CHAPTER - VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
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It is evident from the present study that the literacy campaign of GVSA has effects upon the life of the individual and the community. At the individual level, it has been found that majority (83.3%) of the neo-literates have attained the NLM norms in the literacy test. In all the three literacy skills i.e. Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, the performance of neo-literates is found satisfactory (As many as 96.00 percent, 92.70 percent and 87.3 percent of them have attained 50 percent and above scores in Reading, Arithmetic and Writing respectively). The study also reveals that compared to Reading and Arithmetic, the neo-literates' performance is poor in writing.

Studies like K. S. Bhat et al and M. Venkataramana et al, September, 2000; Yasmeen Parveen, 1998; Ganguli P.K., Pathak K.N. and Mirza, S.1984; Padmini, N. 1992 also found that the majority of the learners had attained seventy percent and above marks in all the three test components. However, compared to the females, the overall performance of the male neo-literates is better in the literacy test. This result does not tally with the findings of some other researches (K. S. Bhatt, et al and M. Venkataramana et al 2000; Xavier Labour Institute, 1983; Sarma, B. 1990). Caste wise, no significant
differences of performance have been seen in literacy test in all other social categories except between the General and the ST category. Although the usual expectation is better performance from younger generation, in our sample, this was not the case as the results show that the neo-literates of above 30 years of age performed better in the literacy test. It may be due to the fact that elderly people had more experiences of life where they felt the need for literacy more acutely and therefore may be more motivated to join the campaign. This finding is not supported by the study like Xavier Labour Relations Institute, 1983. Though both the neo-literates and the illiterates agree with the fact that Literacy is necessary for one’s life, the neo-literates have been found happy and satisfied with their newly acquired literacy skills, which they started using in performing different day to day activities. As many as 42.67 percent neo-literates have reported that it is through literacy that they have learnt about money calculation and accounts keeping; 33.33 percent could read signboards, bus-boards and newspapers, could write letters and put signature, which they enjoyed doing. This finding is consistent with findings of other researchers (Mpogolo, Z.J., 1990, Singh, T.R., 1970). That is why we find that 96.00 percent of the neo-literates
agree to the fact that literacy has helped them to know unknown things as against 37.00 percent illiterates expressing that opinion.

The benefits accrued through the new found literacy skills make the neo-literates positive about women's education and they expressed eagerness for their children's education. However, some illiterates (5%) did not see the need for women's education and around 3 percent of them remained undecided about education of their children.

Besides the advantages of literacy, which are general in nature, some specific knowledge and informations were also transmitted to the neo-literates at individual levels, by way of the literacy campaign. They may be grouped as under:

**Earnings and savings:**

Though both the neo-literates and the illiterates expressed desire for improved earning, the neo-literates have understood that literacy improves earning potential by helping them to know about different sources of earning. This finding has been supported by some other studies as well (Centre for Media Studies, New Delhi, 1996-97;
Around 66.00 percent of the neo-literates believed that the literacy campaign has also capacitated women's earning through activities like poultry, weaving clothes and selling them, earning by making homestead gardens and by co-operative farming.

Although the economic condition of both the neo-literates and the illiterates were poor, more number of neo-literates (80.00%) had savings habit than the illiterates (68.00%). As many as 59.00 percent of the neo-literates reported that they had learnt of savings after being literate where as 13.34 percent of them had it before being literates. Regarding knowledge of savings also neo-literates have been found more aware than the illiterates. Interestingly, neo-literates females are found more aware than the neo-literates males and the illiterates. It may be mentioned here that one of the success stories of GVSA is “Prachesta” the self-help group concept, which gave economic benefits to many females in rural areas of Assam.

Health:

While both illiterates and neo-literates had some amount of health awareness the nature of their awareness differed. While the illiterates
spoke of rudimentary information about healthful habits like cleanliness, need for nutritious food and good sanitation, the neo-literates spoke about the need for pregnancy care, safe drinking water, and knowledge about symptoms of common diseases and precautionary measures, infectious diseases and its preventive measures and so on. This could probably be due to their association with GVSA.

Though both the neo-literates and the illiterates are aware of family planning, more number of neo-literates (70.00%) have knowledge of different family planning measures than illiterates (51.33%). This finding is supported by Joseph K.P., 1987, Mahapatra, P. L., 1987, stated that there was a linkage between literacy and small family norm. Regarding source of knowledge of family planning, 41.00 percent of neo-literates received the same from GVSA, 33.00 percent from village activists and health activists, and 18 percent from government advertisement; whereas 37.00 percent, 21.00 percent and 9.00 percent of illiterates received the same from village activists, government advertisement and GVSA respectively.
Women empowerment:

The neo-literates of our study are found more conscious about their rights and duties than the illiterates. Compared to men, women neo-literates are found to be more aware of their rights and duties and they commanded more respectability in the family and in the society. Besides, we also find some difference between neo-literate and illiterate women in their perception about women's position in the society while illiterate women accept male domination as one's own fate and neo-literate women think that women's solidarity is needed for justice. Some previous studies support this present finding (Anita Dighe, 1995, Nishat Farooq, Zabir Qureshi, Afaq Ahmed, Suharwardi, 2000, Centre for media studies, New Delhi, 1996-97, Mahapatra, 1987, Egbo, 2000, Burchfield et al 2002). However, the study like Centre for Media Studies, 1994 states that literacy campaign did not bring significant change in the status of women.

