

Reorientation of Teachers Teaching in Rural Areas

ROOP N. KABRA*

Abstract

There is need of the teachers for providing proper school education in rural areas. Many field experience reveal that teachers often focus on the urban and feel comfortable in urban areas. It is necessary for the teachers to play a vital role in bringing awareness to the rural areas. As a democratic society we need interdependency among the people in sharing the ideals, institutions and experiences. Developing countries like India needs to develop proper linkages between rural-urban educational settings so that it will bring equity in the society.

During most of my service period I have served as a teacher purely in rural areas. So I am a bonafide rural teacher and to my mind there is no educational work of greater importance for the welfare of the Indian people than the preparation of teachers for the rural areas of the country. The vast majority of our people live in villages, where the standard of life is so low that the role of the rural teacher is not only that of an educator of the children who come to his school but also that of a torch-bearer to the entire rural population. Potentially, the rural teacher is the true creator of his people. But to what extent is he so in reality? What efforts are being made to prepare teachers who can effect a 'silent social revolution' in rural India, a revolution that will make the country safe for democracy, peace and happiness?

Formerly, only knowledge of three R's was expected from the primary school teachers. But now the real function of the village teachers is much more vital and significant. The task of the village school like that of the urban school is to provide such educational experiences as will prepare boys and girls for a more abundant life; physical, economic, social, moral and spiritual. The task of the village teacher, like that of the urban teacher, is to assist the children to grow and develop mentally, physically, morally and spiritually. What then, distinguishes the village school from the city school, and the task of the village teacher in our country from that of the urban teachers?

Broadly speaking, the distinguishing elements are two; one is the need to relate the education of the village child to his natural environment, within which it

* Lecturer in English (Retd.), — Kishore Kutir, A-438, Vaishali Nagar, Jaipur-302 021

must prepare him to live effectively. The younger generation of the villages must be taught the occupation of their parents and the crafts of the locality, of course, with better understanding and improved technique. They must be made to realize the importance of better and improved life. They must be taught spinning, weaving, tailoring or other more productive works like making chalk, ink, tooth powder, soap and hair oil, etc. and computer education, so that they can enjoy their leisure usefully. They must be taught to have clean, cheerful and comfortable and yet simple and cheap houses with an abundance of sunshine and fresh air and a proper drainage of water. They must be impressed with the need of beautifying their houses with gardening and vegetation. Besides these material values, they must also be taught the extremely important lesson of thrift and self-sufficiency on the one hand and cooperation and service on the other. To achieve all these values it is important to make the village schools rural in tone and teachers rural minded. Secondly, there is the nature and extent of contribution they have to make to the entire life of the community. Restoring cottage industries is possible. Fostering the value of recreation to break the monotonous drudgery of their lives is also essential. Diseases can be prevented even without doctor if we take precautions or preventive measures.

As agriculture and rural education are interdependent, the village teacher and his school should be an important channel through which suggestions for the improvement of agriculture can flow. A well-informed teacher can acquaint his

pupils as well as help their affairs wisely. The most valuable thing is to lead its people to help themselves actively for their own progress. There again the teacher has a role as a guide and a friend. It means that the school as a cooperative body of teachers and older pupils should be a live community centre for the whole village radiating light and happiness all around. The reform of village life and of moral education depends upon securing the right kind of teachers who are purposeful and resourceful, who are imbued with the spirit of service, who possess minds that are awake and growing, flesh that active and faith that is dynamic and who have been adequately prepared for rural teaching and moral uplift. It is the task of the institution engaged in teacher training to select and to prepare such teachers for work in the rural schools.

The main responsibility in this reorientation programme is that of the teacher training institutions. Teachers from rural background must be expected to go and serve their areas and this group of teachers should be given specific training to deal with the problems particular to rural areas. For example,

- the language teachers must be trained for adult education techniques;
- science teachers must be given practical training to handle machines and tools common to villages, e.g. the water-pump, electric motors, diesel and oil engines (flour mills, etc.)
- the civics teachers must be well versed with the Nyaya Panchayat rulings and its functioning. He should be accepted as an advisor;

- some teachers must be given perfect first-aid training;
- the P.T.I must be trained to know and devise games, functions, festivals and programmes suitable to the village;
- above all a spirit to work with devotion and dedication be infused in the teachers and the headmasters to serve these areas. The training institution must serve as a fountainhead of inspiration and zeal and establish in them a taste to work in the rural set-up contrary to the usual apathy and distaste for rural life.

