

A school with a difference

By PARVIN AHMED

The school is the same as dozens such are in the city. There are students who are learning and there are teachers who are teaching. But the similarity ends here.

The students are young boys and girls who work hard during the day to earn their livelihood. The teachers, after a day's work at their respective places, come here to offer voluntary services. The time is unusual too. The school starts at 7 p.m. when children should be to home under the loving care and protection of their near and dear ones.

The name of the school is Motijheel Naisha Bidyalaya (Motijheel Night School). It began in April 1972 with seven volunteer teachers who themselves were serving at local high schools and it was started with only 28 pupils. The pupils were cajoled into coming to school, a thing then unheard of before in the city.

"It was a very difficult task, we visited the bustees to persuade the parents to send their wards to the school. Many of our students are working as servants and maid servants at various households and their employees were not very happy



with our activities. They thought that the awareness on the part of their employees would create more problems for them. We had to convince them too of the good side of our effort", said a teacher of the school.

"The task has become easier now. Our students themselves persuade their parents and relatives to send their wards to our school", he added.

At first the school had a nursery, and classes one, two and three on the playground of the Adarsha High School (now Ideal School) in the city's Motijheel colony. Now it has moved indoors.

Today the school has classes upto eight with 14 teachers. Five hundred

working boys and girls are studying there. The first batch of students passed out from the school in 1976. Of them 32 are studying in different colleges of the city. So far 1000 students have passed out from this school.

The idea of starting the night school was mainly that of Mesbahuddin Ahmed Sabu, the headmaster of the school. Mr. Sabu felt that if he could take the initiative in starting a school for the working children even if their number might be very small, many more would be inspired to follow suit. He thinks that a little bit of learning will make these boys and girls aware of themselves and help them in their works.

When this correspondent visited the school recently, he was very much impressed, and rather surprised, to see a group of well behaved and disciplined children and young boys and girls. A little bit of training had done miracle on them.

"They have become more gentle, more polite and attentive and willing to learn than pupils in the other city schools", said a teacher.

Fetema is a small girl of class five. She comes to the school accompanied by her thirteen-year-old sister Begum. "We enjoy coming to the school every day. Studying is not very hard. I work in the day and come to school here at night", said Begum.

Khadija, whose mother works as a maid servant, said she loves the books that the teachers let her take home. "We have games here and we love that", she said.

A student of class eight, Md. Abul Hussain likes very much what his teachers teach him. "Now I know what I never dreamt of knowing. But sometimes become frustrated. Even if I pass out from this school I won't be able to leave my present job, which is not a paying one and I don't have enough money to study further", he said.

This is a problem many of the students will face once they leave the school. Since their education will not land them in better jobs than their present ones they are apt to feel frustrated. The teachers are aware of this fact too, and are in favour of introducing professional training courses for the students. "Presently we have no plan to open class ten. Even if the students passed S.S.C., they won't get better jobs. The scope of SSC candidates in different offices and organisations is very limited. That's why I want to impart technical training, so that on receiving such a training they can go for technical jobs", said the headmaster of the school.

The school is beset with many problems, mainly financial. It is run on donation from a few persons and organisations. But there is an acute shortage of basic accessories.

The light of education can hardly be expected to reach the hundreds of working boys and girls who are deprived of the basic necessities of life and still are working hard to keep themselves and their families alive. Against the backdrop of so many problems which a poverty-ridden country like ours is beset with, Mr. Sabu may seem to be all one. But we get that little bit of light after making an