



tanishka
sociocultural observations
for application in Mexico

tanishka

Learn to "coexist" to make possible an "us"
Lluís Duch

"Our personal identities are socially situated. We are where we live, eat, work and make love. It is possible to predict a wide range of your attitudes and behavior from knowing any combination of "status" factors —your ethnicity, social class, education, and religion and where you live— more accurately than by knowing your personality traits"

Philip G. Zimbardo

Importing a social program from one country to another can be a gamble. As many similarities as there may be between India and Mexico (gender disparities, educational gap, high levels of poverty, etc.), social temperaments can lead the same project to be perceived differently in both contexts, as cultural characteristics from one country cannot be extrapolated to another.

Grupo Salinas, Fundación Azteca, and The Women's Project Foundation decided to bring the Tanishka Foundation Project to Mexico, a project carried out by the Sakal Media Group through its Delivering Change foundation in India. The objective is to learn from the more than 5,000 success stories of the Tanishka Foundation in the State of Maharashtra, India, in order to apply them in our own country, beginning with the State of Oaxaca.¹

With the aim of understanding the factors for success and the social and cultural considerations that must be made for application in



¹ Taken from: <http://www.tanishkafoundation.org>



Mexico, Bitácora Social² visited the Pune district to meet some of the groups of women, talk with them, the guides or mediators, and Sakal leaders to understand how their methodology can be applied in Mexico, taking into account the various social factors.

It is our view that the role of Sakal and of the women leaders is essential, as they act as a kind of link between a world of power and politics and world of vulnerability and inequality. The pressure that Sakal can exert through its credibility and the determined efforts of the women as they feel supported help to realize NGO³ projects and public policies which otherwise may not have reached their beneficiaries.

To listen to these women proudly speak of what they've achieved (from taking bakery classes or cleaning the shores of a river, to taking legal action against child abusers) was an unforgettable experience.

We noticed a strong argumentative capability in these women (even without understanding the language). Their verbal fluidity and expression transmitted a sense of knowledge, pride, and appropriation of the work they perform. In his book *The Argumentative India*, Amartya Sen notes that there is an ancestral tradition in India that favors the expression of ideas and arguments, suggesting that this argumentative tradition is a central factor in improving equality conditions. Unfortunately, we believe that the verbal tradition of respect for and defense of ideas has been lost in our country.

Moreover, as part of our reflections and observations on the difficulties of application in Mexico, we feel that the current lack of trust or credibility placed in politicians could in fact encourage society (and women in particular) to organize, take control, and make the



“...The argumentative tradition, if used with deliberation and commitment, can also be extremely important in resisting social inequalities and in removing poverty and deprivation. Voice is a crucial component of the pursuit of social justice”.

Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative India*, Penguin.

² Othón García and Paola Dada, both members of Bitácora Social, traveled to Mumbai to meet with Sakal executives and to Pune, Solapur, and Borawani to speak with members of the team, Tanishka women leaders and participants, associates, reporters, and others.

³ In Mexico these are generally referred to as Civil Society Organizations (abbreviated to OSC in Spanish).



local changes that their communities need, without waiting for political forces to change. Tanishka can be an instrument of certainty in a context where certainty is lacking. This document compiles our notes and observations, which we hope will aid in better understanding the similarities and differences between both cultures, to help Tanishka Mexico achieve the same level of success as the program has had in India. We hope this document is useful to achieving that purpose.



OTHÓN GARCÍA



structure of the report

This report was prepared by Paola Dada, a member of the Bitácora Social staff. The **left side** of the report consists of descriptions and academic observations regarding the program as it was observed, as well as the characteristics that are fundamental to its success

The **right side** includes:



short quotes deemed to be of relevance;



notes on how what was observed in India would have to be adapted or modified for Mexico; and



ideas on how the program could be applied in our country..



description

Tanishka is a network of rural and urban women that works to create spaces for discussion for women⁴ to seek solutions to their individual, family, and community problems with a self-management approach.

