

Center of Social Awareness: Children's University

A divine event took place on the planet called Mother Earth is the instituting of Children's University in Gandhinagar. It can be claimed to be divine, for no other University in the contemporary world ever aims at covering the wide development cycle beginning from unborn child to 18 years of teenagers.

In some countries, there are institutions having similar name and title, i.e., in Manchester (UK), China, Adelaide (Australia), Malaysia, Scotland, Texas (US), Bosnia and Sarajevo. However, these institutions function similar to NGO or trust for the development of various activities pertaining to the age group of 7 to 14 years. But, none of them encompasses four different and core dimensions including education, research, training and extension, and functions as the University in true sense in this area. Thus, Children's University situated in Gandhinagar is the first of its kind which works under these four dimensions and serves to the greater aim of the society. This aim encompasses the activity related to *GarbhadhnaSamskar* to the incarnation of best progeny and hatches the dream of preparing a holistic human being for the society.

The seer of this dream is our honorable current Prime Minister Sri NarendrabhaiModi. He is not only seer, but also visionary sage. A divine verse has emerged in his mind- "Every child matters." This verse gets expanded in the sublime "Darshan" of this University. To word this "Vision" in his letters, "the upbringing of our children should be done in such a way that avails the development of physical, mental, intellectual, emotional and spiritual facets which ultimately lead them to avail the opportunity of self-realization."

In order to bring this divinely inspired idea into reality, he institutionalizes a mechanism, that is, Children's University.

On 9th June, 2008, this thought was first shared in a workshop with leading academicians by ShriNarendrabhaiModi. He also gave proper explanation regarding the necessity of Children's University. He had pointed out at times that Children's University would specifically focus on the researches related to child and its neighboring areas. He also informed that in current era, child is overburdened with unnecessary stress and to bring improvement in this situation is prime requirement of our time. Adding to that, he pointed out that the number of nuclear family has been increasing rapidly in present time and "upbringing and security" which are the natural rights of children is pushed inside the corner. Elaborating this concept further he said not only for the physical health, but also in terms of mental and psychological requirements Children's University should come forward and support. So that, children of today and tomorrow can develop their personality in all different dimensions with the support of healthy environment teemed with emotional care of the whole society. Such holistically developed beings can contribute to country and humanity with their best skills and abilities.

Those academicians who participated in this workshop welcomed this idea and gave very valuable suggestions on it. On 12th Sep, 2008, under the headship of Kiritbhai Joshi- a modern sage and visionary, the first task force of 16 people was created by the Government of Gujarat. The first, second and third meeting of this task force met on 6th & 7th of October, 2008, 2nd & 3rd of January, 2009 and 19th & 20th of March, 2009 respectively.

During these meetings, the vision, mission and objectives of the University were framed. Along with this, different works and services which shall be rendered by the University were also finalized and its overall structure was also discussed.

For the construction of Bill for the Children's University, a Committee made of the President of task force and a member secretary was formed which included Dr. Abhay Kashyap and Prof. J. S. Rajput. Under the direction of Commissioner of higher education and Principal Sri M. R. Upadhyaya, the draft of bill was given final shape by the Dept. of Education.

After the approval of cabinet, this bill was presented in Legislative Assembly on 28th of July, 2009 by the then Education Minister, Sri Ramanlal Vora. It was deliberated intensely in the assembly and many members took active participation in the debate on its structure. After intense debate, it got passed into the assembly. This bill, after getting consented by the honorable Governor on 31st of July, 2009, attained its final recognition as **Children's University Act, 2009**.

As its first Vice Chancellor, I assumed the charge on 16th of January, 2012. An intense joy of joining vital work was felt deeply at times. After the satisfaction and joy of spearheading "Vanche Gujarat" during the golden jubilee year of the State, I was assigned the stern task of University's formative years just after ten months by Sri Narendrabhai Modi. It was indeed my great fortune.

