

Religion in Practice: Then, Now & Hence

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'Don't worry much whether God exists or not; rather be reassured that you do exist'. 'It is of least significance, how much God loves you; what actually matters is how much do you love God'. 'I have seen Gods, they are born of mother's womb; but I am looking for a devotee'. These are few of the many maverick thoughts on God that Sri Sri Thakur brought upon collective consciousness of our time.

Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra was not a reformer, the type we read in history books. He was not a revolutionary of the types who overthrow the existing order by a big bang disruption and usher in a new order. He was not a philanthropist of the type we see around, who might have dedicated his life's savings for a socially noble cause.

Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra operated at a very fundamental level of human existence, consciousness, evolutionary traits of civilization; everything at a scientific and spiritual plane. His movement can be said to have caused revolution in the domain of tradition, convention and all that have been part of a continued saga of human endeavour from past to present. In that sense, he heralded what is called modernization, progression and evolution; all that ushers a better future, distilled by an urge for refinement, excellence and innovativeness.

In this essay, we will attempt to reflect on milestones where Sri Sri Thakur has differed from the convention and given a fresh and stimulating twist to conventional thoughts. Significant to note here that real progress will happen if we all, the people at large, individually and collectively, follow and join Sri Sri Thakur at those twist and turn of time. Otherwise, time may lead us anywhere else, towards wilderness and bewilderment, and where else; nobody knows. Not many of us are conscious of our collective direction and next destination. Here Sri Sri Thakur plays the role of guide, the leader, the forerunner, the path finder, and the able charioteer.

Part – I : Religion

Conceptually, there is hardly any difference in essence between two religions. If one practices the ideology of any religion, one will achieve the intended objective. Prophets and the original scriptures, the holy books, which are the fountainheads of any religious movement, do not mean to conflict with any other religion. More than the principles of religion, it is the practice which provides life to religion. Whoever follows the principles of religion tends to get benefit. Every major organized religion consists of 4 structural entities: a) the Ideal and the ideology in codes (principles); b) the conducts (practices) which are ritualistically adopted by majority of followers of religion; c) institutional structures which govern, influence, regulates and mobilizes the affairs of a religion in public domain, and d) the practitioners of religion who avowedly remain affiliated to the religion.

Origin and Developments of Religious Movement

Major religions of the world are originated from the ideological paradigm of contemporary prophets. Prophets descend at different points in time for the whole humanity. God is one, prophets are God's messengers; hence they are the same. They never discriminated any group, based on its religious affiliations by birth.

Religious tenets have been packaged and branded with a tag of exclusivity, by the followers of the prophet, with a view to propagate and perpetuate the new view point of the prophet for the then society. Normally, during the lifetime of the prophet, the devotees get guided by the prophet directly and that guidance normally happens to have universal appeal. But after the great demise, the prophet's life and time remain shrouded by some kind of mystery and the mystery gets murkier with passage of time. In the process, various distortions backed by mean interests, creep into the organized legacy of the prophet. Lot of social, commercial, ethnic and political feelings get associated with the prophet's movement. When the prophet's followers promote the prophet's mission with zeal and aggressiveness of a true devotee, some fanatic elements and group sentiments also creep in. The first casualty of this movement is the liberal elements of the prophet's ideology, which are the core of any prophet's life and teaching, like: love, fellow feelings, service, forgiveness and so on. As the movement progresses, it snowballs into a systematic and structured organized societal groups. Slowly the spiritual aspects becomes a low key affair, while temporal part, which is visible and more affable, gains prominence. This is the trend and pattern of almost all major religions, though there are differences in their history and contours.

World of Religion as it stands Today

In today's context, every religious leader has to look deep into his own ideology. It is of course easier said than done. Given a chance, everybody would like to do that. The process of getting into the root of ideology of any religion is not very well laid down. Nevertheless this is the only way to deal with religion, if one were to escape from the clutches of the communal and fundamental forces. When one turns to the original sayings of the prophet, one would know that religions are not to be treated like 'isms', to serve the interests of some influential sections, the way it is being treated now. Even if few religious leaders take to the liberal path, there may not be much impact on the society. The reasons being, the sphere of today's religion has widened much to include all kinds of elements in the society and the fundamental elements, mixed with other interests like politics, jingoism, megalomania, etc, have gone out of hands of sane leaders. Today religion is more of rhetoric, less of practice; being used to serve number of other interests.

Today religious affiliation on a societal scale has some features and some privileges. People of one particular religion own up a particular deity (godhead) and some associated symbols like a holy book and some holy places and some sacred objects (may be a tree, may be an animal, may be an object of nature like fire, and moon and so on). Almost all religions have a place of reverential congregation, some places of pilgrimage and some festivals. All these practices bring practitioners of a religion under the influence of same faith, same rituals, same dos and don'ts etc. Therefore, surrounding the above features, people of each religion develop a cult, a set of codes, and a peculiar pattern in behavior. Most importantly,

dress, festivities, and language are very explicit features of most of the religions, which clearly distinguish one religious group from others.

The socio-religious groups provide a sense of security and fellow feelings to their members. Privileges also stretch up to political and economic benefits. A clear sign of solidarity is visible in each religious group when it comes to facing the outside world. Political leaders find it attractive to capitalize the sense of inclusion of each member of religious community and bring in leadership dynamics to this particular phenomenon. This exclusive privilege in this competitive world, with visible trend of fast upward mobility, brings about a conflict of interest amongst religious groups. There is a very intense urge in the groups to maintain the status quo, to strengthen the divisive barriers, out of fear of insecurity.

Taking everything into account and viewing from a sociologist's perspective, we find religions have come to acquire more socio-economic political connotation than the spiritual content in it. Therefore, a separate spiritual cult is growing in parallel, on the social landscape. The enlightened sections of the society are quite aware of the differences between religion and spirituality. There are quite a good number of spiritual leaders who are quite influential and they are using managerial leadership and media and meeting emotional and spiritual need of the people. Branches of discipline like yoga, astrology, architecture (*vastu*), and social service to the disadvantageous section of the society etc are growing and meeting the need of the people. Growth of herbal medicine, homeopathy, spiritual healing and gated community living etc. are also associated features of the same trend of healthy and holistic living. All ancient scriptural wisdom is being delivered on a mass scale, with an entrepreneurial drive and being organized in the form of corporate culture. Powerful media, digital technology and web culture together have stretched the reach of these services to every corner of the world. Today, the spiritual world has a global integration, competitive spirit and therefore some spiritual promoters have a very wide base and mass appeal.

