

FREE BUT FETTERED—THE ILLITERATE CITIZEN

by
Dr. C. D. Deshmukh



FORUM OF FREE ENTERPRISE

SOHRAB HOUSE, 235 DR. D. N. ROAD, BOMBAY-1

**"Free Enterprise was born with man
and shall survive as long as man
survives."**

**—A. D. SHROFF
(1899-1965)**

**Founder-President,
Forum of Free Enterprise.**

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Having been invited to be speaker in this series of memorial lectures is a high honour, commemorating as it does a man of great eminence in the world of business in India. That I happen to have been counted amongst his friends makes the occasion more memorable. I take this opportunity to join in the homage paid to the late Mr. A. D. Shroff whose was in many ways a unique personality, combining many qualities not often found together, viz., acute financial acumen, hard-headed business capability, commonsense, realism combined with a rare capacity for friendship—friendship which time and distance could not dim. It was his realism that made him a champion of free enterprise. Patriotism is not the monopoly of those professing some brand of socialism or another. Patriotism can co-exist with a judicious bias in favour of free enterprise. A. D. Shroff was a notable exemplar of this truth.

The authors of the First Five-Year Plan (December 7, 1952) recognised the problem of illiteracy as primarily a handicap to democracy. They observed: "In a country, where nearly 80 percent of the population are illiterate, democracy will not take

*This is the text of the Fifth A. D. Shroff Memorial Lecture delivered under the auspices of the Forum of Free Enterprise in Bombay on 27th October, 1970. Dr. Deshmukh, the eminent economist, is a former Finance Minister of India, and a former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. At present, he is President of India International Centre, New Delhi, and is associated with several public activities, and national and international organisations.

root until a progressive programme of primary education trains up a generation fit to undertake its responsibilities. Even the programme of primary education is considerably handicapped without a corresponding programme of the education of adults."

According to their view, the concept of adult education, which was mostly confined to literacy, was found to be too narrow to be able to meet the various needs of the adults. They, therefore, widened it for the purposes of the Plan to include, in addition to literacy, the health, recreation and home life of the adults, their economic life and citizenship training; and to denote this new concept the term 'Social Education' was coined implying an all-comprehensive programme of economic uplift through community action.

Up to this stage, the work in the field of social education had been confined mostly to literacy. As a result of the work during the preceding 15 years, especially during 1937-39, and since 1949-50, the literacy percentage in the country increased from 8.3 in 1931 (for undivided British India) to 17.2 percent in 1951 (for divided and integrated India). Most of the post-literacy work was done through libraries, although the library movement had not made much headway in the villages, owing to dearth of suitable literature. The recognition of the importance of recreational and cultural activities in programmes of social education was then a fairly recent development. However, no systematic attempt had been made to exploit their potentialities for mass-education. A few institutions had attempted to improve the economic condition of the villagers by teaching them improved crafts and agriculture. There was some good work to the credit of some of the basic institutions and some co-operatives.

The total expenditure on social education in 1950-51 was Rs. 83.45 lakhs. The First Five-Year

Plan visualised an average annual expenditure of Rs. 3.02 crores. It was estimated that an average annual expenditure of Rs. 27 crores would be required for the succeeding 10 years to make everybody literate and give him in addition a veneer of social education in the larger sense of the term.

In order to enable the human factor to respond fully to the national plans of development, social education was to be based on co-operatives, agencies of village development, co-operative farming, agricultural extension work, etc. In handling these priorities the utmost attention was to be paid to inculcating in the adults right individual and collective habits. The knowledge of various subjects was to be correlated to every step involved in these activities, thereby broadening the horizon of the adults and enabling them to understand and effectively participate in the wider national life. To this end reorientation courses were to be planned for the personnel engaged in the departments concerned and to prepare literature to guide them in their work.

The social education approach was to permeate all programmes of state aid to the people. The effectiveness of private agencies doing social education work was to be encouraged by giving them proper help.

State resources were to be used primarily for organizing all economic activity on co-operative basis. This was to be the rallying point for the community and mark the beginning of the community centre, the nucleus of which was to be provided by the trained community organizer.

In organizing literacy and post-literacy work the aim was to be to put it on a self-financing basis, as far as possible, by normally starting it only when the ground had been prepared by some more obviously useful activity and interest in knowledge had been sufficiently stimulated. "A news-sheet, locally

produced and carrying suggestions for improving their lot — suggestions which they can immediately put into practice and in which they have developed faith as a result of the work in the first stage — should find ready customers among the villagers.” At a later stage the state could help with libraries to the extent that its resources allow.

A special aim was to train local leadership as a result of the working of small groups in youth clubs, children’s clubs, farmers’ clubs, etc.

Teachers’ training colleges were urged to take up research in methods of imparting literacy. Experimental centres of social education were to provide sufficient material for literature suitable for adults. The scope for inter-departmental co-operation was indicated. The Central Government was to provide model guide books for workers and prepare pamphlets on certain standard subjects like health, democratic citizenship, co-operatives, etc.

Finally, the lines on which a suitable administrative machinery was to be devised were indicated. The guidance was to be given by the Central Government, which was to initiate, and aid financially, experimental work in social education and basic education in the States, guide it, assess the results and make them available to the other States. A common national platform, where the various agencies could meet at intervals for mutual discussion — so necessary for evolving a common outlook and securing co-ordination of different agencies — was, in the Commission’s view, already provided by the Indian Adult Education Association.

It was pointed out that social education in industrial areas in towns had special importance in view of the dull and drab conditions of life prevailing in urban areas. It was pointed out that here the employer and the labour unions should be able to co-operate.

