

Progress And Adult Literacy In Bangladesh

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EDUCATION is one of the fundamental human rights. It is the backbone of the nation. Without right type of education neither the country nor the nation can prosper. It removes ignorance, superstition, bigotry and narrowness. Education makes a man useful and responsible citizen (as he becomes aware of his rights and duties). Education enables him to earn more as he becomes skilled. Per capita income of a skilled and educated worker is much higher than that of an illiterate and unskilled worker.

Knowledge is power and education gives us knowledge. The basis of education is literacy that is, literacy is the foundation on which the structure of learning is built on. It gives permanence to learning as well. Therefore, it goes without saying that eradication of illiteracy is a must. The sooner it is eradicated from Bangladesh (where as many as 80 per cent people are illiterate) the better it is.

Eradication of illiteracy or literacy-teaching should not be confined to the learning of the alphabet alone. It should help one in the discharge of his day-to-day duties and responsibilities. It should raise his income which in turn will raise the National Income and his standard of living. Literacy-teaching to be effective has to be job-oriented and functional.

History bears evidence to the fact that USSR, Japan, USA, People's Republic of China etc. started their development with the proper eradication of illiteracy. Literacy is the prerequisite of development or first step in them.

Currently Iran, Philippines, Cuba, Ethiopia etc. are making all-out efforts for the eradication of illiteracy.

Man is an asset to his country provided he is useful and has the ability to earn otherwise he is a liability. Teeming millions of people are there in Bangladesh; population explosion is adding more and more every year. But most of them are unproductive, they are unable to earn their livelihood and live a miserable life.

Immediate attention has, therefore to be given to make them productive. For this purpose, they should be armed with the minimum knowledge and skill to earn their own bread, if not the butter. Herein comes the question of imparting functional and job-oriented education (based on literacy).

It may be started with a war like strategy attacking the 'black demon' from all fronts at a time in a co-ordinated manner with the available resources (man material and money.) The work should be taken up at the public and private sectors simultaneously. Devoted workers and voluntary organisations can render yeomen's service in this field. Examples of developed countries can easily be followed.

In rendering social service as literacy-teaching it is difficult to motivate the participants and to keep up the tempo. On the one hand, the new learners should see the tangible results or benefit from their learning. On the other hand the workers should have refreshing of their training from time to time to keep up their zeal and enthusiasm for

the service. The mass communication media can render very valuable service in the motivation for literacy and maintaining interest in it. Without further delay the work of eradication of illiteracy may be started. Organisations like the Union Councils, the Municipal Councils, the Co-operative Societies, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Guides and other voluntary organisations can come forward to do their best. Youth organisations can work in the lines of the 'Komsomols' (Russia), the Sepah-Danesh (Iran), and the Communes (China). Specially prepared literature and equipment for the literacy learners and their teachers will go a long way to make their jobs interesting and learning effective.

At the moment various development programmes are under implementation in Bangladesh. In most of them, literacy teaching may be a component unit. Certainly, it will fit in well in the Family Planning and allied programmes. There may be a literacy cell in the Thana Development complex.

To sum up literacy learning brings knowledge and skill. It enhances the individual income and Gross National Product and National Income. It helps immensely in building up the nation and the country. Economic solvency makes the political freedom meaningful to one and all. 'There is nothing but what a man tries for—says the Holy Quoran. We must not be downcast or disheartened in campaign against illiteracy till its complete eradication from Bangladesh.