



## IMPACT OF LITERACY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Dr. C. Senthil Kumar,**

Independent Researcher,

The emergence of India as an independent and democratic nation brought about certain basic changes in the policy and programme of adult education. Not only the prevalent colonial policy towards adult education was reviewed by the Government of India but also new programmes were developed to the changing needs of a democratic nation.

The development of a new policy towards adult education in the Independent India was necessitated due to a variety of socio-economic and political factors. The adoption of the welfare approach to development necessitated extensive involvement of Government and bureaucracy in carrying out structural reforms in various fields and also the creation of infrastructures.

### **Mass illiteracy is India's sin and shame must be liquidated- Mahatma Gandhi**

At the time of our independence the rate of literacy was only 18 percent and the rate of literacy among women was just 9 percent. With the objective of increasing the rate of literacy, National Adult Education Programme was started in 1978. Under this scheme, a number of Adult Education centers were established where literacy and numeracy were taught through volunteers.

In spite of all these efforts, we could achieve a total literacy rate of only 74% and 65% of female literacy in Tamil Nadu. One of the basic reasons for illiteracy among the people is the lack of interest in learning. Many think that there is no point in studying at a late or advanced age as it will not fetch them a government job. They never consider illiteracy a shortcoming on their part. Family responsibilities, lack of time etc are the other factors which prevent them from attending literacy continuing education centers. Women in particular face such difficulties.

The function of adult education can not be confined to promotion and maintenance of literacy. The main aim is to arouse the interest of illiterates and make them wish to learn. The best way of doing this will be through activities closely associated with their daily work. In the

widest sense adult education is only one aspect of the problem of social reconstruction. The literacy campaign is only one aspect of the adult education movement. The primary aim of the campaign is not merely to make adult literate but to keep them literate.

### **Social Education:**

Attempts are being made to bring about a desirable social change by acquainting people with the ever- changing currents in social, economic and political life. Education for health life, to keep homes and surroundings clean and to make life useful and enjoyable is an essential part of social education. The need to train people to organize the economic and social life on a co operative basis and to develop in them in a particular way a sense of their responsibilities for social and national security is also included in the broader concept of social education.

Social education needs a programme package and effective leadership. A large percentage of the rural community has by and large been impervious to the influence of adult literacy programme. Benefits of social education programme have actually derived by 0.3% of the population. It is noted that since the key grass- root level workers, officers were over burdened with diverse but immense responsibilities; they failed to cope up with the demands especially in the absence of suitable literature, expert guidance and adequate research support.

### **Functional Literacy:**

The concept of functional literacy emerged during 1960s. A series of international and national events 1950s paved the way for its emergence. Although the importance of functionality in literacy had been duly recognized by the earlier rural development and community development programmes, it was not given adequate emphasis by the adult educators whose main concern was confined to basic literacy.

Functional literacy was formulated by William Gray. He says that a person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture or group.

### **Literacy and Socio-economic development:**

Functional literacy with greater precision and the close link of literacy and socio-economic development was discussed in detail. Adult literacy is an essential element in general development, must be linked to economic a social priorities and to present and future need for

labour. Functional literacy should be regarded as a way of preparing man for a social, civic and economic role that goes far beyond the limits of rudimentary literacy training consisting merely in the teaching of reading and writing. The process of learning to read and write should be made an opportunity for acquiring information that can immediately be used to living standards. Reading and writing should lead not only to elementary general knowledge but to training for work, increased productivity, a greater participation in civic life and a proper understanding of the surrounding world and ultimately open the way to basic human culture.

Education of adults relates to training in functional skills relevant to their respective economic activities. Programmes for this purpose will be strengthened and adequate resource support provided for organizing technical and vocational skill based courses for the benefit of adult learners. As a part of the post literacy and follow up services, short duration condensed training courses will be organized for upgrading the skills of the semi - literates and for increasing their awareness of various social events.

Investing in adult literacy programme yields economic, social and political benefits. Increased adult literacy enhances the human capital stock, increasing economic growth rates and improving social indicators. It is an important determinant of income and is positively associated with other social indicators, such as reduced infant child mortality rates and improved child nutrition. In the United States it is inversely correlated with the costs associated with unemployment, incarceration, criminal proceedings and law enforcement.

