



# THE REVOLUTIONARY OPTIMISTS

## CLASSROOM GUIDE

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## INTRODUCTION

This study guide is intended to flexibly support educators in preparing for and following up a group screening of **The Revolutionary Optimists**, a feature documentary about a group of Indian children working to affect positive change in their Kolkata slum communities. These support materials are intended to facilitate group discussion, individual and collaborative creative exercise and subject-based learning and provide access to resources for further investigation of material. Educators are encouraged to adapt and abridge the content as necessary to meet their unique learning objectives and circumstances.

All SFFS Youth Education materials are developed in alignment with California educational standards for media literacy. SFFS Youth Education welcomes feedback and questions on all printed study materials.

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SAN FRANCISCO  
**FILM SOCIETY**



## USING THIS GUIDE

Group screening of **The Revolutionary Optimists** can be a useful tool for inspiring group discussion and prompting further research on a wide range of topical issues. This study guide may be used flexibly in a

classroom environment to guide these discussions, inspire follow-up creative exercises and engagement activities and to generally supplement the educational value of the viewing experience. Content is selected to challenge middle and high school students to think critically about the film's style and substance, to engage students with the themes and issues at hand and to facilitate further investigation into related topics.

## ABOUT THE FILM

Children are saving lives in the slums of Kolkata. Amlan Ganguly doesn't rescue slum children; he empowers them to become change agents, battling poverty and transforming their neighborhoods with dramatic results. Filmed over the course of several years, *The Revolutionary Optimists* follows Amlan and three of the children he works with on an intimate journey through adolescence, as they fight for the better future he encourages them to imagine is deservedly theirs.

Kajal, a 12-year-old girl, is one of nine million Indian children who live and work inside a brick field. When Amlan creates the first school inside the brick field, Kajal has a chance to have an education and find her voice. But when her mother falls ill, she and Amlan must balance her desire to learn and make change with her need to work in order to survive.

Priyanka is the 16-year-old leader of a dance troupe founded by Amlan to keep girls in school and dissuade

Directed by Nicole Newnham & Maren Grainger-Monsen  
USA 2012, 87 min, Color, English & Bengali with English subtitles  
Recommended for ages 13 and up

them from early marriage. A serious dancer, she is also paid a tiny stipend by Amlan to teach dance to other children in her neighborhood. Now her parents are pressuring her to marry against her wishes, and she sees only one way out – to marry her young boyfriend. But if she elopes, she will be controlled by her in-laws, and risks losing her position in the dance group, her employment, and her chance at an education.

Salim is an 11-year-old boy who is fighting to make change in one of Kolkata's worst slums, but his family faces many hardships—including having to leave their home at 4:30 every morning to steal water from a neighboring slum, as there is no water in their colony. By mapping their un-mapped community and collecting data about the problems that they face, Salim and his fellow child activists hope to convince the government to give them a water tap. Can these



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► child activists bring about desperately needed change in their own community?

Hot-headed, theatrical, but astonishingly dedicated and sincere, Amlan left a successful law career to try to make meaningful change where the law and other NGO's had failed. A dancer, choreographer, and costume designer, he brings creative expression to subjects that can otherwise be difficult for film audiences to approach. The Revolutionary Optimists will leverage this artistry, to reveal to the audience both the desperate, flawed world he is trying to change, and the vibrant, colorful world that his optimism generates.

As the centerpiece of a multi-platform advocacy campaign, The Revolutionary Optimists will leverage Ganguly's story to bring attention to the urgent need to solve the treatable health problems in the developing world, and how education and child empowerment are a crucial key to reaching that goal. Through our online tool, Map Your World, we hope to give these youth a powerful technological tool to advance their dreams of change for the neighborhood and inspire other kids around the world to make their worlds a better place.

## Recommended Subject Areas:

Current Events

Language Arts

Media Literacy Social Studies

(Economy, Government, Ethics, Women's Studies, Urban Studies)

World Cultures (Asian Studies)

Youth Activism / Leadership

## Key concepts / buzzwords:

Arts Education

Bengali

Cartography

Child Labor

Community

Ethics

Family

Film Criticism

Gender Roles

Hindu

India

Kolkata / Calcutta

New Delhi

Polio

Poverty

Public Health

Sociology

Urban Slums

Water Supply

Youth Activism / Empowerment

## Referenced Characters:

Amlan Ganguly

Kajal Kahar

Salim Shekh

Sikha Patra

Priyanka Mandal

Mitu Das (Priyanka's friend)