So today, we have:

- a) World of Dharma (ancient breed)
- b) World of Religion (socio-economic-political breed)
- c) World of Spirituality (hybrid of ancient, modern and corporate)

All these have evolved with the need of the time, taste of people along with a living style which is marked by graduating order of affluence and technology. Rising aspiration of people, propelled by new and younger generational outlook has made the culture entirely different from what it used to be, say, a quarter century ago.

Striking negative feature in this trend is that certain natural elements are missing. For example, the following elements which were part of our culture and upbringing, are slowly getting discredited and perhaps being marginalized from the life of people:

- Living with nature, love for nature, curiosity to explore nature
- Human touch with each other, sentiment and emotion for others in the family and society
- Connect with history, heritage, art, literature and pure science

A point that must be brought out here that society is progressing fast in terms of standard of living people enjoy, connectivity that is available, both physical and cyber, fast urbanization that is taking place and overload of media's impact in shaping people's view of the world. Culture – traditional as well as contemporary, is trying hard to assimilate these changes and yet remain relevant to people and their lives. That is where spirituality is emerging as modern face of religion in the enlightened part of society.

Religious Revival & Remix

Religion still remains favorite recourse to large sections of society; rational and modern. People attach God, Godly prowess and God's favor with religion. Therefore, people of all sections of society feel the need for religion, religious establishment and religious paraphernalia for various reasons like personal gain, security, immunity from evil happenings and unforeseen mishaps etc. Large numbers of people do not understand much about religious principles; as they have neither time nor ability to get into the nuances of religion; as there are huge mysteries in the world of religion itself. Therefore, when it comes to practice of religion, even modern and well meaning people get guided by traditional religious leaders, however ancient and outdated those leaders and practices might appear to be. So we have proliferation of all kinds of religious leaders; traditional, modern and spiritual. It appears, there is place for all in a heterogeneous and uneven society like ours, which is eternally in state of transition.

World over, India no exception; there are people at the bottom of the pyramid. There are sections of the people suffering from abject poverty, starvation, malnutrition, ravaged by natural calamities, manmade calamities like war, subjugation, exploitation and victim of terrorism and so on. This section of people have no recourse other than subjecting themselves to traditional religious tradition, customs, being guided by traditional religious leaders, whatever may be their level of enlightenment.

Then comes a time when everyone, without exception, suffers from own limitations; namely: weakness to complexes, old age, ill health, unforeseen mishaps and death. These moments of reality, creates a phobia in people's mind, sooner or later. People, being obsessed with these hard realities, tend to surrender before any recourse, when and where they can find a relief, a support, strength, a ray of light and a heave of sigh.

Due to the three situations and factors mentioned above, religions still hold a sway on large sections of people world over. Fear and awe for the supernatural power overpower the ordinary mortals. The fear of being distressed and hope of getting relief compel people to look up to God, religion or what you have. It is the ultimate succor, the supreme insurance, the hard destiny, which people have not been able to face; therefore they come to terms with it.

Religion as understood from Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra

- a) The world of religion needs fresh air, new light and a renewed originality.
- b) It needs a vigorous popular movement too.

In a nutshell, I would like to observe that Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra has done everything of these two, in a superb demonstration of breaking the tradition and setting a new era. Conceptually, he has challenged the very term religion, saying what prophets have actually propounded is not religion, but 'dharma'; religion is not the English equivalent of what 'dharma' conveys. Concept clarity travels with use of appropriate vocabulary.

'Dharma' is not to be equated with any dogma, creed, and ism or with any kind of restrictive and exclusive preserve of institutionalized social tradition. 'Dharma' is not barrier based on one's place of birth and inherited customs. 'Dharma' is certainly not an organized strength to be used for or against any other similar groups to settle certain existential issues.

'Dharma' is a way of scientific living. It is living and growing, in association with the surrounding fellow beings and in consonance with the environment. Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra defines it as 'being and becoming'. 'Dharma' in its conceptual domain has got certain essential ingredients like: law of nature, progressive and collective living, scientific temper, loving attitude, inquisitive serviceable approach to others, and life of balance between matter and spirit.

Sri Sri Thakur very nicely said that principles of 'dharma' have two parts: divine and discrete. The divine part is eternal; things which are linked to law of nature, principles of human biology and deep rooted psychology. Such principles which are foundations of our stay, cornerstone of cosmic law and very core to ecology, have got all time value, are divine. Those divine laws are to be maintained through basic codes of conducts, which every religion upholds. On those counts, no religion takes a contrary stand.

There are however discrete parts of 'dharma', which are associated to the core and are relevant to the context of time, locality, climate and habitation. These parts of dharma are related to ritual, habits and customs, which are adaptable. On these grounds, there can be differences amongst religions. These differences are immaterial to the core purpose and substance of 'dharma'. Therefore, there can be differences in the practice and observations amongst religions, which are mostly of these kinds of discrete affairs. These differences can however be no basis for any conflict amongst religions.

Sri Sri Thakur's ideology provides us the following:

- a) Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra provides clarity about the concept of 'dharma', thereby making it crystal clear to a person about his or her way of living, in line with 'dharma'. Sri Sri Thakur tells one, what is that one should do which will be in conformity with 'dharma' and what is that one is required to eschew which is not sanctioned by 'dharma'. Sri Sri Thakur made 'dharma' an integral part of one's daily living, thinking and action. There is nothing that one has to do separately for the sake of acquiring virtue as required by 'dharma'. 'Dharma' does not exist

outside one's life. No worship, no penance, no ritual, no pilgrimage, no recitation of scripture, no donation – nothing of this sort to be done exclusively for the sake of satisfying 'dharma', and which is not linked to one's life. Everything has a place in the scheme of life and everything has to support existence and growth. One can draw line between what is core and what is periphery; what must be done under any circumstances and what should be done under a given circumstance. Under Sri Sri Thakur's guidance, everything what one does has a rational, scientific and psychological understanding; no blind faith, no superstition, no tradition without personal satisfaction.

