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( A. P. )

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Presentation to the National Committee on Women: Education & Training for  
Self Awareness & Self Reliance

Focus : Adolescent Girls & Young Women.

PART - A

From the point of view of the " quality" of our future generation, the most crucial segment of our population is today's young girls who are just on the threshold of marriage & motherhood. It is precisely also this segment of our population that has been sadly neglected in all our developmental and educational programmes.

As per 1981 census, 75 per cent of women in India are illiterate. This situation is not improved any by the high drop out rate for girls at the primary stage and at the middle school stage. In the rural context an overwhelming majority of the girls in most parts of the country are illiterate. A good percentage never enter school. Of those who enter, a high proportion drop out well before reaching the 5th standard. Thus, a great majority of our girls reach their adolescence mostly as illiterates or semi-literates with no skills and no practical knowledge which could prepare them for their future roles. This situation perpetuates illiteracy, poverty, undernutrition & underdevelopment since these girls who later become home makers can not understand the value of education and can not take advantage of the many development programmes of agriculture, health and nutrition. They lack special skills for employment and therefore take a subordinate role in the family and the society. They are also wholly unaware of their legitimate rights as citizens. Not having had the benefit of schooling themselves, they do not appreciate the value of education for their daughters. So, the daughters turn out to be illiterate like

the mothers. ~~It~~ It becomes imperative then to break this vicious cycle by focussing our attention on the adolescent girls and young women and educating them to self reliance.

The Proposal : ~~The~~ strategy is to bring about a socio-economic transformation of our poor rural communities through a programme of nonformal education & training addressed exclusively to the girls and women between 12 and 20 years living in rural areas. All girls including those who have not had primary school education and who are currently illiterate will be eligible for the programme.

The programme can be termed as "Integrated Education for Better Living". The girls should be given practical instruction through audio-visual aids only, in the following areas :

- . Personal hygiene and environmental education;
- . Nutrition-value of different local foods and types of nutritious recipes that can be made out of them, preparation of inexpensive balanced diets out of local foods;
- . New agricultural technology for increased food production , effective and economical use of fertilisers, safe & timely use of pesticides;
- . Simple post-harvest technology for preventing food wastage during storage, methods for preservation <sup>and</sup> storage of perishable foods;
- . Sex education & family planning;
- . Care of the new-born & infant feeding & rearing;
- . Child care and development;
- . Home nursing and first-aid;
- . Available health care facilities & their utilisation;
- . Immunisation, care of diarrhoeas (oral rehydration) and diseases of children, simple remedies for common ailments;
- . Importance of education of children and
- . Legal rights of women and citizens and their obligations.

The approach and emphasis in this programme should be that of developing the women to self reliance. These girls and young women should learn and grow to consider themselves as potential contributors and not as mere recipients of welfare services and programmes.

Vocational Training : The girls should also receive training in simple crafts appropriate to the location, the appropriateness being determined by tradition, local acceptability and marketability of the product manufactured. A wide range of crafts may be considered anywhere from basket-weaving, knitting, wooden handicrafts to preparation of processed foods and silk-worm farming.

Governmental organisations with considerable information and experience in this area can be involved in the aspects of training and marketing.

Facilities for attending the Programme : Past experiences and our social traditions demand that we should create certain facilities and support services to enable the girls and young women to enter and attend the programme regularly.

1. An awareness to the importance of such education & training of the girls has to be created among the local community members involving the local leaders;

2. The venue of education should be accessible to the girls that is preferably within walking distance from their homes;

3. A ~~AM~~ creche or balwadi near the centre, so that the girls /women could leave the younger siblings in their care in these places while they attend the educational programme;

4. The programme should not last for more than three hours each day and it should be given at timings and days convenient to the learners;

5. The entire programme should be so designed as not to extend ~~the~~ beyond three to six months;

6. The programme should be offered exclusively to the girls and young women. The instructors must be women preferably of local origin.

The training of the women instructors can be with the joint collaboration of agricultural universities with the home science colleges, the NCERT and the Central Health Education Bureau.

Outstanding Voluntary Organisations & Associations with a commitment for women's development could be involved to assist in the implementation of the programme at the local and regional levels.

An apex body for women's education & training needs be created to plan, monitor, educate and operationalize training programmes for women.

#### PART - B

While illiterate and semiliterate women are at a great disadvantage and remain at the submerged levels of the society with regard to their status the literate and educated women, at least the majority of them, tend to maintain the low traditional profile of the home maker. They tend not to perceive themselves as contributors. They are not aware of their political rights, responsibilities and potential strengths. Their participation in decision-making at the home level the community level & all other levels is not of significance. Therefore their participation in formal and informal political processes is low. Motivating and encouraging these literate and educated women for greater participation in development is a challenge of the present times.

Proposal : The situation explained above can be tackled both through the formal sector and through the non-formal sector in education.

The Department of Women's Studies of Indira Gandhi National Open University can develop courses for educating women by distance education with regard to the situation of women in India and in other South East Asian Countries; the cultural and historical perspectives of women's role in the Indian society; the constitutional rights and responsibilities of Indian Women and current challenges for women's development. Useful information on various governmental



and non governmental organisations involved in moving women to social action in the development of women and on the programmes for the development of women ~~and~~ can also be extended through this process.

The mass media such as the T.V., film, radio and print should promote the positive image and status of women and avoid programmes, visuals and articles which focus on and emphasize the traditional role of the home maker and denigrate the ~~at~~ status of women.

Every university must create a centre for women's studies, the main functions of which would be a) to conduct researches related to women's status and issues; b) to conduct seminars and workshops to raise awareness to women's problems and to motivate women for participation in political process and development and c) to prepare and produce resource materials for training women functionaries of programmes for women.

In the school system no effort should be ~~be~~ spared to screen the curricula, the resource materials and text books to eliminate sex stereotyping and to promote and to perpetuate exquisite balance between girl and boy.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, possibly reading 'A. K. S.', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.