Shibasish Ghosh

Ramesh Chandra Ganguly (Amlan's father)

Baby Singh (brick field proprietor)

## Settings

Rishi Aurobindo Squatters Colony

Kolkata brick field

Arjunpur Slum, Kolkata

(Prayasam's Dance Theater Project)

Parliament, New Delhi



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### STORY & CHARACTERS

- How would you describe the character of Amlan Gaguly? What are his core values? What was his upbringing like? What is his ultimate goal in bringing education and empowerment to the youth of Kolkata? What else would you like to know about him, besides the information presented in this film?
- Which of the children in the film did you find most memorable or relatable? How would you compare their respective situations? In what ways are their lifestyles and circumstances similar to each others'? In what ways do they differ?
- What unique challenges does Kajal face in her life at the brick farm? How would you describe her relationship with her mother? What are her aspirations? What is her attitude about her own future?
- What unique challenges do Sikha and Salim face in the Rishi Aurobindo Squatters Colony? How would you describe their relationship with each other? How would you describe their values? Why do you think they developed these values? In what ways do they involve themselves in leadership of their community? Why do you think leadership like theirs is so rare among youth in urban slums?

## WHAT UNIQUE CHALLENGES DO TEENAGERS PRIYANKA AND MITU FACE IN THE ARJUNPUR SLUM OF KOLKATA?

• What unique challenges do teenagers Priyanka and Mitu face in the Arjunpur slum of Kolkata? In what ways do they contribute to Prayasam? How would you describe Priyanka's home life? What dilemma does she face? How does Mitu feel about her decision? Why does Amlan so strongly want to dissuade her (and Indians like her) from early marriage?

• What arrangement has Amlan made with Baby Singh, the proprietor of the brick farm? How does this arrangement benefit her business in the short-term? How might this arrangement be a detriment to her business in the long-term?

• How would you characterize Ramesh Chandra Ganguly, Amlan's father? What is his professional background? What are his values? How do they differ from his son's? What factors do you think were the most formative of Amlan's values?

• What was groundbreaking about the "community cup" soccer tournament that Salim and Sikha help to organize with neighboring communities? What role does "football" play in their slum culture? How do the adult onlookers appear to feel about the proceedings?

• How would you describe the narrative structure of this film? Where does this story begin? Where does it end? Is the story presented sequentially? What are the primary conflicts around which the story unfolds?

• What was the most memorable moment in this movie? The funniest? The saddest? The most surprising? The most thought-provoking? The most inspiring?



## ► CONTEXT

1. Non-fiction films often attempt to portray historical or biographical information in an objective, impartial way. Do you think true objectivity is possible in documentary filmmaking? Why or why not?

2. What did you know about India before seeing this film? What did you know about life in urban slums, if anything? What did you learn about Indian culture from watching this film? What did you learn about poverty? How does your impression of poverty in America compare to your impression of poverty in a Calcutta slum?

3. What kind of education do most children living in Calcutta slums receive? How is the Prayasam model different in terms of practical application? How is the Prayasam model different ideologically?

4. “More than 1/3 of girls in India drop out of school by age 11. Unpaid work by women would account for more than 60% of India’s GDP.” Discuss this quote from one of the film’s title cards.

a. What does GDP (Gross Domestic Product) measure exactly? Why is it important economically?

b. What reasons does the film present for the high percentage of Indian females who cut their education short? What do you think the primary factors are behind this trend? What incentives and pressures exist for young females in urban slums to leave school? What incentives exist for them to stay in school? Why do you think it is challenging for some Indian women to value their own education? What do you think the long term impact will

be on Kolkata if this pattern of high birth rates among undereducated females continues?

5. Salim and Sikha help spread the word about upcoming polio vaccinations in their community. To what extent is polio a public health problem in India? By what means does it spread? What is being done about it? What challenges does the Indian government face in curtailing it?

6. What language do the characters speak throughout this film? What is the history of this language? What other languages are spoken in India?

7. What religious faith do the characters practice? What are some examples of the characters’ faith manifesting in the story?

8. How do you think the filmmaker feels about Amlan and his message? What are some choices the filmmaker made that convey this attitude? Why do you think the filmmakers chose to include so much backstory on Amlan and his family?

9. What other biographical (individual or ensemble) documentaries have you seen or do you know of? What other biographical films have you seen? What are some characteristics

biographical films tend to have in common?

10. What other topical documentaries have you seen or do you know of? What are some characteristics topical documentaries tend to have in common? What are some television programs that utilize a topical documentary style?