- b) Having defined what 'dharma' is, Sri Sri Thakur sets his own life as an example of that. Sri Sri Thakur's life was a demonstration of 'dharma'. He was embodiment of 'dharma'. His life delineated an outline of 'dharma' for others to see and follow. 'Dharma' got a life and shape in Sri Sri Thakur. With Sri Sri Thakur before us, one does not have to look for any deep reference or inscrutable scriptures for knowing the shape, feature, the outline, the look and knowhow of the most mysterious concept called 'dharma'. Sri Sri Thakur's life is that open book which runs the text of 'dharma'.
- c) We got a glimpse of lives of all the past prophets in Sri Sri Thakur. This is something great, bordering on unbelievable today. Imagine Lord Krishna, the mythological god-head with thousand and crores of verse and text singing his divine attributes, is present before you in flesh and blood! Are we talking sense? Same awful exclamation can be made for other mighty names like Lord Rama, Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Hazrat Muhammad, Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna Pramahansa. It became easier for us to know, understand, appreciate past prophets' conducts, life style and approach when we saw Sri Sri Thakur live. It was just a replica of all the past prophets, looking from the point of view of ideology and approach to people. Sri Sri Thakur has done interpretation of holy texts of other religions; which bear a striking originality that resembles the first person experience. We have read Sri Sri Thakur's interpretation of Gita, Holy Bible and Quran Hadis, where we do not find much of philosophy but more of personal expression, feelings and sentiment. When we read this, we get a rational and practical view of the scriptural narration.

What best can be done now

Given the situation today, the following action seems plausible in the current socio-religious sphere:

- a) We need to bring spirituality into religion. That would essentially mean bringing more of spiritual practice into the life of people who are spiritually conscious; who are conscious for their self development and who have quest for something higher things in life.
- b) This also would imply that attempt to reform conventional religious groups and institutions and leaders towards the true practice of dharma will not meet with much of success. That domain of religion is occupied by multiple interests and religion is observed as a label, as a façade.

Established religious institutions and leaders would not like to adapt to changes due to fear of losing their identity.

- c) True meaning of dharma and spiritual practice will be seen and felt with the prophet contemporary only. His ideology is worth following, as it is all fulfilling, scientific, rational and up to date. The prophet contemporary fulfills all past prophet. While following the principles of the current prophet, one can still maintain one's affiliation with the religion in which one is born. Sri Sri Thakur does not admit of conversion. One would necessarily preserve and remain wedded to one's originality with respect to religion, culture, heredity and family lineage. One can lead a progressive life without forsaking one original identify. Maintaining identify is something like maintaining purity.

Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra had followers belonging to all so called religious groups; they have not forsaken their original affiliation. Rather they have come to know what those affiliations in effect means.

- d) Today Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra's ideological paradigm needs a proper understanding and following. The ideology is such that it does not limit one to any parochial consideration. It only helps to enlighten.

Part – II: Worship

Worship is an act of glorifying God through submission and dedicated actions. Worship has many forms, innumerable varieties and different scales in terms of arrangement and grandeur. The common thread running amongst all these varieties is that worship essentially remains a devotional and transactional affair with God, marked by high degree of purity, purposefulness, procedures and precision. Overall, due to its esoteric nature and divine connectivity, worship remains an otherworldly affair, performed in a worldly way.

Varieties of worship

In terms of varieties, all worships can be classified in the following 3 forms:

- *Home worship*: Everyday worship we do in our home
- *Temple worship*: Everyday worship that is done in designated places like temples, *ashrams*, churches, gurudwarads and mosques (some call it prayer, *bhajans* and services, etc)
- *Mandap worship*: Occasional worship on designated auspicious occasions like (Durga puja, Ganapati puja, Saraswati puja etc)

In all these forms, the arrangement and procedures vary a lot; but at its core, worship remains an individual affair with the divine. To clarify the point, even if there is a grand *puja* going on in the neighborhood, it becomes a *puja* for us, only when we visit the place and participate in it by whatever

way. Individual performance and participation is always encouraged in all kinds of *puja*, be it, homely *puja* or an event on a mass scale. In this individual performance, the transaction, (material, psychological and devotional) between the person and the deity is significant, without which the act of worship is not considered to have happened.

In terms of scale, worship has innumerable varieties, based on degree of arrangement, procedure and money spent. People undertake *puja* on a particular scale, based on their willingness and ability to take up the arrangement.

Worship is a primordial act

Worship, as an act of submission and admiration to supernatural power, is as old as human civilization. Human being started worshiping objects of nature, like Sun, moon etc. Each natural object and natural phenomenon was associated with a divine power, which was required to be propitiated for their benevolent occurrence. Each of those types subsequently became a divine head with attributes and those attributes were glorified in verse, which became mantras. In course of time, innumerable godheads have come to stay, largely due to man's enlightenment, imagination, creative talent and need for maintaining a favorable terms with those divine heads. All the procedures and paraphernalia have been created by seers, realized souls from their knowledge and experience of dealing with high powers; nature's power, power of divine and so on. Looking from this perspective, each of these procedures are highly meaningful, purposeful and creation of refined minds.

How is worship happening today?

Today, generally, all forms of worship are reduced to a transactional event. Everyone expects outcome and therefore conducts worship. There is nothing much wrong in what is happening, except that the spirit of worship is getting circumvented and people are getting deprived of higher order achievement. What is happening in the form of worship is perhaps in tune with the tenor of current time. There is, of course, devotion in whatever people are doing. But looking from spiritual perspective and divine orientation, something appears to be amiss.

In today's existential plane, worship has become an activity supporting our life and growth. Just like any other activity, worship has become a specialized, sophisticated, precise activity, matching with today's lifestyle. Since standard of living and affluence of high-end section of society has risen, the grandeur of worship also has gone up. With the current trend of society, form of worship also has undergone change. For example, new temples have come up with varieties of facilities to meet the various kinds of needs of people. Today, there are temples with guest house, restaurants, and conducted tour programs for exhibits attached to it. Places of worship have become technology intensive. In the days of terrorism and communal tension, some sensitive places of worship have come to require high security protection.

Today we follow conventional method of worship, put in contemporary time frame. We have priests, who are supposed to know the art and science of worship. Even if one priest does not know, still he performs up to his skill. We repose faith in him and in his role of invoking the divine power by following the rules and procedures in a sanctimonious ways. We believe and follow all the conventional customs

and restrictions prescribed at some classic places of worship. We do not violate them, out of fear of guilt of sacrilege.

Worship as per Sri Sri Thakur

Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra says, 'worship is worthship'. 'To worship the feet would essentially mean following the footprints.' Basically, Sri Sri Thakur wanted to make worship meaningful and an integral part of life.

Worshipping is actually an act of appreciation and admiration. What follows naturally from over there is a sense of owning up the object of worship and imbibing the qualities of the deity whom we worship. For that to happen, everything that we do in worship has to be understood by us. Questions like, who the deity is; what are his or her attributes; how can those attributes be internalized by us; what are the procedures of worshipping. Basically, we need to understand many things that we perform symbolically and ritually.

Let us get this in Sri Sri Thakur's own words: (Message, Vol II, 1964)

"To worship a deity
or a great and good one
is to imbibe him
in your being
through service,
exercise for him
and exalted adjustment in you
of all the attributes
that dwell in him
and to be active accordingly –
this you may call
the advent of that deity
or good and great one."

