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## UNIT 2 INDIAN ADULT EDUCATION - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

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Your understanding of current Adult Education programmes in India would not be complete without knowing how the concept of Adult Education evolved over the years and was operationalised. A brief overview of different programmes implemented during the past would help you appreciate the continuous efforts made in the field of Adult Education. Historical records show that the concept of Adult Education has undergone several but significant changes in the past. It has been observed that the organised and systematic instruction of adults long preceded the formal organization of schools for children. However, such practices rarely led to institutionalization or gave rise to any specific term during ancient times. Transmission of knowledge was an integral part of socialisation and cultural process. Although the term- “Adult Education” was first coined in the English language in 1851, the provisions for the education of adults were available since time immemorial (Hudson. 1851).

Being renowned for its learning and educational institutions from ancient days, a wide variety of educational opportunities were available to the people of India. The sacred literature especially the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Dharma Sutras* and the *Aranyakas* bear testimony to the importance accorded to the acquisition of knowledge. The word *Veda* is derived from the word, *Vid* which signifies ‘knowledge par excellence’. Notwithstanding the importance accorded to the acquisition of knowledge in ancient India, the prevalence of caste system among Hindus greatly restricted its access to the priestly class (Dube, 1990). The colonial

policy of encouraging the education of upper classes was also not conducive for spread of education among the masses (Shah, 1999).

The history of Adult Education in India may be broadly studied in two parts: pre-independence and post-independence. The growth of Adult Education before independence may be divided into the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Over the years a number of initiatives were taken by the state, civil society and religious organizations and individuals to promote Adult Education. Several programmes, viz: Night Schools, Social Education Programme, Farmers' Functional Literacy Programme, National Adult Education Programme, Total Literacy Campaigns, and Continuing Education Programmes have been implemented in India at various points of time.

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## **2.1 OBJECTIVES**

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The main purpose of this unit is to provide you an overview of the emergence and growth of Adult Education Programmes in India during the last sixty years (1947-2007). However, an attempt is also made to familiarize you with the origins of Adult Education and its growth prior to 1947 as a backdrop.

After studying the unit, you are expected to be able to:

- Understand the conceptual changes in the policy and programmes during the last sixty years;
- Examine the differences among various programmes;
- Identify the reasons for changes in the programmes; and
- Study the impact of different programmes.

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## **2.2 ORIGIN OF ADULT EDUCATION: AS A SOCIALISATION AND CULTURAL PROCESS**

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Adult Education formed an integral part of socialization and cultural process during ancient and medieval period. Although, there were no formal or specialized institutions imparting literacy or education to adults, the social and religious centers specially the temples, market places, community halls, etc served as centers of non formal education for adults. In this section below, you will get a brief overview of Adult Education programmes during ancient and medieval periods.

### **2.2.1 Adult Education in Ancient India**

The origins of Adult Education in India may be traced to the oral tradition prevalent in ancient society. The ancient world being an 'oral world', the mode of transmission of knowledge was through discourses and discussions. Compared to secular knowledge the acquisition of sacred knowledge was held in high esteem as it widened the individuals' horizon of understanding to achieve "dharma" (moral), "artha" (wealth), "kama" (pleasure) and "moksha" (salvation) (Graff, 1987).

Written texts, although not many, were kept secret and access to sacred knowledge was not the right of everyone. "The craft of reading and writing remained the sacred monopoly of small circle of elites" (Cipolla, 1969). The tradition of Vedic learning was to impart it in the ear as a secret doctrine to be contemplated and

realized and not intended for the profane (Mookherji, 1951). According to the ancient Indian theory of education, knowledge was technically called *Sruti* or what was heard by the ear and not what was seen in writing (*Smriti*). It was the system of oral tradition by which learning was transmitted from teacher to pupil in an unbroken chain called *Guruparampara*. Learning was also promoted through discussions at public meetings which were regular feature of rural life. Masses were addressed by wandering scholars known as *Carakas*. There was also equality between the sexes in the field of knowledge (Altekar, 1944).

Unlike the Christians and Muslims whose desire to read the holy scriptures like the *Bible* and the *Quran* served as a strong motivational factor for the acquisition of basic literacy, there were no such urges among the Hindus. Hinduism being not a religion of Book, reading from the holy books like the *Gita* and the *Ramayana* was not an essential religious requirement for the Hindus. Thus if religion became an enabling factor in the spread of literacy among Christians and Muslims, it was an inhibiting force in the Hindu society. Besides there was a fear that failure to recite the Vedic hymns properly would lead to disaster; and this prevented many from venturing into it. Even writing appeared to be a "sacred act of worship carrying with it the supernatural powers and fraught with mystical dangers". "Tendencies to secrecy, proprietorial exclusiveness and the greater valuation of what is learned orally from a *Guru* over what is read in books- all these have served to limit the resort to writing" (Goody, 1975). Thus, in a society where access to knowledge was ascriptive and the privilege of a few, it was quite natural that large sections of people remained illiterate not by choice but due to circumstances. Education in ancient India was dominated by religion and the concept of universal basic literacy was alien to the ancient Indians. This inbuilt resistance of the Hindu religion was a great stumbling block to the wider spread of literacy. Hence, one of the root causes of illiteracy in India may be traced to the prevalence of rigid caste system in the country.

The pattern of 'restricted literacy' fitted in with the segmentation of ancient Indian society. In the absence of scriptal literacy, visual graphic aids and art forms were resorted to, but literacy practices were not institutionalized. This early stage was termed as 'craft literacy'. A number of temples served as effective channels of adult education, though the terminology of adult education was not in vogue. Temple architecture, sculpture, and paintings preserved the knowledge of the pre-literate world. In many of the South Indian temples and *mathas* reading of the epics, the *Puranas* and other religious texts took place even from the days of the Pallavas and continued to be practiced on a large scale in the subsequent periods. The *puraniks* with good pronunciation and oratory recited the stories of the *Puranas* in temples or in the mansions of rich persons. The *Haridasas* and *Kathakaras* gave sermons accompanied by music and singing and were popular among masses. Every important temple had a *kathakara* attached to it who acted as teacher-musician to the adults. They organized *keertans*, *bhajans*, *jagran* and *satsang* which were a powerful source of education for the adults from ancient days and these continue even today (Gurumurthy, 1979).

Notwithstanding the importance accorded to education in ancient India, the demand for education was restricted. It was due to the *varna* system which empowers Brahmanical class to inherit and transmit learning. Most of the occupations practiced by the masses did not require any formal learning except on the job training which they acquired at home through observation and imitation. The elite character of education began to change with the advent of Buddhism,

since Buddhist monks and *viharas* did not differentiate people on the basis of caste and were open to all irrespective of caste taboos. "Buddhism envisaged the democratization of education." The sermons of Buddhist monks were the main source of education to the masses who flocked to their assembly. The Buddhist philosophy recognizes the potential of all human beings to develop their resources to their ultimate till one reaches the final state of perfection. The teachings of Buddha which were inscribed on iron pillars, stones and rocks which served as non-formal channels of education for the common people, especially during the reign of Asoka. The dynasty of Gupta (A.D.320-647) witnessed the flourishing of Hindu culture when books came into common use. While in the north books were written on birch-bark, in the south palm-leaves were made use of. In this period, libraries were also established. Drama, lyric poetry and prose were assiduously cultivated and they served as channels of adult education (Keay, and Karvey, 1973).

### **2.2.2 Adult Education in Medieval India**

The tradition of oral transmission of knowledge, values and culture of society continued even during the medieval period when the rulers of India provided considerable political patronage and financial support to scholars, saints, teachers, artists and artisans who were actively involved in the spread of the messages of peace and harmony through various art forms, music, preaching, and writings. Temples became dearer to people as social centres. They were the meeting places and centres of village ceremonies and religious and social discourses, besides imparting 3R's to children. "As the temples spread, literacy spreads." (Patwardan, 1939). The spread of education in medieval India was mainly dependent on the interest of the rulers. The growth of popular education was hindered for want of a popular medium of instruction. Mughal rulers considered education to be a handmaiden of religion and hence State encouragement to education was sporadic. However, due to the egalitarian philosophy of Islam, access to education was open to all during the Mughal regime. The sayings of Prophet Mohammed and the teachings of the *Quran* placed great emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge from the cradle to the grave. During Akbar's time, there were no printed books and important handwritten books were read aloud in the Court and discussions were held which benefited the aristocracy. Aurangzeb was the first Mughal Emperor who championed the cause of free and compulsory education for the masses. Though he could not enforce it throughout his kingdom, on an experimental basis he enforced it in Gujarat among the Bohra community, which seems to have paved the way for the high rate of literacy in this community (Ahmed, 1987).

