

Twenty Five Women Leaders of Cooperatives

Articulate Their Vision for a Bright Future
And Plan to Achieve Their Goals
Using Neuro Linguistic Programming,
Appreciative Inquiry and Fifth Discipline Insights, Tools & Techniques

Ganpur Village, Dichpally Mandal, Nizamabad District, Andhra Pradesh State, India,
12-14 July, 2004

THIS THREE-DAY TRAINING REPORT CONTAINS:

1. The Training Context.

The First Day:

1. Introducing the Training and Setting the Stage for Action.
2. Harvesting energy for development: "Discovery" The first step of Appreciative inquiry
3. Articulating Values behind past achievements - to build the future on past
4. Reinforce learning of point 2, 3 & 4 above with more examples of similar achievements

The Second Day: "Constructing in the Mind"

1. Knowing "What you want"
2. Who is the one who want? The Master or Slave
3. How to want? Using the right brain...Imagination
4. How does wanting with imagination work: Any example from among women?
5. NLP tips on Successful Goals
6. Offer women a broad mental canvas to paint their dreams on
7. A canvas that include available resources/possibilities...Exercise of "missing trees"
8. Help them include plans to plug drains on available resources
9. Include possibilities to increase productivity: We can improve our situation!
10. Remove any psycho social chains that may bind them to ground, even as they want to fly!
11. Gender Bias/Bondage...How is it operative? - a daring look at reality
12. How to be free of bias? Look around for different ways people behave - gender'wise'...
13. A meditation to effect desired changes in one's identity and spirituality
14. Now, fully free, totally empowered from within, off into DREAMS...
15. Draw the dreams on paper: Force right brain to act & reinforce ideas into actions

The Third Day: "Sharing Dreams and Planning Strategies"

1. Exhibit dreams: Share with each other your dreams - get appreciation
2. Reflect on how to achieve Dreams: Securing Capital, Information
3. Plan for reaching Goals: Short Term Goals, in detail: for self, family, and organization
4. Dialogue with Support Organization: What they could do to support women's journey
5. Conclusion

1. THE TRAINING CONTEXT

TWENTY FIVE WOMEN LEADERS gathered from as many villages, representing their village cooperatives at Ganpur Village on 12-14 July, 2004..

Of them, fifteen were from Cooperatives being promoted by the "Society for Elimination of Poverty" [SERP] a State Government Agency. SERP initiated their Thrift and Credit based activities through Self Help Groups [SHG] from October 2003 through its VELUGU Project.

The rest were drawn from Cooperatives promoted by a large Voluntary Organization, GRAM, working in the area for more than 25 years. Till date, GRAM¹ has organized 2,572 SHGs in Nizamabad and another 627 in Adilabad Districts.

Further, GRAM helped these SHGs federated into more than 17 Cooperatives across clusters of 20-25 villages each.

This exercise was organized by GRAM for SERP. GRAM included women leaders from Cooperatives it promoted, so that women from a common area will evolve a common vision, irrespective of who helped to promote their cooperatives.



And the privilege of leading this combined group was given me by GRAM, where I had earlier done NLP and Appreciative Inquiry Training on a large scale.

THE FIRST DAY

2. Introducing the training and Setting the stage for Action.

We began at noon, when all the 25 trainees had arrived. As the idea of sitting and discussing 'dreams' for three full days is something strange (or alien?) to the participants I took time and care to introduce the purpose and method of the exercise as:

A. An opportunity in education:

I presented the training as an opportunity for education on Self Help and Cooperation; a wonderful occasion to lead themselves to their social and economic development.

I told the trainees not to take their illiteracy as equal to being ignorant: They were strongly reminded of their innumerable skills in doing many life enabling things that the 'educated' are not capable of even attempting.

Also, I gave examples of how people with very little education had been, and are great leaders in business.

B. This is education in management:

Now they are moving away from an identity of "poor workers", to "managers of cooperatives." Hence, this training in management techniques used by top managers of big business. They will learn to dream their future, just as managers in big corporate houses do. [Using Neuro Linguistic Programming, Appreciative Inquiry and Fifth Discipline insights and techniques/tools/insights]

Managers dream/plan their destination first. They first decide where they want to go.

I explained how 'dreaming' precedes activities with simple examples: Like, their travel to the training centre; their organizing a marriage celebration at home etc.

C. This education is an exercise inside the mind:

It's about using/applying one's 'imagination' This is a new kind of exercise – different from training they are used to: about savings, lending, book-keeping etc.

We will set our minds on a path of success just like winners do. Design ways to lead ourselves and the members at home, through Self Help and Cooperation.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR ACTION:



To appreciate the primacy of their role in their development, I invited one among them to volunteer to preside over the session – particularly someone who had not got an opportunity to sit on a chair as leader (every one is seated on the floor during training).