- It operates in Maharashtra, India through forums and meetings where between 10 and 15 women 24 to 64 years of age gather to socialize, discuss, and make decisions (in an environment of respect, trust, and inclusion)⁵ to create community networks to resolve emotional, physical, and financial problems in their community.
- They work in seven areas: the environment, health, education, violence prevention, land rights (property ownership), livelihood, and leadership and participation in public management.
- The program operates as a kind of ecosystem in which there are at least three active parties collaborating to help the women's groups resolve their problems: the women themselves, Sakal Media Group, and other stakeholders or "allies" and associates such as NGOs, governments, private institutions, volunteer specialists, and others.
- Despite the fact that it is an organization of women, it is not seen as a "feminist" organization. Gender is considered more as a culturally constructed category depending on the situation, context, personal efforts, and recognition. What they seek to do is

⁴ "It has almost become part of the conventional wisdom of development economics that, in developing countries, the economic gains from educating females are greater than from educating males". Knowles, S., Lorgelly, P.K. & Owen, P.D. (2002). Are educational gender gaps a brake on economic development? Some cross-country empirical evidence. *Oxford Economic Papers*, pp118-149.

⁵ "As living beings organized in an autopoietic manner, human beings are complex, impenetrable, and indeterminable beings. As 'gregarious animals' they constantly try to overcome their biological individuality through consensualization. Consensualization occurs in affective and linguistic coordination, that is, in 'conversing' (structural coupling) with others". Ludewig, K. (2010) *Bases teóricas de la terapia sistémica*. Mexico. Herder.

In Mexico it would be important to consider conducting initial experiences in urban and semi-urban contexts, given the complexity of arranging monthly meetings to discuss the group's issues. Rural communities in Mexico can be quite remote, hindering the groups' operation. In the case of Oaxaca, NGOs working in the region that have organized groups of women in the past could also be leveraged. This, however, could counter the self-management principles of the program.

It is important to understand that in Mexico, partnerships within lower-middle and lower income communities tend to seek resolution for immediate problems: if there is no water, they shut down a street to pressure the government to send pipes. However, this does not necessarily imply that they are "organized" in groups and that the partnerships can function for longer-term projects, due to their being accustomed to immediate solutions. It would be interesting to recruit women that have the capacity to call for immediate action, as this implies natural leadership abilities. However, the use of mediators to help them organize their group and make decisions will be essential to these groups' success.

To achieve a greater potential for success, a survey could be taken of NGOs and corporate social responsibility programs to develop a kind of directory of potential allies, organizing them by area of interest and connecting them with the various working areas of Tanishka. This directory would help the women's groups develop contacts and relations more quickly once they organize and decide on which problems Tanishka Mexico wants to tackle.



generate spaces where women can make decisions that benefit their families and communities, regardless of whether the relevant social groups are patriarchal or more egalitarian. The intent is to provide women with tools to perform their role in society as a caretaker.



characteristics of participants and their role in the ecosystem

women

"If we educate a boy, we educate a person. If we educate a girl, we educate a family – and a whole nation".
African proverb quoted by James Wolfensohn
(9th President of the World Bank)

The women with whom we spoke came from various social strata and contexts (rural and urban, professionals and homemakers), but despite these differences they demonstrated self-assuredness, speaking freely⁶ and with confidence.⁷

Amartya Sen states that people from India like to talk. India's epic literature is characterized by great oral tradition. For example, the Mahabharata is a collection of stories revolving a central axis; full of dialogues, dilemmas and alternating perspectives.⁸

This is important, as it speaks to a tradition of argumentation: a collective, ancestral exercise that respects what the other has to say. And these arguments have been presented not only by male figures, but also by female figures.

⁶ "Even if we go back all the way to ancient India, some of the most celebrated dialogues have involve women, with the sharpest questionings often coming from women interlocutors. This can be traced back even to the Upanisads —the dialectical treatises that were composed from about the eight century BCE and which are often taken to be foundations of Hindu philosophy". Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative India*, Penguin. 2005.

⁷ "The search for order and meaning tends to adopt a narrative form (e.g., the form of a developing story). Sharing narratives (telling, creating, and revising stories) is a powerful means of bonding in human beings." Mahoney, M. (2005). *Psicoterapia constructiva*. Spain. Paidós. Colección Psicología, Psiquiatría y Psicoterapia.