### **Planning for a new strategy:**

As literacy forms the basis of all development efforts in the country it is the duty and responsibility of the government, educational institutions and social service departments to encourage illiterates to become literates. Being driven by such a commitment and responsibility, the Gandhigram Rural University has experimented with a new strategy to impart literacy through income-generation activities. The strategy is to promote literacy among the rural illiterates, particularly Self Help Group (SHG) members through entrepreneur development programmes. Adult education is not complete itself by imparting literacy and numeracy alone, but it should also teach them some income-generating strategies to cater to their needs. Hence vocation based skill training programmes is essential for Fast learning. This is exclusively for SHG members (women) since they are lagging behind when compared with men. This technique follows certain camp mode of training where SHG members are asked to stay at a particular

place from morning till evening where they are exposed to various on-hand experiences. Bakery, Jam and Juice making, soup and snacks preparation, Food preservation, Pickle making, Masala powder making, Domestic electrical appliances repairing, Photo graphy, Video graphy, cell phone repair, Refrigerator, TV and radio, Computer applications, Embroidery, simple wiring, Mushroom cultivation, cleaning gas stove, Calculator and cell phone, Sanitary napkin making, Toys making, preparation of herbal medicine, Detergent powder, pheyneel and blue liquid, Agar pathi, Computer sampurani, Vermi culture, Tailoring, Soap making etc. The Gandhigram Rural University has taken steps to promote the marketing facilities to the women entrepreneurs for marketing their products.

Success can be attained when a thin activity is done with full involvement. This can be brought about only when SHG members get united at a place and stay together for a considerable duration. Moreover when they are with their peers and members of their own age group, they feel comfortable, thus learning in a joyful situation.

The special features of Fast Learning can be summarized as follows;

- i) Programme organized in a camp mode.
- ii) Programme is for SHG members between 15 years to 40 years.
- iii) Learning for a span of ten days, 15 days, and 30 days continuously in a joyful ambience.
- iv) Along with literacy, various strategies and experiences are given.
- v) Gaining experience at least in one income yielding vocation.
- vi) Making them succeed in activities that boost their self- confidence.
- vii) Impart technology in a simple way
- viii) Imparting education in a group

SHG members have a sense of fear and hesitation and lack of self- confidence these could be removed when they are given good exposure in running income-generation activities independently. With a new strategy to impart literacy which was evolved by Dr. T.Karunakaran in the name of “Fast literacy”. This strategy is to promote literacy among the rural illiterate, women through camp approach. Vocation based camp approach especially is the essence of Fast learning.

The programme is based activities on to boost the Self-confidence of women that will automatically enhance their learning ability. The period of learning is short, only for ten/

fifteen/30 days. Illiterate women who are likely to gain maximum benefit out of this programme are included in this programme in the age category between 15-40 years. During this period many useful learning experiences are provided along with the literacy learning.

Rural women have a sense of fear and hesitation and lack of self-confidence. When they are given good exposure in handling cell phones, replacing the fuse wire, cleaning gas stove, taking photos, video graphy, use of calculator, use of computer, riding cycle, and such activities them feel at home with these gadgets. The usual pattern of teacher student learning situation, participatory learning makes this programme on joyful experience.

Evaluation has been done at the end of these last days of fast learning programme. It has proved that this programme has brought in noticeable changes and in the learning ability of the participants. The difference between their entry behaviour and exit behaviour showed that their knowledge of literacy and numerecy has improved significantly. They were able to identify the letters, write their names and the family members, names without any other's help. As a result of these training programmes all the trained illiterate SHG members have started various making products and sold their products in the nearest marketing centers. The integrated camp approach to adult education will pay rich dividends.

### **Conclusion:**

More and more neo literates and illiterates are to be motivated and convinced to choose skill training and put their energies and resources to a productive use to generate employment and self-employment .Special measures will be taken to eradicate illiteracy and to change their economic, social and political status will ensure sustainable development. At the same time we also need to take direct measures to improve the literacy rates by some direct methods as today's children are parents of the future.

### **References:**

1. **SHAH.S. Y**, "*An Encyclopedia of Indian Adult Education*", National literacy mission, Directorate of Adult education, Govt of India, 1991, New Delhi.
2. **JAIN, P.C**, "*Hand book for New Entrepreneurs*", Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, 1998.

3. Scheme of continuing Education, National Literacy Mission, Dept of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, New Delhi.
4. **DIVYA VAID**, Gendered Inequality in Educational Transitions, “*Economic and Political Weekly*”, August 28, 2004.