

ADULT EDUCATION THROUGH SOCIAL SETTLEMENT

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Both the institutions, adult education and the social settlement, are as yet young in India. Assuming that a study of their organization and working in the West may lead to useful suggestions for their working in this country, the author proceeds to show how social settlements can help in the process of adult education, and makes a critical survey of the problems likely to confront the adult educator and the personal qualities that will be required to meet them successfully.

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India's allegiance to the democratic way of life cannot be doubted. But if it is not supported by a live, informed intelligence, which can result only from compulsory mass education, this blind allegiance is sure to provide a fertile soil for pseudo-democratic incompetence. As matters stand today, 92% of our people are illiterate, and even out of the remaining 8%, not many are distinguished by balance of perspective, depth of information and the other marks of an educated mind. For the smooth working of democracy, the two stumbling blocks in its way, namely, lack of educational facilities of adequate magnitude and the prevailing low quality of education, should be eliminated. This adult education alone can do. Its function is not only to aim at adjusting human beings to their environment, but also at making wholesome modifications in the environment itself if it is inherently deliterious in its influence. Social settlements are functioning in the West as the tools of such concepts of adult education and their history, viewed along with the account of the development of adult education, leads to the inference that both these institutions, arising from the same needs, are complementary to each other. Both, however, are as yet young in India. Therefore a study of their organization and working in the West may be useful to us and no apologies need be made for this shift of attention from the East to the West.

With the advance of civilisation, society has become more complex and has divided itself into those who have what they need and want to have, and those who have *not* what they need and want to have. At this point the social settlement plays an important role. It becomes the meeting point of these two divisions of society, the timely bridge that prevents their fatal partitioning. As Dr. Holt says in "Social Action" : "A neighbourhood house is an attempt to reconstitute the neighbourhood in a society created and ruled by the law of the markets." We can well imagine that the personalities of thousands and thousands of our workers have little chance of healthy development in big commercial cities which sprang up almost overnight without any conscious planning and purpose, without any preplanned facilities of play and recreation grounds, with no adequate hygienic and sanitary provision. The social settlement in such a neighbourhood must become a family living in that area—a family consisting of a group of people having had educational and social advantages living in a neglected neighbourhood, striving to understand the problems of the wage-earner and the better-placed man, and sharing in the normal neighbourhood life.

Certain misconceptions about social settlements need to be cleared at this stage. The settlement is not a charitable institution, although, as Mary Simkhovitch

puts it, " it may do charitable things and its efforts may be supported by charitable funds." Again, it is not the instrument of any party, political, religious, communal or any other. Being an unifying factor, it attempts to search for the salient points in every group of society. The extent to which these misconceptions are prevalent is clearly shown in the following quotation from "Settlement Catechism" by Mary Simkhovitch : "What do capitalists think of the settlements ? Often they think they are hotbeds of radicalism. What do 'radicals' think of the settlements ? Often they think the settlements are the instruments of capitalism by which working people are lulled into inactivity. What do 'religious' people think of the settlements ? That it must be irreligious, if it does not hold religious services or is not connected with the church. What do those who have studied the settlements most closely think of them ? That they are neither 'conservative' nor 'radical,' 'religious' nor 'irreligious' but that guided by experience and life itself they propose to build up a more valuable kind of neighbourhood life than that which at present exists, irrespective of theory or regardless of criticism."

This policy of non-partisanship gives the social settlement certain distinct advantages over other kinds of social work. No problem is regarded by it as an isolated problem, but as one which has to be seen in relation to other problems. The settlement, again, gives unparalleled opportunity to understand the indigenous life of city neighbourhoods and thereby secure training for political activity. Lastly, by being a member of a group rather than working as an isolated individual, one-sided views are checked by the constant criticism of other members of the groups. The settle-

ment thus may be defined as a "group of men and women associated under qualified leadership for the common purpose of knowledge, wisdom and fellowship for the service of the community either by personal effort, by united action, or by influencing public opinion and participating in public life."* As C. Manshardt has put it, "It serves as a neighbourhood clearing house and as a centre of neighbourhood co-operation."