⁸ Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative India*, Penguin. 2005.

It would seem that in India, the class and caste system is very "transparent", and so relations between socioeconomic levels does not pose a problem, as each person knows the place they occupy, allowing them to mix freely without trouble. In Mexico, however, this could present a conflict, especially between lower-middle class women and typical middle class working women. The groups would have to be of a single socioeconomic level.

It will be important to take this *argumentative* factor for the proper development of the groups in Mexico. It is likely that meetings will be necessary for the women to earn one another's trust and express their opinions, without making any decisions.

"It is very important to avoid the twin pitfalls of (1) taking democracy to be just a gift of the Western world that India simply accepted when it became independent, and (2) assuming that there is something unique in Indian history that makes the country singularly suited to democracy. The point, rather, is that democracy is intimately connected with public discussion and interactive reasoning. Traditions of public discussion exist across the world, not just the West".

Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative India*, Penguin. 2005



India's multicultural origins⁹ (coexistence of various religious groups, for example) allows for a culture of acceptance and understanding of different points of view. This does not necessarily mean that they agree with the various positions, but there is indeed a culture of tolerance and respect for the decision of the other to believe something different, express it, and state it in public. This creates social attitudes that are open to dialogue and to hearing and respecting ideas that are different from one's own.¹⁰

They acknowledge that there were difficulties at the beginning, but that the selection of the group's participants is very important: they should be women who want to make a difference in their community and that are convinced that change will not come from the outside.

Their worldview brings them to acknowledge two things: first, that nothing is static, everything is in movement, such as their leadership, their projects, and their knowledge. They understand that everything moves forward step by step, and they do not expect immediate results. And second, this worldview in a certain way "obliges" them to help and participate in their community. They see it as their duty, though not one which is imposed, but rather that is a part of who they are, especially among women who are leaders or have a higher level of professional development.

They meet around once a month (ten meetings per year due to vacation periods), though they acknowledge that in order to keep participants involved, something has to happen at each of these meetings, otherwise they lose interest and participation declines. In the case of long-term projects, they have strategies to create a sense

⁹ "All the convergent influences of the world run through this society: Hindu, Moslem, Christian, secular; Stalinist, liberal, Maoist, democratic socialist, Gandhian. There is not thought that is being thought in the West or East that is not active in some Indian mind". E. P. Thompson, citado en Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative India*, Penguin, 2005

^{10a} "Individuals are motivated to maintain or achieve a positive self-identity. In the context of groups, this implies belonging to groups that enjoy high status. (...) People make social comparisons between their own group and other groups in order to determine the extent to which their own group provides them with a distinct and positive social identity". Tayler, D.M. & Moghaddam, F.M. (1994). *Social Identity Theory. Theories of Intergroup Relations: International Social Psychological Perspectives*. p.59

In Mexico, the dominant view among the middle class is that each person has what they deserve. Participation of society in actions that benefit others, rather than themselves, is very limited. It suffices to review the data from the National Discrimination Survey conducted by CONAPRED, which found, for example, that one in four people believes it is very or somewhat justified to call the police when one sees many young people together on a corner. One in ten people believe that authorities should relocate Protestants to another area, and one in twenty believe that they should obey the majority decision and remove the Protestants. Not having money, physical appearance, age, and sex are the conditions most identified by the people that feel that their rights have not been respected.

In short, our society tends to act more through prejudice. This social attitude must be taken into account when forming the Tanishka Mexico groups. The women will feel less uncomfortable if they are in a group of peers than if they are in a mixed group of different socioeconomic levels.

Moreover, this is how the self-management approach is strengthened. If the group makes a decision, that decision will be based on their own prejudices, ideas, and reasoning, and they will feel that the decision is correct instead of feeling that it is imposed from the outside.

