

AB DARSHAK BOLE BOL BASANTO



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❖ About The Study

BACKGROUND

BOL BASANTO, a legal literacy audio-visual programme produced by the Multiple Action Research Group (MARG) was telecast on DD1 on Thursdays at 2.30 p.m. for ten weeks commencing January 27, 2000. The series, produced in 1998 in collaboration with the Ford Foundation, dramatises events to generate awareness on laws relating to women and their legal rights by taking active recourse to the linkages of the legal system with society and societal control.

In the series called '*Our Laws*', MARG had produced a set of 10 manuals on the laws related to women. Using these, subsequent workshops and legal literacy camps were held. Majority of the target group consisted of semi-literate or illiterate women, i.e. those not in a habit of reading or even conjuring up situations from written material. It was therefore felt that *the audio-visual medium*, which can help the target group empathise with a situation without conscious effort, be used. The series *BOL BASANTO* thus followed.

It was only befitting that a popular communication format like fiction with dramatised events was used for this dissemination. Dramatisation has the potential to depict a situation coherently and help the target group empathise with the issues through a lucid identification with characters, situations, etc. Viewers further perceive such a communication more as a medium of entertainment, and their involvement is without any pre-conception of "learning". This makes absorption of the message smoother. The reading material on this literacy series, however, remained as a supplement to the audio-visual campaign.

OBJECTIVES

Concomitant to the telecast was the fact of how the campaign was received. The important question was whether, and how, has it impacted the intended audience. The Centre for Advocacy and Research was assigned to conduct a study and ascertain how the legal literacy campaign and the communication strategy used in it worked with the

audience. It entailed ascertaining from the viewers their opinion and assessment of the campaign.

The objective of the study specifically lay in:

1. How receptive have the viewers been to the messages?
2. What have been the levels of viewers' identification with the problems and solutions depicted in the programme?
3. And finally, what have been the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign as a legal literacy /awareness exercise?

A note on the study:

- Investigation with viewers as part of the study was done with select groups. The response and findings generated thus may not be generalised as a Programme-Rating-Survey outcome.
- The study is not a comment on the viewership of the programme /campaign. How available and accessible its telecast has been to viewers as a whole or as distinct groups was not sought as a mandate for the study. Making the programme available to the study sample (select groups of viewers) was sought as part of the conduct of the study.

METHODOLOGY

Technique

The study used qualitative investigation consisting primarily of the *Participatory Appraisal method*. This was carried through *Focus Group Discussions* held with consistent groups. The group discussions immediately succeeded the telecast or video playback of the separate episodes of the campaign series. In all, thirty FGDs were held around ten episodes at three centres.

The key areas of inquiry were:

- ❑ What do the viewers relate to?
- ❑ What do they recollect spontaneously and unaided?
- ❑ Which aspects of the programme helped to convey the message?
- ❑ Whether the viewers absorb the nuances of the message conveyed?
- ❑ What did they like best in the episode/series? Why?

(See Annexure 1 for an elaborate lay out of the investigation areas.)

A detailed Guide was developed for the FGDs. It entailed an active role for the research team in facilitating and guiding the discussions. In the very first FGD, however, we realised that it was difficult to follow a detailed guide because we were talking to a group, which were grappling with many personal constraints while participating. They seemed scared of being vocal in their responses as they felt that they were being subjected to some kind of a ‘test’ through the discussions. Also, given the time and space constraints to such research studies, we decided to play by the ear and let the groups’ feedback come spontaneously and unaided. Only after the participants had come to have a reasonable familiarity with the research group and the discussions, we attempted at intervening, say by asking questions or remarking. The role of the research team thus was cut down to being a mere leveler in the discussions.

Most of the FGDs were conducted on Thursday afternoons subsequent to the transmission of the episodes of the programme, BOL BASANTO. However, as the study initiative commenced two weeks after the telecast started and also owing to some unavoidable logistical constraints, some of the episodes were played on the VCR for the viewers.

Mau was marred with frequent electricity failures because of the statewide strike by the U.P. electricity board. The local coordinator conducted three FGD's with live telecast but the rest had to be done through VCR playback. The research team visited Nadwasarai, Mau twice and conducted the FGD's.

Study Sample

The sample for the study was devised to represent women from rural and semi-urban habitations. The campaign being largely targeted at the marginalised sections, it became important that the sample for the study

was representative of them. With these guiding parameters, three centres were selected for conducting the study.

AREA PROFILE

To generate discussions, ten focus group discussions (FGDs) each were organised at both rural and urban set-ups. These were Indira Camp (a slum cluster /basti in Patparganj, Delhi), Dakshinpuri (a resettlement colony in South Delhi) and in Village Nadwasarai, Mau District, Uttar Pradesh.

Indira camp, Joshi Colony, Patparganj, Delhi: The urban commoner

This slum came into existence in 1980 while the ration cards were made in 1995. There are some 200 jhuggis and a population of around 2,000. The inhabitants are a mixed group of both Hindus and Muslims and hail from mainly four States – U.P., Bihar, Bengal and Rajasthan. Most of the children go to the nearby municipal school for education. The men-folk are mostly involved in construction work whereas the women are either housemaids in nearby societies or are housewives.

Although a twenty-year-old basti, it has more or less no contact with NGOs. It gave the research team an opportunity to interact with a very 'raw' set of participants who had no 'politically correct' statements to give but yet they had little awareness recording the problems they faced in their day to day life and their probable solutions. There were no inhibitions and they spoke from their heart.

Dakshinpuri, New Delhi: A relatively aware urbanite

It is a resettlement colony, which came into existence in 1975. It is part of the Ambedkar Nagar, which is spread over a radius of 4 kms. The houses are built on small plots. The men in the area are involved with different kind of occupations like plumbing, construction and government as well as private jobs. The women are mostly involved in weaving, embroidery and making ornaments.

It has an aware surrounding with various NGOs working in the area trying to provide them with various types of information on their social and legal rights. We thought that they would approach the programme with a little 'preparedness'. (Though, in the beginning we found many of

them, except the younger ones, quiet unapprised on legal issues and less forthcoming in terms of sharing their own personal experiences as compared to the other two groups.)

Nadwasarai Village, Ghosi Tehsil, Mau Distt., Uttar Pradesh

A small but prosperous village, it is more like a kasba with pucca houses and a big market on the main road. The population of around 7,000 is a mixed group of caste and religion. Muslim landlords brought people from all castes, communities, and occupations and founded this village as a self-contained village around 400-500 years back. The Hindu households though fewer in number are a prosperous lot with active political and economic participation.

Agriculture is the main occupation in the village, though there are many who have migrated to the gulf countries and others who have now shifted to trading. The womenfolk are involved in spinning on the charkha and refining raw silk sarees. But in most cases the entire family, including the children, gets involved in this business. There are over 25 odd schools in the two-km radius. Educational awareness is very high. More than 90% of the young men and women go to school and colleges. However, the dropout rate being very high, the educational level remains low.

Though only twenty percent of the total homes have television sets, most households have access to TV in their neighbourhood. Doordarshan is widely watched but some homes also have cable connection.

There has been little social development and welfare activity here and people, in particular women, have no idea of the probable solutions to their problems. Thus their feedback was of someone who was just introduced to the subject of legal rights through this programme and therefore very spontaneous.

PROFILE OF THE FGD PARTICIPANTS

The panellists/viewers were identified through a random selection of the houses but the research team kept the proposed demographic profile of the respondents in mind.

At all the three places, the panellists/viewers (10-12 for each FGD)

constituted women from different sections including minority communities, working, non-working, students, literate, illiterate, non-Hindi speaking, married, unmarried etc. We maintained the same group at every centre. However, in Dakshinpuri, after the first three episodes, three of the participants left for their native places while two got full-time jobs in a garment factory. Thus, in this centre, we had to constitute a new group. But there were seven regular viewers.