Mrs. Mumtaz of Bardipur volunteered and others welcomed her, clapping hands. [Chair persons kept changing after every few sessions to give opportunity to more individuals]

The trainees, next, elected a four member appreciative committee to lead every one to appreciate anything good happening by clap of hands. Its members were given special chairs.



We also made a committee of time keepers. The trainer himself made sure not to take any chair – and kept standing while speaking, or sitting on the floor with the rest.

3. HARVESTING INNER ENERGY USING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY:

We need energy to do this mental activity a new kind of spirit and enthusiasm that one might call the spiritual energy. And we gathered this energy from revisiting our own joys, successes or achievements related to SHG activities.

Also, though vision is about future, the past could have impact on the imagined future: 'Once bitten twice shy' is one such example.

Hence, in our visioning exercise, we ensured that past negative experience related to their SHG activities did not cloud their ability to create a bright future.

We ensured this by starting the training with the first step of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), that helps groups to clear out of slipping into a 'problem solving' mode AI is a Management Science of Organizational Development, based on sound principles of Development Psychology.

TAKING THE FIRST STEP (OF AI): DISCOVERY

Trainees were divided into four groups: They were given a task: Find out what special event, occasion, achievement or experience, in all your life as SHG members, gave you greatest joy; after sharing in groups, they came back to share individually in a General Session.



They found their greatest joy was when they individually or collectively:

- Revived a faltering Sangam (SHG) in village and set it right
- Started many more SHGs by their efforts.
- Got elected as leader.
- Got out of the four walls of their homes.
- Increased their knowledge: "Now we know more things"
- Achieved mobility: "I was able to convince my husband and come out for this meeting"
- Assisted other poor: "I helped a poor member to come up in life with a loan."
- Became able to speak on stage: "Now we can speak in public."
- Increased capacity to save: From Rs.5 we now save Rs.30 each month.
- Grew in number: "From looking at one successful Sangam we learnt to start/run our Sangams."
- Show-cased their achievement before the world: "The Chief Minister of the State inaugurated our Super Market at the District headquarters Nizamabad."
- Offered Free Labour for common cause: "We made our own road in Gollapalli village by offering free labour; and even got a bus service to village."
- Constructed our Office: "We built a room for office of the Village Sangam"
- Conducted health Camp: "We organized Health Education Camp for 150 adolescent girls in Rampur Village with assistance from Government medical staff."
- Banished wife beating: "Earlier, we could not get out of home. But, now, we even punished a misbehaving husband (by taking him on a procession around the village with a broom et al) and stopped wife beating altogether in our village."
- Stopped liquor vending: "We could stop sale of liquor as well as palmyra toddy in our village."
- Broke free of the practice of untouchability: "We put an end to practice of untouchability by breaking the discriminating separate glasses kept for Dalits in tea shops."
- Disproved a proverb and an age-old belief: "Men teased about our efforts to make Sangam quoting a proverb than says even three women cannot unite and work, but we proved them wrong."
- Got recognition: "We are recognized and respected in the village, Mandal and even at the District."
- Acquired bargaining capacity: "Now we sell our produce at better price"

When each one shared, others clapped hands, and celebrated their achievements and joy. Finally, the staff present, from SERP and GRAM, shared their appreciation of the achievements of the women.

The chair-person of this session concluded, offering her chair to a new leader:

“Today we were able to follow/understand whatever has been told us and we will be able to go forward together; and I am handing over the chair to Pola Lakshmi.”



ARTICULATING VALUES BEHIND PAST ACHIEVEMENTS

SELF-HELP AND COOPERATION – GREATEST SOURCE OF JOY

After capturing the sources of joy, one important point women reflected on was this: “What specifically were the greatest sources of joy?”

It was when they achieved things by themselves. This joy would not have been theirs, if, for instance, the Velugu or GRAM Staff or some Government Official achieved those results for them. In future, to multiply joy, they will focus on ‘their’ achieving in ‘their’ goals.

[This awareness of their ability to achieve, and the joy it brings is very fundamental to a visioning exercise of this kind, sponsored by an external agent, backed with external resources (here, funds from World Bank.)

Or else, the vision could end up as an articulation of what they wanted from the sponsors rather than being what the women themselves want to achieve.]

Hence I remind them again and tell them: Your greatest joy is when YOU fulfilled YOUR needs/desires/aspirations by YOUR struggles Not, when someone from Nizamabad, Hyderabad or Delhi decided what you needed and gave it free!”



Interestingly, not one free item of dole they have received from the Government got mentioned as a source of their joy.

