



جائزة خدمة الإنسانية
ISA AWARD FOR SERVICE TO HUMANITY



DR. ACHYUTA
SAMANTA

PROFESSIONALISM
AND LEADERSHIP IN
HUMANITARIAN WORK



June 2015

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“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country
awake.”

Rabindranath Tagore (1861 – 1941)

The words of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore provided inspiration to a different generation of Indians. Enslaved by colonialism, they ached for freedom from foreign rule, but also from poverty, ignorance, divisiveness and the ‘dreary desert sand of dead habit.’ Even today, this cry for freedom endures as many more people continue to release themselves from various forms of bondage, as they are ‘led forward by ever widening thought and action.’

This awakening is at the heart of the many political and social reforms that have transformed the country since its independence in 1947. A sharp focus on a radical overhaul of education that would empower the masses to be self-reliant, productive and active contributors to the economy has been one of the goals of India’s decision makers. In other words, providing a template for policy-making that would resemble the India of Tagore’s dreams.

This quest is not limited to those in authority; but has inspired millions of ordinary men and women to work harder and ‘strive tirelessly towards perfection.’ There are stories of countless individuals who have carved a singular path to help the less fortunate, and enabling them to be equal participants in shaping the destiny of the nation. One such individual is a legend in his own lifetime. His life and work clearly demonstrate that sometimes it takes only one person to change the world, one person to make an impact, one person to lend a helping hand, to emerge as an agent of change, and pave the way to the India of Tagore’s dreams.

This man is Dr. Achyuta Samanta.



BLAZING A TRAIL OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY

Achyuta Samanta – the founder of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences and Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology – was only four years old when his father died, leaving his mother and seven siblings in severe poverty and hardship. Rather than resigning himself to despondency, he took the courageous step at the tender age of six to start working and thus shoulder responsibility for his family’s well being.

This humble beginning laid the foundation for his future career path. In 1992, he took his first steps as a social entrepreneur with the sole purpose of giving high quality education to socially and economically disadvantaged members of society and, thus provide opportunities to help liberate them from poverty.

Dr. Samanta’s journey has been marked by strength and resilience as he established both the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology and the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences on the bedrock of strong ethical values. Today, the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology is regarded as a world-class university but it was begun with an investment of just Rs 5000. His dream was to ensure that poverty would never pose a hindrance to anyone’s education. He accelerated efforts to create a slice of heaven on earth, and called it the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, which now caters to 25,000 children from the underprivileged tribal community.



DR. SAMANTA A LIVING LEGEND

Dr. Samanta is widely described as a living legend because of his own miraculous journey out of poverty but also for his relentless quest to help those languishing in abject poverty, ignorance and neglect. He has indeed braved the adversities of life, and yet took it upon himself to chase the dream of bettering the lives of the socio-economically challenged indigenous tribal community of Odisha. He could have easily appropriated for himself the goodwill, fame and resources that he earned along the way, but instead he chose to invest in creating a better world for the poor and downtrodden. He lives in a rented house, wears simple clothing, cooks his own meals and never fails to wear a contagious smile that reveals a youthful charm despite his 50 years.

BRAVING POVERTY AND A SHATTERED CHILDHOOD

Dr. Samanta’s mother underwent a great deal of struggle after the sudden death of her husband left the entire family in abject poverty. She could only manage to provide a dilapidated thatch-roofed house as shelter for her children in the village where they lived. She fed them with rice gruel and wild spinach because that was all she could afford with her meagre earnings. However, this encounter with poverty in his early childhood did not daunt him. He faced the challenges of life with utmost calm, solemnity and unmatched determination to overcome the negativity and pessimism that usually surrounds people who have been betrayed by fate. It would seem nothing short of a miracle for anyone in this situation to even aspire to an education, but that is precisely what happened. As if driven by divine inspiration, he would follow the older boys from the village as they walked to school. Surprised by his willingness to stay in class, the school’s headmaster eventually gave in, thus paving the way for Dr. Samanta’s academic journey from primary school to high school, from high school to college, and from college to university. He eventually earned a Masters degree in Chemistry that landed him a lecturer’s job at a college in Bhubaneswar, the capital city of the eastern state of Odisha.



