

# THE INNER WORLD OF A TEACHER

Reflections based on journal entries by Shuchi Sinha

*OELP chose to work with a local field team in our core area in the Ajmer District, as this ensured continuity in our evolving Foundational Learning programme while keeping it grounded. The journey of these teachers has been a vital part of our evolutionary story. Most of them are women. Reflecting on their growth stories has helped us to deepen our understanding and evolve systems of meaningful classroom engagement as we scale up across wider locations.*

## The OELP teacher - who was she when she joined OELP?

She is perhaps one of countless women who is searching for her identity; an identity that her family and the patriarchal social world around her have slowly been wiping out. Her struggle is not for attaining happiness but for retaining her identity and proving her self-worth.

## What does being an empowered teacher mean?

Intensive on-the-job training and hand holding gives an OELP teacher recognition. Her struggle and striving towards making her class the best one, brings a sparkle to her identity and becomes her passion. In a male dominated world, her struggle is to prove her self-worth. So it becomes increasingly important that the children in her class perform better than all the classes located in other government schools.

## What does she become?

**For Leela**, a teacher from village Patan, this experience has liberated her from the shadow of the socially mandated ghonghat and allowed her to shed her inhibitions and engage with the children in her class with fullness.

**For Jamila**, the liberation has been of speech. As someone who was afraid and hesitant to talk to people beyond her immediate world, and more so to persons from the opposite sex. Her role within OELP has changed her into an articulate woman who is no longer afraid to

share her ideas, thoughts and opinions within and beyond her community. As a librarian she is a role model for other women and adolescent girls in her village and beyond.



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**For Shabana**, the freedom of movement has been a significant achievement. When Shabana, an unmarried teacher living with her mother, in village Kankniyawas, first started going for meetings and trainings, many from the village warned and mocked her mother. But Shabana, who subsequently got married says, "In cultures, where the woman is always meant to be accompanied by another person, albeit a child, the freedom to take classes, attend meetings and go for outstation trips have liberated me from these fears and hesitations." Today Shabana is a confident and empowered young woman who is looked up to by her peers.



**Within the larger context**, as we moved into working with government teachers in other Districts of Rajasthan, we began to discover that buried under the highly controlled, centralized and outcomes driven system were teachers who begin to engage deeply with the children's learning when they are able to feel in charge of their class and respond to the diverse and individual of the children under their care. **When provided with a responsive, nurturing environment and meaningful mentoring support seemingly disinterested, teachers began to transform and express their individual identities as involved teachers.**