

Prof. Abu Hena: A Living Memory

—Sharif Mohd. Nurul Hussain

"MAN is never born great; he achieves greatness". But how? Man's greatness lies in his deeds; though of common origin but being of extraordinary character—the imperishable legacy he leaves behind for the coming generations. Though belonging to the group of common folks, as an ordinary man of the mundane world, he asserts his position of greatness by his selfless devotion to a particular cause and thereby immortalises himself. To recall such a great soul, I remember with deep reverence the name of Prof. Abu Hena, a teacher of English Department, University of Dacca. His memory is still held in reverence by all who knew him—his students, colleagues, friends and acquaintances.

The life of Prof Abu Hena is the long, long story of a teacher ardent and dedicated, who for forty-two years stuck to his duties against paralyzing odds, against back-breaking soul-killing frustrations. He has gone on loving his work and his pupils and his academic circles with a passionate devotion and very great intensity of emotions. Hardly there is any one in Bangladesh who has been connected with education and with educational institutions, and has not heard of late Prof. Abu Hena. His entire career has been against the variegated backdrop of social, political and international events covering the period from 1922 to 1975. He spent almost half a century in the field of educa-

tion—a career which has been a glory not only to him but to those also who are connected with education in Bangladesh.

In fact the very name of Prof. Abu Hena conjures up a picture of an ideal teacher, a dedicated soul, who never lost sight of his direction and purpose. As a teacher he knew his duties more than others and had stood by the students and with the students lovingly, diligently and conscientiously. Sincerity and a profound sense of duty were the distinguishing



traits of his character and he had stuck to his educational job unwaveringly and undaunted. For his general lectures in the classroom he used to make plodding preparation at home and in the library; for his tutorials he used to fix up in advance the task to be given and examined the scripts with scrupulous care. On the eve of

examination when he had to race against time over prescribed syllabus even then he did not spare extra classes to which students flocked in strength—a very rewarding experience as a teacher.

In his uninterrupted run of thirty-one years in Government Education Service, one significant thing in his career that figures out is that he had never been a social climber. Through out his life he never looked for favours whatsoever from any quarters. He was content with whatever he achieved. Indeed, Prof. Abu Hena's motto all through was the acceptance of life's challenge in his humbler sphere of educational work, with an inner urge to fight and go over in the same purposeful direction without any personal axe to grind.

In our present society when we are seized with the consternation of constant moral erosion, Prof. Abu Hena's integrity of character may give us some solace and point to us the much coveted road to truth. A man like him is rare today and the 'greatness' of his kind is becoming rarer and rarer with the passage of time.

Though foremost a teacher, Prof. Abu Hena's great concern was for the education in general of this part of the subcontinent. He had always advocated for a systematic and useful education that can add to the greater benefit of the nation as a whole.

Now against a colossal background of selfless devotion to a particular cause what would one expect of the personal pro-

file of this great soul? Physically he was not robust, to consummate with his greatness but a lean and sturdy man. With compressing lips, he looked like a man of determination to achieve his own life-goals. A halo of respectability always surrounded him. Even at his old age he was full of vigour and vitality and retained much of his youthful vivacity.

Prof. Abu Hena is no more among us. We human beings are ungrateful creatures by nature and endowed with a flagging memory and a treacherous heart we often fail to recognise and appreciate one's greatness. But it is very encouraging to find that the Department of English, Dacca University observes his death anniversary every year with due solemnity recalling his selfless services in the field of education in general and to the student community in particular. The observance of death anniversary of any great man has one obvious advantage. It helps us to imbibe with and inculcate the very spirit and lofty ideals of the departed soul which awakens our consciousness and helps us in turn to be human beings of some value and sense.

In fine, to the posterity the life of Prof. Abu Hena will serve as a reminder that it is possible to lead a life even under heavy pressure from forces of degeneration and decadence. Those who have followed in his footsteps and have taken up the difficult profession of teaching will find it a source of inspiration even at their darkest hours.