Chapter 1

Introduction
1988: Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi inaugurates an ambitious National Literacy Mission (NLM) that envisages making 30 million Indians literate by 1990 and 50 millions more literate by 1995. NLM initiatives begin across the country, including Gujarat.

1993: A government-commissioned review by Gujarat Institute of Development Research reports less than satisfactory progress in the state's Gandhinagar district. The same year, another review, commissioned by the Government of Gujarat and carried out by Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research declares 15 out of 21 districts fully literate.

1999: Action India, a non-government organisation floated by some well meaning influential non-resident Indians identify literacy as an area to work in. Sam Pitroda, the technocrat credited with conceiving NLM, is the driving force behind Action India.

2003: The Government of Gujarat which claimed total literacy in 15 out of 21 districts, officially recognises the state's literacy scene as one of the poorest in the country; appoints a core group headed by a UNESCO consultant to look into the problem. The idea, obviously, is to make future literacy initiatives more effective.

There have been at least three major initiatives to spread literacy before 1988, namely, Social Education (1952), Farmers' Training and Functional Literacy Programme (1967-68), and National Adult Education Programme (1977-78). In short, a major thrust has been made in each decade since Independence to spread literacy. In more than half a century India has attained the literacy rate of 65.4 per cent. Kothari, et al² report that actual figure could be 10 percentage points less, ie, around 55 per cent. Census India-1951 reported literacy figure of 18.3 per cent. This means an effective growth of a shade above 37 percentage points in 50 years.
This by no means is something to write home about, considering what countries like Cuba, Vietnam and nearer home Sri Lanka have achieved in comparable period. By the Government of India's own admission, much ground remains to be covered.

Fifty years after achieving Independence, poverty, illiteracy, disease and lack of minimum social services continue to affect hundreds of millions of our people.³

And two years later, in 2000, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen noted

(...) some kind of change was noticeable in the Indian economy... the country had still a long way to go in removing illiteracy, and improving health conditions...⁴

Quantity apart, Visaria⁵ and a decade later Kothari, et al⁶ have questioned the quality of literacy. No gainsaying, there is something amiss.

A look at the programme content of all four major initiatives establishes that it (the content) is satisfactory.⁷ A lot of resources have gone into them, both human and financial.

As the discussions later in this thesis (Chapter 6, Unit 6.3.6) bring out, the delivery system is the weak link. There is an urgent need to tone it up. Literacy initiatives cry for political will and honest implementation.

Making almost half of the remaining nation literate and helping this population cross the threshold of sustainable literacy is an arduous task. Even if attempted honestly, it will take years if not decades to reach the level of sustainable literacy. Sustaining motivation of the learners and teachers could pose a problem. One way – there could be several others, such as Social Marketing approach as in Family Planning and Green Revolution – is to
adopt the participatory communication approach in which various social institutions are made a stake-holder.

This thesis aims at eliciting the views of participants on the ongoing efforts to spread literacy. It looks into the methodology, materials and people’s perception of the last literacy initiative, namely the National Literacy Mission (NLM). In this context I have interacted with a specific community, analyse the hierarchy of relationship that functions in that community, and how this hierarchy gets affected or might get affected due to an enabling process like literacy programme conducted for its members. Also presented in this thesis is the analysis of the levels of identities the participants express and how the realisation of the identities leads to or could lead to change in hierarchy and relationship. In the end, the thesis proposes a comprehensive programme communication with community at the centre stage.

Development communication discourse has two opposing strands. While a few still hold on to the modernisation theory underlining the importance of technology transfer, several others claim that such trickle down approach will never work as it has failed to deliver.

Amid several approaches suggested to use communication for development, came in “social marketing” another term to describe a set of activities in the field of development communication.

Social marketing has been used in India and several other developing countries particularly in promoting health practice and techno-economic endeavour and in several other domains of human existence. In the West, the social marketing concept has also been used to increase membership of churches and find patrons for sports clubs. However, in all these cases social marketing has followed the dominant paradigm, adopting the commercial marketing concepts and fine-tuning them to suit the specific campaigns.