Before proceeding to examine how the settlement can help to promote adult education, let us try to answer the question as to why adults need to be educated. All are agreed on the inadequacy of our present system of education. We have been able to acquire knowledge, but not the required competence to apply that knowledge to life in practice. We are educated in part, but the whole man is not educated. Therefore adult education attempts to make up the deficiency by educating the whole man. Next comes the social need for adult education. The individual must be enabled to adapt himself to the changing world. As the National Education Report of America says : "Rapidly changing social and economic conditions require the development of a system of continuous education which will enable adults to adjust themselves to their changing environment." Conditions in the progressive machine-age aggravate the need for adult education. Under the cramped atmosphere of modern times the adult has no opportunity to give expression to his thought. So the first service that a program of adult education seeks to fulfil is to provide him with the opportunity for self-expression. It attempts to engage him in some work of positive creation ; for creativeness is the function of man in his wholeness. And the driving force of this

* *Settlements and Their Work*, E. S. A. paper No. 2, p. 3.

noble attempt will be the love of beauty ; the love of seeing something in its perfection and as the product of his own efforts. Another great need which is met by this process of adult education is to help the adults to keep their minds open in spite of advancing age. It enables them to form their own judgement by basing it on facts. It insists on their discarding worn-out ideas and habits, and substituting for them new ideas and up-to-date knowledge. Thus they are enabled to realise their responsibility in relation to their neighbours.

There are several ways in which the settlement promotes adult education. Firstly, considering the fact that the settlement brings together the high and the low without distinction, it is no exaggeration to maintain that " by the alchemy of residential propinquity a cross-current of learning is established between the privileged supporters and the unprivileged consumers."* Secondly, there is an undefinable and immeasurable personal education that takes place between individuals, once confidence is established between them. No programme of adult education through social settlement can entirely forget this a important trend and should constantly, therefore, bear in mind the ideal of maintaining personal contact with individuals in the neighbourhood. Thirdly, all through the years of its life the social settlement has been attempting to promote civic education or civic education looking to reform. A considered programme of adult education has been its agent. While keeping aloof from party politics, it has studiously attempted to educate the citizens in the nature and forms of government, in the duties and rights of citizens. Further, the social settlement believes that learning is a social process, and so the opportunity for sharing knowledge and experience is amply provided for by it.

It is not possible to give a general program of work for settlements as a whole. Nor is it wise to give a list of activities that could be carried on in a given situation. Each settlement has to act differently keeping in mind the particular needs of the neighbourhood and the peculiar conditions of the situation. Hence we can only try to lay down very broadly the different forms adult education can take in a social settlement. The broad heads will be :—

1. Adult Education through group work.
2. " " " classes.
3. " " " the platform.
4. " " " the desk of the 'adult educator.'

Through Group Work.—Group work itself may be carried on in what are known as clubs and associations. Regarding the individual not merely as an individual but as a member of the group and educating him through it is the primary function of group work. Group accomplishment would depend upon the successful training of the individual in the art of self-government in the clubs. Various methods of procedure may be used in order to make the club a centre of training in self-government. It should be run entirely by the members of the club through committees or executives elected by them, and its decisions and conduct should be subject to a self-imposed set of rules and an unwritten constitution.

In running these clubs, however, one needs to keep in mind the experiences of other settlements and try to profit by their faults. The experience of social settlements where an extensive programme of group work was attempted shows that "(1) the neighbourhoods in which they are located and the 'neighbours' with whom they work have a major responsibility in determining the policies of the settlement, (2) their educational programmes are

* G. Hawkins. *Educational Experiment In Social Settlements.*

directed toward the development of indigenous leadership, (3) their educational programmes are built on immediate interests made apparent in or developed by group associations, and (4) they tend in their association with other groups to work out from the settlement rather than into the settlement."*

Through *Classes*.—Adult education is for two types of people, for those who have gone through schools and colleges and yet need education, and for those who have not had the advantage of education at all. In India the latter form by far the bigger majority. Therefore, the classes for them should try to impart a part at least of the education they would have received had they attended the schools and also the sort of education that schools themselves have failed to impart. Hilda W. Smith has some valuable suggestions to make as fundamental to such classes in order to enable them to fulfil these functions : "(1) The necessity of absolute freedom of teaching and discussion, (2) the emphasis on the social sciences in the progress of instruction, (3) a method of teaching that relates instruction to the actual experience of the worker-students, and (4) the social application of the new knowledge to problems of the workers' own lives."

The most important thing to remember in conducting discussions in these classes is to see that you discuss the things that are of interest to students themselves and in which you too have an interest. Another important keynote to the successful working of these classes is to keep the problems of these workers before your eyes always, problems such as technological unemployment, loss of personal skill and satisfaction born of individual creative work and increased leisure time for the workers. As regards subjects, students may be

encouraged to pursue the subjects of their interests. Vocational classes, such as those in type-writing and shorthand, may be arranged. Then there can be classes dealing with special interests and hobbies like photography, painting, music, etc. It has of course to be borne in mind that adults cannot go on learning indefinitely and that therefore every course should be of a definite duration and limit.

