

# Total Literacy Campaigns: A Field Report

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*Establishment of mass literacy is a task that calls for sensitive and well-coordinated administrative skills and a political commitment that few governments in post-Independence India have had. Without mass organisations of the poor, without mass participation in programmes of social and economic development and without the universalisation of primary education, the gains of the literacy campaign will be difficult to sustain.*

THE National Literacy Mission (NLM) was established in 1988, with the objective of revising and strengthening the existing adult education programmes in the country and making them mass programmes. Several evaluations were conducted by the Mission, and projects like the Rural Functional Literacy Programme, the Mass Programme of Functional Literacy, the adult education programmes of voluntary agencies and state governments were revised. These efforts did not lead to a satisfactory strategy for the eradication of mass illiteracy.

In 1989, a voluntary agency, the Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) asked the National Literacy Mission for financial assistance for a mass campaign in Ernakulam district. The first Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) was begun in Ernakulam district on January 26, 1989, and from this experience was developed the TLC model\* for mass literacy that is now being implemented in over 150 districts of the country.

An important conclusion of the international literature on education and literacy is that mass literacy is not a development outcome that is achieved merely with the passage of time: it requires a conscious and organised mass campaign. The Indian experience on this is dear enough. India's programmes of adult education, administered by the Department of Adult Education for several decades, failed to achieve any real progress in the field of mass literacy.

Internationally, campaigns to promote rapid increases in rates of literacy have involved the mobilisation of large numbers of learners and teachers, often by central authorities who have used elements of compulsion, ideology and social pressure to propagate literacy. In Nicaragua, the mass literacy campaign of the early 1980s was given the imagery and vocabulary of a national war to depose an oppressive social order and establish a new one based on mass empowerment.

Literacy is, of course, of intrinsic importance in the life of a human being. Literacy is also an instrument of empowerment. Awareness about social problems and structures, and information about development programmes can help transform lives, by enabling people to seek—and demand—better conditions of life. To be 'literate' in terms of the norms of the Mission, a learner must have basic literacy and numeracy skills, functional knowledge, usable in day-to-day affairs and social awareness.

Experience has shown that there are some innovative features of the total literacy campaign in India that are common to the different areas in which it has been implemented. The first of these common elements is its mass campaign approach. The TLC seeks to cover, in a specified time-period, the entire illiterate population residing in a compact, geographical area, usually a district. The second common feature of the campaigns is the participation of the people of the localities where the campaigns are on, in planning and implementing the campaign. Thirdly, campaigns are based on voluntary work. Panchayat-level, block-level, district-level and state-level organisations have been formed that are independent of, although supported by, local governments and administrators. Though the specific methods of mass mobilisation vary, the formation of such organisations is absolutely crucial to the success of the literacy campaigns.

While there are common features to the campaigns in different areas, literacy campaigns must also be sensitive to existing social conditions, to the conditions of life and work of people in specific localities, to the gender and age compositions of local populations, to the languages that people speak, and so on.

Essential to a literacy campaign are programmes that ensure that neo-literates do not relapse into illiteracy. It is well established that a neo-literate can revert to illiterate status in 8 to 10 months (and even quicker) if post-literacy campaigns do

not provide sustained practice in using literacy skills. This is even true of regions where base-level literacy is high, like Ernakulam district. Given that the potential for regression into illiteracy among neo-literates is always present, it is important that literacy comes to play a meaningful role in the lives of the neo-literates if literacy skills are not to be lost. Regression means the wastage of sizeable resources, both human and financial, spent during the campaign and, more important, the tragic loss of a skill that has taken much dedication and hard work to impart and inculcate.

Tanzania, an example of a country that emphasised post-literacy maintenance and development activities in its national literacy campaign, imaginatively used a variety of media to promote reading and writing skills; these included mobile libraries and rural newspapers. Textbooks representing different areas of interest were produced for learners. An overall functional orientation to the literacy campaign was adopted, which helped raise the literacy levels to over 80 per cent.

