NON-STUDENT YOUTH: PROBLEMS AND
PERSPECTIVES

P.K. Patnaik
India

        Attention has been focused in the recent past on the
need for development of youth services as an integral part of
national development planning.   The question one might feel promp-
ted to ask is, "Is there any justification for a youth service and,
if so, what should be the rationale behind the same?"   In a monistic
society, when there was adult consensus about norms of belief and
behaviour, older people were considered to be able to teach
youngsters all they needed to know.   The motto "A Scout is loyal
and a Scout obeys" enjoined on a Boy Scout was observed as a
categorical imperative, but in the pluralistic society of today,
where all beliefs and behaviour have been called into question and
the entire system of values is subject to a searching scrutiny, it
will be difficult to predict if the above motto could hold any longer
its sacrosanct spirit.   The revolt of youth is the most outstanding
characteristic of the last decade,which witnessed serious upheavals
of youth both in the campuses and outside.   One asks the question:
Are the youth themselves to blame for this sorry state of affairs?
The answer,to my mind, would be in the nature of the reply given
by Cassius: "The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars but
in ourselves."

        An important phenomenon of the present time is what
may be termed as the "crisis of want".   Attainment of separate
statehood by developing nations of the world and the efforts being
made by respective national governments to launch an ambitious
programme of economic development to eradicate social and economic
inequality and poverty result in a rising of expectations, particularly
among youth, and consequential frustration when these national
economic goals are not achieved fast enough.   When nine-tenths
of the people in most of the developing countries have for themselves
standards of living worse than what the bottom-tenth of the
American people enjoy, it is small wonder that there is so much
restlessness among the youth who expect innovations quickly.
About 60 per cent of the total population in the ECAFE region is
under 25 years of age.   It therefore requires no particular
emphasis to suggest that any plan for national development which
does not sufficiently recognise youth as an integral part of society

in such matters as planning and decision making is not likely to register its impact on the community or the country.

Secondly, the rapid change, characteristic of modern times, tends to widen the gap in the cultural orientation of generations, bringing in its wake lack of understanding and appreciation of each others' point of view, if not a complete break-down of dialogue between generations, restlessness among the youth and revolt against authority and the establishment. The present phenomenon of social change has been aptly expressed by an American sociologist in a searching analysis of the problems of the American youth in the following words:

> "Whereas the elders were usually reared in a rural and relatively stable environment - where the youth had well-defined social and economic roles - young people today are increasingly being reared in a dynamic and changing urban environment. Growing up in a dynamic society they tend to accept innovations quickly, while their elders generally wish to perpetuate the values and behaviour patterns with which they were familiar in a more rural setting."[1]

The above analysis would hold equally good in respect of any society emerging from the traditional stage to modernity.

Youth represents that phase of life marked by growth and development. The youth population needs situations in which opportunities exist for enabling the young people to enjoy a meaningful life and realise their full potentialities. A radical thinking on the position of young people in society and adult attitudes to the young is required. We must therefore provide opportunities for the young to learn, grow and live creatively by re-ordering our national priorities. The objectives of youth service and its approach need to be reappraised in the light of the changing social scene. In order to be meaningful and effective, youth services should concentrate on preventive and remedial measures and not simply leisure provision. A youth service that wishes to be relevant must estimate the social scene, and particularly that part of it which affects the lives of young people.[2]

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(1) Prof. Preston Valien of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Brooklyn College, New York - "Problems and Promise - A Sociologist's View of American Youth".
(2) Youth and Community Work in the 70s - Report of the Youth Service Development Council, U.K. (HMSO)

Many of the problems are rooted in the educational system. The courses of studies, methods and curricula of education are for the most part out-dated and unrelated to the needs of the youth or the community and fail to provide any stimulus or change to the developing minds. Education and training are, therefore, two important aspects of youth services. Any ameliorative measure for the youth should be co-related to a simultaneous need for educational planning with the basic objective of injecting relevance into the educational system. As H.G. Wells has said, "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe". This futuristic statement of H.G. Wells, it seems to me, has no greater relevance to any other age in history than the present times. We are now witnessing a parallel growth of education and unemployment. While of late there has been a great upsurge in educational activities, there is a corresponding lack of job opportunities for the educated youth, which brings in a hiatus between education and society, and frustration among the educated youth. Any attempt, therefore, to tackle the youth problem in a realistic manner would call for educational planning and long-term investment in education of the youth.