Many participants at Indira Camp hailed from Chappra district of Bihar while some were from other states like Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. The age group of the participants was 16 – 55 years. There were many participants who are working as housemaids in the nearby housing societies. One of them worked in a factory. Some of them were housewives while one was a student.

The participants in Dakshinpuri were within the age group 18-55 years. Hailing from different states including Rajasthan, Punjab, U.P., Haryana, they constituted working women, housewives, social workers and students.

The participants in Mau were in the age bracket 16-60 years and constituted both Hindus and Muslims. They were more spontaneous and articulate in relating the depictions in the programme to their real life experiences. The participants constituted both working/non-working women and students.

GENERAL MEDIA HABITS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The three centres, each distinct in their overall socio-demographic features, had women with remarkably different media habits.

Nadwasarai

Nadwasarai is in a transition of sorts as regards access to media. While Doordarshan has considerable availability, satellite channels are yet to gain firm grounds. Except for a few houses on the main road which have their own dishes, the village doesn't have satellite TV. In Nadwasarai and other adjoining villages, the majority has access to TV with the set either at home or in the neighbourhood.

Long power cuts and engaging household chores result in limited hours of watching. Most women voiced their inability to watch TV as they are

told that television watching is prohibited in Muslim religion. With this background, there were couple of recently married girls who were prohibited by their husbands from attending the FGD's. The unmarried and the middle-aged women, however, said that they had lesser pressures at home.

The afternoon film on the DD Metro Channel was found to be very popular with women across the study centres. A serial *Adhikaar* (on Zee TV), which dealt with the legal and societal rights of a Muslim woman was pursued by most of them with great interest.

One of the women during in an informal chat said that due to television divorce cases are becoming more common. "Impressed by what they see on TV, men have started wanting good looking, smart, educated but subdued wives", she said. Many young girls especially noted that because television serials show educated women going 'bizarre' in their lives, there is a growing opposition at home on their continuing education. Mothers often squarely blamed TV for spoiling their children "as they spend most part of their day in front of the TV watching films and serials". They also complained against vulgarity in films and other television programming.

Indira Camp

The group at Indira Camp was a mixed one. There were some women who had television sets at their homes but the rest had access to television programming either in their neighbour's house or at their work places. In their leisure time, all of them followed this practice of sitting together in one house and watching TV. As most of them were housemaids, they shared that they also have access to TV at their workplaces. "When the 'mamsaab' watches TV, we also get to watch it", they said. "And if the programme or the film is interesting, we stay on to watch until it finishes."

But, there were a couple of them who said that they prefer sitting in the sun talking with the neighbours rather than watching TV. The only time they watch is when the children or husbands watch and thus the programme is obviously of the latter's choice rather than theirs.

But, on an average, it was estimated that the participants of Indira Camp watch TV for an average two hours a day. They are avid watchers of films on television than any other type of programming. The channels generally watched are DD1 and DD2, but they prefer Zee Cinema and the

local cable channel for films. Some of the programmes watched by them (though not with consistency) are - *Shaktiman*, *Boogie Woogie*, *Alif Laila*, *Noor Jahan* etc.

Dakshinpuri

In Dakshinpuri, most of the homes had Colour TV at their homes with cable connection. Some of the participants, especially the younger ones, were avid TV viewers with the television at home running continuously for the major part of the day. They didn't take any particular names when asked what particularly they watched, but countdown shows and films were cited as the favourites.

The rest of the participants were occasional viewers - films again being their favourite. Most of the married women with children said that they watch whatever their children watch like *Boogie-woogie* and films on the local cable channels.

❖ **What did the FGDs indicate?**

Assessing the Communication Content, Format and the Strategy

ABOUT BOL BASANTO

The Programme

This series, aimed at legal literacy/awareness, was based on the concerns and experiences of the less-privileged women and men in the society. Each episode dealt with the socio-legal linkages around an issue /institution /subject. These are:

1. What is Law?
2. Lawful/unlawful Marriage
3. Dowry
4. Divorce and Maintenance
5. Property and Inheritance
6. Rape and Kidnapping
7. Police
8. Labour Laws and Accident benefits
9. Child Labour, Bonded Labour, Daily Wagers and the issue of Untouchability
10. Development journey of Basanto and Legal Assistance

Communication Format used

- The programme dramatised real life legal predicaments and used a three-way communication:
- Story telling which narrated a problem and its legal solution
- Legal information dissemination using lyrics – songs and verses with music
- Written information on law at the end of the programme and in couple of episodes even in the middle.

Thus, the dramatised scenes were interspersed with songs and verse to carry forward legal messages, written legal information coming on the screen as inserts.

KEY FINDINGS

◆ WHAT IN THE CAMPAIGN WORKED

1. Addressed a “felt need”

All the participants *identified with the objectives and purpose of the programme*. If we assume that the two main objectives of the programmes were to increase their legal awareness and to some extent their legal literacy- then this was, by and large, accomplished.

The programme not only reinforced their “awareness” about the ground reality, empowered them with a notion of “rights” and entitlement, demystified institutions like the Court but also for the first time created a realisation that even people working in law enforcement agencies such as the police are legally accountable.

They expressed their desire of viewing more of such programmes so that the world of information can knock the doors of their closed lives. *“Till date, ‘Kanoon’ (Law) for me meant going to a court. I never had an inkling that law is present everywhere and in whatever we do.”*

Some observations by participants in all the three Centres bring this out rather well.

“Aaj tak hum samajhte the ki kanoon ka matlab kewal adalat hai, par kanoon har jagah par hai, ye humain maloom nahin tha”.

“Jamanat ka paisa nahin dena padta, sirf rakam bharate hain, yeh to hum mein kisi ko bhi maloom nahin tha. Bahut achha hua apne bataya, ab hum dhyan rakhenge”.

“kanoon police pe bhi lagoo hota hai, humein yeh maloom nahin tha. Aaj hi humne jaana.”

“Balatkar par kaafi jankari mili. Isse pehle to kuch pata hi nahin tha ki kya karna chahiye. Waise yeh aam ghatna hai. Kabhi bhi ghaat sakti hai. Isliye jankari achhi lagi.”

“Humain yeh pehli baar pata chala ki aisi ghatana (meaning rape) ko chhupana nahin chahiye. Usi samaya batana chahiye nahin to saboot mit jatein hain.”

2. The programme is Highly Watchable

BOL BASANTO *combined information and education with entertainment.* Women across groups admitted that for them TV is the only source of information and entertainment. This programme gave them both and thus they would like to watch more such programmes. (*“Arre maja bhi aaya aur jankari bhi mil gayi”*). They enjoyed the whole series, laughed at the jokes, hummed with the music, cried with the suffering of the characters. Especially the episode on dowry was found to be very moving for the viewers.

There were umpteen instances during the course of the study to establish how highly watchable the programme is. In fact, when one of the episodes was not telecast due to some error at Doordarshan, the unrest at the faces of the participants was seen. They were very agitated and felt as if they were ‘deprived’ of something, which they enjoyed.

We have some specific instances below.

The viewers/panellists took initiatives themselves. Even when the research team was unable to conduct the FGD due to some reason at Indira Camp, the participants watched the programme and held discussions about it among themselves. And when the research team went the next week, they were bombarded with feedback. The recall was tremendous and that showed their involvement with the programme.

The youngest participant at Indira Camp, who was a student in the nearby Municipal school shared during one of the FGD’s that her best friend also watches this programme and they talk about it in school with their other friends.

In Mau, the young man who had brought the VCR for the meeting took it home and showed it to some 20-30 women in his neighbourhood. The women sat till 3.00A.M. watching and discussing the 5 episodes on one cassette. He came back to us the next morning and told us that the women liked the programme very much and they want other people also to see it. Other women participants in Mau, expressed their desire to know more and were interested in telling more people about it.

3. Effective use of the fictionalised format

Purely from the point of view of communication, the use of *fiction as a tool and dramatised realism as the medium* shows up as central to this awareness generation exercise. The format of the programme i.e. the use of narrative and drama to raise awareness and understanding of issues and legal predicaments was corroborated at many levels.