The provision for social education in the Plan (operative for 3 years only) was Rs. 15.10 crores, i.e., 10 percent of the total provision for Education of Rs. 151 crores, this latter being 7 percent of the total Plan expenditure in the Public Sector.

The Second Five-Year Plan devoted far less space to literacy or social education, although it continued to provide round Rs. 3 crores a year for social education, including Rs. 10 crores in the National Extension and Community Development programmes. The depressing fact that only 17 percent of the population (after excluding children below 10 years) was literate was recorded for the year 1951 and the serious disparity in literacy between men (24.9 percent) and women (7.9 percent) and between the urban population (34.6 percent) and the rural population (12.1 percent) was noted. The Plan Report declared roundly, "Rapid Social and Economic progress along democratic lines and widespread illiteracy are scarcely compatible with each other." However, while observing that literacy was undoubtedly important, the Planners apparently laid greater stress on (i) carrying out the essential reforms proposed in the system of education and (ii) on developing facilities for continuation of classes and social education classes at various levels. Although Fundamental Education was mentioned, its precise implication was nowhere explained. The Report said: "The Ministry of Education propose to establish a fundamental education centre for training social education organisers and for continuing study and research in problems relating to social and basic education".

Social education undoubtedly held the field, as believed to embody a comprehensive approach to the solution of the problems of the community, primarily through community action. It included, besides literacy, health, recreation and home life, economic activities and citizenship training. The sights were set very high indeed and social education and rural

improvement were looked upon as a nation-wide effort, of which the facets were the entire national extension and community development programmes of the State in co-operation with people and voluntary organisations, the co-operative movement and the village panchayats — the last introduced with a gay abandon and brave words (democracy at the grassroots) in the middle of the Plan period. A period of careful evaluation was indicated as likely to help determine the nature of specialized agencies and methods and techniques needed in the field of social education both in rural and in urban areas.

Against this somewhat fuzzy philosophy, some realistic perceptions had begun to obtrude themselves by the time the Third Plan was formulated. States the Report: "Over the past decade in several directions there has been a measure of progress, as in the development of community centres, reading rooms in villages, organisation of youth groups and Mahila Mandals (women's associations), and the revitalisation of village panchayats and the co-operative movement. One aspect of social education and in some ways the most important, has, however, caused concern."

This was literacy. It was noted that between 1951 and 1961 literacy had increased only from 17 to about 24 percent. The Planners wisely observed: "The introduction of Panchayat Raj at the district and block levels and the important role assigned to village panchayats render it imperative that in as short a period as possible a substantial proportion of the adult population should become capable of reading and writing. This is essential in their own interest as in that of the community as a whole. As sufficient progress had not been achieved so far in this direction, the problem is being now studied afresh with a view to working out means for the rapid expansion of adult literacy."

Altogether, in the Third Plan, about Rs. 25

crores were expected to be available for social education. At the central level there was to be further development of the National Fundamental Education Centre as part of the National Institute of Education. Literature was to be provided for neo-literates, and voluntary organisations in the field of social education were to be assisted and the library facilities were to be expanded. The educational plans of States found room for libraries and continuation classes and, to a limited extent, for adult schools and other schools for perfecting adult literacy.

The Plan envisaged a large-scale and effective programme for adult literacy based on the closest possible co-operation at every level of personnel engaged in education and community development. It called for a pooling of the available resources in men and money, mobilization of voluntary workers and organizations and development of adult education and literacy work at the block and village levels and in every city and town, so that it took the character more and more of a popular movement. Panchayat Samitis, village panchayats and voluntary organisations were to create and maintain popular enthusiasm and develop adult education and literacy on a continuing basis in a manner related organically to their own needs and conditions. At every step the local leadership, the teachers and the voluntary workers were to be drawn into the movement for the expansion of literacy both among men and among women. Proposals for a large-scale programme of adult literacy on these lines were to be drawn up by the Central Ministry of Education in consultation with the Ministry of Community Development & Co-operation, and it was hoped that appreciable progress would be realized during the Third Plan.

The Third Five-Year Plan was to end in 1966 and the Fourth introduced. However, three fallow years characterised by disillusionment, failure of

crops, devaluation and loss of direction intervened, in circumstances now only too well-known.

During the Third Plan, after rising by 20 per cent in the first four years, national income (revised series) at 1960-61 prices registered a decline of 5.6 percent in the last year. Since population kept on rising steadily at 2.5 percent annually, the *per capita* income in 1965-66 was about the same as in 1960-61 and showed only a nominal rise in the following year. It was only in 1967-68 with its record harvest that national income rose in one year by 9 percent and the estimated income in 1968-69 was expected to exceed the previous year's level by 1.8 percent.

The planning between 1966 and 1969 was, therefore, merely a holding operation, and the formal Fourth Five-Year Plan (1969-74) has only recently been put out and approved. This Plan devotes little space to adult literacy and attempts no appraisal of the efforts made in the direction of social education and adult education during the preceding 18 years. But it promises that efforts will be made to spread literacy amongst adults through mobilization of voluntary effort and local community resources. Pilot projects are to be initiated in selected districts to begin with and the programme is to be extended to other areas in the light of experience. For the development of the programme assistance is to be sought from industry, from the students working under the National Service Scheme, and from voluntary organisations which will be assisted financially and given technical guidance. Under Agriculture the Plan Report mentions a programme of Farmers' Education and 'Functional Literacy' in the high yielding varieties area. This programme is to be extended to 100 districts, to cover one million adult farmers,