As discussed above, India has been trying to increase literacy level in its people since
independence. Efforts have been made in the last couple of decades to attain total literacy, something that some of the underdeveloped countries have achieved.

1.1. The problem:
Some successful and some not so successful attempts have been made to make practices and innovations like family planning and green revolution more popular and acceptable to members of society. Role of communication in disseminating and persuading people to adopt them has been conceptualised and implemented. Literacy, too, is sought to be promoted in the country under various programmes.

However, despite massive investments in terms of financial, technological and human resources, results have, at best been moderate. This shows that efforts did not pay off the way planners had expected.

Employing dominant development theories to promoting literacy could be one of the reasons. Friere and several others like Askew, Nair and White, Hall, and Melkote have stressed the need for looking beyond these theories and suggested people’s participation in developmental programmes. This research student proposes to explore the ways to ensure people’s participation in the literacy movement. The community in which literacy is to be promoted has to be at the centre stage.

1.2. Methodology:
The present study involves primarily qualitative research, though quantitative data, too, have been gathered. The idea behind collecting qualitative data is to check the trend and to see if the quantitative data collected support the findings of qualitative data.

While data have been collected in the field following the established norms, as described below, relevant information was collected by library research. It involved literature survey which has been mentioned in the following chapter.

As part of library research, literacy policies of India were studied and documents such as
Farmers’ Training and Functional Literacy Programme, National Adult Education Programme and National literacy Mission were analysed. The analyses have been presented in Chapter 4, Unit 4.6.

Interview schedules were prepared to collect data. However, as expected, all interviews went beyond these schedules.

Quantitative data were gathered by survey method involving questionnaires. The questionnaires were filled personally by this research student while interacting with the respondents. Presented below is a table of standard methods and techniques involved in Library, Field and Laboratory research.

**Table 1.1**

**Research Methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Techniques</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Library</td>
<td>(i) Analysis of historical</td>
<td>Recording of notes, Content analysis, Tape and Film listening and analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>records</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) Analysis of documents</td>
<td>Statistical compilations and manipulations, reference and abstract guides, content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Field</td>
<td>(i) Non-participant direct</td>
<td>Observational behavioural scales, use of score cards, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) Participant observation</td>
<td>Interactional recording, possible use of tape recorders, photographic techniques</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) Mass observation</td>
<td>Recording mass behaviour, interview using independent observers in public places</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(iv) Mail</td>
<td>Identification of social and economic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>--------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Background of respondents. Use of attitude scales, projective techniques, use of sociometric scales.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opinionnaire</td>
<td>Interviewer uses a detailed schedule with open and closed questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal interview</td>
<td>Interviewer focuses attention upon a given experience and its effects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focused interview</td>
<td>Small groups of respondents are interviewed simultaneously.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Group interview</td>
<td>Used as a survey technique for information and for discerning opinion; may also be sued as a follow-up of questionnaire.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone survey</td>
<td>Cross sectional collection of data for intensive analysis, longitudinal collection of data of intensive character.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study and life history</td>
<td>Use of audi-visual recording devises, use of observers, etc.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Small group study of random behaviour, play and role analysis</td>
<td>3. Laboratory Research</td>
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*Source: Kothari*¹⁰

Of these (i) and (ii) were applied during Library Research and (vi), (vii) and (viii) were used during Field research in this study.

Community is the central unit of account in the present study. The most common
methods used in qualitative research are depth interview and group discussion. This research student proposes to use group discussion method. This method involves small groups discussing the topic(s) of concern with the guidance of a researcher. Hakim\textsuperscript{11} and Frankfurt-Nachmias and Nachmias\textsuperscript{12} have suggested the size of the group to be between four and twelve as this number is relatively easy to manage.

Friere\textsuperscript{13}, too, has outlined in detail a participatory approach in which the importance of researcher is reduced and the participating community's wisdom gains an upper hand. This approach could stand the researcher in good stead. Friere takes the case of coordination of a plan for adult education in a peasant area with a high percentage of illiteracy. If the plan includes a literacy campaign and a post-literacy phase, in the first stage the group or the individual who is coordinating the initiative seeks out and investigates the "generative word" while in the second stage, the group or the individual seeks out and investigates the "generative theme." The Brazilian scholar suggests certain steps to seek out the generative theme\textsuperscript{14}.

