

Stress on functional literacy

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Eradication of poverty through well-laid-out plans and programmes has become the cornerstone of our overall national policy planning. Since our overwhelming number of population live in the village, all our attention has to be focussed on bringing about a qualitative change in the life-pattern of the people for it to be still living isolated from the mainstream of social life. The task in this regard is to create job opportunities for the people in the village so that they can be involved in greater number in productive activities in which they can be gainfully employed. Priority to rural development calls for involvement of the people at their own level in a concerted way. In this regard, organising rural life in the right direction is a challenging task which shall have to be faced in constructive way. According to the opinion of development experts, the real challenge is to develop the campaign against rural poverty into a mass movement in an integrated manner, based upon their principles of self-reliance which stresses the total involvement of the people in many-sided develop-

mental activities. The people for whom all developmental efforts are being made shall have to be taken in confidence through inspiring them under judiciously worked-out plans and programmes. Reshaping life in a rural society beset with multifarious problems means restructuring the rural society in such a way that the people may find their own way of employment, supported by institutional bodies engaged in rural sectors.

The involvement of the rural people in productive activities in a greater number calls for making them aware of what their primary responsibilities are in the reshaping of their future. The prime task in this regard is eradication of illiteracy from the face of the society. In this regard the approach to education of the rural community must take into account the distinctive needs of children, young persons, adult men and women. For speedy rural development, development experts suggest a blend of formal and non-formal educational methods. According to some, "earn while you learn" could be so designed that they can better under-

stand the main problems they are to face. In this regard it is suggested that the rural schools imparting non-formal education should so adapt its work schedule as to keep pace with the changing seasons and work routines of the village community.

In case of young persons in the age group of 15 to 20 years, the real test should be to provide them with job opportunities to learn new skills relevant to their aptitude. It has been suggested that one way of strengthening the rural community is to build up in each village a cadre of workers drawn from among the rural youth. In case of young men and women, the main thrust must necessarily be in terms of functional literacy programmes with greater stress on imparting relevant skills and enhancing their capacity. This calls for laying greater emphasis on "learning by doing" and making use of local resources in widening opportunities for gainful employment.

It should be noted the functional literacy is of utmost importance in the rejuvenation of rural economy. The disadvantaged sections of the population must un-

derstand what their problems are and how they will solve them. They are to be convinced of the imperatives they are to carry out in their bid to better their condition. In planning programmes for them, attention shall have to be paid to their aptitude. Different young men have got different aptitudes and unless priorities can be properly ordered in keeping with their test and aptitude, they will hardly feel encour-

aged. Learning local trade skills for acquiring skills. Training to master skills is of great necessity for them. The mass media like radio, television, films and local newspapers can also play a greater role in carrying the message of functional literacy. It needs to be mentioned that our base of development is our village on which our economy is based. This is a challenging task to be carried out in right earnest so development process can quicken up.

The task of rural reconstruction lying ahead of us demands vigorous endeavour coupled with enthusiastic and dedicated leadership in the village. Poverty-stricken farmers or those out of employment in the society need functional literacy making them ca-

pable of understanding their own problems to be faced by them with institutional support to be given by local institutions and bodies directly involved in the rural development programmes. In the village, different men have flair for different kinds of vocational activities which demands imparting training according to their aptitudes. Cooperatives, pisciculture, poultry farming, cattle raising, sheep-breeding, intensive agriculture and also family planning cannot be seen in an isolated way. Therefore educating rural people through bringing them under different organisations.

Persons at the grass-root level shall have to work with greater zeal and endeavour so that the people at the grass root level can be inspired to undertake greater responsibilities to mould their own future supported by institutional means.

Besides, policy planning shall have to be made judiciously in consultation with the people of a given area for whom the particular plan and or programme is meant. The people can be inspired well, they will shoulder greater responsibilities in developmental process.