CHAPTER - VII

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The importance of education as a powerful instrument for effecting change in human society has long been recognised. The concept of education in realising and appreciating human values is rooted in history and philosophy of India. The people of India can be legitimately proud of their ancient civilisation and education is not a new thing to us. There are instances galore in Indian history that the
great sages and peers imparted education over the ages and they won respect of their students. That is because all the values they have talked about have been reflected in their own lives.

Gunner K. Myrdal has rightly observed that, "Education is not merely a concept. Education enables man to lead a better and richer life and to develop his personality on the one hand, and on the other hand it is a potent agency for economic development of a country. Education has now been well recognised as an investment, nay a vital investment."¹

Thus the role of education is not merely confined to personality development of individual members of the community but it also helps the society and for that matter the nation in economic development because investment in education is treated a worthwhile investment for nation's welfare.

The educational system that was adopted in India prior to independence proved inadequate and out of place now and needs to be thoroughly overhauled in order to keep pace with the fast changing circumstances. Any piecemeal solution as a patchwork will not fully meet the requirements and aspirations of the people unless there is complete reorientation of the educational system. The inadequacy of the educational system is evident from the fact that in spite of noticeable upswing in the enrolment of students, the objective of universalisation of elementary education has not been realised even after 35 years of India's independence. The unpalatable truth is that out of nearly 5 lakh primary schools in the country, about 2 lakh schools or 40 per cent do not have proper buildings and what is more pitiable is that 37 per cent of the primary schools in the country are single-teacher schools and drop-out rate is also high since 60 per cent leave schools before they reach Class-V standard. Another unfortunate thing that deserves serious attention is that there is a sizeable number of adult illiterates about 85 to 90 million in the productive age-group 15-35 years for which their
potential for proper economic development remains untapped. Therefore, any reform towards educational policy should be considered against the backdrop of this educational scenario. Educational reform can neither be considered in vacuum nor in isolation. It is holistic in character and forms an integral part of the total development process.

The present investigation is a regional level analytical study, the purpose of which is to throw light on how the people have benefited from the myriads of development programmes including educational programmes in the Community Development Blocks in Kamrup district. The impact of these welfare-oriented programmes has been brought out in the form of some socio-economic variables, such as educational standard, disparity in the level of education between males and females, their occupational distribution, economic status (e.g. earners, earning dependent and non-earning dependents, etc), which have a bearing on the growth of healthy community life.
The survey findings have revealed some interesting results. There has been a visible impact on the lifestyle of the rural population in the C.D. Blocks of Kamrup district due to implementation of various educational and other related programmes by the State Government over the past three decades. People's awareness has also increased significantly, which is reflected in the impressive rise of literacy rate in the recent past. For instance, compared to rural literacy rate of 24.8 per cent for Kamrup district (1971 Census), the literacy rate in the villages covered by C.D. Blocks of Kamrup district as thrown up by the present survey is found to be 39 per cent, indicating a 14 per cent rise in course of the last one decade and a half.

Again, as against rural literacy rate of 34.2 per cent for males and 14.6 per cent for females in Kamrup district, the literacy rates for males and females as revealed by the present study are respectively 49 per cent and 28 per cent. This shows that along with their male counterparts, the females have exhibited their increasing awareness towards
education. This increasing consciousness on the part of the weaker segment of the society is a healthy sign for the advancement of community living. The women-folk who so long remained neglected due to ignorance and lack of knowledge and skill has been found to be enlightened due to proliferation of knowledge as a result of increased educational activities and other information media.

The impact of education on community living is manifest in a great variety of ways. For instance, in course of my investigation in the villages under C.D. Blocks of Kamrup district, it was found that the rural population, more especially the tribals who earlier under the influence of superstitious belief adopted crude practices for curing of diseases have now lost faith in superstition and have taken recourse to modern methods of medical treatment. This is not to say that they have discarded the indigenous medicines which have been traditionally found to be effective.
There has been a noticeable change in the outlook of the people, their attitudes to life and ways of living, their behaviour pattern, adjustment to environment with a sense of belongingness and participation in activities for common benefit of the community.

Increasing awareness of the community is also reflected in various other ways. For instance, 45 per cent of the households reported that they had some kind of library facilities in their villages and 25 per cent attended library once weekly, 30 per cent once bi-weekly and another 20 per cent attended library once monthly. Moreover, 40 per cent of the households reported that they had borrowed books from the library. It was also revealed that although due to poor economic condition, most of the people did not subscribe newspapers of their own, 35 per cent used to read newspapers and 25 per cent read magazines and journals, etc in the library or in the Information Centres of the C.D. Blocks. This shows that education has increased the people's awareness for popularity of journalism.
Sixty per cent of the people reported that they had Radios and Transistors of their own but all of them did not listen to educational programmes broadcast in the Radios, because most people bought radio or transistor for its entertainment purpose listening to film songs, and radio dramas and other musical programmes. Only 30 per cent of the households listened to educational programmes in the radios or transistors regularly and another 40 per cent only sometimes either in their own radio sets or in the neighbour's house.