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## **2.3 EMERGENCE AND GROWTH OF ADULT EDUCATION IN INDIA BEFORE 1947: BEGINNING OF INSTITUTIONALISATION**

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Prior to the independence of India in 1947, the process of institutionalization in Adult Education had already begun in the form of Night schools. These schools emerged in different provinces of British India. While the colonial rulers encouraged them, several Christian Missionaries, social reform organizations and the Nationalist leaders also set up Night schools. This section will provide you a brief overview of the colonial policy towards adult education, various provisions and efforts made by eminent leaders.

### 2.3.1 Adult Education in Colonial India

The colonial period witnessed several interesting developments in the field of Adult Education. While the economic policies of the colonial rulers impoverished the landed aristocracy which was providing financial support to a large number of vernacular and adult schools, the limitations of financial resources and the Anglo-oriental controversy gave a new twist to the British policy towards education in India. According to the downward filtration theory adopted by the British in 1830's "education was to permeate the masses from above. Drop by drop from the Himalayas of Indian life, useful information was to trickle downwards, forming in time a broad and stately stream to irrigate the thirsty plains" (Mathew, 1926). The policy was to concentrate on the education of upper classes who have "leisure for study and whose culture would then filter down to masses". In practice, it was observed that most of the educated who usually came from the higher castes got comfortable jobs and became absorbed in bettering their own prospects than sharing their learning with the masses. In fact some of the middle classes who were the beneficiary of English education opposed the attempts made by the social reformers to spread mass education, since it would lead to an increase in the ranks of those demanding a "share of the cake." (Majumdar, 1972). On the other hand, due to downward filtration theory, the British administrators did not consider it necessary to develop any programme of Adult Education or of universal primary education in British India during the first half of the nineteenth century.

The practice of downward filtration theory was soon criticised by the Education Despatch (1854) which suggested several measures for spreading mass education and also for preserving and encouraging indigenous education. The Despatch stated that the masses were "utterly incapable of obtaining any education worthy of the name by their own efforts", and recommended a system of grant-in-aid which materialized at a much latter date. Although illiteracy among Indians had attracted the attention of British statesmen in 1860's when Lord Lawrence noted that "among all the sources of difficulty in our administration and of possible danger to the stability of our government, there were few so serious as the ignorance of the people", the colonial rulers did not develop any specific programmes to liquidate adult illiteracy as there were neither the resources nor the trained personnel to take up Adult Education programmes (Shah, 1999, Op. Cit).

*The main thrust of Adult Education in India during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century revolved around basic literacy. Night schools were the key adult education institutions in British India. They were few and modeled after British Adult Schools and were mainly set up by the Christian missionaries, nationalist leaders, socio-religious organizations and intellectuals. The official policy was to encourage them wherever practical and permit as much flexibility as possible in school hours. The core curriculum included rudiments of reading, writing and numeracy, covered within a minimum of 100 days. Average instruction per day was of 2-3 hours duration. The Indian Education Commission (1882) observed that every province in British India had provisions for setting up night schools and Bombay and Madras had 134 and 312 night schools with an enrolment of 4000 and 7000 adults respectively (Report of the Indian Education Commission 1882, 1883).*

The challenging task of educating illiterate adults was taken up by the missionaries, enlightened Indians and socially committed British officials. In the absence of adequate professional literature, replicable models and limited number of dedicated adult educators in British India, the growth of Indian adult education was extremely slow. British models like the Mechanics Institute, Working Men's College were not of much relevance to the socio-economic requirements of Indian society since the 19th century India and Britain were at different stages of growth. In England adult education institutions like the Mechanics Institutes and Working Men's Colleges had emerged partly as a response to the particular needs essentially created by industrial capitalism. In the case of India, such developments came at a much later period. Arguably then, the educational needs of adults in colonial India were quite different, which made it difficult to transfer any of the British models and philosophies to the Indian situation. The adoption of the policy of expansion of primary education as a strategy for curbing the growth of illiteracy in India also seems to have led to the negligence of adult education. It was argued that "adults cannot be given the cake when the child remains without bread and hence the government preferred the policy of encouraging primary education to adult education since 1880's." (Siqueira, 1960).

Although the concept of basic literacy remained unchanged all through the British period, a variety of attempts were made to educate illiterate adults by Indian intellectuals, nationalist leaders, social, religious and political organizations during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Some eminent Indians like Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Ranade, Keshub Chandra Sen, Vidyasagar, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Veerasalingam, Sayyid Ahmad Khan not only opposed the idea of restricting the access to knowledge to the upper and middle strata of society, but also pleaded for the promotion of mass education through vernacular languages. While Keshub Chandra Sen wrote a series of open letters to Lord Northbrook depicting the "painfully ignorant and pitiable condition of the dumb millions in India", Vidyasagar stressed that the extension of education to the masses was the immediate need of the country. Being a great champion of mass education Keshub Chandra Sen set up a society "Sangat Sabha" in 1859, with the co-operation of Devendra Nath Tagore to discuss spiritual and social problems of the day. He pleaded for the establishment of evening schools for the benefit of agricultural and working classes to free themselves from popular prejudices and blind beliefs and suggested that Government should award special honours to those landlords who establish such schools. Systematic attempts were also made by Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mary Carpenter, and leaders of Brahm Samaj, viz., Sashipada Banerjee to educate illiterate women in Bengal during the nineteenth century. Keshub Chandra Sen also established *Bama Hitaishini Sabha* (Society for the Welfare of Women) where learned women read newspapers and held discussions to arouse social and intellectual consciousness among the Indian women so that they could respond readily to the schemes of social and educational reforms introduced for their upliftment (Shah, 1999. op.cit.).

*Of all the nineteenth century intellectuals, Swami Vivekananda's ideas on adult education are noteworthy. Observing that the chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolising of all the education by a handful of men, he stressed the need for spreading education among the masses. He believed that "a nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses; and the only service to be done*

*for the lower classes is to give them education to develop their lost individuality.... They are to be given ideas; their eyes are to be opened to what is going on in the world around them; and then they will work out their own salvation". According to him the greater part of education to the poor should be given orally and in vernacular languages. To quote Swami Vivekananda, "education is not the amount of information that is put into brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated fine ideas and made them your life and character, you have more information than a man who has got by heart a whole library."* (Advaita Ashram, 1990).

The social reform societies, viz., the Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Smaj and Indian Social Conference did pioneering work by educating the masses through publications and public lectures. The organisation of literacy classes and setting up of libraries was also recognised by Indian social reformers as crucial for the progress of their movements. Some of the Indian universities like Madras and Mysore organised extension lectures for the benefit of masses following the extra mural tradition of British Universities.

A number of the enlightened rulers of Princely States of Mysore, Baroda, Cochin and Travancore had taken special interest in the promotion of literacy among masses. In 1912 Sir M. Visvesvaraya, the Dewan of Mysore, organised 7000 literacy classes throughout the State with a network of circulating libraries. A magazine-*Vigyana*- was also published to popularise scientific knowledge. Several non-Governmental organisations, social reform societies and political parties played a significant part in the promotion of adult education during the first quarter of the twentieth century. In 1915, Dr. D. N. Maitra founded the Bengal Social Service League in Calcutta for the amelioration of the condition of illiterate poor through a variety of community development programmes. With the establishment of a rural centre at Sriniketan by Rabindranath Tagore in 1922 and initiation of rural reconstruction activities by the Y.M.C.A. at Marthandam, social reconstruction programmes by Subba Rao at Rajamundry and by F.L. Brayne at Gurgaon and launching of the constructive programme by Mahatma Gandhi during 1920s, there was tremendous expansion and diversification adult education activities in India (Mohisini, 1993).

