

Books For The Younger Readers

Sadequa Shafiullah

THERE are plenty of books published for the children in Bangladesh. Every year literary awards are given to writers for the best works. But honestly, one has to accept that available books are not sufficient for the growing needs of our children. They want new books of varied interests. But unfortunately our writers seem to write mostly for their own sake rather than for the children. Specially short stories full of moral values are absent nowadays from modern juvenile literature.

Children are very much imaginative and they prefer to identify themselves with the characters of the stories they love to hear. So it is easier to influence the character of children through good stories and to inspire them with the mottoes in the stories.

We can recall the memories of our childhood days when we were eager to hear stories from our grand-mother and other elderly relatives. We were so fond of Thakurmar Jhuli and Thakurdadar Jhuli—two famous books of fantasy that we became intimate with the characters.

ters of those books that we used to weep sympathising with the princess or the Queen in distress. We also took pride for the heroic action of the prince or the king when he killed the giant or some evil person.

Appreciating the dearth of juvenile literature, Bangladesh Shishu Academy is publishing books to meet the requirements of the children. Since 1971 the Academy has been publishing children's books. The first publication was Kazi Nazrul Islam's Khuki-O-Kathberai—a book of rhyme of the rebel poet. It has published one hundred and eight books for children so far.

among which poems and nursery rhymes are 28 short stories, 18 juvenile novels, 23 science fictions, 7 dramas, 8 life stories of great people, 6 and so on. In life story series another 12 books will be published in the coming years.

Bangla Bhasha, Andolan, Sonarai-Desh, Bangladesh Pura Kirti Sundar Baner Bawali Sur Nea Zar Khela, Bangladesh Phul Kacher Manus Apan Jon etc. are some of the prominent books in Bangladesh series. Shishu Academy has also

published a book named 'Sat Kanga Pakhi' comprising young children's writings up to the age of 16 years. All the illustrations of this book have been done by children. This multi-coloured book received National Book Centre's award for the best publication. Besides these with the children's writings two volumes of 'Kachi Hater Kalam Theke' (From the Tender Hand's Pen) have also been published by the Academy. This institution is publishing a regular monthly magazine named Shishu.

A plan has been taken by the Academy to publish children's Encyclopaedia in Bengali in ten volumes, covering almost all the areas of children's interest. The first volume has just come out and it seems before the second volume comes out we will have to print the second edition of the first volume. It has received the best publication award of the year 1984. There are other books also which got awards from National Book Centre as best publications. Bangladesh Shishu Academy's publications also received two international awards—one from

Czechoslovakia and another from West Germany.

The Academy not only publishes books but it also encourages writers to write and publish juvenile literatures to meet the growing demand of the children. It has introduced Agrani Bank Shishu Shahithya Puraskar for the writers in the field of short stories, dramas, poetry and rhymes, novels and scientific stories.

In Dhaka the Academy has a children's library with 8 thousand books for the juvenile readers. It has also branch libraries in twenty districts. To attract the children and also to build reading habit of the children it has introduced a reader's service for them. This institution has also organised library based programmes for the children to develop their knowledge. Book fairs are also organised at different levels from the capital to the Upazila level from time to time for the benefit of children. But one has to admit that the juvenile books in Bangladesh are not sufficient to meet the real requirements of the children. We need more good books for our children.