School an Institution

School should become an institution for the improvement of agriculture and rural life as well as for the teaching; the aim must be:

1. to teach the dignity of labour and cultivate the school and the home;
2. to develop a habit of accurate and patient observation as opposed to hasty deductions;
3. to develop an intelligent and active interest in the main occupation of the rural population;
4. to give the teachers the necessary background for rural reconstructional work and to develop the habit of reading literature on agriculture, local history, local folk-tales, local geography (soil and climate), village panchayat (actual working, powers, duties, election and advantages), hygiene and everyday science;
5. extra-curricular activities such as Young Farmers Club, Excursion Club, Village Games Club, Cooperative Society, and Community Welfare, etc. must be taken up.

For the growth of democracy in India the teachers must be alive to the problems of the community which they happen to serve through the school. The teachers should be familiar with at least the following parts of the community:

1. Population (number and composition)
2. Housing
3. Industries and occupation
4. Employment opportunities
5. Welfare agencies
6. Reception centres
7. Political make-up
8. Cultural make-up and religious life
9. Tax rate and taxable resources
10. Possibility of exploiting community resources for classroom purposes
11. Attitudes of the community towards the school
12. Needs and problems of the children
13. Home lives of the pupils
14. Computer literacy

Much of the above information may be had by living and being a part of the community. The teacher's behaviour in the community is of paramount importance. Our democratic society is a chain of interdependent people, institutions, ideals and experiences. Teachers must remember that 'a school room is a sociological laboratory in which they are to solve the problems of human relations. Teaching is hard work. In fact the task is never done.'

Should the curriculum of primary schools and secondary schools in urban and rural areas be different or should it be uniform throughout the country? But

surely, the teachers for the rural schools be trained specially to assimilate a rural background and to imbibe the ideals of social work and activity methods of teaching. Activity methods which provide work experience and emphasise cooperative action between pupils are seen to be suited for schools intended to help community development. Teachers occupy a pivotal position in any educational system, so that the success and failure of schools and particularly rural schools, depend largely on them; teachers for rural schools have to be suitably trained in institutions having a proper rural setting and concentrating on a study of rural environment and social service.

Some people may object to the differentiation between rural and urban school curricula and consequently to a similar differentiation in teacher training, and argue that such policy is detrimental to national unity. While saying this they quite forget that there is already a wide gulf between the urban and the rural set-up and it is towards fillings this that we propose this differentiation. They point out that a different rural school curriculum heavily charged with practical work would tend to block the progress of rural child who wants to enter secondary or other forms of post-primary education, while rural parents often object to having a special rural programme which might endanger the progress of their children in further education.

But these are all vague fears. Industrial countries, where good roads exist, where rural communities are advanced, and where even agriculture has become a form of industry, may feel that the gap is so reduced between town

and country that there is no more justification for differentiated rural school curricula and rural teacher training, except in minor adaptations. Countries like India where farmers live a destitute life of disease and poverty, may feel, on the other hand the rural schools and consequently the rural teachers must be dedicated to improving the life of the village communities, and thus may decide on a special rural teacher training programme.

Another problem is the isolation of the rural teacher; not only the physical isolation of distance from a big city but also the discomfort of poor and unhealthy housing, the lack of medical care, the lack of a regular supply of such things as fruits, milk, and vegetables, not to mention books, magazines, internet facilities and the broadening contacts with the outside world. Attempts must be made to grant additional allowances to rural teachers placed in remote districts and to provide them with housing accommodation. Teachers therefore, tend to avoid rural service. Not only are teachers with a city background averse to service in the villages, but even the teachers coming from the rural areas, educated in urban centres, have been known to be unwilling to go back to the villages. Teachers from the rural stock are to be trained in the rural environment itself.

Conclusion

To sum up, the following points have to be emphasised upon for proper and efficient reorientation:

1. The right selection of teachers keeping in view the rural the rural needs and their bias.

2. The development of aptitude and spirit to work with dedication for the uplift of the villages.
3. Right, useful and suitable training to suit rural requirements.
4. Follow-up work to be carried out by the headmaster.
5. Rewards and punishments.
6. Rural allowances.
7. Library, full of life and utility to all equipped with xerox, computer and net services and phone, etc. in rural schools.
8. The P.T.I. to know and devise games and functions suited to rural folks.
9. The village Sarpanch, the H.M. and the Department must coordinate effectively.
10. Common rural expectations as given below should never be lost sight of;
 - (i) First-aid
 - (ii) mechanical knowledge and handling of common tools
 - (iii) tips on good farming
 - (iv) Panchayat working
 - (v) suitable recreations
 - (vi) housing, drainage and architecture
 - (vii) Computer literacy
11. Radio and TV to serve towards establishing a good rapport between the school and the community.
12. Developing faith and interest of the community towards schools.

And in this way the teacher may bring about the 'silent-social revolution' and our villages may prosper and develop. The extra finance for rewards and encouragements in the shape of rural allowances will have to be arranged. It would have to be given special status and then only the gap will be filled. The teachers serving in the rural areas are the best personnel for minimising the gulf between rural and urban life.