social acceptance within a community, and as a stumbling block to social mobility. A definition by the UNESCO in 1978 only serves to emphasize this concept that the illiterate person is somehow not contributing her/his share towards life within the community : a functional illiterate has an inability to ".... engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his

group and community, and for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development." This definition clearly demands that the illiterate develop literacy skills in order to be a fully participant member of his/her community. It completely omits mention of the role played by the community and the larger society in denying the individual access to acquiring these skills.

The other side of this coin almost always contains a list of skills deemed necessary for complete and fulfilling human existence, "the necessary foundation for a higher quality of life" (St. John Hunter, 1987). To be poor therefore is all right, it is and honorable thing; but to be illiterate is to be invisible, non-human. The language of literacy continues to be negative, accusatory, devaluing the personhood of individuals on the basis of the lack of certain skills considered vital for "decent human existence" (Singh, 1990).

This line of negative thinking appears to have been adopted internationally among researchers and learners. Non-literate people appear to reflect these academic descriptions of themselves and their lives. Women in particular tend to perceive themselves as "empty pots", "hollow boxes". They do not see themselves as fully participating, contributing members of society. The fault (according to them) is theirs since they are in the unenviable position of being illiterate. Their knowledge and work experiences are rendered null by them in the face of this lack. They did not consider their work as mothers, wage earners and housewives as "real work" even if often it was their single salary that kept the family fed and sheltered. Whether this is because women's work is still largely devalued(Boserup, 1990; Omvedt, 1990) was not clear. For women in the four communities studied, "real work" meant having an education, regular hours, a good salary, dressing up to go to work and total financial independence.

Their knowledge about ecology, community cleanliness, raising children and managing a household under unstable circumstances amounted to nothing because of their lack of schooling. Learners in an urban environment do not place high value on their life experiences. In their eyes, their knowledge lacked credibility because it was not sanctioned by formal education. Age was the only factor that commanded respect. In traditional societies such as Morocco and India, certain forms of non-formal learning are valued. In India for example, there exist traditional forms of healing which are valued and in some cases trusted over typical medicine. By and large however, "schooled literacy" (Cook-Gumperz, 1986) is sought after. Researchers such as Fingeret found that in the US. there existed communities where non-curricular learning was held in high regard.

SCHOOL SKILLS AND NON-CURRICULAR LEARNING

The skills associated with literacy are the subject of debate. Levine (1982) describes literacy as being "...more sophisticated than mere capacity to write one's name and to read a simple message, but less than full fluency." Literacy events utilize a number of the skills associated with school learning such as holding a pencil, following the logical sequence of letter, numbers and words, etc. In Muslim countries it is quite common to be well versed in the Quran Sharif, taught in the indigenous religious schools called madrasas. Unfortunately this learning is purely rote. Hence, while students appear to be able to read the Quran Sharif with fluency, they still often cannot read the Arabic script when written elsewhere. This learning cannot be transferred to reading other books or doing math. Hence in places like Morocco and India, a number of Muslims are able to rattle off the Quran in a manner convincing enough to make an observer believe that they are reading. In actuality, they are merely following the lines page by page, not recognizing the characters but recalling the logical pattern of oral phrases.

According to O'Neill and Cook-Gumperz (1986) literacy is a combination of linguistic, cognitive and reasoning skills,

within the normative context of modern schooling. Cook-Gumperz (1986:4) describes the literacy events of Wagner et al (1986) as "schooled literacy". She then goes on to cite O'Neill's distinction between "schooled and a common sense literacy". By school-based literacy, O'Neill refers to the technical skills involved in school learning, which are linguistic (learning the rules of language, verbal and script), and cognitive, such as computation and reasoning. One part of literacy for adults is thus patterned after the skills that are taught in school. The treatment of these skills (basic as they may be) with an adult audience necessitates a different approach to teaching.