This is a report on the progress of the literacy movement in four regions of south India, namely, the Union Territory of Pondicherry, Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar and Pudukkottai districts in Tamil Nadu, and Nizamabad district in Andhra Pradesh. The report is based on field trips that I made to these areas in June 1992, as part of a study of strategies for the post-campaign phase of the literacy movement in these areas. It is premature to attempt a detailed analysis of the post-literacy campaign, but the directions that is now taking may be described.

## PONDICHERRY

After Ernakulam in Kerala, Pondicherry was the second region in India to be declared 'totally literate' (Pondicherry was so declared in November 1991). About 67,000 people in the age group 15 to 40 years, 60 per cent of them women, were covered by the Total Literacy Campaign in the Union Territory. Initiated in September 1989, and organised by the 'Puduvai Arivoli Iyakkam', or Pondicherry Literacy Society, the movement gathered momentum after March 1990.

To administer the campaign, a committee with representatives from the government, political parties, voluntary organisations such as the Pondicherry Science Forum, Nehru Yuvak Kendra, and associations such as the NSS, was formed. The first task was to create an environment favourable to the campaign, by means of a massive publicity campaign involving mass conventions, 'kalajathas' (cultural shows and processions) and 'padayatras' (campaigns in which volunteers walk from place to place). The ob-

jective of these activities was to generate awareness for eradicating illiteracy, and to motivate and mobilise volunteers and learners to participate in the campaign. Ten cultural troupes travelled through the villages, popularising the message of literacy through more than 1,500 performances. To ensure community participation and continuity, which were critical to the success of the campaign, literacy committees—involving local youth club, women's organisations and teachers—were formed at the village, commune and district level.

The next task was training. There were two categories of people to be trained. The first was the category of volunteers, including key resource persons, master trainers and volunteer instructors, who were trained to teach a 3-part integrated primer. The second category comprised village and commune level organisers. About 13,000 volunteers were mobilised and trained.

The teaching phase lasted from about June 1990 to April 1991. The initial response to the classes was encouraging, with an enrolment of about 80,000 from an illiterate population estimated at 1,00,000. Several problems emerged: many were issues that could be expected to arise with the enhancement of public consciousness and a heightened awareness of basic rights among a population living in poverty.

Sustaining the interest of the learners and preventing drop-outs was difficult. The 'environment-building\*' efforts had succeeded in motivating illiterates to enroll themselves in the campaign. After all their daily chores, coming to the centre could be tiring and wearisome. There were other reasons for learners dropping out: some people felt that they needed to know only how to sign their names; the pedagogy of the campaign was often poor; the monsoon and festivals intervened. Those who already had some basic literacy felt disinclined to join the groups as they found nothing new or exciting on the agenda; they could not see its functional application in their lives.

The government's unwillingness to follow the programme through was, and is, a major obstacle in the way of the campaign. One lesson in the literacy primer raised issues of poverty and unemployment in India and of the iniquitable distribution of resources, and it called on people to struggle for a just society. Citing this chapter as "evidence", the speaker of Pondicherry's legislature actually called the Total Literacy Campaign "anti-national". The elected government of the Union Territory refused to sanction the post-literacy budget proposal; as a result, reading material for Pondicherry's 530 post-literacy centres could not be produced and, more important, large numbers of committed volunteers were disheartened.

Government policy has brought the post-literacy campaign to a virtual standstill in the Union Territory. A campaign that generated mass awareness, and sought to make the poorest conscious of their rights, was seen as being profoundly dangerous by the party and government in power in Pondicherry.

The village-level workers and many volunteers are young and not equipped to organise adults around various social, economic and work issues. They themselves lack adequate information on issues of interest to the adult learners. Though an attempt was made, through a 'force of 80' highly motivated volunteers, to retrain village-level instructors and monitor the classes, they have not all been able to develop the organisational skills required for bringing the neo-literates together into literacy circles. In some cases, the volunteers worked with the expectation of future government employment, and when they did not get this, lost interest in the programme.