This worldview is also different in Mexico. People tend to think that they are not in control of what happens to them. Whether it be for religious reasons ("it was God's will") or for attitudes that suppose the government should be meeting the needs of the population ("the government should do it' job"). In this sense, the sense of "obligation" toward others is also different in Mexico, as it is restricted to the family (nuclear family in the case of the typical middle class and extended family in lower-middle class families).



that something is happening at each meeting, or that there are small milestones achieved prior to concluding a major project.

Sakal Media Group

Sakal, as the creator of this space, has three main roles. One is as a mediator or guide, selecting the women leaders, helping the group organize, training them on processes, helping to achieve results with their decisions, monitoring them at the call center, etc. This monitoring role is very important during the early years of the groups. The second role of Sakal is as a facilitator of connections, creating links between companies, NGOs, and public and private institutions that may be the right instrument to resolve the problems of the women participants.

The third role —without priorities— of Sakal is as media agent. This role can have positive and negative aspects. From the positive perspective, it helps the women's groups find the best way (institution, public policy, NGOs) to resolve their problem; for NGOs and public and private institutions, it can be a good opportunity to promote their organization and policies; but from the journalistic point of view, it can also be an agent of pressure that oversees the performance of governments in using budgets from public policies. It is an instrument to establish an example to be followed: those who do well are acknowledged and those who do poorly are identified.

These three roles and the history of the media group over more than 80 years have made Sakal a partner with a high level of credibility both in society and in the government and participating institutions.¹¹

¹¹ "Established in 1932, the Sakal Media Group is the largest independently owned media business in Maharashtra. Headquartered in the educational and cultural capital of the state, Pune, the Sakal Media Group owns and operates newspapers and magazines in Marathi as well as English with a circulation across Maharashtra and Goa. The Group also has interests in digital media, event management services, commercial printing and also runs a regional television channel. With a workforce of over 3500 and a vendor network that exceeds 25,000, the Sakal Media Group is a people-focused organization with an open and vibrant work environment offering scope for advancement and growth. Guided by the philosophy of 'Social First' all group initiatives are guided by their potential for social impact and transformation". Taken from: <http://www.sakalmediagroup.com/about-us/>.

For Mexico, this will also be important. Having effective meetings, where something happens, will help to change the point of view as it exists at present. The meetings attended by Mexicans (political rallies, neighborhood associations, parent meetings, etc.) "are good for nothing" and "nothing ever happens".

Tanishka Mexico would have to make an effort to reverse this perception. One idea could be to hold talks with specialists that given them advice for their daily lives: how to handle an adolescent child, how to help your family eat better, etc. If the women attending the meetings find them to be useful, it is more likely that they will stay with the group than if the meetings are only to "discuss" and complain with a sense that nothing ever happens.

The role of the "mediators"/managers/reporters is essential to the success of the program. There is a great tradition in Mexico of group management, but unfortunately, it has been linked to manipulation by political groups. One the one hand, the profile of the recruits will be important, in order to involve true agents of change, who know and have contacts to help the women's groups. On the other hand, they need to really be committed to helping the women change their communities, seeing their efforts with pride and dedication and not only as a source of income.

In this sense, the role of Grupo Salinas, especially of its television channels, will be very important. The more the relations, contacts, and ties of the channel can be used as leverage to obtain results for the groups, the quicker perceptions will develop that things are happening.

The communication itself is also important. It is not only a matter of using contacts but also of publicizing the work of these "strategic allies" to acknowledge when they are participating and to identify them when they are not. The pressure of the media in all aspects is an important factor for the success of the project.

In addition, Tanishka Forum is one of its main programs. It is not an isolated social responsibility project or a minor activity within the group's work. The people who participate in Tanishka were selected from among their best workers, and for those who are selected it is a great honor to participate in the program.

It is interesting how the managers from Tanishka continue to identify themselves as reporters or editors despite the fact that a large part of their work is related to the tasks of serving as mediators for the women's groups. In addition, when they introduce themselves, they mention with pride the number of years they have been working at the company (Sakal). There is even a sense that working at Tanishka is itself an acknowledgement of their dedication and good work within the company.