Adult education is to continue to be an integral part of the community development programme. University Departments of Adult Education are to

be helped to take up pilot projects, to conduct research and organise extension and extra-mural lectures. A National Board of Adult Education has been set up to advise Government on the development programmes and for enlisting the co-operation of the interested and the agencies concerned. The further development of television and the experiments with satellite communications, which will begin from 1972-73 may, the hope is expressed, have significance for education, especially adult education. Of the total outlay provided for education, of Rs. 822.66 crores (hardly 3½ percent of the Gross National Product) the portion meant for social education is Rs. 8.30 crores against Rs. 15.10 crores in I and II and Rs. 25 crores in III Five-Year Plan. To this might be added Rs. 2.45 crores for Farmers' Training and Education, including functional literacy. A special scheme of farmers' training was introduced on a pilot basis in 1966-67 in five districts. The three components of the Scheme were (i) functional literacy, (ii) farm broadcasts, and (iii) farmers' training. The intention was to try out arrangements for intensive training and information in selected districts having potential for optimum use. Later on, the scheme was extended, so as to increase the number of farmers' training centres to 25 in 1967-68 and 50 in 1968-69. A recent evaluation, however, showed that only 27 centres were functioning effectively. During the current year there has been a spurt. The number of centres has been doubled.

While this somewhat lackadaisical attitude towards adult literacy has characterised the Five-Year Plan Reports, the problem of the liquidation of illiteracy has during the last decade been attracting attention in the international sphere.

Dr. Mrs. Durgabai Deshmukh in an honorary capacity and five others including myself as consulting experts helped to draw up the Asian Model of Educational Development prepared by UNESCO in

May 1965. Dr. Mrs. Durgabai was in charge on behalf of the experts of the part of the draft dealing with Adult Education and Teacher Training. This part of the draft was revised appropriately in accordance with the relevant resolution of the Teheran Conference (World Conference of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy held in September 1965) and recommendations in this respect were adopted by the conference of Ministers of Education and Ministers responsible for Economic Planning, held in Bangkok on 22-29 November 1965, which approved the modified Draft Plan. As both of India's concerned Ministers were busy owing to a session of Parliament, I was asked to represent both and in those two capacities participated in the deliberations of the Bangkok conference. The conclusion of the conference of interest in connection with education out of school was: adults must be given opportunities for continuing their education at all levels. They emphasized that formal education needs to be supplemented with simultaneous action for extending adult education and out of school youth programmes to prepare countries to respond immediately to urgent economic and social needs. "It must also be recognized," their Report and Recommendations said, "that youth and adult education programmes and formal education of children and young people reinforce each other by preventing the perpetuation of illiteracy and semi-literacy in the population and should therefore constitute integral parts of the Education system." This principle is spelt out in a few paragraphs which bear reiteration in extenso:

The Asian Model of Economic Development

"Educational orientation is directly influenced by the tempo and nature of changes in society. The impact of these changes on the individual and upon his community are producing profound disturbances in the traditional social and cultural values. Women are taking their place side by side with men in the

development of their countries and full access to education must be available to them. It is necessary, too, that the common citizen learns more of the needs of this modern dynamic world and adapts and develops his life in keeping with rapidly changing conditions.

“Economic and social development both in industry and agriculture are making new demands on education, and adult education is now being considered as an important and essential element in the over-all education system. Governments are realising that to neglect the education of the adult and youth elements of the population will mean a major obstacle to progress for the next few decades. The coming twenty years are crucial; countries of Asia cannot afford to let their adult illiterates become a ‘lost generation’. It is in fact this generation that contributes to the productive wealth of the country, by providing the labour force and generally contributes to its economic life. Adult education therefore must be geared to economic and social needs; it must, in other words, become ‘functional’. Further, this functional aspect should be concentrated in ‘priority areas’ in economic and social development, and the future manpower needs for the countries.

“As a consequence education of adults and out-of-school activities for youth should be an integral part of all educational systems and plans. Informal education is necessary in the countries at all levels of development, starting from elementary literacy to higher education. On the other hand, education cannot be limited any longer to schools and universities; today educational activities must be carried out by factories, co-operatives, local authorities, radio broadcasts, television, etc. As far as content is concerned, adult education covers very difficult fields and needs. But the urgency of some problems in Asian countries and the scarcity of means impose

the necessity to select priorities and to plan adult education according to needs and possibilities.

“Within this wide scope, the specific tasks of adult and youth education can be related to the following immediate problems; the number of illiterates in the region; the number of early school leavers including semi-literates needing further education; the number of young people who by 1980 would still not have had access to primary education and elementary education; the number of adults to be trained to meet manpower requirements at the basic, middle and higher levels; ascertaining the kind of skills required and related in terms of numbers to the National Development Plan.

“The programmes of continuing education of adults and out-of-school youth education would, therefore, comprise the following activities; functional literacy, general education programmes following school curriculum and, wherever possible, using school resources; technical and vocational education; civic education.”

FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

“The struggle against adult illiteracy is now following two main directions; on the one hand the elaboration of well-defined and realistic national plans and programmes for progressive eradication of illiteracy according to the possibilities, needs and aims of different countries; on the other, implementation of work-oriented pilot literacy projects carried out through national means with the support of multilateral and bilateral assistance.

The immensity of the problem of literacy, as well as the unsatisfactory results obtained in the past, led the individual countries and international conferences to elaborate new strategies and approaches, in order to achieve this tremendous undertaking.

"Briefly stated the essential elements of the new approach to literacy are the following: (a) literacy programmes should be incorporated into and correlated with economic and social development plans; (b) the eradication of illiteracy should start within the categories of population which are highly motivated and which need literacy for their own and the country's benefit; (c) literacy programmes should preferably be linked with economic priorities and carried out in areas undergoing rapid economic expansion; (d) literacy programmes must impart not only reading and writing, but also professional and technical knowledge, thereby leading to a fuller participation of adults in economic and civic life; (e) literacy must be an integral part of the over-all education plan and educational system of each country; (f) the financial needs of functional literacy should be met out of various resources, public and private, as well as provided for in economic investments; (g) the literacy programmes of this new kind should aid in achieving main economic objectives, i.e. the increase in labour productivity, food production, industrialization, social and professional mobility, creation of new man-power, diversification of the economy."