The response of women to the campaign was encouraging. They saw in the campaign a space for themselves, and an opportunity to interact with each other and to gradually bring about changes in social, and more particularly, gender relations. As part of the village-level committees, women's subcommittees were formed. These subcommittees raised a range of issues, including the need for more facilities for primary education, more public utilities, and (with rather less success) the organisation of income-generation projects for women.

The literacy movement had reached the masses, something which the government had been unable to do. Expectations about the benefits and impact of the literacy movement mounted. People began to expect it to provide solutions to all their problems and hasten the pace of implementation of development programmes. It is really not a criticism of the literacy campaign, but its inability to meet the expectations of the people in terms of the implementation of development programmes led to a decline in enthusiasm over the months. To take an example, twice there were floods in a fishing hamlet, and three rows of houses were washed away. The people of this hamlet wanted financial assistance for housing, but this issue could not be taken up by the literacy committee. The fisherwomen of the hamlet were being exploited economically by the contractors. To assist them by increasing their collection, the literacy society helped them install Fish Aggregation Devices. However, private launchowners smashed these devices.

When people perceive literacy as critical to their daily existence and see its utility in enabling them to live better, the motivation to strengthen their literacy skills also increases. To take an example, Father

Anthonisamy of the Holy Redeemers, who is also on the Executive Committee of the Arivoli Iyakkam, conducted a survey amongst four Arivoli groups and found that 85 per cent of the learners were in debt. Through the Holy Redeemers, those paying more than 10 per cent interest per month were helped to pay back their past debts immediately. An equivalent amount of money was deposited in the thrift and credit group that was organised around the learning group. The group employed the literacy volunteer to maintain its records and accounts. In addition to managing the thrift and credit society, the volunteer continued to help develop the literacy skills of the members. It is possible to tie such developmental work to literacy work.

Wherever functional literacy has become a practical reality and has been identified with local issues and priorities, the literacy movement seems to have made a deeper impact. In other words, literacy is an instrument for social justice and the empowerment of people.

Another development effort resulted from a 'social mapping' exercise undertaken in a literacy class. The group noted that only four out of 11 street lights worked in their street. A petition was written and sent to the electricity department. Quick action by the department became a source of motivation to the neo-literates.

Adult learners wanted to continue to learn, provided they found learning meaningful to their lives. The challenge facing the Arivoli Iyakkam was to plan and implement a post-literacy programme that would improve their work-skills, and help them find new forms of employment.

No literacy campaign can be successful if a programme of compulsory and universal primary education is not implemented. The literacy campaign had a direct impact on primary education in the union territory. In fact, the programme for adult literacy and Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) are really two sides of the same coin. As part of the post-literacy campaign, the activists of the literacy movement sought to arrange teacher training camps for the universalisation of elementary education as well as a 'back to school' campaign for drop-outs in the age group of six to 14 years. The government, however, did not sanction funds for the post-literacy programme, and this campaign has come to a halt.

Several members of the formal education system co-operated actively in the enrolment of drop-outs and of illiterate working children. Visalakshi Thangappa, headmistress of the government girls high school, created a separate section in the school for rag-pickers. A noteworthy achievement, she feels, is the enrolment of three exceptionally bright and talented children, who after a test, were admitted directly to classes 7, 5 and 4 respectively.

Prior to this, they were students in the TLC.

The fortnightly bulletin brought out by the Literacy Society, the literacy wall for transmitting news at different places in every village and hamlet, and the exercises in 'social mapping' have generated much interest among learners. However, the inadequacy of materials and finances for initiating new activities is becoming a major constraint on the progress of the movement.