- ◇ Firstly, **it helped to hook the viewer** and create an active interest in a legal series. As the series had a fixed set of characters and the story progressed over a period of 8-9 years around them, the viewers also moved along. The *recall value* of the events and situations in the programme was noted to be very high. For instance, after watching the episode on lawful/unlawful marriage, the respondent could see the change in Basanto. As one of the respondents said “Basanto had no brain in the beginning, but the lawyer gave her information in the previous episode and that is why she took both of them (Laajo and her mate) to law for help. (*“Usko bhi to pehle akal nahin thi, jab wakil ne pichhli bar bataya, tab dimag aaya. Tabhi to is wale (episode) mein woh dono ko lekar gayi kanoon ke paas.”*)

The same was with the episode on property rights. As Laajo’s share in the property was being debated on the grounds of lawfulness of her second marriage, all the participants started dabbling with the nitty-gritty of both her marriages (which was dealt in the second episode telecast a month back). It is significant to note that the viewers remembered the laws too because they were keenly following the story. At the end in fact, the participants were so involved with the story-line (especially in Mau) that they asked us to find out whether Laajo and Irfan got married or not.



(A still from the episode on Property Rights)

- ◇ Secondly, the element of melodrama, emotional and psychological upheaval used to flesh out the different manifestation of the problem had **a high degree of realism for them.**

So credible was the narrative and drama woven around the various concerns that whatever information and knowledge on law that got disseminated seemed more easily assimilable than if presented as an “advice” or as “instruction”. “This kind of information looks good on TV but not when someone tells you as an advice.” (*“TV par dekho to accha lagta hai, aise suno to accha nahin lagta”*) – a remark at Indira Camp Basti.

Another remark tends to be more conclusive. *“Natak (all the drama coming on the TV) mein yeh (meaning BOL BASANTO) sab se achha laga, baki to samajh hi nahin aata. Phir aayega to phir dekhoongi.* (In all the drama serials on TV, BOL BASANTO was very good. Otherwise, the rest of them we are not able to understand. I would love to see this programme if it is shown again.”

So powerful is the medium of television that one of the participants at Indira Camp after watching the episode on lawful/unlawful marriage commented, *“woh theek keh rahi thi, agar ladki ladka ki jaldi shaadi kar do to unhein koi bimari pakad legi, sahi kaha aur jab TV par keh dali, yaani government ne keh dali”.*



(A still from the episode on Divorce and Maintenance)

- ◇ Thirdly, *the* **“context” and the milieu are extremely familiar and easy to identify with.**

The participants especially in Indira camp Basti were very happy to see ‘people like them’ on the small screen. The language used in the

programme they felt was their's. The setting - the basti, the milieu, the dialect, demeanour and lifestyle clearly evoked a sense of nostalgia among the participating viewers so imperative to a spontaneous association.

"Pehli baar jab dekhna shuru kiya tha to jyada accha nahin laga tha. Ab jyada achha lagne laga hai. Gaana accha lagta hai. Karyakaram dekh kar aisa nahin lagta ki dikhava hai. Bilkul original lagta hai. Sacchi kahani lagti hai. Hota bhi aisa hi hai. Sabhi insaan sudhar sakte hain. Aisa nahin ki sudhar nahin sakte."

'Jaisi jagah chuni hai, jaise kirdar chune hain, dekh kar lagta hi nahin hai ki natak hai. Sab asliyat lagti hai. Aisa hi hota hai'.

The programme succeeds in engaging viewers by depicting real life situations, predicaments and responses. Viewers are quick to reckon that they are afflicted with similar problems as depicted in the succeeding episodes. There is also a similarity in the manner in which people around respond to the problem. For example, one of the women who is a victim of domestic violence, after watching the first episode said that she could empathise with Basanto because *"Jab us par vipda ayi to koi uski madad karne nahin aaya. Woh meri jaisi thi, isliye achi lagi."* She was referring to the first episode where Basanto loses her money and tiffin-box. She pleads to everybody but nobody came for her help.

In Mau, the participants even felt that everything shown to them on TV was 'real'. They were of the opinion that unlike in their village, in cities, women like Basanto who are smart and intelligent and lawyers like Satyavart, who are always ready to help the poor, actually exist.

◇ Fourthly, aside a rather instinctive association with the problems, there is a **strong bonding with the characters.**

There was clear appreciation among the viewers of the fact that the narrative progressed mainly in the journeys of the three protagonists – Satyavart Srivastava, Basanto and Laajo. It's significant that the characters for the viewers were as much real as inspirational. The viewer responses amply reveal the association particularly with Basanto and Laajo is not only spontaneous but also deepens gradually. However the manner in which the viewer relate to these characters differ. It clearly depicts what each one means.

HOW THE NARRATIVE PROGRESSED?

The narrative progressed in the journeys of three protagonists. The programme succeeds in taking the viewers through stages of personal growth through these individual journeys of the protagonists.

The Initiator of Change



The first protagonist is **Satyavart Srivastava**, a sensitive lawyer committed to the cause of legal awareness. He sensitises Basanto in the first episode and makes her aware of the presence of a legal system as the backbone of the society. He gives her legal assistance for the first few episodes and then leaves her to initiate the legal fight for the women in her neighbourhood.

Satyavart Srivastava was seen as a learned and informed saviour by the women participants. Nonetheless, both his empathising with the victim as well as his personal forays into the victim's (woman's) sufferings and fight, say when he sings a verse to the women, help bring him closer to the viewer. "*Wakil saab achhe lage. Woh gaana bhi ga rahe the aur accha kanoon bhi bataye - yeh accha laga.*" There are other observations on a similar note. "*Woh achha laga kyunki woh keh raha tha ki kanoon garib aur amir dono ke liye hai aur agar kanoon nahin rehta to kuch nahin raheta.*"

The Catalyst of Change



The second protagonist is **Basanto**, who catalyses change – first undergoing a self-transformation and then catalysing change in other's lives. She is a spirited woman who sells steel utensils in lieu of old clothes. Like many other women, she doesn't know about law and its provisions. She becomes aware of its presence on coming in contact with the lawyer while in a crisis. He sensitises her, who then with her commitment and newly gained intelligence, fights against the social malice like dowry, rape, police harassment etc. and tries to bring justice in her neighbourhood.

Not only is she readily identified with but also her journey is well absorbed by the viewers. After watching some of the episodes, one of the Dakshinpuri participants recalled, "In the beginning, even Basanto had no idea about the legal system just like us. In the first episode, the lawyer was introducing her to it and in the same way us. (*"Arre pehla to Basanto ko bhi nahin pata tha hamari tarah. Pehle wale kadi mein to woh wakil shuru kara raha tha usse, hum bhi to saath mein shuru hua waise hi."*)

Basanto, as could be expected, looked more amenable to the women. She was looked upon not merely as a crusader of their cause but also as someone who was approachable. *"Basanto ki tarah ek aurut honi chahiye. Usmein himmat thi. Ab agar sari aurthein darpok hongy to kaise hoga. Ek ki himmat se hi sabki himmat badhti hai"*.

Basanto is not only smart but also possesses the qualities that make a good leader. She is kind and considerate to the poor while continuing to crusade their cause.

