

72

Disparities In Education

The plea for removing rural-urban disparity in education expounded by Prof. Iazuddin Ahmed, the Adviser in-charge of Cultural Affairs, while speaking at the inauguration of the two-day national seminar on 'Environment And Women' is one which this paper has added its voice on more than one occasion. In a nation bent on following the democratic principle it is inconceivable that such glaring disparities should be allowed to continue to exist, or be further perpetuated without at least some attempts being made towards a more equitable arrangement.

Within the walls of the big towns and cities we find the expensive kindergartens catering to the needs of the affluent which have mushroomed over the years and, although there is no denying such edifices cater to a need, whether real or imagined, it is also true that such institutions bring into focus the stubborn differences which still exist within our society. When the country is unable to provide a standardised form of education open to all irrespective of class or creed it is natural that those who can afford will send their children to what they conceive to be better schools even at the risk of impoverishing themselves; but that this also creates an elitist class is also very true. The gap between the rural poor and the urban rich, widens considerably.

Apart from these glaring disparities there are others too over which we should not be content lest complacency takes the place of concern; for in the rural areas we also find much which concerns any thinking person. Here we see the difference between the rural affluent and the rural disadvantaged who, even if able to take full advantage of whatever comes their way in the form of formal education, can in no way benefit from it due to the basic inequalities which exist. The poor and otherwise disadvantaged whose children are under-nourished will never be able to achieve their potential at birth as malnutrition renders them incapable of learning and retaining any lessons and they are therefore further disadvantaged than ever as they fall behind their rural counterparts. What can be said about the rural-urban gap is also applicable to the rural-rural gap and, for that matter the urban-urban gap if one compares the urban poor to the urban rich. Disparities exist everywhere but nowhere more apparent than in the field of education and here it is where we must at least begin to close the gap, but, before we can do that, the needs of the population in terms of food and proper nourishment has to be met for, in the long-run, this is what it all comes down to.