Radio as a medium of information has served about 65 per cent of the farmers because 40 per cent of the households regularly listened to radio broadcasts on improved agricultural practices, e.g. benefits of improved seeds (HYV), chemical fertilisers, insecticides, benefits of irrigation, price bulletins of agricultural commodities, marketing facilities for their agricultural produce, etc. Another 25 per cent listened to such programmes only occasionally.

The family planning programme did not appear to have made any visible impact on the rural
population in reducing the family size, because the average size of the household was found to be 8. In course of investigation, it was found that among the muslims, there were as many as 15 members in a family. Sterilisation as a method of birth control did not find popularity among certain section of the population. Only about 60 per cent families desired to have small size families and the rest 40 per cent still feel that larger the family size, the better the family income, because the children in large majority of families help their parents in agricultural operations besides doing other household activities. Therefore, there is urgent need for vigorous drive for popularising family planning as a measure to check population growth which is rising alarmingly.

Though some change was noticed in the occupational pattern, agriculture continued to dominate the rural economy, because more than two-thirds were engaged in cultivation and about 25 per cent were engaged in various professions. This calls for measures to shift the population from traditional agriculture to other more gainful occupations in
trade and industry to improve their economy on the one hand and to reduce pressure on land on the other, which has already reached saturation point.

The rural people generally expressed their willingness to extend their cooperation in the implementation of development programmes, but seeing corruption in the hierarchy of administration they become suspicious about the bonafides of the leadership of a few undesirable persons. This is not to be generalised that all people in the administration are corrupt. More often that not, the funds allotted by Government for the common benefit of the community, were either misused or used to serve the selfish ends of a handful of influential persons in the village. This has eroded their confidence in the leadership of such unscrupulous persons. In the matter of distribution of improved seeds, fertilisers, improved birds and animals like farm poultry, pigs, jersey bulls and jersey cows, even agricultural credits, only the influential persons who had link with the administration got preference over those who are actually needy and
deserving. Therefore, to win the confidence of the rural people, it would be necessary to keep vigilance on this type of malpractices.

Farm inputs and agricultural credits are also not received by the needy farmers in times of need from the Government and financial institutions due to complicated procedural matters. Therefore, there is need for modifying and simplifying the complicated procedures for granting of agricultural credits to the poor farmers.

In the light of the above observations, the following suggestions are offered by way of remedial measures;

(1) For all-round development of people in general and educational development in particular, a network of decentralised educational set up on community education should be formed in every district with proper plans and programmes.

(2) Every educational institution from primary level to university should establish linkage with the community as well as society through community educational programmes for ensuring better community living.
(3) All employment generating schemes of 20-point Programme like National Rural Employment Programme (NRSP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) should be vigorously implemented involving works relating to irrigation, social forestry, roads, flood protection, soil and water conservation, village schools, dispensary buildings, and construction of drinking water wells, etc to ensure wage paid employment to the rural poor comprising small end marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other disadvantaged segment of the population. These schemes, if properly implemented will ensure improvement in the level of living of the rural poor. An integrated approach should be adopted to bring about community welfare through Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRDP) and through projects taken up under District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA), etc.

(4) The multi-service community centre has the capacity to adopt itself to the rapid and broad changes in the life of the community. It would be, therefore, necessary to establish multi-service
community centres in every village where local voluntary organisations, educational institutions, and local people's participation would discuss and thrash out the problems facing the community and chalk out development programmes to make them more receptive to the diversified needs of the people. 'Think globally and act locally' should be the motto of multi-service community centres in all villages.

(5) Development programmes should be implemented on a nonstop or continuing basis and educative process must be assessed regularly and periodically and any drawback noticed should be remedied and aim should be to give stress on people's suggestions for community welfare.

(6) The basic concept of community belongingness or sense of community and community education should be developed and clearly understood by planners, administrators, implementors, evaluators and policy framers including those involved in the problem. Community environment should be created
so that every single person in a community can benefit in some way from being involved with all the other community members.

(7) With technological innovations in the electronic era, knowledge and skills have expanded rapidly with the dynamics of change in the world. Therefore, there is desperate need for people to constantly update their thinking and attitudes keeping abreast of the new developments taking place in the world around them. For this purpose, it would be necessary to establish a suitable Information or Resource Centre in the C.D. Blocks within easy access of the people.