In Asia, the dimensions of the problem, on the basis of statistics prepared for the Teheran World Conference on Illiteracy (1965) are frightening. There were about 300 million illiterate persons, 15 years of age or more in member States in Asia. The percentage of *adult illiterates* of 15 in 1961, was over 90 percent in Afghanistan and Nepal, and over 70% but below 80% in Laos, India, Pakistan,, Iran and Viet Nam and between 27 and 47 percent, in *Ceylon*, South Korea, Phillipines, Burma, *Thailand*, Taiwan and Malaysia. Buddhist countries on the whole make a better showing than India and Pakistan.

The latest estimates show a deterioration so far

as India is concerned. Of the 800 million illiterates in the World India has 350 million, i.e. but $\frac{2}{3}$ of the total population.

Some of the apparently intractable features of adult illiteracy in India owe their origin to the unsatisfactory status of Primary Education in the country.

According to the Second All-India Educational Survey carried out by the National Council of Educational Research and Training, although nearly all the rural area is now served by primary schools 41 percent of these are one teacher schools, and in 20 percent of the primary sections the enrolment is upto Class III only. Nearly 24 percent are incomplete primary sections, not having the final primary class according to the approved pattern. Girls constitute only a little over 36 percent of the enrolment in the primary sections of the country. Against the Third Five Year Plan targets of 76.4 percent (90.4 percent for boys and 61.6 percent for girls) the actual percentage was 74.36 percent (93.39 percent for boys and 54.70 percent for girls).

The ratio between enrolment in classes I and II is approximately 7.2 (only 4 : 1 for rural areas, being 7 : 2 for boys and 6 : 1 for girls).

Considering matriculation and Teacher Training as the desirable qualifications for teachers at the primary stage, only 32.70 percent of them fulfil both these qualifications (varying between 3.40 percent in Orissa and 81.11 percent in Punjab). There is a sizeable backlog of untrained teachers, 57.38 percent for regular training courses and 46.62 percent for short training courses.

Adult Education:

The National Policy on Education embodied in a Report of the Committee of Members of Parlia-

ment on Education (1967) has this to say on *spread of Literacy and Adult Education*:

“The liquidation of mass illiteracy is essential, not only for accelerating programmes of production, especially in agriculture, but for quickening the tempo of national development in general. Plans to accelerate the spread of literacy should, therefore, be prepared and intensively implemented on several fronts. With a view to reducing new additions to the ranks of adult illiterates part-time literacy classes should be organised for grown-up children (age group 11—12) who did not attend school or have lapsed into illiteracy. All employees in large commercial, industrial and other concerns should be made *functionally literate* within a prescribed period of their employment and a lead in this direction should be given by industrial plants in the public sector. Similarly teachers, students and educational institutions should be actively involved in literacy campaigns especially as a part of the social or national service programme. The achievement of literacy should be sustained by the provision of attractive reading materials and library services to the neo-literates. Adult or continuing education should be developed through facilities for part-time or own-time education and through expansion and improvement of library services, educational broadcasting and television. The development of extension services in Universities is of great significance in this context. In particular, the Universities should organise special extension programmes to train rural leadership.”

It is of interest to mention here a Seminar on Eradication of Illiteracy which was held at Hyderabad from November 4 to 7, 1966 under the auspices of the Council for Social Development of the India International Centre, New Delhi. This was with special reference to UNESCO'S contribution to the World Programme, with special reference to India.

The venue was Andhra Mahila Sabha Buildings, Hyderabad. This had special significance as Dr. Mrs. Deshmukh, Founder President of the Sabha, was then a member of the International Liaison Consultative Committee for the Eradication of Illiteracy of the UNESCO. This body incidentally was active then, but now seems to be moribund and has perhaps been wound up. The printed proceedings of the Seminar are available as a priced publication.

An unexpected ally in respect of literacy emerged, possibly as the result of the awakening of international interest in this vital matter. The occasion was the appointment of the Education Commission of 1964, under the chairmanship of Dr. D. S. Kothari (Chairman of the University Grants Commission) which, for the first time in the history of such Commissions, was induced to take interest in the problem of literacy as well as adult education. The Commission appointed a Task Force on Adult Education with one of its members, Dr. V. S. Jha as Convenor. Among the members of this Task Force was Shrimati Durgabai Deshmukh under whose convenorship a Sub-group on Literacy Education was formed. Her membership of the UNESCO International Liaison Committee for the liquidation of illiteracy enabled her to make substantial contributions to the deliberations of this Sub-group which are reflected in the Commission's recommendations on the subject.

In the chapter on Adult Education (Chapter XVII, page 422 *et segg*) the Commission roundly state that India was more illiterate in 1961 than in 1951 with an addition of about 36 million illiterates, and that in 1966, it had 20 million more (since between these years the total population increased by some 150 million, there must be at least an equal number of more literates also). The Commission note that this has happened despite unprecedented expansion of primary education and despite many

literacy drives and programmes. Though the percentage of literacy has risen from 16.6 percent in 1951 to 24 percent in 1961 and 28.6 percent in 1966, a faster growth of population has pushed the country further behind in its attempts to reach universal literacy. The Commission wisely observe: "The moral is obvious: conventional methods of hastening literacy are of poor avail. If the trend is to be reversed a massive unorthodox national effort is necessary."