What Basanto said was very important to them. Viewers often recalled

her statements unaided. *“Aaj dabne wala yug nahin hai, Basanto ka kehna hai, dabne se kuch nahin hota, mamla kharab ho jata hai, unhonein sahi jankari di”* They also complimented her in many ways. *“Basanto is very kind hearted. She is deeply moved by the sufferings of others.” (“Basanto bahut narm dil hai, usse kisi aur ke upar ki gayi jyadti bhi bardarshat nahin hoti.”)*

It is notable that beyond an identification with Basanto’s persona, there also is an association with her personal journey from a naïve, nervous and timid ruralite to an aware and intrepid woman. Her gradual transition from a weak, tentative and ignorant to an aware, confident and assertive woman is absorbed well by the viewer. Observations like the one below from Mau depict this association very well. *“In the beginning of the story, Basanto was very emotional and stupid but still had the sense of self-esteem. But after some time, she gained intelligence with her interaction with the lawyer. This I liked very much.” (“Is kahani mein shuru mein basanto bhavukta aur nasamajhi ki baat karti hai par phir bhi woh khuddar thi. Par baad mein woh wakil saheb ki baat ko samajh ke samajhdar ho gayi. Humain yeh bahut accha laga. Agar aisi aurtein hon samaj mein to samaj badal jaye”)*

Women in Mau even thought that Basanto is a real character and if she will come to their village, all their worries would be gone. She will solve all their problems with her knowledge and wit. They were happy that this kind of change is coming in the cities.

The Change Agent



The third protagonist, **Laajo**, emerges as the agent of change. In the second episode she is introduced as a young girl, very naïve who elopes with the man she loves. She goes through an ordeal later but with the help of Basanto and Satyavart Srivastava, stands the test of life. She gets

herself divorced from her mentally unstable husband, gets married for the second time by her own choice, fights for her share in her husband's property as well from her natal home when the husband dies and in the end herself becomes a activist and fights for the rights of her fellow labourers.

Viewer's responses intensify with the progress of Laajo

The journey of 'Laajo' in fact comes up as the journey of the viewer. Laajo was introduced as a completely naïve person in the beginning of the programme. In the same way the viewers' association also started while with the same naivete. They, like Laajo, were not vocal about their problems. They are as ignorant of the legal system and its functioning as Laajo. It is the viewer, along with Laajo, who is awakened by Basanto and Satyavart through the series. Laajo learned about various laws while living through various phases of her life, the viewers similarly learned about them episodically while virtually passing through the various upheavals of Laajo's life. It is amply demonstrated in how viewer's involvement develops and intensifies with the progress of the story.

This three-way communication proves successful, as it is able to acquaint the viewers with law in a very subtle yet firm manner. Towards the end, they not only were found to recognise the importance of law in the society and in their own personal lives but also revealed a personal resolve of sorts, much as Laajo does. And thus is the common viewer made comfortable with a rather specialised subject like law.

The strength of the character of Laajo is in its ability to strike a very personal chord with most women viewers. Laajo, despite her initial naivete, makes a swift transition to a more combative person. In fact, towards the end, she emerges more powerful than Basanto. An observation at Mau is illustrative of the many similar responses everywhere. *"Is wali kadi mein wakil Laajo se kehta hai ki Laajo to ab mujhe bolne hi nahin deti. Ismein yeh dikhaya hai ki insaan agar pareshani mein pad jaye to usse sab baat ka pata ho jata hai; phir insaan kitna samajdaar ho jata hai."*

She succeeds in reinforcing that problems though deep-rooted can be overcome with individual determination. Most participants across groups remarked on the growth of Laajo. As one of the participants in Indira Camp pointed out, "In the beginning, Laajo was so quiet, but during the end she became bigger than Basanto. She gave us a feeling that if we want we can also become like her." (*Jaise woh shuru mein kuchh nahin*

bolti thi, baad mein dekho to woh Basanto se bhi badi ho gayee. Hum bhi aise ho sakte hain. Isliye humain laga ki hum chahe to kya nahin kar sakte”.)

An observation at Dakshinpuri on the individual growth of Laajo: *“Laajo mein kitna fark aa gaya hai, kahan gaon se bhagi thi, ab kaam seekh rahi hai, kaise daftar mei beathi thi, bahut achha laga use dekhkar”*

A Muslim participant, who had earlier opined that it is not a woman’s job to go out and work but the man’s responsibility, after watching the episode on Labour laws, concedes thus: *“Laajo ab pehle se achhi ho gayi hai, Ab who sab karti hai, duniya ko bhi dikhati hai ki kanoon kaise madad kar sakta hai. Laajo ko kaam karta dekh kar lagta hai ki agar humain bhi pareshani ayi to hum bhi kam karenge. Aur agar maalik puri tankuah nahin dega, to phir lad kar lenge.”*

A younger housewife quipped on this. *“Yeh sab dekh kar mujhe laga ki humein bhi kaam karna chahiye, ghar se bahar nikal kar bahut jankari milti hai, tabhi pata chalega kanoon vagairah kya hai.”*

One of the participants in Nadwasarai expressed her association with the character thus: *“Isme Laajo ki jankari dikhayi hai. Vidwa haalat mein ladte-ladte kaise aage badh gayi hai. Usne kafi taraki ki hai. Allah miya aise hi taraki sab ko de.”*

Citing Laajo’s case, one of the participants remarked, *“agar aurat seena tan le, to char ko fayada hi karegi.”*(With her determined fight, a woman always ends up benefiting others around.)

4. Music is a binding element of the drama

Audience feedback strongly suggests that music is a vital sub-element of the drama. The tone, tenor and emotive pangs that music and the accompanying lyrics together generate are germane to the narrative. It thus succeeds in firming up the association between the viewer and the overall ambience. *The first feedback from the viewers on any of the episode were invariably relating to the music.* After watching the first episode, one of the participants said, *“Mujhe bahut accha laga. Mein roj dekhoongi. Woh gaana gate hain na, yeh achha laga”.*

Viewers’ responses bring out the many nuances of how the element of music and lyrics had worked with them. We catalogue some of these below.

At Dakshinpuri.

“Sangeet bahut accha laga. Mayeke se doli, waise baat galat hai par gaana bahut accha laga. Laya bahut acchi hai.

“Gaane se batao to jayada accha lagta hai.”

At Indira camp.

“Sangeet se jyada samaj mein ata hai. Saadi baat to ek baar keh kar hat jati hai.

“Sangeet mein line dobara bhi dohrai jati hai. Is liye jyada samaj mein ata hai.”

“Gaane se batane se jyada dhayan mein rehta hai, nahin to bhool jate hain”.

A remarkable aspect of most of the songs, as many of the participants mentioned especially after watching the episodes on Dowry and Rape, is that these were filled with deep emotion. *“Bahut dard hai ganoo mein”*. Most of the viewers said that they were able to understand the message better when it was sung as a song like the one on police harassment. The song, *‘FIR yaane who rapart jo’*, they said was very useful. In fact, most of the participants said that they like Satyavart because he sings. (*“woh accha laga, kyunki woh ga ke suna raha tha”*)

Women’s identification with the melody is in fact even deeper. The music in some of the songs, women at Indira camp said, were ‘taken from folk songs of Bihar and Orrisa’. As the majority of the participants especially at Indira Camp hailed from these two states, they could relate more to it. They even sang a few lines from the original folksong whose tune was used in one of the songs in the episode on dowry.

The song – *“jaise ki is deh main khoon hai, waise hi jeevan mein kanoon hai”*- had the highest recall from the first episode. This episode, which was aimed at introducing the viewers to the presence of law in our society was seen as an ‘uninteresting’ episode where nothing happened. But this song is what made them realise the importance of the presence of law in the society as well as our lives. All the participants repeated these lines to describe what they have understood about the issue. In fact, for them these lines became their definition of Law.

A remark by a social worker: One of the Dakshinpuri participants who is also a social worker associated with a community based organisation stated that she has conducted many legal awareness programmes in the neighbourhood but never before she found it so impressive. She said that information given in the form of slides/lectures/written material doesn't help much. But, in BOL BASANTO, it is the music that holds the audience together. (*"Maine pehle bhi apne centre se judi mahilayon ko is tarake ke legal awareness par based programmes dikhaye hai, par woh impact nahin chod pate, par is programme mein sabse acchi baat hai iska sangeet, wohi is ko darshaon se jodta hai, jo bhi message gakar bataya jata hai wo accha samaj mein ata hai. Waise bhi jab information ko slides, lecture ke roop mein bataya jata hai tab logon ko itna samaj nahin ata par jab drama ke roop mein dikhaya jata hai tab wo impact jodta hai."*)

"Mayeke se doli nikle, Bitia kare pukaar (both from the episode on dowry), *"Jaise ki is deh main khoon hai"* (first episode), *"Muslim shadi mein ladke ke paigam ata hai"* (from the episode on lawful/unlawful marriage) *"Jhonka ek hava ka"* (from the episode on property rights) were liked the most by all.