However, these steps are exhaustive and could be carried out only with big resources and over a much greater span of time than those at command of this research student. Friere has suggested steps for minimum knowledge of the situation, select some basic themes to serve as "codifications to be investigated." Accordingly, they can begin with introductory themes and simultaneously initiate further thematic investigations.

The participants' response to these codifications, pictorial or verbal, are then analysed. The analysis is presented before the participants for further discussions and the message is prepared based on the discussions.

Group discussions are usually tape recorded, so that direct quotations from the participants figure largely in the eventual report in place of the tables and statistics offered in a survey reports. Given the emphasis on detail and depth of information, qualitative studies normally involve small numbers of respondents. Hakim\textsuperscript{15} has suggested three-four group discussions for a survey. Accordingly, three group discussions
were organised and recorded for the present study.

The great strength of qualitative research is the validity of the data obtained as individuals are interviewed in sufficient detail and group discussions are intense as people give their own views on a given theme and also react to views they disagree with. Hence the data could be taken as true, correct and believable.16

The main weakness of qualitative research is that small numbers of respondents cannot be taken as representative, even if great care is taken to choose a fair cross-section of the type of people who are the subjects of the study. However, this weakness is taken care of to a great extent in the present study as the research student aims at proposing a comprehensive literacy programme that addresses the larger issues that the participant-learners from a small community confront.

1.3. Objectives of the study:
The objectives of the study are
(a) To offer a critique of development discourse,
(b) To explore ways to make social marketing more participative and hence more democratic,
(c) To analyse the ongoing efforts to spread literacy in terms of methodology, materials and people's perception of the last literacy initiative, namely the National Literacy Mission (NLM),
(d) In this context, to interact with a community, and
(i) analyse the hierarchy of relationship that functions in a given community, and how this hierarchy gets affected or might get affected due to an enabling process like literacy programme conducted for its members,
(ii) analyse the levels of identities the participants express and how the realisation of the identities leads to or could lead to change in hierarchy and relationship,
(iii) propose a comprehensive literacy programme that addresses the larger issues participant-learners face, and
(iv) suggest a communication strategy for the said programme.
1.4. Location of the survey for the study:
Time limit is normally associated with a degree/diploma-oriented academic exercise at a university. For the present study, it was imperative to select locations in the vicinity of Ahmedabad so that the survey could be completed within a given timeframe. The location of the study has been is discussed in Chapter 5.

1.5. Respondents:
Interacting with the following respondents was imperative to meet the objectives set for the study:
Participant learners,
Volunteer-teachers,
Volunteer-supervisors,
Officials of the implementing agencies, and
Planners.

1.5.a. Qualitative data: While the research student could locate and interact with respondents of the first four categories despite the passage of considerable time since the first National Literacy Mission classes were organised (almost a decade ago), Planners were evasive. Former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who conceived the National Literacy Mission, is no more. The chief planner of the mission, Mr Sam Pitroda, the then Advisor to the Prime Minister and currently the Chief Executive Officer of global telecom major WorldNet, now lives in and divides his time between the United States and the United Kingdom. Efforts to contact him were in vain and perhaps ill-health prevented him from responding to emails.

However, the National Literacy Mission document is fairly extensive and self-explanatory. The text contained in the document could easily serve as the views of the Planners. The present study quotes this document wherever reference has to be made to the Planner’s views.
The research student interacted with a total of 20 Participant-learners, 12 Volunteer-teachers, and four Volunteer-supervisors and two officials of the implementing agencies to collect qualitative data.

1.5.b. Quantitative data: The initial plan was to have only 60 samples of Participant-learners for the quantitative data. However, this sample size proved to be unsatisfactory while analysing the data collected. So the sample size was later increased to 120. This gave better scope for analysis.

1.6. Division of respondents:
The respondents have been divided along two lines: Class and Gender.

The respondents could have been divided into two classes: those living above poverty line and those living below poverty live.

