

**Adult Education in India**  
**Or**  
**Each One, Teach One**  
**Or**  
**Eradication of Illiteracy from India**  
**Or**  
**Education of the “Old Parrots”**  
**Or**  
**Three R’s for the Adults**

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Essay No. 01

**“Education is the cheap defense of nations.”**

**— Burke**

India is a democratic country. No democracy can function successfully if its masses are illiterate. In a democracy, people elect their own rulers. The illiterate masses are generally exploited by clever politicians through empty slogans, false promise and high-sounding arguments. An educated and alert electorate is, therefore, the basic requirement of a true democracy.

Unfortunately, India continues to be a very backward country in respect of literacy in spite of the fact that successive popular governments have been trying their best to spread literacy. Our constitution also promises universal literacy and equality of opportunity for all. Compulsory primary education for children between the age group of six to fourteen years has already been introduced. Schools have been opened even in far-flung villages in the country. Efforts are being earnestly made to force the children to come to schools. It is really a commendable effort.

Along with the education of the children, efforts are also being made to provide a knowledge of the three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) to the illiterate adult population in the country. The project of Adult Education was launched on a big scale by the Janata Government in 1977. But the scheme could not see the light of the day because of the in-fighting and the internal squabbling of the various constituents of the Janata Government.

When the Congress government came back to power, it decided to take up the project of Adult Education again. It gave the slogan: 'Each one, Teach one.' It was an excellent idea. The Central Government gave a concrete shape to the entire project and work was started in right earnest.

The problem of educating 'the old parrots' is a colossal one. There are about 450 million illiterate adults in the country. First, they have to be persuaded and motivated to receive education. Secondly, resources, personnel, equipment, teaching aids, buildings and other related materials have to be provided on a large scale. Thirdly, huge amount of expenditure involved has to be arranged for. In addition, there are several other related problems also. But in spite of all this, the government is proceeding ahead with the project in all seriousness.

The project has been handed over to more than 150 universities in the country. Colleges affiliated to the universities have been asked to open and organize adult education centres for adults in their respective areas. Each unit conducts teaching courses for 20-30 adults. The curriculum includes in addition to the knowledge of the three R's up to the primary standard level, a training in some socially useful activities. Teachers manning each unit are suitably paid. Suitable incentives are being paid to the adult learners so that more and more them willingly join the teaching centres. It is hoped that lakhs of centres working in the country will certainly be able to achieve the desired targets.

The problem of adult education is really a grave problem. But there is no need to be pessimistic about it. Let the teachers and the concerned officials rise to the occasion and put themselves heart and soul into the noble task. No government plan can succeed unless it is backed by the people. We must give up the practice of sitting at the fence and throwing missiles or criticism and condemnation at the government. Let us join the heroic effort and make this ambitious plan a grand success so that Gurudev Tagore's dreams are converted into a reality. He dreamt of an India. :—

**“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;**

**Where knowledge is free.....”**

## Adult Education

Adult education is the most important programme of social welfare in India. Over eighty per cent of our men and women are illiterate. They have to be made literate as quickly as possible, otherwise democracy in India cannot work. They do not understand even the mechanism of voting. Most of our people just cannot afford education. They have to earn their living every day of their life. They are daily wage earners. They can pick up adult education through night-time classes, organized by the social welfare organizations in many parts of India.

A country cannot make progress if the majority of its people are uneducated. There are more than fifty crore people who are illiterate in India.

On October 2, 1978, a nationwide National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was launched on the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. That programme was then continued by the Indira Government. Adult Education is a non-political and non-controversial subject. Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi was even more interested in the propagation of Adult Education than Prime Minister, Shri Morarji Desai who launched the programme in 1978. Adult Education centres have been opened in a very large number of districts of India.

Adult Education Scheme combines learning with earning activities of the illiterate people. The timings of teaching are so arranged that these do not conflict with the working hours. The 1978 programme added another aim, a cent per cent literacy in five years but that was a distant dream. It could never be realized. As the population is going up; so is the illiteracy. Consequently, there are more illiterates today than those were at the time of independence in 1947.

Adult Education produces good workers in offices and factories. It helps them continue their self-education. It makes a good citizen of India. Its aim is to bring about general awakening and political consciousness in the country.

Adult Education is very helpful in the all-round development of the country and the nation. It helps raise standard of living of the farm and factory workers. It is a mean for the poor people and the weaker sections of the society.

The revolutionary Adult Education Programme launched by the Janata Government came to nothing, because most of the money had been misspent and gone into greedy hands. In the past few years Adult Education Programme was effectively executed and the literacy of the nation increased to a great extent.

Adult Education is strictly an official enterprise. The Government offers necessary help to all social organizations willing to undertake the work of making the illiterate literate so that they can read and write.