LIFE SKETCH OF SRI SRI THAKUR ANUKULCHANDRA

The literature on Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra's life and philosophy is vast. There are at least thirty biographies in Bengali, and three in English. A few have been translated into other languages.

Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra Chakraborty was born to Shiva Charan Chakraborty and Man Mohini Devi on September 14, 1888 in Himayatpur Village in Pabna district, now in Bangladesh. His mother was a disciple of Sri Sri Huzur Maharaj of Radha-Soami Faith now known as Agra Satsang in Western and North India. From childhood Anukul Chandra was devoted to his parents, particularly to his mother. She was very strict with him. Sri Sri Thakur would fondly remember his childhood memories: once for some folly of his, his mother became angry with him and chased him around to beat him with a bamboo stick. As he easily outran his mother, she could not catch up with him. When he looked back he found his mother panting from exhaustion. He stood stuck still until his mother reached him and took the merciless beating without demur. After a while his younger brother who was watching the scene came to him and said, "why are you so foolish? Mother could never have caught you, had you not stopped so suddenly." "Yes brother" replied Anukul Chand "but when I saw her sweating and gasping for breath, her face completely red from the scorching sun, I could not run any more. Her falling down or getting hurt, would have been more painful to me than her lashings". He was so much woe-begone after her death in 1938, that he said, "I do not find any purpose in my life after my mother’s death. But before her departure she used to say: all my hopes have been fulfilled by you. Nothing more is left. She was telling this when her condition was deteriorating. I could not enjoy the words of appreciation". (A.Prasange vol 1-22.07.1940).

After village primary school, Anukul Chandra joined the high school at Pabna, and then moved to another school at Naihati. He did not take the entrance examination, as he gave away the money to a poor student enabling him to sit for the examination. He came back to his village to find his mother very unhappy, as she has always wanted him to be a doctor. Passing the high school examination was necessary for admission to the National Medical School of Calcutta. He persuaded the authorities of the Medical School to conduct a separate test for him. Surprisingly he succeeded and on appearing the test was admitted to the Medical School.
During his school days at Pabna he wanted to experience the life of the coolies of steamer station at Padma river, flowing by the side of his village. He found arrogant passengers at times ill-treating the poor boys working as coolies. In school he used to give away his clothes if he found someone not in a position to buy any. His family and his relations took this attitude of natural compassion as some sort of aberrations and were worried. But such was his natural love for others that he would not retaliate even when beach by someone without a cause. He often spoke about this sadistic tendency in human beings to torture the innocent; which brings down the human aspect in a man.

He married Sorashibala Devi on 13th August, 1906. She stood by him through all the his mission to create a better world by redirecting human energy to love and fellow-felling.

At the Medical School Anukul Chandra was doing well. But the economic condition of his family was not very good. He had no money to purchase books, and for staying in the Medical School hostel. His accommodation was arranged in a coal depot far away from the Medical School and he had to walk 18 Kilometers daily. Sri Sri Thakur would reminisce about those difficult days, “I was living with the coolies of the coal depot. I read and slept under a lamp post by the side of the road. I could have been run over any time. Then I began to sleep on the platform of Sealdah railway station. I will spread one old newspaper on the ground and cover myself with another. To quench hunger I would drink water form the roadside tap. Once I lived on water for three days after which I fainted. I spent many days in this manner. Then some one gave me a book on homeopathy. I read it and started treating the coolies. I lived with them and loved them too. They would raise a little money for me now and then. I managed to survive with that and helped them, out of that during their need. I made a name as a good student in the Medical School. When I appeared at the examination my performance was not bad but during viva-voce I told the examiner to club all the questions and put them to me together at one time. This was not liked by the examiner and I failed. I collected my belongings and returned home and started practice in homeopathy. I did very well in my homeopathy practice (Deeap-Rakhia TP-174).