The respondents could have been divided based on other indicators such as income or Human Development Index. Income is measured in terms of Gross Domestic Product. For the present study, this could be simplified into the respondents' monthly income from various means. However, classifying the respondents on the strength of their income would require fixing arbitrary income intervals: the interval could have been, say, (a) up to INR2000 a month, (b) up to INR5000 a month, (c) up to INR8000 a month, (d) more than INR8000 a month. It was decided not to adopt something that was arbitrary.

Selecting Human Development Index, too, posed certain problems. One of the major indices here is health which, in turn, is measured in term of life expectancy and availability of Primary Health Centres. Life expectancy figures at micro level are not available. Normally, these figures are available at the national level. Availability and access to Primary Health Centres are likely to be the same for the entire community the research student proposes to study.

Another index in the Human Development Index is knowledge. This could be measured
in terms of availability of schools in the vicinity. This figure, too, is likely to be the same for the entire community.

Under the circumstances division of the samples along Poverty line appears to be a safe way out. It gave the research student just two classes mentioned above: those living above poverty line and those living below it.

The research student proposes to carry out the study on the suburbs of Ahmedabad with communities that attended the National Literacy Mission classes. The National Literacy Mission efforts were made in Guptanagar, Juhapura, Sarkhej, Fathewadi, Naroda and other such villages on the periphery of Ahmedabad. These villages have a mixed population in terms of caste, creed and income.

To analyse the perceptions of the learners of the literacy programme the research student proposes to carry out a survey among them and ascertain their perception genderwise and classwise. Poverty line has been used for dividing the respondents into two classes: those living above poverty line and those living below poverty line.

1.7. The scheme of the study:

The thesis has been divided into seven chapters, including the Introduction and the Conclusion. As mentioned earlier, I interacted with Participant-learners, Volunteer-teachers, Volunteer-supervisors, and a couple of officials of implementing agencies.

Many of the respondents were or are government employees who could open up and talk frankly only on terms of anonymity. None of the respondents has been identified by her/his proper name in this thesis, nor has her/his village or neighbourhood mentioned. This has been done with a view to protecting the respondents’ identities.

Participant-learners have been identified as LNa-X or LNrd-X with “L” denoting his/her status (that of participant-learner), Na and Nrd standing for Narimanpura and Naroda.
respectively, and X representing the number assigned to the person.

Similarly Volunteer-teachers have been identified as TNa-X or TNrd-X or TSa-X with T denoting his/her status (that of volunteer-teacher), and Volunteer-supervisors have been identified as SSa-X with S denoting his/her status (that of volunteer-supervisor) and Sa standing for Sadra village.

The first chapter (the current one) gives an overview of the research problem, the objective of the study, the research design, the methodology followed and the scope of the study.

The second chapter discusses the concept of communication. The chapter begins with an outline of the two principal schools of study of communication: the transmission or the process school, and the semiotic or the ritual school. Various models of the two approaches have been enumerated and an attempt has been made to understand the difference between the two approaches to the study of communication.

The third chapter deals with the development communication discourse. The theory and practice of communication in developing countries with special reference to India has been discussed. Various approaches to development proposed and followed over the years (the economic approach, the sociological approach) and their critique have been discussed. It reviews the development communication initiatives taken in India and the linkage between literacy and development. "Social marketing" has emerged as one of the approaches in the field of development communication. The chapter also deals with the social marketing approach to development communication. Social marketing has been used in India and several other developing countries particularly in promoting health practice (family planning in India and children's immunization in Bangladesh), techno-economic endeavour (green revolution in India) and in several other domains of human existence. However, the approach has been questioned as in all these cases social marketing has followed the dominant paradigm, adopting the commercial marketing concepts and fine-tuning them to suit the specific campaigns. An attempt, as spelt out in
the objective of this study, has been made to see how social marketing approach could be made broadbased, more humane and democratic.