Development of an action programme for educational reconstruction of India could itself form the subject of a detailed study, and it is not the intention of this paper to explore the problem areas in greater depth with a view to devising solutions except to the extent necessary to supplement the requirements of the present study. The object of this paper is to present the problems of the non-student youth, indicate in broad outline the several measures being undertaken by the Government for the non-student youth, and highlight their role in the development process of the country.

In a vast country like India, where the population is estimated at 540 million, the problems facing youth are of a varied nature and relate particularly to the absence of suitable facilities for recreational and cultural activities as well as opportunities for effective participation in the task of national reconstruction and development.

Youth Services cover two groups, namely student youth and non-student youth. The former fall under the purview of colleges and universities, and programmes for them are being implemented jointly by the Ministry of Education and the University Grants Commission in various fields, e.g. National Sports Organisation, establishment of student service institutes (Nanak Bhavans)

and provision of facilities through the National Service Scheme to ensure student participation in service to the community, etc. Whereas some institutional facilities are available for the student youth there is almost a complete lack of such facilities so far as non-student youth is concerned. It is, therefore, the non-student youth, broadly covered by the age-group 18 to 30 and numbering approximately 100 million, which present special problems because of of their large numbers, their predominantly rural composition and the lack of institutional opportunities. With a view to evolving a suitable programme for non-student youth, the Ministry of Education and Youth Services (now redesignated as the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare) took the initiative in convening a Conference of Representatives of Youth Organisations, Youth Service Agencies and Youth Leaders from 30th April to 2nd May, 1969, which considered various aspects of the problems relating to non-student youth.

The Conference considered, among other things, that:

"the objective of youth services is to provide opportunities to the non-student youth for self-expression, self-development and cultural attainment, preparation and training for work and family life, enabling them to assume social and civic responsibilities, developing in them a spirit of comradeship, patriotism, cultural outlook and participation in planning and implementation of the programmes of community and national development."

The Conference emphasised that the purpose of youth programmes is not only to ensure what youth can do for the society, but also to enable the society to fulfil its obligations to the youth in providing facilities for the development of their personality and making them socially useful, functionally efficient and economically productive.

The Conference suggested programmes under the following three broad categories:-

(a)   developmental programmes relating to non-student youth;

(b)   activities and programmes of non-student youth directly beneficial to the community; and

(c)   programmes of training for youth leaders and personnel of youth services.

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The Conference also recommended that there should be a National Advisory Board on Youth Services at the centre, comprising representatives of Central Ministries, State Governments and non-official voluntary youth organisations which would co-ordinate the various programmes for youth.

The National Advisory Board on Youth was constituted under Government of India Resolution No. F.2/9/70-YS I(3) dated 15th July, 1970, and its first meeting was held in December, 1970. The National Youth Board recommended that the following measures be adopted:

(a) Setting up of State and District Youth Welfare Boards;

(b) Setting up of Youth Centres, one in each District, and two centres at Block level in each district, with facilities for sports and games, hobbies, vocational guidance to improve the skills of youth, social education, promotion of national integration, and training of resource personnel for these tasks;

(c) Establishment of Work Centres in selected places and in the vicinity of technical and engineering institutions for imparting training to non-student youth in short-term trades and skills, which will have potential for self-employment;

(d) Establishment of Reception Centres in metropolitan cities with lodging facilities for the purpose of giving useful vocational information to the non-student youth coming from rural and urban areas in search of employment;

(e) Development of adventure facilities for trekking, hiking, mountaineering, coastal sailing etc., and development of camping sites at different places in the country;

(f) Training of youth leaders, and provision of facilities for the purpose; and

(g) Grant of financial assistance to voluntary organisations engaged in youth welfare

activities, e.g. conducting research in youth work, carrying out significant experimental or pilot projects, training of personnel for youth work, conducting workshops devoted to problems of youth welfare, organising camps and programmes conducive to promoting national integration.