Thus Anukul Chandra studied allopathy but mainly practiced in homeopathy and as a doctor he was a big success in his area. Patients with prolonged and intractable diseases were cured. When asked about his tremendous success, Anukul Chandra Said: “I hardly hear the sound of the patient’s heart beat through the stethoscope, but the sound of the “NAME” beating inside my own self. ‘Name’ makes the brain cells sensitive, love makes them receptive and out of compassionate urge to do good to others I could detect the cause of the illness. The Supreme Father helps me”. (R.M.Biswas, The Guide P8).
His mother Manmohini Devi took initiation of the ‘Divine Name’ from Huzar Maharaj of Agra Satsang. What remains a mystery is how Anukul Chandra Knew the ‘Divine Name’ and took to repeating it from his childhood, before his formal initiation. In later life he, recollected: “I used to repeat the ‘Name’ from my very childhood, before I had been formally initiated by my mother. I used to be absorbed in the Name; Name would continue day and night. A burning desire for the ‘Name’ would always remain within me. In repeating the ‘Name’ the whole body seemed to be electrified; gradually it so happened that even if I intended to stop repetition of the ‘Name’, the ‘Name’ itself would not leave me. It would go on spontaneously (like breath) in side me. A queer experience I would get a terrible feeling of suffocation or inexplicable feeling of joy would overwhelm me. It seemed as if I would die from the upsurge of joy. I tried to avoid that terrible shock and aesthetic emotion by confining myself to a room, but I could not. Then I would drive a bamboo stake in to the bottom of a nearby pond. Whenever such feelings overwhelmed me, I would sink in to the pond and try to remain under water by holding on to that bamboo firmly”. (The Guide P23).

Anukul Chandra in periods of such type of ecstatic joy would find the trees and other things as heaps of brilliant light. At times he would feel a stream of light entering his being, and he would swoon. He would find the whole creation looked like millions of bubbles in a vast ocean of light and as he would rush to embrace them he would fall down on the ground. People around him and his family considered it as some kind of hysteria. Manmohini Devi wrote about this abnormal behaviour of his son to Sarkar Saheb, who succeeded Huzur Maharaj, and on his advice was given initiation of the name by his mother.

Practicing homeopathy for some years, he had to gradually close down his practice, as most of the time, he remained absorbed in ‘sankirtan’ (group singing of devotion songs with musical instruments). He had two close boyhood friends who joined him to remain with him till their death. During ‘Sankirtan’, most of the times he felt the presence of God everywhere. Often he would fall down on the ground. His hands and feet would fold and withdraw in to his body and he would go through many difficult Yogic postures though never in his life he had practiced such exercises. His body will become limp as if he were dead and only the big toe of his right foot would vibrate showing the signs of life. Sometimes his body temperature would shoot to 110 degree Fahrenheit, and water poured on his body would evaporate in a trice. After sometime his body would become as cold as ice for hours together, his lungs would stop working and his heart stop beating.

During these states of apparent unconsciousness he made utterances which were not readily understood then and there. He made these utterances in different languages which he had never learnt and which were unintelligible to those around him. Between 1914 and 1919, the messages given by him in trance were recorded
on seventyone occasions. They were compiled in a book called *Punya Punthi* (The Holy Book). He would never want these utterances to be discussed in public, as normal human intellect might not be able to fathom their real depth and significance. So he said, “I do not pay much importance to those utterances, as I did not have any control over them. I better understand what I say to you as a normal person” (The Guide P.38).

During this period when he started the ‘Sankirtan’ movement, his close associates called him as (Sri Sri) Thakur. He was very upset when people started calling him by the above name and projected him as an incarnation. He said: “a Brahmin cook is called Thakur (in Bengali). I think I am just that; by calling Sri Ramakrishna as Thakur and Sri Chaitanya as incarnation you are taunting them (A.P. Vol-1, -25.3.1941).

After the trance period was over Sri Sri Thakur left his home and lived in a hut near Padma river. His close associates who became his disciples, lived with him. This place in course of time grew in to a big ashram. While living here he jotted down his thoughts for the guidance of a disciple, Atul Chandra. Atul Chandra was working in Pabna steamer station. When he was transferred to a far off steamer station, he wanted advice from Sri Sri Thakur for his guidance. For his sake, Sri Sri Thakur jotted down certain principles and thoughts in a note book, which was published as a booklet later with the name *Satyanusaran*. Although the literature of Sri Sri Thakur’s views, all noted down by his secretaries from 1939, run to more than twenty-five thousand pages in print, *Satyanusaran* written in Bengali is the only one written by Sri Sri Thakur himself. Now it is translated into English and many other Indian languages.

The ashram grew rapidly and hundreds of devotees turned up daily. There was not enough money and the ashramites including Sri Sri Thakur used to take one meal a day for quite sometime. A body known as life Research Society was formed to carry on experiments for curing diseases by the ‘Holy Name’. A patient would be touched by three to four persons sitting around him and repeating the ‘Name’. Many instances were recorded where patients going to die could recover from their illness by this method. On this, Sri Sri Thakur clarified, “Treating illness by uttering ‘Holy Name’ has been done on many occasions. It can not be effective if there is slightest doubt in you or in your immediate environment about its efficacy. A strong shower of vital force occurs if one repeats the ‘Holy Name’. Illness of any kind can be cured through an increased vital force (Discourses P-88-22.11.1941).

