

Youth constitute a dynamic force that influences many activities in a society. They are one of the potent resources of a nation in times of emergencies. In India with her predominantly rural population, the rural youth can become one of the important factors in village reconstruction programmes. It, therefore, becomes imperative to organise the rural youth and to channelise their aspirations and energies properly.

In the life of an individual, youth comprises that period during which the individual is in the process of transformation from the dependent and less responsible age of childhood to the self-reliant and responsible age of adulthood. It may turn out to be a period of social crisis. During this period, the physical development of an individual is taking rapid strides. Psychologically the youth may be uncertain of themselves. They have many problems and need guidance to overcome the same. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the various activities of the rural youth and their problems. An investigation was undertaken to know the occupational and the leisure-time activities of rural youth and their problems. Findings concerning the activities of the youth are presented in this article:

Landis (1944) observed that youth are as likely to enter their father's occupation as any other. A similar observation was also made by Elias (1949). Joy and Beck (1937) reported that a majority of the youth out-of-school were engaged in farming. Anderson

(1937) concluded in a study of young men from schools that 91 per cent of them preferred an occupation and 8 per cent gave no choice. Out of those preferring an occupation, only 16 per cent, the largest proportion, gave preference to farming though the occupation of the fathers of 93 per cent of the youth was farming.

Thurow (1934), Anderson and Kerns (1935), Anderson (1936), Lively and Miller (1934), Bell (1938) and Stewart (1938) have observed that reading is the main leisure-time activity of most of the rural youth. Anderson (1936) reported that three per cent of the young men do not find time for leisure.

METHOD

Young men within the age-group of 16 to 30 years were covered by this investigation which was conducted in the villages of the development block attached to the College of Agriculture, Poona. A random sample of 284 young men was drawn from 20 villages randomly selected from this block. These youth were interviewed in their villages with the help of a structural schedule.

FINDINGS

In the sample studied, 39 per cent of the youth were in the age group of 16 to 20 years, 32 per cent were between 21 and 25 years of age while the remaining 29 per cent were between 26 and 30 years. Nearly 25 per cent of the youth had not received any formal education. 30 per cent had

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studied upto the IV standard and 29 per cent had received formal education between the V and VII standards. Only 16 per cent of the youth had studied beyond the VII standard.

38 per cent of the youth had married at the average age of 19 years. The earliest age at marriage reported was 11 years and the latest 26 years. 86 per cent of the youth belonged to joint families.

Occupational Activities.—The youth represents the period during which an individual is transferred to the independent adulthood. To be independent and self-reliant, one needs to be gainfully engaged in some occupation for livelihood. Knowledge about the pattern of occupational employment of the rural youth is, therefore, important. The distribution of the youth, according to their and their parental occupations, is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF THE YOUTH BY THEIR OCCUPATION AND BY THE OCCUPATION OF THEIR FATHERS.

Sr. No.	Occupation	No. of youth engaged in this occupation	Percentage	No. of youth whose fathers were engaged in this Occupation	Percentage
1.	Farming alone	189	66.55	256	90.14
2.	Farming and labour	35	12.32	12	4.22
3.	Farming and job other than labour	22	7.75	8	2.82
4.	Occupation other than farming	10	3.52	8	2.82
5.	No occupation	28	9.86	—	—
Total		284	100.00	284	100.00

A large majority of the youth were engaged in farming either with or without any supplementary occupation. Two out of every three youth were engaged in farming alone. The proportion of the youth working in non-agricultural occupations was very small and represented mostly young men employed in trade or who were paid-employees either in the village or outside. Some of them were employed in factories in the town of Bhor. Nearly ten per cent of the youth were not engaged in any occupation; most of them were studying in schools.

It is interesting to know the occupation of their fathers in order to understand

the occupational background of the youth. Fathers of nearly all the youth were engaged in farming either exclusively or with some supplementary occupation. However, there was a fall in the number of the youth engaged in this occupation, the fall being more pronounced in the occupational category of 'farming alone' indicating a tendency on the part of the youth to depend less on farming as the main source of their livelihood as compared to their parents.

Nearly all the working youth were engaged in the parental occupation either with their fathers or independently, the latter group constituting only a small proportion. Those

who worked independently were doing so mostly due to their parental sickness or their death.

A majority of the youth were working in the parental occupation. This, however, did not mean that they were necessarily prohibited by their caste from taking up any other occupation. Many followed their fathers' occupation because of preferences, convenience and familiarity with it though some reported family pressure as the reason responsible for their occupational choice.

The youth who were not working in the parental occupation reported that "desire to migrate" and "other member of the family looked after the family occupation" were the main reasons responsible for not engaging in the parental occupation. Some mentioned that they did not like the parental occupation and

few others considered that "the parental occupation was quite laborious" and "it required considerable capital", and hence they did not take it up.

Leisure-Time Activities.—Each youth was asked about the leisure-time he could get every day for recreation, gossiping, playing games, social contacts and such other activities. Information regarding the period of the day when the leisure-time was available was also collected.