Reinforcing Learning: Similar Achievements:

To reiterate, I gave an example of ‘Self Help’ from Jamkhed² where a woman organized her companions to dig a well that no Government Official came forward to help dig.

After digging the well, the women invited the District Collector (highest civil servant of the district) to ‘inaugurate’ the well that he would not helped dig in the first place.



The Collector was so impressed that he recommend their activity, during a Collectors’ Conference, to the then Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi; And, the Prime Minister invited those leaders for a consultation over breakfast at his residence. Self-Help can take one up to the Prime Minister!

When you work on Self Help, others come to help:

Women in Nizamabad District, organized by GRAM, who are already in Mutually Aided Cooperatives, are offered by the Small Industries Development Bank of India a loan of Rs.15,000,000 this year with an assurance of more for next year. The Bank is eager to help them because they admired the self help activities and achievements of these women and want to support them to start new enterprises.

Only Self Help helps to identify your needs.

For instance, it could be better to add value to your products from your farms, Soya and cotton: prepare Soya milk; or take up ginning of cotton than sell raw cotton. But, how can someone who is not aware of what you are producing plan for adding value to your product? We concluded as some wanted to go home, as they came unprepared to stay. We closed around 6.00 with a request for members to come back next day.

THE SECOND DAY

CONSTRUCTING IN THE MIND

Trainees reviewed (at 9.00 A.M.) the joy, energy and learning of previous day.

Asked "What you learnt and how you felt", they replied on these lines:

- Now we know about importance of registering VOs as Cooperative Societies, and possibilities of raising loans.
- We are happy to recollect our achievements.

Next I introduced the theme of the day:

"KNOWING WHAT YOU WANT"



[The starting point of development from an NLP perspective is to articulate what one wants to achieve: the goals one would like to go after NLP also suggests some minimum requirements for goals to be 'valid'. These 'requirements' are nothing but 'aspects' found in the dreams/goals of achievers modeled by NLP; and I find them very useful in rural development training contexts. By complying with the requirements of valid goals, you 'empower' your goals to 'provoke' you into action and achievements – a finer refinement from AI's Provocative Proposition? More of the requirements as we proceed.] Obviously, knowing the destination – 'what one wants' – precedes the journey proper, if NLP says so or not. Yet,

strangely, not many seem to know what they want.

A STORY:

I narrated the story of a woman from Jukkall Mandal, from the same District. Years back, she attended training at Sudhapally Training Centre of GRAM She saw a lime tree full of fruits. Taking them for sweet limes, she asked the gardener for one. When told it was sour lime, she did not believe. The gardener gave her one to taste. When she knew it was sour lime, she wanted a *tree* for herself.

She got the address of the forest department's nursery from where she bought a sapling, and planted it in front of her house, near the open drain. It yielded well during the drought. And it stood her in good stead. After that woman narrated her sour lime story, during training in Jukkal in 2000, I told those trainees that I found the story unbelievable – just to provoke them. The trainees protested. "We know she has a tree." "I have seen her sell sour lime." "I even bought limes from her." So went their protests.

When asked if any of them planted any lime tree, none said they had. We have not 'thought about it'...Memu anukoledu... was their answer...

Yes, our mind needs some force to push it to dream; Just seeing someone succeeding does not send one automatically into dreams of success. But if you forced yourself to clearly visualize a tree full of fruits in front of your house, and supporting you through a drought with additional income– that is dreaming or visioning; and that could motivate people to plant trees.

Today we are focused on that task: articulating in our mind what we will go after. Problems are there for everyone; articulating problems don't help solving them as much as seeking out for a solution.

If you kept your attention focused on finding a branch to hang on to, when you are being washed off in a flood, you stand a better chance of survival, than if you kept articulating your problems in all their details and depth.

Let us take time out to forget our miseries and sufferings, and focus on what we want...focus on possibilities for the future, by imagining them.

WHO IS IT WHO WANTS? THE SERVANT OR THE MASTER?

So far you were 'servants' or 'coolie workers. Now, you are moving forward to becoming 'managers' of your own businesses, as begin operate your Cooperatives.

This training is precisely to help you to appreciate that you are managers (*yajamaani*).

A manager must know where she wants to lead. There is a difference in the style of work, when you lead others.



I then told the story of three stone cutters at a building site: One was breaking stones for the coolie he received. Another saw the same work as laying of some foundation. Yet another at the same site, doing a similar task, said he was building a cathedral.

Trainees agreed that the one with vision will enjoy the work and also do a better job, besides being more capable of cooperating with others.

As you begin to take charge of your destiny, through cooperative action, you are changing style of functioning: You will behave as people who know what they are going after building a cathedral... Your inspiration will be your long term vision – not the daily wages.

