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Primary Education Vis-a-Vis Female Education-II.

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An awareness of the need to expand education has to be generated in the minds of the teachers and the public. The accommodation problem may be temporarily solved by gradually introducing double shifts in the existing schools and also by utilising the off-hours of Muktabs, Pathagars and even of guest houses and drawing rooms of solvent persons of the locality.

A question has been raised for making the Primary Curriculum agriculture and industry-oriented and it has been suggested that Arabic and English may be dropped to accommodate the agricultural and industrial subjects. But the suggestion does not seem to be reasonable. English was once left out of Primary Syllabus but because of its importance at all levels of international forum and to ease the question of appointment of our Bangladeshi students in different foreign countries it is now considered essential to make the foundation of English learning strong, by again giving its start from Class I. It may at best be introduced from class III as it was decided in one of the earlier stages of days past. And teacher Islamiat is not teaching Arabic. Islamiat concerns itself with behavioural activities of our children based on religious principles and practices of Islam and also with family members, relations, neighbours, as per Islamic code of conduct. This does not cause a heavy load at all. This is also in consonance with one of the clauses of Human Rights of U.N.O. to leave the primary education to the choice of parents, a replica of our Prophet's dictum in this regard. Moreover, the agricultural and industrial bias has already been given in the two allied subjects for Classes III-V, namely Paribesh (environment) Parichiti — Social Science and Paribesh Parichiti — Science.

These two environmental papers are fraught with descriptions of useful agricultural, industrial and other allied subjects necessary to run the

business of life, lacking in only provision for practical participation in work, which may even now be provided in the co-curricular activities of the students in their off-hours.

Again, a question has been raised to change the present courses of Madrasa and Maktab studies to accommodate the modern useful subjects connected with necessities of life. After years of struggle the Madrasah education from primary to upper stages has been given a secular touch to make the students useful members of society in a modern sense. Persian and Urdu have been deleted from Madrasah education and the religious influence of the Persian poets like, Shaikh Saadi, Jami and Rumi have now ceased to exist in our society. So, the question of further change of the course of studies at the moment does not seem to be of immediate necessity. At best some agricultural bias may be created through off-hours activities as done in some Madrasah. Bengali and Social Science and such other allied modern subjects have already been introduced in the primary section of the Madrasahs.

The Muktabs deal with the teaching of Quran and prayer for 2 hours in the morning. The Muktabs may be utilised for primary teaching in off-hours throughout the whole day.

The present primary school examination system need not be changed as suggested by some. The suggestion for promotion from one class to another on the basis of periodical grading process does not seem reasonable. It leaves room for doubt. Personal likes and purview dislikes of teacher may come within the purview of such a grading process. The present system of three examinations in a year for each class is, perhaps, in consonance with the examination system of our neigh-

bouring country. Let us not be carried away with the idea, everything new is good.

The government contingency grant for the primary schools may be enhanced to meet the transit cost of supply of free books and for the printing and supply of question papers free of charge. This will ease the problem of taxation of guardians.

To expedite the process of primary education the services of University students during vacation period and of retired government employees may be sought and utilised with a simple background of some training.

Female Education

In attaching importance to female education our government has declared female education free upto Class VIII and has given a directive to local authorities to give appointments on priority basis to female teachers in primary schools with a minimum qualification of Matric 2nd Division even without training for the present. They will have their training in the regular process and will be mobilised to have ambition for further studies in their private capacities. Female teachers are helpful in the enhancement of the roll strength of girl students in the school. Their very presence creates encouragement in the minds of girls and their parents in favour of their immediate enrolment in schools. They are, moreover, found very regular, and devoted.

Female education is needed for a healthy social life of a family. An educated mother is an asset for the education of her children and of the community at large. In spite of their higher education and high posting, female teacher do not disregard their domestic duties, management of food and other household affairs for the ease and comfort of their children and sunbands. An educated lady is

conversant with hygienic rules and regulations and with other necessary information for the guidance of their families. This is why our Prophet insisted on the education of women. They are fashioned so tenderly that their association is frequently sought by their children and they are sources of inspiration to their husbands in hours of their great tension and anxieties. In our holy book, Sura 30, verse 21 refers to the ties of love and compassion and to the quietness of mind which a married person finds in his wife.

The question of separate schools for our girls may be considered in phases and the arrangement for transport of female teachers who are to come from a distance may also be made.

Non-formal education: There is the other side of the medal as well. We have our heads held high for the education of the slum areas and of the education of the illiterate adults of our society. It is understood our government is going to take up programmes for non-formal education with effect from 1993 with a view to giving basic education to the urban slum dwellers, the people living in hills and district areas and women. Mass education Committees are understood programmes for children below 4 years of age, pre-school education programmes for children between 4-5 years, programmes for non-formal primary education of junior group for unschooled and dropouts between 8-10 years of age, senior illiterates of 15-35 years of age and follow up programmes for post-literacy education. These are some each making declarations.

In all such literacy programmes government has taken cognizance of female illiteracy rate as higher than that of the male 81.2 as against 63.3 p.c. of male illiteracy.

This article is in the context of the key-note paper read by the writer at a seminar on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the Education Week, held at the Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka.