

When we judge ourselves and look at our own economy we can easily say we could have achieved much more for our people than we have done so far. We have devoted our time more for smaller and peripheral politics than to the real development. Not much effort has been made by the political leadership of any party to concentrate on the real issues confronting the nation. The issues like self-organisation or self-reconstruction or community responsibility neither on the part of the leaders nor on the part of people who intend to do good to others, has ever come up for any serious discussions or debate. The mutual distrust, profound in traditional democratic parties produce only collective irresponsibility and when emotion creates euphoria for democracy or rule of law, the maximum they achieve is a disorganised democratic system. For a while, once in power, they state responsibility with all its complexity and resource scarcity, do not help the political leaders to even achieve the minimum of expectations, not to speak of addressing any major issues of real development.

Manikand has faced this issue of inner struggle throughout the history. And this issue will continue to be there more in developing society where underdevelopment prevails in a more acute form. In a deprived society, expectations are always high, whereas the real political ability is too limited to contain them. The politicians make out promises which they cannot fulfill and this tends to create a further distance between those who rule and those who are ruled. The element of distrust deepens and conflicts get sharpened. Due to underdevelopment people tend to grow unrealistic aspirations which lead to create more frustration at the end because of the distance that exists between hope and reality.

The two realities which loom large for the entire nation are the population and education. Since fast growth is essential to shorten the period of transition and development entails a concept of totality, growth cannot be achieved at the desired rate without addressing these two vital issues. Growth is directly linked with population and education specially in the context of Bangladesh economy.

Bangladesh has a population growth rate of approximately 2.2%. It began with more than 3% in 1971. Although there has been some decline in the percentage but not in terms of actual children born now and the success is too little in view of what has been spent on it, and the number of people work for it. If the growth rate continues as it is by the end of the century the population will be somewhere between 150 to 160 million. With the concomitant increase in the landlessness, diseases, malnutrition, illiteracy and mass poverty, the impact of may growth in economic terms, say if it remains around 4% will be marginal and the total result will be a negative growth. Every government talks about it, spends lot of money but achieves very little. The main reason of this non-progress is too much reliance on bureaucracy and foreign NGOs. It is generally taken as a social programme with very little actual political commitment.

Whereas population is an economic problem and hence the solution lies in the political dispensation. It has to be taken as a political issue, a national cause of highest priority. Only policy planning and a framework is not going to help, all there is a total political commitment from top to the grassroots with active participation of people of all walks of life. It has to be a truly socio-political movement to provide an opportunity for leadership by all levels of political parties do spend a lot of time on trivial matters but hardly engage in socio-economic programme. The party-workers, particularly at the ground level don't have any work to do throughout the year excepting holding occasional meetings and receptions for leaders visiting the area. This is what they call programmes. The party as such, for that matter no political party, has any socio-economic programme, such as population control or mass education, of its own to help to resolve any basic problem in society. If they had done so they could have done immense good not only to the nation but to themselves as well. It could help them to identify themselves with the people more closely and enjoy their trust and confidence. In a situation like this, the course of politics and development would have taken a different turn to lead the nation towards a better progress. It is not the individual responsibility alone that can ensure mass participation. A community responsibility emerged under a political programme can prove to be of greater importance. With a full national effort, the population growth rate has to come down to 1% by the end of 1996 and to 0.5% by the end of

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the century to make the country economically viable. Education is as much important as population. As a national issue, it is even more important as it carries more multi-dimensional socio-economic benefits. The man we are looking for, the man who will help in building the nation, in achieving a total development, can emerge only through knowledge. His inner strength and ability can be articulated only through the light of education. His power of productivity immediately improves if he knows how to apply his mind reasonably at a given situation. It transforms his mind and body to change the total perspective of life. He acquires a new kind of awareness to assert his position in society. He moves from darkness to enlightenment, from the state of underdevelopment to a state of sustainable progress. It is not the degree of education he gets but the mere fact that he has a right to education, that education is open for him, that he can go to a school to share and behave, to interact and discipline his mind, is more important. He can then safeguard his interest in a society of endless exploitation. He will learn to react to any situation, personal or social or economic. He can stand on his own. Education is therefore the key to total development.

Education will play a vitally important role to make any family planning programme successful. Individual awareness is of utmost importance in inducing a person to accept a programme of the kind family planning demands. Without self-realization and self-constitution, a plan dealing with personal life cannot achieve much success. Realization for community participation or community responsibility, which is essential to make any socio-political impact of any national programme, will help reducing the population growth rate.

But again, sad as it is, the state of education is in a dismal situation. A subject so important for growth and development, as a matter of fact, for the whole future of the nation, is in the most pathetic condition. Politicians and bureaucrats have both failed in appreciating its importance. They have all talked about it but none has really taken it up seriously from a national urgency point of view. Most painful of all is that there is no national policy on education. Attempts have been made to frame policies, high level committees have been constituted, reports have been submitted but due to lack of consensus or determination, no national policy on education could be evolved to put into operation.