The growing nationalist movement in India, the prospects of Swaraj and the introduction of constitutional reforms in 1919 further brought home the danger of entrusting power to an ignorant electorate and highlighted the importance of literacy for political and economic reasons. Nationalist leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai and B.G. Tilak organized night schools for illiterate masses and summer schools for literate adults. The Congress Socialist Party of Andhra established peasant schools in Guntur and West Godavari to train workers for the peasant movement. Most of the political parties organised schools to train young men for local leadership so as to enable them to carry on the struggle for freedom of India. The overwhelming concern of Indian nationalist leaders being the freedom movement, they had initiated a process of mass mobilization and conscientization through public lectures and discussions with a view to making the masses aware of their rights and motivate them to fight for the freedom of India. Hence, the freedom struggle of India may be viewed as the biggest and the most successful adult education movement in modern times. While some of the nationalist leaders

like Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendra Nath Bannerjee and Gopal Krishna Gokhale had pleaded for universal literacy; B.G. Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai set-up night schools and summer camps for the political education of freedom fighters. Although Rabindra Nath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi tried to tackle the problem of illiteracy by integrating literacy with rural development and constructive programmes, their efforts were rather limited. The interest and involvement of eminent Indian leaders in literacy, however, drew the attention of masses towards the gravity of the problem.

The active interest of non-officials and non-Governmental organisations in the promotion of adult education received a boost when the Royal Commission on Agriculture (1928) and the Auxilliary Committee of Indian Statutory Commission (1929) reiterated the importance of adult education as a tool for the socio-economic development of the nation. Observing that "illiteracy presents the most formidable single obstacle to rural development in the widest sense" and the movement for adult education in India had hardly begun, (with the exception of the efforts made by the Indian Army School of Education at Belgaum), the Royal Commission recommended that adult education should be promoted mainly through non-official channels. *During 1920s there were four important channels of adult education in India: (i) night schools, (ii) awareness programmes through films, public lectures and discussions organized by social, cultural and political organisations, (iii) libraries and (iv) community development projects including constructive programmes. It was estimated that in the four provinces of Bombay, Burma, the Central provinces and the Punjab, there were 3450 registered night schools with an enrolment of 1,17,000 learners. Bengal, Bihar and Madras had 7768 night schools with an enrolment of 1,87,000 learners. Of all the places in India, Punjab was in the forefront of literacy efforts. As early as 1921, a literacy campaign was launched in the province of Punjab which catapulted it into the forefront of adult education movement. Starting with 630 night schools with an enrolment of 17,776 adult learners in 1922-23, the number of night schools increased to 3784 with an enrolment of 98414 by 1926-27. Apart from official initiatives, the non-Governmental organisations like the Y.M.C.A. in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, Servants of India Society of Pune, Seva Sadan Society of Bombay, Devadhar Reconstruction Trust in Madras, Bengal Society for the Improvement of Backward classes, Bengal Social Service League and co-operative schools of the United Provinces had also shown considerable interest in the promotion of adult education. Some of the professional societies, viz., Economic Association of Kanpur, Rural Reconstruction Association of Benaras, Bombay Sanitary Association, Saksharta Prasarak Mandal, Bombay Literacy Association, were engaged in educating the masses through public lectures, films and slides on various aspects of health, society, economy and polity (Shah, 1999. op.cit.).*

The policy of creating rural libraries was first inaugurated in Baroda State in 1894, where 661 out of a total of 706 libraries were rural in 1927. In small provinces of Ajmer, the Punjab and the United Provinces there were vernacular libraries attached to rural schools and a school teacher functioned as librarian. In 1928, there were 1,769 village libraries in the Punjab. Besides these there were circulating libraries in certain districts of the United Provinces. Madras Library Association and the Christian Literature Society brought out a number of books for neoliterates and supplied them in tin boxes to several villages during 1930s. In fact, the Adult Education Committee of the National Christian Council of



India and its 14 Provincial Councils in Assam, Andhra, Bengal, Bihar, Gujarat, South India, Mid India and United Provinces were very active in the preparation and publication of literacy and post-literacy materials in a number of Indian languages. They were financially supported by the Churches of America, Canada, Australia, Britain, Ireland, etc.

Some of the enlightened British officials like F.L. Brayne (Punjab) introduced an innovative rural reconstruction campaign. A large motor van fitted with a travelling library, a radio-set, a cinema projector, a dispensary and public address system was sent to rural areas with a view to educating and entertaining the masses and also providing them medical help. An adult educator, a doctor, a cinema technician, a driver, a cleaner and a peon travelled as a team. Not only did they exhibit the books and lent them for reading to villagers but the selected books were also read out to the illiterate masses. Rural reconstruction activities were also initiated by some of the British professors with the active co-operation of college students. An experiment on rural reconstruction was undertaken by T.F. Fernandes of King Edward College at Amraoti in Central Provinces on the lines of the Young Farmers Club in England in which the college students were actively involved in a variety of rural development activities (including literacy) in co-operation with governmental and non-governmental agencies (Fernandes, 1939).

During 1930s several attempts were made by individual adult educators to evolve effective literacy materials and methods in various Indian languages. While S.R. Bhagwat was actively involved in the development of literacy primers in Marathi, Dr. J.J. Lucas, Dr. J.H. Lawrence and Dr. S.G. Daniel - Gijubhai Phadke, Mrs R. Dongre experimented in Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi and Tamil languages. However, it was Dr. Frank C. Laubach, an American Missionary who developed the technique of Each One Teach One in the Philippines during 1930, provided the professional leadership to Indian adult educators to develop innovative literacy primers (based on keywords and pictures) in a number of languages, viz. Hindi, Marathi, Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Gujarati, Bengali, Assamese, etc. through a series of literacy workshops. Addressing a number of adult education conferences in India during 1935-39 he tried to promote the cause of adult education, in which he received the support of Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore, Sayed Mahmud, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajagopalachari, and others. His work on *India Shall Be Literate* which throws light on Indian adult education during 1930s, is an important publication on adult education in India (Laubach, 1940).

Apart from programmes, attempts were also made to set-up adult education institutions in India. Two eminent adult educators of India, Shafiq-ur-Rahman Kidwai and N. G. Ranga set up adult education institutions, viz., *Idara-o-Talim-o-Taraqqi* (Institute of Adult Education) in Jamia Millia Islamiya (1938) and Rama Needu Adult Education Institute in Andhra (1933). While Ranga was influenced by the Bayer Summer School, Workers' Education Association and Wood-broke's Settlement of Birkenhead in England, Kidwai drew inspiration from the Indian National Movement. These institutions not only brought out a number of publications but also organised a number of adult education activities during 1930s (Indian Journal of Adult Education, 1964).

During the early decades of twentieth century the colonial rulers adopted the policy of promoting adult education as a non-Governmental activity and focusing

on elementary education as an effective means of achieving literacy. Such a policy was not very conducive for the emergence of adult education as a distinct field of activity. However, certain international developments during 1920s and 1930s aided the growth of adult education in India. The formation of the World Association For Adult Education (1919) and the organisation of the first World Conference on Adult Education in Cambridge (1929) which drew together 300 representatives from 24 nations including nine from India, the publication of the *Report of Auxiliary Committee of Indian Statutory Commission* (1929), the visit and ground work of Dr. Frank Laubach in different parts of India during 1930s, the political support to literacy given by the Congress government in power during 1937-38 and the publication of the *Report of Adult Education committee* and the formation of Indian Adult Education Association in 1939 - all have been instrumental in promoting adult education as a distinct field of activity by late 1930s. In fact, in pre-independent India, apart from certain Indian intellectuals a number of British adult educators and adult education organizations have played a key role in shaping the character and growth of adult education.

There was tremendous expansion of adult education programme since mid-1930s. With the transfer of power to the elected representatives of Indians as a result of the 1935 Act and the assumption of power by the Congress in several provinces, a series of Provincial Mass Literacy Campaigns were organised in different parts of India during 1938-39 viz. Bihar, United Provinces, Bengal, Bombay, Madras, Punjab and Assam. The duration of these campaigns varied from 4 to 6 months and the age-group of target was 10-50 years. There was consistent expansion of adult education during 1938-42. It was estimated that during 1938-42 nearly 2.77 crores adults attended literacy classes of whom 1.38 crores became literate. Though these campaigns were launched by different provincial governments, there was active participation of students, teachers and all sections of society. Of the different provinces in India, the literacy campaign of Bihar was the most successful in terms of coverage as well as setting up of libraries (Shah, 1987).

