

ROLE OF BANGABASI COLLEGE

In the Development of Humanistic Studies

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I

FOUNDATION OF THE INSTITUTION AS A CENTRE OF HUMANISTIC STUDIES

A humanistic approach to the idea of education implies the expansion of total personality of a man. The term 'Education', it may be observed, is derived from Latin verb '*educare*' where the significance of 'E' is 'out of' and '*duco*' is 'to lead.' Thus the proper meaning of education as leading out the inborn possibilities, is interpreted by Plato and Aristotle as "...the development of the whole man." It is a process of developing the total individuality related to the social change and progress, which, in the opinion of Gisbert, is "...the transmission of the social heritage to new generation."

In the context of this humanistic analysis of education, if the objects and activities of Bangabasi College are examined, it is seen that it was founded as the centre of higher education for the elevation of an individual's personality in consonance with the proper understanding of the physical and social environment of the country.

In the background of these observations it may be pointed out that the nature of Calcutta Colleges under Calcutta University, since its foundation, was controlled and determined by either the Missionaries or by the Government. Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, a great reformer of Bengal, paved the way for organising college education under private management by the sons of the soil. In the wake of the establishment of some illustrious institutions like Metropolitan Institution (Vidyasagar College), The City College, The Ripon College (Surendranath College), in Calcutta, seeking to inculcate this national spirit, Acharya Giris Chandra Bose, a true patriot of the land, founded this important centre of higher education under the constant inspiration and guidance of Pandit Iswar Chandra and the direct assistance and co-operation of Sri Bhupal Chandra Bose, a Deputy Director of Agriculture of Assam and the father-in-law of Sri Aurobindo, a great revolutionist, Sri Bomkesh Chakravorti, a leader of the English Bar in Calcutta, Sri Satyendra Prasanna Sinha, the Lord Sinha of Raipur and of other eminent personalities of the country. The name of this institution as Bangabasi, was suggested by Sri Jogendra Chandra Bose, a cousin of Giris Chandra and a celebrated editor of Bengali News paper '*Bangabasi*' for symbolising its unity with the resurgent spirit of Bengal.

In the context of a rich heritage of our country, Bangabasi was established as the real centre of humanistic studies for the cultivation of socio-cultural values. For a proper fulfilment of this purpose of humanistic education the real motto or end of this institution, stood on three traditional values of India—*Praṇipātenā Pariprāṣṇenā Sevayā*. By reverence or *Praṇipātenā*, the self respect or a respect for the cultural tradition as "...cultivation with

respect to appreciation of ideas and art and broad human interests" is developed. But the real significance of this process of reverence lies in the gradual unfolding of true questions or *Paripr̥ṣṇa* about 'ideas and art', leading to the realisation of the real truth of life and existence. Thus the indispensable part of these processes is closely related to the application of the humanistic values in life and society as the expression of humanistic truth that is *Sevā* or the service of humanity.

With these higher ideals of human learning, Bangabasi College came into existence in 1887, which gradually became a centre of higher education for the people of the common middle class families and of poor undeveloped communities and for socio-political sufferers. In this way, BANGABASI in Bengal became the proper seat of human training for *Bangabasi* or men from different communities in Bengal.

The essential humanistic value, as cultivated here, is social efficiency; which, in the observation of John Dewey, means to educate a man properly, to be a fruitful member of society, to foster an idea of common good, to be a good citizen of the state, to adjust with the prospective social change and finally to contribute something for the welfare of the people and society.

II

DIFFERENT FORMS OF DEVELOPING HUMANISTIC EDUCATION

A centre of higher education becomes effective and fruitful to society if it can harmonise humanistic studies with scientific teaching. These two forms of studies go

together as they are complementary to each other. The fundamental object of science is "...to find out truth, ultimate purpose being to make it useful to society." So scientific studies, applying truth to life, makes it useful and the humanistic studies, on the other hand, supplying the knowledge of truth of life as the expression of humanistic values, make it more meaningful. Thus, a proper system of liberal education is the co-ordination of science with humanities which finally develops a true method of humanistic studies as a realisation of real art of life.

i. Affiliation for First Arts standard (F.A.) and first B.A. course.

For dissemination of this humanistic idea of liberal education, Bangabasi College was started at Bangabasi School which was founded in 1886, with only six teachers and twelve students in a small house at 116, Bowbazar Street, and on 1st June, 1887,¹ this centre of learning was affiliated to the University of Calcutta upto the First Arts standard. This standard as second grade college was maintained till 1896. In the very beginning of sending up candidates for F.A. examinations,² one stood eighth in the University and in different years the college acquired prizes in History, Sanskrit, Physics and Chemistry. In 1891, it won the Duff Scholarship for Mathematics and in 1902 for Physics and Chemistry. In this way it proved its efficiency in the field of education and the number of students on the rolls was gradually increasing from forty three at the end of 1889, to one hundred at the end of 1895.