The leaders of Tanishka Mexico would have to have significant media activity. Giving interviews on radio stations and for local newspapers, appearing at public events, and continually publicizing the accomplishments constitute a success factor, because these actions create and strengthen credibility. In Mexico, according to the Information System on Civil Society Organizations (SIOS, in Spanish) under the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL), there are 20,000 Civil Society Organizations (abbreviated to OSC) registered, meaning that there is one legally established institution for every 5,750 Mexicans. How many others might there be that are not registered? How have their results been? This situation undermines the perception of the true impact of NGOs.



other allied actors

The participation of these "partners" or allies has to do with the broad network of contacts created by Sakal over the years and as a media outlet. The partners participate according to the advantages that the women's groups may have. The NGOs, for example, can find a strong ally to apply their projects in already organized groups and receive publicity through the media. Politicians and institutions can find a vehicle to reach their consumers or voters, but they can also receive media pressure for proper application of public policies and appropriate use of state funds.

Taking an "inventory" of allied actors prior to beginning the program could be useful to channel the groups' discussions to areas where there are already contacts and influences. This is not a matter of manipulating the group, but rather of encouraging certain areas of discussion to ensure the proper tools are in place to resolve the problems posed.



keys to success

in the group¹²

- **fee:** the women who participate in a group "subscribe" or participate through a fee. It may seem paradoxical that in trying to help vulnerable groups they are charged an admission fee. This symbolic fee has the value of a commitment assumed with the group, helping to remove the *welfarist* notion. This fee is accepted because the women know that things will really happen, thanks to the credibility of Sakal.
- **leader:** the mediators of Sakal have been careful when selecting the group leaders, and this has led to the success of the program. It involves professional women¹³ or women with a professional attitude in terms of their leadership: women who are organized and well spoken, allowing them to explain their project and negotiate with other parties.
- **methodology:**
 - **the self-management model** (the fact that the women themselves are the ones who decide what should be done in the community) is important for the positive development of the group. On the one hand, it helps to create ties, but it also generates a sense of power and control over decisions. For example, it is not a project that is imposed by the government or an NGO that comes to help in what they believe is relevant for the community, but rather it is

¹² "The formation of community presupposes: identification of the individual with the group, interaction maintained over time, mutual knowledge, group solidarity, individuals delivered to the group, and a sense of belonging and of an 'Us'." Gurrutxaga, Ander. "El redescubrimiento de la comunidad". *Reis* (Year 56, No. 94). Universidad del País Vasco, pp 35-60.

¹³ In both countries, this profile may not necessarily be archetypical. That is to say, most of the women in society are not necessarily professionals who want to help others, although this does seem to be a relevant factor for the Tanishka groups.

In Mexico there is a very entrenched *welfarist* tradition. It is likely that there will be barriers to paying the fees. However, it is not impossible, but the credibility (and effectiveness) of the program will have to be developed before collecting fees.



The selection of the group leaders is very important to the program's success. They must be women who are committed, who recognize their role in the success of the programs, and who have a "professional" attitude toward their leadership role. This is not a matter of groups formed spontaneously. The mediator selects a woman who, based on her profile, will be able to call on other women to organize them and create their forum. In this sense, it is also not a matter of groups created "artificially" with a particular interest (for example, microlending groups), but rather reflects the intent to leverage the ties and the knowledge of the abilities that the leader already has of the other women.



It will be important that this methodology be communicated extensively in many media outlets. Focusing the communications of Tanishka Mexico, at least during initial efforts, by giving control to the people, showing it as something different and rarely done in Mexico, where not only are the opinions of participants considered, but where the women themselves are the ones making decisions, could help to make communications more attractive and relevant.



the women themselves who decide that it is a priority for their community, and that gives them a sense of control that makes the ties and sense of belonging stronger.

- ▶ **attraction to participate**, as they have managed to create an environment of cordiality and respect at meetings where things actually happen. From small training courses to large projects, they coordinate and call upon the groups so to create success stories from the start, no matter how small. This first successful effort helps to generate trust and strengthens the bonds between them.
- **belonging**: through different actions, such as handing out a bracelet with the call center phone, an identification, a poster with motivational phrases (that explain and remind of the forum's mission), a plaque to hang outside their homes, etc., all help to create a sense of belonging. These actions help to encourage other women to join and to bring the family and community to recognize the work they are doing to transform their environment. In addition, at the meetings, it is acknowledged how the personal abilities of each participant strengthen the group.¹⁴
- **recognition**: the success stories published in the local Sakal media outlets and public events help to provide recognition for these women and to change the minds of members of the family or community who mistrust their participation.