5. Stimulated Introspection about real-life associations and dilemmas

Every problem, be it property dispute, dowry, police apathy or a deep societal bias, is not only a part of the viewer's contextual reality but also her experience, personal or collective. And what is more critical is that like the characters In the serial, the viewers too have experienced it in the same difficult circumstances of poverty.

In their understanding of the problems depicted in the different episodes, women's responses across groups reveal poverty as a strong denominator to all the problems. However, when we look at how they associate with a problem depicted, it is their experience (of such a problem) – either as individuals or as a collective - that comes up as central to determining their interest and recall as well as understanding and interpretation of it. For instance, the recall of and involvement with the depictions in the episodes on dowry, divorce and maintenance was very high in the rural group. Their responses too were intense. (*"Hum is kadi ko baar baar dekhna cahenge, apne bachon aur pariwar ke saath dekhna chahenge"*).

During the discussion, we found out that this interest was more because of the increasing divorce rate in the area.

In Nadwasarai, the women participants seemed grateful for the information given in the episode on Labour Laws. As one of them said, “Womenfolk work more than the men in the agricultural farms but when it comes to paying them, the land-owners hesitate. So every woman worker should be aware of these laws.” (*Aurthein kheton mein aadmion se jayada kam karti hai, par jab paise dene ka sawal hota hai to malik katratae hain. Yeh sab jankari sab aurthon ko maloom honi chahiye.*)



(A still from the episode on Labour Laws)

Another lady remarked that this serial was very good for rural people because the workers are badly exploited here. (*“Yeh serial dehaton ke liye bahut fayedemand hai, yahan majdooron ko bahut sataya jata hai”.*)

There were few participants, mainly young housewives, who found it difficult to relate to the information in this episode because “*main to kaam nahin karti, isliye kuch samaj nahin aaya*”.

The episode on rape, domestic violence, etc. on the other hand evoked strong personal reactions, and particularly so in the urban groups. After watching the episodes, one of the participants at Indira Camp who is also a victim of domestic violence said, “I liked all the episodes of the programme. I understood the story lines in all the episodes. I have understood that like when her husband was beating her, Laajo came out. That was good. I have understood that.”

'Law is also for the poor' is a loud message

What in fact seemed to fascinate the participants across groups was the fact that the programme emphasised that the law is also for poor. One of the participants in Mau said, "In the beginning, Basanto kept saying to the lawyer that there is no point approaching the law on her problems because nobody listens to the poor man's voice. Just like us, she also had no idea that the law is for poor, so she was hesitant of expressing her hurt." (*Jaise shuru main Basanto bar-bar keh rahi thi ki jaane do babuji, hum garibon ki kaun sunega, woh bhi hamari tarah thi aur kanoon se wakif nahin thi, aisa soch kar who apni bat daba kar reh jati thi.*)



(A still from the episode on Bonded Labour)

Another lady put the objective of the campaign succinctly as a serial that tries to understand and solve the problems of the poor. (*"kahani mein kamjoor varg ki samasyaon ko suljhane aur samajhne ka prayatan kiya gaya hai"*)

The programme 'mirrors a woman's state'

The campaign further succeeds in generating involvement at a yet another plane as it is seen as depicting and dealing with issues and predicaments specific to the womenfolk. "The programme deals with the evils of the society where a woman never gets justice." (*Serial samaj ki kurition ko dhayan mein rakh kar banaya gaya hai, jahan aurthon ko haq aur insaaf nahin milta.*) – a remark by a housewife in Dakshinpuri.

There are umpteen observations by viewers everywhere to point out how the campaign is increasingly seen as showcasing women specific themes. Some of these are:

“Jinhone yeh banaya hai, who bahut soch samaj kar banaya hai, jo dikhaya hai, wahi duniya mein ho raha hai.”

“Aurut ki pareshani par kanooni karyawahi dikhayi hai.”

“Yeh accha laga ki aurut ko uska haq milna chahiye.”

6. Telecast at the appropriate time

The programme was telecast at a time when the womenfolk generally are freer and can spend their leisure time by choice. This view was expressed by most of the participants in Delhi. In Mau, however, there were a few who felt that the programme should have been telecast in late evening so that the men folk could also watch it.

◆ HOW HAS THE CAMPAIGN IMPACTED

It is worthwhile at this juncture, after having established how the campaign works with the viewers, to understand how it has impacted them. A comprehensive look at women's responses clearly points out that the most notable achievement of the campaign has been in **enhancing their self-confidence**. The series results in the loss of fear of the police, loss of awe and fear of law and its institutions and finally in enhancing self-esteem. This is evident in women's responses.

The police is seen as an approachable lot.

In the first few episodes most of them said that police doesn't listen to women. "If women go to the police station they are pushed away". (*"Arre koi baat hone par agar police station jaye to who aurton ko bhaga hi dete hain"*). But at the end, all of them echoed the view that if something happens to them in the future, they will go to the nearby police station and report the matter. (*"Agar hamare samne aab aisi samasya aati hai to koshish karke usse kanoon tak ya police tak pahunchayenge."*)



(A still from the episode on Police)

Another participant from Indira Camp said, "I liked BOL BASANTO very much because it gave us information on so many legal issues. We have come out of our native places to earn a living. Now if somebody tries to harass me and especially now that my husband is not here, if somebody teases me or tries to harass me, we know that we can do something. I have got this information now. Earlier, I was very afraid of the policemen. But, now after watching this serial, I realised that because we feel scared of the policemen, we won't be able to achieve anything. We will have to be brave like Basanto and Laajo and do something."

The strength of individual determination and perseverance (which particularly Laajo personifies) is reckoned.

The campaign succeeds in restoring and reinforcing their faith in community action. At the end, they seem to get the message that only when individual efforts take the shape of a collective voice (that is all the women in the neighbourhood get together), they would be heard by the administration.

One of the participants who works in a factory shared how the employees are exploited at her workplace. *“kal hi ek adami ka haath kata tha, par kuch nahin hota”*. But after watching the episode on labour laws, this woman said that only when all the men and the women get together, anything can be achieved. She continued, *“there is a woman in my factory who though is illiterate always speaks out. But everybody else keeps shut and don’t support her. The programme shows that only when all of us unite can we achieve something. (“agar sagri aithein aur sagre aadmi sut kar lain, tabhie kuch ho sakta hai. Humare yahan bhi ek aurut hai, jo padi likhe nahin hai, par who bolti hain, magar baki sab chup rehti hain, saath nahin deti, phir kya hoga?”)*

The bargaining power of the collective is underscored.

When asked “ if in similar situation, what will you do?” All of them said that they would collect the women from the neighbourhood and report the matter in the nearby police station. If the concerned officer won’t hear, they will go to the *‘bada afsar’*.

A participant from Indira Camp said, *“ humko to bahut accha laga. agar duniya mein hum kahin jaye aur koi humko bina matlab sata raha hai, to usko thodi na hum sah kar baith jayenge. kahin par na jao, par tabh bhi police chowki par to ja sakte ho na, vahin jao apna madad mango agar nahin dete to age kahin jao, yeh bataya humain...bahut accha dikhate hain samajhate hain, akal mein bhi ati hai, baat dimag mein baith jati hai. Hum to pehle kabhi dekhe nahin the, ab aage aur dikhayenge to hum dekhenge”*.

“Padosion ko bhi milkar jaana chahiye, yeh nahin ki kisse aur ke yahan hua hai, to kuch na kare.”