Through the *Platform*.—The moment we speak of the platform we pass from that aspect of adult education where personal touch is prominent to a situation where there is not the same intimacy and contact between the instructor and the instructed. But experience has shown that the platform by means of lectures, forums, debates, round-table discussions, discussion groups, panel discussions, etc. can be utilised very advantageously to educate adults. To begin with lectures, much certainly depends upon the lecturer. The lecture method aids in stimulating the thoughts of people and stirring them to action. At least it ought to, for a lecture is the dramatization of an idea or ideas of the lecturer. There is an appeal to both the eye and the ear in it, and this double stimulation goes to make a strong impression. In India, unfortunately, the educated populace seems to be remarkably ignorant of the uses of lectures and tragically indifferent to educative lectures. In America admission to lectures is by tickets, and in our country even free lectures find an almost empty hall. It is time the people here were made to realize the importance of lectures other than those that are merely political or humorous, and this can only be done through a process of intelligent adult education. For this purpose a discussion following a lecture is certainly useful. Such a procedure "clears up obscurities and prevents that final feeling of infallibility which many

* Hawkins, G. *Educational Experiments in Social Settlements*.

professional lecturers come to have and sometimes to transmit to their audiences."*

In Western countries there is a growing tendency to use the "Forum" as a useful method in adult education. In this form of education a leader of ability studies a subject and presents it to the audience and then the lecture-hall immediately becomes a views-expressing hall. Everyone gets into the spirit of the subject and expresses his opinion on it, supporting or opposing the leader. Thus the Forum works as a neutral meeting place and testing ground for warring opinions, and finally it serves as a stiffener of liberal opinion. In other words, the Forum is used (1) for imparting information and (2) to unite groups to sets of ideas.

There is yet another form of adult education through the platform. It is of recent growth in America and seems to be appropriate to Indian conditions. Called the Panel Discussion, it, in the words of Morse Cartwright, "places responsibility for leadership in a round-table discussion upon a selected group of from six to twelve individuals, with a chairman in charge." The latter first expounds the subject. This is followed by a discussion, but without set speeches, by the members of the panel in the hearing of the general audience ; and finally the question or questions developed by the panel are placed before the entire assemblage for further discussion.

Debating, when properly conducted, is also an aid to adult education, for "when a goodly number of young men are engaged in seeking truth, the result is both wholesome and stimulating." The Debating Society of the Nagpada Neighbourhood House is a proof of this statement. For here come people of all descriptions and express their opinions with pronounced animation. Here an old gentle-

man speaks of the remarkable goodness of Gandhi, and there a lady with three children comes and wrangles that " marriage should be abolished." Next day, a youth fresh from the college, pickwickally dressed and with unkempt but very luxuriously grown hair on his head, comes and declares that it is high time the gods and goddesses of the world were done away with and a bust of Ingersoll installed in their place. Then there is the inevitable puny creature who weeps over the badness of Englishmen.....

Through the Desk.—If authors can be hailed as one of the most important and influential body of educators, then it is clear that the adult educator who writes books and articles on various subjects interesting to adult students is doing them a real service. The press can be very useful in keeping the great educated public continuously interested in the problem of adult education on the one hand, and informed, on the other, of the advance made in this direction in the neighbourhood in which the particular adult educator is working and is interested. He in his turn can educate the masses by writing articles on subjects which are associated with the lives of all, sanitation, hygiene, house and town planning, and their influences on the lives and character of citizens, etc., and the more advanced adult educator, say, the social reformer, may proceed further and quicken the interest of the public in such matters as changes in the family and other social institutions. There is indeed no limit to the service that can be done in this way.

Then there can be local and provincial exhibitions arranged for the education of the public. Happily, nowadays, the educational value of exhibitions is being well recognised. Libraries, too, can play their part. But to be useful in these days of countless books on innumerable subjects, the

* Ely, M. L. *Adult Education in Action.*

library should be directed by a sympathetic librarian who can guide young and old alike in the proper selection of books after ascertaining their interests, likes and dislikes.

Much of the organizational work in adult education is to be carried on from the desk. Be it through article writing or through a "Vocational Information Bureau" or any other method, all need study, thought and imagination, and without these being continuously employed, adult education cannot be at its best. Carried on in this way and through that elusive and yet powerful entity called personal concern and sincerity in all contacts, great and small, with the young and the old of the neighbourhood, it is bound to benefit not only those within a certain topographical limit, but also those in surprisingly remote places. Leadership developed in a small centre may one day determine the nation's destiny.