Non-curricular learning refers to the information and skills acquired through the process of living as a member of a social group. The term describes skills and information taught to adult learners about living within their society such as the legal system, the administrative network and about their rights. This also includes the passing on of traditions through oral transmission and training received by members of a community that has been perceived as necessary to living as an active participant within it by its predecessors. Learners are viewed as holders of tradition which is of paramount importance. In urbanized areas, non-curricular learning has been somewhat devalued, as has the oral tradition. The exceptions to these are the Hindu and Muslim priests who generally do not attend conventional schools yet command respect because of their occupation. They are also highly literate, having learned formal school skills in their religious institutions.

Parajuli (1990), and Freire and Macedo (1987) draw attention to the kinds of popular knowledge held by people who have not attended formal school. They refer to "common sense" (Gramsci, 1971) information learned through oral transmission held by indigenous peoples. Knowledge concerning their environment, ecology, the seasons, and the lore of the region are valuable kinds of information that have kept the many communities alive and prospering for centuries. This includes what Parajuli (1990) refers to as "survival knowledge" and "popular knowledge". He goes on to say that critical literacy theorists and the Marxists are quite supportive of ordinary people's knowledge, but they are also suspicious of it. They ultimately impose their own pre-determined ideas of what constitutes "good common sense" as opposed to "vulgar common sense" on the same people and ideas that they are supporting.

The popular masses are often accused of being neither sensitive or sophisticated. While Freire and Gramsci (1971) (and others) urge activists to listen to and incorporate the ideology of the ordinary people, they still speak of the difference in thought levels and systems between the two groups. Parajuli (1990) explores this major drawback to Freire's critical literacy and Gramsci's popular knowledge. The parallels are clear. Popular knowledge may indeed be worth returning to as long as it fits in with the "sensitized" paradigms put forth by them. Feminist thought is totally overlooked as is the thinking of indigenous peoples. It is as if they impose a "trickle-down hegemonic theory with a trickle-down counter-hegemonic theory" (Parajuli, 1990).

According to Akinnaso (cited in Cook-Gumperz) in his 1976 report for the UNESCO, literacy,

...should be regarded as a way of preparing man for a social, civic and economic role that goes beyond the limits of rudimentary literacy training, consisting merely in teaching of reading and writing. The very process of learning.... should lead to... training for work, increased productivity,.... and should ultimately open the way to basic human knowledge. (1986:17)

Literacy is perceived as necessary for "increased productivity", for gaining an understanding of the modern, technology controlled world. From being 'contributing members' of the society that they live in, illiterates are expected to become an active part of the process of development. As early as 1964-1966, the Indian Education Commission (1964-66) perceived education and development as inseparable (Naik 1975). According to Naik, "... education should lead to development and development should create the motivation for education as well as provide the tools for it."(1975:50).

Naik uses the term "education" as opposed to literacy when he describes development as including "...language skills....numeracy.....techniracy." (Naik, 1975:50)

In reviewing the various definitions of literacy it becomes apparent that there are three types:

1. School-based literacy:

The term includes the basic skills taught in conventional, formal school - reading, writing and math. The term also brings in the popular notion of "functional education" or "functional literacy" of the kind referred to by Giroux (in Freire and Macedo 1987:3) when he speaks of "...the need to train more workers for occupational jobs that demand "functional" reading and writing skills." A program for functional literacy is based on the acquisition of skills taught in formal school with some pre-determined level of proficiency.

2. Non-curricular literacy:

The term "non-curricular" suggests learning that has no basis in formal school. However when people are uninformed about issues and procedures that are the primary domain of those in power, learning about these is also becoming literate. The term is not to be confused with community learning, popular knowledge or common sense. Non-curricular literacy is based on an assessment of the needs of adults such that it complements school literacy. This component of the process of literacy is what Freire (1987) refers to as the transformation of seized power. In beginning the process of literacy, learners are beginning to seize power. In learning the power systems, language, and issues critical to living in an unequal society, they are beginning the process of transforming or "...re-create(ing) and reinvent(ing) (of) power."(1987:55)

3. Community knowledge/learning:

This comprises the entire realm of experience in the lives of the learners. Freire (1987, 1970) says that the background that learners bring to the learning situation ultimately decides how they process and assimilate concepts. Community knowledge includes oral traditions, historic learning and other non-formal kinds of information acquired through social and community networks.