Feelingly, the Commission note the high price which the individual as well as the nation pays for the illiteracy; e.g. (i) the condemnation of the illiterate in the circumstances of modern life to live an inferior existence; (2) the illiterate individual's low income; (3) the illiterate's isolation from sophisticated social processes, such as democratic Government and commercial marketing; (b) blocking of economic and social progress; (5) reduced economic productivity; (6) less efficient population control; (7) imperfect understanding of national integration and security; (8) retarded improvement in health and sanitation. The sum and substance of the situation is — and I quote the Commission: "The uneducated is not in reality a free citizen". On an analysis of the situation the Commission came to the conclusion that the principal strategy adopted so far to make the people literate, viz. exclusive emphasis on the development of a programme of free and compulsory education for all children till they reach the age of 14 years, has failed. Not only shall we have to wait till 1986 (instead of 1961 as indicated in the Constitution) before we can hope to provide 7 years education to all children, but also the whole current system of primary education continues to be largely ineffective and wasteful and many children who pass through it either do not attain functional literacy or lapse into illiteracy soon afterwards. The Commission conclude: "It is therefore evident that while our effort to develop a programme of free and compulsory education should continue with redoubled vigour, a time

has come when a massive and direct attack on mass literacy is necessary."

In this context this is perhaps the place at which we have to note that according to a recent study sponsored by UNESCO and made by J. M. Kapoor and Prodipto Roy for the India International Centre's (New Delhi) Council for Social Development, the lapse into illiteracy was higher in the case of out of school efforts made to liquidate illiteracy, viz., 45 percent than in the case of the products of the school system, which was 20 percent. The finding that rural school training resulted in the highest literacy retention is most encouraging. The study further indicates that unless adult literacy has reached a high proficiency designated as grade III by the Lucknow Literacy House test, or students have attended at least four years of school, there will be a high loss of literacy.

The Commission noted that campaigns launched in the past to eradicate illiteracy petered out because of (i) being too limited in scale to achieve a significant advance and generate enthusiasm for further effort, (ii) having been sporadic and unco-ordinated; and (iii) having been launched too hastily without careful assessment of the needs and interests of adults, without awakening public interest or stimulating the desire to learn and without adequate provision for the follow-up work.

The Commission point out as pre-requisites of sustained support and purposeful orientation of literacy programmes, the acceptance of certain basic ideas such as; (i) the proposition that the pace of industrialization and modernisation of agriculture and in general of the economic progress of the country is inhibited by the predominance of illiteracy in the working force (144 million or 67.4 percent), (ii) that the illiterate resist social change; (iii) that the illiterates are out of tune with the spirit of the age in

which science and technology influence progress and determine the ways of life and standards of living; (iv) that illiteracy is an obstacle in the way of the communication of new ideas and new practices, so essential for progress; (v) that the illiterate cannot make a real democracy the essence of which lies in participation by the people in organized civic life and in important decision-making.

In the international setting also, the Commission point out, the prevalence of illiteracy in the country is humiliating. It robs of its meaning Article 26 of the Declaration of Human Rights which states that every one has a right to education.

Tellingly the Commission draw attention to the lack of political commitment in the country to any programme of adult education (The more cynical from amongst us are beginning to suspect that politicians have a vested interest in illiteracy).

The Commission recommend unhesitatingly "a nation-wide adherent and sustained campaign for liquidation of illiteracy, involving the Central Government and the State Governments, all governmental, voluntary agencies and private organisations and industries, all educational institutions ranging from primary schools to universities and above all, all educated men and women in the country". The Commission considered that with well-planned efforts it should be possible to raise the country's percentage of literacy to 60 percent by 1971 and 80 percent in 1976. In no part of the country, however backward, should it take more than 20 years to reach practically cent percent literacy, i.e., by 1985.

It is now time to ask ourselves: What exactly is illiteracy. It is not the mere ability to read and write. "Literacy, if it is to be worthwhile, must be functional, i.e., such as to enable the literate not only to acquire sufficient mastery over the tools of literacy but also to acquire relevant knowledge which

will enable him to pursue his own interests and ends. The Education Commission quoted in this context with approval the conclusion of the World Conference of Education Ministers on the Eradication of Illiteracy in 1965 (a conference which the Indian Delegation headed by Education Minister Chagla and his small team, including Mrs. Durgabai Deshmukh were prevented from attending by the outbreak of hostilities with Pakistan 3 days before the date of the conference).

“ Rather than an end in itself literacy should be regarded as a way of preparing man for a social, civic and economic role that goes 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 improve living standards, reading and writing should lead not only to training for work, increased productivity, a greater participation in civic life, a better understanding of the surrounding world and should ultimately open the way to basic human culture.”

The Commission suggested that literacy programme should have three essential ingredients:—

- (1) help increase efficiency,
- (2) generate interest in vital national problems,
- (3) impart skills in reading and writing that would help in continuing education.

The problem of illiteracy calls for a variety of programmes for its solution. The first step essential is to arrest its growth by expansion of universal schooling of at least five years' duration as rapidly as possible in the age group 6 — 11. Since the percentage of girls is about half that of the boys, this is essentially a problem of the primary education of

girls, which was exhaustively discussed by the National Committee for the education of women and girls, under the chairmanship of Dr. Mrs. Deshmukh. For the age-group 11-14 who either missed schooling or dropped prematurely out of the school part-time education is called for. Part-time general and vocational education is also required for young adults of the age-group 15-30 who received some years of schooling but failed to attain permanent literacy or to prepare themselves adequately for the demands made on them by the environment. Having regard to the dimensions of the problem (189 million illiterate adults — age-group 15 plus) and the wider regional variations (47 percent literacy for urban areas, 19 percent for rural, 52.7 percent in Delhi, and 1.8 percent in NEFA), as well as to variance between men and women, the Commission recommended a two-fold strategy for combating illiteracy in the country, viz. (i) the mass-approach and (ii) the selective approach.