#### PASUMPON DISTRICT

With the success of the TLCs in Kerala and Pondicherry, several districts in Ikmil Nadu sent proposals to the NLM for launching campaigns in their districts. The first to be approved were the campaigns in Pasumpon and Kamarajar districts in March 1991.

The campaign in Pasumpon was launched in April 1991 under the aegis of the Pasumpon Mavatta Arivoli Iyakkam (the Pasumpon District Literacy Society). According to the 1991 Census, Pasumpon had a population of 10.75 lakhs, of whom 5.91 lakhs were literates. The campaign began with a major publicity drive, followed by a door-to-door survey that identified 1.08 lakh illiterates in the age group 15-35 years. Despite interruptions due to drought and mass migration in search of work, as well as the elections, teaching began in August 1991 and continued till May 1992. Approximately 15,000 volunteers were mobilised and trained to be teachers. About 90,000 illiterates enrolled in the classes, of whom about 80,000 acquired literacy levels as per the norms of the NLM. The district was declared 'totally literate' (that is, with a literacy rate greater than 80 per cent in the target age group of 15-35 years) in August 1992.

Pasumpon was the first district in Tamil Nadu to implement the TLC. The programme was developed taking note of the difficulties faced in other areas, particularly Pondicherry, and drawing upon the lessons learnt there. Thus, the TLC in Pasumpon district concentrated on and developed a network of participatory, grassroots, village-, panchayat- and district-level structures to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the movement. All voluntary organisations functioning in the district were involved, as were several government departments. Attempts to build the self-confidence of volunteers and learners, specifically women (who constituted 70 per cent of adults who enrolled) were made by organising training programmes and a variety of other activities such as talks, conventions and cultural shows. A significant contribution of the Pasumpon campaign was the introduction of a gram panchayat co-

ordinator, a link person between the district centre and the village centres, who was identified and appointed by the village people themselves.

Though the overall base literacy rate for Pasumpon (55.01 per cent) was marginally higher than the state average, the gap between male and female literacy was among the widest, next only the Pudukkottai district. In response to this finding, the activists of the campaign attempted to establish women's literacy committees right down to the village level. Almost every village had a woman convener.

The women's committees were active in several blocks, especially Ilayankudi and Tirupattur, and tackled diverse issues, from street lights that didn't work to water scarcity. About 800 women were trained in organisation and public speaking. The women's literacy committees also helped to train people in tasks such as the production of palm leaf baskets, for which the resources existed locally. In some cases, the committees sought assistance under the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) programme (an example is a pickle-making unit at Ilayankudi). Fifty DWCRA groups were formed, most of them at the initiative of the village-level women's literacy committees, and they involve both learners and volunteers in their activity.

The literacy committee also took on, with the assistance of the General Insurance Corporation, a programme to popularise personal insurance. More than 2,000 people were insured (the premium was nominal). Two claims have already been filed. Insurance helped people recognise that every life is valuable, and boosted their self-image.

A noteworthy, and well known, feature of the Pasumpon literacy campaign was a programme to teach women karate. Competitions between block-level karate groups were held. This training helped women realise their own strength and lose many of their fears and physical inhibitions.

During the campaign phase itself, there were several initiatives to encourage literacy activities and build a sustained interest in learning. To take some examples, inland letter forms were distributed to volunteers, postcards were written to and by learners, and they were encouraged to fill in money-order and ration-card forms. Several competitions and functions, health camps and 'kalajathas' (cultural performances) were organised by the Arivoli Iyakkam.

The campaign attempted to spread the message that universal elementary education is necessary. A survey that attempted to find out the reasons for school drop-outs found that many people thought school education to be irrelevant and with

no practical utility in their lives. A pilot project on activity-based teaching, which relates learning to activities of daily life, was begun in Ilayankudi block.

Sustaining the achievements of the literacy programme requires much organisation and dedication and also political commitment to mass literacy. The organisers hope that the village-level organisations that have been created will be committed to sustaining literacy as well as linking literacy to income-generating development programmes. The next two years will be crucial in determining the success of the TLC.