It is clear that all three types of learning are important for any successful and complete literacy program. One fact that needs emphasizing is that all literacy training takes place within the non-formal, non-curricular framework of an adult learner's everyday life. We need to bear this in mind when designing programs.

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL LITERACY PROGRAM

Indigenous thought has a validity for the people who live within and create a culture. The failure of internationally and nationally funded programs of literacy in Iran (Wiesinger, 1973) and India (Ramdas, 1987) is an indication of their neglect in taking culture into account. Experts tend to rush in with almost a missionary zeal, full of good intentions and programs laden with ideas reflecting idealism based on sound pedagogical theory. Non-literate people have a right to literacy and change and we want to give them that. Pedagogy and good intentions cannot be separated from the cultural framework that learners live in. In India , literacy does not need to mean the replacement of existing systems of thought. On the contrary, it needs to inform them to include current reality. When literacy refuses to validate a group's

experiences and fails to let them voice their concerns, it becomes the tool of oppression and disempowerment.

Literacy as planned by learners, with the help of the state or other agencies breaks away from traditional, 'expert'-based (imposed?) literacy programs, patriarchal thought, religious prescription and constructs a philosophy of development, education, personal rights that is inclusive and empowering. Of the four programs looked at in Bombay, two communities, Shantinagar and Prakashnagar appeared to have better success rates. On interviewing participants (learners, teachers, volunteers and field officers), it became clear that there was very high learner participation in the actual planning of the program. In fact the program had been learner initiated in both communities. Women had organized to bring literacy into their homes for specific reasons.

The timing of national media programs on Bombay television such as "Akshardhara" and "Lok Jagar" on All India Radio proved perfect for the purposes of these communities. Prior to seeking CORO's help, women from both communities had asked help from local schools and municipal offices. Not finding effective responses, the television and radio broadcasts served as their links to achieving their goals. The interesting feature with both these communities is that they involved young men and women from their families in their programs. First contact was made by these representatives from each community with women to voice their needs. Training of these volunteers and organizational know-how was supplied by CORO for Literacy.

Women from both communities had fairly clear set agendas of what they wanted to accomplish with literacy. They had developed such a wish list based on certain events that took place in their homes. For example, one slum had a history of rampant inter-generational alcoholism and gambling. For them it was imperative to involve possible victims of both, i.e. young men, in organizing a literacy program. Women also wanted to develop a safe forum for themselves where they could discuss and develop plans for social change they wanted to install in their community. Hence top on their list was the creation of a group of trustworthy volunteers, learning to sign their names, reading and writing petitions, awareness of their political rights and stopping alcoholism.

It is evident that community involvement concerning decisions such as program planning, events, is crucial for success and maintenance of literacy programs. When learners make decisions for themselves, their responsibility and commitment levels are automatically high. Within these two communities, enrollment was high and those who did not want to enroll found themselves being excluded from communal decision making. Non participants were treated with suspicion and their occasional requests for help were treated well but with the reminder that enrollment in the program would merit even better treatment. Hence the first step in developing a literacy program needs to be a thorough evaluation of needs, done with full involvement of the community members.

Evaluation needs to be done in such a way that members feel safe in voicing their concerns. The impetus is thus put on the community to emphasize their strong involvement in the program. CORO played the perfect godparent by offering training, materials, organizational know-how and access to resources such as salaries, legal personnel and media attention for important events. The same questions were asked of the women across all the slums: "Why Literacy?" The answer to this question as far as the women were concerned was very obvious: To better their lives, the course of the lives of future generations as well as to improve the community. They were not entirely sure how literacy meant better lives. The connection between education and middle class living was very clear to them. The second point was that women needed to feel safe in order to speak about their concerns. They also needed to meet in large enough groups of supportive women, with a few volunteers. As rule, women tend to work well by consensus. (Papanek, 1989, 1990)

Once the evaluation is done and the agenda is set, the personnel needs to be organized. In the four communities studied, all the volunteers and teachers were residents. The problems encountered were of two kinds: the age of the learners, and secondly, the quality of training received by them. Some of the teachers were relatively young (7 years) and some of the learners were quite old (50-60 years). When the age difference between the teachers and students was large, the classes often encountered problems. This led to a number of conflicts especially when the people were related. This brings in the culture factor. Adults were caught in a dilemma because Indian tradition demanded that they be the experts, the guides and the disciplinarians of the younger generations. Yet here they were, learning instead of teaching, being corrected instead of correcting and being reprimanded instead of reprimanding.

