SRI NARLA VENKATESWARA RAO MEMORIAL LECTURE - 2022



మార్గదర్శి నార్ల వెంకటేశ్వరరావు

by

Tankasala Ashok
Aadvisor to Telangana Government
(inter-state relations)

On 04th December, 2022
At E-Class Room, STML Building, University Campus

Organised by

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University
Prof. G.Ram Reddy Marg, Road No. 46,
Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad (TS) 500 033

About Dr. BRAOU

The University, initially known as Andhra Pradesh Open University, was set up on 26th August 1982 through an Act of the A.P.State Legislature (APOU Act 1982). Subsequently the University was renamed as Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University on 26th October,1991. The establishment of this University, the first of its kind in India, heralded and era of affirmative action on the part of the Government of Andhra Pradesh to provide opportunities of higher education to all sections of society to meet the changing individual and social needs. The University is providing services to the student community through a wide network of 179 study centres spread across both Telangana & Andhra Pradesh States, including 23 Regional Co-ordination centres and 11centres exclusively meant for women students. Prison inmates under life sentence also enrol themselves as students and pursue education through exclusive study centres at Central Prison - Cherlapally, Warangal, Rajahmundry, Visakhapatnam, Kadapa and Nellore and exclusive Study Centre for Army Personal and their family members, which was located at AOC, Secunderabad. The University offers Certificates, UG, PG Diploma and PG Degree and Research Programmes in including various Professional Programmes.

Naarla Memorial Lecture



మార్గదర్శి నార్ల వెంకటేశ్వరరావు

శ్రీ టంకశాల అశోక్

తెలంగాణ ప్రభుత్వ సలహాదారు

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నార్ల వెంకటేశ్వరరావు వంటి మహానుభావుని స్మారకోపన్యాసం చేసే అవకాశం నాకు కల్పించినందుకు అంబేడ్కర్ ఓపెన్ యూనివర్సిటీ వారికి, నార్ల ట్రస్టు వారికి మొదట కృతజ్ఞతలు తెలియజేస్తున్నాను. ఇంతటి ముఖ్యమైన ప్రసంగం చేసేందుకు తగిన అర్హతలు నాకు నిజంగా ఉన్నాయో లేదోగాని, అటువంటి అవకాశమైతే లభించినందుకు ఎంతో సంతోషిస్తున్నాను. ఈ సందర్భంగా నాకు తోచిన విషయాలు కొన్ని మాట్లాడతాను.

ఇటీవల కొంతకాలంగా పత్రికలలో, టెలివిజన్ ఛానళ్లలో వార్తలు, వ్యాఖ్యల సరళి విజ్ఞులైన పాఠకులకు, శ్రోతలకు చాలా అసంతృప్తికరంగా ఉండటం అందరూ మాట్లాడుకుంటున్న విషయమే. ఇది అన్ని విషయాలకు సంబంధించి జరుగుతున్నది. కనీసం నాకు సంబంధించినంతవరకు, అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాలపై వార్తలు, వ్యాఖ్యల ధోరణి మరింత ఆందోళనకరంగా ఉంటున్నది. దినపత్రికలు, ఛానళ్ళు తమకు ఇంగ్లీషు ఏజెన్సీల నుంచి అందే వార్తలను యథాతథంగా ఇవ్వటానికి బదులు వక్రీకరించటం ఇందుకు కారణం. ఈ వక్రీకరణలకు ఒక కారణం జర్నలిస్టుల పరిజ్ఞానలోపమైతే, రెండవది వారికి ఏదో ఒక పక్షంపై ఉండే ప్రెజుడిసెస్. మూడవది ఆ వార్తలకు సోర్స్ పాశ్చాత్య వార్తాసంస్థలు కావటం, ఆ వార్తల పట్ల మన జర్నలిస్టులకు విచక్షణాదృష్టిని కలిగించగల పరిజ్ఞానం, అధ్యయనం లేకపోవటం. ఇందులో పరిజ్ఞాన లోపాన్ని సరిదిద్దుకోవచ్చు. కాని ప్రెజుడిసెస్ ను సరిదిద్దుకోవటం తేలికకాదు. అంతేకాదు. జర్నలిజం వృత్తివిలువలకు పరిజ్ఞాన లోపంకన్న ప్రెజుడిసెస్ వల్ల తీవ్రమైన హాని కలుగుతుంది. పోతే, ఆ వార్తలకు సోర్స్ పాశ్చాత్య వార్తాసంస్థలు కావటానికి సంబంధించి ఏమీ చేయలేము గాని, జర్నలిస్టులకు తమ అధ్యయనాల ద్వారా విచక్షణ దృష్టి ఏర్పడటం సాధ్యమే.

ఇటువంటి స్థితి మధ్య, నార్ల వెంకటేశ్వరరావు గారి జర్నలిస్టు జీవితం తొలిదశ గురించి కొంత తెలుసుకొన్నపుడు నాకు ఆశ్చర్యం, సంభ్రమం కలిగాయి. 1908

లో జన్మించిన ఆయన 1934-39 మధ్యకాలంలోనే, అనగా తన 26-31 ఏళ్ల వయసులో, అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాలపై నాలుగు పుస్తకాలు రాసారు. కేవలం అయిదేళ్లలో వరుసగా నాలుగు పుస్తకాలు. వాటి అంశాలు రష్యా, ఆస్ట్రియా, చెకోస్లోవేకియా, పాలస్తీనా. ఇదే ఒక ఆశ్చర్యకరమైన విషయం కాగా, ఇంతే ఆశ్చర్యకరమైనవి మరికొన్ని ఉన్నాయి. మొదట రష్యా పుస్తకం 'నేటి రష్యా' పేరుతో 1934లో వెలువడగా, అంతకు ఆరేళ్ళ క్రితమే 1928లో, తన 20వ ఏట, టర్కీలో జనరల్ కమాల్ అతాతుర్క్ తెచ్చిన సంస్కరణాత్మక తిరుగుబాటుపై ఒక వ్యాసం రాసారాయన. ఆ వ్యాసం శీర్షిక 'నేనే కమాల్ పాషాను అయితే'. అది వెలువడింది మరెక్కడోగాక సామాజిక సంస్కరణల బ్రహ్మసమాజం పత్రిక 'యువజన'లో కావటం విశేషం.

దీనంతటిలో గమనించవలసిన విషయాలు అనేకం ఉన్నాయి. నార్ల వారికి తనకు ఇంకా 20 ఏళ్ల వయసైనా రాక ముందునుంచే అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాలపై ప్రగాఢమైన ఆసక్తి ఏర్పడటం. టర్కీ నుంచి మొదలుకొని రష్యా, ఆస్ట్రియా, చెకోస్లోవేకియా, పాలస్తీనా వరకు అధ్యయనాలు సాగించి వ్యాసాలే గాక పుస్తకాలు రాయగలగటం. బ్రహ్మసమాజం వంటి సంస్కరణోద్యమంతోనూ పరిచయం, అభినివేశం ఉండటం. ఇందులో మరొక విషయాన్ని చెప్పుకుంటే మన ఆశ్చర్యం రెట్టింపవుతుంది. ఆయా అంశాలపై వ్యాసాలు సరేననుకున్నా పుస్తకాలు రాయగలగాలంటే ఎంతో సమాచారం, దానిపై అధ్యయనం, వివేచనా శక్తి తప్పనిసరి. అప్పుడే పుస్తకాలు రాయగలరు. ఇందులో సమాచారమన్నది ప్రాథమికం. ఇప్పుడంటే సమాచారం కోకొల్లలు. కాని అప్పటి 1920లు, 30లలో ఎక్కడిది? అప్పుడు తెలుగు పత్రికలే ప్రధానంగా మేగజైన్ల రూపంలో అరకొరగా ఉండేవి. బ్రిటిష్ వలసపాలనలో కలకత్తా, ఢిల్లీ వంటి చోట్ల నుంచి ఒకటీ అరా ఇంగ్లీషు దినపత్రికలు ఉండినా అవి నార్ల వారు నివసించే చోటికి ఏవి, ఎన్ని, ఎప్పుడు అందుబాటులోకి వస్తుండేవో తెలియదు. అప్పటికి ఆంధ్రదేశంలో కమ్యూనిస్టులు, వారి రహస్య పత్రికలు కొద్దిగా ఉండినా వాటి వ్యాప్తి, ప్రచురణాంశాలు అతి స్వల్పం. బిబిసి వంటి రేడియో సంస్థ 1920 లలోనైతే మొదలైందిగాని, దాని వ్యాప్తి నార్లవారు నివసించిన చోటికి ఎంతవరకు అందుబాటులో ఉండేదో తెలియదు. ఇక అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాలపై ఇంగ్లీషు పుస్తకాలు ఎక్కడో వెలువడుతుండినా అవి ఇక్కడి వరకు రావటం దుర్లభమైన సంగతి.

ఇన్ని పరిమితుల మధ్య, సమాచారలభ్యతకు గల అటువంటి గడ్డుకాలంలో, వీటిని అధిగమించటానికి నార్ల వెంకటేశ్వరరావు వంటి యువకుడు చేసిందేమిటి? అందుకాయన ఒక అద్భుతమైన మార్గాన్ని కనిపెట్టారు. అపుడు తరచు బందరుకు వస్తుండిన బ్రిటిష్ వాణిజ్య నౌకలు, ఓడల బరువును మెయింటైన్ చేయటం కోసం పాత పత్రికల లోడ్ వేసుకుని వచ్చి, ఆ పత్రికల కట్టలను ఇక్కడ రద్దీ కింద అమ్ముతుండేవి. సమాచారం కోసం వాటిలో తనకు వీలైనన్నిపాత పత్రికలు, మేగజైన్లు కొనుక్కొని చదవటం ఆయనకు అలవాటుగా మారింది. ఇంగ్లీషు భాష పట్ల ఆసక్తి, అది నేర్చుకోవటమే గాక అందులో రచనా నైపుణ్యం సైతం అప్పటికే సంపాందించిన నార్లకు ఆ విధంగా అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాల పరిజ్ఞానం తగినంత సంపాదించటం సమస్య కాలేదు. ఇక వాటిపై వివేచన, విశ్లేషణలు, భిన్న దృక్పథాలతో వెలువడే వ్యాసాలను పోల్చిచూసుకోవటం అన్న కృషి తన స్వంతం. ఆ విధంగా, అంతటి తొలిదశలోనే, అన్నన్ని పరిమితుల మధ్య, ఆయన ఆంధ్రదేశానికి సంబంధించిన అంశాలు సరేసరికాగా, విస్తారమైన విధంగా అంతర్జాతీయ వ్యవహారాల పట్ల గాఢమైన ఆసక్తి చూపి వ్యాసాలు, పుస్తకాలు రచించారు. ఇది ఎంతటి అసాధారణమో, నార్ల ప్రతిభకు ఎట్లా అద్దం పట్టిందో ప్రత్యేకంగా వివరించనక్కరలేదు. పైగా తన దృక్పథం అభ్యుదయశీలమైనది. ఆ ప్రగతిశీలత అటు అంతర్జాతీయ విషయాలతో పాటు, ఇటు స్వదేశంలో ముమ్మరంగా సాగుతుండిన స్వాతంత్రోద్యమంతో పాటు, సమాజ సంస్కరణాంశాలలో కూడా ప్రతిఫలించటం మనం గమనించదగ్గది.