“ My journey from ‘nowhere’ to ‘now here’ is both inspiring and astounding ”

Dr. Achyuta Samanta

DESTINY’S PLAN UNFOLDS

Life seemed comfortable for the young lecturer, but destiny had other plans. His own experience of poverty throughout his childhood years stirred within him a fervent desire to do something to alleviate the suffering of disadvantaged members of society. Obsessed with the idea that education empowers, he set out to put his plan into action. While pursuing a college education in Puri and a postgraduate education at Utkal University in Bhubaneswar, he began to augment his paltry scholarship by giving private tuition to students. This simple act of teaching helped him discover the social entrepreneur within. He looked forward to working towards empowering the hapless unemployable young children who failed to succeed academically. In 1992, he got his opportunity; he took his entire savings of Rs 5000 and started an industrial training institute in a rented two-room building in Bhubaneswar. What followed was no ordinary journey, but a miracle that transformed him into an icon for the academic community.

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF ENTERPRISE

The adversities faced during his early childhood planted the seeds of enterprise, while destiny led him to the field of educational entrepreneurship. It was a time when most academic institutes began to show signs of decadence and an inability to meet the challenges of the changing needs of society. Dr. Samanta’s innovative mind gave birth to an educational institution that became a model to emulate. The Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology Group of Institutions became the largest educational conglomerate in the city of Bhubaneswar. With a total built up area of 7.5 million square feet, the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology boasts some of the finest buildings on 20 independent campuses with state-of-the-art facilities.

BIRTH OF THE KALINGA INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY

The Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology’s academic excellence was recognised by the Government of India. In 2004, the Institute became one of the youngest institutions in India to be awarded university status, a feat mentioned in the Limca Book of Records. Today, the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology is considered one of the 15 best universities in India, and it is also ranked as the 4th best self-financed university as per independent surveys. Over the years, the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology has grown to offer a broad range of technical and professional courses. Starting with Engineering, MCA and MBA, the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology has added programmes such as Rural Management, Law, Biotechnology, Medical Sciences, Nursing, Dental Sciences, Fashion Technology, Film and Media Sciences, Sculpture, Humanities, Languages, Yoga and Spiritual studies in just 15 years. Today, over 18,000 students from different parts of India and abroad pursue a range of graduate, post-graduate, doctoral and postdoctoral fellowship programmes. The Institute is distinguished by excellence not only with its architecture but also with the consistent quality of teaching, research and campus placements for graduates over the years. As a result, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council of the United Grants Commission (UGC) and the National Board of Accreditation of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) have assigned the University with high grades.

KALINGA INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY SPREADS ITS WINGS

The Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology’s glory has spread throughout India and to countries across the globe.. A member of the Association of Universities (ACU), the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP), and the International Institute of Education (IEE), Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology University has signed MoUs with over 50 top international universities, and has strengthened academic partnerships with reputed institutes. A large number of academicians and scholars from prestigious institutions in India and abroad, representatives from reputed business and industrial houses as well as luminaries from the world of sports, literary and film visit the university campus to interact with the students. National and international seminars and conferences are regularly held at the campus attracting scholars and academics from across the world. The University successfully hosted the 99th Indian Science Congress in 2012.

KALINGA INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY: PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology has had the honour of welcoming academicians from reputed institutes like IITs and IIMs to its campus. Other visitors include chancellors, presidents, vice chancellors, rectors from both Indian and foreign universities, Nobel laureates, Magsaysay Award winners, heads of state, statesmen, journalists, diplomats, bureaucrats, eminent scientists, technocrats, members of the Armed Forces and other distinguished members of civil society. All have contributed to its status as a world-class university. The transformation from a one-roomed institute with just 12 students to a world-class multi-disciplinary university has been made possible through state-of-the-art technology, pedagogy, a commitment to quality and - above all - the extraordinary entrepreneurial abilities of Dr. Samanta. It is little wonder that the 2010 Young EDGE Award acknowledged Dr. Samanta as an outstanding educationist. He has been nominated to many Government of India bodies, including the UGC and the AICTE.