In 1919 when Sri Sri Thakur visited Calcutta, he could attract the attention of several renowned doctor, advocates and people from cross sections of the society. Janakinath Bose, and his wife (Parents of sublets Bose,) became disciples of Sri Sri Thakur. Krishna Prasana Bhattacharya, a Ph.D holder doing
research on Electric Properties of Flames came to meet Sri Sri Thakur at Himayatpur and was instantly impressed by his affection and hospitality. They took evening strolls on the banks of Padma. Krishna Prasana would talk about his research work, the latest discoveries of atoms, electrons etc. To his surprise Sri Sri Thakur would listen with rapt attention and engage him with scholarly discussions. Krishna Prasanna would ask, “How do you know about electron and quanta? “He knew about Sri Sri Thakur’s education and qualification. “Have you read about all this somewhere?” ‘No’, Sri Sri Thakur would reply; “from my childhood I sometimes see the universe all melting into a glow of ineffable light particles and the light condenses and condenses in to the material objects surrounding me.” Slowly Krishna Prasan could know that Sri Sri Thakur’s vivid description of the ultimate nature of the physical world did not only tally with the latest scientific knowledge, but suggested new lines of research which was original. Krishna Prasan left his research work and settled down with his family in the ashram of Sri Sri Thakur, for life. He started the World Science Centre and various scientific experiments were carried on there, under the guidance of Sri Sri Thakur. In course of time high schools for boys and girls, hospital, and other job providing cottage industry units were started and were doing well. It became a centre for human solace, and attracted the attention of many eminent personalities of India of that period.

Meanwhile India was in ferment, the National Movement for Independence was gathering momentum under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Chittaranjan Das, a renown barrister of Calcutta had left his practice and joined the movement, though he and Motital Nehru (father of Jawharlal Nehru) had serious differences of opinion with Gandhiji. Both thought that non-violent non-cooperation would not be strong enough weapon to drive the British out of India. They both respected Gandhiji for his moral discipline but broke away and formed Swaraj Party.

Chittaranjan Das met Sri Sri Thakur in April, 1924. He already knew of the village reconstruction activities going on by Satsang of Sri Sri Thakur at Himayatpur. He was in confusion and wanted guidance from Sri Sri Thakur. Sri Sri Thakur explained: The British first came as missionaries, established schools, hospitals in remote villages. Hence nationalists like Das should first win the hearts of the Indian masses by understanding their pain and misery and by trying to eradicate them. Once people realize that their service was much superior to the service rendered by Christian missionaries, they all would be united under the Indian nationalists. Then there would be no need to shout for the independence of India. It would come about on its own. Chittaranjan Das told Sri Sri Thakur that he was not able to get men, not even a single trustworthy one, he could rely on. And Sri Sri Thakur pointed out : Now he, (C.R. Das) could see for himself. He is not able to get even one trust- worthy and dedicated person. He wanted independence but had not prepared the people for it. In every house
there was misery, there was lack of happiness in conjugal life, the infant mortality rate was high and increasing, improper marriages were taking place and no good children could be expected from such marriages. If good children are not born, there will be social downfall Das wrote to Gandhiji: “when I met Sri Sri Thakur for the first time in Calcutta, I was overwhelmed with his child-like simplicity, he was thirty six at that time.

I could realize that unless one attains perfection such natural simplicity will not come in his nature. He solved my innumerable problems by giving very simple solutions. Then I could realize that he is not only simple as a child, but extraordinarily knowledgeable. I had no hesitation in surrendering to him. I have learnt from him, value of truth in all dealings” He was initiated by Manmohini Devi. During his Bengal tour, Gandhiji and Achrya Kriplani visited the ashram at Himayatpur.

Subhas chandra Bose was sent by his parents to Sri Sri Thakur for guidance. There are so many things to do for the country, Bose said to Sri Sri Thakur, where do I start? Sri Sri Thakur told him that he should have a programme of reforming the Indian society. Sense of service should be instilled in as many people as possible. But a more permanent programme should be marriage reform. By marriage reform Sri Sri Thakur meant compatibility between man and woman. This could be done by proper selection of mates. The criteria of selection would be caste, heredity, family heritage the rate of family longevity etc. Without proper marriage it would be impossible to beget good, children. But Subhas chandra Bose was searching for a short cut method to fight the British. He again went to Sri Sri Thakur before his disappearance.