Not that Sri Sri Thakur was not in favour of observing worship with all its attendant paraphernalia. He was never in favor of jettisoning the traditional way outright. Only thing he wanted to do was to see meaning in symbols of worship. Therefore, he was not in favour of doing anything superficial and superfluous.

The choice for us is between substance and style, content and carrier, core and cosmetic. If one can have the luxury of having the both; it is perhaps excellent. Otherwise, if one has to chose, Sri Sri Thakur would go for the substance (in preference over style); content (in preference over carrier) and core (in preference over cosmetic). Therefore, in a situation like today, when we do not understand much about the rituals and deities, hymns and homilies, scriptures and similes, it is better that we observe worship (codes of *dharma*, devotion and sacrifice) through our actions; rather than doing rituals out of awe, reverence and ignorance; as everything might add up to blind faith and superstition.

If I just obey my Guide and follow his ideological dicta, in letter and spirit, do I need to perform worships in the *vedic* or scriptural or liturgical way? Yes, you will do all these in meaningful and successful way. But if you do not indulge into worship and yet follow your guide and abide by His ideological dicta, you do not lose much.

In Sri Sri Thakur's ideological language, real worship is done when 'yajan', 'yaajan' and 'istabharity' are observed. All these are practical works, which one has to perform. All these need assiduous efforts in terms of execution; therefore, here worship is done by work.

In Sri Sri Thakur's scheme of things, when we work for our Lord, for meeting His ideological interest and for building His image (what is called '*ista karma*'), we render real worship for Him. When we extend this concept, whatever we do, get dedicated for His purpose, then for us, work becomes worship.

Real worship brings about flourishing life and growth. It becomes a saga of 'purity, patience and perseverance'. Sri Sri Thakur said, 'God seldom bothers about what man thinks; but He looks up to what one does'. Thought, especially pure thought, is important but not enough. 'Where action follows desire, fulfillment peeps there', said Sri Sri Thakur. In that sense, every act of worship is blessed to perfection.

In the words of Sri Sri Thakur that follows, we can see the result of worship, which can happen to a worshipper: (Message, Vol II, 1964)

“To imbibe the attributes
that make one fit
 to embrace the affairs of
 existential propitious
 with aptness, tricks and tactics
 combating evil
through devout worship, admiration
 and every earnest service
that duly fulfill the commandments
 of the Beloved Master
 is a blessed devout boon
 for one's blessed proficiency,
for it creates and constructs
 the elixir of love, inquisitiveness and earnestness
 and bedews one's personal conduct and characteristics
upholding and keeping up
 existential propitiousness
 with a constructive
 resonant connotation.”

Action Plan

- If you and your family have a love for any kind of worship, please try your best to make it a meaningful exercise. Appreciating the spirit of worship is not that hard, as it appears to be. Little bit of knowledge in Sanskrit and familiarity with Indian scriptures, will give you a fairly good impression to get a grasp of what is happening in any worship.

Making worship meaningful requires a scientific enquiry, concentration and some disciplined behavior. These changes in approach make you eligible to reap the benefit of worship.

- Please bear in mind that no worship by itself can do a miraculous accomplishment. Therefore, the so called worship mania does no good. Desire for any particular worship for any particular deity or at some place of worship can certainly provide a psychological satisfaction, which has meaning by itself.
- If you are highly devoted to Sri Sri Thakur and do not have appetite for any particular worship, it is perfectly alright to be away from any worship. No need to bear a guilty conscience. Sri Sri Thakur as Guru is summation of all gods and goddesses.
- In our country, there is a custom of pilgrimage to places of worship. This has many justifications and implications. It is better to maintain the tradition, without being obsessed about it.

While visiting any place of worship, try to understand the spirit behind the culture prevailing over there. It is no use making religious bias while visiting places of worship. Normally, the places of tourist attraction by any standard are worth visiting.

- Sri Sri Thakur's principles of 'yajnan', 'yaajan' and 'istabhrity' are supreme form of worship. All the forms of worship, namely, *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga* and *gyana yoga* are assimilated in the principles of Sri Sri Thakur, if observed in letter and spirit, with devotion and dedication. All forms of worship get supreme glorification at the observance of 'yajnan', 'yaajan' and 'istabhrity'.

Part – III: Science & Spirituality

Title of this article might as well have been 'synthesis between tradition and modernity'. Significance of Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra's ideology is that he never discarded tradition without understanding it, only because tradition appears to be obsolete and discredited as outdated. If anything is really dysfunctional and needs to be replaced, then Sri Sri Thakur did that without qualm.

Sri Sri Thakur departed from the cult of hermit

One remarkable tradition Sri Sri Thakur departed from is the cult of hermitage for spiritual seekers. Prevailing model in later part of nineteenth century and beginning of twentieth century (little more than a century ago from now) for any religious leader was, carrying on spiritual pursuit by following celibacy, an austere life style, away from human habitation, putting physical system to stringent abnegation; overall a life of renunciation. Sri Sri Thakur made a radical departure from then existing model. He remained in family and society, was deeply committed to all worldly affairs; yet was an example of divinity, spearheaded an ascetic movement and brought in a cult of domestic-hermit. With all the practice of heightened spiritual culture, life of purity, detachment and dedication, a person, as per Sri Sri Thakur, has to follow a life ordained by nature. Life gets perpetuated through procreation. Sri Sri Thakur set up a model of a divine domestic life; a life of balance between spiritual and material affairs, a complete life experience, a forward link in evolutionary process.

The model of domiciled divinity, social *sanyasin*, a hermit in the home, celebration of life, enjoyment in creation and a symbiotic accord with surrounding, everything that Sri Sri Thakur demonstrated was superb. It was both revolutionary and evolutionary. It was glorification of human spirit and celebration of divine expression in human being, with an indomitable urge for expansion and sublimation.

A maverick Thakur had no fiery slogan, no disruptive agitation, no whirlwind tour, no magic show and no esoteric appearance. No sign of abnormality in dress, talk, living style, exclusivity from others; but everything was a spectacle of charm, a resplendent aura surrounded him; love was overflowing from his persona. He said, 'I am a selfish person, as I cannot forsake anyone's real interest'. 'I am much attached person, as I do not see anyone detached from me.' 'I can sacrifice an empire if required, to save a person'. 'I am a beggar of people.' 'I do not do any charity, as I see no one who is not a part of me. I do everything for myself, as all are my parts and I am in all.' 'Everything that I see is expression of myself; I have multiplied myself in so many.'

