

POVERTY ERADICATION THROUGH EDUCATION

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Special Lecture and Text by Prof . B.R.K.Raju

(Prof.B.R.K.Raju received M.A. (Ateneo De Manila), M.A.(S.W.), Ph.D (A.U)., He was a Former Adviser, Youth Affairs (Ministry of HRD Govt. of India) Professor of Social Work., Andhra University.)

My association with social work education and national service program implementation has been brought me in close interaction with undergraduate and postgraduate students and teachers belonging to various universities in Andhra Pradesh and several other universities in the country.

Students and teachers engaged in service with communities realize their curricular, relevance to societal their needs. More than a million students mainly at undergraduate level enrolled at NSS (National Service Scheme) volunteers at a point of time. Each volunteer is expected to put in 120hrs of service per year. He/she is supposed to be enrolled for two years and put in 240hrs of social work apart from a camp in an adopted community for 10 day duration. This is more a personality development program for a volunteer apart from asset creation in a community setting.

However, a number of these volunteers after securing jobs in governmental sector have been found to be more conscious of their obligation to serve the poor and needy than those who were not a trainee as NSS volunteers. Apart from the above category there have been some we have started NGO's and established models serving the cause of the poor and oppressed spread over different linguistic and geographical regions of the country.

One such model NGO which has come to public attention is “Adithi” started by Viji srinivasan (women of the year -2004 as identified by “The week” magazine). Viji srinivasan gave up a life of luxury to work for the empowerment of oppressed women in village of Bihar and Jaharkand for them. She is more than a social-worker-mother, goddess-god! Thanks to Viji specially trained farmers, fisher women are learning to reclaim their worth. Tribal women speak English and market up their handicraft at London and San Francisco. Viji says that during her childhood she believed that life of the poor was beautiful and romantic, hunger and poverty were alien. To her as she was the granddaughter of late Sri V.T.krishnamachari (the first deputy chairman of the planning commission) and daughter of the general manager in the Indian Railways. Over the years she changed the life of more than one lakh poor women and girl children by working for more than 18hr a day, walking bare foot, sleep on the road and sharing ordinary food with co-workers.

Adithi has developed 568 Self-Help Groups (SHG) involved in agriculture food processing and manufacturing local products. These employ 34000 women in Bihar she trained women in high-yielding crop varieties, and fertilizers. Armed with knowledge these women increased yields more than three fold. These SHGs promote education among the daughters of sex-workers and tribal.

Money cannot solve all problems. “The empowerment can be achieved only when people make long-term plans” says Viji “and that can only happen through education”. This resulted in the setting up of IGNOU-ADITHI RURAL STUDY CENTER [Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)]. This offers various courses like B.A., B.COM., B.P.P., C.R.D., (Certificate in Rural Development) and etc. The impact is visible tribal women who are treated like commodities now have a voice in decision making they are comfortable with phones, banks and post offices and use them for their benefit and advantage. The center uses text books written in the “Santhali” language. It makes learning interesting to them as it is their mother tongue.

Encouraged by the result Viji has plans to make the center a university all the above steps are various strategies evolved to eradicate poverty through education and training. These steps are very relevant to the N.S.Society, Vizianagaram with which this workshop is devoted...