Post-literacy programmes followed the literacy campaign and a large number of village libraries were set up. During the period 1940-44, nearly 8,000 libraries were established and about one million people were made literate. It was observed that 60 percent of the literacy centres were set up by the Education Department and more than 60 percent of the instructors were either student volunteers or non-professional teachers. The success rate was also high. The Government policy of implementing the literacy programme mainly through the involvement of volunteers was extremely successful in pre-independent India (Shah, 1987. *op cit*).

In enhancing the scope and status of adult education in India, the non-governmental agencies, nationalist leaders and social reformers played a key role since 1920s. The launching of literacy campaigns all over India and the active association of eminent Indians created a conducive atmosphere for the development of adult education movement in India and also led to the formation of professional societies. Though a few adult education agencies like the Bombay Presidency Adult Education Association, South Indian Adult Education Association and Bengal Adult Education Association had already been formed to co-ordinate and extend adult education work in their respective areas, the need for a central organization was increasingly felt by some of the adult educators who founded the Indian Adult Education Society in Delhi in 1937. The initiative



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## 2.4 GROWTH OF ADULT EDUCATION IN INDIA AFTER 1947: GROWTH OF INSTITUTIONS

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The emergence of India as an independent and democratic nation brought about certain basic changes in the policy and programmes of adult education. Not only the prevalent colonial policy towards adult education was reviewed by the Government of India but also new programmes were developed to cater to the changing needs of a democratic nation. The Constitution of India which defined the role of the Government of India (centre) vis-a-vis the State Governments made the latter responsible for the adult education programmes. Since the Centre designed the adult education policy and programmes for the entire country, and provided the major share of funds to States for its implementation and coordinated the overall activities, it assumed a dominant and decisive role in shaping the character of adult education in independent India.

The development of a new policy towards adult education in independent India was necessitated due to a variety of socio-economic and political factors. The adoption of the welfare approach to development necessitated extensive and intensive involvement of Government and bureaucracy in carrying out structural reforms in various fields and also the creation of infrastructure. However, it could be argued that more than these factors, it was the leadership in adult education, especially of the then Education Minister of the Government of India that was responsible for moulding the new adult education policy. The successful operation of the Mass Literacy Campaign during the period 1938-47, had awakened the masses, their organisations and leaders - both within and outside the Government - to the role of adult education in development and made them conscious of the need to strengthen the programme. Since India at the time of independence was economically backward and extremely underdeveloped and had a low literacy rate of 12.2 per cent, the leadership realized that freedom had no meaning for the ignorant and poor masses unless it was made tangible through activities which helped them improve their social and economic conditions. Although Adult Education formed a part of several development programmes of the Government of India and recognised as one of the two top priority programmes in education, it was felt that the prevalent colonial pattern of adult education was too inadequate to meet the growing needs and aspirations of a democratic nation where every adult would have certain rights and responsibilities which they would find difficult to discharge without basic education. How to design a dynamic adult education programme was one of the challenges before the professional adult educators as well as the Government of India.

The issue of adult education remained sidetracked during 1947- 48 mainly due to the partition of the country which paved the way for the displacement of millions of people, disruption of social life and depletion of resources. Although the main attention of the Government and leaders was focused on the problem of rehabilitation of refugees, the idea of developing an appropriate adult education programme for the refugees as well as non-refugees continued to be the concern of officials and non-officials in the early years of freedom. The Indian Adult Education Association, a non-official organization of professional adult educators, took up the task of "reviewing the role of adult education and reinterpreting its functions in a democratic set up in their annual conference held in Rewa during 29-31 December, 1947. It was observed that "adult education must aim at enabling

the common man to live a richer life in all its aspects - social, economic, cultural and moral” and for the first time, the social aspect of adult education was emphasised by the professional adult educators.

### 2.4.1 Social Education Programme (1948-1967)

The recommendations of the non-official body - Indian Adult Education Association - were taken seriously by the official body, the Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE), which appointed a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Mohan Lal Saxena, the then Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation, Government of India, on 15 January 1948 to work out a detailed “scheme for adult education and literacy”. The Committee comprising of seven eminent educationists of India, viz. Humayun Kabir, Mata Prasad, K.G. Saiyadain, V. S. Jha, M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar and M.K. Sidhanta, felt the need for giving a new orientation to the scheme of adult education and suggested the importance of laying “greater emphasis on the social aspect” and coined the term social education. Defining the objectives and operational details of the programme of social education, the committee aimed at achieving the target of 50 per cent literacy among 12-45 age group within a period of five years. These recommendations, which were accepted by the CABE with minor modifications at its meeting held at Allahabad during 6-9 January 1949 and reiterated by the Conference of Provincial Ministers of Education held in New Delhi during 19-20 February 1949, formed the basis of the social education programme in India during 1950s. However, the credit for popularising the idea and translating it into a programme goes to the then Minister for Education, Maulana Azad, who evinced special interest in the programme and was keen to make “an immediate start with the new scheme” notwithstanding the financial stringency. The fact that a decision was taken to earmark a sum of one crore of rupees for social education (out of the total education budget of Rs.20 crores) shows the official concern for and commitment to adult education. It was stated that 90 per cent of the proposed budget for social education should be distributed among States in proportion to the number of illiterates while the remaining 10 per cent should be reserved for central activities. The deteriorating finances caused by the failure of crops in 1950-51 and rehabilitation of refugees restrained the Government of India from honouring the commitment, and instead, the actual expenditure incurred by the Provinces was reimbursed (Shah, 1995).

*The following were the objectives of Social Education as recommended by the Mohan Lal Saxena Committee: a) To instill a consciousness of the rights and duties of citizenship and foster a spirit of service to the community; b) To develop love for democracy and impart an understanding of the way in which democracy functions; c) To disseminate knowledge of the outstanding problems and difficulties facing the country and the world; d) To develop love for the pride in our cultural heritage through the knowledge of our history, geography and culture; e) To teach the simple laws of personal and community health and develop habits of hygiene and cleanliness; f) To foster the growth of the co-operative spirit as a way of life; g) To provide training in crafts both as a hobby and as a means to economic betterment; h) To provide cultural and recreational facilities by way of folk dances, drama, music, poetry, recitation and other ways of spontaneous self-expression; i) To provide through these various activities as well as through reading and discussion groups, an understanding of*

*the basic moral values; j) To give a reasonable mastery over the tools of learning - reading, writing, simple arithmetics and to create an interest in knowledge; and k) To provide facilities for continuation of education through libraries, discussion groups, clubs and institutions like peoples' Colleges.*

*The committee also identified five aspects of social education to be the core-curriculum viz., (1) Health and Hygiene, (2) Family and Community living, (3) Vocations, (4) Literacy and Cultural activities, and (5) Recreational activities. In short, the social education defined as a "course of study directed towards the production of consciousness of citizenship among the people and promotion of social solidarity among them" had three aspects: (i) The spread of literacy among grown-up illiterates, (ii) the production of an educated mind in the masses in the absence of literacy education, and (iii) the inculcation of lively sense of rights and duties of citizenship - both as individuals and members of a powerful nation.*

The implementation strategies were worked out by the different State governments. The duration of the programme was 180 hours to be spread over 90 days - on an average of 2 hours per day. The teacher-student ratio was 1:30. The programme was to be undertaken especially but not exclusively by the primary school teachers who were paid an honorarium of Rs.10 per month and a recurring allowance of Rs.25, and Rs.11 per year for contingencies. The target group was 12-40 years. A detailed syllabus for the training of instructors was also prepared. The scheme was flexible enough to enable each State to develop a variety of operational strategies. Delhi introduced the education caravan, consisting of four vans, one to serve as a mobile stage, another as a moving cinema and the remaining two as exhibition vans for the promotion of social education in rural areas. The caravan toured 300 villages holding three-day educational melas at one centre during 1949-50. West Bengal and Bihar also emphasised recreational and cultural aspects of social education, while Madras and Bombay concentrated on setting up libraries. U.P. and M.P. organised social education camps during summer vacations. Almost every State had its own programme of social education during 1949-50 (Government of India, 1963).

