

# THE FOUNDATION POST

Q1, 2019



## Adult Literacy

Building the nation through  
education and technology





# THE IMPORTANCE OF ADULT EDUCATION

India is not new to the idea of adult education. The National Literacy Mission, launched three decades ago in 1988 with high aspirations, aimed to put millions of youth aged between 15 and 35 on an educational journey that would change their destiny forever. Progress was initially rapid. Literacy grew to 79.3% as per the 2011 Census, but this masked several concern areas. The rate of growth had slowed compared to the previous decade, while the gender disparity remained severe, with female literacy at only 64.6%, compared to 80.9% for men.

Adult education opens up new opportunities for adults who have been deprived of education and consequently have low levels of occupational efficiency. Most job growth in the Indian economy has come from the service industry. According to the Confederation of Indian Industry, the service sector contributes 60% of India's economy, and 28% of all jobs. Lack of literacy leaves millions unable to benefit from this.



The argument for adult literacy goes beyond economic factors. The Right to Education Act has reconfirmed education as a fundamental right. Educated adults not only make a positive contribution to the economy as members of the workforce, they also support the education of their children and members of their community. Education allows them to live their lives with dignity, and to enjoy access to new opportunities. As technology transforms society, these opportunities will continue to grow.



# HOW TECHNOLOGY HAS CREATED A NEED FOR ADULT LITERACY



Technology enables the modern world. From smart phones to intelligent ACs, it has penetrated deep into our everyday lives. Technology empowers us economically, and at an individual level, enables us to live enriched lives. Even very basic literacy brings many technologies within reach.

## **Economic Empowerment**

According to the GSM Association, over half of all mobile money services in the world are in sub-Saharan Africa. For the world's most economically deprived communities, with limited access to banking, mobile money has transformed lives. Basic literacy is now a powerful tool for financial empowerment.

## **The Dignity of Identity**

In India, technology such as the Aadhar card is immensely valuable as a form of verifiable identity for weaker sections of society. Literacy makes it much harder to cheat them of their due.

## **Increased Productivity**

For daily wage earners, long waiting periods at railway counters and banks can cause financial distress. Adult literacy, coupled with a basic smart phone, frees up many hours, increases productivity, and raises incomes.



## Access to Apps

We take apps for granted, but for the economically weak, they can be vital. Agricultural apps perform a variety of vital functions, from assessing irrigation needs to ensuring the best price for produce.

## Enhanced Communication

With even minimal levels of literacy, the ability to access and share information increases dramatically. Even those not considered 'tech savvy' are often quick to adopt relevant technology. For example, carpenters across India now use Google in their native language to access designs.



# TECHNOLOGY AS A DIRECT AID TO ADULT EDUCATION



While children from low-income families in India typically do not own mobile phones, many adults do. Adult literacy projects thus have the opportunity to utilize them. Through its Digital India programme, the Government of India is also encouraging the use of such technology. In keeping with this, The Shiksha Initiative has developed e-learning solutions for elementary and adult literacy in rural environments. A variety of technological tools are being used at the grassroots level.

## Multimedia Content

Our experience demonstrates that when people listen and see the same concept together, they understand it better, and retain it longer.

## Animation with Voiceover

Animation and cartoons are of proven effectiveness for early learners. Such material is now being adapted for the purpose of adult literacy.

## Projector-based Education

The Shiksha Initiative uses this to transform the classroom experience in schools and adult literacy centres across Uttar Pradesh, allowing for widespread dissemination of centrally produced, quality material.



## Interactive Video Sessions

This enables qualified instructors to interact with adult learners even in remotest villages, raising the level of education.

## Online Assessment

Digital assessment tools provide a simple, foolproof method for monitoring progress and identifying areas where further effort is required.

Such tools make adult literacy efforts efficient, scalable, and effective. The Shiksha Initiative, now scaling up rapidly, is the torch bearer for this approach.





# SHIKSHA INITIATIVE: ERADICATING ILLITERACY, ONE VILLAGE AT A TIME

Some problems can only be solved the hard way, through intensive grassroots effort. Illiteracy is one of them. Started in 2012, the Shiksha Initiative is an ICT driven project designed to eradicate illiteracy. The basic approach involves combining technology, content and human capital to produce sustainable, scalable solutions. Here are the core principles.