Before the comparative merits of the two methods are discussed it is necessary to refer to the criterion for literacy as indicated in the Census of 1961. The test for literacy was satisfied if a person could with understanding both read and write. This, it will be noticed, is a far lower criterion than that indicated by the Education Commission which may be called the functional literacy criterion. All conventionally accepted figures for literacy will have to be lowered considerably if only functional literacy is meant. The expected figure for simple illiteracy for 1968-69 is 350 million, being 65 percent of the estimated population. It is also estimated that in 1968-69 out of the total population of about 230 million in the age-group 11-44 forming the working force, 150 million would be illiterate. This then is the minimum number to be dealt with in any systematic campaigns for eradication of illiteracy. Since it would be demonstrably futile to leave the problem unsolved beyond 1985, if we have 15 years given for completely eradi-

cating illiteracy, then very roughly, we have to make 10 million literate (out of these 150 million) every year. This means that in each of the 5,000 blocks in country, 2,000 on an average should be made literate every year. This is not such a forbidding task, and with properly organised efforts one ought to be able to do better.

A Planning Group on Education, reporting on the Education Department in the Fourth Plan (September 1968) expressed the view that a reason for the retarded growth of literacy was the inadequate support given to it in terms of finances and the low priority accorded to it in the succeeding Plans. In 1950-51, the expenditure incurred on 'social education' was Rs. 86 lakhs (0.8 percent) of the total educational expenditure of Rs. 144 crores. In 1965-66, it was Rs. 120 lakhs (0.2 percent) of the total educational expenditure of Rs. 600 crores. Thus while the total educational expenditure increased over four times, that on social education rose only $1\frac{1}{2}$ times; while the proportion of expenditure on social and adult education to the total educational development programmes in the first plan was 3.3 this fell to 1.5 in the Second Plan and to 0.5 in the Third Plan. The Group observed, pointedly, "Even in the literacy classes conducted in the country the main emphasis is on reading and writing without any regard being given to the functional aspects of the literacy programme." They noted furthermore, that the Educational Administrators had been adopting the conventional and orthodox methods without creating any motivation among the adults or mobilizing voluntary public and political support for developing the programme. The Group's recommendation was that in the Fourth Plan the programmes of eradication of illiteracy should be taken up in a modest way by concentrating on the most sensitive age-group of 15-24, where the number of illiterates was estimated to be about 60 million. The other programmes were to be taken care of through better organisation, but

without expenditure out of plan allotments. The first stage could well be a mass movement largely dependent on the mobilization of local resources, both of personnel and finance. Such a movement could be taken up by (a) educational institutions in neighbouring villages and towns and cities, and (b) non-student educated youth and other social workers in compact areas. Students, teachers, members of professional classes, educated people, etc. could be an important asset in this movement. This general campaign could be spear-headed by Adult Literacy Pilot Projects in selected areas. The first phase might be largely on a campaign basis, with the additional condition that the follow-up for taking neo-literates upto the functional standard would immediately follow without any gap between the two.

The main effort under these twin programmes would be to provide the first stage of literacy to 10 million literates in the rural areas, especially in the age-group 15-24, with $\frac{1}{2}$ million made literate in the hilly and tribal areas.

These then were the main features of the mass approach. It is possible to regard the Grama Shikshan Mohim of Maharashtra as a somewhat specialized campaign of this nature. It must be assumed here in the metropolis of Maharashtra that the audience know more about this than the speaker. It is claimed that so far some 30 lakhs have been made literate through this unique effort at a cost of about Re. 1 per head. The latest verdict from a very authoritative source in the Central Government that I have recently heard is that the follow-up has not been satisfactory. The Maharashtra Government themselves felt peeved that not a single functional literacy project had been allotted to their State, out of the 100 sanctioned, as a sort of penalty of success. I understand that this has since been rectified and some projects allotted to them recently.

This brings us to the so-called selective approach,

about which the Education Commission have a good deal to say in paras 17, 20 *et seqq.* of their Report.

A very important embodiment of the selective approach are the Functional Literacy Projects in the rural areas covered by the high-yielding variety agricultural programmes. In 1968, there was some idea that there would also be functional literacy projects in conjunction with rural industries as also in urban and industrial areas. But these last two kinds have been deferred and attention concentrated on functional literacy projects in intensive agricultural development blocks of about 100 villages.

The larger programme was to be financed by the State and local community. It was proposed to cover 11 million illiterate adults, mostly in the age-group 15-24, in addition to $\frac{1}{2}$ million under urban projects and 2 million industrial workers.

The provision and targets recommended by the Group for Adult Education in the Fourth Plan were Rs. 40 crores in all, for first stage of literacy, in rural areas for 15 million persons and 1.5 million in tribal and hilly areas, and functional literacy, in rural areas including high yielding variety areas for 10 million, literacy in urban and industrial areas for 2 million and assistance to voluntary organisations to cover 5 million literates, in total for some 33.5 million. As against this, it is depressing to see that the target set in the Fourth Five-Year Plan is only apparently 3 to 4 million judging from the total provision of some 11 crores.