“People who are suffering will have to fight with courage, only than these laws and systems can be implemented”. *(“jab tak log himmat ke saath*

nahin ladenge, tab tak kanoon kuch lagoo nahin kar sakta”)

One viewer went on to say that she feels so strong as to have become the Queen of Jhansi. (*“Mujhme itni himmat aa gaye hai ki mujhe lagta hai ki mein jhansi ki raani ban gayi hoon”.*)

While an old viewer from the same basti said, “After watching all this, I feel that I, an old woman, have become a lawyer.” (*“Mujhe yeh bahut accha laga. Mujhe Basanto aur who Harpyari ki kahani acchi lagi. Especially I liked Basanto and the story of Harpyari. Yeh sab dekh kar to main budiya bhi wakil ban gayi hoon! Mein abhi bees dino mein apne gaon ja rahi hoon, agar wahan bhi yeh aaya to mein aur dekhongi.”*)

A remark that comprehensively demonstrates the impact of the campaign came from one of the participants from the same basti when we went to meet up with the participants more than ten days after our ten FGD’s were over. During an informal chat, she said, “ In the last episode the Lawyer said that he is leaving her (Basanto) in the middle of the water but she can swim now on her own. She has become intelligent enough to find her way. After watching this programme, even I felt that I can also swim now. (*“aap ko yaad hai jo wakil ne kaha tha aakhri wale mein, main usse majhdhaar mein chod raha hoon par who ab kudh ter sakti hai, matlab aab who samajdar ho gayi hai, waise hi yeh dekne ke baad mujhe bhi laga ki ab main khud ter sakti hoon”*)

The researchers felt that while they were getting empowered and were ready to take the fight like Laajo, they were also looking for leadership on the lines of Basanto. (*“Agar Basanto jaise auratain samne aye, to pura samaj badal jaye.”*) The programme evoked these feeling in them. One of the participants in Mau said, “Laajo had the support of Basanto and the Lawyer, who was always ready to help them out that is why she could grow.” (*“Laajo ko to basanto ka sahara tha, aur wakil ka bhi jo hamesha madad ke liye tayyar rehta hai, tabhi to woh aage bad gayi”*). While another said that there should be more women like Basanto and Laajo in the society. They are taking care of the men and women in the society and empowering them in the process. (*“Basanto, Laajo chahe aadmi ho ya aurut sabko dekh rahi hain, har samaj mein aise aurthen ho jo aurthon ka honsala badayen.”*)

◆ WHAT DID NOT WORK

1. Efficacy of the Solution

The solutions offered by the programme had two forms:

- ◆ Practical demonstration of the solution emphasising the collective/community method to access the legal process.
- ◆ Use of graphics, body of information on the various laws that govern the different issues

The responses amply demonstrate that the messages were understood only when interwoven in the story and were logical. However, whatever legal information was given in the form of graphics or was stated as an advice or a small sermon, it proved to be a difficult and incomprehensible legal information.

The way viewers tended to absorb the message and information suggests that ***more information need have been woven into the story***, as the target audience was more or less legally illiterate, inexperienced and overawed by any explanation about the law. Most of the participants could recall, analyse or examine the story, but not the information that was dovetailed to each issue and episode. After watching the first episode, one of the participants at Indira Camp said, “*Isme sirf kanoon ke bare mein bataya, is liye kuch samaj nahin aaya.*”

Many of the participants especially in Mau felt that in certain episodes the information was too dense. They expressed their desire to see it again so that they can understand better the implications of the information.

It must be stressed here that the use of a fictionalised format for dissemination in such spheres as legal education has its own constraints. Often the use of emotion and drama to hook viewers tends to pre-empt a rational or a logical understanding of the issue. While it succeeds in making the viewer empathise with the issue and ignite introspection, imparting simultaneously a reasoned understanding of the intricacies and implications around the issue often have to be sacrificed.

BOL BASANTO, given these constraints of the format used, therefore succeeds only in imparting what may be called ***idealistic solutions***.

Having portrayed the problems rather meticulously, it may not as well have been expected but to simplify the solutions. We have thus idealistic notions of collective bargaining, leadership, individual determination and perseverance, etc. as central to the solutions to the intricate problems afflicting women. It increasingly takes recourse to individual and social linkages around an issue /problem rather than locating solutions within the legal system and processes.

2. The viewer could be encouraged to explore further

The dramatisation of the legal predicaments (problems) and a simplification of the solutions together denied the viewer any opportunity explore on her own different solutions to the same problem. There seems no scope for an individual examination or introspection as regards the many possible solutions to a problem. The viewer was not able to see beyond what was shown to them. The research team found the participants more involved with the story and less with the issue of legal recourse to resolve problems. A sequel, may be in the form of a panel discussion or Q and A with an expert or a chat show may help hammer the message more effectively.

3. Exclusion of certain issues, information and certain dimensions of problems

Issues and information

Some of the participants felt that there were many issues, which have been left untouched. As an old woman in one of the Dakshinpuri FGD asked us if there is any law which says that children should give maintenance to their old parents. She said if there is any such law, it should have been shown.

Seen from the other side, this may in fact be a strength of the campaign – a matter of the viewer reposing extended faith in the series.

In the episode on Rape and Kidnapping, kidnapping was given only a passing reference, while rape was taken up as the main issue, a respondent in Dakshinpuri pointed out. They were curious to know what laws says about kidnapping as it is a very common happening in their neighbourhood but said that their queries were left unanswered.

Most of the participants felt that the information was incomplete in the episode on property rights while too much time was spent in dramatising the events. An episode like this generated interest in and identification with the issue but fell short of quenching the viewer's inquisitiveness.

Other dimensions too could be explored

Most of the participants in Mau were Muslim women. They felt that except for the episode on marriage, which dealt with the Muslim laws, other episodes gave only a passing reference to communities which are governed by personal laws or which follow a **personal law**. They were especially concerned as in three of the very important issues – dowry, divorce and property rights – Muslims laws were not depicted.

Nothing was said about the importance of the **dying declaration** in a dowry death. During this episode, one of the participants in Dakshinpuri while sharing her personal experience talked about it and then everybody pointed out that it was ignored. They also felt that the episode on dowry didn't mention the importance of education for the girl and the fact that she needs to be economically independent.

"Ismein sirk kanoon bataye prakriya nahin batai. Aise kanoon batao ki humara darr khatam ho. Agae hum kya kar sakte hain? Agar police wale humari nahin sunte to hum kis ke paas ja saktein hai? Aage kya karyawahi aur kaise karen?"

4. Didn't raise the Social Consciousness

While the series motivated the viewers to set the wrong things right, it didn't address the wrong itself. It seemed to reinforce that injustice is inherent in the society. There were many instances like in the episode on dowry, the viewers/panellist's responded on what they will do if their daughters get into a situation like this but very few talked or even recognised that both giving and taking dowry is illegal. "Agar dahej de dete to ladki na jalai gayi hoti", "Agar kam dahej dete hain, to phir woh ladki ho tang karte hain."

Same was the case with legally valid and invalid marriages. The episode didn't at any point of time mention or gives even a passing reference why young boy and girl should not be married at a young age.

Aside all this, the study also clearly brings out some crucial facets of how Law, its related processes as well as different social norms/malices are

perceived by the target group.

5. Promotion would have helped

The telecast of the programme lacked public promotion. The viewers were not found to be aware of its telecast. It may as well have been advertised between the features films (the kind of programming which is most popular among the target group) so as to make it more accessible.

