

Literacy And Its Purposes

Literacy is important in many a way and for many a reason. Ways of raising its rate are now under consideration in a seminar in the city. The role that UNESCO may play is being explored too. Much effort has been made in the past for universalization of primary education and for adult literacy. The outcome, has been far less than satisfactory. If any new and massive efforts are to be launched now, it would be good to consider reasons why the efforts made in the past did not succeed. It would be wise also to have a clear idea about the purpose that literacy may serve. Strategies for enhancing literacy must largely be shaped keeping in mind the purposes it is expected to attain.

Obviously in a developing country like Bangladesh literacy is no guarantee for sustained flow of higher income. There is not even the guarantee that the neo-literate would not relapse to illiteracy again. The standard of life would

probably be marginally affected—in the sense that the literates would be more aware of the need for taking care of health and increasing productivity. These are no arguments against literacy. The point that must be remembered is that literacy must be linked to work and to enhancement of income if it is to contribute to welfare and the process of development in the way in which it should.

Literacy has another important contribution to make. It makes the people aware of the reality around them. It makes them conscious of their need and gives them the strength to oppose all that goes against their interest and all that favours their cause. It provides them with the ability to distinguish between the right and the wrong. This is important in any country, especially in a democratic society where the people must be careful in discharging their responsibilities.