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Popularising Education Through A Film

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THE positive impact of the involvement of artists in development activities is evident from this song: "This day isn't the end and there are days ahead. On this day you will lay the foundation of those future days". The song is written by the popular writer Humayun Ahmed and sung by Quddus Boyati. The song aims to give concrete shape to the programme of compulsory primary education. It announces to millions that children must go to school. The song is being telecast every day on TV.

In the preamble of the compulsory primary education programme it is mentioned that popular artists will be engaged in the task of creating public interest. The authorities have found that the popular performers were very effective in creating public awareness about EPI. Success is now round the corner. Therefore this methodology is also being employed in case of primary education. A publicity film has been made. This is not a publicity drive of run-of-the-mill type. This is a 'advocacy film' one meant to educate the people on a particular issue and explain the benefits. That is, stimulate a particular line of thinking. To put man face-to-face with a certain question. Let man think it out for himself whether what has been said right or wrong. Whether the film has been successfully made or not is another question. The primary objective of an advocacy film is to determine whether the goal is right.

Farida Yasmin, a little girl in the village Darirampur, likes the song. Moni, a student of Agargaon primary school also said she likes it. This liking is the first phase of success, a

primary fulfilment of its purpose.

This has been possible due to participation by popular artists and technicians. The actor Asaduzzaman Noor said, artists have the advantage that they can utilise their popularity. Their fans enjoy their involvement in national programmes. Asaduzzaman Noor emphasised the need for direct involvement of artists in such activities. He however added, that does not mean that artists alone will promote national objectives and direct publicity campaigns. People from all walks of life must come forward. After popular awareness about education is created, primary education will begin to give result.

The film has been made for creating popular awareness. The Directorate of Primary Education and UNICEF has offered their cooperation. Bangladesh Television has allotted three minutes of free time at peak hour every day to telecast social development. According to the authorities, this is an issue of development activities. The target groups are the illiterate rural masses. They themselves have fallen behind in social progress for want of education and may fail to create opportunities for their children too. However, this is not acceptable in the present-day world. Education for all has to be ensured by the year 2000. This is not the concern of the government alone, it should be taken up at the non-government level also. One has

to know oneself and also know others. As soon as a child attains six years of age, he cannot be allowed to shun school. School is a must.

The director of the film Barkatullah said a field-level evaluation is necessary to determine whether the film has been able to communicate its message, especially to the target group. We must know how they are responding. This is a responsibility the government must fulfil, or else the principle objective of making the film will go by default. Barkatullah also stressed the need for artists and technicians to offer their cooperation.

Quddus Boyati, the singer himself said, I ask children to go to school when I meet them in the streets or in the gatherings of folk songs. He said he too has a responsibility.

Just as Quddus Boyati has his responsibility so the community of artists and writers and men belonging to the different professions—all must do their bit. It is the responsibility of the government and those engaged in education.

All of us should make a united effort to attain "those future days". The days that will see the realisation of a dream—education for all.

It is fortunate that writers, artists and technicians are coming forward to lend their services in this kind of activity. But their number is not big. They are only some handfuls. But those who have offered their services

have been impelled by a keen sense of responsibility. They are taking part in advocacy films. Participants are increasing their own popularity and the film is also getting popular. The theme of development is enjoying wide popularity.

Giving his opinion about this education film Rabbi, a theatre activist and TV watcher, said the tune appeals to common people and the cast is also made up of common people who mostly live in villages and are illiterate. That is how its appeal is so wide. Specially the note of yearning, Ah! What fun the school was, has enhanced the appeal of the song, since those who had been to school and have already passed that stage feel a strong nostalgic attachment to school. While those who have never been to school feel great curiosity about it.

However, the group for whom the educative film is meant, those unlettered tillers and workers in the farms and fields, possess no TV. Thus a doubt is created about whether the message is reaching the target people. But this barrier can be easily overcome. Folk singers and 'Bauls' (mystic singers) live everywhere in the villages. If their interest is roused, they can spread the message in rural society through the medium of their songs. Besides, educational films can be exhibited in rural areas. At any rate, according to Rabbi, the greatest merit of this educational film lies in that it has awakened the sense of responsibility of the educated section. They can counsel the illiterate people about the need for education and inspire them.

—Development Features