OUTSTANDING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Dr. Achyuta Samanta’s mission is an example of social entrepreneurship at its best. A social entrepreneur in the truest sense of the word, Dr. Samanta has developed innovative solutions to some of society’s most pressing problems. He has the ability to understand when something is not working and to implement an effective solution. As a social entrepreneur, Dr. Samanta is an agent of societal change, seizing opportunities that others miss, improving systems, inventing new approaches and creating solutions to social problems. Rather than lamenting over sluggish governmental endeavours and the lacklustre plans of the civil administration, Dr. Samanta seizes problems by their horns. The emancipation of indigenous tribal people has been one of Odisha’s major concerns, and there have been many efforts to bring them into the mainstream, as illustrated in the religious rites of Odisha’s presiding deity, Lord Jagannath. The continued marginalisation of the tribal community of the state touched Dr. Samanta’s compassionate heart.

BIRTH OF AN INCREDIBLE PHILANTHROPIC VENTURE: THE KALINGA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

The Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology was not Dr. Samanta's only dream. Around the time that this world-class university was taking shape, Dr. Samanta had already come up with a plan to empower the poor and marginalised indigenous tribal children of the state by providing them with a level playing field. With the conviction that 'illiteracy breeds poverty and literacy eradicates it', he established a small school in 1992. Situated near the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology, the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences was set up to provide free education and free lodging and boarding facilities to tribal children. This fledgling school has now grown into a mammoth tribal residential school that provides free education from kindergarten to the post-graduate level. The state-of-the-art independent campus serves over 25,000 children and youth from the poorest of the poor indigenous tribal communities, a feat hailed as one of its kind in the world.

KALINGA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES: A MAGIC WAND FOR REAL TRANSFORMATION

Dr. Samanta's vision is to provide quality education and opportunities to the poorest of the poor indigenous tribal children, boosting their all-round development and empowering them with life skills so that they can successfully integrate into the mainstream. Love and care has helped the tribal children to shine in every field, from representing India at international sporting events to excelling in various competitive examinations; the indigenous tribal children have justified Dr. Samanta's firm belief that, given the proper opportunity, they can perform at the same level or even outshine their mainstream contemporaries. The students are doing well academically and have secured 100% results for the past 10 years with no dropouts. They excel at sports, too. A case in point would be the game of rugby towards which the students from the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences have shown a keen interest. The game is hardly popular amongst the people of the state and a surprising choice for remote dwelling tribal people. Dr. Samanta will no doubt be seen as a strong advocate for tribal education and the pioneer of a new era in which even the most deprived person has the chance to have his or her say.



CHANGING IDEAS ABOUT WHAT IS POSSIBLE

Groomed under the personal care of Dr. Samanta, the boys of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences made history when they defeated the formidable South African team by 19-5 at the finals of the Rugby World Championship in London in 2006. This feat was repeated in Australia when the team won six out of eight matches. To play and win rugby tournaments against formidable opponents on foreign soil is in itself an incredible achievement. The million-dollar question that still baffles the world is how such an impossible situation became possible. The answer lies in Dr. Samanta's determination. Despite the difficult circumstances of his own childhood, he dared to imagine a world that would offer a level playing field, even for a person living in the lowest economic class of society. It seemed an impossible dream, but he remained steadfast and helped to make it a reality. Turning tribal youths into a victorious world-class rugby team was an accomplishment that required both grit and determination.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO UPLIFTING TRIBAL PEOPLE

Dr. Samanta dared to encourage the tribal boys to try a sport as specialised as rugby. It is not easy to imagine what it means to be a tribal in Odisha, a state with an annual per capita income of less than a few thousand rupees. In their day-to-day struggle, the half-fed, semi clad tribal people live in abject poverty, eating wild roots, tubers, leaves and insects. Food, clothes and education are beyond their comprehension. It takes a great deal of conviction to take tribal children from the lap of poverty and deprivation and give them all the necessities of life that money can buy. This conviction was Dr. Samanta's only capital when he pursued his dream of creating a more liveable world for all. It is not just a matter of offering these children a kindergarten to post graduate-level education; they are also gaining recognition for their accomplishments and visiting different parts of the world as agents of change.