An opportunity of sowing greater human cause was bestowed upon me. In body, heart and mind, an immense level of energy got charged. I was given the task of setting new trend of work and many challenges were ahead of me. However, I got activated as self-charging battery due to the challenging nature of my new work. At the outset, a slogan sprouted in my heart—"bright the child, brighter the Nation". According to the Act of the University, I began my work by initiating *Tapovan Garba-Samskar* Center. In the same chain, 22 guiding Centers were initiated across the state for pregnant women so that they could get the best and desired child. These centers were known as Tapovan Research Centers. Till now, while this article is being jotted down, around 31000 pregnant women trained in these Centers have given birth to healthy children. Research based analysis of this information has also been carried out by the University.

Having initiated from 2nd October, 2010: Gandhiji's birth anniversary onwards, this important project of the University has achieved good response in the society. This work is directly associated with the society and this project is yet to be reached at many places of the state and we have faith that the stalwarts of the society will carry forward its benefits to many layers.

Another important project of similar importance is *Vidyaniketan*. It is of prime importance for us that our academic institutions should become real heaven of knowledge and place of academic pilgrimage. In order to achieve this purpose, it is required that teachers earn real wisdom along with knowledge for the shaping of best minds. The University feels concerned and committed for the cultivation of such teachers and is constantly engaged in providing distinct training programs to them so that we can help them to find their better

versions. A child is fragrant soft bud and its fragrance of existence lies in its total blooming. We want to realize this sentence. To prepare the character of a child in such a manner that he becomes ready and prepared for higher education at the completion of one's teenage. His body of virtues will become so strong that the society never feels void of healthy, patriotic and thinking citizens. For this process, the University is preparing many novel curricula so that learners can feel the joy of learning.

Education of guardians is also one of the significant topics of the present time. For the guidance and counseling of guardians, the University has prepared beautiful books such as "ShaishavnuSmit" and "ParivarniPathshala".

For young children, puzzles, rhymes, children's songs and stories are important dimensions of development. Cradle songs and aubades are also gradually disappearing due to the attack of so called modernity. The University is also exerting best of its efforts to revive these traditions. For this purpose, the publication department of the University has published books like "BhulakanoKhajano", "Varta.com" and "VartanoRasthal". For songs, three CDs of children's songs, patriotic songs and prayer songs have been prepared wherein 35 songs are composed and vocalized. They are being sung in many homes across the state. All these materials are very useful for the foundational stage of education.

'ShishuParamarshan Kendra' has also been established in the University for the guidance of upbringing children in good manner. Apart from this, a monthly magazine under the title "Balvishwa" is also published by the University in which interesting information and stories useful for parents, teachers and children are given in lucid manner. The attempts to expand its reach are under way.

On the University website- www.cugujarat.ac.in, four short stories with pictorial narratives are being uploaded on 12th and 27th of every month. Till now, the treasure of 500 stories is available on it. Moreover, Vice-Chancellor's enlightened letters are also regularly uploaded on this website.

For the constant innovative creation of children's songs and stories, eminent writers and poets associated with children's literature are invited time to time by the University for the debate and discussion. One of such meeting was just held on 22nd of July.

The discussion regarding the contemporary trends in academics also ceaselessly takes place in our campus. On 18th of July, 2019, the seminar on "National Education Policy" was organized by the University wherein esteemed academicians of the state were invited. In it, intense discussion and churning was curled out. The essence of this discussion was sent to the Ministry of H.R.D. by the University.

Though, the name of this University is Children's University, its work-area is not limited to merely children. In fact, it is very difficult to understand young kids and the University is exerting many sincere attempts so that the adults can understand them.

In the University, certain courses of higher education are also in operations which include master level courses in Psychology, Social Work, English, Food and Nutrition. In the Departments of Education and Psychology, research degrees such as M.Phil and Ph.D. are

also offered by the University. Apart from this, certain part time courses on weekend are also in operation in the University which includes M.A. (Education), post graduate level diplomas in school counseling and pre-natal care and education.

For the artistic development in young learners, certificate courses related to music and drawing are also going on by the University for six months. In a very short time, a certificate course of six months in CCC will also be available on its campus.

Thus, the University works as bridge between kids and adults. In order to near our Mission, every step is significant for us. I rest my pen with a hope that may the learned people of Gujarat will shower their affinity on this University.

Harshad Shah
Vice-Chancellor,
Children's University.