The post-literacy phase must seek to strengthen and further develop the achievements of the campaign phase. The agenda includes a supplementary project to cover about 9,000 illiterates in the 9-14 age group and another 38,000 in the 36-45 age group who were not part of the target population in the first phase of the campaign.

As economic survival needs are often pressing, continued voluntary effort on a long-term basis, despite high motivation levels among many of the volunteers, may not be a practical possibility. A new feature of the Pasumpon literacy movement is a two-year programme at the block level to improve the academic level as well as the economic condition of the volunteers. The plans include an academic component to enable volunteers to complete their matriculation, and a vocational-skill-training component, compatible with local resources and needs. Providing them opportunities to enhance their capacities is justified recognition for the commitment and dedication shown by the volunteers during the literacy campaign.

Such a programme would take care of numerous young people like Chandra. Chandra's brother refused to let her teach in the Arivoli centre as a volunteer as there was no money in it. She wanted to participate in the programme, for the experience and joy of achievement it gave her, and so she lied to him that she received Rs 250 per month as honorarium. During the day she worked as a wage labourer and managed to earn this amount, which she gave to her brother every month.

Neo-literates also gain access to training through TRYSEM, benefits under DWCRA, loans through IRDP, and technical assistance from government extension departments, universities and other voluntary bodies in the areas of agriculture and ground water resource development. An attempt to utilise the cable TV network for communicating some of this information was made.

#### PUDUKKOTTAI DISTRICT

In Pudukkottai district there was a further refinement of the TLC. Pudukkottai, according to the 1991 Census, had 6.62

lakh illiterates out of a total population of 13.22 lakhs. The campaign for total literacy was initiated on July 23, 1991, by the Pudukkottai Mavatta Arivoli Iyakkam, a society registered under the Societies Registration Act. After a hectic initial motivation phase, teaching began on October 2, 1991. As against an initial estimate of 2.3 lakh illiterates in the 15-35 age group, the survey identified 2.9 lakh illiterates in the 9-45 age group. Teaching continued till the end of July 1992, when an external evaluation was conducted, and the district was declared 'totally literate' on August 11, 1992.

Over 26,000 volunteers were mobilised in the district. They taught in the literacy campaign without any payment. The programme was co-ordinated at the district level by government officials as well as a diverse team of full-time Arivoli workers.

Although Pudukkottai was ranked 16th in the state in terms of the percentage of literates to total population in the 1991 Census, the gap in literacy rates between males and females was the highest in the state, 24.3 percentage points. To correct this inequity, women's literacy was emphasised right from the beginning of the campaign.

The response and involvement of women at all levels, not only as learners, but also as master-trainers and assistant project co-ordinators has been tremendous. A major reason for this special emphasis and sensitivity to women's needs, as in Pasumpon, has been the presence of women District Collectors, who were committed to the programme of mass literacy, Qudisia Gandhi in Pasumpon and Sheela Rani Chunkath in Pudukkottai, who spear-headed the campaigns in these districts. They were supported at every stage in this effort by activists of the Tamil Nadu Science Forum, and its president, Venkatesh Athreya, who is also the State Literacy Co-ordinator.

Women's committees were formed at the district, block, sub-block and panchayat levels. These committees were involved in a wide variety of activities. First, 'Meet the Learners' and 'Back to School' campaigns to motivate parents to send children aged between five and eight years back to school were organised. Secondly, the identification of women for various training programmes was carried out. Thirdly, competitions, meetings and conventions were organised at village centres to discuss issues that could not be handled by the volunteers, such as issues of dowry, wife-beating, and economic exploitation. Fourthly, members of the literacy campaign dealt with conflict situations, for example, a movement of women agricultural labourers who demanded minimum wages from a landlord at Pudur. Fifthly, women learners were helped to write their own

petitions to government authorities and to work out their own problems. Through such activities, campaigners tried to generate awareness and develop people's confidence in literacy committees, and attempted to create a credible organisational base for sustaining both literacy and other development activities.