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## MESSAGE & THEMES

1. If you had to summarize the message that the filmmaker was trying to convey in one sentence, what would it be?
2. What values does this film perpetuate? To what extent does it agree or disagree with its primary subjects?
3. How do the three primary storylines of this film (Salim & Sikha; Kajal and the brick farm; Priyanka & Mitu) respectively contribute to the collective message and values identified above?

## MEDIA LITERACY

1. In what format was this film shot? Why do you think the filmmakers chose this format?
2. What reasons do you think the filmmakers had for making this documentary? Under what circumstances did they begin production? How was the film financed? What is its exhibition history?
3. How would you describe the level of access that the filmmakers had to their subjects? To what extent do you think the presence of the camera influenced the characters' behavior in this film? Which moments felt the most "staged"? Which moments felt the most candid?
4. What did you notice about the cinematography in this film? What types of shots were used (close-ups, wide shots, insert shots, etc.)? To what effect? To what extent did the camera move relative to the subjects? To what effect? What types of camera movement did you notice (e.g., following, tracking in/out, handheld vs. steadicam vs. dolly)?
5. What did you notice about the sound design of this film, particularly the score/background music? Can you remember a scene where the use of music had a distinct effect on its tone? To what extent was voiceover used?
6. How do you feel about watching foreign language films with subtitles?
7. What was a compelling shot that you remember from this documentary? What did you like about it? How was it framed? What elements comprised the frame? How were they organized relative to each other?
8. Was there a scene that you found particularly memorable in this documentary? What did you like or dislike about it? What took place narratively? What types of shots comprised it? Was there anything notable about the way it was edited? What sound elements comprised the sequence?
9. What questions came to your mind as you watched this film? Is there anything you would ask the filmmaker? Is there anything you'd like to ask Amlan or any of the children? If so, what?
10. Who do you think this film was made for? Who is the intended audience?
11. Among the final shots of the film is one of Kajal stepping down to place a lit candle in the river. It is immediately followed by a brief, tighter shot of the candle as she sets it on the water's surface that has been subtly altered to appear in slow-motion (1:20:45). Why do you think the filmmakers made this choice? What was the purpose of this visual?

## ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY IDEAS

**River of Life:** Attempt the exercise that Aslam does with his students midway through the film, focusing on the value of perspective and positive focus in spite of inevitable hardship. Each student draws a river across a sheet of paper. The left half of the paper represents the past, the right half represents a plausible future. On each crest of the upper bank of the river, students note high points of their lives and expected futures. On each crest of the lower bank of the river, students note low points of their lives and expected futures. Students may share in small groups or as a class afterward.



► **Write a Letter:** Individually or in small groups, write letters to a character (or multiple characters) in the film. Let your correspondent know about yourself or your class and your reaction to viewing their story, offer moral support or encouragement, ask any questions you might have. If desired, mail your letters to Prayasam c/o of their intended recipients. Alternatively, collaborate as a class to write a single letter. Students can also sign up for an international pen pal service.

**Map your World:** Salim and Sikha lead a project to map their slum community in the interest of demonstrating the need for potable water to the municipal government. Divide your campus or neighborhood into manageable sections and assign each to an individual student or small group to visit and sketch. Encourage attention to detail: shape, measurement, scale, etc. Collaborate to combine your respective sketches and data into a master area map, as detailed or function-specific as you like. Discuss: What logistical challenges did this project present? What technical and/or mathematical challenges did it present? What can you learn from looking at your map (or through the process of creating it) that wouldn't otherwise be obvious? How does your map compare to any existing maps of the campus or neighborhood?

**Host a Fundraiser or Awareness Campaign:** First, set a feasible and desirable project scope and a focus issue. How much time will the class realistically be able to devote to this project? What human resources are available beyond the classroom? On what specific public health issue, humanitarian effort or human right will your campaign focus? What specific action or change will it call for? Where will your campaign take place (on campus, in the community, etc)? Some campaign ideas include any (or some combination) of the following:

- Contact an appropriate NGO about partnership opportunities (e.g., UNICEF)
- Conduct a fundraiser on behalf of the Prayasam Scholarship Fund (or other charity)
- Create a class website devoted to exhibiting students' studies and projects
- Write individual or class letters to your state and/or federal representatives
- Start a print awareness campaign around campus (posters, stickers, etc.)
- Host an awareness and/or charity event (e.g., food drive) for families, other classes or the community