నార్ల వెంకటేశ్వరరావు గారి జర్నలిజం వ్యాసంగానికి సంబంధించి రాయవలసినవి అనేకానేకం ఉన్నాయి. అందులో మొదటనే అంతర్జాతీయ విషయాలను ప్రస్తావించటానికి కారణం ఏమిటో మొదటనే సూచించాను. నిజానికి ఆయన ఈ రంగంలో చూపిన ఆసక్తి, ప్రతిభ తక్కిన అన్ని రంగాల కృషికి సంకేతం వంటిది అవుతుంది తప్ప కేవలం అందుకు పరిమితమైనది కాదు.

1920లు, 30ల నాటి పరిస్థితులు, పరిమితులలోనే అంతర్జాతీయం వంటి సుదూర అంశాలపై నార్ల చూపిన ఆసక్తి నుంచి, ప్రతిభ నుంచి ఇప్పటితరం జర్నలిస్టులు స్ఫూర్తి పొందవలసింది, ఆచరించవలసింది ఎంతున్నదో వేరుగా చెప్పనక్కరలేదు. స్థానిక అంశాలు, జాతీయ విషయాలు అప్పటి తెలుగు జర్నలిస్టులకు తగినంతగా తమ చుట్టూ అందుబాటులో ఉండినవే. అందుకు భిన్నంగా అంతర్జాతీయ

పరిణామాలు ప్రత్యేకమైన ఆసక్తి ఉండి శ్రమపడితే తప్ప అందుబాటులోకి వచ్చేవి కావు. అది కూడా పరిమితంగా. నార్ల తరం నాటి అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాలు మొదటి ప్రపంచయుద్ధం, రష్యా విప్లవం, టర్కీలో సైన్యపు సంస్కరణ తిరుగుబాటు, ప్రపంచ ఆర్థికమాంద్యం, ఫాసిజం, నాజీయిజం. ఇవన్నీ రెండవ ప్రపంచ యుద్ధం కన్న ముందటివి. నార్ల తర్వాత కొత్తగా వచ్చిన జర్నలిస్టు తరాలపై రెండవ ప్రపంచయుద్ధం, చైనా విప్లవం, తూర్పు%--%ఆగ్నేయాసియాలలో వియత్నాం తదితర సామ్రాజ్యవాదయుద్ధాలు, ఐక్యరాజ్యసమితి ఆధ్వర్యాన శాంతియత్నాలు, ఆసియా, ఆఫ్రికా ఖండాలలో వలసవాద వ్యతిరేక ఉద్యమాల ప్రభావాలు ఉండేవి. ఈ సరికి నార్ల తరం బాగా ఎదిగిరావటమే గాక కొత్తతరం కూడా ఈ ప్రభావాలతో అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాల పట్ల అమితమైన ఆసక్తి చూపుతూ వచ్చింది.

నార్ల తొలిదశ ఎదుగుదల కాలానికి ఇప్పటికి ముఖ్యమైన తేడా ఒకటున్నది. పైన చెప్పుకున్నట్లు నార్ల తొలికాలంలో, ఆయా పరిణామాలపై పత్రికలు, పుస్తకాలు, రేడియో వంటి సాధనాల ద్వారా సమాచారపు కొరత తీవ్రంగా ఉండేది. ఈ కొత్త తరం ఎదిగి వచ్చేసరికి ఆ కొరత పూర్తిగా తీరిపోయింది. అక్షరాస్యత పెరుగుతూపోయింది. వారి వ్యాసాలు, పుస్తకాల వంటి రచనల ప్రచురణకు కూడా సమస్య లేకుండా స్థానికంగా పత్రికలు, ప్రచురణ సంస్థలు తగినంత పెరిగాయి. వీరందరి అధ్యయనాలు, చర్చలు విస్తృతమయ్యాయి. ఈ జర్నలిజం ధోరణులన్నీ దాదాపు 20వ శతాబ్దం చివరివరకు కొనసాగాయి. వారిపై అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాలతోపాటు వివిధ రాజకీయ, సామాజిక స్థానిక ఉద్యమాలు కూడా ప్రభావం చూపాయి. ఆ విధంగా, 1920లలో నార్ల తరంతో ఆరంభమైన ఈ జర్నలిజం ధోరణి, ఇంచుమించు 80 సంవత్సరాలపాటు కొనసాగింది. 60ఏళ్ళు దాటి చివరిదశ వస్తుండగా క్రమంగా బలహీనపడసాగింది. 1920లకు కొంతముందు నుంచే ఆరంభించి నార్ల తరం వరకు పలువురు ఇతర ప్రముఖ సంపాదకులు కూడా ముందుకు వచ్చారు. అది తెలుగు జర్నలిజానికి స్వర్ణయుగం అనాలి.

ఈ దశ తర్వాత ఏమిటన్నది ప్రశ్న. నేను మొదట ప్రస్తావించిన పరిజ్ఞానలోపం, వక్రీకరణల పరిస్థితి ఇందుకు సంబంధించినదే. 20వ శతాబ్దపు చివరిపాదంలో, అనగా సుమారు 1980 తర్వాత నుంచి జన్మించిన తరం ఇపుడు జర్నలిజం కొత్తతరంగా ఉనికిలోకి వచ్చింది. అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాల గురించిన వార్తలను

ఇపుడు పత్రికలలో రాస్తున్నది, ఛానళ్లలో చెప్తున్నది, వ్యాఖ్యానిస్తున్నది, యాంకరింగ్ చేస్తున్నది ఈ తరమే. అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాలలో ముఖ్యమైనవి అనేకం ఉంటున్నాయి. కాని వీరిలో ఆ పరిణామాల పట్ల నిజమైన ఆసక్తి, వివేచన కలగటం లేదు. నార్లతో పోల్చితే శూన్యమనాలి. కొద్దిమందిని మినహాయిస్తే వాటిగురించి వార్తలు, వ్యాసాలు, పుస్తకాలు చదవటం, చర్చించటం తక్కువ. స్వయంగా రాయటం, రాయగలగటం అంతకన్నా తక్కువ. అయినప్పటికీ ఆ వార్తలు రాసి, చెప్పి, వ్యాఖ్యానించే, యాంకరింగ్ చేసే బరువైన బాధ్యత వారిపైనే ఉంటున్నది. వారికి ఆయా సంస్థలు శిక్షణలు, ప్రోత్సాహాలు ఇవ్వటం లేదు. వాస్తవానికి ఈ కాలంలోనూ ఇరాక్, ఆఫ్ఘనిస్థాన్ వంటి యుద్ధాలైతేనేమి, ఉగ్రవాద చర్యలైతేనేమి ప్రపంచాన్ని కుదిపివేసాయి. యుక్రెయిన్ – రష్యా యుద్ధం ఇంకా కొనసాగుతున్నది. అమెరికాకు చైనా, ఉత్తర కొరియాలతో ఉద్రిక్తతలు తలెత్తాయి. తైవాన్ సమస్య ఇందుకు అదనంగా మారింది. ఇక ఆర్థిక సంస్కరణలు, ఆర్థిక సామ్రాజ్యవాదం వర్ధమాన దేశాలలో సృష్టిస్తున్న సమస్యలు, కల్లోలాలకు అంతులేకుండా ఉంది. పర్యావరణ సమస్యలు అనేక దీవులు, జాతుల ఉనికినే ప్రశ్నార్థకం చేస్తున్నాయి. దీవులు కాని దేశాలలోనూ పర్యావరణ క్షీణత ప్రభావాలు, అందుకు వ్యతిరేక ఉద్యమాలు అంతటా కన్పిస్తున్నాయి. మొత్తం మీద మానవజాతి క్రమక్రమంగా అందరి అభివృద్ధి, మానవ సౌభ్రాతృత్వం, శాంతి సుఖాల వైపు పురోగమించటానికి బదులు, ఉద్రిక్తతలు, ఘర్షణలు, ఆధిపత్య ధోరణుల వైపు తిరోగమిస్తున్నది.

ప్రస్తుత చర్చకు సంబంధించి చెప్పేది ఏమంటే, ఈ వివిధ పరిణామాల గురించిన సమాచారం, గణాంకాలు, విశ్లేషణలు, భిన్న దృక్పథాలు, క్షేత్ర స్థాయి కథనాలు, చిత్రాలు, డాక్యుమెంటరీలు, వ్యాసాలు, పరిశోధనాపత్రాలు, పుస్తకాలు మొదలైన వాటికి ఎంతమాత్రం కొరతలేదు. ఇంటర్నెట్ సహా వేర్వేరు మార్గాలలో అది మనం ఉక్కిరిబిక్కిరయేంతగావచ్చిపడుతున్నది. చివరకు ప్రభుత్వాలు, ఆయా సంస్థల రహస్య నివేదికలు,డాక్యుమెంట్లు కూడా లీకై బయటకు వస్తున్నాయి. ఈ స్థితిని ఒకసారి నార్ల వెంకటేశ్వరరావు గారి 1920లు, 30ల నాటి సమాచార లభ్యత స్థితితో పోల్చిచూడండి. ఇపుడు ఇంత లభ్యత ఉన్నా ఇప్పటి తరం చేస్తున్న సాధారణ పఠనం, సీరియస్ అధ్యయనం, చర్చ, ఆలోచన, ఆయా విషయాల పట్ల తీసుకుంటున్న దృక్పథంతో, వారు ఆయా వార్తలు పత్రికలలో రాస్తున్న, లేదా టీవీలలో చెప్తున్న ధోరణితో పోల్చిచూడండి. నార్ల, ఆయన తరం చూపిన వృత్తిపరమైన తహతహ,

వృత్తి విలువలతో, వృత్తి నైపుణ్యాలతో పోల్చితే, అప్పటినుంచి వందేళ్ల తర్వాత మనం చూస్తున్న తరం ఏ విధంగా ఉన్నట్లు? నార్ల తరానికి, వందేళ్ల తర్వాతి తరానికి మధ్య భూమ్యాకాశాల అంతరం కనిపిస్తున్నది. ఒకటి స్వర్ణయుగమైతే రెండవది లోహయుగంగా పతనమవుతున్నది. వాస్తవానికి చదువులతోపాటు సమాచార లభ్యత ఇంతగా పెరిగినస్థితిలో మన జర్నలిస్టుల స్థాయి నార్ల కాలపు స్వర్ణయుగం నుంచి వజ్రవైఢూర్యాల స్థాయికి ఎదగవలసింది.