1. Minutes of the Syndicate, Calcutta University, June 18, 1887, Item. 53.

2. Minutes of the Syndicate, Calcutta University, August 24, 1887, Item. 154.

In 1896, the affiliation for B. A.³ was granted and Latin was taught with other subjects. In 1897, the first batch of candidates appeared at the B.A. examination of the Calcutta University. But in first few Degree Examinations the results of the college were not satisfactory, because the best students of this institution would invariably take admission in the Presidency College after passing the F.A. course. After a few years the students got interested in the humanistic ideals and activities of this institution and there was gradual increase of students in B.A. classes.⁴

With the ideal of humanistic studies as the harmonious development of Arts with Science, the novel and significant feature of the department of humanities was the introduction of B. Course in Biology⁵ with Physics and Chemistry. Thus in the system of humanistic education, teachings of Science and Arts went on simultaneously and it is also interesting to note that some teachers could teach more than one subject⁶.

ii. Introduction of B. L. and M.A. Courses.

In this way the teaching of Arts as humanistic study also included the study of Law as the legal interpretation of values of life and society. So, the College, in this period, thrived with two departments, the Arts and the Law. The Law teaching in the college, under the direction of Pandit Nrisingha Chandra Mukhopadhyay, prescribed full course of study for B.L. and pleadership examinations.

3. Minutes of the Syndicate, Calcutta University, Jan, 1896, Item, 360 & April 9, 1896 Item. 325.

4. Bangabasi College Magazine, January, 1903.

5. Report of the University Commission, 1905.

6. Principal G. C. Bose taught English, Logic, Chemistry with his own subject Botany.

The institution gradually became the centre of higher studies and was authorised to send up candidates for M.A. examinations. M.A. classes in English were opened under the guidance of distinguished professors like E.M. Wheeler and Lalit Kumar Banerjee. But in the period of six years from 1898 to 1903, only six M.A. candidates in different subjects came out. In 1898, Mr. Indu Madhab Mullick, an inventor of the Ic-Mic-Cooker, was the first student to obtain M.A. degree.

But with the introduction of The University Act of 1904, Law classes were voluntarily closed and the provision for M.A. classes in private colleges ceased.

iii. The later developments of Humanities.

In 1903, the College, after changing its location twice, finally shifted to its present building, at 19, Scott Lane, Calcutta-9. In 1906, through the enactment of the University Act of 1904, a historical change in life and activities of Bangabasi College was brought about. In view of the new regulations the new courses of studies also were introduced from the beginning of the session in 1907 and thus the departments of humanities were completely separated from the departments of Science.

By 1910, the affiliation in all the major subjects in Arts upto the B.A. course was granted and for every subject of study there was a set of Professors devoted to it, instead of the old system of teaching of different subjects by the same teacher. The teaching of literary courses in this context, also achieved gradual maturity. Prof. Lalit Kumar Banerjee, a reputed scholar, took the

charge of teaching English Literature and Prof. Manorajan Moitra, an young scholar with Triple Honours in English, Philosophy and Sanskrit and first class first in English, also joined for its proper advancement. There were other eminent scholars like, Mr. A. K. Ghosh, with a Tripos in History from Chambridge, for History classes, Babu Panna Lal Bose, a famous Judge in well known Bhawal case and former Education Minister of West Bengal, for Philosophy classes, Pandit Bhagabat Kumar Sastri, a reputed Sanskrit scholar, for Sanskrit classes and so on.

In those days there was no opportunity for teaching vernacular in colleges and Acharya Giris Chandra fought for the introduction of vernacular in the curriculum of humanities. In 1908, arrangements for teaching Bengali in the first and third year classes, were made and for the first time, the system of tutorial work in English also was introduced. This attempt for studying humanities was appreciated by the then Inspector of Colleges, who reported, "The Principal has made arrangements for tutorial assistance in the subject of English in the first and third year classes. His method appeared to be very satisfactory".⁷

Within a few years some changes in the life and humanistic activities of the College were observed with the changes in social environment.

