

Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra and Paradigm of an Ideal University : A Study of the Concept of Sandilya University

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ABSTRACT

The root of all isms is Existentialism, no existence, no ism.' (Mukherjee2021:17). And 'Education is to know the existence in consonant contrast to environment by doing and discerning' (Chakraborty1965:5), these couple of words precisely depicts the entire philosophy of 'Satsang' and its founder Sri Sri Anukul Chandra Thakur . A bright prospect has been reflected from the gleanings of his thoughts and works all across the domains of human life. The first and foremost element in his proposed education is bowing down before an Ideal. He explained his idea of education as 'the systematic organization of instincts and habits that will fulfil the becoming of life, by a graduated active manipulation of behaviour may be called education and the function of a teacher is to infuse character and conduct by example and precept through each subject and activity.' (Bhattacharya 1939:150). He believed the activity of teacher brings knowledge unconsciously to the student through experience with spontaneous adjustment. The whole system of education should be concentric to an ideal embodied – the 'Acharya' and all training and knowledge should be imparted through active habits with elevating valorous admiration and devotedly sincere loyalty to the commands of the Acharya. This brings forth a co-ordination between the motor and sensory nerves integrating the students personality through meaningful adjustment between thought, speech and deeds which is further excelled by coordinating ideal, revival of the ancient Aryan culture synthesized with the knowledge advanced science and technology.

Keywords: Ideal, Education, Knowledge, Sri Sri Thakur, University.

Introduction

'Where varieties arrive with a meaning at unity-it is University' (Chakravarty1935:70) is the concept of His university in a nutshell. Where all pluralisms are brought together in the specified unifications and are converged meaningfully in Unitarianism through the process of knowing is university. All educational programs should be 'tending to impart education through service in an inquisitive acquisition, ... thoroughly moulded in a practical shape. The manufacture and manipulation of the elements of people's life and growth should be the only basis to supply the practical needs of every individual environment through hand on skills and activities taking each and every branch of education'. (Bhattacharya1939:149). In the global scenario of employment landscape it is becoming increasingly crucial that children not only learn, but more importantly learn how to learn. Pedagogy must evolve

to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, discussion-based, flexible and enjoyable. Education must move from content-based to competency-based i.e. towards less-content and more towards learning about how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multi-disciplinary and how to innovate, adapt and absorb new material in novel and changing situations. Education must build character, enable learners to be ethical, rational, compassionate and caring, while at the same time prepare them for gainful, fulfilling employment.

Aims and Objectives:

Discuss and assess the paradigms of an Ideal University as envisaged by Sri Sri Thakur(henceforth SST) with a new and forward-looking vision for India's Higher Education System as proposed by

NEP-2020 are aims and objectives of the proposed study. In this context, the role of Indian Universities in transforming India into a global knowledge Super-power and find out the ways and means of achieving the holistic development of learners quipped with 21st century skills as envisioned in NEP-2020 are within the scope of the study.

Methodology:

The qualitative research methodology has been applied to fulfil and finally achieve the aims and objectives of the study. It gives emphasis on understanding the process of dynamic situations of a problem and conducts the study in natural settings. Researcher builds a complex holistic picture, analyses words, and reports detailed views of informants which are mostly qualitative in nature. Research method is a part of research methodology and it is applied at the stage of data collection and data analysis. In view of convenience and focus on its original process of writing, descriptive survey type of method is adopted.

Hypothesis

The paradigm of HEIs should be based on the foundation of knowledge system from ancient India and its contributions to modern India. The National Education Policy -2020 envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos contributing to transform India sustainably into a global Education Hub. The

Indian universities should play a major role in educational, intellectual and economic transformation of India thereby making India a global knowledge super power. The idea and concept of Shandilya University seeks to make *atma-nirbhar Bharat* as envisioned in NEP-2020 by fostering higher order cognitive skills, creative potentials and unique capacities of each individual in both academic and non-academic spheres. Hypothetically the said idea and concept of SST had provided a basic paradigm of an ideal Indian higher education institution much before the NEP 2020 was declared. It is supposed that the very ideas of Sri Sri Thakur are forecast of new educational policy.

Literature Review :

Undoubtedly there are many disciples of Sri Sri Thakur but His Educational Philosophy is not properly

discussed and assessed. The book 'The Social Philosophy of Sri Sri Thakur Anukulchandra' (2004) by Dr. R.K. Lal is undoubtedly a seminal work but it does not properly focus on the educational philosophy of SST. As the educational philosophy of SST is very consistently befitting with the lofty ideals of ancient Indian knowledge system, which was prevalent in the universities of Nalanda and others, it is necessary to discuss the concept and its features of the educational philosophy of SST.