నార్ల తరంలో ఆరంభించి సుమారు 80 సంవత్సరాల పాటు సాగిన ఒక ధోరణి, 20 వ శతాబ్దపు చివరిపాదంతో మొదలైన కొత్తతరంతో మారటానికి కారణం ఏమిటి? అట్లా మారిన ధోరణి ఈ 21వ శతాబ్దపు తొలిపాదం ముగియవస్తున్నా కొనసాగటం ఎందువల్ల? ముసుముందు అయినా ఇది మారవచ్చునా, మారకపోవచ్చునా? అన్నవి మాత్రం క్లుప్తంగానైనా మాట్లాడుకోవలసిన విషయాలు. లేనట్లయితే నార్ల వారసత్వానికి, స్మృతికి మనం న్యాయం చేసినట్లు కాబోదు.

పైన అనుకున్నట్లు, ముఖ్యమైన అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాలు ఈ కొత్తతరం కాలంలోనూ చోటు చేసుకున్నాయి. ఇప్పటికీ కొనసాగుతున్నాయి. కాని ఈ తరంలో అత్యధికులకు జర్నలిజం ఇతర వృత్తులవలెనే ఒక వృత్తి అయింది తప్ప అందులో వారికి కన్పించే ప్రత్యేకత ఏమీ లేదు. అదే స్థితి అంతర్జాతీయ విషయాలతో పాటు ఇతర విషయాలలోనూ కన్పిస్తున్నది. ఈ కాలానికి చెందిన మీడియారంగం యజమానులకు ఏ విధంగానైతే ఇతర ఉత్పత్తులు – వ్యాపారాలవలె ఇది కూడా ఒక ఉత్పత్తి – వ్యాపారరంగం అయిందో, జర్నలిస్టు సమూహానికి కూడా పైకి ఏమి మాట్లాడినా వాస్తవ దృష్టిలో ఇతర ఉద్యోగాలవలె ఇది కూడా ఒక ఉపాధి అయింది. నార్ల కాలంలో మీడియా యాజమాన్యాలు గాని, జర్నలిస్టులు గాని దీనిని కేవలం ఉత్పత్తి %--% వ్యాపారరంగంగా, ఉపాధి అవకాశంగా పరిగణించలేదు. ఆ విధంగా ఉభయులూ ఫోర్త్ ఎస్టేట్ అనబడే మీడియా ధర్మానికి, విలువలకు కట్టుబడి వ్యవహరించారు. జర్నలిస్టులు తమ నైపుణ్యాలను నిరంతరం పెంచుకోజూసారు. ఈ దృష్టి యాజమాన్యాలకు మారటం స్వాతంత్ర్యానంతరం నుంచి మొదలుకాగా, జర్నలిస్టులు మరో పాతికేళ్లవరకు నిలబెట్టుకున్నారు. అందుకు ఒక కారణం పాతతరం జర్నలిస్టులు తమ వెనుకటి వృత్తి ధర్మం, విలువలతో పాటు విషయ అధ్యయన దృష్టితో, సామాజికస్పృహతో ఇంకా జీవించి ఉండటం కాగా, రెండవ కారణం

వివిధ సిద్ధాంతాలు, ఉద్యమాలు 1960లలో, 70లలో ఈ వృత్తిలోకి కొత్తగా ప్రవేశించిన తరంపై చూపిన ప్రభావాలు. కనుక ఈ కొత్తతరం జర్నలిస్టులు కూడా అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాల గురించి వార్తలు, వ్యాసాలు, పుస్తకాలు శ్రద్ధగా చదివేవారు. ఆలోచించటం, చర్చించటం, రాయటం, గోష్టులలో పాల్గొనటం అవసరమని భావించేవారు. యాజమాన్యాల దృష్టిలో మార్పు వ్యాపారలాభాలు, ఇతర ప్రయోజనాల కోసం పైన పేర్కొన్న విధంగా ఉండినా, జర్నలిస్టుల దృష్టి మాత్రం నార్ల తరంవలెనే కొనసాగింది. బయట సమాజంలోని వివిధ ఉద్యమాలు, వాటిలో పలువురు జర్నలిస్టుల భాగస్వామ్యం ఈ కొనసాగుదలకు దోహదం చేసాయి.

కాని పైన అనుకున్నట్లు, 20 వ శతాబ్దపు చివరిపాదం వస్తుండగా ఈ స్థితి స్పష్టంగా మారటం మొదలైంది. అప్పటికే మారసాగిన యాజమాన్యాలు ఇపుడు ఆర్థికసంస్కరణలు, సంపదల పెరుగుదల కారణంగా ఆ ప్రయోజనాలను పొందగలమన్న ఆశాభావంతో, పొందాలన్న కోరికతో, మరింత మారసాగారు. అది కూడా ఎటువంటి మొహమాటాలు లేకుండా, వేగంగా కూడా.

ఇక జర్నలిస్టులు యథాతథంగానే, తమంతట తామే, పైన అనుకున్న విధంగా మారసాగారంటే, యాజమాన్యాలవైఖరిలో మార్పిడి, అందులోని వేగపు వత్తిడి, జర్నలిస్టుల మార్పిడిలో కూడా వేగాన్ని తెచ్చింది. మరొకవైపు సమాజంలో బలహీనపడుతుండిన ఉద్యమాలు, ఈ కొత్తతరం జర్నలిస్టులు కూడా వృత్తి విలువలు, వృత్తినైపుణ్యాలు, వృత్తి అధ్యయనాలు, దృక్పథాల రీత్యా మరింత బలహీన పడేందుకు పరోక్షరీతిన కారణమయ్యాయి. వారి ప్రాపంచిక దృక్పథమే మారింది. వారిలో ఒకప్పటి వివిధ స్పృహలు అన్నీ క్రమంగా పోతూ, వైయక్తిక ధోరణులు ప్రబలుతూ కేవలం తమకోసం తాము బ్రతకటం మొదలుపెట్టారు. ఈ మార్పులన్నింటి ప్రభావాలు ప్రత్యక్షంగా, పరోక్షంగా జర్నలిస్టుల అధ్యయనాలు, వార్తారచనలు, దృక్పథాలపై ఉంటూ వస్తున్నాయి. ఆ విధంగా నార్ల వారి తరం 20 వ శతాబ్దపు మొదటిపాదంలో, లేదా అంతకు కొంత ముందు నుంచే ఆరంభమై చివరిపాదం గడుస్తూ, ఈ 21వ శతాబ్దపు మొదటిపాదం వచ్చేసరికి తిరగబడిపోయింది.

అందువల్లనే కొంతకాలంగా అంతర్జాతీయవార్తలు మన పత్రికలలో, ఛానళ్లలో ఈ విధంగా దర్శనమిస్తున్నాయి. ఆ మాటకు వస్తే అన్ని వార్తలు కూడా. నార్ల టర్కీ సంస్కరణ విప్లవంపై మొదట వ్యాసం రాసారు. తర్వాత రష్యా కార్మిక విప్లవంపై

తెలుగులో మొదటి పుస్తకం రాసారు. ఆ విధంగా, అంతర్జాతీయ పరిణామాలకు సంబంధించి తెలుగు జర్నలిజంలో ఆయనది టర్కీ – రష్యా తరం అనవచ్చునేమో. ఆ తరువాత వచ్చినది చైనా – వియత్నాం తరం. అదే సంప్రదాయం కొనసాగి ఉంటే 20 వ శతాబ్దపు చివరిపాదం నుంచి ఇరాక్ – అఫ్ఘాన్ తరం మొదలుకావలసింది. కాని అట్లా జరగలేదు. అసలు ఏ తరమూ లేకుండా పోయింది. లేదా ఒక తొడలు విరిగిన తరం అవతరించింది.

ఈ మార్పులో భాగంగా అంతర్జాతీయ అంశాలు సరేసరి. ఈ విషయంలో మార్పు అన్నది సంకేతాత్మకమైనది మాత్రమేనని పైన అనుకున్నాము. ఇదే మార్పు అన్ని అంశాలలోనూ కనిపిస్తుంది. నార్లతో వ్యక్తిగతంగా పోల్చినా లేక ఆయన తరం తో పోల్చినా ఇపుడు వచ్చిన క్షీణతరమైన మార్పులు మరెన్నో ఉన్నాయి. నార్ల బహుముఖ ప్రతిభ గురించి మాట్లాడటం లేదిక్కడ. కేవలం జర్నలిజానికి సంబంధించిన మౌలిక విషయాల గురించి అంటున్నాను. ఉదాహరణకు సరైన పద ప్రయోగం, మంచి వాక్య నిర్మాణం, ఇంగ్లీషు పదాలకు సరైన తెలుగు పదాలను కనుగొనే యత్నం, ప్రజల వాడుక భాషను వెలికితీసి ఉపయోగించటం, ఆ విధంగా భాషాభివృద్ధి ప్రయత్నాల వంటివి. ఇవి తన తరంలో ఎట్లుండేవో, ఇప్పుడెట్లా ఉన్నాయో తెలిసిందే. అద్భుతంగా రాయగల వారు, మామూలుగానైనా చక్కగా రాయగలవారు, కనీసం దోషరహితంగా రాయగలవారు తగినంత మంది లేరని కాదు. కాని ఈ లక్షణాలు లోపించిన వారే ఎక్కువగా కనిపిస్తున్నారు. పోతే, జర్నలిస్టులకు ఇంగ్లీషులో తగిన పరిజ్ఞానం ఎంత అవసరమో తెలిసిందే. ఆ రోజులలోనే నార్ల 22 ఏళ్ళ వచ్చేసరికి స్వయంకృషితో ఆ భాషపైన పట్టు సాధించి అందులో వ్యాసాలు రాసి, తర్వాత కాలంలో పుస్తకాలు సైతం ప్రచురించగా, ఈ కాలపు గ్రాడ్యుయేట్, పోస్ట్ గ్రాడ్యుయేట్ జర్నలిస్టులలో అత్యధికులు ఇంగ్లీషులో దోషరహితంగా ఒక చిన్న పేరాగ్రాఫ్ రాయలేని స్థితిలో ఉన్నారు. ఇంగ్లీష్ పత్రికలు, పుస్తకాలు చదివే అలవాటే లేదు వారికి. ఇందుకు సంబంధించి అనేకానేక సాధనాలు అందుబాటులోకి వచ్చినప్పటికీ, ఈ విషయాలలో కూడా నార్లకాలం తిరగబడటం కొట్టవచ్చినటు కనిపిస్తున్న విషయం.