The College, at that time, was passing through a critical period. Anti-Partition movement started in Bengal and the College also was closed for one day as a mark of protest. Not only that, it gave shelter and protection to

7. Inspection Report, 1903,

many students and teachers who were political sufferers. Government was trying to interfere in the administration of the college for changing the nature of its humanistic activities. But Acharya Bose, a true Indian, challenged this interference by refusing boldly to receive the grant-in-aid from Government. In the meantime the First World War broke out and during this period from 1914 to 1918, there was no remarkable change in the day to day life of the institution. There were three sections in the college like Intermediate, B.A. and B. Sc. classes for each year. In this period the College acquired the glory of welcoming some distinguished visitors, representing different spheres of academic life and education in general such as, Sir Sankaran Nair, the Education Minister of the Government of India, Dr. Deva Prasad Sarvadhikari, the Vice-chancellor of Calcutta University, the members of famous Sadler Commission, the Governor of Bengal and Mr. Wordsworth, the Director of Public Instruction and some other eminent personalities.

In 1921, Non-co-operation movement, stimulated the young spirit of the institution and in December 1921, and in January, 1922, the College had to be closed. But the movement created permanent impressions on the life and activities of the students and the Students' Association, formed in 1919, received a new lease of life. On the 13th September, 1929, Sri Jatindranath Das, President of the Students' Association of the College, breathed his last by fasting for sixty three days at Lahore Central Jail and his tragic end created a tremendous stir in the student-world. In 1930-31, the Civil Disobedience Movement started that threw the social and educational life of the institution into a turmoil.

Just at that time, on the 1st January, 1939, the real friend and the guide of the institution, Acharya Giris Chandra Bose passed away into eternity, but the creative spirit of the institution did not die. Principal Prasanta Kumar Bose, the worthy son of the late Acharya, shouldered the responsibility for its development and expansion in different directions. In 1944, one branch of this institution was opened at Kusthia (at present in Bangladesh) with Sri Anil Kumar Roychaudhuri as its Prof-in-charge. But it was closed down due to disturbances that ensued as a result of the war.

In 1947, with the attainment of independence of India, the College celebrated the Diamond Jubilee Ceremony in a befitting manner, for the completion of the first sixty years of its significant existence. It was inaugurated by C. Rajagopalachari, the then Governor-General of India, and was addressed by Dr. Shyamaprasad Mookherjee, Professor Satyendranath Bose, Sri C. C. Biswas and other eminent persons.

a. Expansion of Humanities through the Affiliation in Honours.

The next period of the College may be treated as the glorious period of expansion of the institution. As the roll strength of the institution was increasing from more and more, two plots of land with old buildings had been purchased where new buildings were constructed for the proper accommodation of students and extension of different departments. In the meantime the College reached the high standard in developing humanities and in the period from 1944 to 1950, it secured the affiliation for Honours in different subjects like Bengali, Philosophy

and Economics in addition to Honours in English and Sanskrit in which the College had been enjoying affiliation for a long time. In 1957-58, Political Science was separated from Economics and affiliation for Honours in Political Science also was granted. It may be noted in this context that these different departments were much enriched by the teaching and guidance of many distinguished scholars like Prof. Shyamapada Chakravorti, Prof. Pulin Behari Kar, Dr. Sushil Chandra Chaudhuri, Prof. Niren Roy, Prof. Janardan Chakravorti, Prof. Debajyoti Barman, Prof. Kali Krishna Banerjee, Dr. Sadhan Bhattacharya, Prof. Bishnupada Bhattacharya, Prof. Sankari Prasad Bose and others.

b. Introduction of M.A. Course in Bengali.

In November, 1950, the College opened a new evening Department of Bengali language and literature in memory of its founder, Late Acharya Giris Chandra for the promotion of research and post-graduate studies at the initiative of Prof. Jagadish Bhattacharya. It is significant to note that a team of distinguished scholars, literary critics and writers like Prof. Mohitlal Majumdar, Roybahadur Khagen-dranath Mitra, Dr. Narayan Ganguli, Prof. Shibaprasad Bhattacharya, Prof. Murari Sen, Dr. Ajit Ghosh and others were actively engaged in making the programme a success. It is indeed a matter of pride that Bangabasi College was the only private institution under Calcutta University which acquired the glory of teaching a Post-graduate course.

c. Affiliation for Commerce Course.

With the different subjects of humanitics, the College opened another important faculty like the Department of Commerce with the introduction of Pre-University

Course in 1964. In 1972, B.Com. pass classes were started and in 1986, it got affiliation for Honours in Commerce.

d. Opening of the Sister units of the Institution.