## Robust Hardware

On the technology front, the key challenge has been providing cost effective hardware solutions that can function in harsh rural environments with intermittent power supply.

## Adaptable Software

The best of hardware serves no purpose without matching software. A dedicated content development team produces engaging content synced with government curriculum, using recursive feedback methodology. This ensures that material is constantly improved to maximize effectiveness.





## Human Capital

The critical success factor for such projects is the development of human capital. The Shiksha Initiative now has a dedicated team of over one hundred experienced professionals, from which a nucleus is drawn for every fresh expansion. Having started with 10 centres in 2012, the project now supports over 150.

## Need Creation

It is important to create a need for education. Amongst rural adults, in particular, embarrassment and economic conditions often combine to become a barrier to learning. In order to participate in any education programme, for example, a daily wage earner must see enough future value to sacrifice income in the short term.



## Community Support

Villages value relationships, and our field team works tirelessly to create bonds with the community. Teams conduct regular community meetings, surveys, door-to-door campaigns and many more mobilization programmes in villages to sustain momentum. Strong links are created with local stakeholders such as ANMAs, panchayats, and Krishi Vigyan Kendras.

## Partnering Government

The Shiksha Initiative is run with the support and participation of the government. Government teachers are often inspired to innovate and evolve their teaching skills. Government officials are now increasingly supportive.



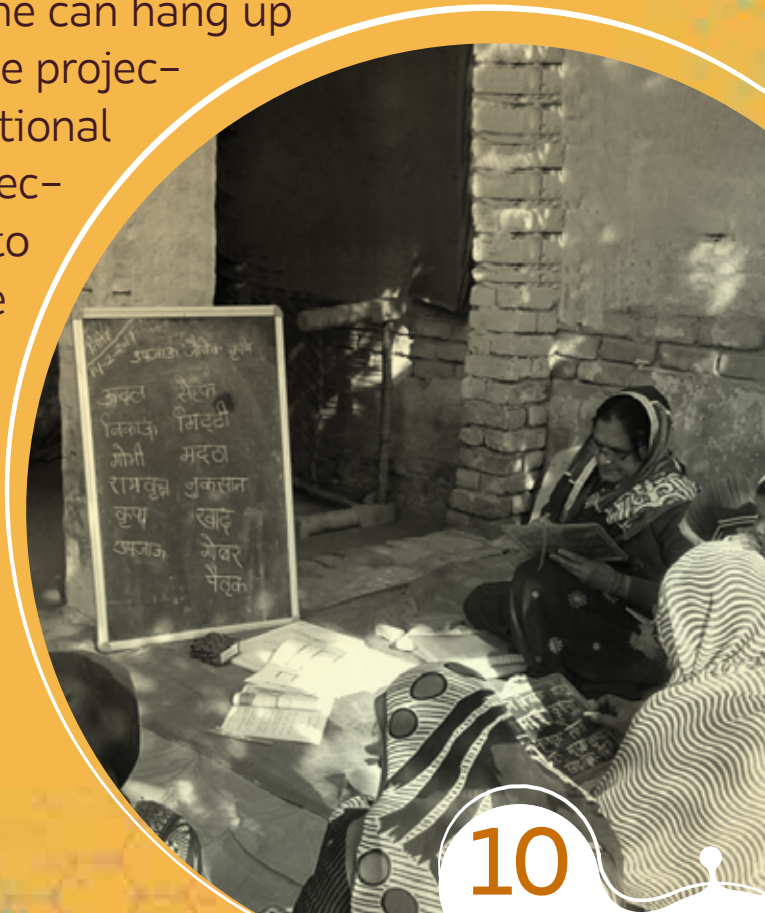
# ADULT EDUCATION: GRASSROOTS PERSPECTIVE

Seema, a former primary schoolteacher, joined the Shiksha Initiative in 2016. She travels 10 kilometres every day to teach adults and children at the Shiksha Initiative Centre in the village of Dhoom Malikpur.

“Teaching adults is very different from teaching children”, she says. “Once they accept the learning process, adults learn faster. They also demand to know the underlying logic behind anything they are taught.”

She feels that adult literacy is crucial because the culture of learning is then passed on to the next generation. Parents can also cross-check whether their child has been taught properly.