పోతే, నార్ల వెంకటేశ్వరరావు గారిని తెలుగు జర్నలిజంలో మూడవదశ ప్రతినిధిగా చెప్పవలసిఉంటుంది. ఆంధ్రప్రాంతంలో వ్యవసాయరంగం వెనుకబడి, ఇతరత్రా

ఆర్థికాభివృద్ధి లేక, అక్షరాస్యత తక్కువగా ఉండిన 1830లు, 40లు, 50 ల కాలంలో పత్రికలు ప్రధానంగా మద్రాసు నుంచి వెలువడుతూ వలసపాలకులకు, క్రైస్తవ మిషనరీలకు ఉపయోగపడుతుండేవి. అది మొదటిదశ. ఆ తర్వాత 1850 లలో కృష్ణా, గోదావరి ప్రాజెక్టుల నిర్మాణంతో ఆర్థికపరమైన అభివృద్ధి నెమ్మదిగా మొదలై, సామాజికాభివృద్ధి కూడా జరుగుతూ, రెండవ దశ జర్నలిజానికి కారణభూతమైంది. ఆర్థికాభివృద్ధి ప్రభావం క్రమంగా అక్షరాస్యత, ఒక మోస్తరు చదువులు, సాహిత్యం, రచనలు, పత్రికాపఠనాసక్తి, సామాజిక కార్యకలాపాలు, సంస్కరణభావాలు, దూరప్రాంతాలతో సంబంధాల పైన పడసాగింది. దానితో వలసపాలకులతో గాని, మిషనరీలతో గాని సంబంధం లేకుండా చిన్న చిన్న కొత్తతరహా పత్రికలు రాసాగాయి. పత్రికలు, ప్రింటింగ్ ప్రెస్ లు మద్రాసు నుంచి ఆంధ్ర పట్టణాలకు మారాయి. వాటిలో భాషా సాహిత్య అంశాలు, సంస్కరణోద్యమాల విషయాలు, రాజకీయాలు, స్వాతంత్రోద్యమ వార్తలు, మహిళల అభ్యున్నతి, కులాల అభ్యున్నతి, తెలుగుజాతి భావాలు, జాతీయతాభావాల గురించిన వార్తలు, రచనలు వెలువడేవి. ఈ రెండవ దశ సుమారు 50 – 60 ఏళ్ల పాటు కొనసాగింది. జర్నలిజం, పత్రికలు ఈ విధంగా మొదటిదశ నుంచి రెండవదశ కు మారటానికి ప్రధాన కారణం వ్యవసాయం తదితర ఆర్థికాభివృద్ధి రంగాలలో వచ్చిన మెరుగుదల, తద్వారా విద్యా–సాహిత్య, ఉపాధి, సామాజిక, సాంస్కృతిక, రాజకీయ రంగాల మార్పులన్నది స్పష్టం.

రెండవదశలోని ఈ వివిధ మార్పులకు మూడవ దశ నుంచి ఒక ఊపు అనదగ్గది వచ్చింది. మరొకవిధంగా చెప్పాలంటే ఆర్థికంగా, సామాజికంగా పూర్తిగా వెనుకబడిన వలసపాలన దశ నుంచి, ప్రాజెక్టుల నిర్మాణంతో వ్యవసాయ, వ్యాపార అభివృద్ధి దశలోకి, లేదా పెట్టుబడిదారీ వ్యవస్థ పూర్వదశలోకి అడుగుపెట్టి, తర్వాత పెట్టుబడిదారీ వ్యవస్థలోకి మరికొన్ని అడుగులు వేయడమన్న మాట. మనం అంటున్న మూడవదశ ఇదే. నార్ల కాలం కూడా ఇదే. ఆంధ్రప్రాంత ఆర్థిక, సామాజిక, విద్యా – సాహిత్యాల, రాజకీయ చరిత్రను స్థూలంగా పరిశీలించినా ఈ విషయం అర్థమవుతుంది. 19 వ శతాబ్ది మధ్యలో కృష్ణా, గోదావరి ప్రాజెక్టుల నిర్మాణం, పంటకాల్వల వ్యాప్తి జరిగినప్పటినుండి మొదట ఆ మండలాలలో ఆహారధాన్యాల కొరత తీరటంతో ఆరంభించి క్రమంగా సంపదలు, స్థానిక పరిశ్రమలు, ద్రవ్యచలామణీ, పట్టణీకరణ, రవాణా, రహదారులు, విద్య, వైద్యం, వ్యాపారాలు, వినోదం, జీవనశైలి మార్పులు, కొత్తతరహాలో వివిధ సామాజిక, సాంస్కృతిక

కార్యకలాపాలు, మదరాసు వరకు ఎగుమతి దిగుమతులు, దాని వెనువెంట వాణిజ్యపంటల రాక వంటివి కనిపిస్తాయి. మరొకస్థాయిలో ఇదే దశలో బ్రహ్మసమాజ్ తదితర సామాజిక సంస్కరణ సంస్థలు, కాంగ్రెస్ నాయకత్వాన అప్పటికే సాగుతుండిన స్వాతంత్రోద్యమం ఆ ప్రాంతంలో అడుగుపెట్టాయి. రష్యా విప్లవం స్ఫూర్తితో కమ్యూనిస్టుభావజాలం, కార్యకలాపాలు కూడా ఆంధ్రదేశంలో ఆరంభమయ్యాయి. వీటన్నింటిని ప్రతిఫలించే మూడవదశ జర్నలిజాన్ని, జర్నలిస్టులను, తగినంత పరిణతి చెందిన స్థాయిలో మనమిపుడు చూడవచ్చు.

అందుకు అనుగుణంగానే నార్ల తెలుగు, ఇంగ్లీషులు బాగా నేర్చుకుని దేశ, విదేశ వ్యవహారాలలో ఆసక్తి చూపుతూ 1928లోనే తన 20వ ఏట టర్కీ సైనికవిప్లవంపై వ్యాసం రాసి, దానిని బ్రహ్మసమాజ్ వారి పత్రికలో ప్రచురించటం, 1929లో 19వ ఏట మద్రాసు కాంగ్రెస్ సభలలో పాల్గొనటం, 1931లో 21 వ ఏట వలస ప్రభుత్వానికి నచ్చనిది ఏదో రాసి పోలీసు లాఠీల బారిన పడటం, అదే సంవత్సరంలో ఇంగ్లీషు రచనలు మొదలుపెట్టటం, మరొక రెండేళ్లు గడిచినాక ఇంకా డిగ్రీ అయినా పూర్తి చేయకముందే స్వదేశీసంస్థానాలపై పుస్తక రచన, 1935లో 'ప్రభ' అనే పత్రికలో ఉద్యోగిగా చేరి 27వ ఏటనే ఆ పత్రిక నిర్వహణ బాధ్యతలు నిర్వర్తించటం వంటివి చేసి, 1941లో తన 33 వ ఏట ఆంధ్రప్రభ దినపత్రికకు సంపాదకుడైపోయారు. ఆ వేగవంతమైన పురోగతికి తన అసాధారణమైన ప్రతిభ, జ్ఞానసముపార్జన, శ్రమించేతత్వం కారణమని ప్రత్యేకంగా చెప్పనక్కరలేదు. ఆ కాలమంతా ఆంధ్రప్రాంతం ఒకవైపు ఆర్థికంగా, రాజకీయంగా, మరొకవైపు సామాజిక – సాంస్కృతిక, విద్యారంగాలలో నానాటికి అభివృద్ధి చెందుతూపోయింది. జర్నలిజం రంగం ఇందుకు సమాంతరంగా వృద్ధి చెందింది. ఈ మూడవదశ అప్పుడప్పుడే ఆరంభమైన కాలంలో 1908లో జన్మించిన నార్ల, అదే దశ ప్రగతికి అనుగుణంగా స్వయంకృషితో, పట్టుదలగా ఎదుగుతూ, తన వయస్సుకు మించినవి సాధిస్తూ, ఆ దశలో జర్నలిజానికే గాక సాహిత్యరచనలకు, ఒక పౌరునిగా సామాజిక సంస్కరణలకు, దేశ రాజకీయ స్వాతంత్రోద్యమ క్రియాశీలతకూ ప్రతినిధిగా, పలువిషయాలలో అగ్రగామిగా నిలిచారు.

తన తరం గడిచిన వెనుక జర్నలిజం ఆ విధంగా ఉండబోదని, క్రమంగా క్షీణదశ మొదలు కాగలదని నార్ల ముందు చూపుతో పరిస్థితిని అంచనా వేయగలగటం ఒక విశేషం. సంపాదకుని స్థాయి ఎంతో గొప్పగా ఉండేదని మనం భావించే

1976 కాలంలోనే ఆయన, ఆ స్థాయిని యాజమాన్యాలు పతనం చేయటం గురించి విచారంతో వ్యాఖ్యానించారు. పైన మనం చెప్పుకున్న 20 వ శతాబ్దపు చివరిపాదం, లేదా క్షీణదశ మొదలవుతుండిన రోజులవి. అప్పటినుంచి మొదలైన తెలుగు జర్నలిజం నాల్గవదశలో మనమిపుడున్నాము. ఈ దశ వ్యాపార పెట్టుబడులు, టెక్నలాజికల్ ఇన్నోవేషన్లతో ఎంత విస్తరించి పెరుగుతున్నదో, సమాజంలో ఆర్థిక, సామాజిక అంతరాలు అంతగా పెరుగుతున్నాయి. జర్నలిజం , జర్నలిస్టుల వృత్తి ప్రమాణాలు, వృత్తి విలువలకు సంబంధించి గాని, జర్నలిజం ఆత్మ, పరమార్థత అయిన సామాజిక శ్రేయస్సుకు సంబంధించి గాని ఔన్నత్యాలు కన్పించటం లేదు. పైగా అందుకు విరుద్ధంగా జరుగుతున్నది. ఈ స్థితిని అంతిమంగా అరికట్టగలది స్వయంగా జర్నలిస్టులు, వారి వెంట నిలిచే సామాజికులే. జర్నలిజం రంగం అంతిమార్థంలో వారిది. వారికోసమే ఉనికి లో ఉన్నటువంటిది. నార్ల నమ్మింది, ఆచరించింది కూడా అదేనని చెప్పటమే పూర్తి సరైనదవుతుంది.

చరిత్రలో ఎప్పుడైనా, ఎక్కడైనా ఆర్థికశక్తులు అభివృద్ధి, పరివర్తన చెందటం మొదలైనపుడే సమాజ స్వరూపస్వభావాలు మారటం మొదలైంది. ఆయా రంగాల వికసనం జరిగింది. ప్రతిభ కలిగి శ్రమించిన వ్యక్తులు రాణించారు. సమాజ స్వరూపస్వభావాలలో జర్నలిజం కూడా ఒక భాగం. ఆ స్వరూపస్వభావాల మార్పులకు దశలు ఉంటాయి. ఆ దశలు అంతకు ముందటికన్న ఉన్నతస్థితిలోకి ప్రయాణిస్తుండిన కాలంలో నార్ల 'ద మ్యాన్ అండ్ హిజ్ టైమ్స్' అన్న పద్ధతిలో జీవించి అందుకు ప్రాతినిధ్యం వహించారు. తక్కిన భారతదేశంతో పాటు ఆంధ్రప్రాంతం కూడా ఆర్థిక, సామాజిక వెనుకబాటుతనం, ఫ్యూడల్ జమీందారీల నుంచి, రాజకీయంగా అప్రజాస్వామికతల దశ నుంచి, ఫ్రెంచ్ విప్లవం, ఇంగ్లాండ్ పారిశ్రామిక విప్లవం ప్రభావాలతో, దేశీయంగా వలసపాలనా వ్యతిరేక స్వాతంత్రోద్యమ ప్రభావంతో నెమ్మది నెమ్మదిగానైనా ఆర్థిక, సామాజిక ప్రగతివైపు, ఫ్యూడల్ జమీందారీ వ్యవస్థలూ సంబంధాల విచ్ఛిన్నం వైపు, ఆధునిక ఆర్థిక వ్యవస్థలవైపు అప్రజాస్వామిక రాజకీయాలనుంచి ప్రజాస్వామికతల వైపు, అన్నిరంగాలలో, కుటుంబజీవనంలో కూడా సరికొత్త మానవ సంబంధాలవైపు తప్పటడుగులు వేస్తుండిన కాలమది. కొత్త సిద్ధాంతాలు, ఆలోచనలు కూడా గాలిలో వ్యాపించటం మొదలైంది. అటువంటి పరివర్తనా దశలో నార్ల జీవించి అందుకు ప్రాతినిధ్యం వహించారు. ఆ తర్వాత మెటీరియల్ అభివృద్ధి ఎంతున్నా వృత్తినైపుణ్యాలు, ప్రమాణాలు, విలువల క్షీణదశలో

ఈ తరం జర్నలిస్టులు జీవిస్తూ ఆ క్షీణతకు ప్రాతినిధ్యం వహిస్తున్నారు. అదే సమయంలో, పైన అనుకున్నట్లు, ఈ స్థితిని అరికట్టగలది అంతిమంగా ఈ జర్నలిస్టులు, వారి వెంట నిలిచే సామాజికులే. అందుకు నార్ల స్ఫూర్తి, ఆయన తరం జర్నలిస్టుల స్ఫూర్తి వారిని వెన్నంటి ఉండగలదని ఆశిద్దాము.