FGD Guidelines

Detailed Areas of Investigation

1. What have you understood from this episode?
2. Who is the protagonist?
3. Did you like him/her?
4. What was he/she talking about?
5. What message has he/she tried to convey to you?
6. What was the problem?
7. How was the solution sought?
8. What was the solution?
9. Can you identify with the characters? If yes, with whom?
10. Would you like to see this episode again?
11. What did you like best in the episode?
 - Protagonist
 - Music
 - Presentation of the problem
 - Presentation of the solution
 - Histrionics
12. With whom would you like to watch it with?
 - Men of the house Children Peer Whole family
 - (Give reasons)
13. What is your proximity to the story?
 - Characterisation
 - Milieu (Placement of the problem - Placement of the solution)
14. How will you assess the presentation of the problem?
 - Good Better Not good (Give reason)
15. How will you rate the presentation of the solution offered in the episode?
 - Possible Not possible (Give reason)
16. Were you able to get the message? If yes, what was it?
17. Which aspects of the prog. helped the series to convey the message?
 - Protagonist Music Presentation of the solution
18. What did you get out of it?
 - Information Entertainment Both Neither Other
19. What will you do if faced with a similar situation?
21. Would you use any of the information provided in the episode if faced with similar situation?
 - Yes No May be (Give reason)

Synopsis of BOL BASANTO

Episode 1 - What is law?

Basanto is a street vendor. She sells utensils in exchange of old clothes. One day, after coming back from a house she finds her “katordan” having 300 rupees in it missing. She argues with the house owners for her “katordan” but when she realises that her ultimate resort is to complain to the police she backs out, believing police helps those who have some connection in the police. She even goes on to say that law does not exist in our country. But one of the persons who is the witness of her fight for her things, follows her and tries to make her understand through a song, “*jaise ki is deh mein khoon hain, vaise hi jeevan mein kanoon hain...*” that law does exist in our lives. He also tells her that all are equal in the eyes of law. At first she refuses to listen to him, as she does not know what actually law is. That person asks the question from several other people but none of them is able to give him the reply. One of the persons from whom he asks says that law means Police and Courts. He then explains to Basanto that law is not police and Courts but the rules, which govern our lives. He explains his statement by giving various examples in the form of a song as to what would have happened if there were no laws in the society.

When Basanto grasps the meaning of law and its importance in the society, he explains how a law is made in our country and what is the meaning of Constitution and Fundamental Rights.

In the end when Basanto asks him his identity, the person replies him that he is a lawyer, Satyavart Srivastava. Surprise` to know this, Basanto asks him as to when he himself is a lawyer, why does he keep on asking other people the meaning of law. He replies that this is because he wants to make the common person understand the meaning and importance of law in their lives.

When Basanto is returning back, the owner of the house with whom Basanto had fought earlier, sees her and says that his 3-year old kid had taken the “katordan” and asks her to take it back and the money from his home and also apologises to her.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: Who makes Law and what is Constitution is described.

Episode 2 - Lawful/Unlawful Marriage

Basanto's nephew, Suresh, elopes with a girl, Laajo, and takes shelter with Basanto. Laajo's brothers come to Basanto's place and threaten her to tell them the whereabouts of Suresh and Laajo. But when fail to trace them in Basanto's home, they go away. Basanto takes them to Satyavart's chamber to take his advice. When she tells him that they have got married that day itself, he asks them how did they marry? Suresh tells him that they got married in a temple, by exchanging garlands and then he applied Vermilion on her forehead and the marriage was complete. Satyavart tells them through a song "*nahi hoti hai, aise hoti nahi hai shadi, sindur lagaya sirf galmal pahna di...*", that they would not be considered as married, as Saptpadi, one of the most necessary custom for their marriage was not performed. He also inquires about the age of Laajo, which Basanto says must be around 16-17 years. Satyavart again says that their marriage is not legal and tells them the valid conditions of a Hindu marriage. But Suresh refuses to listen to his advice and along with Laajo and Basanto walks out of his office. Outside, Laajo's brothers catch hold of them and take back Laajo after beating Suresh mercilessly. When Basanto rushes back to Satyavart for help, he says that they can do nothing, as Laajo is minor and her brothers, being her guardians, have the right to take her back. He asks he to wait till Laajo becomes major.

Basanto visits a Muslim lady, Rehana, who through a song "*Muslim shadi mein ladke ka paigam ata hai, ladki walon ke age uska nam ata hai...*" tells her how a Muslim marriage is performed according to their personal law.

The story reverts back to Laajo who has in the meanwhile been married to Shivkumar Tiwari alias Munna by her father. Satyavart files a case on her behalf and charges her father of compelling her to marry without her consent. He then also proves in the court that Munna to whom Laajo is married is incurably insane since childhood. Taking this as ground, the judge declares Laajo's marriage as invalid.

By this time, Laajo has become a major, so Satyavart gets her legally married to Suresh and gives them their marriage certificate.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: Conditions of a valid Hindu marriage are told. Registration of marriage is essential.

Episode 3 - Dowry

The story begins with the news of a dowry-death of a lady in the neighbourhood of Basanto.

Basanto and Laajo visits a house in their neighbourhood to sell their utensils. There, they see that the daughter-in law of that house, Jyoti, is being harassed by her mother-in law and sister-in-law for not bringing enough dowry. The mental torture, which Jyoti undergoes, is depicted through a song.

After coming back from Jyoti's place, Basanto goes to Satyavart to tell him about both these cases. Satyavart tells her that nobody else can help Jyoti unless she herself lodges a report for dowry harassment with the police. And he also tells her the precautions, which should be taken in investigations of dowry-death.

He then starts discussing the dowry provisions with his junior, Annie. She tells him that even the law-enforcing agencies like Police, is not aware of all the dowry provisions. She tells her incident in which she had gone with her friend to report for the demand of dowry, but the policeman refused to write the F.I.R. as the demand had come before marriage.

The story again goes back to Jyoti's place where Basanto is trying to make her understand that she should report to the police. But Jyoti refuses to do so as she thinks that this is not the correct step, she would instead wait for her brother to come.

Jyoti is burnt to death by her in-laws.

Basanto brings Jyoti's parents to Satyavart who holds them also responsible for Jyoti's death, as they did not respond to her when she called them for help. But he promises to get back Jyoti's "*streedhan*" from her in-laws who are now in jail. In the Court, he proves that Jyoti's case is that of bride burning for the sake of dowry.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: Sections 406, 498A and 304B of Indian Penal Code are told.

Episode 4 - Divorce and Maintenance

The laws related to divorce and maintenance have been explained through the stories of three women. The episode starts with the story of the woman who has got divorce on the ground that her husband is missing for past eight years.

Then the scene shifts to the story of the women that wants to take divorce on the ground of cruelty by her husband. She also asks Annie other grounds of divorce, which Annie tells her. Annie also tells her the law related to custody of children in divorce cases.

Satyavart also talks about the ground of mutual consent for divorce.

The third story is that of a friend of Basanto, Harpyari. Her husband has left her for another woman Shakuntala. Basanto advises her to take divorce from her husband and also tells her that she would talk to Satyavart regarding this. She tells Satyavart the case and says that according to her the best option is that instead of going through the whole rigmarole of taking divorce, Harpyari should go and marry another man without telling her husband. Satyavart explains it to her that it would be wrong as such a marriage would not be legal. Harpyari should first take the divorce from her husband and then marry another man.

Satyavart also talks about the law related to bigamy.

In the court, Satyavart gets for Harpyari divorce and maintenance from her husband. The laws related to maintenance are told through a song.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: How a divorce can be taken is told? How a divorce can be taken through Jati Panchayat is told?

Episode 5 - Property and Succession/Inheritance

The whole episode related to property law is in flashback. Laajo becomes a widow due to the untimely death of Suresh in an accident.

Suresh's brothers refuse to keep her and her children with them. They also plan to take away Suresh's provident fund money and the Life Insurance money. When Laajo asks them to give her the share of Suresh in his ancestral property, they refuse to do so by saying that they don't consider her Suresh's wife.

Laajo's brothers also refuse to let her live in their ancestral home and give her maintenance from their ancestral property saying that they have already spend her share in her first marriage. Now she can't ask for anymore.

Basanto calls for the Panchayat meeting. Satyavart's junior, Irfaan accompanies her in the meeting. He tells the Panchayat that as Laajo is the legally wedded wife of Suresh, she and her children should get their share in the ancestral property. But the Panchayat refuses to listen to him. Irfaan also explains as to how a property is divided according to the Hindu Succession Act.

