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Facing the challenge of illiteracy

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Eradication of illiteracy from the face of the society is of fundamental necessity to accelerate the pace of developmental activities in the country. Unless people can be made conscious of their paramount responsibility they are to discharge in national life, development process is thwarted. It is our prime necessity that people are made to understand the fundamental problems of the country.

The overwhelming number of our population live in the village afflicted with poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. The latter are deterrents to national development objectives. The first thing to be done is wiping out illiteracy through a well-co-ordinated and well-organised campaign.

Realising the acute necessity for removing illiteracy, the government has launched a movement to make people literate within the shortest possible time. There is no denying the truth that education is the 'sesame' to knowledge. A nation's identity is manifested through her people who must be imbued with the lofty ideals of dedication and service to the society. That spirit can only be aroused when the people are educated to understand the problems. Poverty is generally found to be rampant in a society where illiteracy is wide-

spread. Today, it has to be clearly understood that the degree of achievement of a country in different fields is linked with her rate of literacy. But how people can be made literate shall have to be evolved out judiciously under a well-thought out plans and programmes to be taken in hand in the light of the experiences in the process of the literacy movement.

That literacy is vital and a real investment in socio-economic progress of a nation has to be understood by all. The purpose of any popular campaign in a modern nation-state is to intensify the drive for national development.

One cannot decide thing in one's favour unless one is sure of what is to be done. Our society is characterised by poverty and illiteracy. Despite having the most fertile soil, we are not able to produce things in desired quantity. The vast majorities of our people are not aware of new production techniques because of illiteracy. But how illiteracy can be removed is a pertinent question. Launching a programme is not such a difficult task. It has been found in some of the developing countries that some programmes aimed at bettering the lot of a given number of population could not make any headway despite

the fact that finance was not a problem.

The first task is to assess the degree of success a programme is likely to make. The programme can achieve success if we can rightly assess the objective situation of a society and formulate the programme in that light. Otherwise, the much publicised and well-intentioned programme cannot achieve a success. Any programme can be pushed ahead, if the people at different levels can be well-organised through motivation.

Since literacy campaign is a new beginning, it has to be pushed through in a such a way as to create a sense of total participation of the people for whom it is meant. The children of today are the effective force of tomorrow. If they cannot be given the elementary lessons of literacy, we cannot march forward with confidence. Their problem shall have to be looked into in depth and effort should be made to take concrete steps in that light. The literacy programme should be considered a real investment in development process. Development is the task of millions of men and women working side by side to achieve a common purpose of national emancipation from the courses of illiteracy, poverty and under-development. This is a national responsibility

which shall have to be carried out under a judiciously worked out plan and programme.

The need now is to motivate the people so that they come forward to actively participate in the nation building activities. The cherished goal we want to achieve cannot be reached without literacy. All people working in different stations in life should be inspired to participate in the literacy programme. If rural development programmes with total participation of the people of the respective areas can be implemented, it will accelerate the pace of the literacy movement as people through their effective involvements in economic activities will have a sense of direction through get-together every now and then.

It is an admitted fact that a determined nation can achieve the unachievable. It implies the need for dissemination of knowledge among the people languishing in illiteracy for want of any opportunity. Total development of a society calls for total involvement of the people in great national undertakings. The first thing is: People shall have to understand the problem in its entirety. Dedication may come only when they can well understand the problem.

The main stumbling block in this regard is illiteracy thwarting the development bid of a nation. Unless we can work out a pragmatic programme, which can be made real with due participation of the people, we cannot make any big achievement. Removing illiteracy is a national priority and it has to be faced with measured step. Any hasty step will only affect the tempo of the movement. The people in the field shall have to be made well aware of the great national obligation they have undertaken. They must understand the people they are approaching with patience and love.

People need to be motivated and they are to be told that getting literate is in their own interest. The literacy campaign can be well advanced if the people can be involved in economic pursuits. In this regard the rural development programme has to be taken up with greater vigour. This also calls for having rural infrastructure for development, which has to be created. Our main task is to speed up the development process and bring about a qualitative change in the life. Without removal of illiteracy we can hardly achieve that objective. This is a national task to be accomplished with concentrated endeavour.