In the light of the recommendations made by the National Youth Board and also on the basis of the Report of the Working Group on Youth Programmes, set up by the Planning Commission in 1966, detailed schemes indicating the pattern of assistance to be given on each type of activity mentioned above have been prepared and are to be implemented through the State Governments and national voluntary organisations.

The various schemes formulated by the Government for non-student youth cover:

(a)   programmes relating to the welfare of non-student youth themselves;

(b)   programmes for non-student youth directly beneficial to the community.

Most of these activities are such as would fall within the purview of State Governments, and hence the priority which the State Governments would accord to these programmes would be a relevant factor. It is for this reason that most of the schemes designed are in the nature of centrally sponsored pilot projects, with financial assistance from the Government of India, while the State Governments would be the agency for implementation of the schemes within their respective jurisdiction. The importance attached to the role of national voluntary organisations engaged in youth welfare activities in the implementation of the various youth programmes listed above is another significant characteristic of the programme administration. It is with this objective in view that priority has been accorded to programmes of training for youth leaders and personnel for youth services.

Work among non-student youth is a new venture and the sheer magnitude of the task presents special problems. Unlike the student youth the non-student youth are not a homogeneous group. The problem, therefore, is how to register non-student youth and how to bring them together into identifiable groups under some kind of institutional rubric. Student youth can be easily

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identified with reference to their educational institutions.
Employed uneducated youth can be identified through their
employers or places of employment. But unless there is some
system of recognising them through social or institutional
bodies, uneducated unemployed youth will present problems.

For identification of the task, non-student youth could
be grouped under the following broad categories:-

(a)   out-of-college and out-of-school youth who may
      be, by and large, unemployed; the educated
      unemployed;

(b)   the uneducated unemployed youth, both urban
      and rural,who might never have attended school;
      and

(c)   school leavers who drop out at different stages
      before completing their secondary education.

Each category has its own special problems and needs
and the aspirations of one group may vary considerably from those
of another. An integrated approach to the problem is therefore
necessary,with a view to meeting the basic needs and aspirations
of the several groups involved.

The problem of the educated unemployed has been assuming
serious proportions. While it would be difficult to form a correct
estimate of the unemployed and under-employed in this country,
figures available at the employment exchanges indicate that the
number of applicants on the live registers at employment exchanges
during 1969 was estimated at 34.23 lakhs, of whom 25,726 were
post-graduates, 189,512 were graduates, 401,326 intermediates
and 909,686 were matriculates. The immediate problem in respect
of the educated unemployed, therefore, points to the imperative
need to devise the mechanics of putting this category of the country's
manpower to various streams of employment, including self-employ-
ment. This would call for sustained efforts on the part of the
State to make productive investment for development of the infra-
structure and generation of the potential for gaining employment.

In a long range view of the problem, the millions of
educated unemployed in the country will have justifiable reasons
to point an accusing finger at the educational system which brings
them past the university stage and thereafter leaves them on the
road. In other words, this would point to the urgency of relating

education to environmental needs. The Education Commission, which was seized of this problem, was of the view that a vast majority of students feel more or less compelled to follow the single track to the university after completing their secondary education because of the absence of other suitable alternatives. While selective admission to universities could provide an answer to the problem on a limited scale, what is needed is a realistic programme of diversification of courses of studies and vocationalisation at the secondary school stage.

The Education Commission therefore recommended a strong vocational bias to secondary education. The Commission found this "of special significance to the Indian situation where the educational system has been training young persons so far mostly for government services and the so-called white-collared professions". The Commission felt that vocational education courses at the school stage should be predominantly terminal in character, with adequate opportunities for the exceptionally gifted child to rejoin the main stream and move higher, through further study.