The programme picked up with the launching of the First Five Year Plan which made a provision of Rs.5 crores for social education. With the creation of a full fledged Ministry of Community Development and Co-operation in 1952 and the integration of social education with the community development programme, more systematic attempts were made to tackle the problem of illiteracy. The integration of social education with the community development programme was based on the premise that any large scale and effective programme for adult literacy must be based on the closest possible co-operation at every level of personnel engaged in education and in community development and for that, social education and adult literacy have to be developed as extension activities undertaken by educational institutions, especially village schools in collaboration with Panchayats, co-operatives and voluntary organisations. The community development programme aimed at "community uplift through community action", covering agriculture, irrigation, communication, education, health, social welfare, etc. The First Five Year Plan emphasised that social education approach must permeate all the programmes of State aid to the people (Government of India, 1952).

*The Community Development Programme was conceived as a centre-based programme at block level. A number of blocks constituted a project. Each block on an average covered a population of 66,000. While the Block Development Officer was responsible for the overall implementation of the project in the area, a chief social education officer supervised the social education programme which was carried out at grassroots level by a male and female social education officer. Programme of social education in the blocks included formation of community centres, youth clubs, Mahila Mandals, adult literacy centres, farmers' groups, recreation centres and training of gram sahayaks. While the course content of social education programme under community development did not differ from the earlier one, the duration of the programme was increased from 6 to 10 months and divided into two stages of five months each. Although the main course was completed in the first stage, follow up activities were taken up in the second stage. The basic approach towards social education and budget allocation remaining the same during the First and Second Five Year Plans, there was strengthening of the administrative infrastructure, expansion of training facilities, library system and increased production of audio-visual programmes.*

There were several significant achievements in the field of Social education during 1950s. Beginning with 55 selected blocks in 1952, the community development movement extended to 4 lakh villages by the end of the Second Plan. It was estimated that during the First Five Year Plan, nearly 35 lakh illiterates became literate (out of 67 lakhs enrolled in adult literacy centres) whereas during the Second Plan nearly 40 lakh attained literacy. Besides, 63,000 community centres, 454 school-cum-community centres, 55,000 youth clubs, nearly 100 libraries and five Social Education Organisers Training Centres were also established during the First Five Year Plan. Some of the key national level institutions also came up during the 1950s, viz., Literacy House, (1953), National Fundamental Education Centre (1956) and National Book Trust, Central Board of Workers Education (1957).

The Government of India accorded due importance to the production and distribution of suitable literature to neoliterates through a centrally sponsored scheme which provided assistance to several agencies, viz. Mysore State Adult Education Council, Jamia Millia, Indian Adult Education Association, etc. Besides this, the Ministry of Education instituted prizes for authors of best books for neo-literates in different languages and organised workshops in literacy journalism. Central assistance was also provided to voluntary organisations, for production of audio-visual aids, promotion of workers' education, development of rural radio forums and setting up of permanent adult schools on experimental basis (Mohisini, 1993).

Notwithstanding the well defined concept of social education, well conceived programme package and effective leadership of Maulana Azad, the first Education Minister of Government of India, active participation of NGOs and eminent adult educators, viz., Mohan Sinha Mehta, Sohan Singh, T.A. Koshy, B. N. Jha, M. C. Nanavathy, A. R. Deshpande, and the support of UNESCO, and America (Ford Foundation) the programme did not make a dent in rural areas. "Except for certain isolated examples here and there, a large percentage of the rural community has by and large been impervious to the influence of adult literacy

programme.” It was calculated that the benefits of social education programme was actually derived by 0.3% of the population. It was noted that since the key grassroots level workers – Social Education Officers, were overburdened with diverse but immense responsibilities, they failed to cope with the demands specially in the absence of suitable literature, expert guidance and adequate research support (Shah, 1987).

During 1950s, India received international support towards the development of adult education. While a number of Indian adult educators were trained by the American team led by Dr. Frank C. Laubach and Dr. Wealthy Fisher, the Ford Foundation provided grants for setting up Social Education Training Centres. The Indo-American cooperation in adult education did not last long due to political reasons. The only exception being the World Literacy Inc. which continued to provide financial support to Literacy House at Lucknow. Subsequently India received funds from UNESCO for setting up a National Fundamental Education Centre and organisation of a regional seminar on reading materials for neo-literates. While all these international inputs strengthened Indian adult education, it remained basically a centre-based programme and did not develop into a popular movement. Although Dr. Frank Laubach submitted a proposal to the Government of India for launching an All India Literacy Campaign in 1950, it was shelved due to paucity of funds. The official policy revolved around the expansion of elementary education. It was argued by the policy planners that by providing free and compulsory education to all the children by 1960, the problem of illiteracy could be tackled more effectively. The failure to achieve universalisation of elementary education by 1960, the successful emergence of *Gram Shikshan Mohim* and the paucity of resources, limitations of social education programme and the proclamation of Education Policy (1967), all paved the way for change in the adult education concept and policy by mid-1960s (Shah, 1991).

The *Gram Shikshan Mohim* (Village Education Campaign) was the first successful literacy campaign undertaken in independent India during the late 1950s. Masterminded by an enterprising official of the Education Department of Maharashtra-Shri B. R. Patil - the campaign was a resounding success, and gradually spread over the entire state of Maharashtra during 1960s and significantly contributed towards increase of literacy in the state. During 1961-71, the literacy in the state increased by about 10% i.e. from 29.82% to 39.18% as against the 5% increase (from 24.02% to 29.45%) at the national level. It is estimated that about 10 million adults became literate through the campaign. The campaign not only won international recognition in the form of UNESCO Pahalavi Prize for literacy in 1963, but was also considered worth replication in other states by the Planning Commission (Dutta, 1986).

#### **2.4.2 Functional Literacy Programme (1968-1977)**

The concept of functional literacy emerged during 1960s. While, the Second World Conference on Adult Education held in Canada in 1960 reaffirmed the importance of closely linking adult education to productive activity, work and development, the World Conference of Education Ministers on “Eradication of illiteracy”, held in Tehran in 1965, defined functional literacy with greater precision and the close link of literacy and social and economic progress was discussed in detail. The conference observed that:

*adult literacy, an essential element in general development, must be linked*



*to economic and social priorities and to present and future need for labour... Rather than an end in itself functional literacy should be regarded as a way of preparing man for a social, civic and economic role that goes far beyond the limits of rudimentary literacy training consisting merely in the teaching of reading and writing. The very process of learning to read and write should be made an opportunity for acquiring information that can immediately be used to improve living standards; reading and writing should lead not only to elementary general knowledge but to training for work, increased productivity, a greater participation in civic life and a better understanding of the surrounding world, and should ultimately open the way to basic human culture (UNESCO, 1965).*

The international thinking on adult education had its impact on Indian policy planners. Dr. V. K. R.V. Rao, an economist and a member of the Planning Commission in 1965, ardently supported the idea of functional literacy. The Conference of State Education Ministers organized by the Planning Commission in June 1965, noted that “one of the reasons for the failure of many development schemes like agricultural production, family planning, cooperatives, panchayat raj institutions was the lack of functional literacy among the majority of the population in rural areas”. This new emphasis on the functional approach to adult education was fully endorsed by the Fourth Five Year Plan and the Education Commission (1964-66). To quote the report of the Education Commission:

*We do not equate literacy with the mere ability to read and write. Literacy if it is to be worthwhile, must be functional. It should enable the literate not only to acquire sufficient mastery over the tools of literacy but also to acquire relevant knowledge which will enable him to pursue his own interests and ends (Naik, 1968).*

*Defined as “literacy integrated with the occupation of the learner and directly related to development”, the concept of functional literacy was translated into action when UNESCO designed the Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) which provided an opportunity for India to develop the Farmers Training and Functional Literacy Project (FTFLP). This project, which was in operation during (1968-1977) aimed at improving the efficiency of the farmers in the implementation of the special programme of High Yielding Varieties of wheat that was selected by the Government of India for enhancing agricultural production and development in the context of the Green Revolution. The project had three components viz., (1) farmers training (2) functional literacy and (3) farm broadcasting. Under each, a number of activities were undertaken. Under farmers training, five-day training courses were organized for selected farmers by specialists, besides organizing Charcha Mandals (Discussion Groups) Mahila Mandals (women's groups), conducted tours and periodic field demonstrations. Under farm broadcasting, half an hour programme on technical information was broadcast daily by the All India Radio. The functional literacy programme was woven around the selected themes related to high yielding varieties of seed and farm practices. These three activities were planned in an integrated manner with a view to educating and informing the illiterate farmers about the high yielding varieties of seeds and the details of improved agricultural practices (Government of India, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, 1972).*

It was observed that neither the farmers training nor the increased or improved physical inputs could by themselves achieve much if the farmer remained illiterate and hence functional literacy was in-built into the project as a key component with the following objectives. To enable the farmers to (i) read and understand labels on fertilizer bags; (ii) fill up loan application forms, input cards (iii) keep simple account of operations, and (iv) read and make use of simple extension bulletins, rural newspapers, etc. The FTFL project was jointly undertaken by three Ministries - Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Information and Broadcasting, and Education and Culture, and it aimed at training about 5 million farm families in 100 Selected H.Y.P-districts and imparting functional literacy to one million adults at the cost of ninety million rupees. Apart from Government of India funds, the project also received the UNDP and UNESCO assistance. During the Fourth Plan, Rs.60 million by the Ministry of Agriculture for the farmers training, Rs.20 million by the Ministry of Education for functional literacy and Rs.10 million by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for farm broadcasting were provided for this project (Shah, 1991, *Op. Cit.*).