There is evidence to show that right from the beginning there has been a reluctance on the part of authority to face the fact that the cost of making an adult properly literate ranges between Rs. 20 to Rs. 30 per head. That this is incurred only once over a year and is less per year than the cost of Rs. 35 per annum for a minimum of 4 to 5 years for a child of 6-11 years of age is overlooked. It is also not realized

that the adult undergoes literacy education in his spare time whilst following his vocation (predominantly agriculture). It was the realization of conditions like this, prompted by participation in the work relating to the draft Education Plan for South and Eouth East Asia (1965) and discussion in the International Consultative Liaison Group formed by UNESCO that led Dr. Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh to undertake at the instance of the Government of India a Functional Literacy Project, with me as the Project Chairman, in the Shadnagar Block of the Mahbubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh (some 30 miles from Hyderabad). A Project Report was submitted in September 1967, following a systematic preliminary survey of the area, consisting of 102 villages with a population of 1,04,000.

The Introduction to this Project Report mentions that in the Mahbubnagar District the percentage of literacy was only 13.5, (far below the national average even for rural areas). The survey of the Block revealed the following state of illiteracy among people of the 15-45 age group (by samples) agriculture and non-agricultural house-holds:

	<i>Agricultural Households.</i>	<i>Non-Agricultural Households.</i>
Literacy percentage:	16.14 to 21.8	7.5 to 3.5

The bulk of these literate adults had been to school (about 50 or 60 percent to primary schools, 16 to 22 percent to middle schools, 19 to 26 percent to high schools and a small fraction, 1 to 4 percent to College. Of 100 percent only 1 to 3 percent were merely literate without having gone to any school).

Preparatory work after survey consisted of training the teachers (a substantial proportion of whom were selected from among the literate farmers — a highly successful experiment) and the holding of a workshop for Telugu Writers to encourage them

to produce suitable text books and follow-up literature — (some 19 books were written and about 6 — 7 are already printed). The co-ordination of vocational literacy has been successfully accomplished, thanks to the devoted efforts of the Project Officer, a retired Block Development Officer. Experience showed that the period required for achieving functional literacy had been under-estimated. Nine to ten months are required, i.e. approximately a year, so that only one batch of literates can be produced by a centre (of 30 persons) instead of two. The expenditure per head works out to Rs. 30|-. Both the longer period and the cost per head have been accepted by authority. The first *alumni*, some 900, received their certificates proudly at a Convocation held at Hyderabad.

Basing one's calculations on this very systematic effort, it may be estimated that some Rs. 450 crores will be required over 10 years to make 150 million farmers literate. The Pilot experiment is fully capable of extension all over the country and Rs. 30 crores a year is not too high a price to pay for breaking the illiterate citizen's invisible fetters and ensuring a safer democracy.

Literacy today issued by the Literacy International Committee (September 8, 1970) gives an interesting account of a Functional Literacy Experiment in an Industrial environment in Brazil UNESCO Pilot Project 1, UNESCO Experimental World Literacy Programme. This programme involving 32 wagon repair and maintenance workers and 48 miners, employed by a firm did not cost anything as the half-an-hour a day required for the programme was included in the working day and remunerated as such. The firm's productivity was not decreased by the curtailment of actual working hours, but actually increased. Workers progressed at varying rates in their reading and as the experiment progressed the new literates became assistant teachers. Personal relations between the team leaders, the engineers and the illiterate

workers improved considerably. Though the experiment was small, it was considered a success as an introduction to a modern functional approach to literacy training.

The target actually set by Government under functional literacy is, alas, about 1|10 of that required. It is expected that in 100 districts covered by high-yielding programmes, about one million adult illiterate farmers would be made functionally literate by the end of the Fourth Plan period. As in other undertakings and enterprises our efforts appear to be intended to be only symbolic and not calculated to make any appreciable impression on the situation. For all practical purposes, the citizen of India will continue to be fettered for at least a couple of generations more. Of the three life and death problems confronting the country, viz. population control, liquidation of illiteracy and conservation of our natural resources, there is not one that we are handling with success. On the contrary, as compared with the desiderata, the total effort, despite much high-faluting talk, is puny and feeble. Surely this way lies perdition. In the meanwhile, as the universal solvent of every tough problem, the nation has celebrated an International Literacy Week (September 8—15, 1970) and an Indian Seminar to plan National Literacy Quinquennium is timed to coincide with the Literacy Day.

On the occasion of the international year for human rights (1968) an International Conference on Human Rights was organized by the United Nations at Teheran (April 1968). At this conference an address was delivered by Mr. Rene Maheu, Director-General of UNESCO — 'One must first be able to read', he pointed out, to make his responsible freedom a reality, and to be aware of the law which could protect him. To promote literacy is to change man's conscience by changing his relation to his environment. Literacy as well as enriching individual

freedom and rights is an integral part of the emancipation of communities and nations.

To conclude, I cannot do better than quote the resolution (IV) adopted by the Second Committee of the International Conference on Human Rights, organized by the United Nations at Teheran on 22 April to 13 May 1968, as a solemn appeal to all, whether the State or the voluntary organization or the individual, whether a believer in free enterprise or in any of the innumerable brands of Socialism:

“Text of resolution IV adopted by the Second Committee of the International Conference on Human Rights, organized by the United Nations at Teheran, 22 April to 13 May 1968.

“The International Conference on Human Rights.

“Considering that literacy is a vital condition for the effective enjoyment of human rights, both civil and political, and economic, social and cultural.

“Noting with regret that, despite efforts made by States and international organizations, there are still over 700 million illiterate persons throughout the world.

“Considering that illiterate adults are defenceless in a society whose workings they cannot understand, into which they have no means of entering; and in which they are unable effectively to exercise or to defend their rights as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration.”

“Considering that the right to education is solemnly proclaimed in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in many other international instruments, including the covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.”

“Recalling the conclusions of the World Congress of Ministers of Education held at Teheran in 1965.”