On an average a youth could get about three hours of leisure-time every day. The maximum and the minimum leisure-time in a day reported were seven hours and one hour, respectively. Table 2 gives an idea about the extent of the leisure-time available to them per day.

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF THE YOUTH BY THE EXTENT OF LEISURE-TIME AVAILABLE PER DAY

Sr. No.	Leisure-time available per day (hours)	Number of youth	Percentage
1.	Up to 2	151	53.17
2.	3 to 4	105	36.97
3.	5 and more	28	9.86
	Total	284	100.00

Nearly one out of every two youth had a limited leisure-time of less than two hours every day while only a small number reported substantial leisure-time-

it is also interesting to know the period of the day when this leisure-time is available to the youth. It was noticed that nearly half the number of the youth, the largest propor-

tion, could get leisure-time both in the mornings and in the evenings, while only a small proportion reported getting leisure-time in the mornings, afternoons as well as in the evenings.

In order to find out how the youth spend their leisure-time, they were asked to mention their leisure-time activities. These activities were grouped into four categories, namely,

(1) games, (2) music, (3) reading and number of the youth reporting various (4) other recreational activities. The leisure-time activities are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3
LEISURE-TIME ACTIVITIES OF THE YOUTH

Sr.No.	Leisure-time activity	Number of youth reporting	Percentage (n = 284)
1.	<i>Games :</i>		
	(a) <i>Outdoor games</i>		
	Lezim	245	86.27
	Hututu	203	71.48
	Atya Patya	185	65.14
	Volley Ball	38	13.38
	(b) <i>Indoor games</i>		
	Playing cards	85	29.92
2.	<i>Music :</i>		
	Bhajan	200	70.42
	Radio	170	59.86
3.	<i>Reading :</i>		
	Newspapers	140	49.29
	Novels and other books	81	28.52
	Magazines	70	24.65
	Weeklies	51	17.96
4.	<i>Other Recreational Activities:</i>		
	Chatting	249	87.68
	Cinema	22	7.75

It was interesting to note that for a large number of the youth, chatting was one of the leisure-time activities. This was closely followed by the outdoor game of "lezim" which is very popular among the rural people. A substantial number of the youth showed interest in reading newspapers, magazines and other literature.

A village temple was used by nearly 90 per cent of the youth as one of the places for leisure-time activities. This was followed by the playground, the gram panchayat office and the home, in order of importance.

Discussion.—Nearly three out of every four rural youths included in the sample had received some formal education. The level of literacy among these youths was higher than that of the total population. This seems to be due to the expanding educational facilities in the rural areas and the increased awareness of

the parents about the value of formal education. However, there is yet a need for improving the educational status of the rural youth. This would help in the successful implementation of rural development programmes including those designed for the youth welfare.

A majority of the youths were unmarried. It is a common experience that an unmarried person differs from a married one in his activities, needs and problems. As this characteristic plays an important role in an individual's life, the married and the unmarried youths need to be considered separately while devising youth welfare programmes to cater effectively to the needs of these two categories.

A large number of the youths were members of joint families, indicating thereby that the joint family system still continues to be

predominant in our rural areas. The father's authority is supreme and most of the family decisions are taken by him. Under such a family system, the young people cannot take any important decisions on their own and in many cases, they have no freedom of action, whether they are married or unmarried. Involvement of the parents and other elderly persons from the family in the planning of youth welfare programmes is therefore quite essential.

Occupation plays a vital role in the individual's life since it provides the means of livelihood. The investigation has revealed that rural youth are mostly engaged in farming. This is quite natural since agriculture is the predominant occupation in the rural areas. Occupational guidance for the rural youth should, therefore, emphasise improvement in the farm technology and efficiency.

The rural youth generally follow their parental occupation. In most of the rural families, occupational know-how and skills seem to be the only assets which these families pass on to their children. Familiarity with the occupation and, in some cases, even the family pressures and decisions seem to be responsible to make the youth take to the parental occupation.

The rural youth get limited leisure-time. Programmes aiming to provide suitable leisure-time activities to them are necessary

A considerable number of the youth avail of the traditional means of recreation, listen to radio programmes or engage themselves in reading during their leisure-time. These tools can be effectively used as means for educating them.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

For the purpose of this investigation, 284 young men from the villages of the Poona Agricultural College Development Block were interviewed. Nearly one out of every four youth studied was illiterate and only a small number out of the remaining had studied beyond the VII grade. This indicates that in general, the formal educational level of the rural youth is low and efforts are necessary to improve this situation.

Most of the rural youth were engaged in farming. The youth welfare programmes should, therefore, be predominantly farm-oriented. Since a substantial number of the youth are members of joint families, such programmes should be chalked out also in consultation with the senior members of the families.

Reading and listening to radio programmes were among the main leisure-time activities of a substantial number of the youth. Literature and radio should, therefore, be fully exploited for educating these youth as well as for providing recreation to them.

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