As the message of Sri Sri Thakur’s divine personality went on spreading people came to take initiation in large numbers. Persons with sincerity and devotion were selected from among the devotees, for training to give initiation on Sri Sri Thakur’s behalf. They are known as rituriks. Now such ritwuits are around three thousand, in different places in India and abroad doing Sri Sri Thakur’s initiation work. Satsang Society was formed in 1925; and it expanded with a lot of activities very rapidly. Sri Sri Thakur started a Satsang Bank to give loans to poor farmers for agriculture and cottage industries. Thus Sri Sri Thakur and his Satsang became a big hinderance to the exploitation of the common by people of landlords, zamindars and money-lenders. The ashrammates were harassed in public without any rhyme or reason. The political scene of the country was very disturbing. Misunderstanding between the two communities i.e Hindus and Muslims was growing very fast resulting in killing and harassment of the innocents of both the communities. The British with their policy of “devide and rule” did not maintain law and order.
Sri Sri Thakur was upset. The incidents of violence and harassment to the volunteers of Satsang, and the general atmosphere of communal disharmony and killings told upon his health. His Muslim disciples were worried about the safety of the ashram, which by that time had a population of eight thousand residents. The Satsang maintained its own post office, its own dispensaries, cottage industries, mechanical workshops etc. On Aug 30, 1946 Sri Sri Thakur announced his desire to go to Deoghar, a health resort (in the then Bihar and now in Jharkhand,) for a change of climate. Due to his failing health and high blood pressure doctors had advised him long since to go to a health resort for rest and recovery. He called an urgent meeting of all his disciples who were available in around Pabna. Prominent among them was a local Muslim leader, Hakim Saheb to whom he entrusted the responsibility of the ashrammates and assets of various institutions in the ashram. Sri Sri Thakur left Himayatpur with his family and a few disciples on September 1, 1946 for Deoghar. is a temple town with an ancient temple of Lord Shiva; it is otherwise known as Vaidyanathdham in Eastern India. The name Deoghar or Debghar means “the home of God” Sri Sri Thakur never kept money on him anytime. It was in this new climatic of self imposed deprivation that a new era of Satsang movement started. Soon after his arrival he made it clear to his disciples that he had no plans to return to Himayat pur. Hi did not agree to sell away the assets at Himayatpur, whose value was estimated at one and half core or rupees, at that point of time.

Religious tension and riots were on the increases and on each day a new band of refugees arrived at the ashram. Some of them were followers of Sri Sri Thakur but most of them had come with the hope that they would not be turned away. The devotees undertook various types of work to bring money for the running of the ashram. Rioting broke out at Noakhali, two hundred kilometers from Pabna where the minority became the target of mass killing. As a result more refugees poured in to the ashram. Sri Sri Thakur was anxious to rehabilitate whooved came to him, Two organizations ie Hind Rehabilitation Center and Bengal-Bihar Rehabilitation center were formed. Sri Sri Thakur wanted to collect three thousand people who would agree to give ten rupees a month to carry on his programs of resettlement of the homeless. But his plan could not be completely materialized. The news of partition of India (Aug 1947) shattered his heart. He wondered what good was the independence of the country, when the people living there in are not free from cruelty, mean-mindedness and sever esense of hatred on improper understanding of religious values.

On partition Himayatpur became a part of in Pakistan. The Pakistani soldiers entered the ashram to take over the buildings and other assets. At Deoghar Sri Sri Thakur did not evince the slightest sense of loss. From morning to
midnight he went on planning, instructing supervising and counselling his devotees to build up the Deoghar ashram as he said to them: we have lost nothing. All that was created at Himayatpur was by your efficiency and ability. You still have that. With your ability we would build again, and this time it would go faster, for you have the benefit of your past experience and ability (A. Houserman – Ocean in a Fea Cup p 296).

His eldest son Amarendranath Chakraborty (fondly addressed as Borda—meaning elder brother) took over the administration of the ashram. As years passed Satsang at Deoghar had two schools for boys and girls respectively, a collage printing press, hospital, aurvedic medicine manufacturing centre, and a number of buildings to house whole-time workers residing there with family. Sri Sri Thakur suffered a strokes in 1956, but within one year he recovered completely. In 1957 he nominated Sri Sri Borda as the Spiritual Head, and Guide of Satsang.

Sri Sri Thakur once said that after leaving the mortal frame, he would remain in astral embodiment and would become apparent in Acharyadeb—the nominated spiritual heads, for guiding his disciples. Sri Sri Thakur shunned publicity. He left his mortal frame in the early hours of January 27, 1969. Sri Sri Borda passed away at Satsangvihar puri on Aug 6. 1994. Now the spiritual head of Satsang is Ashok Chakraborty (fondly called as Sri Sri Dada). Now there are more than two thousand five hundred Satsang centers in India and abroad and the number of disciples following Sri Sri Thakur are more than six crores.