“Bearing in mind the recommendations of the Consultative Liaison Committee for Literacy set up under the auspices of UNESCO, and the solemn appeal made by its Chairman,”

“Invites

- (a) The governments of all countries in which illiteracy is still widespread to increase the intellectual and material resources marshalled to combat illiteracy, with a view to expediting the gradual elimination of this scourge;
- (b) The Governments of all countries, including those not faced with the problem of illiteracy, to intensify their cooperation with and support for programmes for the education of millions of illiterate men and women;
- (c) The General Assembly of the United Nations to draw the attention of organs having responsibility in the area of human rights to the importance of combating illiteracy as a means of ensuring the effective and positive enjoyment of rights possessed by every human being;
- (d) The United Nations and its Specialized Agencies, especially UNESCO, to do their utmost to increase the contribution which literacy can make in the contemporary world to the safeguarding of peace, economic and social development, the emancipation of peoples and the promotion of rights and freedoms.”

By way of an epilogue, it will be of interest to note the further developments that have taken place in regard to the pilot fundamental education scheme in Andhra Pradesh. The State Government has authorised the Andhra Mahila Sabha to extend the scheme to four more blocks in four other districts. Dr. Mrs. Durgabai Deshmukh and myself have also decided, impelled by our interest in population policy and programmes, to integrate with the literacy work the non-

chemical aspects of the family planning programme in all five blocks.

We are also about to establish a Literacy House in the Southern Region of India at Hyderabad, with Canadian assistance. The details of the Scheme will be found in the Annexure.

The views expressed in this booklet are not necessarily the views of the Forum of Free Enterprise.

Annexure

LITERACY HOUSE SOUTHERN REGION HYDERABAD, ANDHRA PRADESH

FUNCTIONAL LITERACY WORK PLAN FOR OCTOBER, 1970 TO OCTOBER, 1971

This Project envisages the establishment of "Literacy House" in the Southern Region of India at Hyderabad whose Primary functions would be:

1. (a) to organise and conduct training for trainers of teachers;
(b) training for teachers;
(c) Organising short term, orientation, in-service and refresher courses for the workers of the Literacy Centres;
2. (a) conducting workshops for writers to produce socially significant literature for neo-literates;
(b) printing Primers, Readers and follow up literature;
3. For testing teacher's material produced both in the workshop and outside for effective follow up of Literature in the Literacy;
4. Training in mass media and communication, including Puppetry.

Andhra Mahila Sabha, Hyderabad, is currently implementing a Project of Functional Literacy in the Shadnagar Block of the Mahboobnagar District of Andhra Pradesh and has undertaken to implement similar projects in four more blocks in Andhra Pradesh with a population of 1,00,000 viz., in each of the districts of West Godavari, Hyderabad, Kurnool and Chittoor during the current year. These are financed by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, through the Government of Andhra Pradesh. Each Project is planned for 3 years and each project having 60 literacy centres per year, the budget per each block being Rs. 53,700|-, thus providing for 300 such Centres in all the 5 blocks of the districts covering a total Population of 5,00,000—these 300 Centres will conduct literacy programme for a total number of 10,000 illiterate population of active and progressive young farmers each year.

The key personnel to man these Projects will be, one Project Officer-cum-Chief Instructor-cum-Supervisor, 5 Supervisors and 60 Literacy teachers. These have to be given adequate and intensive training in their respective functions, to be able, successfully, to discharge their responsibilities. It is in this context that assistance from the World Literacy of Canada was sought, because the Projects as envisaged by the Government and which the Sabha is implementing or is about to implement, do not provide any, or have provided insignificantly small, amounts for training of teachers. An outline of the size of the Projects, the Sabha is undertaking during this year under financial assistance from Government is given below:

Total size in terms of Budget of the Functional Literacy Projects undertaken by the Andhra Mahila Sabha under assistance from the Government:

Per Project, Budget for the First Year ..	Rs. 53,700
Per Project, Budget for the Second Year ..	Rs. 46,200
Per Project, Budget for the Third Year ..	Rs. 46,200

Rs. 1,46,100

For the 5 Projects in 5 Blocks for the full period of 3 years 5 x 1,46,100	Rs. 7,30,500
Government grant for the current year	Rs. 2,43,500

The cost per individual made functionally literate (Rs. 3,46,000 for 10,000), excluding the value of the Andhra Mahila Sabha's own contribution, comes to Rs. 34.6.

A. D. Shroff
(1899-1965)
Champion of Free Enterprise

A. D. Shroff was a champion of free enterprise and a great leader of business and industry, and an economist whose predictions have proved right over the years.

He was associated with promotion of planning in the country even before Independence. When Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was the President of the Indian National Congress, in 1938 he appointed a National Planning Committee with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as the Chairman. Mr. Shroff was one of the members of the Committee.

After graduating from Sydenham College in Bombay and the London School of Economics, Mr. Shroff started as an apprentice at the Chase Bank in London. On return to India, he joined a well-known firm of sharebrokers and was also teaching advanced banking at the Sydenham College of Commerce & Economics. For over forty years, he was associated with a number of industrial and commercial enterprises, many of which owe their origin and development to him. He was a Director of leading concerns like Tatas, and his range of interests covered insurance, radio, investment, shipping, banking, and a number of other industries.

He was one of the eight authors of the well-known Bombay Plan presented to the country by private enterprise in 1944. He was also an unofficial delegate at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 which set up the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

He served on a number of committees including the well-known Shroff Committee on Finance for the Private Sector set up by the Reserve Bank of India.

In 1956, he started the Forum of Free Enterprise which has stimulated public thinking in the country on free enterprise and its close relationship with the democratic way of life. It is a tribute to Mr. Shroff's vision, courage and leadership that in spite of many adversities, the Forum of Free Enterprise established itself as a national institution within a short time.

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