The Ideology and Philosophy of 'Sandilya University':

Discussing the ethics of the ideology of Sandilya University, SST said 'A true university must bedew its students with love, hope and charity and turn the into the valley of heavenly homage to make them men of talented glory

Surrendered at the feet of heaven.' (Sri Sri Thakur's words) According to SST, it would possess self-contained universal education. Everything is to be fashioned in its own kind. Students will be made equipped from all sides. Everyone wants to live and grow. Hence, the more enliven the principles of life and growth is, the more influence of the Ideal over the lives of people there is. That principle is to be brought out such that people pursue them in their own interest. Men should be trained up in such way that they may be flourished in character, volitional zeal, congruous dignity, physically, mentally and intellectually in all sides with their environment. They should emerge out as a true wealth of the nation and they are not likely to face a least little difficulty in finding out their subsistence for living. They might flourish with the true wealth of character and their efficiency bloom in every sphere of life. SST said that it is always better to bear and propagate our cultural tradition and the more we become adhered and preach its values among our students, the more sensible and perfect, we are likely to be. SST emphasised That the fundamental thing is to evolve the character and personality. We should know how to speak up the right words with a sweet tongue. We must elicit the existential urge of a person. According to SST, we are endowed with our six-fold activities. 1. The Self-practice of principles

promoting survival and growth (Jajan). 2. Propagation of life-promoting practices (Jaajan). 3. The act of learning (Adhayana). 4. The act of teaching (Adhyapana). 5. Self-less Offering (Daan). 6. Accepting that offering (Protigraha). This was mandatory for everyone. By constant practice and propagation of these principles, our existential being is nurtured which brings forth our psychological and spiritual uplift.

We further know about the ideology of Sandilya University from his historical discourse with Mr. Eugene Exman, the Vice-President, American Publishing Company 'Harper and Brothers'. Exman enquired about the different aspects related to the deemed university. In question of whether this university will promote co-education; SST conveyed his intention that He doesn't like co-education. He proposed a separate university for women. He explicated if co-education is allowed, the male loses his masculinity and the female loses her femininity. The boys invite feminine character and girls masculine. As a result, both are harmed. Besides he thought it to be the cognate to debauchery because many a times there is a relishing indulgence of the normal inclination between boys and girls which loosen the chastity of desire and so deteriorate the eugenic product. This in turn may weaken and distort posterity. The next question put forward was, do the professors appointed for Sandilya University need to be initiated in 'Satsang' Ideology? SST replied- it's always better if they do, otherwise its won't account much. But all the attributes are to be accepted and nurtured. In fact, all the principles of life and growth have to be welcomed and pursued. All the existential providences are to be abided by.

The Project and Planning for Sandilya University

One of SST's intense volition of heart was to build up a University. And he yearned to make it in the holy name of His ancestral father, Maharshi Sandilya. SST aspired to build this deemed university with hundreds of acres of vacant land beside the Rohini Railway Station and adjoining villages in the district Deoghar, now in Jharkhand. Whenever, the elites used to visit His Ashram to have his company, he used to

send them to look over the empty land and welcomed their thoughts and opinions enthusiastically. He did this a pretty much time over the last few couple of years of his life.

SST had a lot of talk over his planning and scheme of this dreamed university with Exman, who met Him and got initiated to His Ideology after going through the Book- 'Ocean In a Tea-Cup' authored by Ray Houserman, one of His disciples. It was on 27th July, 1964. SST told Exman to contribute for his deemed university. Exman assured that America could help Him in his mission. SST also had a keen expectation that America could do a lot in setting up His Sandilya University through the then President John Fitzgerald . Kennedy (1917-1963). And in this reference, some correspondence of letters took place between His Satsang Ashram and the office of President Kennedy. When the work begun progressing, things turned out differently on the sudden death of the President. SST was overwhelmed with profound grief. He burst into tears. He was of the view that it can bring a catastrophic change in welling up the world if personalities like Kennedy, Khrushchev (1894-1971), Chou-En-Lai (1898-1976), Bidhan Chandra Roy (1882-1962) become determined to take joint venture in the welfare of our World.

According to Thakur's scheme, almost 300-350 acres of land will be required to build everything thoroughly. And it will need the approval from the government. The man who is to be selected Chancellor, will be a man of outstanding personality. He will deserve academic qualifications as well as administrative potential. Register of the university should belong to the community of Satsang. A co-operative body comprising all the heads of the departments would be made. Students' health organisation will be there. The learners will be made specialists depending on their inborn instincts. The quarters for teachers and students are to be situated side by side so that the teachers might be able to watch the students thoroughly. Every six students will be assigned to a single teacher. A liability for overall supervision will be entrusted over the teachers. But, despite such volitional zeal of His heart, the work was not advancing at all. Over his despondence Sri

Balkrishna Kapur, one of his austere devotee determined—‘Thakur, do not worry, I alone will build up the ‘Sandilya University’ by your blessings. Such sincere urge made His face bright in joy.