Everything put together presents Sri Sri Thakur in a show of contrast, a baffling personality and an endearing puzzle. That is how perhaps, he brought about seamless reconciliation between ancient and modern, resolved conflict between past and present and presented an ideology that is a step towards future and a lead for evolution.

Sri Sri Thakur's approach to Science

One more area where Sri Sri Thakur differed from the conventional religious world was his approach to science. Everything that he did, said and prompted others to do was science at its best. He said, spirituality provides answer to why's and how's of things that happen and leads towards causality of things happening around.

Not that conventional religion had much of unscientific stuff in it. The difference lies in how do we view things and how do we explain things. In the conventional world of religion, there were seers, realized souls, who could experience things through extra-sensory perceptions and did set some philosophy for others. They expected rest of the world to believe things and lead life. The seers tested the assumptions,

arrived at some conclusions, and announced these as maxims. For majority of people, those theories were rolled out as axioms; they were supposed to believe those. In the name of beliefs, however, some blind-faith like stuffs and banalities also got inducted into system, as the culture rolled out from generation to generation, passing through centuries of human civilization.

With passage of time, human ingenuity brought out many inventions, which proliferated. Science got popular on the basis of tested knowledge through equipments, documentations and education. People in general got used to scientific inventions, which they could see, touch, feel, experience, test and got practical observations. Sometime down the history, science and religion took a conflicting position, not because of any genuine reason, largely out of one-sided and narrow view of things. Degeneration of standards at a popular level led to bipolarity between religion and science. That was a time, when knowledge was compartmentalized; industrialization gave wing of commerce to science and technology and religion got degenerated to dogma and superstition.

Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra did few wonderful things:

Sri Sri Thakur brought a new perspective to religion. As per Him, practice of religion brings about enlightenment. World of religion was cleansed by Sri Sri Thakur of dogma, creed, ism and superstitious elements. He said, religion is a way of life based on law of nature. Religion promotes life and growth and the rules of religion, at any time, are set by the contemporary prophet. Contemporary prophet today is Sri Sri Thakur himself and he defined religion as an 'Ideal' centric life, a life of love, service and fellow feelings. Love and attachment on the 'Ideal', makes one disciplined, progressive, free from complexes, enlightened and all that. In that scheme of things, all prophets are equally honored and principles of 'being and becoming' are followed. Therefore, Sri Sri Thakur made religion a liberal way of life, centering around the latest prophet.

Faith

Faith, a term much used and abused in the world of religion, is to be differentiated from blind faith. The difference between the two is a thin line, highly subjective and contextual. Sri Sri Thakur attached much significance to faith in the sphere of spiritual life. Faith, in the sense of Sri Sri Thakur, primarily means faith on the Lord, the Guide, and the Prophet (all are synonymously here). Faith means: absolute faith on Him; His power; His grace; His ideology. Faith leads to unconditional surrender at the Guide, the Prophet. Unconditional surrender means undoubted acceptance of His ideology, leading to following the principle of ideology. The real operating part of faith is observance of His principles. It is here, activities and practical life comes to play.

In the absence of active practice of the ideological dicta, faith remains in the realm of psychology and thought process. Faith on the Lord induces action; faith cannot make one indolent, lethargic and passive. Having faith on the Guide does not mean to be fatalistic. Deep faith on the Guide induces faith on one's own capacity. A life of faith gets transformed to a life of reassured confidence on oneself, as life unfolds into a virtuous cycle of faith, struggle and achievement, reassured faith and the cycle continues.

Faith on Sri Sri Thakur means taking a plunge into the deep sea of perseverance and explores the pearls of achievement. It means jumping high up in the sky to catch moon of realization, perception, materialization of potential. Faith in Sri Sri Thakur means dedicated action to turn impossible to possible.

It was Hanuman's faith on Sri Ramachandra which made him possible to lay a floating bridge of stone on the sea to connect mainland to Lanka. It was Columbus's faith that he would see the end of the sea that made him to discover America, the prized land of fortune. It was unflinching faith on Ramakrishna Paramahansa, which turned Narendra to Vivekananda. Therefore, faith is the fulcrum that transforms life, makes impossible to possible, alters destiny, enables to overcome hurdles, forces one to climb the mountain and scale the peak.

Faith is strengthened through reasoning and conviction. Achievement deepens the faith. Faith is built on the foundation of love. Love invariably springs from the Lord and gets reciprocated by the obliged devotee. The devotee gets inundated by the love that he receives from the Lord and explores a treasure in the Lord. The gracious Lord is out to take the child, mend his way, cleanse him of his impurities and obsession, and lead him towards unfurling of possibilities.

Sri Sri Thakur's application of Science

Sri Sri Thakur applied high technology in day to day application in an unassuming way. He would guide illiterates to handle complicated machine by sheer application of own inner faculties. He would guide a compounder (para medical staff) and make him cure many serious ailments by bringing out his intuitive knowledge. He would make simple ways of cracking hard scientific and technical problems and enable so called ordinary people to find appropriate solutions. In the process, Sri Sri Thakur provided lead to scientific and technical experiments and clues to superior inventions.

Sri Sri Thakur's drive was to popularize scientific inventions to people's application. He said, the high spiritual realizations of seers are actually sparks of scientific theories and can be popularized through appropriate technology for mass application.

Science and technology must provide ways to alleviate people's suffering and take the humanity towards better and higher life. On this point, Sri Sri Thakur was one with rest of the scientific community, who are engaged in research and development.

Spirituality and science are complementary to each other, may be overlapping subset of human enquiry towards endless possibility. In both the fields of enquiry, the depth of perception, degree of perseverance and dimension of purposefulness — all matter for the outcome. People get confused in these variations (in depth, degree and dimension).

Sri Sri Thakur made an epoch making assertion that in a situation of conflict between science and religion, the rule of science would prevail. Science has a method of experimentation, verification and arriving at conclusion for mass acceptance, whatever may be the level, order and degree of the issue in question. On the contrary, religion can get degenerated at mass level, acting like opium. Religious movements have a tendency to be swayed away by various kinds of bias, when not subjected to any kind of validation.