Since the success of any programme of education depends to a large extent upon the leader or "Adult Educator," a critical study of the problems that will confront him and of the qualities that will be required of him to meet these problems successfully may not be out of place for our purpose. The first requisite for the Adult Educator is to know his community well, its antecedents, its most sacred and powerful traditions, its changing trends of thought and feeling. In order to make a study of the people whom he serves, he must acquire what S. R. Slavson calls "psychological insight." He must carry this insight to such an extent that he becomes a part of the group itself. He must acquire a "membership character" in the group. As O. Tead puts it, "the demand upon the leader is to know the attributes of the individual so as to be aware of the characteris-

tics of human nature. Every issue of leadership comes back to this : know the human organisation, the manner of its behaviour, the natural promptings of natural basic desires, the typical aspirations, the usual and possible modes of satisfaction, the conditions of happiness in a profound sense. The leader should be an expert in human nature—whether his knowledge is intuitive or acquired by conscious study."*

Having thus studied the situation and the people therein, he must develop a socialized personality. For, after all, the functions of leaders are to socialize human beings, and this cannot be done unless they themselves are socialized beings. As Prof. Giddings points out, the leader must develop (a) a growing consciousness of kind—the feeling of identification with the group, (b) an increasing sympathy and understanding, and (c) an increasing friendliness among the members of the group so that the group may in reality be a socialized one. As a result of study and observation he should find out the people whose needs he can best serve. He "must know something about what life is like for the isolated housewife, the harrassed factory worker, and the bewildered adolescent ; whether life is somewhat alike for all these, whether there are relatively uniform ways of working with their problems and the like."[#] While always open to conviction he should never swerve from his principles ; and along-side of his working on marked-out principles, he must have definite objectives of work. "For in the last analysis the leader is only as strong as his objectives are strong. A leader is known by the objectives he espouses."^{##} He must learn to have foresight and wisdom in planning. This suggests the aphorism of Roosevelt that

* Tead, O. *The Art of Leadership*

[#] Kotinsky, R. *Adult Education and the Social Science*

^{##} Tead, O. *The Art of Leadership*

"nine-tenths of wisdom is being wise in time". While emphasizing the need of having objectives and pursuing them relentlessly, I would hasten to point out that these objectives cannot and should not be pursued regardless of the feelings of the group. Pigors is right in pointing out that group-leadership is based on the successful interplay of individual differences.* And the co-ordination of these individual differences, if it has to give rise to a worthy leadership, is subject to certain conditions : (1) " Individual differences should not be so great as to preclude solidarity of purpose. (2) The presence of a ' common cause ' is basic for leadership. (3) It is nonsense to talk of leadership in the abstract, since no one can ' just lead without having a goal.' (4) Leadership is always *in* some sphere of interest and towards some objective goal seen by leader and follower,"#

Another great fact the adult educator should remember is that he is not merely a machine to run routine programmes. He is also a creator. In bearing this responsibility he has a two-fold function : he is to be a creative leader himself and he must create leadership among his group members. We have dealt sufficiently on the first function. As regards the second, his responsibility can be said to have three steps : he has " to (1) help the individual to develop his potential leadership capacities to the maximum through training and application; (2) help him express his leadership power along the right channels so as to be a constructive rather than a destructive leader, and (3) help him expand the scope of his leadership so as to achieve the maximum influence."## If he is to be a creative leader he must maintain his position not by mere domination but by

the power of efficiency. At the same time he should not imagine that he is the only man capable of mastering the situation, but should acquire the ability to delegate details to others. The danger of concentrating power in one's own hands is that such power which borders on selfishness is bound to be shortlived. There is yet another reason for developing local leadership. " Every leader should have a worthy ambition that his work may remain, that his influence set in motion through his life of service may be carried forward long after he has laid his burden down."§ Thus the leader multiplies his own life by developing younger men into leaders.

Lastly, foremost among the qualities of the adult educator is the integrity of spotless character. If he can possess that, all else will follow. As Henson points out : "The kind of influence that gives a man authority over his fellows is inseparable from the possession of what we are accustomed to call character." History contains the record of many famous men who, though endowed with amazing abilities and distinguished by notable deeds, have yet failed through a lack of the quality called character. Alcibiades of ancient Greece and Bolingbroke, the famous Englishman, are just two examples. The advice which Shakespeare places in the mouth of a father counselling his son might well be addressed to the adult educator also :—

"This above all : to thine own self
be true,
And it must follow, as the night
the day,
Thou canst not then be false to
any man."

To sum up, then, the adult educator needs to possess a sense of purpose and

* Pigors, Paul *Leadership or Domination*

Laportes, William R. *Recreational Leadership of Boys*

Laportes, William R. *Recreational Leadership of Boys*

§ Mott, J. R. *Leadership of Constructive Forces of the World*

direction, enthusiasm, friendliness and affection, decisiveness, intelligence, integrity and faith. Any programme of adult education which is not carried out with a leader possessing these qualities to a reasonable degree is bound to be a failure. A wise adult educator has to see that he controls

human energy, within a given sphere, in the pursuit of a common cause by the successful interplay of relevant individual differences. He must also endeavour to see that his will, feeling and insight direct and control others in the pursuit of a cause which he represents.