Her first task at the beginning of every programme is to find a good location, where she can hang up a white curtain to use with the projector, in addition to the traditional blackboard and chalk. The objective of each 90-day course is to take learners well beyond the standard 10–15 word official definition of literacy, to basic proficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic. Students quickly overcome their initial feeling of shame.



Nusrat is an example. She is helping her kids with their studies. She can now read invitations and newspapers, and read prescriptions. For all of these things, she used to be dependent on others. She used to be afraid of grammar but is surprised now at how easy it is when explained properly. Because of students like her, Seema goes to work every morning with a spring in her step.



# MOMENTUM BUILDS FOR ADULT LITERACY

The Shiksha Initiative is now gaining critical mass, with adult literacy becoming an increasingly important component. The team is gaining invaluable insights. The core challenge remains, which is, convincing adults of the need for education. It is done in different ways, tailored to different audiences. "Our field team is basically are from the same or surrounding locality," says Anuj Goswami, head of an editorial team. "They are aware of the challenges that people face in that particular geography and in their social structure. Based on this they explain the need."

The telecom revolution has been a revelation. According to Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, there are currently over 500 million mobile subscribers in rural India, including 120 million smartphones users. This has opened up new avenues for news, entertainment and communication. Even the simple act of withdrawing money from an ATM is an act of empowerment. These are frequently cited by beneficiaries as key reasons for participating.



The biggest impact is at the human level. It is the joy an old lady feels when she fills in a bank slip for the first time. It is the ability to recognize a piece of paper as a doctor's prescription. It is the determination on the face of the lady who now wants to teach others. For the Shiksha Initiative team, these little victories are the biggest rewards.



# SNAPSHOTS

## SSN College of Engineering

The grand alumni meet, Tribute 2019, was held on January 5 at the SSN campus in which over 600 alumni participated. SSN also celebrated its first Innovation Day on February 8<sup>th</sup>. 32 project teams presented their proposals to over 50 representatives from leading companies.



## Shiv Nadar School

It was a period of awards and achievements. Shiv Nadar School teams won the two leading Robotics competitions in the country, the VEX Robotics Championship & the Robocup Championship, for the 2nd and 3rd times consecutively. The Shiv Nadar School Noida Girls' Soccer Team was runner up in the Under 13 Delhi School Girls Football League. Meanwhile, Grade X students of Shiv Nadar School Gurgaon received the Junior Astitva Samman 2019.





## **SHIKSHA Initiative**

An MoU was signed with the Department of Basic Education, Sonbhadra, covering 15 schools initially, with a mandate to cover 200. Shiksha Initiative will provide infrastructural, educational and skill building support, along with assistance in community engagement.

## **Shiv Nadar University**

The University hosted 'Industry 4.0 / Education 4.0', a lively panel discussion on the evolving job market of tomorrow. Dr. Abha Kumar, CIO and Head Global Sourcing, Vanguard, USA, shared her valuable industry insights into future job trends.



## Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

Born in 1937 in Kolkata, Arpita Singh is one of India's most eminent female artists. The current retrospective at Kiran Nadar Museum of Art provides a unique opportunity to view six decades of her work. Drawn from various public and private collections, the exhibition focuses on her long and singular commitment to art, and its evolution into a personal expressive language.





## ABOUT SHIV NADAR FOUNDATION

- Shiv Nadar Foundation was established in 1994 by Shiv Nadar, Founder, HCL - a US \$8.3 billion leading global enterprise
- The Foundation is committed to the creation of a more equitable, merit-based society by empowering individuals through transformational education
- The Foundation pursues the philosophy of 'Creative Philanthropy', which envisages creation of institutions that continue to impact future generations for many centuries to come
- Total number of students and alumni – 26,575
- Total investment – INR 51,153 Million (USD \$786 Million)

### K-12 EDUCATION



2009

Leadership Academy for meritorious rural underprivileged children



2012

Chain of urban K-12 schools to create lifelong learners

### HIGHER EDUCATION



1996

Ranked amongst India's top engineering colleges



2011

Student-centric, multi-disciplinary & research-oriented university

### MASS INTERVENTION



2012

Technology-based educational intervention envisioning the eradication of illiteracy



2010

Building awareness and propagating modern and contemporary Indian art



# SHIV NADAR FOUNDATION

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