Tankasala Ashok

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Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR OPEN UNIVERSITY

డా. బి.ఆర్. అంబేద్కర్ సార్వత్రిక విశ్వవిద్యాలయం





Prof. G. RAM REDDY MEMORIAL LECTURE 2022



Four Decades of India's First Open University Through the Past into the Future

By

Prof. V.S. Prasad
Formerly Vice Chancellor (Acting),
IGNOU, Vice-Chancellor, BRAOU &
Director, NAAC

Organised by

Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Open University,

Prof.G.Ram Reddy Marg, Road No. 46,
Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad (TS) 500 033

About Dr. BRAOU

The University, initially known as Andhra Pradesh Open University, was set up on 26th August 1982 through an Act of the A.P.State Legislature (APOU Act 1982). Subsequently the University was renamed as Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University on 26th October,1991. The establishment of this University, the first of its kind in India, heralded and era of affirmative action on the part of the Government of Andhra Pradesh to provide opportunities of higher education to all sections of society to meet the changing individual and social needs. The University is providing services to the student community through a wide network of 179 study centres spread across both Telangana & Andhra Pradesh States, including 23 Regional Co-ordination centres and 11centres exclusively meant for women students. Prison inmates under life sentence also enrol themselves as students and pursue education through exclusive study centres at Central Prison - Cherlapally, Warangal, Rajahmundry, Visakhapatnam, Kadapa and Nellore and exclusive Study Centre for Army Personal and their family members, which was located at AOC, Secunderabad. The University offers Certificates, UG, PG Diploma and PG Degree and Research Programmes in including various Professional Programmes.

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Prof. G. Ram Reddy Memorial Lecture-2022

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"Yesterday is but today's memory and tomorrow is today's dream"
- Khalil Gibran

Introductory Remarks

I am thankful to Prof K. Seetharama Rao, Vice-Chancellor of the University, for giving me the opportunity to deliver Prof. G. Ram Reddy Memorial Lecture, in this momentous occasion of celebrations of four decades of India's first Open University. I have had the privilege of associating with this University for these four decades; first two decades as an internal staff member in different positions and next two decades as external associate in various ways. I am also fortunate to live long and active enough to participate in the forty years celebration of the University. Let me congratulate Prof. Seetharama Rao and his Team for many new initiatives on this occasion. Presently the University is also in the process of self-evaluation of its performance as a preparation for external assessment and accreditation by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). It is the right time to reflect on our four decades experience. It is also an opportunity to pay our respects to Prof. G. Ram Reddy and to all others who have contributed to the development of the University during the last four decades. Prof. G. Ram Reddy, the founder Vice Chancellor and a legendary in the field of Open Distance Learning (ODL), has laid the sustainable foundations of the new system. He has inducted me into this new system which gave me many career opportunities and life enriching experiences. I am proud of association with and inspiration from Prof. G. Ram Reddy. I join all of you in paying my respects to him on the occasion of his birth anniversary.

Look Back to Look Forward

We look back to past to understand the present and plan for the future. The study of institutional history helps us, if properly appreciated, in today's institutional decisions of what to do and what not to do. John Dewey, perceptively observers that education is **"a process of living through a continuous reconstruction of experiences"**. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (here in after referred to as BRAOU or the University) has the rich tradition of action studies on its experiences and on ODL first under the aegis of **'Centre for Evaluation'** and later from 2001 by **Prof. G. Ram Reddy Research Academy in Distance Education (GRADE)**. The University has the distinction of having a dedicated unit for evaluation studies on distance education. The University also has another distinction of being the most explored research site on ODL. More than 20 scholars have undertaken research on different aspects of functioning of the University leading to M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees. More than a hundred research studies were conducted and a large number of articles on the working of the University were published in journals and presented in workshops and seminars. These studies provide a rich **knowledge resource** to draw meaningful lessons from past practices, useful for future actions.

This University to my knowledge is the only Open University in India to undertake a research project on impact study of institutional experiences. The study was sponsored by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) on the occasion of Di-Decennial celebration of the University in 2002. My-self and Prof. V. Venkaiah, the then Director, GRADE were the researchers of the project and the study was published by the University in 2005 under the title: **"India's First Open University: Experience of Two Decades"**. The Important parameters considered in the study include; access and equity, flexibility, innovation, quality and relevance. It is worth examining the feasibility of extending this study to four decades experience and impact. The COL may be approached for support to the study as extension of time-series study of institutional impact.

During the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of University in 2007, the '**Centre for Social Empowerment'** led by Prof. Ghanta Chakrapani, (present Director, Academic) has brought out success stories of BRAOU learners under the title **'Memu Saitam'**. It is a good work of inspiring stories of struggles and extraordinary achievements of learners inspite of many social disadvantages. The University may continue the publication of **'Success Stories Series'** to authenticate its legitimate claims as a '**University with a difference'**.

The Focus of the Lecture

Now I have moved from the life of action to life of reflection. Today, in this lecture I propose to reflect on four decades of India's first Open University journey through the past into the future. The focus of discussion includes a brief narration of the trajectory of experiences, the significant contributions and a few observations on the next phase of the University. My focus here is more on events and lessons than on individuals and their contributions. In this long journey of four decades, certainly individuals have made a very significant contribution and deserve all appreciation and gratitude. But in the exercise of learning from experiences, it is more appropriate to reflect on collective wisdom, collective contributions and may be also on collective limitations. We are what we are today is because of these collective strengths and limitations. Recognition of this **'collective spirit'** is the right way to move forward. Here a qualifier is necessary. These are my subjective reflections. It is quite possible to draw different conclusions from past experience with different perspectives. I have reflected on the institutional experience from the perspective of realisation of basic premises and values of the Open University system. In my understanding the foundational goal of the University is **'to provide inclusive quality higher education and lifelong learning to large numbers at affordable costs, overcoming the limitations of time and space'.** We should try to draw meaning of our experience from this broad perspective of foundational goal of the University.

The Trajectory

The four decades of trajectory may be broadly divided into two phases of The Early Years or the First Phase (from 1982 to 1993) and The Campus Years or the Second Phase (from 1994 to Present). The first phase of early years is a period of excitement, experimentation and uncertainty. During this period, the University functioned from a rented accommodation in Somajiguda and surrounding areas in Hyderabad. The Campus Years of the Second Phase begins in 1994, with the shifting of University to its own campus in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad. The Second Phase is the phase of growth, consolidation and development. Below is a brief overview of important developments in these two phases.

The Early Years (1982-93): The Tipping Points

Let me start the discussion by raising the question of why the first Open University was established in Andhra Pradesh, not in any other state or at the national level. Malcolm Gladwell's 'The Tipping Point' idea, i.e., the moment of threshold or a boiling point resulting in significant social event, may provide a partial answer to this question.

At the national level the idea of starting an Open University has been under consideration since December, 1970. It was in that year that the Ministry of Education has organized a Seminar under the Chairmanship of Prof. D.S. Kothari. Later in 1970s a project report was prepared by a committee under the chairmanship of Mr. G. Pardhasarathy. But nothing has happend at the National Level till 1985. At the State level in 1978, the then Education Minister Mr. Bhavanam Venkataram, based on discussion with Prof. G. Ram Reddy, the then Vice Chancellor of Osmania University, evinced a keen interest in the concept of Open University. There was a change in the Ministry at the State level in February 1982 and the then Education Minister Mr. Bhavanam Venkataram become the Chief Minister. This was the tipping point for the establishment of Open University in Andhra Pradesh. He was in position of Chief Ministership only for a short period between February to September 1982. During that short period he has taken all

steps for the establishment of Open University with the active academic support of Prof. G. Ram Reddy. The University was inaugurated by the then President of India Mr. Gyani Jail Singh on 26th August at Nagarjunasagar. Though the political necessity to find ways of meeting the increasing social demand for higher education, desire to make higher education the cost effective and the example of British Open University in the use of technology for education are the major driving forces for the establishment of first Open University, the tipping point or the threshold moment was the Chief Ministership of Mr. Bhavanam Venkataram. At that time the Chief Minster also has decided to locate its headquarters at Nagarjunasagar and got it inaugurated at that place.

There was a change in the Ministry in September 1982 and Mr. K. Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy, became the Chief Minister and Prof. G. Ram Reddy was appointed as Vice-Chancellor in November, 1982. Prof. G. Ram Reddy could persuade the new Chief Minister on the desirability of making Hyderabad as the University Headquarters in view of better connectivity and the availability of wide range of educational and technological resources. The Government being convinced of the reasons, has made Hyderabad, the headquarters of the University. The wise decision of the then Government made a significant difference in the functioning of the University. In India we have examples of many Open Universities facing locational disadvantages, because of political decision on headquarters location. The tipping point for the change of headquarters of University from Nagarjunasagar to Hyderabad was the change of Chief Ministership. That is how we are in Hyderabad today. The wisdom of political masters and the coincidence of many contextual factors contributed for the establishment of first University in Andhra Pradesh and its location in Hyderabad. It is the beginning of a new phase in higher education in India.

The University has started its operations in November, 1982 with the appointment of first Vice Chancellor on 18th November, 1982. Its operations initially have started, in a private rented building with two persons; Vice Chancellor and his PA brought on deputation from

Osmania University. Later in 1983, the University was shifted to a Government building in Somajiguda and started its under-graduate academic programmes of B.A., B.Com and B.Sc in 1983-84. It is a record in the Open Universities' history that a University could start its academic operations within six months of its establishment. Launching Science degree programme through distance mode was a bold initiative at that point of time. The University in 1985, first time in ODL system has launched a professional programme in Library and Information Science, another bold initiative at that time. In 1993, another professional programme, Master of Business Administration was launched. Initially the University has started functioning with a few academic staff, mostly brought on deputation from other Universities and a small number of support staff appointed on contract basis. The staff was initially engaged in multiple tasks, blurring the distinctions of academic and administrative tasks. In later years regular academic and administrative staff was recruited. Most of the academic staff recruited in the early period had some experience in conventional system, which brought more credibility and experience to the operations of the Open University system.