**Study India:** Break into 3-6 small groups. Each group is assigned a topic to research from the following list, as it pertains to the nation of India:

Arts/Music/Culture

Economy

Environment/Ecology/Climate

Government

Humanitarian Efforts

Language

Population/Demographics

Religion

## MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES

### SCREENING WITH MEANING

The vast majority of interpersonal human interactions taking place at any given moment are taking place via some type of medium. Every image projected on a screen, every word published on a page, every sound produced from a speaker – each comprises a piece of media content, a media message of some sort. The ability to discern between and understand the vast array of media messages by which we are continually surrounded is an essential skill for young people to develop, particularly in a mainstream commercial culture that targets youth as a vulnerable, impressionable segment of the American marketplace. Most teenage students already have a keen understanding

of the languages different media use and the techniques they employ to inspire particular emotions or reactions.

Analysis of a media message – or any piece of mass media content – can best be accomplished by first identifying its principal characteristics: (1) the physical means by which it is contained and/or delivered, (2) the person(s) responsible for its creation and dissemination, (3) the information, emotions, values or ideas it conveys, (4) the audience to whom it is delivered, and (5) the objectives of its authors and effects of its dissemination.

Students who can readily identify these five core characteristics (abbreviated in this section with the keywords Medium, Author, Content, Audience and Purpose) when faced with mass messages will be equipped to understand the incentives at work behind them, as well as their potential consequences. Media literacy education incentivizes students to become responsible consumers, active citizens and free, critical thinkers.

### CORE CONCEPTS OF MEDIA ANALYSIS

#### MEDIUM

##### **All Mass Media Messages Are Constructed.**

How is the message delivered? In what format?  
What technologies are used to perpetuate the message?  
What expectations do you have of the media content, given its medium and format?

#### AUTHOR

##### **All Mass Media Messages Are Constructed by Someone.**

Who delivers the message?  
Who originally constructed the message?  
What expectations do you have of the media content, given its author(s)?

#### CONTENT

##### **All Mass Media Messages Are Constructed Using a Language.**

What information, values, emotions or ideas are conveyed by the media content?  
What visual elements comprise the media content?  
What auditory elements comprise the media content?  
To what extent did the content meet your expectations, given the format/author?

#### AUDIENCE

##### **All Mass Media Messages Reach an Audience.**

Who receives the message?  
For whom is the message intended?  
What is the public reaction to the media content and/or its message?  
What is your reaction to the media content and/or its message?  
How might others perceive this message differently? Why?

#### PURPOSE

##### **All Mass Media Messages Are Constructed for a Reason.**

Why was the message constructed?  
Who benefits from dissemination of the message? How?  
To what extent does the message achieve its purpose?  
What effect does the message have on the audience it reaches, if any?





## THE NON-FICTION FILM

### BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DOCUMENTARY

- 1895 Lumiere Brothers develop the first motion picture film reels, capturing brief, unedited clips of life around them called “actualities” (e.g., *Train Arriving at the Station*)
- 1922 Robert Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* is the first feature-length film to be called a “documentary,” employing the “creative interpretation of reality” to tell a factual story
- 1936 John Grierson releases *Night Mail*, an example of the more poetic, experimental approach to documentary that his movement embodied
- 1963 The cinema vérité movement begins in Europe, shortly followed by “direct cinema” in the U.S. Films of these movements attempt to present factual information objectively and observationally, though many were produced with political or ideological motivations.
- 1999 *The Blair Witch Project* is released, becoming the highest grossing film of all time (relative to its production cost). Marketed and styled as a documentary, the suspense/horror film used the genre to unprecedented effect, fooling millions of filmgoers into believing it was a non-fiction film (obviously enhancing the fear factor). The “mockumentary” has since caught on as a comedic sub-genre.

### TYPES OF DOCUMENTARY

All documentaries may be measured along a spectrum of impartiality. Some documentaries attempt to record and present information in as objective and unbiased a manner possible, as if the film were made by a fly on the wall. Other documentaries present real-world information, but do so in a highly obtrusive, manufactured, often biased manner. Arguably no documentary can be 100% unobtrusive to the events it seeks to record (subjects are almost always aware of the presence of a camera, for example), and no documentary can be 100% objective (a single edit represents a subjective filmmaking decision). Media literate students should be able to discern the plausibility and purpose of documentary programs based on their authorship, the nature of their content, the extent to which bias is expressed, etc. Generally, all documentary films and programs occupy one (and sometimes more) of the following categories:

