

SCOUTING IN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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The Scout/Guide movement is an international movement and despite the political, social and cultural heterogeneity of nations, its devotees, irrespective of national differences, are bound by a homogeneity of purpose all over the world. Besides, its international character, the movement has steadfastly adhered to its cherished principles and practices which the passage of time have not been able to erode.

An organisation which expands both in space and time is likely to evolve a stable code of norms of conduct to which its members are obligatorily required to conform. The new entrants in the organisation try to cling tenaciously to its accepted mores and modes of behaviour lest they should be dubbed as infidels. The older ones who run the organisation by sheer force of repetitive behaviour are stiffened into the role of sticklers and conformists. With a view to maintaining and perpetuating the noble tradition of the organisation they scrupulously observe the rituals of the organisation. New ideas or innovations are generally resented and then opposed by them for fear of polluting the sanctity of the conventional wisdom. All forward-looking institutions, as and when they fall into the hands of static sticklers, begin to recede into anachronism and finally sink into discredit or at least oblivion.

Any organisation devoid of dynamism, is, therefore, likely to wither away. Such organisations draw their sustenance from the hoary past. They soon become non-functional, if not extinct.

Each organisation needs reorganisation of its programmes and modes of working for its very survival. An organisation cannot subsist only on its past practices or its past glory. It must, have confrontation with the needs of present reality. It has to seek and work for its transformation in terms of the pressing needs of the living present. Baden Powell, founder of the Scout movement, could foresee all eventualities of the movement and in order to save the Scout/Guide movement from the march of static ritualism, he sounded a note of warning tinged with optimism—'scouting divorced from reality is an impossibility.'

The Scout/Guide movement, I am happy to remark, has not stuck into a quagmire as



yet. But we cannot say with any certainty that history might not repeat itself in the case of the Scout/Guide movement. Historical laws of growth and decay operate unwittingly and in a remorseless and relentless manner. The Scout/Guide movement may meet the same fate as other movements in history have had their doomsday unless it is wrenched out from its conventional wisdom and adapted to the needs of the living times. “The scouting of today and tomorrow,” observes Dr. Lasylo Nagy, Secretary General, World Scout Bureau, “should have three principal characteristics namely—faithful, modern and useful.” It must remain faithful to the ideology that inspired its founder. This is necessary for maintaining its identity. But the ideology is an abstract concept. It has to be translated into a plan of action which helps an individual scout/guide to grow physically, intellectually, aesthetically and morally and prepares him to give his own contribution to the community.

The needs of community change very often. But due to the frequent and startling changes in science and technology the dimensions of social change in the community are taking such rapid strides that it is becoming difficult to keep harmony between social organisation and the technological advancement. In view of this, the Scout/Guide movement has to play an important role in establishing an equation between the extraneous forces of science and technology and the rigid forces of community organisation. The social and economic life of the communities all over the world have reflected tremendous change and impact on the artifacts, social organisations and the value systems of the masses. It may not be possible, perhaps, for our young Scouts and Guides to help the communities in remoulding their community organisation and rebuilding its system of values. But it would be certainly legitimate to demand of them to help the citizens use and maintain artifacts properly which technology has bestowed on them for their use at home and in the locality. The young Scouts and Guides should be so retrained as to make them useful for catering to the needs of modernisation which technological advancement has impinged on them. No living movement, dedicated to serve humanity selflessly, can afford to lag behind the rapid and all-round advancement effected in the community life on account of a chain of explosions of scientific knowledge. If a movement or an association wants to keep itself abreast of the fact-changing patterns of living, it has to keep its programmes and reorientation. Some training programmes of scouting have lost their practical utility. Signalling, for example, has become quite obsolete. With the advent of electronics, sensitive and powerful wireless sets and walkly talkies the communication has become quick and exact. Moreover, they are used round the clock and for far-off distances. If scouting sticks to training in singalling, it will be of very little utility.

Not only do we need to give up the programmes which have ceased to have any relevance to the modern life of the communities; but there is also an equally pressing need to reinforce and reinterpret the existing programme in the light of the emerging needs of the community. One of the programmes of scouting which needs revitalisation is the First Aid.

The FIRST AID in Scouting is limiting to rendering preliminary aid to the injured only. With a wide net-work of Red Cross activities the FIRST AID training programme in scouting has become redundant. At almost every games and sports meet or in fairs one finds tents that display large white banners with big red crosses on their panels. It is rendering expertised First Aid to the victims of accident. It especially acts as an agency to prevent outbreak of epidemics in huge gathering of human being. Hence the FIRST AID training programme of Scouting has to seek new avenues to serve the community in its different walks of life. The Red Cross serves human lives, but it is not only the animates that need first aid, but also the inanimates which are

in dire necessity of first aid, especially at places away from big towns and cities. There is hardly a field where scouting cannot render FIRST AID to the local community.

Let us start with simple and familiar fields which await first aid. With the installation of atomic, thermal, hydro-power and electric power plants in the country, almost every village, worth the name is electrified. Ignorance of fuse generally makes farmers and consumers dependent on the crafty electrician, who charges disproportionately to the service he renders. Besides, unnecessary expenses in the absence of the crafty electrician, water-lift pumps remain inactive, crops in the fields parch without water and cottage industry comes to a halt. Imagine, a community dinner for celebrating a winning in an election or the wedding of a son or a daughter. People are in hilarious mood, they are making the most of it. All of a sudden electricity goes out on account of the fuse. The whole atmosphere changes to annoyance and curses. People start running helter skelter in search of kerosene lamps. Some go out in search of an electrician. If a boy scout happens to be there, he will retrieve the situation by resorting to a simple mechanism of transferring excess load of electricity to other circuits and fixing a fuse wire in fuse box. Motor starts lifting water and crops are watered with steady flow of water; community dinner venue is lit and gaiety returns. He can render first aid in minor repairs of faulty plug and plug pins in lamps cord. He may fix elements in electric presses, heaters etc.

Household gadgets like sewing machines, wick or gas stoves etc. get out of order accidentally. Their running repairs are very simple. If a boy scout learns about minor faults of these household gadgets, he will be a great help to the women who handle these gadgets. He will repair them in a jiffy and earn their gratitude. Another area that awaits first aid is plumbing. Almost all big villages and small towns have their own water supply system. Dripping taps, leaking pipes or choked drains are headaches to the people, especially where plumbers are hard to find. They not only stain washbasins and floors but also start stinking in the absence of simple knowledge of detecting the fault in the washers, loose fixing of pipes etc. A scout is of help in relieving the suffering of the troubled. Hand-water lift-pumps for drawing water are used where water supply system is not available. They generally get out of order on account of constant use. In the absence of readily available mechanical help it remains out of order for a petty long time even for minor repairs. It causes inconvenience to the users. A scout can set them in order. Bicycle is a cheap and trusted vehicle of the common man. It is within his means. Its mechanism is very simple. Boy Scouts can very well pick up running repairs of leakage of valves, loosening of breaks, fixing a puncture or a faulty chain etc. He can be a handy help on the road for novices.

Mechanical implements, automobiles and mopeds are in general use in urban as well as rural areas. A tractor plying between a town and a village is common sight. These mechanical vehicles and implements are prone to go out of order and stop working in the case of even a minor fault like carbon deposit on plugs or a layer of dust on air filter. Generally users feel helpless and are seen dragging their vehicles to a mechanic's shop. One can realise the condition of the user at this juncture. He perspires profusely with the energy he exerts in dragging it and the great mental agony with which he suffers at his helplessness at not locating the fault even though the fault happens to be minor one. The Boy Scout's first aid in locating the fault and removing it, if it happens to be a minor one, will be a relief to the user. The Boy Scout can be of use to the rider especially in replacing broken clutch or gear wire, fixing wheels in case they go deflated etc. Only a few of the areas in which a man needs help have been pointed out



here. They can be multiplied to a large number at the time of drawing. The First Aid training programme.

A little extension in the First Aid programme from physical and overt activities to covert social, cultural and economic fields will shower its bounties on the local community. The local community, on account of ignorance of the facilities available to it and caught between jaws of unbreakable traditions and customs fails to benefit by the fruits of technology and facilities that await it. The Scouts' first aid in drawing local community's attention to how they can borrow loans from commercial banks, co-operative banks or co-operative societies will help in extending their business or in buying agricultural implements, fertilizers and improved seeds etc. Such types of first aid in guiding the community correctly may bring forth a complete revolution in the economic condition of the community. The community will prosper and with it the country will roll on the road to prosperity. Prosperity will decidedly raise living standards of the community. Old and archaic cultural patterns of living will yield its place to modern ones, for the candle of knowledge will light every nook and corner of a hut and drive away the darkness, ignorance and superstitions. It will also narrow down or, at least, bridge the gap between the rural and urban lives.

The kind first aid F. L. Brayne, an ICS officer, rendered to the rural Punjab in the cultural field, the Scouts can render to their local community. Brayne employed dialectical method in drawing home the futility of wearing gold and silver jewellery along with dirty and soiled rags by womenfolk. F. L. Brayne in his book, "Socrates in an Indian Village" points out the evil customs that needed completed reformation. Scouts and guides can render pioneering service in social fields. Casteism, untouchability and religious bigotry that afflict the local community await their first aid. A corporate life, irrespective of caste and creed, will convince the community especially the rural one of the futility of caste or class war that only retards their progress and prosperity. Camp fire provides still another avenue to pin-point evil customs, like child marriages, funeral dinners, untouchability etc., that eat into the very vitals of the society. Social reforms in the community are the need of the day. Scouts and Guides can highlight the disadvantages, rather harms of large families and dowry system. They may exhibit through short plays and skits the needs of widow re-marriage, of planned families of two or three children only. Large families mean poverty, ignorance and sloth. Demand of dowry leads to either economic breakdown of a bride's family or results in her murder. Newspapers are replete with such murders. Scouts can show horrors of such evil customs in camp fire items and provide mental food to ruminate over them and to become active in doing away with such evil customs.

There are other fields which need first aid. We need protection against deadly germs. It requires cleanliness. Scouts and Guides can be of special help in this sphere in driving home the urgent need of cleanliness for healthy and normal life.

This new approach to first aid will entail far-reaching changes in the training programmes. Scout masters and scouts both will have to get training in revised programmes that render true first-aid to the needy community.

This programme encourages a change in the traditional role of scoutmasters and scouts. No doubt, they will not be masters of their trades. They are expected to have only elementary knowledge in a trade that will help them in doing running repairs. The new concept of first-aid gives a new dimension to the scout movement. It will make the movement more popular with the community and rejuvenate it to meet the challenge of the changing needs of the society. □