*The organizational structure and programme components of FTFL project were worked out in detail by the Government of India. The FTFL project was conceived as a centre-based programme with an instructor learner ratio of 1:30. The project was confined to 3 H.Y.P. districts in a State and the maximum number of centres per district was limited to 60 and they were under the charge of a project officer who was assisted by six part-time supervisors (each with 10 centres) or two full time supervisors (each with 30 centres). The duration of the functional literacy programme was one year and it was organized in two phases of six months each. Each phase had 150 hours of effective teaching. The programme was implemented on all working days and on an average of one and half hours daily. The learning materials were region specific and problem oriented and the Directorate of Adult Education, New Delhi, prepared the first book entitled Kisan Saksharata-Pehli Pustak, Teacher's guide and supplementary readers. These materials were prepared as prototypes for easy adaptation to different situations. More than 70 titles were brought out in India. A combination of methods was used in curriculum transaction, viz., demonstration, practical training, oral instruction, audio-visual communication and discussions. The detailed guidelines for the implementation of the project were prepared by the Government of India and the states were requested to follow the directives of the Centre (Government of India, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. 1972, *Op. Cit.*).*

Commenced as a pilot project in three districts in 1968, the programme expanded during the next ten years and by 1977 covered 144 districts out of 397. It was estimated that on an average 50,000 farm families attended the functional literacy classes each year. During the Fourth Plan nearly 30 lakh farmers joined the functional literacy classes as against the target of 100 lakh, and an expenditure of Rs.80 lakh was incurred as against the proposed outlay of Rs.200 lakh. The project was evaluated at different points of time by national and international agencies. The Pilot evaluation study conducted by the Directorate of Adult Education in 1970 revealed the utility of the functional literacy programme in contributing to agricultural production. The drop-out rate was only 17.5%. The subsequent evaluation conducted by a committee in 1977 noted that funds

provided for the scheme at district level were inadequate and the inter-departmental coordination was far from satisfactory. Besides, the supervisory system was almost non-existent. It was observed that a substantial proportion of the grassroots level workers had no training and in many districts, the follow-up programmes for the neo-literates were found to be weak (Directorate of Adult Education, 1973).

The programme was implemented exclusively through official channels. Although it succeeded in developing skills and disseminating knowledge of improved agricultural practices, among farmers, it had certain limitations since the beneficiaries were mainly from relatively well-off and enterprising farmers who were desirous of introducing new agricultural practices. The programme touched only the fringe of the problem, leaving the mass of the illiterates - exploited marginal farmers and landless agricultural workers - outside its scope. Notwithstanding these limitations, the operationalisation of the project over a decade, did enable a section of Indian adult educators to enhance their professional skills in the integration of the components of literacy and functionality. It also revealed the problems likely to be encountered in any inter-departmental development programme besides upholding the importance of decentralisation of powers and strengthening of the monitoring system.

The concept of functionality found a place in several programmes during 1970s. Functional Literacy for Adult Women was an important project introduced during 1975-76. By 1977, it covered 23 States/Union Territories. Its aim was to impart non-formal education using functional literacy as the means, besides accelerating the participation of adult women in the developmental efforts of the community so as to bring about attitudinal changes among them which would enable women to play their role as citizens. The scheme was conceived as a package of services to adult women in the 15-45 age group and was implemented jointly by the Department of Education and Social Welfare in the experimental Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) project areas. The functional literacy classes were organized by the *Anganwadi* workers of ICDS who were given an additional honorarium of Rs.50 per month. The programme contents included the elements of health and hygiene, food and nutrition, home management and child care, civic and vocational education (Naik, 1968, *Op. Cit.*).

The phase of functional literacy also witnessed the establishment of National Board of Adult Education (1969), Directorate of Adult Education (1971) and emergence of non-formal education programmes. The Central Advisory Board of Education at its meeting held in November 1974 recommended that the exclusive emphasis on formal system of education should be given up and a large element of non-formal education should be introduced within the system. Multiple entry and programmes of part-time and correspondence education should be developed. Besides, the C.A.B.E recommended that functional literacy programme should be planned in relation to various developmental schemes appropriate to rural and urban situations. Hence during the Fifth and Sixth Five Year Plans, efforts were made to integrate adult education with a number of developmental programmes. Directorate of Adult Education identified 65 Schemes/Programmes in different departments of the Government of India which had a substantial component of non-formal education. Some of the significant schemes were *Krishi Vigyan Kendras*, Workers Education programme, Nehru Yuvak Kendra, Satellite Instructional Television Experiment, *Shramik Vidyapeeth*,

Rural Welfare Extension, and Family and Child Welfare project, etc. While the *Krishi Vigyan Kendras* were concerned with technical literacy and aimed at imparting education through work experience to rural youth in agriculture and allied subjects, the *Shramik Vidyapeeth*, were intended to provide integrated education and training courses for different categories of urban workers with a view to improving their professional competency and also enriching their lives.

### Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Space is given below is the question for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit under “Answers to Check Your Progress”.

2) Briefly describe the salient features of Farmers Functional Literacy and Training Programme.

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### 2.4.3 National Adult Education Programme (1978-1987)

By early 1970s two significant events, Paulo Freire’s writings on conscientiation approach and the deliberations of International Symposium on literacy held in Persepolis in 1975 seem to have influenced the concept of adult education. Viewing education as an element in the process of human liberation, Freire considered that the main task of adult education is to bring about a process of critical reflection that leads to action and change. According to him dialogue and participation are key elements of liberating education and the role of adult educator is to enter into dialogue with illiterates about concrete situations and offer them the instruments with which they can teach themselves to read and write. Freire’s ideology was reaffirmed in the Declaration of Persepolis, which considered literacy to be “not just the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic but a contribution to the liberation of man and to his full development.” Further, the Declaration clarified that:

*“the concept of functionality must be extended to include all its dimensions political, economic, social and cultural. Just as development is not only economic growth, so literacy must aim above all to arouse in the individual a critical awareness of social reality and to enable him or her to understand, master and transform his or her destiny” (Bataille, 1976).*

These overseas ideas had their impact on Indian Adult Education. The scope and significance of combining the twin components of functionality and liberation was realised in 1978 when the then Government in power (Janata Government), emphasised "re-distributive justice" to alleviate poverty and liquidate illiteracy. The Government of India gave top priority to adult education and issued a Policy Statement on Adult Education and formulated the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) in 1978. The conceptual framework of NAEP laid equal emphasis on literacy, functionality and social awareness and visualised adult education as a "means to bring about a fundamental change in the process of socio-economic development, from a situation in which the poor remain passive spectators at the fringe of the development activity to being enabled to be at its centre and as active participants". Emphasising that "literacy ought to be recognised as an integral part of individual's personality, it was assumed that the illiterate and the poor can rise to their own liberation through literacy, dialogue and action". In fact, considering education as a means of man's liberation and tool for human development, was in conformity with ancient Indian adage (*Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaya*) and the educational philosophies of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindra Nath Tagore.