The need for a concerted and sustained programme was emphasised by the Commission to ensure that enrolment in vocational courses is raised to 20% of the total enrolment at the lower secondary stage and 50% of the total enrolment at the higher secondary stage by 1986.

Similarly, higher education needs to be co-related to the technical manpower requirements of the country to avoid the unwelcome spectacle of mass unemployment. This will require a survey of the technical manpower requirements of the country and the ordering of our educational priorities accordingly.

In a country where agriculture provides more than half of the national income and export earnings as well as the means of livelihood to over 70 per cent of the population, it is an imperative necessity that agricultural work experience should find a dominant place in our educational set up.(3) The Education Commission has recommended the establishment of agricultural polytechnics where students can acquire the necessary technical skills so as to contribute towards the growth of scientific agriculture. These recommendations are receiving the consideration of Government.

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(3) M.S. Swaminathan, "Agricultural Transformation and Opportunities for a Learning Revolution" (Dr Zakir Hossain Memorial Lectures, Sept.4-5, 1970, University of Delhi).

The problem of uneducated unemployed youth is even more serious in its magnitude since it calls for efforts to implement a minimum educational programme for the illiterate and uneducated and, at the same time, to provide opportunities for the rehabilitation of unskilled and semi-skilled personnel in some worthwhile employment. For the youth under this category suitable programmes will have to be identified for (a) urban youth (b) rural youth and (c) tribal youth. While the basic problem of unemployment and under-employment is common to all the three groups specified in this category, each group also has problems peculiar to it.

The problems that could be identified in respect of urban youth would include those arising out of illiteracy and lack of facilities for education, medical health and hygiene, proper housing, recreational sports and cultural activities.

As regards rural youth, in addition to the above problems, which apply to them in equal measure, the following specific problems may also be identified; casteism, lack of communications, observance of outdated customs and practices, untouchability, as well as agrarian problems. In so far as the economic problems of the rural areas are concerned, the main points are those of the prevalence of unemployment and under-employment among the rural youth. It has been estimated that even those who are employed in agricultural work have employment for only 125 days in a year on the average. More than one third of the youth in the villages have only seasonal employment opportunities, resulting in mass migration of unskilled youth to urban areas in search of the basic needs of life. The main task, therefore, of any scheme of social service in the rural areas is to orient its objectives towards preventing the drain of such surplus young men and women into the cities where they do not find employment opportunities but only intensify the already existing imbalance.(4)

This pin-points the need for a more serious application to agriculture and the setting up of agro-industrial centres in rural areas, promotion of handicrafts and cottage industries, greater provision for recreational facilities, thereby making rural life more attractive to those sections of the youth who would otherwise drift towards the cities. Another priority need is the promotion of urban-rural integration, which is the only way to change the

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(4) Report of the Conference of Representatives of Youth Organisations, Youth Service Agencies and Youth Leaders, April 30, May 1 and 2, 1969 (Ministry of Education & Youth Services, Government of India, 1969).

traditional society and arrest the de-humanising process already set in motion by the evil effects of urbanisation.

The problems of tribal youth, which are similar in many respects to those of rural youth, would call for a high order of priority in view of the economic backwardness of the tribal society and the exploitation of the tribals by vested interests.

The problem of school leavers in the early school stage is one of the biggest handicaps being faced by those in charge of educational planning and administration in India. The Constitution of India enjoins on the State "to endeavour to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years". The National Education Policy, enunciated in 1968, further stipulated that strenuous efforts should be made for early fulfilment of the directive principles of the Constitution. While the enrolment of students in this category has been very encouraging, a common problem that is being faced relates to wastage and stagnation. Of every 100 children that are enrolled in Class I only about 40 reach Class V and about 25 reach Class VIII. Of the 75 per cent of the children who drop out at the primary stage, about half drop out in Class I. This is the most serious problem of the present system of primary education and it has been due to (a) the poverty of the people, which compels them to withdraw their children from school to earn something to supplement the family income, and (b) the dull and uninspiring character of the primary schools, which do not attract the children for an adequate period. Suitable programmes need to be developed to reduce the prevailing wastage and stagnation in the schools and to ensure that every child who is enrolled in school successfully completes the prescribed course. But the problem remains of how to bring back the school drop-outs into the educational stream. The number of pupils who drop out of school at several stages before completion of their secondary education consitute a significant proportion of the productive sections of manpower of the country. Any serious efforts at manpower planning should therefore be concerned with this cross-section of the labour-force, with a view to devising suitable measures to increase their work-efficiency and train them in occupational skills having the potential of self-employment. This is an educational priority area which calls for immediate attention, and focuses the need for the development of crash programmes for the education of out-of-school youth.