We need vision or imagination to do business a stone boulder can become an export commodity if cut and polished! Or, you may powder eggs and export it to Japan – all need imagination first.

USING THE RIGHT BRAIN:

(Some NLP Tools in Communication for Leaders)

Help all your members to build in imagination. The brain has two parts, the right and left, each specializing in one job: One on past and the other on future. We need to use the right brain to plan our future. Usually, when you speak of future, your eyes, too, turn to right. When you speak about future before your group, raise your left hand and speak. That will make the audience look to the right; their right brain will be triggered to act:

When you go back, plan future first with all members; using their imagination, help them find what they want and achieve by their own efforts.

HELP TRAINEES TEST VALIDITY OF WHAT I SPOKE SO FAR:

Eye movements are easily verified with a few questions about past and future. About the need for goals to achieve success, I want that they verified from their experience of success.

Hence, I asked: Is there anyone among you who can say I am a little better off than others, though earlier I was also as poor as the rest?

Or, can the group look at a member here and say this woman is better off... Once they were poor like us... but she has successfully developed herself.

I request anyone with such distinction to come before others and share the secret of your success.

Mrs. Sattegangu of Suddapally's Success Story:

Long back, she went to her cousin and requested him to take her husband along to Dubai, as a manual labourer. But out of jealousy he refused. Taking that as a challenge, she made her own efforts: secured loans and sent him abroad to do coolie work; and with the foreign exchange he earned, she paid back the loans, bought her house, bought some lands and many other things.



Obviously, "wanting to own a house and land" preceded her decision to send her husband abroad.

She wanted it so intensely that she would not be discouraged by her brother's refusal to help. She achieved by 'self-help,' finding her own loans, and the opportunity for earning in Dubai. Sattegangu proved NLP right, once again. NLP model of successful persons is true on every count in her case.

NLP Tips on Successful Goals:

NLP says of Successful peoples' goals:

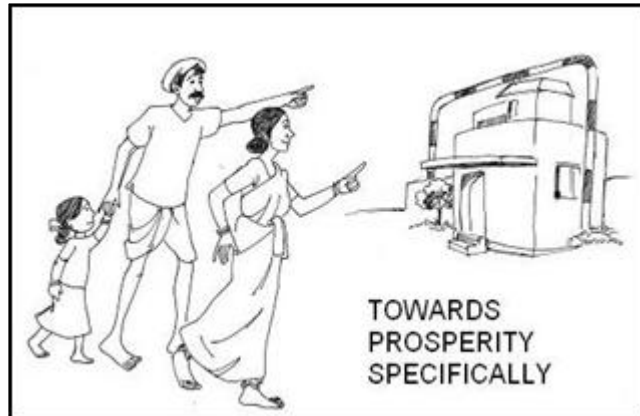
- They have positive contents.
- They point to a 'towards' direction.
- And they have a high degree of self-help spirit.
- They are ecologically sound: That is, they include family members, and does not exclude community, by adhering to existing laws
- Goals need to be 'thought of' or imagined as a visual, auditory and kinesthetic sensual experience, now.



Such 'Valid' Goals inspire/ignite one from inside, and help one to access one's inner powers, and also help seize any externally available resources to achieve goals]

This slide captures the confused and dissipated 'feeling' when one wants to escape/eliminate poverty. "Going away from' misery does not inspire. It does not provoke one to act

.A valid goals leads one 'towards' something. Set your goals like winners,articulating 'contents' to be achieved, and visualizing them 'in front of' you. Your style of pursuing goals too must reflect a sound ecology: Strives to take the family along; and avoid illegal activities.



Also, taste success in imagination, once a while:Experience ahead the joy awaiting you as visions filled with sounds, smell, taste and feeling you would get when you reach the goal. Then, your goals will acquire a power of their own to lead you.

PREPARING A BROADER MENTAL CANVAS FOR VISIONING

Limited exposures to opportunities could limit our visions. In an earlier training, trainees described such limited vision as "the vision of the frog in a well."

Unless women get a larger canvas to paint their dreams on, they run the risk of creating a tunnel vision. [When they see opportunities to develop, they could be expected to dream better If they proceeded with the mindset of 'have-nots' then they might only look forward to doles]

I try to create an awareness of available opportunities by:

1. Building sensory acuity to see what one missed. [NLP tells us that we protect our brains from an overload of information, by 'deleting' much of sensory inputs]
2. Plugging any drain on available resources.
3. Doing better what you are doing well: increase productivity.
4. Telling success stories of other SHGs elsewhere to let them know what they all can achieve together.

1. BUILDING UP SENSORY ACUITY:

Trainees did an experiment, exercising their imagination:

They saw trees in the empty space around their houses. The end result astonished them all. This is the exercise they did: They imagined full grown teak wood trees in any vacant space lying idle around their houses.