In 1940, the Intermediate Commerce department was started in the evening and Prof. Hari Charan Ghosh was in-charge of the department. In 1944, B.Com. classes were also started in the evening. In 1947, separate I.Sc. classes were started in the morning and separate B.A. classes were also started in the evening. In 1945, separate B.Sc. classes were started in the evening under the guidance of Prof. Ladli Mohan Mitra.

In this way for the fulfilment of the growing interest of students, morning and evening units of Bangabasi College were opened separately under the supervision of Prof. Rajkumar Chakravorti and Prof. Satyananda Roy. But finally due to the introduction of Phase-Reduction Scheme of the University Grants Commission, New-Delhi, on 11th April, 1965, all units of Bangabasi College emerged as separate colleges like Bangabasi Morning College, Bangabasi Evening College, and Bangabasi College of Commerce. Bangabasi Commerce College was started in the evening in Bangabasi School Buildings, but in 1982-83, The Giris Chandra Chatrabas (formerly Canning Hostel) became the Bangabasi College of Commerce, thus expanding humanistic activities of Bangabasi College more and more.

e. Introduction of Co-education System.

It is observed to day that girls are seeking the opportunities for taking higher education and proper humanistic

training equally with the boys. With a view to providing them with proper opportunities, Co-education System was also introduced in 1979, for the advancement of the total humanistic ideas and ideals. In this march to progress, the torch of leadership was handed over from Principal P. K. Bose to Principal S. B. Ghosh and then to Principal B. Bera.

In the light of the history of the growth and the development of humanistic studies in Bangabasi College in different branches and disciplines, it may be said that, this College deserves to be rightly regarded as an institution of national importance in the history of expanding humanistic education in the country, as it wholly and successfully identified itself with the main stream of humanistic tradition of India.

III

OTHER HUMANISTIC ACTIVITIES FOR THE CULTIVATION OF HUMAN VALUES.

Men differ from one another in personal capacity, in aptitude and temperament. So different forms of humanistic activities in different fields of humanistic studies are fundamentally necessary for the cultivation of human values which are required for mental or intellectual development and for a proper social adjustment. So human values, may broaden an individual's attitude and outlook, power of abstract thinking and generalisation that make him fit in accommodating with the complex situations of life and society.

With these ideas of humanistic education, different forms of humanistic activities were organised in Bangabasi College for the creation and development of humanistic attitude and interest.

i. Different Extra-Curricular Activities.

For the cultivation of creative interest in the academic life, it tried to organise several academic and extra-academic activities in different times.

a. Scripture and Language Classes.

For the development of traditional outlook, classes for teaching Bhagbad Gita started in 1927, under the guidance of Pandit Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya. Again, as per direction of Sri Kailash Chandra Sarkar, language classes in French, German and classes in Short-hand courses also were started. But with the death of Pandit Bhattacharya and Sri Sarkar these were discontinued.

b. Study Circle and Seminars.

For stimulating the creative interest in different subjects, in August, 1915, 'The Economic Association', on 22nd January, 1932, 'Hindi Literary Society', on 31st August, 1939, 'Fine Arts Society' etc., were formed and also were continued for many years. Discussions, lectures, seminars etc., were organised in different departments of humanities in different years. In this connection special lectures, were arranged by the departments of Bengali and English ; Seminars like 'Morality and Politics' in 1972, 'Marx Seminar' in 1984, 'Indian Family is not coherent with modern life', in 1985, 'Radhakrishnan Seminar' in 1989

etc., organised by the Department of Philosophy, may also be referred to. In order to encourage the participation of students in different honours subjects, arrangements for different seminar rooms with libraries, containing upto-date books, have also been made,

c. College Library.

In addition to seminar libraries for different honours teaching departments, the college has a very valuable library with a capacious reading room, called 'Jatin Das Memorial Hall' and many other rooms, containing more modern books on different subjects, collected from the contributions of college fund, fund created out of the contributions of Calcutta University, University Grants Commission and from the contributions of eminent professors like Sri Surendranath Goswami, Sri Dhirendranath Ghosh. Mr. S. M. Bose and others.

d. College Endowments.

For the purpose providing facilities to the poor and intelligent students in developing their academic life, the College grants Stipends, Scholarships, Free studentships and financial help from 'Students' Aid Fund' created by the Students' Union and from the 'Aid Fund' created by some contributors like Sri Jyotish Chandra Gupta, Mrs. H. K. Dey, Prof. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, Prof. Rajkumar Chakravorti and others.

To reward the meritorious students some endowments have been made for different subjects in humanities. These are Prof. Lalit kumar Banerjee gold medal for obtaining,

first class in English Honours, Prof. Rajkumar Chakravorti gold medal for securing highest marks in English in B.A. examination, Mr. K. C. Dey silver medal and so on.

c. Magazine.