(8) Pre-primary education in the Kamrup district or for that matter in the State of Assam appears to have been grossly neglected, because no worthwhile expansion has taken place in respect of pre-primary schools. Pre-primary age-group is the most receptive period of child life and in this age the child has greater adaptability. Moral values, values of dignity of work, and social and national integration can be inculcated to him
through different play-way methods. When the working mothers or parents go out of home for cultivation or other occupations, it becomes a problem for them to keep their young children at home. Therefore, balwadis, anganwadis or creche type child-care educational centres should be attached to every primary school in the C.D. Blocks.

(9) Selection of sites for primary school campus should be made in hygienic and pleasant environment with suitable infrastructures like proper school buildings with necessary school paraphernalia and play grounds for games and physical exercise. Immediate steps should be taken to provide more teachers in primary schools where there are single-teacher schools. Apart from official machinery for supervision of primary schools which is at a low ebb, scale of supervision should be increased to maintain quality education and local people themselves should pay greater attention in this respect.

(10) At present there is varying degree of unemployment among the generalists, because
there is over crowding in the institutions of general education. Therefore, to ease the unemployment situation in the State, it would be necessary to channelise a segment of student population at the secondary or higher secondary stage of education to vocational stream according to exigencies of time. Vocationalisation should start with the introduction of production-oriented subjects. A mobile vocational guidance or counsellor cell should make frequent visits to schools to inform the students about the facilities available in the State about vocational education and to arrange admission and placement for students willing to take up such vocational courses. Thus craze for higher education can be minimised on the one hand and the system will help meet the requirement of middle level technicians on the other.

(11) There is a sizeable proportion of adults in the productive age-group 15-35 years comprising of illiterates, semi-literate, school drop-outs and school leavers, who are the potential source of work force. Urgent steps are called for
to properly utilize this vast reservoir of manpower resources in the various production process after making them functionally literate and imparting job-oriented training to them in a phased manner.

(12) Educational programmes which are at present prevalent in the Community Development Blocks are inadequate to cater to the changing needs of the local people. Therefore, every Community Development Block should be directly involved in non-formal educational programme such as Adult education for school drop-outs etc. The programme should cover diverse disciplines, viz. general hygiene, population education, health education, citizenship education, nutrition, child care, and education relating to agriculture, livestock, veterinary, etc., which would help the community in personality development and character building as also to increase the capacity of the members to augment production and productivity for the community welfare.

(13) At present there is a great majority of villages which do not have adult education centres; and in those villages where there are such centres,
the people did not appear to be enthusiastic about attending literacy classes because they felt that they did not get immediate visible benefit out of it. Therefore, there is desperate need for motivating the people for arousing their consciousness to realise the benefit of adult education for common welfare of community life. The publicity media will have to play a crucial role through publicity campaign, such as pictorial posters, distribution of informative booklets, screening of films of educative value and also through mobile drama and songs depicting themes of community interest.

(14) Audio-visual aids like T.V. and Video are powerful media for spread of education among the masses. All important towns should be provided with a network of high power T.V. transmitters in a phased programme to ensure wider T.V. coverage and Community T.V. sets should be provided in each and every C.D. Blocks or Village Educational Centres to mobilise public opinion and to update the knowledge of the viewers.

(15) Adult Education Centres should be established in each and every village and placed in
charge of a local full-time organiser with attractive salary so that he takes interest in his work and devotes whole-heartedly to the literacy classes.

(16) To achieve the objective of attaining cent per cent literacy by 1990, it would be necessary to involve all educational institutions and voluntary organisations for the success of the adult education programmes. All industries should be encouraged to start adult literacy classes in their factories and workers' colonies to make their unlettered workers at least functionally literate and expenditure incurred on this score should be considered for the purpose of income tax rebate by way of incentive.

(17) Community and education are two different aspects of the same human experience. For full development of abilities of the members of the community, there emerges the concept of community based educational institutions, such as community schools and community colleges, etc. The existing universities and colleges are like ivory towers alienated from the community. To establish a direct link with the community, community schools/community
colleges should be established within reasonable
distance from the village catering to a group of
villages and unlike in the formal system, curriculum
should be made flexible to accommodate subjects of
diverse community interest. In fact, to start with,
on an experimental basis, a few selected colleges
in the rural areas may be taken to serve as community
colleges which will keep close contact with the
community, their interests, their diverse problems
and would devise ways and means for solution of
their problems.

(18) As the term 'community' stands for a
secular, non-sectarian, and egalitarian social order,
there should be no question of any consideration of
caste, creed, or religious denomination in identifying
or treating the community. In fact, heterogeneity
of a community should be considered as a virtue in
the learning process.