THE START OF A LONG JOURNEY

This is the story of one man's struggle against the odds. It was no easy task to hire international coaches to train boys who had never worn shoes or ventured out of their huts in the forest, boys who had never been on a train, let alone an aeroplane. Dr. Samanta's courage and fervour have yielded clear results. He created an international team singlehandedly, without backing from a sports official or financial support of any kind, and this is just the start of a long journey.



KALINGA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES ATTRACTS THE WORLD'S ATTENTION

The success of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, which was established to bridge a socioeconomic opportunity gap, has attracted the attention of international organisations. UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA and the US Federal Government participate in various projects designed to benefit the tribal students of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences. Economic planners, presidents, prime ministers, chief ministers, Nobel laureates, eminent social workers, diplomats, ambassadors, chief justices of Supreme Courts from various countries, media luminaries and other celebrities have visited the Institute. Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences is helping towards fulfilling the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

RECOGNISING SERVICE TO HUMANITY AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

On one level, much like any other journey, the venture to create a world without hunger, suffering, conflict and bloodshed begins with a single step. The outcomes are by-products of remaining steadfast to the vision and in maintaining a focused determination in achieving the goals that have been set. No triumphant music plays in the background, and most significant victories often go unnoticed. Along the way, experiences are sometimes painful and sometimes just pedestrian. Ultimately, however, this venture proves to be a unique path leading to depth and purpose, and an indicator that the flame must be sustained whenever such flames are ignited. A compassionate heart is not partisan, sectarian or limited to a particular region. Dr. Samanta believes in recognising and celebrating compassionate hearts everywhere. Each year, the prestigious Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences Humanitarian Award recognises and celebrates excellent service to humanity. The Award's distinguished recipients include Ms. Edna Bomo Molewa, a prominent social worker and Minister in South Africa's national assembly; Dr. Ham Kee-Sun, President and Founder of Hanseo University, South Korea; His Excellency Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the Prime Minister of Mauritius; the Rt. Hon Lord Nicholas Addison Phillips, President (Chief Justice) of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom; and His Excellency Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley, Hon'ble Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Bhutan.



“I have been chasing my dreams ever since my father died when I was only four years old”

Dr. Achyuta Samanta

GIVING BACK TO THE MOTHER AND THE MOTHERLAND

The establishment of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences reveal just a small facet of Dr. Samanta's personality. His desire to fulfil his mother's wish and his commitment to his roots led him to transform his remote village, Kalarabanka, into a model village by providing all the facilities and amenities found in large cities. Kalarabanka's growth and development stimulated development in the other villages of Kalarabanka panchayat (or cluster of villages), which paved the way for it to become a Model Panchayat. The village of Kalarabanka has become an educational hub in the area, with both vernacular and English medium schools. The village, India's first to provide 100% health insurance coverage for its inhabitants, has modern amenities such as a drinking water supply system, a 50-bed hospital, a post office, banking facilities with ATM, telephone and Internet services, and temples and community halls. Under the auspices of Dr. Samanta, community festivals are held every year to celebrate local culture and heritage. This is a great tribute to one's motherland.



SUPPORT FOR ODISHA'S ART AND CULTURE

The multifaceted Dr. Samanta did not rest on his laurels after founding the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences. He has not forgotten his roots, and the philosophy of his life is to respect mother, motherland and mother tongue. He has worked tirelessly to promote, support and protect Odisha's literature, art and culture. In 2000, his passion for language, literature, art and culture led to the establishment of Kadambini Media Pvt. Ltd, which produces 'Kadambini', the first Odia-language family magazine, and 'The Kunikatha', the first Odia-language children's magazine. Dr. Samanta also recognised that film is an important medium for social change and raising awareness. Kadambini Media Pvt. Ltd. produced 'Kathantara', an award winning feature film in Odia language that looked at the plight of the victims of super cyclone.

THE VISION THAT TRANSFORMED A LOCAL ECONOMY

The US-based Edge Foundation described Dr. Samanta as one of the world's top 15 social entrepreneurs. His talent for social entrepreneurship has led to innovative solutions for society's most pressing problems. He has the ability to identify and bring change to the parts of the system that are not working. Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology University is located in what was once a high-crime area due to unemployment. Dr. Samanta decided to change the area, and it is now thriving; industries, technical and professional institutions, shopping complexes, restaurants, banks and other financial institutes provide direct and indirect employment to every able-bodied person in the area. This economic transformation was made possible by innovation, motivation, critical thinking and Dr. Samanta's eagerness to solve a social problem.