The schemes to be designed for non-student youth in this sector should therefore have a utility bias and develop around a

strong vocational core so as to convert the available unskilled man-power into skilled and semi-skilled manpower. This would call for a programme of employment rehabilitation by means of identification of various short term trades and skills having an immediate demand in the market, and imparting training in these occupational skills to the out-of-school youth. In other words, apart from giving them the rudiments of instruction to read and write and do simple arithmetic, it will be necessary to impart training in vocational skills for the youth of this category in the urban and rural areas. The establishment of urban youth centres and work centres is designed to provide for these amenities.

The foremost problem, however, is how to secure the involvement of the youth in the community. The specific measures that need to be taken in this regard will have to be identified.

The National Service Scheme introduced in the colleges and universities two years ago aims to provide under-graduate students with opportunities for devoting their leisure time to a variety of social service and developmental activities alongside their academic work. Under the Scheme, which is an alternative to the National Cadet Corps and the National Sports Organisation, any male student in the first and second year of his collegiate career can volunteer for social service. He will have to render 120 hours of service per year for two years. A minimum of 50 students must participate from each college, subject to a maximum of 200, in order that the college may qualify for Central Government assistance. While opportunities for social service are available to about two million college students, the non-student youth have no such opportunities. It would perhaps be a truism to suggest that mass participation of youth in development will help to generate a climate of dynamism in constructive activity and will engender in youth the experience and self-confidence necessary for embarking upon a career of self-employment. I would therefore voice a strong plea in support of the argument that college or university level programmes of social service need not necessarily be limited only to students of the particular institution but should have suffic-ient flexibility to draw in others from the community, particularly those who drop out of schools.

Mention may be made in this context of the domestic volunteer service schemes in operation in several countries, e.g. the VISTA and Teachers Corps of the United States, the Community Service Volunteers (CSV) of the United Kingdom, Iran's Four Corps of Development, the National Youth Service of Kenya, Operation HOPE (Help Our Pre-schools Everywhere) and

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Volunteers for Improvement of the Philippines (VIP) - the two
long term domestic development service programmes run by the
Presidential Arm on Community Development (PACD) of the
Philippines - to mention a few. We would wish to share the
experience gained in the field in respect of those countries which
have made considerable headway, as well as the impact of the
Malaysian National Youth Pioneer Corps and the National
Development Corps - programmes undertaken by the Ministry of
Culture, Youth and Sports. This Seminar could fruitfully
discuss how best to utilise the energy of out-of-college youth in
a realistic domestic volunteer service programme, and the
mechanics for involving non-student youth in the national drive
for reconstruction will have to be evolved.

The Seminar may also consider the problems of rural
youth. The special problems relating to the rural youth will have
to be identified, and effective measures to tackle them, harnessing
the energy of the rural youth for purposes of national reconstruction,
have to be enunciated. These problems are of a global nature,
and require the serious consideration of youth leaders, intellec-
tuals, social workers and others working in the field.

The current world crisis is essentially psychological.
We must remember that it is basically impossible to do anything about
the youth problem unless we realise that the youth problem is not
an island-like phenomenon, but a manifestation of the malaise
afflicting society everywhere. The basic problem, therefore,
is how to achieve the right relationship between human beings.
The future belongs to the young, and the future will depend to a
large extent on how far we succeed in motivating youth to strive
for excellence and canalising their energies into constructive fields.
Those of us who are involved in this fascinating experiment have
an obligation to contribute the share of our efforts in this
endeavour.