Laajo through Satyavart, files a case in the Court and gets her share of property in both her father's property and her husband's ancestral property.

The episode ends with a song, which says that Laajo got her right over the property because she fought for it.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: What is will is described.

Episode 6 - Rape and Kidnapping

The story begins by showing the society's attitude towards rape. Two men are talking about a recent rape incident and one of them is trying to know all the details of it without having any sympathy with the victim.

Basanto takes the victim, a minor girl to Satyavart and tells him the whole incident. Satyavart scolds her for coming 3 days after the incident. Basanto replies that she herself came to know of the incident that day itself. The victim's parents were trying to hide the fact as generally the family members of a rape victim do. She also tells him that the police refused to lodge an F.I.R.

Satyavart comments through a song how usually instead of the offender, the rape victims themselves are blamed by the society.

Annie tells the girl that she is not required to tell the incident to everyone but only to the magistrate.

Satyavart through a song tells the precautions which should be taken when a woman is raped.

Satyavart discusses the rape law with his juniors. Annie inspite of being a lawyer herself hesitates to discuss on this topic. Then Irfaan explains what is rape.

Satyavart tells the punishment given in rape and also as to in which condition a husband is also considered a rapist.

Basanto and Laajo tell the other women that for the increasing rape incidents, we are also to be blamed as mostly, the victims do not report the incident because of which the offender becomes more confident. So they should always get him punished.

Satyavart tells how a rape trial is conducted.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: Laws related to rape and kidnapping are told.

Episode 7 - Police

The episode starts with a song saying that the law is applicable on every individual of our nation including the government agencies like police.

A policeman comes to Laajo's place where construction work is going on. He asks her to give him some money, then only he will allow her to extend her house. But Basanto comes and asks him to show the Corporation's order. On seeing that the opposite party is strong enough to question him, the policeman goes away.

Sometimes later, Basanto sees that the same policeman is arresting a woman forcibly and very indecently as she had stolen somebody's purse. Basanto tells the policeman that he cannot arrest a woman in this way, but he refuses to listen to her and takes the woman away. Basanto follows them. In the police station, the policeman asks his colleague not to let Basanto enter the station. Although Basanto says that it is her right to go with the arrested woman, she is not allowed to do so.

She immediately rushes to Satyavart for help but he also refuses to go with her and asks her to find the solution herself. She organizes women from her village and goes to the police station. There, that policeman is conducting a search on the arrested women. Basanto tells her that he cannot do so but he refuses to listen. Basanto goes to the senior police official who also at first shows no interest in the problem. Basanto warns him that if he won't listen then she will go to higher officials. When he sees that Basanto knows whom to approach in case of a problem, he immediately gets up to look into the matter and scolds the policeman for his misbehaviour. Basanto also insists on lodging a report against that policeman. The senior police official at first refuses to do so saying that report cannot be lodged against a policeman. But as Basanto knows that this is not true, she is able to lodge the report.

Annie then explains the meaning and importance of an F.I.R. to the women.

Satyavart visits Basanto's village and tells them various rights, which are available to us against the police through a song.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: Law related to police is told.

Episode 8 - Minimum wages, Equal Remuneration, Maternity Benefit, Workmen Compensation.

Due to poverty, Laajo is compelled to work as a labourer. But there she does not get minimum wages. She then starts working in a factory where also she finds that there is a discrimination between men and women. Women are paid less wages than men for equal amount of work done. She is not ready to bear the discrimination and so along with some other women workers visits the Labour Officer. He tells them about the laws related to Minimum wages and Equal Remuneration. In the meanwhile, the factory owner comes and the Labour Officer goes out to talk to him.

His peon takes out a book and asks Laajo to read it. Laajo reads the name of the booklet 'Hamare Kanoon' and then reads the portions in it which talk about equal remuneration and maternity benefits. The labour officer comes back and asks all of them to tell him one by one his problems so that he can send notices to the factory owner. Laajo takes back with her all the ten manuals of Hamare Kanoon to her slum colony and reads them and tells the laws mentioned in them to the other people.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: Laws related to minimum wages and the rights of factory workers are told. A lady, Jhumia, comes to Laajo and asks her to get her some work as her husband's hands got cut while working in the factory. Laajo asks her whether they got any compensation for it or not as it is written in the book that he should get the compensation. When Jhumia replies in negative, Laajo visits Satyavart and raises doubts over the authenticity of the book.

Satyavart then explains it to her that there is no question of doubting anything written in the manuals which talks about laws as they have been written by an organisation MARG for Government of India itself to write the manuals. Irfaan then tells her the laws related to workmen compensation through a song.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: Who will get the compensation is told. Satyavart then explains how should the worker proceed to get the compensation in case of any accident. Laajo along with Irfaan visits the factory manager who at first says that Jhumia's husband cannot get compensation as the accident occurred because of his own fault. He also says that he will talk to the factory owner sometimes later. But the moment Laajo says that they have also lodged the report in the police, he gets afraid and immediately goes to talk his employer.

Episode 9 - Bonded Labour, Inter-State Workmen, Child Labour, Untouchability

The episode starts with a song saying that bonded labour should come to an end.

A contractor, Halkar Singh, brings some people from villages to work as labourers. Laajo works for him as a cook. Basanto comes to visit Laajo.

Halkar Singh is telling the labourers that bonded labour is a very inhuman thing and so he has got them freed from it.

Basanto also supports his statement. Laajo tells her that this has not been done by Halkar Singh but by the government. Law itself has made bonded labour a crime. She reads to them from the manual how the law helps to get a bonded labourer freed.

Basanto along with Laajo goes to other workers and asks them whether Halkar Singh has provided them any passbooks, which is a must for him to do. Laajo explains the contents of the passbook. Basanto also tells them the other duties of the contractor, which are, must for him to do. But suddenly, Halkar Singh comes and threatens them as a result of which they have to run away.

They are followed by a lady who tells them that her son has ran away as he was being mistreated in the village because of belonging from lower caste. She also says that although everybody knows that practicing untouchability is a crime, still it is very much prevalent.

Satyavart sees an advertisement in the TV and discusses with his juniors the laws related to child labour.

In the meanwhile, Basanto visits the Labour Inspector with some workers who then comes to meet the contractor. He tells him his duties towards the workers.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: Law related to migrant workmen are told.

Episode 10 - Basanto's journey /Legal Aid

The episode runs on two lines simultaneously. In the first one, the progress of Basanto is shown from a woman who did not even believe in the existence of law at first to an emancipated woman who knows how to fight for her rights. In the second one, information about Legal Services Authority is given.

At the start of the episode, it is shown that the property papers of all the persons in Basanto's colony have been stolen. The policeman tells them that for this theft, no report can be lodged as no property has been stolen.

In his office, Satyavart is talking to his juniors about how Basanto at first did not believe in the law but slowly started doing so.

Laajo through a song tells the other women of her village not to bear all the atrocities inflicted upon them silently and asks them to raise their voice against it.

Laajo and Basanto visit Satyavart and tell him that they have got a legal notice, which they refused to receive and also ask him to go along with them to the court. Satyavart tells them that they should have accepted the notice but refuses to go along with them.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: Civil and Criminal Courts is described. Satyavart tells Basanto and Laajo about the District Legal Services Authority and asks them to go to the Court on their own. After they go, Satyavart tells Irfaan that he refused to go as he wants them to be self-sufficient. He then tells Irfaan how after knowing her rights, Basanto fought for them, be it for the marriage of Laajo or against corrupt policeman or for Laajo's property rights.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: Hierarchy of the Courts is told. In the meanwhile, Basanto and Laajo go to the Court where at first the officials refuse to co- operate with them, so they visit the magistrate. He asks them to write an application and submit it in the Court.

BACKGROUND INSERTION: Who is eligible to get free legal aid is told. In the Court, Basanto tells Irfaan very confidently that now she can get her works done on her own.

Laajo comes to visit Satyavart and asks him if widows can remarry on which he tells her that it is possible but she will have to wait.