- Poetic:** The most abstract type of documentary. The earliest documentaries were essentially poetic; images were organized based on associations and patterns, creating a fragmented, impressionist, lyrical record of actual places, objects and people. Poetic documentaries do not include characters or plots, and were largely made by early filmmakers looking to subvert the coherence and standardization of early narrative films. Some modern music videos can be considered poetic documentaries. Notable examples: *Rain* (Ivens, 1928), *City Symphonies: NY, NY* (Thompson, 1957)
- Expository:** Documentaries that speak directly to the viewer (via titles and/or voiceover) in an effort to persuade, convince or educate. Most modern documentary films and TV programs are primarily expository. Expository docs may be further categorized as follows:
  - Persuasive:
    - Commercial: Docs that advocate a particular product, service or brand
    - Political: Docs that advocate a certain position on political contests/issues
    - Theological/Ethical: Docs that advocate a certain position on religious/moral issues
    - Topical: Docs that advocate a certain ideological position on social issues

## THE NON-FICTION FILM

### ► – Educational:

- Scientific: Docs that attempt to convey factual information on science topics
- Historical: Docs that attempt to convey factual information on historical topics/periods
- Biographical: Docs that attempt to convey factual information about individuals
- Topical: Docs that attempt to convey factual information about social issues

Both persuasive and educational documentaries present information in traditionally efficient ways. Impartial, “omniscient” voice-over narration, on-screen text and insert shots of supporting charts, illustrations, maps, etc. are stylistic techniques common to most expository documentaries. The combination of interview audio and “b-roll” footage of associated visuals is another classic convention of non-fiction filmmaking. It is not uncommon for filmmakers or television producers to take advantage of the credibility that this format lends, and to present fictional (or, at best, debatable) information as factual. Thus, the distinction between a persuasive doc and an educational doc is largely based upon purpose and audience; a film made to argue a point of view or perpetuate a myth may appear no less fictional than an educational doc about photosynthesis.

Expository documentaries are inherently more impactful on the people and environments they attempt to capture than observational docs; but inherently less impactful than participatory docs. The presence of the filmmaker is usually acknowledged and/or obvious (audible interviewer in conversation, voice-over narration, on-screen titles/diagrams/maps/schematics, character interaction with crew, etc.) under the pretense that the filmmaker(s) are only involved peripherally. Some filmmakers include dramatic re-enactments of story content in their

“documentaries”. While this can be as emotionally compelling as a heart-wrenching Hollywood tragedy, it fully removes any pretense of factual impartiality.

3. **Observational:** Docs that attempt to simply and spontaneously observe some part of the world with minimal intervention. Observational films are less abstract than poetic documentaries and less biased or forceful than expository documentaries. Observational docs date back to the 1960s when the advent of mobile lightweight cameras and portable sound recording equipment enabled non-fiction filmmakers to capture events in an organic, unobtrusive way (new celluloid films also needed less light to achieve exposure). This mode of documentary historically avoids stylistic “add-ons” like voice-over commentary, music, titles, re-enactments, etc. These films aimed for immediacy, intimacy and revelation of individual human character in ordinary life situations. Examples: *High School* (Wiseman, 1968); *Gimme Shelter* (Maysles, 1970); *Don't Look Back* (Pennebaker, 1967)

4. **Participatory:** Participatory documentarians rightly believe that it is impossible for the act of filmmaking to not influence or alter the events and characters being filmed. Much like an anthropologist studying a culture by taking part in it, a participatory filmmaker inserts him/herself into the action at hand as a means of inciting and documenting reactions and as a means of making his/her authorship transparent and spontaneous. The encounter between subject and filmmaker inherently becomes a critical component of the film. Autobiographical documentaries are 100% participatory. Examples: *Man with a Movie Camera* (Vertov, 1929), *Sherman's March* (McElwee, 1985), films by Michael Moore.

*Adapted from Bill Nichols, Representing Reality (1991) and Introduction to Documentary (2001)*



## SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

### WEB LINKS

The Revolutionary Optimists Homepage

The Revolutionary Optimists on IMDB

The Revolutionary Optimists TEDxChange short

Prayasam Homepage

ITVS Women & Girls Lead Program

Global Fund for Children

UNICEF: Get Involved

The Ford Foundation

Child Rights International Network: Prayasam

Making an Effort: Short essay by Shibasish Ghosh

The River of Life: Short film by Sikha Patra

Blog post on The Revolutionary Optimists

Unicef article on Mapping for Change

Stanford School of Medicine article:  
Med student helps Prayasam create community health maps