Thereafter, SST gave instructions to. Kapur to make a schematic diagram of the plan taking account of different departments and aspects of the university and directed him to communicate with some educationists, who might help him in this monumental task. The next day Kapur left for Kolkata seeking co-operation from his friend Santosh Bagchi, who made the primary sketch of the university and Kapur showed it to SST. Then after doing some modifications, the plan for His proposed Shandilya University got finalised.

Curriculum for Shandilya University as Proposed by Sri Sri. Thakur

In question of curriculum and subjects to be taught in Sandilya University, SST told Exman that the selection of students and teachers will follow the norms as that of the Nalanda University of Ancient India. Students will be allowed to get admission from different countries and the pivot emphasis will be laid upon the practical application of all subjects of the curriculum.

All kinds of subjects have to be dealt with, ranging from Science, Arts, Linguistics, Sociology, Literature, Medicine, Law, Justice and Administration, Military Training, Engineering, Commerce and Business, Research and the like. Besides, how military officers, cops and soldiers are to be trained up will all be taught here. The Military Department needs such kind of teachers who know the characteristics of war. There will be faculty for teaching necessary to be trained for becoming the Prime Minister of a nation. There will be a special faculty for learning the language of birds and animals. Everything needs to be drawn out so as to apply them more scientifically and rationally taking into consideration of all the allied aspects. He was of the vision that at the initial stage some inconveniences may arise, but will get resolved in due course of time.

Teaching Method in Shandilya University as Proposed by Sri Sri Thakur

Exman threw a question to SST ‘Thakur, will India welcome and accept the method of Education, you are proposing? And do you think that the education system prevailing at present time is justified?’

He replied: The activities done in the name of education today cannot truly be called education. Only cramming is done for examination. No primeval idea is developed thereby in the students’ mind. Hence, they cannot grow independently. He went on saying- I yearn to build such a university where on one would be deprived and bewildered, their imagination faculty and discerning eye wouldn’t be sluggish and vague. The learners will be educated in such a way they would be efficient in character, volitional zeal, congruous conformity, physically, mentally and intellectually altogether with their environment. I wish it to develop in a distinct manner without any compulsion. Learner will acquire proficiency holistically. If they can prove their worth, then all troubles that come on the way will get resolved in time.

SST further explicates, we learn science, but what analogies science has with philosophy, to what extent it is in communion with science and how much the one fulfils the other-all need to be known. There are a lot more educationists who know part by part lacking in knowledge how one fact co-relates with the other. Hence, their education cannot get fulfilled from all sides. As such, there remains lacuna.

Yet another side of education is the formation of character. We learn a lot, but if that learning does not mould our character and conduct in the right direction, that education hardly can contribute to human resource development. Therefore, I talk much of Sandilya University. If that is made possible by the grace of Supreme Father, that would be a blessing.

The discussion followed further, as questions and answers, Exman enquired- ‘will there be any bell-system or interval of periods? The answer given by Him was, in those days, at Pabna Tapovan School and other higher Institutions there was no period system, yet many were passed out in first rank in the examinations. A single teacher was assigned to teach all the subjects in a particular class. Because many a

times, there comes diversion of understanding if different subjects are taught by different teachers. There remains no consistent congruity. One teacher proposes the other disposes. The pattern of teaching differs. Besides, I think those teachers who teach only one subject for years lack the systematic co-ordination of knowledge. Therefore, I talk about being knowledgeable in all the subjects. Even though being a specialist in one subject, yet they need to have a general exposure with different other subjects.

The question followed, what about the examination system or conferring degrees after the completion of course? SST responded- firstly, it is better to evaluate what have been acquired from outside. It is always better to examine whether the understandings are getting piled up. Examinations don't imply to write down the words of books only. We don't want to be like books, but to be a man. So whatever strategy for conferring degrees there may be, the prime concern should lay on the emergence of true human potential. Our university should reach up to such height of glory and fame so as to make everyone competent from all sides so that it might be acceptable by all. All other universities will acknowledge that. The next question put forth by Mr. Exman was- whether this university will start from the 10th (Matric of that time) level or from the very beginning? SST replied - it will start right from ABCD i.e. from the beginning. And those who come from other places after the 10th level, will also get admission if deserve merit. No one will be refused.

The next question posed was- after passing out from your university how would the students get admission to the universities outside the country since they won't acknowledge your university. SST

answered ,it's alright, if they do. It doesn't matter, if they don't. The learners emerging out of this institution need not go elsewhere for further study and people will get to know their achieved potency from practical demonstration. If they really become affluent and could prove it, then everything that come on the way will get solved in time.

Conclusion:

Thus the concept and ideology of the Shandilya University of SST were in fact ahead of the time when it was duly proposed by SST. It was characterised by multidimensional and multidisciplinary ideas as it not only included subjects of Arts, Science and Commerce but also military as SST gave emphasis on it. Admittedly His thoughts on Education, Science, Philosophy and Psychology etc. are impregnated with infinite possibilities that disclose new avenues for original research. His visions are sure to be as a guidepost to plan nation's educational policies as envisioned by NEP-2020. .

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