Adults tended to feel threatened when children corrected their work and asked for better performances. Children also had difficulty slipping into the role of "expert" with the same people whom they regarded as experts in their everyday lives. The role of teacher was not as well defined as it was when the students were in school. At home, study sessions were interrupted by household chores, by disinterest, by illness and other such unexpected problems.

Training teachers is the next issue of concern. This step is extremely important as is the actual selection of volunteers. Teachers or trainers need to be interested, capable and committed. The four campaigns primarily chose children as trainers, a choice that did not always work well. Learners need to have teachers who they can feel at ease with, whose credibility they respect. Trained outsiders (Wiesinger in Iran, for example) may not be the ideal solution but neither are primary or middle school children. They may be the most obvious and easily available resource, but they need a lot of good training in how to work with adults, especially when the adults in question happen to be members of their family.

Unfortunately in the four slums studied, there was no clear data available about the amount of time devoted to training the youngsters. Often children ended up playing "teacher" to their students. Therefore training teachers, explaining the organization of curriculum material to them beforehand, as well as making them aware of the possible problems that could arise when working with adults is essential to the success of any literacy program.

The kit used in the four slums is a good one. It covers all the basic information from health, hygiene, human rights, political and legal rights, money matters and other subjects pertinent to city living. Unfortunately the children were not well trained in its use. This is a common problem, faced by a number of literacy programs that involve young children as teachers.

Flexibility was the key word at CORO. They listened to communities and provided them with help as and when needed. It is easy to forget that agendas change. In two of the four communities often prescribed lessons were changed depending on current happenings. For example in one slum women wanted to know how to deal with recalcitrant policemen. Speakers were brought in from a local women's organization and the topic was dealt with from the kit as well as from her experience. Similarly women who worked as vendors, asked to learn math sections of the kit prior to learning about traffic rules. CORO workers followed a policy that said that the community took charge of it's literacy. The onus was on them and their needs determined how the program went and whether it worked or not. They listened and offered help when asked.

The key to the success of these programs was not just the fact that it was the communities that asked for help, but also that there was a very good working relationship between the communities and the agency. The two other communities where schoolchildren taught their parents in the seclusion of their homes, dealt with a different set of problems. Children were not trained very well and parents (learners), had no real forum where they could express their concerns. Teachers

did not have regular or consistent access to agency members in the "Each One Teach One" program. Programs seem to work better when people organize, and are personally invested in them. Having a group to belong to, share problems and successes with helped the other two communities achieve a higher degree of literacy.

One factor that has not yet been mentioned is linking ideology. In Cuba, (Kozol, 1978), the literacy program was handled like a battle campaign. Literacy was a national project, national sentiment was high, and political support at all levels was strong. It was also linked to Cuba's development and world status. Having a common cause such as national identity, goals such as social change, incentives such as employment, or improved status help immensely to improve the chances of success, not to mention learner motivation.

CONSEQUENCES OF SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS

The success of literacy campaigns is judged by their consequences. All the planning and development that has gone into the campaign is deemed effective only when participants turn around and realize that their goals have been accomplished, whether in part or in totality. Results sought include almost complete literacy within a community, changed perceptions of self, resolution of social problems and financial independence.

In the four cases studied, women across all the communities had some experiences in common. They all mentioned the discovery of a personal voice. They described a change in self-image, increase in self-confidence and a new vision of their life in they city. To use an often repeated expression, it was as if for the first time, they could see. They said it was a pleasure to move around without having to constantly ask people for help. Some women said it was a secret pleasure that brought smiles to their faces when after years of asking for help, they could do certain things like boarding a bus or counting exact change confidently.