(This District has natural forests of teak wood highly valued for its timber that has a golden yellow glow)

They imagined the trees to be as old as their houses. Next, they gathered data:

1. How many such trees each could see around her house?

2. How many years since her house was built?

Of the twenty five who did the exercise, except four, (marked value '0' under column (3) – refer to following table) all had space to grow trees.

They found that, if they had used the wasted water and lands each of them, today, – on an average – each should have wood worth more than rupees 283,400.

They made a frequency table and calculated value of missing trees:

S.No	Groups By Age of houses	Total Number of Trees Missing Per Household	Total No. Trees	Value Per Trees in Rupees	Total Value of Trees in Rupees
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1	0 - 20	13+5+10+10+20+20+20+30	128	0	0
2	20 - 30	5+15+30	50	25,000	12,50,000
3	30 - 40	3+20	23	35,000	8,05,000
4	40 - 50	10+15	25	45,000	11,25,000
5	50 +	5+0+20+11+0+0+10+20+5+0	71	55,000	39,05,000
		GRAND TOTAL	297		70,85,000

They arrived at the total value after giving zero value to all trees less than twenty years old, just to make their estimates truly conservative.

[As trainer I take care not to let a sense of any 'guilt' or 'despondency' creep into trainees during and after this exercise. Rather, I carefully, worded the exercise as a discovery of our tremendous resources available readily to us, just for the grabbing.]

When I ask them how they felt after the exercise, they replied: "We feel like planting trees now."

Looking at trees that are not there, you feel motivated.

Also, they are now more aware of the importance of imagination:

Imagination could have helped our forefathers to plant trees. It can help us now.

How sane is it to dream things that are not there?

Richard Bandler and John Grinder, co-founders of Neuro Linguistic Programming, have a wonderful comment on imagination:

“That’s what civil engineers do for a living, you know.

They go out and look at valleys that have nothing in them and hallucinate freeways, and dams and then they measure them...Seeing a freeway where there isn’t one is “natural,” it’s called “work.”³

The exercise of imagining trees that where not there could be called ‘work’ that our managers did, just like engineers who would hallucinate freeways and dams and took measurements.

We, too, measured the money we would have in our pockets, from imaginary trees!

2. PLUG DRAIN ON RESOURCES:

Are there any more vital resources around that the poor can’t afford to let go waste that could become a resource?

Discuss and share your answers to this question: “What is your husband doing when you are saving money? Does he assist your thrift activity?”

Trainees held group discussions and found that husbands are a drain on family income.

Sharing on what needs to be done, they concluded:

Group 1: We need to stop the habit of consuming liquor.

Group 2: Need to stop drinking habit is the main issue.

Group 3: Besides stopping this bad habits, men, too, must form Sangams start thrift credit activities.

The money that men squander could be thought of a great resource to progress. The women already thought out ways to tap them: anti-liquor campaign. [Trainees are moving into ‘designing’ stage so soon]

3. INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY:

That productivity could be increased may be an obvious fact to those with greater exposure. But those cultivating lands using traditional methods may not have that much of an idea.

to share. This helps trainees

st farm.
ould produce bio-fertilizers.

w with little water,
lly raised a horticultural garden
y from where we were getting trained.

[Making those having information take the chair and share with others speaking into a microphone produces many good outcomes: It teaches each one to value others and value 'learning' – a foundation to build 'learning organizations on.'

It shows 'team learning' as value. Such group activities build 'mental models' of themselves as 'capable teachers, learners, and managers' than just dependent beneficiaries of doles. It builds a sense of 'personal mastery' particularly in the one who shares – stretching her capabilities to limits, to come forward, shedding her inhibitions and to share, holding a microphone and to lead others. These are vital to make an organization successful in the 21st century: A "Learning Organization" as described by the "Fifth Discipline"]



4. SUCCESS STORIES:

One of the trainees shared about her visit to Mulkanoor Milk Cooperative operated by women like them, living in the neighbouring Karimnagar District. GRAM had arranged that exposure visit, with a view to help the local Cooperative to start a dairy in this district.

The women there procured and sold around 20,000 litres of milk each day. They had invested Rs.35,000,000 in their venture and doing good business.

I narrated how Amul Cooperative at Anand, Gujarat, exports fresh milk and milk products to foreign countries.

Concluding remarks by Chair person:

I was asked by someone in village, "Why you are not caring for your children but leaving them to themselves, you go to attend training?"

I replied "I am going to learn development".

But my own children encouraged me to come here and learn. I am happy to come here and learn so many things.

Lakshmi Narsu volunteers to lead next as chair person.