The NAEP was mainly conceived on a project pattern with adult education centres functioning as grassroots level units and each of them catering to 25-30 illiterate adults. Initially (1978-80), the duration of the programme was for 10 months (300-500 hours). However, it was extended to three years after the review in 1980 and renamed as Adult Education Programme, according to which the programme was to be operationalised in three stages to be spread over three years. While the first stage of basic literacy was of 300-350 hours' duration, the second and third stages were of 150 and 100 hours respectively. The contents of the first year programme included basic literacy, numeracy, knowledge about health, family life, vocations related to the learners' background and laws relevant for family life. Since the focus of the second and third year programme was on reinforcement of literacy and improvement of vocational studies, no specific content was laid down and freedom was given to the organizing agencies to introduce locally relevant reading materials for the neo-literates. Subsequently the duration of the programme was reduced to two years (Government of India, 1978).

Though equal emphasis was laid on literacy, functionality and social awareness, in the course of operationalisation, functionality was relegated into background. The Review Committee on NAEP observed that:

*"the programme so far has largely remained confined to literacy, the development orientation of the programme has been superficial and the functional components in the course almost non-existent... while the importance of functionality and awareness as integral parts of the adult education programme is being increasingly recognised, much efforts would be needed to achieve this integration into practice"* (Government of India, 1980).

The subsequent operationalisation of adult education programmes revealed several drawbacks. The study conducted by the Programme Evaluation Organisation of the Planning Commission found that in as many as 45 per cent of centres, the functionality part of curriculum was not being followed though over 90 per cent of the learners reported increase in social awareness. A number

of evaluation studies sponsored by the Department of Education (MHRD) during 1980s revealed that “functionality and awareness component generally got neglected or poorly reflected” and achievement level of learners varied from 40 to 60 per cent (Mathur and Jambhulkar 1985). Since large sections of the poor and illiterate masses identified NAEP as their programme, “the drop-out rate has been much lower than was feared”. The high level of participation of women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, involvement of voluntary agencies have been a significant achievement of the NAEP. Besides, the resource base of adult education was also strengthened by setting up the State Resource Centres. The involvement of the selected Social Science Research Organisations in the evaluation of adult education programmes gave a tremendous boost to the expansion of adult education research. During 1980s as many as 56 evaluation studies were conducted by different institutions in India (Anil Bordia, 1982).

The 1980s also witnessed the expansion of University Adult Education in India when the University Grants Commission (under the leadership of Dr. Madhuri Shah) provided hundred percent grants to universities to take up adult, continuing education and extension activities with the active participation of university community. Of the 226 universities, deemed universities and institutions of national importance in India (during 1995-96), 93 set up separate Departments of Adult Continuing Education. The expansion of University Adult Education since 1978 had its impact on the progress of research. Compared to 41 Ph.D. theses on adult education brought out during 1946-79, as many as 139 theses came out during 1980-98. With the launching of the Mass Programme of Functional Literacy in 1986, the scope for participation of students, both college and schools, increased tremendously. The expansion of Nehru Yuvak Kendras provided an opportunity to non-student youth to participate in literacy programme and other developmental activities (Shah, 1990).

### Check Your Progress

**Notes:** a) Space is given below the question for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit under “Answers to Check Your Progress”.

3) What were the salient features of National Adult Education Programme?

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## 2.4.4 Programmes of National Literacy Mission (1988-2007)

Upholding literacy as an important component of human resource development, the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) stated the need for strengthening the programme for training in functional skills relevant to economic activities and adopting the strategy of mass movement to cover the huge target of illiterates. The importance of literacy was reiterated by the *National Policy on Education* (1986) which envisaged that adult education would be a means for reducing economic, social and gender disparities, and nation as a whole would assume the responsibility for providing resource support. Working out the implementation strategies, the *Programme of Action* recommended that “emphasis in adult education programme should be on skill development and creation of awareness among the learners of the national goals, of development programmes, and for liberation from oppression.” Subsequently, when promotion of literacy became an important national mission, the document on *National Literacy Mission* (NLM) specified that the objective of NLM would be to impart functional literacy to 80 million illiterates in 15-35 age group by 1995 through a variety of means and with the active involvement of all sections of society. The concept of functional literacy envisaged under NLM was much broader than the earlier concept and included the following four aspects: (i) achieving self-reliance in basic numeracy, (ii) becoming aware of the cause of one’s deprivation and moving towards amelioration of conditions through organisation and participation in the process of development, (iii) acquiring skills to improve the economic status and general wellbeing and (iv) imbibing the values of national integration, conservation of the environment, women’s equality, observance of small family norm, etc. This expanded concept of functional literacy may be termed as developmental literacy in view of its coverage of all aspects of human life and emphasis on the promotion of national concerns. Thus, developmental literacy may be defined as literacy for all round development of human beings and nations. By enabling individuals to lead an enlightened, productive and socially conscious lives, the developmental literacy aims at the development of nation as a whole (Government of India, 1988).

With the change in the concept, the operational strategies were also modified to make it a mass movement through total literacy campaigns. However, the breakthrough came with an experiment in mass literacy campaign spearheaded by an NGO, Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, in Ernakulam District in 1989 with the objective of making the entire district fully literate within a period of one year. The campaign was implemented with the active cooperation of the district administration and all sections of society in a time bound, volunteer-based and cost-effective manner. The campaign approach was characterised by large scale mobilisation through a multifaceted communication strategy which fully exploited the traditional folk culture. The instant success of the campaign approach had a snowballing effect and similar campaigns were launched in quick succession all over the country. Of the 525 districts in India, more than 80% (447 districts) launched Total Literacy Campaigns (TLC) by March 1998. During the decade 1988-98, 68.5 million learners were made literate as against the target of 100 million by 1999, which is a remarkable achievement given the size of the country and its diversities in terms of region, religion and culture. Although a perusal of the 130 evaluation reports of TLC districts, shows that only 25% of districts have succeeded in achieving a literacy rate of above 80%. The *Census Report of 2001*, reveals that the literacy percentage increased from 52 to 65.38

during 1991-2001. Besides, the cumulative number of literacy volunteers mobilised since the launching of the literacy campaigns has exceeded ten million. Thus, the literacy campaign represents the largest ever civil mobilisation in the history of the country (Report of Expert Group, 1994).

Consequent upon the successful implementation of literacy campaign in the Ernakulam District in Kerala state and its emergence as the first fully literate District in India, the Total Literacy Campaign has been adopted by the NLM as the principal strategy for eradication of illiteracy in the country. As on March 2000, the TLC had been launched in 526 districts (out of 588 districts) in the country. Besides, the NLM supported the Rural Functional Literacy programme (RFLP) in 30 districts (located in six states, viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Nagaland and Sikkim), which are sparsely populated and hilly areas where campaign mode could not be adopted. The RFLP is a centre-based programme where an instructor imparts literacy to 20-30 illiterates for two hundred hours spread over a year. Apart from these two major programmes several state Governments, voluntary agencies and educational institutions have been implementing various types of small scale projects and innovative programmes. During the period 1988-2000, NLM succeeded in imparting literacy to 849.39 lakh persons through various programmes (National Literacy Mission, 1998).

With a view to consolidating the gains of literacy campaigns and programmes and providing the neo-literates further opportunities for learning, the NLM launched a scheme of Continuing Education in 1995 (which was revised in 1999), which envisaged the setting up of a Continuing Education (CE) Centre for a population of 2000-2500. The CE Centre is conceived as an institutional mechanism which would provide a range of basic literacy, post literacy and target specific programmes covering equivalency, income generation, special interest and skill oriented programmes. Each Centre is managed by two part time functionaries, viz. *Prerak* (Facilitator) and an Assistant *Prerak*. For every 8-10 CE centres, one Centre is designated as a nodal CE centre whose functionaries are entrusted with the overall responsibility of monitoring and supervision of the centres. As on December 2006, there were 2,18,000 CE Centres in 321 districts in India. Further details of the CE programmes are given in the unit on Current Policy and Programmes (Planning Commission, 2007).

### Check Your Progress

**Notes:** a) Space is given below the question for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit under "Answers to Check Your Progress".

4) What were the objectives of the concept of functionality envisaged under National Literacy Mission?