¹⁴ "For the social integration of a society it is important that there be reciprocal acknowledgement of those properties which all members share; on the other hand, for the social integration of a community, it is important that the members are reciprocally valued for the properties or capabilities that correspond to each of them as specific subjects or groups of people. Reciprocal value means maintain relations of solidarity between members, because to give solidarity to another is to consider that person as someone whose properties have value for a common life praxis. For that reason, the social relations to which we refer when we speak of 'communities' are always relations of solidarity: in those relations I give to the other more than respect or tolerance, knowing that my life goals are facilitated or enriched by their capabilities". Axel Honneth (2009), *Crítica del agravio moral. Pátopos de la sociedad contemporánea*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, pp 297.

The possibility of holding useful instructional discussions was already mentioned (courses on handicrafts and cooking, advisory to complete their studies [through INEA], but with tutors and guides; psychologists, gynecological and blood tests, etc.). These kinds of activities could help attract women from lower-middle and lower socioeconomic levels.



Although they may seem to be superfluous or additional expenses, the symbolism behind these actions is important. It helps to create a sense of belonging but also strengthens credibility: "this is serious", not just talk, as the organization and investment is noticeably made in order to achieve success.



Among the first activities to conduct in the forming of the group could be to put together an "inventory" of skills/abilities. The women should be the ones to say what each of them can contribute to the group: introducing more women, using their contacts, employing their life skills, using their studies, etc. This activity will help them get to know one another, build ties between them, recognize the value each of them has for the group, and know what instruments they have to strengthen their group.



Recognition can come from multiple sources, but it cannot be absent. It can come from family, from the group itself, from the mediator, from the Tanishka authorities (domestic and international), etc. And it can be manifested in various mechanisms, from a simple letter signed by the head of the group, public ceremonies in the community where recognition is given, a certificate given for participation that can be hung at home with pride, publication of results in an internal bulletin, etc...



Sakal

- **importance:** the relevance and prioritization of the program within the company has been a key factor for the success of Tanishka. A program used to meet the social responsibility "quota" is not the same as a program central to the development of the company. Tanishka is one of the most important programs from the media consortium, according to its own leaders.
- **profiles:** the people participating as mediators or guides (who continue to be called reporters or editors) were selected from among the employees with the best performance; for them participating in the program is something to be proud of and a reason for recognition. These are people who are committed to helping others and doing what's necessary to achieve success. Their personal experience as editors and reporters helps them to gain the local contacts (politicians, businesspeople, other social actors) necessary to help the women's groups they are guiding.
- **ecosystem:** understanding fully the Tanishka methodology implies acknowledging the multiple layers and relations that are involved in order for this process to remain an ecosystem. In a certain sense, it is part of a political framework of the State of Maharashtra and it operates under those codes.
- **media coverage of results:** keeping success stories in the media helps to increase credibility and give Sakal and the program political strength.
 - * This can be seen as media pressure, however they see themselves as observers of the successful implementation of public policies.

It is unknown what the role of Grupo Salinas and its media outlet will be in the development of the program in Mexico, but there is the possibility of using social science interns (or university students doing their social service) as mediators (guides), such as anthropologists, social workers, and psychologists from public universities, who can even promote programs to help their own community. To offer another example, the INE trainers who have worked as volunteers to recruit and train polling officials could also be used. They have fully identified neighborhood leaders and they have the appropriate attitude to convince women to participate in these activities.

It will be important that the profile be from a public university, as our country tends to have class (classist) reactions when socioeconomic levels are mixed.

In addition to the role played by the Grupo Salinas broadcaster for the publicity of Tanishka actions, the foundation must make various efforts to gain media coverage of the results. This could include anything from internal bulletins (which should be distributed among all the women, so they can take it home and show it with pride), to organizing press conferences, mass media interviews, etc. This publicity helps to create internal and external credibility which is extremely important to maintaining group cohesion.