Sri Sri Thakur perceived scientific invention

Sri Sri Thakur demonstrated science in everything what he did and said. It was a bit surprise that Sri Sri Thakur's ashram at Himaitpur in Pabna District (currently in Bangladesh), which was a village then and even now, there was a 'vishwa vigyan kendra' (world science centre), wind powered dynamo to power the surrounding villages, steam laundry, and so on. One of the disciples of Sri Sri Thakur was a scientist turned devotee, who was working with CV Raman, the Nobel Laureate, as a research student, after passing out as gold medalist in Physics from Kolkata University sometime in pre-1920. He was Krishna Prasanna Bhattacharya, who writes (quoted below) after a thoroughly enchanted dialogue with Sri Sri Thakur for the whole night under the canopy of star studded sky on the bank of river Padma: (Message – Vol I, 1935)

"I talked of science, of atoms, of electrons, of radium, of x-rays, of quanta, of the living and non-living, of heaven and earth and of what not – on the breezy summer night under the star glittered canopy of the sky. The Padma was lashing her waves on her bank, I poured out my brains – I could not but do so. I found in him a loving responding receptacle of all the questionings and absurdities in me. Like one meeting his asked-for after a long long separation. I had all my valves open, my brakes were off. I laughed with him, kept silent for long with his head on my lap both gazing at the same stars in the same sky, rang with talks on all topics and there was an overwhelming response from him – sympathetic retorts, unique suggestions, queer queries. I wondered how one, who as I knew, was not initiated into academic culture, could understand so profoundly and respond with such intelligent keenness. His utterances were so homely, so intelligent, so delicate, so nice, so loving, so enlightening, so very cordant with the latest discoveries of science and suggestive of newer avenues of thought and work – yet so nakedly simple. I doubted and asked, "How can you talk of these things, of electrons, of quanta? Surely you have read of these things?" He answered, "No! From my childhood I sometimes see the universe all melting into a glow of ineffable light particles and the light condenses and condenses into the material objects surrounding me." His utterances burst out like eruptions volcanic but sweet. They were rough-hewn expressions of sensations – so immediate, so real, so absorbing. I vaguely apprehended he can see the sciences, he can perceive the ultra-atoms!

The next day I left him with reluctance. My pretensions of knowledge got a rude shock from him who has no university education and cannot even speak in English. I again met him soon at Calcutta and kept his company for months. His vivid description of the ultimates of physical nature did not only tally with present day science but suggested new lines of research which were so brilliantly original and prolific to me and to most of my scientist friends that I soon gave up the work I began with Prof. CV Raman at the Palit laboratories, Calcutta University and joined him in his cottage home. The words of Max Planck rang

in my ears – “Scientists will arise who will have much keener perception than the scientists of today. What we need to develop are the perceptive faculties themselves. The development of the powers of perception is one of the main tasks we have to meet. That seems to be Einstein’s idea.” And that idea I saw realized in him, in his queer visions.”

Sumamry

Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra’s worldview has got science and spirituality embedded in it, in a symbiotic relation with life and society. If someone is following Sri Sri Thakur, the so called dichotomy between science and spirituality is a non-issue. Both the areas of human endeavour attempts to make life progressive, sharpening the perceptive faculties that man is endowed with. It is a continuing pursuit of self discovery and self actualization.

Action Plan

- The world of religion, in thought, practice and institutional arrangement, has to have more of scientific quotient, as demonstrated by Sri Sri Thakur. For the conventional religious camp, it means a paradigm shift, which is possible, if we appreciate Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra’s ideology.
- For the world of science, there is a need to be more appreciative of the spiritual part of life. Spiritual world is experiential, it is exploratory and the quest is more in the realm of inner world than that meets the eye.

Part – IV: Man Making

Everyone has aspiration for some achievement; whatever may be the object, or the kind of achievement. Everyone wants to get something or reach somewhere. The need for aspiration and achievement orientation do vary from person to person and also from time to time for the same person.

It is also commonly known that one has to do certain things to get certain objects. Action breeds results, which, as a universal principle, is generally known to people. It, however, is not clearly known to everyone; what action leads to what results and also the time factor. The action-result equation is a complex multivariable equation, which is hard to solve by all, at all times. Even if one knows what to do, there may be constraints due to which one is not able to accomplish the action. There are factors outside one’s control which may prohibit the desired result out of a set action. Therefore, everyone is found caught in the race for achievement oriented action and resultant frustration. Generally, what is observed is that the desired outcome, as expected, remains far away from the hand and disillusionment sets in.

What comes on the way of our desired result is a series of unexpected hurdles, constraints, difficulties, which stares us as hard realities. We do not know how to deal with these thorns; many of these remain beyond our reach, knowledge, idea etc. It is like hitting a mountain on the way; like crossing a forest in the night; walking through a desert under scorching sun. We come to face situation, when we simply do not know what lies ahead and what life is all about.

Causes of Gap between Expectation and Result

Sri Sri Thakur brings two factors, related to this topic. Those two factors provide some causal analysis to the above phenomena.

1. First one is ignorance. Ignorance is the cause of much of our trouble and sufferings. At any point in time, if we are sure what to do and what to expect, then the consequence of our action would match with expectation. If we know how to deal with an unexpected situation, then the consequence would not go against us. Much of our inabilities are outcome of our ignorance. Limited perception, limited viewpoint, limited idea, limited clue and limited skill are all which limit our capacity to deal with life. These limitations directly or indirectly contribute to limit our possibilities.

As per Sri Sri Thakur, ignorance is sin. Ignorance would not let us away from the consequences of any act of omission and commission. Sri Sri Thakur says, if you put your finger into fire out of ignorance, fire is not going to spare you. Point that Sri Sri Thakur would like to bring home is that we must be aware of laws of nature and be guided by those. Sri Sri Thakur wants to make us enlightened, experienced, mature, skilled and wise.

What we call mistakes is also another form of ignorance. We commit mistakes, because we are not fully conversant with that particular activity. We have not learnt that process to perfection.

Elements required for one to steer clear of trap of ignorance are: sensitivity, alertness, consciousness, vigilance etc. These elements need to be cultivated. Sri Sri Thakur has provided a different way of creating sensitivity, creativity, probity and all those. He says, love for the Lord makes you alert. Love for the Lord puts forth your existence before your complexes. You tend to protect, promote, and perpetuate your existence. You tread the path of existential bliss. "Love is supreme wisdom", says Sri Sri Thakur. You do labour for the love-Lord and you gather experience.

2. Second thing Sri Sri Thakur says in this context is the process of transformation. Significantly, love on Sri Sri Thakur and adherence to His principles, puts one on inquisitive and acquisitive mode. This mechanism, implicitly and explicitly, creates conditions by which a person acquires abilities, qualifications, features, attributes and capability to perform superior tasks. A person gains self development. He scales himself up on the ladder of ability to perform higher and better tasks. His mental, physical and emotional capacity gets stronger and mightier. That is how, a person transforms himself.