Illiteracy has been a matter of concern for more than a century now. The concern for illiteracy has led to hectic activities at times but obviously these activities were never sustained long enough to materially alter the numbers of the illiterate population in several parts of the world. The fourth chapter deals with the various approaches to understand and analyse literacy or the lack of it. In the age of calculators and computers are literacy and numeracy necessary? An attempt has been made to analyse the rationale for literacy.

A study of literacy has to go beyond purely social realm and take into account political and economic factors, including power structure, policies of the ruling elite, implementation of those policies and the delivery system. The fifth chapter is devoted to these. Efforts have been made by individuals and organisations even before independence to spread literacy among the people. Attempts at spreading literacy in India have a chequered history straddling our independence. Literacy initiatives have been discussed in this chapter and the impact of the last major initiative – National Literacy Mission – analysed. Despite the various initiatives taken since independence the result is for all of us to see. The national literacy rate is pegged at 65.2 (according to Census figures of 2001). This chapter also looks at the efforts to spread literacy in Gujarat.

It must be borne in mind that the National Literacy Mission was planned and designed by a state agency and as such was a state initiative. People’s own definition of the situation is an important element of any social process, even if it does not provide a complete account or explanation and may include self-justificatory reports (Semin and Manstead, 1983). An attempt has been made in the sixth chapter to analyse how respondents saw themselves in the literacy initiative. The chapter mainly deals with the negotiation of the learners with the environment around them while participating in a learning process, a process that is essentially participatory.
As mentioned above, the research student also collected some quantitative data. The findings of this study are primarily based on the qualitative data. The idea behind gathering quantitative data was to see if they supported the findings from the qualitative data. The data have been presented in this chapter.

The respondents numbered 120. There were 60 male and female respondents each. A total of 68 of these (men and women together) lived an “above-poverty-line” (APL) life and the remaining 52 belonged to “below-poverty-line” (BPL) families. Data pertaining to the respondents have been compared only on the parameters of gender and economic conditions.

Conclusion has been drawn based on the analysis of qualitative data and the excerpts of the group discussions (excerpts of two group discussions have been given in Annexure VII A. Conclusion has been presented in the seventh and the last chapter of the thesis.

1.8. Expected contribution: As stated earlier, despite massive investments in terms of financial and human resources in literacy drives, results have been moderate. Looking beyond approaches employed so far could yield better results. This is what this thesis attempts to do.
Footnotes


Wignaraja, Ponna (1991): Towards Praxis and Participatory Development in


13. Freire: Op cited

14. Freire has suggested the following steps:

(A) In the first meeting the investigators arrange an informal meeting of a significant number of people. During this meeting the investigators talk about their objectives for being in the area. The idea is to win the confidence of the community members by telling them about the objective of the investigation, how it is to be carried out and what use it
will be put to. If the community members agree to the investigation and its subsequent use, the investigators call for volunteers from among them who collect a series of necessary data.

(B) The investigators begin visiting the area acting as observers with an attitude to understand what they see. Investigators normally come to the area with values which influence their perceptions. But they cannot transform the thematic investigation into a means of imposing these values.

(C) To the investigators the area under study is a "code," enormous though, to be deciphered. The area is taken in its totality and the visits are used to "split" it by analysing the partial dimensions which impress them. This helps them expand their understanding of how the various parts of the social system interact, which will later help them penetrate the totality itself. During this stage the investigators observe certain moments of the life of the area, both directly and through informal conversations registering everything in notebooks, including apparently unimportant items. They record the idiom of the people, their expressions, vocabulary, their syntax (the way they construct their thought) as also their lifestyle, behaviour at a community place like a religious place. The power and economic structures are closely analysed: the labour in the fields, meetings of local associations (noting the behaviour of the participants, the language used, the relations between officers and the members, the role women and young people play, games and sports they are interested in, and so on.

(D) After each visit, the investigator was supposed to draw up a brief report to be discussed by the entire team, in order to evaluate the preliminary findings of both the professional investigators and the local assistants. These meetings, in fact, work as the second stage in decoding the unique living code of the people investigated.

Freire then outlines codifications. The participants' response to these codifications, pictorial or verbal, are then analysed. The analysis is presented before the participants for further discussions and the message is prepared based on the discussions.

16 Ibid.