- **measurement of impact:** The call center and mediators help to keep an accurate record of what's going on in the groups, helping to build credibility among partners, shareholders, and society. Maintaining reports on conditions before, during, and after is important to achieving that kind of credibility.

Measurement of the impact of results helps to create credibility. However, caution must be taken, as the quantitative impact can be difficult to measure or may require longer-term results. As this is a process of self-esteem and empowerment for women, their own perceptions before and after the program could be very relevant. Perhaps Tanishka will be unable to present "hard data", but surely it will improve the perception that the women have of themselves and their abilities (which will surely create a long-term impact).



other participants

Another element of success for the program is to have a broad network of contacts with public and private institutions, NGOs, and political actors (parties, social representatives, public officials, union leaders, etc.), and to know public policies and the authorities that carry them out.

To have an inventory of allies and public policies is essential, to the extent that these are tools necessary for the groups to achieve success. Helping them with the processes and procedures necessary is part of the work of the mediators and the NGOs, which better understand the bureaucracy of certain public policies and authorities.



by way of conclusion

México-India

Mexican and India indeed share multiple characteristics: we both have low educational levels¹⁵, there are gender gaps at a national level, we live in patriarchal societies, and we have high income disparity and high levels of poverty. This allows the application of Tanishka to find certain similarities and convergences.

However, there are also cultural divergences that must be taken into account to successfully apply the program in Mexico.

While India constructs a multicultural context, in Mexico (despite the diversity of indigenous groups), people actually coexist in "unilateral" contexts, to put in one way. Closed groups, hermetic communities, mistrust in the other, and decomposition of the social and community fabric are all barriers that Tanishka may face in Mexico.



¹⁵There are considerably more Indians (23%) than Mexicans (4%) without formal education (men and women). Comparable proportions of Indians and Mexicans followed technical/vocational schooling, yet more Mexicans have completed this study track. Considerably more Mexicans than Indians advanced to the university-preparatory and university levels.

Literacy is widely used in comparative research on development. Being able to read and write in one's mother language is the first step toward getting an education, and India is lagging far behind Mexico and globally accepted standards. This has far-reaching consequences for mortality rates and life expectancy, as well as socio-economic development. Across educational levels, gender differences for adults are very small in Mexico. A bit more women than men have completed primary school only; a bit more men than women have obtained a university degree.

(Mukherjee, 2004: http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/4869/1/MPRA_paper_4869.pdf).

Adult literacy rates Mexico

Total: 93.5%

Men: 94.8%

Women: 92.3%

Source: UNESCO UIS

Adult literacy rates India

Total: 62.8%

Men: 75.2%

Women: 50.8%

To offer an example, it would seem that we have a dominant religion¹⁶ despite the growth of certain religious groups, generating a single "valid" worldview on certain beliefs, values, and behaviors.

We also differ in that we have a less forward or argumentative temperament than in India. Our interaction tends to be indirect, we tend to avoid topics, and to avoid speaking frankly, which would permeate in the women's forums. To put it another way, Mexico is not as argumentative as India.

There is also a rooted "custom", if it can be called as such, of receiving support from social projects without direct participation (or in exchange for a vote only). That is to say, an organization or political party comes and offers "assistance" to vulnerable groups without creating any ties of shared responsibility or participation on the part of the beneficiaries. This could also permeate the attempt to collect fees to access the group; the "welfarist" history of our country could mean these fees are seen in a bad light. Communications efforts will be necessary (and the building of credibility that the women's forum does in fact work) so that people can see the value of participating (and paying) to belong to these groups.