During the 11 years early phase, the University mostly functioned from rented accommodation in Somajiguda and launched a number of programmes, developed a network of student support services and most importantly designed and developed quality self learning materials. Large number of distinguished academics and practitioners were engaged in the development of self learning materials and staff of conventional colleges was engaged in providing learner services. The University has tried to reach to large numbers at minimum costs by extensively using the available educational resources of the conventional system. The internal staff and external resource persons' enthusiasm of participating in a new experiment of democratization of education helped the University to overcome many limitations of physical, financial and human resources. Another significant development in early years of the University is re-naming of the University as Dr. B.R Ambedkar Open University in 1991, on the occasion of Dr. Ambedkar's birth centenary.

The Campus Years (1994 to Present): The Development Phase

The present campus location and subsequent developments have their own tipping points. Initially, Government allotted around 120 acres of land at Vanasthalipuram, the outskirts of eastern part of Hyderabad. Prof. C. Narayana Reddy, the then Vice Chancellor and Prof. V. Nagaraja Naidu, the then Registrar have used their contacts with the then Chief Minister Mr. N.T. Rama Rao and others who matter in Government for allotment of the 54 acres of Government land at Jubilee Hills to the University. Prof. C. Narayana Reddy rythemic style used to say that we have moved the University from **'Vanasthalipuram to Janasthalipuram'**. This is another tipping point in the evolving life of the institution. The foundation stone for the new campus was laid by Mr. N.T. Rama Rao on 1st June 1986. It took nearly 8 years for construction of new buildings in the campus. Prof. S. Bashiruddin the then Vice Chancellor (1992 - 95) ably assisted by Er. V. Raghavan, Consultant and technical advisor (retired Chief Engineer R&B, Govt. of AP) and internal engineering team led by Er. B. Lakshmi Prasad, gave a big push to the process of completion of construction of buildings and shifting to the new campus in 1994. The new campus was inaugurated on 31st August, 1994 by the then Prime Minister of India Mr. P.V, Narasimha Rao, heralding a new chapter in the life of the University.

The period from 1994 to present is a period of growth and consolidation. In 1994-95, the first academic year in the new campus started with the total enrolment of 55,018, an impressive increase in 11 years from 6231 in 1983-84. Around 15 academic programmes were offered with around 400 regular and contract teaching and non-teaching staff. Over the periods the enrolment increased and crossed the mark of one lakh (1,28,391) in 2002-03 becoming a mega Open University (as categorized by Sir John Daniel). Now the COL is advocating mega Universities to become giga Universities. The 2002, as a mark of 20 years of successful functioning, the University has celebrated Di-Decennial celebration. During that period many initiatives were taken for consolidation, quality improvement and

streamlining the operating system. In 2002, the University was offering around 30 programmes including post-graduation, professional and research programmes with around 500 academic and administrative staff, both regular and contractual. In 2002 – 03, the University has taken many steps to strengthen student support services (SSS) including the creation of 23 Regional Coordination Centres (RCCs), one at every district headquarters. In most of the places the University has constructed its own buildings in Government College Campuses to house the RCCs. The earlier two tier structure of student support system became a three tier system with middle type of RCC playing a very important coordination, monitoring and guidance function of Study Centres under their jurisdiction. This cost effective structural arrangement of SSS is an innovative arrangement for optimum use of available resources. From the beginning the University is focusing on having a well networked system of learner support services provided through a network of study centres, located in conventional colleges with tutorial and counseling services being provided by conventional college teachers as part-time Academic Counsellors. At present the University has a network around 180 Study Centres with around 4500 Academic Counsellors providing tutorial services to BRAOU learners.

During the last two decades from 2002 to 2022, the University has launched many new programmes in new areas and entered into collaboration with many agencies to offer new educational programmes to working population. The **Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA)** is in place since 2010 and is engaged in many quality related activities. Earlier the GRADE, under its Quality Assurance Cell has prepared many booklets on quality which are being used by different operating units to improve their quality. In 2017, the University has introduced Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) and semester system in B.A, B.Com and B.Sc. programmes. The annual enrolment reached the highest number of 1,91,367 in 2010-11 academic year. In current academic year 2022-23, the total enrolment is around 1,15,000 in 41 programmes, being offered by 5 faculties and 21 Departments. It may be noted that the academic and administrative staff, both permanent

and contractual have come-down to around 200. The depletion of human resources is a matter of concern. The total receipts of the University in 2021-22 financial year was around 76 crores, of which around 84 percent is from student fee, making it a student financed institution. During the same period 40 percent expenditure was on salaries and pensions and around 60 percent was on learning resources, student services and administration.

In last three decades after shifting to the new campus, there is an impressive development in the physical infrastructure of the University. In 1994, the new campus has buildings, with built-up areas of two lakhs square feet. During the last 30 years many new buildings were added and now it has build-up area of around four lakhs square feet. This good infrastructure and beautiful campus with natural boulders in a centrally located place is a great opportunity for the University to become an educational and cultural hub of Hyderabad. The good infrastructure itself can be a good stimulus for future growth of the University.

The Significant Contribution

There are many things, past and present, that makes the University proud. These include:

- **An Inspiring Example**

  The University through its open mission practices, programmed learning resources, strong network of learner support systems and reliable student evaluation systems became an inspiring example in ODL. The University, through its credible operations has contributed significantly to change the negative image of ODL, a result of unhealthy practices in correspondence education, which is in practice in India from 1962. Many Open Universities established after 1982, including Indira Gandhi National Open University (1985) have built their institutional systems and practices noting from the experience of first Open University. The University has a visible and credible national and international presence. The COL close association with this University during

the last forty years is an indication of its international reputation. The people associated with this University in various capacities, are playing important roles in national and international ODL institutions in various ways.

- **Innovative Practices**

  The University has the distinction of introducing many academic innovations during the last forty years. The University in 1983-84, has made multidisciplinary Foundation Courses in social science, science and languages, compulsory to all Undergraduate students. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is prominently advocating for multidisciplinary education. The University has allowed the students in 1983-84 itself to have flexible choice of subjects across the disciplines. The NEP 2020 has recommended this system under the scheme of Academic Bank of Credit (ABC). The University has pioneered the offering of science and professional programmes through ODL mode, which are subsequently followed by many other Open Universities and dual mode ODL institutions. Initially there was formidable resistance from conventional system for offering science programmes in OU mode. Prof. S. Brahmaji Rao, distinguished professor of Chemistry with wide experience in conventional system and good academic reputation, led the team of science faculty in the University and designed and developed a credible system of science teaching through ODL. In subsequent years the University has built multimedia science labs for development of lab kits and virtual labs for science practicals. The COVID-19 phase has legitamised the use of technology in education and NEP-2020 has recommended the use of ODL and online modes of education for providing all types of programmes, validating the initiatives of the University.

  Recently (2022) the UGC has advised Universities to engage persons with rich experience in professional areas as **'Professor of Practice'** to make the professional programmes more practice oriented. The University has adapted this practices in 1980s itself

and engaged reputed practitioners as consultants to design and develop professional programmes. In 1980s the University has launched Library Science and Public Relations programmes under the guidance of reputed practitioners like Mr. B.P. Shenoy (the then chief librarian of Osmania University) Dr. C.V. Narasimha Reddy, (retired Director, Public Relations, Govt. of AP) and a few others as professors of practice, though not named them as such. The NEP 2020 is strongly advocating for higher education including professional education in mother tongue. The University has started from the beginning offering undergraduate programmes and a few professional programmes in both regional language Telugu and English medium and a few programmes in Urdu medium. The University is also offering a few post-graduate programmes in Telugu medium. The University has also departed from the traditional way of teaching Telugu language at undergraduate level and introduced innovative pedagogy in developing communication skills of students.

The University has developed multimedia self-learning materials in both print and non-print form. The printed learning materials of the University were developed with great care by involving well reputed academics and practitioners. These learning materials are extensively used by conventional University students and teachers. The University has recently made them available to persons appearing for competitive examinations. In this way the University has made a significant contribution to the knowledge resources of the community. The University is also extensively using Audio-Visual programme in teaching-learning from the beginning. The University has the distinction of first University to have a dedicated Unit for audio-visual programmes. The All India Radio, Doordarshan, YouTube are being used for providing direct to home learning services. Technology is being used in teaching-learning, student support services, student evaluation and system management. The admissions are made online and web based learner support services are provided. Digital On Screen Evaluation

System (DOSES) is used for evaluation of answer scripts. The University has put in place the OER policy and OER repository (braouvidyaghani). The University is also engaged in development of MOOCs and e-learning portal. Recognizing the importance of online education, the University has established a dedicated unit **'Centre for Online Learning'**, for design, development and delivery of online education. These initiatives indicate that the University is aware of importance of new media and responding to the changing times. The University from the beginning is focusing on including vocational courses in the curriculum of various programmes. The University has established in 2016, **Centre for Skill Development and Career Planning** to drive the development of more skill oriented Courses / Programmes with collaborations and partnerships and to provide guidance in career planning.

The University, on the occasion of forty years celebrations has initiated many community engagements / outreach programmes under faculty forums. These include: Sarvathrika Samajika Vedika (Social Sciences); Vanijya Vahini (Commerce); Science Awareness and Extension (Sciences); Vignana Vedika (Education) and Language and Literary Forum (Arts)

- **Reaching the Unreached**

During the last four decades the University has the distinction of providing access to inclusive quality higher education to large numbers. The University is continuously striving to reach the unreached. The University adopted open admission policy for admissions to undergraduate programmes from the beginning mainly influenced by British Open University example. During the last 38 years (1983 to 2020), under the open admission scheme thousands of students were admitted, who were earlier not qualified for higher education. Those who successfully completed their graduation under this scheme are in important positions in public life, public services and pursuing higher studies. Many other Open Universities and other ODL institutions have followed the example

of the first Open University. Unfortunately, this socially useful innovative practice was discontinued by ODL institutions in India on the directions of University Grants Commission (UGC). The UGC in this decision might have been guided by its desire to have parity in admission policy with conventional system. This requirement negates the OUs basic premise of openness to people.

The University has the distinction of providing higher education to larger number of socially disadvantaged groups. In 2021-22, academic year out of total annual enrolment of 125463 students, 86.7 percent belong to SC, ST and OBC groups, 62.9 percent are from rural areas and 45.6 percent are women. Broadly this represents the social group representation in student enrolment during the last five years. This is a commendable achievement. The University is also providing educational opportunities to specially targeted groups like prisoners, security forces, persons with disabilities and transgender learners.

A Few Steps into The Future

The four decades of University celebration is an opportunity not only to reflect on our experience, but also is an occasion to plan for our future. Deep thinking and planning is necessary to identify the pathways of forward journey. These may include:

- **Understanding the Changing Context**

  Understanding the changing context is empowerment. When we are looking to past experiences to understand the present, we should be equally aware of the **'emerging context'**. We are living in a world of unprecedented transformations. We should be able to contextualize our experience with national and international development with 'open mind' open-to new ways of looking at things. The University is an institutional learning activity and the COL is rightly focusing on ODL institutional role in learning for development, leading to economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation.