Self enhancement:

One important finding of the study is that literacy has led to enhancement of self. Neo-literates were found to be more self-dependent, self-satisfied have better self-knowledge, earn better respectability in family and society and had more self respect than
that of the illiterates. The statements made by neo-literates like - “I feel that after being literate, my family members and other neighbours have started to give me more importance.”, “Earlier I used to support my husband’s decisions without thinking; now I can give my own decision.”, “Today I am happy as I can put my signature instead of my thumb impression”, “Now I have no hesitation to talk with ‘dangar manuh’ (big person meaning Government official); I have understood that police personnel and even the ministers can work only as per the law”, “Now I can manage all my house-hold activities like shopping, making arrangement for the guest etc., without others help”, “As I am literate now, I can ask my children without hesitation regarding their studies; but earlier I did not have that moral courage”, “Now I can interact and communicate with other people in a better way; I talked without hesitation with government officials or others when they visited the village”, “Now I can go to other new place and move there freely as I can read sign boards, bus-boards, bus seat number, road number etc.”, “Today I can write an application or fill up a form without others help”, “Earlier I had great desire to read newspaper when I saw other people read it with quite interest; now I am happy that I can also read newspaper”- indicate increased self-awareness and self-esteem arising out of new found literacy skill.
This finding is supported by some other studies (Bingman, M.D. 2000; Benseman, J. 1989; Lind, 1996)

At the community level, both the neo-literates and the illiterates think for the progress of the country. However, compared to 52.66 percent of neo-literates, only 21.33 percent illiterates had knowledge about the “New Panchayat Act”. The neo-literates were somewhat more convinced about the role of political parties in rendering services to the society. The illiterates however, expressed their lack of confidence upon political parties. Though both the neo-literates and the illiterates expressed the necessity of casting votes, it is the illiterates who actually had more experience of vote casting. However, unlike the neo-literates, the illiterates were mostly depended upon others’ decision as to whom to vote for. In view of weaning of governmental responsibilities in mitigation of social evils, like the neo-literates the illiterates also consider that both the government and public should take the responsibility for removing crime, corruption and injustice in the society. Some studies like (Chaturvedi, 1969, Aikara J. and Henriques, J, 1982, R. and Rao T.V., 1982, Lal, M. and Mishra, R., 1983; Becker et al, 1976) show
that literacy campaign have contributed in bringing about social awareness among the neo-literates.

From the result and analysis put forth in Chapter-V, we find that some of the hypotheses, which were formulated at the beginning of the study, can be accepted to be true. These are -

(i) The neo-literates of the campaign have attained the literacy norm set by the NLM.

(ii) The participants of the campaign are more aware of the utility of increasing the family income and thereby living a better life than the non-participant ones.

(iii) Participation in the literacy campaign causes a woman learner to be more aware of her rights and obligations, status and position in the family and society and also to be more able to take household decisions than the illiterate women who have not participated in the campaign.
(iv) Women participants of the campaign have better savings habits than non-participant female counterparts of the locality, as well as the male participants of the programme.

(v) The participants of the literacy campaign are more aware of the panchayat system and are involved in planning and evaluation of panchayat activities than the non-participant individuals (adult men and women) of the locality.

(vi) Women’s participation in the campaign has been more active compared to the men.

The hypothesis ‘the participants of the campaign are more aware of concept of healthful living (safe drinking water, sanitation and a cleaner, germ-free household environment) than the non-participant individuals of the locality’ can be accepted partially as results of this study reveal that there is no difference between the participants and the non-participants of the campaign regarding health awareness as more number of non-participants responded to need for cleanliness and good sanitation while participants of the campaign were found to be better informed about safe-drinking water.
In conclusion we can say that the literacy campaign by GVSA has impacted upon individual and social life of the learner. As a leading NGO in the field of literacy in Assam, one major objective of GVSA is to work for the achievement of total literacy and for building of mass awareness amongst the people for attainment of self-reliance. Through literacy campaign GVSA has been trying to bring mass awareness in remote villages about the importance of literacy. Analysis of the findings of this present study reveals that through the literacy campaign by GVSA the neo-literates could acquire basic literacy skills, i.e, Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. However, it is to be mentioned here that a few neo-literates who were selected as subjects returned the test paper and refused to appear the literacy test administered by the investigator for the study as some of them found themselves unable to write and some other even forgot to read. The investigator had to select some other neo-literates for the test and the study. This may perhaps be due to their discontinuation of literacy practices and due to lack of opportunities for the use of literacy. Based on the findings, some suggestions may be put forth as follows -

(i) Gana Chetana Kendras which are learning centers equipped with learning materials, have important roles in continuing literacy
practices of the neo-literates. It was observed that in the investigating areas not all such Kendras were functioning properly. Efforts should be made to revitalize them.

(ii) The study also reveals that compared to Reading and Arithmetic, the neo-literates performance is poor in Writing; further attention is required for the improvement of the same.

(iii) The performance of ST category in literacy test was found to be poorer than the General category and OBC and SC categories. This may be due to their (ST category) lack of interest towards this literacy campaign. Efforts should be made to motivate them.

(iv) Provision of some remuneration may be made for the GVSA activists as they had reported during the investigation that they would be more happy and enthusiastic in pursuing their activities if some financial benefits are available to them.

It may be mentioned that although the objective of the literacy campaign by GVSA in spreading literacy among the grass-root people and thereby making them aware for attainment of self-reliance has been partially fulfilled, still there are illiterates in the GVSA
campaign area who are eager to be literate, but yet to be covered by the literacy campaign.

While acknowledging the effects of literacy campaign, it may be mentioned that it is not enough to make people literates; along with it an environment has to be continually created for the use of literacy skills.

India needs much vigorous attack on illiteracy. With 34.60 percent (302.44 million) of illiterates in the country, in this 21st century India’s aim to be one of the super powers appear to be farcical. It is a slur for the country with high level of scientific and technological skill, not to be able to remove illiteracy. With 28.70 percent (3.30 million) and 45.94 percent (4.84 million) of illiterate men and women in Assam we need larger coverage by more such campaign.