A hallmark of the strategy in Pudukkottai seems to have been to link the movement for literacy with the lives and livelihoods of the people right from the start. This has not only provided a constant source of motivation to the learners, but has also facilitated close co-operation between the district administration (especially the revenue, development and education departments), the full-time Arivoli staff and the learners. It encouraged learners to take leadership positions and assist the administration wherever possible. I shall describe some of the women's groups that I visited.

The district has about 450 quarries, which were controlled by private contractors. In 1991, when the quarries were brought to auction, the contractors refused to bid at the floor price, expecting to be able to depress the price, as they usually were. The collector organised about 3,000 women workers into groups of 20 each and gave them quarrying rights at nominal rates for three years. There are now about 150 such women's groups. They were provided loans of Rs 1,000 each from the Indian Bank for tool kits, uniforms and initial working capital. The members earned a daily wage of Rs 20 to Rs 30 (a four-fold increase in daily earnings), and shared the profits every week. It has been a struggle to retain the women's contractual rights. The contractors, deprived of their quarry rights and profits, tried different ways to destroy the groups. They refused to allow trucks into the area. Help from the police had to be sought. They told group leaders that they would not be permitted to sell stones, which the contractors claimed for themselves, on account of their initial investment in the quarry.

I had the privilege of visiting several of the quarry groups in Annavasal, Thirumayam and Viralimalai talukas. The literacy campaign helped the women workers in this fight against the contractors by helping them gain confidence and learn the ropes of the business. They were able to petition the Assistant Director (Mines) at the district headquarters directly for their permits and seek his guidance in operational matters. They have now learnt to write out their own bills and receipts, and maintain their production accounts, and they can see that self-reliance is critical for ensuring the sustainability of their gains. Two of the group leaders, Vasantha and Anjalai, who were totally

illiterate, showed us their accounts. They have learnt how to keep them by attending the regular Arivoli classes and with some special assistance from the volunteer. The volunteers were given special training in maintaining accounts and records for these women's groups. More and more women workers began to attend the literacy classes.

Another group I visited at Illuppur was a group that worked at cutting and polishing artificial gems, using power-run machines. There are now 56 groups of 20 women working at this trade in the district, and another 50 groups are undergoing training prior to formal registration. Involving as it does the operation of machines, in the initial phase, literate women, with a minimum of five years of school education, were organised into these groups and given loans through a nationalised bank. The earning potential in this trade was about Rs 30-40 for an eight-hour working day. The women began to repay their loan instalments at the rate of Rs 100 per week.

Seeing the earning potential of this trade, many women joined the Arivoli classes in order to be able to work at gem-cutting. They were agricultural labourers who earned Rs 6-7 for a day's work. Employment quotas were observed, for scheduled caste women, for destitute women and for others from the most oppressed sections of the rural population. The new gem-cutting trainees were all neo-literates, and neo-numerates. Numeracy is important as the cutting of the stones has to be accurate and in accordance with the calibrations on the machine.

An imaginative feature of the literacy campaign, which can be emulated by literacy workers elsewhere, was to provide bicycles to women. Almost 1,500 bicycles were made available in the rural areas through low-interest loans to Gram Sevikas, anganwadi workers, and others. 'Cycle-rallies' and bicycle demonstrations by women were also organised.

The levels of achievement of literacy and other basic cognitive skills varied, of course, within hamlets, and within centres. At the same time, a major strength in Pudukkottai has been the even distribution of master trainers over all panchayats. They are in the ratio of one for every 20 volunteers. It should be possible to use their services for further training. This is important, as volunteers are often too young and inexperienced to sustain the interest of learners, especially when learners are adults who often require more experienced trainers.

