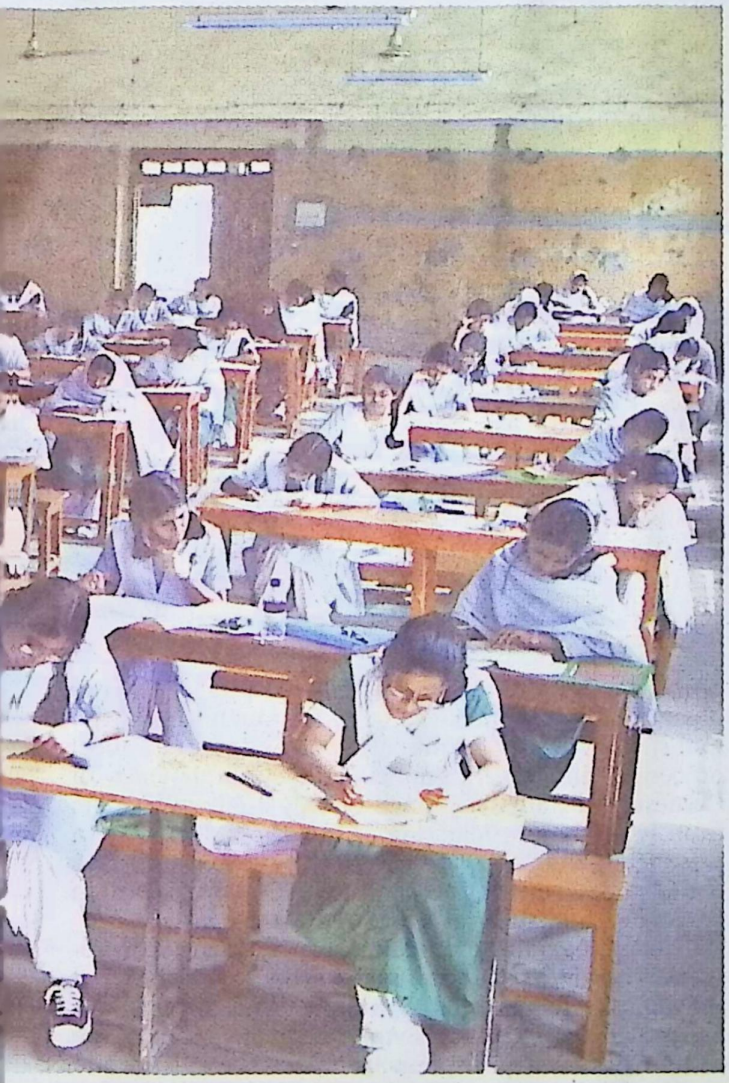
rate is because even though the government provides free education for women till Class 12, not all of them are able to put it to any use, especially in the rural areas. Hence, many parents in these areas see it as a waste of time, eventually bringing their daughters back home.

Rasheda K Choudhury, the Primary and Mass Education Advisor, remarked that even though the Primary School Registration Rules say that there should be one primary school in every village of 2000 people, there are more than 2000 villages which have no school whatsoever. "The government is trying to incorporate these villages in the second



Primary Education Development Programme," she said. "A process for a unified education programme has already begun."

Even in the urban areas, where a large number of women are coming out of their homes everyday to join the workforce, some of the most successful women probably had to give up a whole lot to prove their abilities in the patriarchal society. At the roundtable, a researcher in the field of education shared a true story where a student of hers was preparing to get into medical college right after high school. "I was shocked to see her gone all bald one fine day!" related the researcher. "She had shaved off all her hair just to protest her father's will to marry her off to a successful businessman."

Rasheda pointed out that the attitude has to change at home and only then can the government leap further. Parents have to build up the confidence within so that they can defend their children from the hegemonies in the society. This is especially needed for disabled children. "Structural development has been made mandatory in every new primary school to accommodate children with physical disabilities," she says. "But at the end of the day, it's the parents of regular school-going children, who oppose the admission of children from poor communities, as children of cleaners or even children with physical disabilities in ordinary schools."

If there is no work available after completing one's education, parents would be all the more discouraged to send their daughters to school. Vocational schools would at least provide the students with skill-development sessions, hence strengthening generations of work force.

The speakers at the session also spoke about the need for improvement of vocational education to reduce the drop out rates at school. If there is no work available after completing one's education, parents would be all the more discouraged to send their daughters to school. Vocational schools would at least provide the students with skill-development sessions, hence strengthening generations of work force. There is also a need for active union parishad standing committees and teachers-parents committees, change in school curriculum, making it mandatory for women to have completed the SSC examination to be eligible to get married and a unified education system in order to make education best effective in the country. They also pointed out that the two main political parties in the country have not specified strategies for expansion of quality female education in their party manifestos.

Changing the mentality of the society is probably as good as trying to move mountains. Since, positive changes must begin at home, parents and family members must view their children, sons and daughters alike, as the builders of a society portraying strength and values. As the Queen in Rokheya Hossein's 'Sultana's Dream' had remarked to her subjects, "If you cannot save your country for lack of physical strength try to do so by brain power." ■