In order to kindle the creative abilities of the members of the institution, 'Bangabasi College Magazine' was started in January, 1903, Its importance and activities were evaluated thus : "This College Magazine deserves more extended notice partly because it is the only college magazine in Calcutta and partly because it is full of interesting matters furnishing side lights on student life. ...It is an effort deserving of highest commendation."⁸

The Magazine was continued for nineteen years and first it appeared as monthly and bi-monthly issues and then it was published thrice a year. The Magazine, however, is published annually at present.

ii. Several Socio-Cultural Activities.

For the cultivation of proper social and cultural interests as the part of creative humanistic studies, different socio-cultural performances are organised in the institution by the members of Teachers' Council, the Employees' Association and the Students' Union.

An Alumni Association was also formed for a proper co-ordination of present members of the institution with those of the past, for organising different socio-cultural activities like drama, music, sports etc.

8. The Report of the University Commission, 1905.

Regarding the pursuit of extra-academic activities, meetings, discussions etc., arranged by the Teachers' Council, Vivekananda Smaran Utsav, Saraswati Puja etc., by the Employees' Association and Freshers' Welcome, College Social, Inter-College Cultural Competition etc., as organised by the Students' Union may also be mentioned.

The humanistic studies in the institution cannot be completed if its members are not encouraged to imbibe the spirit of sports and games. With this idea in view, the institution at present, organises Inter-class Football Competition, Annual Sports, Inter-College Table Tennis Tournament, Inter-college Cricket Tournament etc., every year. It is a matter of pride that Bangabasi College has a separate play-ground and a well furnished tent at the Maidan.

In this connection it is also to be noted that for the creation of a proper humanistic outlook with sports and games, N.C.C. and N.S.S.S. programmes were also introduced of which one was for making students more disciplined and other was a training for social service. It may be remembered in this connection that the college with its students and staff, rendered valuable service to the sufferers from East-Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) and opened 'Saranartha Seva Sivar' for the succour of the distressed. Again, at the time of Bangladesh freedom movement, its role in helping the sufferers, was also remarkable.

The different Extra-Curricular and Socio-Cultural activities, creating traditional outlook and social habits, can cultivate the human values properly, for a real fulfilment of the objects of humanistic studies.

Keeping aloft this rich tradition of humanistic education, the College completed its hundred years of existence with the celebration of the Centenary on 27th November, 1986, in its glorious journey to the radiant future.

IV

AN EVALUATION

After a careful analysis of the brief history of the humanistic education in Bangabasi College in different directions, we may evaluate its role in the socio-cultural context. Regarding its humanistic approach to the idea of education, it may be observed that it has two-fold significance—individual and social. The influence of this educational centre in the life of individual helps him to develop his individuality as related to his successful adjustment with the social environment.

In the light of a proper relation of individuality with social adjustment, the real significance of humanistic education is evaluated. This may be properly performed keeping in mind the difference between 'Society' and 'Sociability.' A man is born in Society, but it does not make him automatically 'Sociable.' Different humanistic trainings develop his "capacity to co-operate towards the happiness." This can help an individual to become conscious of the common good that makes him 'Sociable.' In the context of this analysis if the objects and activities of the humanistic studies in Bangabasi College are examined, it is observed that this Institution may be treated as the proper centre through which the socialisation of individuals is

achieved. The object of this socialisation is the cultivation of socio-cultural values in human life as related to its tradition and heritage. This process is explained by E. B. Taylor as "...complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

True significance of this process lies in the change and progress of the socio-cultural life of the country. Bangabasi College, a dynamic centre of humanistic education, plays a vital role in moulding that life in society. It has been organising several humanistic activities and has produced a galaxy of talents who have also enriched the Indian way of life as the expression of creative humanity.

In the background of these observations, contributions of the College in the national movements for acquiring political freedom and in different humanistic fields like education, politics, law, fine arts, literature, sports etc., and scientific developments, for securing social freedom, are indeed noteworthy and laudable. Importance of these objects and activities lies in the effort to achieve true human freedom, which, in the observation of Rabindranath Tagore, means the realisation of "...the truth that dwells in the ideal man,"⁹

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The time is come when Education has to be saved from the invasion of official and red-tape control on the one hand and the incursion of the turbid whirlpool of party politics on the other. I have always through my long life strenuously fought for the principle of the Independence of Education—the principle that Education is an end in itself and not a mere means to an end, however high it be.

—G. C. Bose.