REMOVING PSYCHO SOCIAL FETTERS THAT COULD BLOCK ONE'S ABILITY TO DREAM

There are two areas needing to be addressed adequately, for any one to achieve development in the Indian Context. One is establishing dignity of labour, and the other, the sense of equality of gender/caste in the minds of those wanting to develop.

Self-Help and Cooperation are proven strategy to break through such obstacles. I narrated from the history of Nadars of Tamil Nadu, a caste that was considered very low, some two hundred years back.

Their story proves that caste/gender disabilities could be broken down with a thrift/cooperation strategy: There was a customary law forbidding Nadar women wearing blouse in 1800s.

And soon after their starting of thrift program, they fought for their rights to cover their breasts.

Also, they went up to London, appealing before the Privy Council, to demand their right to enter temples, a right denied to them.

They had a Self Help Movement built on small community savings in the early 1800s. By 1885, they had their first high school offering free education to any one willing.

Today Nadars are free of the kind of disabilities they suffered earlier.

IMPACT OF GENDER BIAS ON OUR RESOURCES: TIME

We discussed in groups on how much time women worked and how much time men worked on a day when they both got wage labour employment.



Result: On a working day, trainees discovered, a man had 5 hours of free time, even after he helped with some work in maintaining the mini dairy (usually made of just one or two buffalos) at home.

If these five hours were included in our efforts to develop, how much will we be able to progress?

Imagine the husband went to visit drip irrigation farm or vermi compost venture we just heard about, how much strength it will give for our progress?

Will your dream plug this leakage of energy or wastage of time?

To make it possible, we need to practice gender equality. May be, you will do well to train children to learn to respect and cooperate with each other – boys and girls.

GENDER BONDAGE OPERATING WITHIN WOMAN:

We had a slide showing the husband of a group leader serving tea to her group gathered in her house.

Such pictures made them laugh. They are seeing something strange and funny a man serving tea to women engaged in a discussion.

If this man were to be shown collecting the cups after they drank tea, and washing them, then they may revolt! How can a man do that?



A THOUGHTFUL HUSBAND

We reflected how a man has to kill time: Five hours of leisure on a working day; and the whole day when he was not employed.

Will he not corrupt his mind out of sheer laziness? He frequents tea shops, discusses politics, smokes, drinks and gambles.

If he wanted to share work at home, are you prepared to allow him? Will he ever be ready to share work?

That raises the question: how do you bring up children.

ADVANTAGE TO MALES?

We find through dialogue that these trainees too, like women elsewhere in this part of the world, don't allow their male children to sweep the floor, wash utensils or clothes, or to cook etc.

These they consider to be girls' tasks. And the boys are free to play the whole evening when their sisters work at home.

The woman is a victim and perpetrator of this unjust division of labour: all work related to dirt and cleaning, she allots to girl child only.

As victim, she feels angry at this injustice and does want to break through. That is the sign of hope: wanting to change. But, towards what? To where?

LOOK AROUND FOR DIRECTIONS IN GENDER EQUALITY:

I next project a picture of a Sri Lankan Puberty Ceremony and explain how the family celebrates puberty:

The girl is given center stage, seated on a high chair in the front room decorated as a bride - parents in the background in the kitchen any visitor meets the girl first, who welcomes them then she orders for tea to the visitors, who were given low chairs.

Slide closes with a question for trainees to mull over a cup of tea during the break: What do you teach your girl child to 'feel' about her body at puberty? What feelings you learnt at your puberty about self: good or bad ones?"



After Tea:

Leading towards change of 'belief' about oneself through a meditation that reverses learnt feelings about self.

AN NLP Meditation:

Reflection on God/Brahma the creator; how Creator shares power to create with women at puberty – An NLP meditation that gives an experience of being God's Daughters – Being made in God's Image and Likeness: Aham Brahman (I am Creator).



This meditation helps them gain a new self understanding.



It establishes a new self-image in them. And they break free of any inferior feelings they reported after tea break that bound them all these years in chains from dreams fitting a true child of God.



Thus, the women are ready, now, well prepared from the deepest level of identity and spirituality, to dream to full

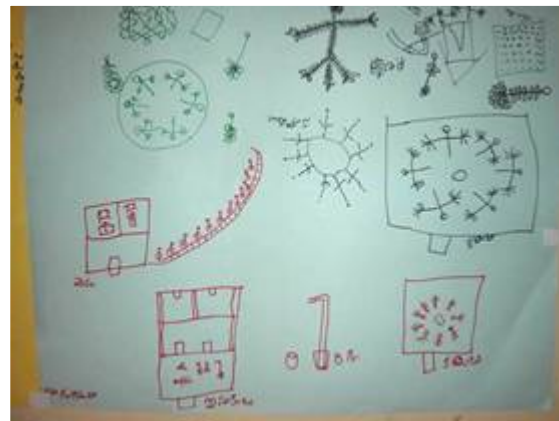
capacity.

