

PROF ABU HENA

## A living memory

SHARIF MOHD. NURUL HUSSAIN



"Man is never born great, he achieves greatness". But how is the obvious question. Man's greatness lies in his deeds, though of common origin but being of extraordinary character — the imperishable legacy that he leaves behind for the succeeding generations. Though belonging to the group of common folks, and 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 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 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 yet 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 education — a career which has been a glory not only to him but also to those 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 perhaps

more than others and stood by the students and with the students lovingly, diligently and conscientiously. Sincerity and a profound sense of duty were the distinctive traits of his character and he had clung to his educational job unwaveringly and undeflected. 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 meticulous care. On the eve of examinations when he had to race against time to cover pres-

Today is the fifth death anniversary of Prof. Abu Hena.

cribed syllabus, he did not mind taking 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 stands out is that he had never been a social climber. Throughout 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 along was the acceptance of life's challenges 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 sieged with conservation 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 educa-

tion in general of this part of the subcontinent. He had always advocated for a systematic and useful education that could add to the greater benefit of the nation as a whole.

Now against a background of selfless devotion to a particular cause what would one expect of the personal profile of this great soul. Physically he was not robust; rather a lean and sturdy man. With compressing lips he looked like a man devoid of sympathy, but in the heart of his hearts lay a fount of affection. 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.

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 students community in particular. The observance of death anniversary of any great man has one obvious advantage. It helps us to imbibe and inculcate the very spirit and lofty ideals of the departed soul which rekindles our consciousness.

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; to those who have followed in his footsteps and have taken up the thankless profession of teaching will find it a source of inspiration even at their darkest hours.