

Illiteracy and poverty



Illiteracy may be defined as ' the condition of being unable to read or write' and it is one of the main causes of poverty in any society, and Pakistan unfortunately. According to the 1998 census the definition of literacy is ' one who can read a newspaper and write a simple letter, in any language'. Based on this definition Pakistan has a literacy rate of 55% *.

Illiteracy contributes to poverty in numerous ways, both indirect and direct. The first link between illiteracy and poverty tends to be when the poor man is unable to afford a high quality education and this in turn prevents him from getting a high-paid job.

This may also lead to other causes of poverty. When the poor man can't make ends meet with his meager income then he is forced to send his children to work. These children should instead be going to schools and getting education so that when they grow old they can get a higher-earning job and improve their standard of living. This cycle may continue for many generations to come and the poverty stricken people may not be able to improve on their style of living.

Another way that illiteracy leads to poverty is that it alienates a person from his rights. An illiterate person isn't aware of his rights, and so he can be easily manipulated and exploited by the ' bourgeoisie'. If it happens on a large scale and these people are forced to work for jobs with very low incomes, the poverty levels in the country increase.

One way to reduce poverty is by regulating laws that force children to attend schools and gain education up to at least a certain level. This is easier said than done, however it isn't impossible. One way to accomplish this goal is by

paying the child's parents, who are reluctant to send their children to school and earn below a certain level of income, a monthly allowance, the same that the child would have earned if he was forced to work. The allowance can be more than what the child could have earned to give a greater incentive to the parents to send their children to school.

A second way to alleviate poverty is by opening 'industry specific' institutes, which provide skilled training to people at subsidized costs. This would improve the quality of labor and make them more efficient hence improving the economic condition of the country thereby reducing poverty.

A third way to reduce poverty, especially in rural areas, is to make it compulsory on all university students to go to a village and teach for six months. Private universities all over Pakistan should make it a compulsory requirement for its entire graduating student to provide basic education to the children of rural areas. Completion of this requirement will make the student eligible to get his degree. Finally, laws should be passed that protect people unaware of their rights. Those people who are found to exploit the illiterate working class should be given strict punishments. In order to make people aware of their rights government sponsored advertisements and awareness seminars should be conducted throughout the country, especially in rural areas.