Summarily, Sri Sri Thakur says, “do, be and get”. Further, Sri Sri Thakur has presented a defining arcade of accomplishment in the following para: (*Kruti Bidhayana 264*)

- Accomplishment upholds existence,
- Accomplishment is honesty,
- Accomplishment springs from worthiness,
- Accomplishment is the announcement of mastery and mastery is the spark of godhood.

Deeper Root of Difference in Individual Distinctiveness

Sri Sri Thakur has taken us much deeper and brings out that ability to acquire knowledge and to perform things has much deeper field of formation. The difference in performance is as different as a tree bears mango and another tree, by the side, bears apple. The two trees are of different variety; though they are growing on the same field. The variety lies in their DNA; apparently both are trees with roots, branches and leaves and appear to be of same structure and nursing.

Sri Sri Thakur’s man-making program is based on the following premises:

- Quality of a person is fundamentally what he is born with. The basic stuff of a person is kind of inborn. A person is born with his type.
- A person can of course undergo transformation during the lifetime. Qualities, abilities, upgradation done during one’s lifetime are called acquisitions. Qualities acquired during this life are different from the instinct that one is born with. Instinct of a person constitutes the core of a person’s nature, while acquisitions remain in the realm of habits and behavior. Progressive acquisitions passing through generations, when takes shape of gene and becomes irreversible, get added to the instinct. Therefore, while a person is always on a dynamic motion of acquiring quality, at any given point of time, he is fixed with a set of biological asset.
- What follows from above, looking from the point of view of society, man-making process is actually inviting (creating condition for the birth of) soul of higher and better instincts. Analogy can be drawn with agriculture. If you want good crop, you need to have high yielding variety seed and fertile soil appropriate for that crop. Similarly, for better human being, you have to have compatibility between father (seed source) and mother (field condition) in the plane of bio-psychology. This follows the principles of biology, eugenics and psychology; issues which are not very much popularized by science so far, though it is known amongst the scientist circle. Sri Sri Thakur, as an operating guideline, said that quality of child is determined by the deep psychological desire of parents and the biological compatibility between the parents.
- Every person, by quality, aptitude and aspiration, is a chip of a larger block. Every person has a genealogical root and the root manifests in the person’s type of attributes. Therefore, a group of persons having homogenous attributes and same genealogical root forms a class, since time immemorial. Heredity of a person helps to establish that genealogical link and helps to predict certain generic attributes. It is therefore necessary to know a person’s original stock and the class he belongs to. Based on this classification and affiliation to a particular stock (race), it is

possible to match the male and female from the point of view of compatibility for marriage. Ultimate aim is to create condition for better progeny and refinement of each class through proper culture and maintenance of purity. This is essentially a process of evolution.

Culture of Becoming

Sri Sri Thakur therefore wanted a human-culture, in the same way we do agriculture, sericulture, horticulture and so on. That culture has to be part of a social system. Marriage, child bearing, education, both formal and informal, are part of social institutions and culture. Every society has norms to maintain the system and also check deviant behavior and control idiosyncrasies.

The issue here is that social systems are constantly changing and, more so currently, it is in a state of flux, primarily due to cosmopolitan living, migration and globalization. The class barriers are crumbling; social norms are breaking; individual tastes are getting formed based on life style. All these are adding up to a situation, where traditional systems are under threat.

It is here that Sri Sri Thakur's contribution plays unique role. What Sri Sri Thakur tells us to do, is not something carrying forward from the past. He has updated everything of past to be presently relevant and applicable. Therefore, we are spared from the headache of searching pearls of wisdom from the heap of the past, accumulated through centuries, vitiated by various kinds of interests. Sri Sri Thakur has provided us an ideological path which only needs to be followed in letter and spirit.

Summary observation

Man-making process involves preparation prior to birth of a child. That preparation begins with marriage of parents and their psychological and biological preparedness to invite a child of superior variety. The child's bio-psychological makeup is shaped by the deep seated desire of parents and their conducts in terms of purity, mutual love and concentric affiliation to the Ideal (Lord). When a child is born, his type (in terms of inherent potential) comes with it. After birth, there is scope for exploration of those potential and translating possibilities into reality. The factors which come to play then are: family culture, ideal centric environment, education, world view, aspiration for distinct life style, so on and so forth. Concentration on ideal and following His ideological framework, together, provide a progressive tenor to life. Life takes wing of high attainment, following the ideology of Ideal; as Ideal fulfills the person as per his / her distinctiveness. Then it becomes a journey on path of 'being and becoming', a life of growth and prosperity in association with family, surroundings and society.

The philosophy of Sri Sri Thakur, when put in practice, ignites the practitioner's consciousness, sensitivity, intelligence and concentration. A person also gains enhanced efficiency in accomplishing things he does, as he develops an urge and taste for superior performance and higher accomplishment.

Sri Sri Thakur as Guru plays the role of friend, philosopher and guide. He leads the path; he facilitates the process of becoming; he provides light and enlightenment; he protects from adversities; he plays an

umbrella role. The only condition required is surrender to the Ideal with devotion and roll on the path prescribed by him.

Action plan

- Understand and practice the import of marriage, as a process of procreation.
- Matching between male and female for the purpose of marriage has to be based on the principles of compatibility of bio-psychological attributes. In conventional Indian society, the groupings of *varna* used to provide the class to identify the bio-psychological blocks and pedigree of each person.
- Follow the ideological prescriptions for development of full potential of a person in terms of achievement and self actualization.
- It is significant to bear in mind that man is born first and then can be made to grow on a particular frame, based on inclination of the person, his parents, family and society

Part – V: Living Ideal

Life is a continuing play and the world is a stage. The script of the play is continuously being rewritten by the actors themselves. No one has option to change the rule of the game, to hold the time in abeyance and to play whimsical.

Hard realities of life catch up with everyone on this earth, though imperceptibly. A universal reality is that life is dear to everybody; life likes to live, longs for longevity and reacts to threats of extinction. Life, as a being, has an eternal urge for becoming. Everyone has instinctive existential urge for preservation, protection and promotion of life. Rules of 'dharma' facilitate that process. Ideal, the embodiment of 'dharma' upholds the existential urge of everyone.

The Concept of Ideology and Living Ideal

The concept of living Ideal is integral to Sri Sri Thakur's ideological framework. It refers to a person who lives exactly the ideology he advocates. He is a living example of the ideology that he professes. He demonstrates the ideology. He is the embodiment of the ideology. The ideology takes shape in him. He defines the contours and colours of the ideology. Ideology is referred to him for validation. He teaches the ideology by holding himself up as an example. His life is the ideology that he makes available for the rest of the world to test and taste.

