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Mass Literacy Drive

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THE present crash literacy programme has shown considerable progress in spite of multifarious problems standing in the way of its success. It appears from experience that of all the problems confronting our literacy drive, some are so persisting that it is hardly possible for us to achieve a total success unless these are removed by some remedial steps.

Our enrolled unlettered people are not regular in attending classes now being taken in different mass literacy centres. In some centres where there are arrangements for exhibition of T.V. Programmes attendance of the learners appears to be high. But most of the centres of the country are running without such arrangements as may attract the unlettered masses.

The attitude of our learners towards functional literacy is very often glimmering. The labourers or the rickshaw-pullers are reluctant to attend classes to learn at night when they find it more lucrative to work and earn or mostly they spend this time in taking rest. Moreover, the day labourers of rural areas are in the habit of making an excuse that their hard work at day time has rendered them too tired to devote themselves to reading at the time of rest. This argument shows that they take little interest in receiving the knowledge of the three R's. This attitude should be removed through motivation all over the country. Most of the ill-clad poor of the country are the learners whose attendance has naturally fallen with the

advent of winter.

The progress in rural mass literacy centres is at as low pace as compared with those in urban areas. In far-flung rural areas such a drive is still quite Greek to the unlettered masses when only in the centres located at central areas of thana, subdivision or districts classes are regularly taken by school teachers under the supervision of local Government personnel.

The S. S. C. Candidates who have to teach at least one of the unlettered masses as it is now included in their course of studies carrying marks 50, are faced with a fresh problem of choosing their learners who frequently change their address as they belong to the group of destitutes living a nomadic life. It is reported that many of the learners who are boys or waiters of restaurants or servants suddenly disappear and the candidates are hurried back to despair as they have to pick up new ones to teach in order that he may obtain pass marks in this subject called 'Karma Avighata' failure in which means failure in the S.S.C. Examination. The S.S.C. Candidates are to participate in the drive to wipe out the curse of illiteracy. But those hailing from the rural areas far away from thana, subdivision or district headquarters are seen not working so seriously as those living at headquarters. The teachers now in service in headquarters schools are to supervise the activities of the candidates in this regard while those in the schools of far-

flung rural areas are seen doing little. It is heard that some learners demand something as gratification from the candidates with whom they learn and refuse to read without being satisfied with what they want to get. In this connection it may be further mentioned that care is not always taken while choosing an unlettered one and may be persons not really unlettered are also enlisted or chosen for teaching in some cases.

It may be added from experience that in some centres only those who are in between 10 and 15 years old attend classes while the aged are not interested to do so for more than some consecutive days which are not enough for one to receive functional literacy. Most of the aged unlettered people are seen unwilling to undertake mental labour required to learn reading, writing and arithmetic. They should be made enthusiastic and interested so that they may become spontaneously responsive to the call of literacy.

Inadequacy of teaching materials is a barrier indeed. In spite of initiative taken and a large number of books provided by the Government many of the learners do not find them available. Other essential teaching materials such as pen ink, paper, slate and pencil are very often demanded by most of the learners who fail to buy them and consequently finding no such arrangements or no alternative become disinterested and do not attend classes.

Apart from want of teaching materials in rural mass literacy centres which are unelectrified, the teachers and the learners suffer some setbacks for non-availability of lights or lamps. A question generally springs up as to who will afford to manage hurricane kerosene, or lamps when teachers are always ill paid and not in a position to afford for this purpose. The local representatives of Gram Sarkars or others concerned who have a lot to do in this regard are very often seen playing a passive role. Here it may be argued that classes may be taken at day time. But the problem is that the learners belonging to the working class many not be able to attend classes at day time when they put in their best to earn their livelihood.

Mass literacy centres at all union levels have yet to be opened while at all ward levels of a union such centres should be opened in order to gear up the drive to achieve total success. The members of Gram Sarkars in cooperation with such other persons of their respective areas as may be necessary for the purpose should take initiative to open mass literacy centres at all wards throughout the country.

It may be concluded by saying that since it is a national duty to impart education to the unlettered masses, each and every one of the 3 million literate people of the land should be much more cooperative with their helping hands to remove the malaise of illiteracy.