In the Post COVID-19 and Post NEP 2020, many changes have been taking place in the world of education in India. Technology use has become a more legitimate activity in education. It is a happy development for Open University system. But a word of caution is also necessary. Y.N. Herari, rightly warns that if we are not clear of purpose of technology use, we, may find ourselves more in serving the technology instead of technology serving us. He further, perceptively observes that, '**humans are always far better in inventing tools than in using them wisely'.** Experts are rightly warning the commercial interests of technology firms directing the world of education. The technology can provide right answers only if we understand the education problems and requirements correctly. The Open Universities (OUs) in future may have to compete with the online commercial education platforms and ventures in the provision of online education. Interestingly out of 18 OUs in India, 17 Open Universities are in public sector. In public universities the education is a public good and technology is a tool for promotion of public good. The OUs may be caught in the two competing worlds of technology for public good and technology for profit. In addition the Government is planning to establish 'Digital University'. I am not sure of its implications to the OUs. The world of education is moving from physical space to cyber space. Not everything is going to be good. We must be able to learn and adapt what is good in these developments and also develop skills and capabilities to survive and grow in the new context.

The NEP 2020, has suggested a new regulatory framework of **'light but tight'** to ensure integrity, transparency and resource efficiency of the educational system. A great ideal, but the ground experience of OUs is different. In many ways the regulatory systems are becoming more centralized and discriminatory to ODL systems. We are in the framework of **'not to do anything unless permitted'** in contrast to a liberal frame of **'doing everything unless restricted'**. The OUs distinction is its flexibility and the

regulatory parameters are to be tested from their appropriateness to ensure the flexibility of the system. Now the regulatory systems focus is more on ensuring uniformity and accountability. There is a need to ensure balance in multiple goals of regulations, keeping the interest of diverse institutional systems and objectives. The universities have a dual function of adapting to changing conditions and also working for change of circumstances. They are presently mostly struggling to adapt to circumstances and lost their will and capacity to struggle for change of circumstances.

- **Access with Success and Relevance of Programmes**

  The University, as mentioned earlier, has an impressive record in ensuring access to higher education to a large number of socially disadvantaged groups and special categories of learners. The same cannot be said of successful completion of programmes by them. Out of millions of students enrolled in last forty years, only 499036 got degrees in last 24 convocations, the latest being held on 06.08.2022. The success rate is very low. Though the ODL is cost-effective from access perspective, it may be costly from the perspective of the costs of degrees. Increasing efforts should be made to increase the success rate of students enrolled in University. The focus now has to be shifted **from access to access with success**. The student success is viewed as successful completion of programme, leading to award of degrees resulting in student acquiring the knowledge, skills and competencies which are personally, professionally and socially useful. We are not sure whether all our programmes are resulting in student success from this perspective. Programmes relevance is another concern. The University popular programmes are undergraduate programmes in Arts, Commerce and Science constituting 80 percent of learners in 2022-23. The University may have to diversify its programmes by adding new age demand driven programmes for employability and livelihoods. The general education programmes may have to be redesigned to make them more employable and life skills development programmes. The University may also offer more

short duration and add on courses to upgrade the knowledge and skills of working population. The University, with its rich experience in provision of undergraduate education, may examine the feasibility of offering four year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programme for the holistic multidisciplinary education. The teaching-learning strategies need to be strengthened by integration of Pedagogy (teacher-centric) Andragogy (learner focused) and Heutagogy (independent learning) and synergy of multiple modes with more flexibility in practices. The learner support services needs further strengthening by using new technologies to improve the success rate of learners. More sustainable practices of quality assurance should be in place to make the system more resilient and socially relevant.

- **Capacity – Building of Institution and Staff**

  It is said that in conventional system teacher teaches and in ODL the institution teaches. The institutional efficiency is the defining element of institutional success in ODL. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2015-2030, Goal 16) advocates the necessity of building **effective, accountable and inclusive** institutions to achieve the sustainable goals. There is a need to enhance the institutional capacities of OUs to realize their vision and mission. The OUs administrative systems also are suffering from some of the common ailments of Indian administration. Some critics characterize of Indian administration model as **'Khumbakarna Governance Model'** - most of the time sleeping over problems. What we require in ODL is **'Ram Governance Model'** - a model practiced by Prof. G. Ram Reddy and Prof. Ram G. Takwale as Vice Chancellors of Open Universities. This is a tested model in Open University governance. The important features of the model include: leading by example, identifying, nurturing and encouraging talent, enabling and recognizing performance and networking for institutional development. The

operating systems, in this model, are driven by **integrity**, **sense of purpose** and **pragmatic wisdom**.

The **'Ram Governance Model'**, empowers the staff to contribute their best to the realization of institutional goals. During the last forty years the University has had its quota of internal conflicts, maladjustment of roles, ego clashes and work shirking. These are common ailments of institutions, integral of group activities. The wisdom of leadership lies in converting the clashes over positions and powers to **'constructive conflicts'** over institutional development paths. Results base management systems, continuous upgradation of skills and capacities of staff and putting in place systems of performance recognition and rewards may result in staff engagement in constructive institution building activities. The experience shows that if the governance model is good, everything falls in place.

Concluding Observations

Institutional history is the study of change over time, to free from the past burdens and embark on a new path through the culture of innovations. The past experience should help us to build a more resilient institutional systems and practices appropriate to **emerging context**. In Indian distance education we have passed through stages of Correspondence Education (1962-1982), Open University / Open Distance Learning (1982 – to present) and entering into the phase of Digital University / Online Learning / Blended Learning. The distinct feature of our system is the co-existence of all forms of distance education in practice. The Open Universities are becoming multimodal and increasing convergence between distance and campus learning. In this fast changing context we have to **'reimagine our experience'** and engage in **'intelligent action'**. The University has an **'institutional dharma'** of realization of social transformative vision of education. We have

to continuously strive to reduce the gap between our **Dharma** (goals) and our **Karma** (actions). Let us resolve to move forward to realize our Dharma with **'Ram Governance Model'**. This is the best way to pay our tributes to Prof. G. Ram Reddy and realize the educational vision of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

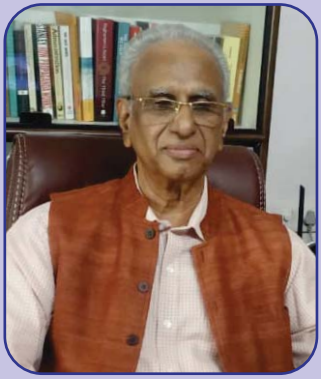
"Open Universities must refresh, rethink and redesign their policies and processes to embark on a new path through a culture of innovation"

- Prof. Asha Kanwar, President COL

Thanking you all

PROFESSOR V.S.PRASAD

Brief Bio-Data



- Professor V. S. Prasad was born in 1943 in a small village, Mahadevapuram in Khammam District of Telangana, India. He obtained his Masters and Ph.D in Public Administration from Osmania University, Hyderabad, India
- Prof V. S. Prasad is known for his contribution to Open and Distance Learning and Quality Assurance. During his more than four decades of academic life, held many academic and educational leadership positions which include Professor of Public Administration; Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Acting Vice-Chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University; Vice-Chancellor of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University and Director of National Assessment and Accreditation Council.
- Prof. Prasad is an internationally recognized expert in the field of Open and Distance Learning. The Commonwealth of Learning, in recognition of his services to ODL honoured him with the award of "Fellow of Commonwealth of Learning". Prof. Prasad headed the Project of Government of Mauritius as Project Director, Open University of Mauritius from January 2009 to June 2010, for the establishment of Open University in Mauritius.
- Prof. Prasad as a Quality Assurance Professional, headed India's premier Quality Assurance Agency i.e., National Assessment and Accreditation Council(NAAC) as Director(2003-2008) and also actively associated with the activities of International Quality Assurance Agencies.
- Presently, Prof. Prasad is engaged in the study and advocacy activities in Higher Education, particularly in areas of Open and Distance Learning and Quality Assurance.
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Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR OPEN UNIVERSITY

డా. బి.ఆర్. అంబేద్కర్ సార్వత్రిక విశ్వవిద్యాలయం





Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University
Centre for Internal Quality Assurance (CIQA)

Second Special Lecture on

Imparting Quality Skill Education through Open Universities
Issues and Challenges

By

Prof. Rajan M Welukar

About Dr. BRAOU

The University, initially known as Andhra Pradesh Open University, was set up on 26th August 1982 through an Act of the A.P.State Legislature (APOU Act 1982). Subsequently the University was renamed as Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Open University on 26th October,1991. The establishment of this University, the first of its kind in India, heralded and era of affirmative action on the part of the Government of Andhra Pradesh to provide opportunities of higher education to all sections of society to meet the changing individual and social needs. The University is providing services to the student community through a wide network of 179 study centres spread across both Telangana & Andhra Pradesh States, including 23 Regional Co-ordination centres and 11centres exclusively meant for women students. Prison inmates under life sentence also enrol themselves as students and pursue education through exclusive study centres at Central Prison - Cherlapally, Warangal, Rajahmundry, Visakhapatnam, Kadapa and Nellore and exclusive Study Centre for Army Personal and their family members, which was located at AOC, Secunderabad. The University offers Certificates, UG, PG Diploma and PG Degree and Research Programmes in including various Professional Programmes.



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Imparting Quality Skill Education through Open Universities

Issues and Challenges

My good old friend and colleague, the Honourable Vice Chancellor of Dr. Ambedkar Open University, Prof K.Seetharama Rao, Prof. (Madam) E. Sudha Rani, Director, Academic, Dr.AVRN Reddy, the Registrar of this university, Prof. Madhusudhana Reddy, Director, CIQA and my dearest colleagues from various departments and faculties of this university, I am fortunate to come here and meet you all, today.

I would like to give you a perspective on how open universities in the present day need to look at the approach to ODL in terms of whatever changes are happening in the world. I am going to present to you some points through my PowerPoint presentation and some orally.

Can we separate skill-based education? This is my first point. We take up education to learn something and use that learning in our day- to- day life, for whatever purpose, either for earning or doing something for somebody, or for some organisation, and whenever you are doing some job for yourself. Whatever education you are taking relates to that particular education or subject and it is the knowledge you are using to perform that job. To perform that job you need skills. Without skills you will not be able to do it. Therefore, I always say, what is most important in this competitive world is, not only skill or education, but the third most important thing which we are missing– 'competency'. Now, only having education and skills is not going to help you but rather you should develop the competencies which would bring in 'quality' in education. In a competitive world, quality is very important and therefore I look at it from a very different perspective.

Since the last five to seven years, I have been talking about competency-based education rather than skill education. Competency is important and we need it to move on in life— of course, we need to follow the credit system like our apex body says. We need a structure to innovate, and renovate. Innovate within the ODL system and think of possible ways to go beyond the structure of innovation. Into this kind of innovation, if we can bring in skill education or incorporate competency education into all the programmes that we are offering we can be said to be innovating. We must incorporate those skills into whatever we are teaching. So integrating skills and competencies into whatever we are teaching is what is need today.