THE DREAM EXERCISE

Spend a few minutes in silence: Visualize, in five years time, how you want to see yourself, your children, husband, elders at home, any handicapped persons around, your homes, your fields, your SHGs and Cooperatives?

The areas to be visualized are:

1. Self.
2. Children/husband.
3. Elders.
4. The Disabled.
5. Homes.
6. Fields.
7. SHGs.
8. Cooperatives.



Share with each other your dreams, in your groups.

NEXT, PAINTING THE DREAMS:

Trainees were next provided with charts and pens to give shape to their dreams. Smaller groups of five members were made. We ensured that the groups had members drawn from both the Government promoted SHGs and Voluntary Organization promoted ones. The trainees kept drawing their dreams till dinner time.

THE THIRD DAY

SHARING VISION AND PLANNING

9.20 Recap: Reminding each other of the previous day's experience/learning.



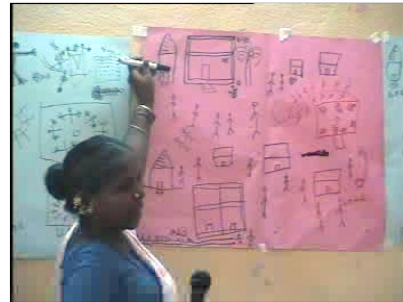
NEXT, A GRAND EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS.

The women leaders arranged their drawings on the wall.

Each came up to explain what she wanted to achieve in next five years through her painting. Each held a microphone in hand and spoke words that expressed self confidence:

“Now I am in this hut. In next five years, I will build a house like this.” and so on. The collected list of items from their dreams goes like this:

- Build a better house
- Purchase land for agriculture
- Build a school building
- Put up a building for their organization
- Plant trees
- Establish a hospital
- Educate my child to become an engineer.
- Purchase an auto, a bus...



These are not items that they are asking for free from any one. But, it is their plan to achieve them. This is true Planning for Development by the poor, for the poor. The poor have obviously decided to move towards prosperity Their eyes are set on a bright future.

Women will hereafter decide if they will need assistance from outside; and if so, whom they will approach and under what terms they would receive any support. This is a long way away from leading people to participate in Government sponsored development projects. [Most Projects have an allocation of funds to encourage “people’s participation” in the project]

MR. SAMSON, DIRECTOR OF GRAM RESPONDS:

Mr. Samson responded to trainees’ display of dreams with a DVD show. It was on a Sand Quarry Business, a joint venture of four cooperatives belonging to a total of eight thousand women in SHGs.

Women secured the license to quarry sand from the Government in an open bidding. They bid the contract for Rs.901001.

This development project gave them good returns. But the Government was not able to participate in their project.

Women faced obstacles. They went to the High Court of the State seeking help to continue in business.

He shared of how in another instance, when women of Nandipet wanted to purchase a bus, they sought assistance from a local news paper reporter. He took them to the city where they were making buses.

The company people did not allow them in, thinking they were trespassers into their campus. But coming to know that they came to buy a bus, they were given proper reception.

When women designed their development project, they will be accompanied by many well wishers. They will also face obstacles.

He suggested they chunked their goals into small pieces that they could reach in three months time. He also explained the concept of chunking, asking: How do you eat an elephant?

First, you make a manageable beginning. Find, what you want to achieve in the next few months. Then proceed further after you have reached that milestone.

Reflections on how to reach goals:

To achieve goals, besides the qualities trainees built within them, they needed money and information.

Money:

Avoiding wastage is something within our reach. In Lokeshwar Mandal, GRAM made a study and found that on an average, women spent three times more money on medicine than what they saved every month.

Can trainees save more if a trained volunteer took care of their health? One trained in preventive medicines, treatment for simple ailments and in midwifery?

Build up borrowing capacity: Women could build their credibility with bankers: That comes with strong SHG practices: regular savings, prompt repayments, unity among members, good record keeping etc. [Interestingly, though this trainings is often accused of failing to talk to women on core issues: “the importance of savings, repayments, record keeping etc.we invariably reach a point – after setting goals - when the importance of all these thrusts itself into trainees.

These ‘fundamentals’ become extraordinarily clear to trainees, and they make decisions on their own to strengthen their movement, as will be obvious in a moment]

Information:

How to get knowledge (E.g. on health): Knowledge is core to wealth creation today. How do we get information on improving productivity in farming; in dairy; for starting new ventures?

If you learnt from Jamkhed experience, how to preserve health, you could save money and achieve health.