In the above scenario, ideology is not merely an idea; it is a tested, verified and demonstrated idea, raised to the level of dicta. Ideology does not remain confined in the realm of maxims, scriptures and sermons; ideology is delivered through live demonstration. Such ideology, emblem of lofty and purity, does never remains in utopia; such ideology stalks the world.

Such an Ideal, the manifested idea in flesh and blood, shines like an elementary object of nature. It shines like a flame; it rises like the sun; it pours and soothes like rain drops; it touches cool and gentle like breeze; it lashes the shore like the bottomless sea; it looms large like magnificent snow clad peak of a mountain. Beauty is that such an ideal does not make an announcement for himself; does not hoist and foist himself high up in the air; does not hold a rally to mobilize a following.

The ideology under reference here is an all fulfilling ideology. The ideology is a complete framework in which a person's all aspects of life is taken care, and led towards all-round progress. Life of a person is a very complicated affair, as it has myriad of interfaces. Life faces innumerable situations. Sri Sri Thakur's ideological framework covers life in totality, provides solutions to all kinds of issues and fulfils a person with long run perspective. At the same time, the ideology covers social life, family life, economics and political aspects of a person's life and also of society. The ideology has universal application; it is all embracing and all-inclusive. It is a holistic ideology in the sense that it takes care of physical, psychological and spiritual parts of a man and brings about a balanced growth.

This ideology touches the core of a person's life, habits, thinking and doing. This kind of ideology is not an ornamental type; though it has aesthetic and beauty in it. This kind of ideology calls for total commitment, involvement and engagement, leading to a progressive transformation of life, individually and collectively.

If there is a person who happens to be the springboard of that ideology; he is the progenitor of the ideology, then he is the living ideal. In that scenario, when both the ideal and ideology are embedded together, then that presents an enabling scenario.

Sri Sri Thakur – the Living Ideal

Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra is the living Ideal. Firstly, he is the Ideal who gave an ideological framework, unique of its kind, all fulfilling and universally applicable. For a person who is wedded to his ideology, there is a direction for life.

Secondly, Sri Sri Thakur lived on his ideology; demonstrated the ideology, showcased it in his own life. His followers did not have to look here and there to find an emblem, an example, and a visible replica of the ideal that he put forth before the humanity. His followers only looked at him, followed his footsteps. Consequentially what happened to them was a transformation that the ideology induced in them.

The two things: a) following Sri Sri Thakur and b) putting the ideology in practice, are the same. The whole affair happens with mutual love and affection between the Ideal and the follower, an energizing episode, and the process is a self reinforcing one. The whole process happens so naturally that once someone gets into the process, changes appear to happen almost automatically and imperceptibly. One of course has to make a determined and focused effort.

Sri Sri Thakur – the Living Ideal for Ever

Today, the mortal frame of Sri Sri Thakur is no more available. Sri Sri Thakur, the walking and talking God, has withdrawn himself from this earth. The living emblem of ideology has merged into the realm of eternity. The living image is now cast into history, tradition, folklore, literature, cult, an organized religious force. Sri Sri Thakur is no more visible and therefore the living example of his ideology has become a thing of the past.

So today, Sri Sri Thakur is available everywhere, though not seen anywhere. The divine image of the Lord, however, is present as it was ever. After completing the demonstration for us for 81 years (1888 – 1969), Sri Sri Thakur has bequeathed the following:

- The ideological framework, well codified, documented in such a manner that the Ideal would come alive, if invoked
- A set of literature, immense in volume and diverse in nature and still growing, in such a manner that one can get him in the literature
- A precedent of principle in practice, getting transferred from generation to generation, in such a manner that the principle remains undistorted
- A set of devotees, still counting and to be succeeded in future in such a manner that people can see the reflection of their Ideal in and through the devotees. The succession of devotees includes his own family lineage.

With all the above provisions, Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra remains the living Ideal. He is 'living' in the sense that his life and ideology, together makes him eternal. He is living for devotees whoever feels the need for him. His physical frame is the chosen crystallization of attributes, which will remain as the object of meditation forever, till he descends again. Till a new prophet descends in the lineage of Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammad, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna, Sri Sri Thakur will remain the incarnate to be worshipped, to be reflected, to be adored, to be followed. He is one, unique, irreplaceable, non-dual and indivisible. Love and devotion has to be concentrated on Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra only; on none of his followers, his progeny included, however greatness they might come to achieve. No one can be greater than the Lord. Ideal and followers cannot be placed on the same pedestal, if degeneration is to be avoided.

Sri Sri Thakur's Face and Mouthpiece

Today, in the physical absence of Sri Sri Thakur, it is possible that some of his disciples by virtue of their intense spiritual attainment can guide and mentor the people, as Sri Sri Thakur's representative. His representatives cannot replace him; at best the representatives can help others to know Sri Sri Thakur, to help attain Sri Thakur. Representatives of Sri Sri Thakur can be his face, can be his mouthpiece, and can be his missionaries. They can be carriers of his grace. They can be *ritwik*, *yaajak*, and *udgata*, like apostle, clergy men, and priests in conventional religious world. They can be 'godly' persons by virtue of their attainment; but they cannot be 'godlike' persons. All these are roles to be performed, not positions to be inherited and certainly does not provide any privileges to be enjoyed. These devotees would deliver Sri Sri Thakur and serve the mankind. They have to win the status by earning confidence of the

people; there is no way that a divine status can be awarded by any temporal authority. These exalted devotees can be legendary ideal for people; but certainly cannot replace the living Ideal. Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra is the living Ideal for ever. He would remain forever at the peak; as he is omnipotent. He is the destination and therefore always remains to be reached. He can have numerous angels to perform his roles in parts.

Summary

Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra remains our living Ideal for all time to come, till he re-incarnates again and that possibility is ruled out at least for next few thousand years. Our life, fame and furtherance will flow uninterrupted only by following Sri Sri Thakur. There is no substitute to him.

Sri Sri Thakur, after 81 years of his play has withdrawn himself from the earth to his original state of divinity. His ideology, image and literature have been bequeathed for the humanity to know him, be connected with him, follow him and enjoy association with him.

There is no successor to Sri Sri Thakur's supreme position. He is one and unique. Love and concentration on him has to be total.

The devotees are part of God's inner group. Devotees will continue to deliver him and serve his mission for the benefit of the mankind. There will be great men and women amongst the devotees, who may become much sought after. They will be like guardian angels of Sri Sri Thakur serving his mission in his physical absence. They will maintain a tradition of devotion and dedication for the Lord and will never attempt to usurp his position.