Sociological information on urban slums in India

Film trailer released during production

Map Your World: *Map Your World is a multi-platform project that puts the power of new technologies into the hands of young change agents, enabling them to map, track, and improve the health of their own communities – and then share their stories of change with each other and with the world.*

<http://revolutionaryoptimists.org/>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2083374/>

<http://vimeo.com/15064299>

<http://www.prayasam.org/>

<http://www.itvs.org/women-and-girls-lead>

<https://www.globalfundforchildren.org/>

[http://www.unicef.org/righttoknow/index\\_getinvolved.html](http://www.unicef.org/righttoknow/index_getinvolved.html)

<http://www.fordfoundation.org/>

<http://www.crin.org/organisations/viewOrg.asp?ID=4625>

<http://revolutionaryoptimists.org/blog/making-effort-shibasish-ghosh>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTXm6Fx7dr8&list=UUE61RMDmdRaF158-16R5dSg&index=1&feature=plcp>

<http://thegreyskies.wordpress.com/2012/06/03/five-young-crusaders-for-change-the-revolutionary-optimists/>

[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/india\\_58382.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/india_58382.html)

<http://scopeblog.stanford.edu/2012/08/27/what-i-did-this-summer-stanford-medical-student-helps-india-nonprofit-create-community-health-maps/>

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/india-s-urban-slums-rising-social-inequalities-mass-poverty-and-homelessness/30756>

<http://goodfilm.org/film/d/132/The+Revolutionary+Optimists>

<http://revolutionaryoptimists.org/map-your-world>



## NOTABLE QUOTES

**TITLECARD:** “Rishi Aurobando is one of 6500 slum communities in Kolkata. The city has been promising to bring drinking water to the taps in this neighborhood for 5 years.”

**TITLECARD:** “Child labor became illegal in 2010. India still employs more children under 15 than any other country.”

**Amlan Ganguly (AG):** “For all these years we have been treated like pigs. And now suddenly there is a school for our children.”

**AG:** “Before gaining victory over others, let us have victory over ourselves. What is the meaning of this?”

**AG:** “There are many differences in class in our society. Some are of a higher caste and some are from a lower caste. But it should not be so. We should not think anyone is low. All are equal.”

Sikha: “Now the idea of marriage doesn’t even enter my head.”

**AG:** “We call that the aspiration level. That level has gone down... If a person gets used to something bad, he no longer hopes for something good.”

**Mr. Shekh:** “There’s a problem with the water here anyway. We don’t know if it’s good or not. Many stomach problems are thought to be related to our water. That’s why we’re very scared about our water.”

**AG:** “A man in our society who dances is not respected or some kind of... it’s a kind of a... effeminate people only dance. Though, y’know, the greatest god, Shiva, he also dances and he’s a male. But we forget about it. In Indian society the girls are looked down upon too. They are the second sex. They are the second gender. There is no equal footing.”

**AG:** “I saw that most of the girls are getting married at the age of 12 or 13. They didn’t know what they’re doing: ‘everybody’s getting married, so I’m also getting married.’ As soon as they got married, they have their first baby and by 20, they have at least 4 kids. We have to make these girls understand that what their mothers have done... please think twice before going in the same direction.”

**AG:** “They have to internalize that life is beautiful. If their mindset is changed, they can change their surroundings.”

**TITLECARD:** “Less than half of all girls in India enroll in secondary school. 47% are married by the time they



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► reach 18.”

**AG:** “If your children ask: ‘why didn’t you graduate?’, what will you tell them? They’ll end up more advanced than you.”

**AG:** “I thought she would find it out within herself. But she didn’t. She proved me wrong. Priyanka showed me I have a long way to go.”

**Salim:** “We made a map to show that in our large community, we have no drinking water. Almost 9,000 people live there. Half fetch water, half buy it. So much time is wasted in getting water. If we can put these points together in a report and visit our Councilor, and if we show them there are taps, but no taps with drinking water, then I think that water will be provided.”

**Shikha:** “Through Prayasam, we’ve spoken to girls our age in our community. We asked them what kind of problems they face in their adolescence. They say their brothers get a lot of freedom while they’re stuck doing housework.”

**Sikha:** “As a girl, I’ve been told that everything that happens is our fate or luck. But we cannot just depend on fate. If I do something good or something bad, that itself is what determines my luck. So we should forget about fate and as much as we can we should put in our own effort.”

**TITLECARD:** “Today over 1 billion people—one in six of us— live in an urban slum. The number is expected to double by 2030.”