DR. SAMANTA'S STORY OF SIMPLE LIVING AND HIGH THINKING

Dr. Samanta finds great satisfaction in following a Gandhian lifestyle. Although he could afford luxuries, he chooses to lead a simple life; money and luxury mean very little to him. His simple vegetarian diet, inexpensive clothing and endearing smile speak volumes. He shares others' pain and nurtures a profoundly kind and loving heart. He longs neither for a house of his own nor for a hefty bank balance, in the belief that giving to others is the greatest luxury in life. This is the secret behind the fast growth of the two gigantic institutions and the others in the group. His struggle, his sacrifice and his simplicity are definitely more precious than anything money could buy. He is distinguished by his love for humanity. Dr. Samanta's concern for an ailing society has earned him admiration throughout the country and around the world. Regional, national and international publications, magazines and journals praise him and his work. He has been featured in Time Magazine, Outlook, India Today, Reader's Digest and a host of other publications. Dr. Samanta has received doctorate degrees and other prestigious decorations from universities within the country and abroad and from many governments.

ACHYUTA SAMANTA: BLAZING A TRAIL OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY

Dr. Achyuta Samanta is a man of a thousand dreams. He pursues his dreams until he is able to give them a tangible shape. With faith and beliefs strongly rooted on right effort, he works for a genuinely worthy social cause, and success inevitably follows. Anybody who lost their father at the age of four, without a stable income and a number of mouths to feed, would have been pushed to the brink of despair, but that did not prevent Dr. Samanta from achieving the impossible. On the long journey from nursery school to Masters in Chemistry, Dr. Samanta left his mark everywhere. His teachers remember him as a bright student, the village elders remember him as an ever-willing helping hand, and the priests remember him as a devotee who helped in gathering flowers for the deities. Dr. Samanta accumulated blessings for the future, and these enabled him to establish a conglomeration of educational institutions including Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences. These two institutions have brought glory to him and to his home state of Odisha.



My journey from 'nowhere' to 'now here' is both inspiring and astounding. Born with the burden of poverty in a non-descript village of Odisha, (one of the most backward states in India), the journey to where I now stand is without parallel. I have been chasing my dreams ever since my father died when I was only four years old. Friends and foes have criticised me, for they think I have been in search of some kind of a utopia, but I have chosen a path that sometimes appears to be one that even angels would fear to tread as it deals with the idea of creating an oasis in a vast desert. I refused to remain in the poverty that had been meted out to me. In my early life, I encountered hunger in all its manifestations at every turn, but I turned all such situations to my favour so that I could serve the poorest of the poor. The humiliation inflicted by poverty was a humbling experience, but it did not deter me from realising my life's meaning and purpose. Perhaps I had a tryst with destiny and destiny had definite plans for me. The establishment of a world-class university like Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology and the creation of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences - a refuge for the children of lesser gods - started with my savings of Rs.5000 (\$100) back in 1992.

I continue to accept life as it comes to me, and every step is a leap forward. Standing in front of a vast ocean, I feel I have collected only a few pebbles and much remains to be done. Here I present whatever has come my way to enrich my journey from a domestic helper to 'ISA Award for Service to Humanity Laureate'.



Tagore's inspirational words spoke to a nation that was on the verge of being born. The struggle to win freedom from colonial rule needed more than a template for governance; it needed a roadmap for growth, prosperity and social harmony. The growth of a nation is ultimately the story of individuals coming together and successfully carving a path for progress.

The story of Dr. Samanta reflects the true awakening of which Tagore spoke so evocatively in his memorable poem. His story is not just about one person taking a step and bringing change; it is the story of what can happen when a man with single-minded devotion to be led forth 'into ever widening thought and action' takes a step forward and acts on his beliefs.

What we see here, then, is a story that should inspire us and help us understand that, when idealism rooted in pragmatism is fused with iron willed determination, it can change a nation and transform the world in which we live.