(19) Every teacher or knowledgeable person
of the community should serve as community educator
or community developer. He should be well informed
about the objectives of community education, peoples'
involveement and peoples' participation before he is
entrusted with the responsibility of a community
educator.
(20) Educational programmes should be of 'information exposure type'. Modern innovations of science and technology and modern technical know-how should be utilised on the basis of local and native necessity, which may attract manpower to produce more in diverse fields. Thus educational programmes should be related to poverty alleviation programmes for ensuring a richer and prosperous community life.

(21) Though education is a harmonising and unifying process yet it has been observed that learning process often alienates the learner from his or her gainful traditional family occupation, such as agriculture, handicraft, village industries, ivory works, wood carving, bell metal industries, weaving, etc. Therefore, it would be necessary to motivate them to retain their traditional family occupations by modernising these crafts to produce quality products to attract international market.

(22) To meet the development needs of the community, while it is essential to adopt sophisticated technology, transfer of technology should be gradual in a phased manner and appropriate infra-
structure should be created on which to base such technology. This is not to say that indigenous technology should be completely replaced, rather it should form the basis for adoption of advanced technology to enrich community living.

(23) The educational programmes and development programmes of the block activities should be complementary to one another. In other words, educational programmes should form an integral part of the total development process. The aim of the Community Development programme should be to give stress on the creation of durable community assets to generate income for raising the level of living of the community.

(24) Instead of fully depending on the government, the community should be able to build up their own resources through peoples' contributions for implementation of community welfare programmes. Pragmatic approach should be adopted for achieving an all-round development of community life. In the context of decentralised planning, introduced in Assam with effect from first April, 1986, it would be necessary on the part of the
Community Development Blocks to serve as nucleus of implementing machinery at the grass root level.

In conclusion, it can be said that the dividing line between formal and non-formal education must disappear in a balanced learning process. Learning pervades all aspects and all processes of life at all stages in such a way that each stage or form of education enriches the other. This objective is sought to be achieved through community education. The educational imbalance between the haves and have-nots can be minimised through this type of education. Community education is an association of all those who work in local communities but think globally. Community education is a must for an egalitarian society. The educational system needs restructuring to be free from centralization so that it can move towards greater local initiative and energise the community to foster self rule with increasing participation of the community and the people.

The educational programmes should offer a further chance to all those irrespective of age,
who want to acquire further knowledge and skills to cope with the demands of the rapidly changing contemporary society. The educational programmes should benefit not only the people in the rural areas but also the deprived segment of the population living in the urban slums.

Overall improvement can be ensured in the Community Development Blocks by implementing different development programmes including rural technology through community education centres. Total improvement means all-round improvement including educational, economic, social, cultural, political and so on.

It is widely accepted that 'education not only trains but also equips'. So the programmes have to be adjusted from time to time to respond to the changing needs and growing consciousness of the people. Education plays the crucial role to foster national consciousness and identity.

It is to be appreciated that our work in education is important but it does not exempt us
from being concerned about the myriad other problems that all of us, as human beings have to face. We cannot begin to deal with the problems of education without realistically dealing with peoples' problems as well.

The aim of community education should be to educate the people to increase productivity, employment and to eradicate poverty. It must provide knowledge and skill to the poor, backward and relatively disadvantaged section of the society. Community education programmes should be viewed as an attack on mass poverty and not merely on mass illiteracy. It must train every citizen to be conscious about community feeling and link all programmes with all development activities. Community Development is an educational enterprise and education is the major key to development of rural India.

In most of the villages, vast majority are illiterate, ignorant; peasants live in huts, hovels and sub-standard dwellings devoid of any basic amenities like sanitary and hygienic necessities, not to speak of any modern amenities like electricity,
running water etc. The environment of average village is depressing, the streets are narrow, at times becoming impassable during the monsoons, and lacking in communication facilities.

It must be conceded that community education is not going to magically solve all the problems of the community any more than any other idea, nevertheless, it has one remarkable advantage in that it can imbibe in the minds of the members of the community the feeling that all will benefit by actively involving themselves in the community development process.

Greater attention will have to be paid to the cultural values and aspirations of the people in the development of education along with continued appraisal of the requirements for modernisation. Side by side, for establishment of cultural identity of all communities in the society, the development strategy should be increasingly concerned with endogenous development rather than exogenous development pushed from outside. It is here that education has an important role to play.
Fortunately, education has been given due priority in the State's Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) by allocating funds with substantial step up compared to the Sixth Plan. With this increased outlay on education, it would be possible to remove the educational inadequacies in the State in the near future.

It is hoped that if the foregoing suggestions are implemented in right earnest, it will go a long way in solving the bulk of the problems of the society. We should go in for a new paradigm of development in the 21st century to create an environment for healthy community living.