#### NIZAMABAD DISTRICT

The total literacy campaign in Nizamabad began with a survey and 'environment-building' work by the

Nizaniabad Zilla Aksharasyatha Samithi in September 1991. According to the 1991 Census, Nizamabad has a population of 21.49 lakhs, of whom only 21.7 per cent were literate. The survey identified 4.5 lakh learners in the district in the 15 to 35 age group, leaching began in December 1991 and continued till July 1992. The district was declared 'totally literate' on August 15, 1992, with an estimated 3.5 lakh learners having achieved levels in accordance with the NLM norms.

The TLC in Nizamabad took a form that differed from those described above. Nizamabad is an area where Naxalite activity is particularly high and the TLC could not get off the ground if it had to face Naxalite hostility. Normal life is often disrupted by violent incidents, the law and order situation is very problematic, and people are often not willing to leave their homes after dark. During the initial survey and mobilisation phase, the atmosphere was quite tense and district officials had to move in villages with armed security men. They were unable to make much progress or generate the atmosphere of openness among the people that is essential for a campaign. The Naxalite groups then made an announcement through the local press that they would support the Campaign for Total Literacy as this was a pro-people programme. This eased the tension considerably and permitted the programme to develop in the district.

A second problem was the extremely low literacy rate in the district, as low as 16 per cent for females in the rural areas. It was hence difficult to get older, experienced volunteers. Most of the volunteers were young, middle or high school students.

Thirdly, almost 50 per cent of the learners in the district are bidi workers, most of them women. They sit in worksheds, and that is where their centres run too. They learned to read and write, but being under the supervision of the contractors, it was very difficult to make them aware of their rights or organise them to demand that even basic facilities, such as drinking water and toilets, be provided them by the contractors. Deductions are made from their wages for medical contributions, rents of worksheds and transportation costs. They do not know if their provident fund contributions are remitted regularly. They continue to face shortfalls in raw material, especially *tendu* leaf. The location of the literacy centres, the inexperience of the volunteers and the lack of involvement of the bidi workers' trade unions in the TLC, limited its scope in the district.

The lack of local organisations has meant that the entire campaign has been led by the officials, government machi-

nery. At the district level, special officers were appointed for each mandal. It was primarily the responsibility of these officers to develop mandal-level organisers and panchayat and village-level coordinators.

Given this background of the district, special efforts had to be made to secure public participation, and not keep the TLC restricted to being a 'government programme'.

The TLC created great enthusiasm among the poor and among women, especially Muslim women. Celebrations, competitions and other programmes were arranged at frequent intervals; these included a Mahila Prerana Utsavam (festival for the motivation of women), sports events, songs and rangoli (colourful floral patterns) competitions. Health camps and baby shows (!) were organised for general health awareness and also for specific issues, such as the prevention of gastroenteritis. Opportunities were provided to volunteers and learners to speak on the local radio station of their experiences. Camps were organised at which small peasants met functionaries from the agriculture and veterinary departments. These activities provided people with a space for expression and social interaction.

As it happened, in Nizamabad, four senior district-level administrators took it on themselves to work hard at the literacy programme in exceptionally difficult circumstances. They perceived this programme to be an entry point, the first step towards improving the implementation of other district-level development programmes.

A campaign such as the one in Nizamabad depends very much on the specific person who leads it. A case in point is the Bodhan subdivision, which performed much better than the others in the literacy campaign. The sub-collector of Bodhan personally motivated people to join the literacy programme. He collected a group of local singers at his residence, they composed and practised literacy songs together and produced them in the form of an audio-cassette with the assistance of All India Radio. He visited the centres often and tried to solve local development problems immediately. The same progress in the literacy campaign did not take place in other areas.

The establishment of mass literacy is a task that calls for sensitive and well-coordinated administrative skills and a political commitment that few governments in post-Independence India have had. Without mass organisations of the poor, without mass participation in programmes of social and economic development, and without the universalisation of primary education, the gains of the literacy campaign will be difficult to sustain.