Learners experienced role changes in two of the three communities that were interviewed. The women who formed the coalition had to face the fact that all of a sudden they had managed to accomplish (closing down liquor dens, preventing men from gambling near or entering the slum intoxicated) what had only been dreamed about by the last few generations in past years. Along with the changes they had accomplished came the added responsibility of maintaining the social change and ensuring that the men did not slip back into their former ways of behaving. For themselves they had switched from being the property of their men folk to belonging instead to a group of their peers. They had also become excellent articulators of their needs, discomforts and demands of the men within the community. They had learned the language of rights when speaking with the authorities especially if they were dealing with the police or the locally elected leaders.

The language of rights is new for most Indian women who quite often are unaware that they have rights. Women spoke clearly and strongly about injustices they faced in their lives at the hands of their men, their in-laws, their fathers, brothers and the police. They were knowledgeable about some of the laws governing the safety and rights of women and did not hesitate to brandish them to their adversaries. This was clear in the way that a sixteen year old girl could threaten her grandparents for wanting to marry her off by telling them that she knew that the legal age for marriage was eighteen. This was also evident when women could tell reluctant policemen that they knew of other legal ways to get them to register their complaints.

Some of this data is three years old. Since then, Bombay has been affected by communal riots, elections, etc. which put a stop to the campaign for a while. Months later the programs continued, and at the present time in two of the communities where significant social change had taken place, the campaign is still in place. There are some changes in that women have developed self-help groups and have a strong liaison with a local women's organization. This has kept both the literacy program going as well as maintaining the changes implemented within the communities. There is active pressure on other members of the communities to join in the campaign.

The common misconception held by all the women who were interviewed pertained to the definitions of literacy and education. The women explained that they had thought that they were going to become "shikshit", "sushikshit" meaning educated and erudite in Marathi or "padhe-likhe" meaning educated in Hindi. Finding out that literacy was not formal schooling was both a shock and a relief. They began with the idea that somehow they were going to be on par with the people who went to school.

The syllabus of the literacy kits gave the women their first introduction to some of the skills learned in school. Lettering, math concepts, some elementary science, were overwhelming on first contact. Tasks that appeared relatively easy in the hands of children proved to be monumentally difficult when women attempted them. Some of the concepts, the split-half letters were mind boggling, as were percentages and complex multiplication. It was these encounters with school syllabi that made women seek out the kinds of information and decide their goals for literacy for themselves. They also mentioned the expectation that since little children learned so quickly to read and to write, they expected it to be much easier for themselves, being adults.

These initial expectations were corrected when they came into contact with their literacy kits. The words such as "shikshan" gave way to "saksharata" meaning literacy. They still said that it was a pity that they did not receive any certificates to mark their progress or their accomplishments. The groups in Prakashnagar and Shantinagar mentioned the value of learning about Bombay's administrative and legal systems through the activists that came to their communities. A few points came across in all the conversations : the initial disappointment over the fact that they were not going through conventional schooling. The second was the realization that formal schooling meant many years of hard labor. The third was a gradual awareness that there were gaps in their information that needed to be filled and which would help in changing their lives. The fourth was acceptance of the fact that even though literacy was not education, it was hard work and necessary.

Women said they had almost no use for writing. Hence they were unwilling to invest more time perfecting it. Some mentioned the fact that since they used reading a lot, they tended to persevere in its mastery. They had learned to sign their names, which was the most important task for them. Being able to read petitions was very important to be aware exactly what they were signing. By their own logic, they seemed to have found justification for not spending too much time or effort in perfecting their writing skills.

Another by product of the campaign was women's changed views on socialization of their children. Their mothers had raised them in traditional Indian fashion, where women were to be seen not heard, and were the property of their spouses under all circumstances. These women chose to envision a different future for their male and female children. They wanted to educate both, their daughters and sons to be financially independent. All women had middle-class aspirations for their children, wanting them to move out of the slum into decent flats and have non-working wives. They involved male children in housework and expected the young men of the community to participate setting good examples for them by abstaining from drinking, gambling, domestic abuse and holding down decent jobs.

To conclude, successful campaigns result in greater awareness (political and personal), increased self-confidence and assertiveness, realistic expectations from literacy, changed socialization practices and decisive action for maintenance of implemented social change.

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