Another big difference relates to the sense of responsibility toward society (probably constructed based on religious views and values). Despite the fact that both countries have well defined socioeconomic levels (including castes in India), relations and interaction between them can be very different. In India, the clarity existing between the classes means that it does not matter if you "mix" with someone from a higher or lower level, because everyone knows their place. To the

¹⁶ "The Virgin represented a decisive factor for cohesion in the new nation and 'the only one capable of bringing together the indigenous and the *criollos*, and later, the *mestizos*' (González Hernández, 2002: 61). She is the positive face of *mestizaje*, which goes 'beyond the physical mixing of cultures' and falls perfectly within a 'cultural dynamic that comprises two traditions' (Tuñón, 1987: 53). In this capacity, the Virgin congregates the indigenous, the *criollos*, and the *mestizos* in the fold of a 'Mexican Christianity', a particular religion which provides the basis for a political nation comprised of different ethnicities." Cited in *Historias imbricadas: Imperios, naciones, mujeres*. Ishita Banerjee. Relaciones de género. Ana María Tepichin, Karine Tinat, and Luz Elena Gutiérrez, coordinators Col. Los grandes problemas de México vol. VIII, El Colegio de México, 2010, pp 170.

"The demands of justice in India are also demands for more use of the voice in the pursuit of equity. The argumentative heritage may be an important asset (as I believe it is), but its effectiveness depends on its use. Much would depend on the political deployment of the argumentative voice in opposition to social inequity and asymmetry, and the actual use that is made of the opportunities of democratic articulation and of political engagement. Silence is a powerful enemy of social justice".

Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative India*, Penguin. 2005

This will imply for Tanishka Mexico an additional challenge, as it will have to make simultaneous communications efforts to build awareness and involvement of the various actors and socioeconomic levels in problems of other levels of society.

In Colombia (a country with which we share certain temperament traits), the TV program and digital platform *Misión Impacto** conducted an interesting experiment to raise awareness in the middle class of less privileged groups. The idea was to speak of agents of change through a reality show where renowned performers accompanied an NGO to show the work that they were doing in a certain community. Through the digital platform, Colombians were invited to donate money or to participate as a volunteer, establishing goals for each project. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to explore this model and assess its potential.

* For some examples, visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/misionimpactotv/feed>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnIhC7BOXS0>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzaHmF_fjqM

contrary, in Mexico, many people (especially the middle class) are very concerned not to relate with (or be confused with) the lower-middle class. This creates many classist attitudes and very little community commitment.

Lastly, there are three fundamental parts to which special attention must be paid.

- **the profile of the mediators/guides.** They are the fundamental part of the program's success. They must be political and social actors that have the social sensitivity to understand the problems of each community, respect their group decisions, and carry them out to completion. They must also have a "clinical eye" to select the women who will be invited to be leaders, because that selection will determine whether or not the group is consolidated in the end. Lastly, but just as importantly, they must have a network of contacts, ties, friends, and acquaintances, and a knowledge of NGOs and social programs to be able to work with them. That is to say, they have to be experts on the national bureaucracy in order to help the Tanishka groups to use and apply existing public policies.
- **the profile of the group leaders .** These women need to have a democratic vision, one of respect for others' ideas, with strong communication skills, high tolerance for frustration, and an extensive network of acquaintances (to form her group), able to work with the mediator. The relationship established between them will also be of relevance. The possibility that there are professional women that want to do volunteer work can seem remote, given the class problems mentioned before, but women who have studied and who want to help their own community could be selected.

If Tanishka Mexico had to focus its monetary and human capital on a single action, they would have to invest their time, money, and efforts on finding the best profile for the mediator. With committed mediators, the rest of the project can flow with greater ease.



The first recruitment exercise can be carried out with people who have participated in political parties, election training, or implementation of social government programs (SEDESOL). As mentioned before, NGO workers, student leaders, and interns or recent graduates from public universities in social work, anthropology, sociology, and psychology could also be considered.



- **publicity and recognition.** Mechanisms must be created to recognize the efforts of the women in their private sphere or toward the community, which will help to create a sense of belonging and recognition for the efforts made regardless of the size or impact of the project. This helps to create credibility in the program, strengthens the women's self-esteem, and helps in building ties.

Tanishka Mexico has a great opportunity given the political situation of our country (little credibility, violence, lack of reliable public actors). Generating the possibility for society to take control of their communities' future sounds promising, but we must be conscious of all the barriers that exist in the Mexican social and historic temperament, and communicate in a relevant way.





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