There, women could achieve very high standards of health by one from a village getting trained by highly committed and very able doctors.

In fact, trained village women achieved what even doctors could not achieve directly by themselves.

Hence plan well to acquire the resource called knowledge.



GROUP WORK ON CHUNKING:

PLAN FOR NEXT THREE MONTHS ONLY:

Chunk your task into manageable pieces: what you could achieve in three months? It is good management practice, once dreams are in place, to plan the first manageable chunk: Plan for the next three months.

Discuss in Groups: “What do you want to achieve in next three months for your self/family and your groups?”

Results of Group Work as Reported in General Session:

For SELF/FAMILY:

- I will purchase land for Agriculture
- I will do vegetable production/business
- I will dig a bore well
- I will take care of my aged mother-in-law and father-in-law.
- We will grow trees: Neem, Teak, guava, mango
- I will Purchase a buffalo
- I will give nutritious food to children.
- I will expand business I am already doing.
- I will find a job for my daughter in three months.
- I will send my son to Dubai
- I will learn stitching clothes
- I will build my house

For SHG/COOPERATIVE

- Securing Loans; Revolving Funds;
- Ensuring regular Repayments
- Membership drive; more Groups to be formed
- Groups taking up planting trees
- What we learnt we will inform every member
- Unity: VO's and MAC's; and between SHGs Regular meetings; attendance; record keeping.
- Skill development training for Dais for each village, Sewing
- Follow up training to this camp
- Training for member education to strengthen SHGs
- To join every woman into Cooperative.
- Establish a flour mill
- Buy and sell Saris
- Training to develop skills some women already have.
- Gathering Health information
- Health programs for adolescent girls through groups
- Anganwadi (Kindergarten) schools where there are none
- Build Toilets
- Lessons on prevention of diseases during rainy season.
- Collect maize from whole village and sell it when price go high.
- To learn how to do agriculture with less water (drip irrigation)

[In spite of quite a few inputs about doing business in large scale, like Amul Dairy, they have not come up with any massive plans but only with what they found practical in the short run. One decides to take care of her aged in-laws as the first phase of her development plans...]

WITH TASKS ARTICULATED, LOOKING AROUND FOR PARTNERS DIALOGUE WITH VELUGU STAFF:

Trainees first grouped their short term plans related lands, trees and agriculture Velugu Staff Mr. Chinthaiah, (District Resource Person) informed they have an Agriculture Officer with Velugu who could help them with technical inputs.

He told of a provision of funds for purchase and distribution of lands for the poorest of the poor women under Velugu Project He talked of a private person's vermi-compost production unit in Dharmaram Village, nearby, they could visit.

Velugu gave loans to poorest women in Morthad Village for drip irrigating 89 acres of land at a cost of about Rs. 500,000.

He also informed about Community Investment Fund available with Velugu, which could be disbursed through Cooperatives.

Mr. Stan, Project Executive, an observer from SERP spoke:

You discovered what you want, where you want to go and how to reach your destination, all in the three days. I liked the last session where you were able to raise questions. When you know where you want to go, and to raise appropriate questions, you will surely find your way.

Only when you don't know where you want to go, any way will be the right way!

Participants' response:

Pushpa: Learning of what other women do in other States from Arulraja and to learn of the business they do is very encouraging. The coming together of women from GRAM and Velugu is joy to me.

Yadamma: I learnt a lot in three days. It was like a sleeping person waking up.

Satyagangu: What I learn in three days, I want to tell all the members.

Mumtaz: I am happy with these three days. I got chance to go up the stage and speak, leaving my fears – Now, I will not stop. I am a new member, but I learnt a lot.

CONCLUSION: LOOKING TOWARDS FUTURE:

Once the women spelt out their dreams, information that was not available to them all these years started pouring in, even from the Velugu Staff who were with them all along! On their own, the women may not know who could give them information or how to access them, given the maze of Government Departments and bureaucratic culture that prevail there. One thing is clear: whoever wants to serve these women, will do well to listen to them; pay attention to their dreams and match their services to their demands. Failing that, service providing agencies, be they the Government or Private Organizations will become irrelevant.

The interest of these leaders to take this vision building exercise to all their cadets in the villages inspires GRAM and this Trainer to design a two week long trainers training.

This training will be imparted to veterans in the Cooperative Movement, who are 'retired' and not holding any more responsibilities.

They will be chosen and trained, and their services placed at the service of the movement.

End Note:

1. For more info on GRAM, kindly visit: www.gramacs.org
2. Kindly refer to: www.jamkhed.org for details about the Organization working from Jamkhed, Maharashtra, India, for more than 33 years.
3. "TRANCE-formation" by John Grinder and Richard Bandler, edited by Connirae Andreas, p.26