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## 2.5 INSTITUTIONALISATION OF ADULT EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW

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The history of adult education bears testimony to the development and demolition of infrastructures at different periods. During 1950s, a national level institution, National Fundamental Education Centre and several regional Training Centres for Social Education officers and a number of Janata Colleges were set up only to be folded up within a decade due to the change in the policy of Government of India. Since institutions take a long gestation period to develop professional excellence and ethos, the continuation of the National Fundamental Education Centre and its development into a full-fledged national institution would have strengthened the professional base of Indian adult education. One of the reasons for the slow pace of the growth of adult education as a distinct profession may be traced to the absence of special institutions during 1960-80. This trend changed in 1980s when several State Resource Centres and University Departments of Adult Education were set up. Although several State Governments had developed adequate administrative infrastructure for the Social Education Programme during 1950s, they were dismantled during 1960s when the programme was terminated. The process of redeveloping the infrastructure at State level began only in 1980s. At the national level, though a National Institute of Adult Education was established in 1991 to undertake research, training and publications, it was closed by mid-1990s. In fact, there has been no long-term vision of institutional development in the field of Indian adult education. This is mainly due to the policy of conceiving and implementing adult education as short-term activities or plan projects. Unless adult education is planned as a regular ongoing activity consisting of basic literacy, post literacy and continuing education with a provision for permanent professional institutions for the training of manpower at national and state levels, Indian adult education will remain as a marginal activity with an uncertain future.

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## 2.6 LET US SUM UP

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The growth and development of adult education in India during the last hundred years reveal certain trends and raises a number of issues. During the past, the concept, policy and programmes of adult education in India have undergone several but significant changes. Of the various national and international forces and factors that have influenced the character and development of Indian adult education, the changing policies of Government of India, role of International Organisations like UNESCO, the ideas of Paulo Freire were crucial. Besides several key individuals viz; Humayun Kabir, A.R. Deshpande, Sohan Singh, V. K. R. V. Rao, P. C. Chunder, Madhuri Shah, Anil Bordia, Lakshmidar Mishra, Mohan Sinha Mehta, S. C. Dutta, Malcolm S. Adisheshaiah, Chitra Naik, Ramlal Parikh, Bhaskar Chatterjee have also played significant role in the promotion of Adult Education programmes at different points of time.

Four main concepts can be discerned in the history of Indian adult education, viz; basic literacy (1882-1947), civic literacy (1948-67), functional literacy (1968-77) and developmental literacy (1978-till date). Evolved at different points of time, these concepts were operationalised into a variety of programmes, projects and schemes, viz; Night schools, Social Education, Farmers' Education and *Functional Literacy, Rural Functional literacy, Mass Programme of Functional*

Literacy, National Adult Education Programme, Total Literacy Campaigns and Continuing Education. Besides these, a number of innovative projects were also implemented by official and non-governmental organizations, the most noteworthy being *Mahila Samakhya* Project.

Of all the events, the launching of the National Literacy Mission in 1988 and the emergence of Ernakulam as the first fully literate district in India in 1989 stand out. While the former enhanced the status of adult education programme and assured political and policy support, the latter sparked off a series of literacy campaigns which led to the eradication of illiteracy from a number of districts. Of the several literacy campaigns four (Ernakulam, Burdwan, Pondichery, Bhav Nagar) have received UNESCO Literacy awards and recognition during 1990-1994. As observed by the Arun Ghosh Committee, these campaigns had a positive impact on the enrolment of children in primary schools, improving caste and communal relations, empowerment of women, besides sensitising the bureaucracy to the concerns of common man and above all placing literacy on the national agenda. The positive impact of literacy on development becomes clear when we examine the census data of 1981-1991 which brings out the correlation between literacy and a number of developmental indicators. The National Family Health Survey of 1999, bears testimony to the positive impact of literacy on several social and economic factors such as health and nutrition in relation to women.

Two clear trends are evident in the history of adult education in India. While Indian literacy campaigns are characterised by short periods (1-2 years) of intense activity followed by an uncertain interlude and final tapering off, the centre-based programmes have followed a slow but steady path for about a decade. Of the different major centre-based programmes, projects and schemes viz., Social education, Farmers Education and Functional Literacy, Rural Functional Literacy; the first one had the longest run spreading over the first three Five Year Plans. All the three programmes were characterized by ambitious plans, targets and outlays. Their achievements were, however, modest. Though during the decade 1979-89, the Rural Functional Literacy Project enrolled 249.14 lakhs adult learners, the number of those made literate was only 99.38 lakh. There was a wide variation in coverage of different programmes during 1980s. Against the target of covering 110 million adults during 1981-82 to 1985-86, only 16 million were reported to have been made literate. The average number of persons rendered literate per year declined from 49 Lakhs in 1985-88 to 44 Lakhs in 1988-90. Of the 38 million adults estimated to have been covered during the Seventh Five Year Plan, only 23 million (61 per cent) were made literate. In short, there was considerable variation in the achievements of adult education programmes. It seems that there was an official obsession with targets since most of the evaluations and reviews hardly provided any details of qualitative achievement. It may be argued that one of the causes for the failure of adult education programme may be due to its poor quality and hence the collection of qualitative data becomes all the more important.

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## 2.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- 1) The main thrust of Adult Education in India during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century revolved around basic literacy. Night schools were the key adult education institutions in British India. They were few and modelled after British Adult Schools and were mainly setup by the Christian missionaries, nationalist leaders,

socio-religious organisations and intellectuals. The official policy was to encourage them wherever practical and permit as much flexibility as possible in school hours. The core curriculum included rudiments of reading, writing and numeracy and was covered within a minimum of 100 days. Average instruction per day was 2-3 hours duration. The Indian Education Commission (1882) observed that every province in British India had provisions for setting up night schools and Bombay and Madras had 134 and 312 night schools with an enrolment of 4000 and 7000 adults respectively.

- 2) Defined as “literacy integrated with the occupation of the learner and directly related to development”, the concept of functional literacy was translated into action when the UNESCO designed the Experimental World Literacy Programme which provided an opportunity for India to develop Farmers’ Training and Functional Literacy Project (FTFLP). This project, which was in operation during (1968-1977) aimed at improving the efficiency of the farmers in the implementation of the special programme of High Yielding Varieties of wheat that was selected by the Government of India for enhancing agricultural production and development in the context of the Green Revolution. The project had three components, viz., (1) farmers’ training (2) functional literacy and (3) farm broadcasting. Under each, a number of activities were undertaken. Under farmers’ training, five-day training courses were organized for selected farmers by specialists, besides organizing Charcha Mandals (Discussion Groups) Mahila Mandals (women’s groups), conducted tours and periodic field demonstrations. Under farm broadcasting, half an hour programme on technical information was broadcast daily by the All India Radio. The functional literacy programme was woven around the selected themes related to high yielding varieties of seed and farm practices. These three activities were planned in an integrated manner with a view to educating and informing the illiterate farmers about the high yielding varieties of seeds and the details of improved agricultural practices.
- 3) The NAEP was mainly conceived on a project pattern with adult education centres functioning as grassroots level units and each of them catering to 25-30 illiterate adults. Initially (1978-80), the duration of the programme was for 10 months (300-500 hours). However, it was extended to three years after the review in 1980 and renamed as Adult Education Programme according to which the programme was to be operationalised in three stages to be spread over three years. While the first stage of basic literacy was of 300-350 hours’ duration, the second and third stages were of 150 and 100 hours respectively. The contents of the first year programme included basic literacy, numeracy, knowledge about health, family life, vocations related to the learners’ background and laws relevant for family life. Since the focus of the second and third year programme was on reinforcement of literacy and improvement of vocational studies, no specific content was laid down and freedom was given to the organizing agencies to introduce locally relevant reading materials for the neo-literates. Subsequently the duration of the programme was reduced to two years. Though equal emphasis was laid on literacy, functionality and social awareness, in the course of operationalisation, functionality was relegated to the background.
- 4) The objective of NLM was to impart functional literacy to 80 million illiterates in 15-35 age group by 1995 through a variety of means and with

the active involvement of all sections of society. The concept of functional literacy envisaged under NLM was much broader than the earlier concept and included the following four aspects: (i) achieving self-reliance in basic numeracy, (ii) becoming aware of the cause of one's deprivation and moving towards amelioration of conditions through organisation and participation in the process of development, (iii) acquiring skills to improve the economic status and general wellbeing and (iv) imbibing the values of national integration, conservation of the environment, women's equality, observance of small family norm etc...

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