

## Mass Education

—Principal M.N. Karim

**P**PRIMARY education is considered to have a significant role to play in the supply of skilled manpower and intelligent citizens needed for 'ensuring a democratic social pattern'. Universal primary education as such has been considered to be of imperative necessity for the allround development of a country both in the developed and developing countries of the world. This is particularly because at this level attitudes of children are formed their interest and aptitudes are developed under proper guidance which seek to take due shape at the adolescent stage at the secondary and higher educational levels.

Bangladesh Government have taken some steps in recent years to enhance the rate of literacy particularly by enlarging the number of village primary schools and also by declaring the primary school teachers as Government servants.

So long these village school teachers had practically no economic locus standi and had to struggle against adverse economic circumstances. Now they are expected to do their job wholeheartedly for the benefit of the children and the community. But still the success of primary education is not found to be satisfactory specially at village level as was anticipated.

The annual drop-outs are remarkable phenomena of these schools. To meet this problem and also for the cause of the extension of mass education Bangladesh Government have decided to hold an Education Week this year, to assess the present state of literacy with an objective to project Government aim to make primary education free, universal and compulsory within three to five years time so

that by the end of the present century education for all may be ensured and the present literacy rate of 29 p.c. may be enhanced to a significant percentage. An unbelievable number of village primary school children leave school before the completion of their primary courses and very insignificant number, for less than 20 p.c. go up for Secondary education.

The reason of such drop-out is not far to seek. First there is a dearth of teachers with proper education and ideals. We need dedicated teachers with proper educational background. Children have a natural tendency to imitate their teachers, their manners and behaviours and try to remember their instructions for their higher ideals and ambition of life and dedication for the cause of the self and the community. Hence the success of primary education depends much on the parts that are to be played by teachers as their students' friends, philosophers and guides besides being experts in the art of teaching with good knowledge of the subjects they teach. If we are "to catch the young to inculcate in him the motto of service before self and purity in thought and deed" we shall have to assess how far present day primary school teachers are performing their duties though they are now financially better off than before as Government servants.

In many a school most teachers, being local, are not only irregular but are found more concerned with their own cultivation and other private affairs including petty village politics

than with their teaching profession and with the question of motivating the illiterate parents to send their children to school. So local teachers should not be appointed in their village schools as far as possible if we want to have better service from them.

Teachers of village primary school attached to high Schools are, however, found to be better in the performance of their duties than those of the isolated village schools. Because here the Headmasters of the high schools have their eyes on the teachers of the primary schools which usually man their High Schools.

In villages most of the parents are found to depend on the manual labour and income of their children. Besides, there are children of beggars. How to educate these children if compulsory education is introduced, is a question of great importance. An alternative measure for their education may be found in the voluntary part time services of Government, non-Government and semi Government officials staying in village in organised night schools meant for them and also for the illiterate adults on extra remuneration basis. Services of them and also for the illiterate adult students of Secondary, Higher Secondary and University stages may also be utilised during their vacation periods. Again, the people of the locality will have to be taken into a sort of partnership with the Government to make the mass education a success. They will have to be motivated for education. The illiter-

ate parents shall have to be induced to join the adult education projects so that they may have deep interest in the education of their children and in the interest of the nation.

Education officers may hold monthly or bi-monthly conference in each union with all primary school teachers and guardians of the pupils to assess the progress of education and devise means and measures for the development of education in the locality.

A community centre equipped with suitable books journals, radio sets etc. may also be provided in each village as far as possible with a view to making the rural people conscious of the great importance of education their children in their interest and in the greater interest of the State. Arrangement for mobile audio-visual units and moving picture shows may be made emphasising the value of education in the rural areas and the importance of mass education.

Universal education is a religious obligation for the Muslims according to a saying of our Holy Prophet (S.M). Expansion of mass Education as the theme of the proposed Education Week is just in consonance with this religious principle of Islam. The arrangement which are being made for awards to best teachers and the invitation which are being given to Education Ministers of SAARC countries and to the Regional Asst. Director of the UNESCO are expected to have fruitful results in awakening a move in the direction of mass education. The week is expected to have also a heart searching appeal to the intelligentsia and the rich living in towns to have their own contribution towards the cause of mass education in the rural areas of the country.