Therefore, don't look at skill education as separate from whatever you are teaching or whatever programmes we are offering to our students. What I mean to say is that, we need to go beyond the structure of innovation for our very survival. Because change is mandatory, survival is optional. Tomorrow, if everything is technology-related, then we need to learn that technology. All the jobs will be created in that sector. So if most of the jobs are going to be created in that sector, then we need to cater to the needs of change.

We are into different creative spaces like design, school of design, schools of skills etc. today; there is a lot of demand for that. So many people are needed in that sector. Therefore, I say that we need to innovate, we need to find new ways to teach our students. For instance, what we teach them should be solution-driven. When we expect our learners to be solution-driven, why can't we also be solution-driven? Therefore, we have to be resilient and to be resilient you have to come out with 'out of the box 'ideas.

'The Open University' – the first Open University in the world, was established in 1969 at Milton Keynes in the United Kingdom. You know, during the initial 3 years, they suffered a lot. Student

enrolment had gone down and there was an agitation because of which the Vice Chancellor was removed. Although the Open University was ranked number one in some aspects in Genetics Research, why did they suffer? Because they did not think 'out of the box'. Then, they took a different stand to offer programmes which are needed for the future. Hence, unless and until you have a futuristic approach, unless and until you change your path, unless and until you are the first to do something before anybody else – you are not going to survive.

The whole century will belong to the people who have skills and competencies. Skilling, re-skilling and up skilling are the buzzwords these days. Those who are getting re-skilled, those who are getting up-skilled they are ones who are going to survive and if they are going to survive we need to prepare them from a very different perspective and therefore skills and competencies are worthy words. We have no alternative other than this. But how do we integrate them into each and every programme? That is what we need to understand. We need to understand the change, and we need to capture the change, and we need to strategise to teach people how to survive while making that particular change, and then only will we survive.

I quote here from a book that I recently read. The title of the book is **"It is not the big that eats the small, but it is the fast that eats the slow".** So, what do we need? We need to take faster decisions and we need to come out with 'out of the box' ideas and we need to come out of the structure, which we think that people will not allow.

Nowadays, even the governments are having partnerships, aren't they? If the governments are having partnerships with the private players, say, electricity, in Maharashtra. Today we get it from Adani or TATA, so, why can't we do it. I have used a train not belonging to the Indian Railways, when I was the Vice-Chancellor of AURO

University. You know, from Surat to Mumbai, I used to go by train, that train doesn't belong to Indian Railways. It is a private company which is running the train. So, the Government is having a tie-up with private players. You know, it is a wonderful train, the kind of service we got in that train was very good. I travelled several times on that train — for almost two years. Their services were wonderful.

Further, when we talk about what you individually can't achieve, but you will have to work in a team to do, we are talking about acquiring the team skills you need, isn't it. We also need to create a team. If I can't afford it, but I have the licence, I need to find a partner or partners to form a team. I will tell you the case of Hotel Marriott. You all know about the chain of Marriott hotels across the world. They do not all belong to Marriott but are franchised by 'Marriott' which is a brand and they are selling the brand at 15%. In YCMOU we did the same thing. We sold the brand of YCMOU to 3500 colleges and took their infrastructure. Similarly, now for the 'skill education' I think the University can go out and make some fast decisions. Suppose UGC tells you that you can't have this programme unless you have permission. UGC can't stop you from offering a 7-day programme. You can do that. So, I tell you that all Open Universities are having this, you need to understand your clientele which can be categorised as four quadrants of your clientele. One quadrant of your clientele is the students who want to pursue their degree or postgraduate degree programme to acquire knowledge. Second, are people who want to get re-skilled in various aspects, irrespective of age. I tell you, if you take the data of all the college teachers, only 0.00001% of them may be working in Meta-Works. You might offer a MOOC on SWAYAM and other such things that are not dynamic. It should be quite all right.

Today, when people would want to create a SWAYAM course we might have a training programme for them. No one can stop us

from doing it. We know better than the traditional university teachers, because our approach is very different. You can teach them those skills. I teach some of the teachers in my university, keeping three laptops, and teaching online, going here sometimes, going there simultaneously, working on this and then interacting with the students in a very different kind of environment. An online environment will be needed. Therefore, nobody can stop you from doing this. No apex body can stop you from doing this and there are so many teachers outside the university system whom you hire and fire. We too can have a hire and fire policy. You are in an IT city. If you hire anyone for an overseas programme on a pay, he might take a percentage for which you should be accountable but you should be able to deliver for the value. That is what I am trying to do.

This is what the Open University has also started doing. Now there is a programme which is called a Modular Apprenticeship. The syllabus is not pre-designed but customized learning out of purely academic courses. It is total customization as per the learner, as per the industry. If you can bring that culture into this university, you will be very different. Since you are in an IT city and you are in an advantageous position and doing innovative work in this space. You have the brand of the University, encash that brand, of course, while following the quality norms. You should follow the Marriott business plan. How do they do it? We can become a Marriott without the quality of education and therefore the kind of services we get. That is because Marriott doesn't allow anybody to go beyond their quality norms. Our university can do it. We should not compromise with the quality norms and you know several people will come to you and then, that way you are serving the nation by driving the quality. Look at it from this perspective. So when everybody is doing things very differently, then you should think very differently.

A business model is research-driven. When they come out with a product they do research on its market and create a market. We need a paradigm shift towards new business strategies or models. For example, when the GST was imposed in the country, from the very next day you should have launched a 3 days' certificate programme in GST. However, you have to follow the government regulations for offering the programme. You know IIT Hyderabad offers a one credit programme for 15 hours. Out of the 15 hours, they are teaching 30%. That is 1/3rd of the time allotted or almost 4 -5 hours and one professor from somewhere comes on Saturday and teaches for 3-4 hours face to face. The remaining teaching is through projects, and assignments, in that one credit programme. Can we not have a one-day programme, seven days' programme, one- month programme, three- months' programme? That's it. But look at the skills and competencies required by the people i.e. the second quadrant. These are the people whom we must tap.

Now, the third quadrant 'clientele' is the people who want to re-educate themselves. The fourth quadrant is the schools. Suppose you have a tie-up with the SSC Board and HSC Board and say, we will teach one course to your students on Artificial Intelligence. So, many students would want to learn that course and they will get a credit in the mark sheet saying that they are taking six subjects and they have the option of taking one additional course, as in Maharashtra. However, then, you need governmental intervention. That is what a partnership is. For instance, 14 laths students are appearing in the 10th standard SSC, out of which even if you can get 1% as your clientele, that is 14,000 in one go, and teach them skills for the future, such as, a course on website creation, for example, for which you may not need UGC recognition. I tell you it can generate huge revenue for the university. There is a way and this is what the future is.

My next point is – how do we become resilient? To be resilient you have to do research on what kind of skills and competencies the students are going to require. 10th standard students go to 12thstandard, and when they go for graduation, they will need some basic skills. It is those basic skills which you can teach them at this point of time and if you can convince the State Board, they will be happy. So, you tell the Board you will be getting these outcomes and your teacher who is going to do coordination work will get some incentive out of this. You get teacher support. You get the support of the Board. And you will be able to give the target to the government. So, they will get votes from it in the elections. It is a strategy, through which we can do business. Let us say, if you give a target to the Chief Minister that, "no child will remain uneducated in this aspect of the future tech skills" he will be happy, he will support it or get it promoted. Make everybody happy. If you make everybody happy, you also will be happy. Of course, there is no compromising with quality while looking for innovations and quantity.

I will show you some of the data to understand this. Whatever happens in developed countries, for example in the US, can also happen in our country. It may take 2-3 years or 4years. If we understand their scheme, we will understand what we need to do for our own young people.

Now this is the data from 1970 to 2009 and it has further enhanced. Just as there is a changing demand for skills in the United States, that is what is now happening in our country. There is an increase in non-routine interpersonal skills. We now need to teach non-routine analytical skills. For that you don't have to do a long-term diploma programme. You know FINTECH started it in six months. It is an example to emulate. Technology will not reduce jobs, in fact, it is going to increase them three-fold. Some jobs will be outdated but some new jobs will be created, which will be three-

fold, the data showed. Then there is the difficulty of filling vacancies in Asia and the Pacific because we have really not taken the decision fast enough and therefore our students are skilled in some fields but are not skilled in all the fields which are going to be created. The future is the idea of a hybrid work place, sitting at home or sitting in a restaurant and at the same time, as and when I upload the data and do something when I go to the office — that is hybridisation.

Now, there are 5 key skills that are required for post COVID employment. One is data literacy, the second is digital and coding skills, and the third is technology up- gradation; the fourth is digital distancing and the fifth is paradigm shift and adoption of the franchise model -cum-partnership approach. So your relationship is not only with your own college but your relationship is with the entire world. You must have seen the book "Corporate Chanakya**".** That is what we have seen. I did that in Surat, I launched an online course, of 3-months' duration on Finance and Social Intelligence. I offered it to the industry people, those who are looking after the finance in an industry and it was a hit. My fee was Rs.8, 000/- There were only 30 students, so, 30 multiplied by Rs.8, 000 was the amount generated. I spent 60% of the amount on those resource persons. So, we need to come out with some different ideas like these.

As I told you earlier, when GST came in, on the very second day you should have announced a short course for 15days, and you could have brought the Sales Tax commissioner or GST commissioner as resource persons for classes. You would have got no less than 10,000 admissions with Rs. 2,000/- as fees. If you calculate Rs.2000 into 10000, how much money could you have got? In the same way, if something new comes up, you should look at the numbers. When the government comes out with a scheme for many people, you just launch a programme on it. Even if the

government comes out with a farmers' scheme, you say "in one rupee we will teach you". With that one rupee the scheme will teach the farmers how to fill the form, how to do this, how to do that. That kind of course may not fetch your money but it may fetch you a brand, goodwill and also good grades in that, isn't it, because you are doing something social and of course the new paradigm which brings significant changes in talent management.

All the private universities and educational institutions want their teachers to be trained, but they are not ready to share the money with you, isn't it? You come out with a scheme, that you will give training to the entire new faculty who can be trained. If you come out with a Government regulation that any new teacher who is appointed in any college or a university shall do this particular course and only then they can pursue that career- that will fetch you money and it will help create quality teachers in the education system of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. So, if you create a plan, if you create a scheme, go to the government. Like in Maharashtra, the MKCL-Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation Limited, came up with a scheme. You know one government came out and said that anybody who wants to get a government job must do a compulsory computer literacy course of three months. We offered the course and you know, the enrolment went up to 2 million, 3 million. Similarly, in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh when the government appoints teachers, if you create a course on teaching- learning processes, and offer that course, it will be a grand success. Through it they will also learn meta skills, such as how to inspect their school management. So, you could create a business model. This should become the strategy for the entire university.

Of course, everybody knows about industry 4.0 but now we are moving towards industry 5.0. We are talking about Robots, Artificial Intelligence, IT, IIT and all those things, also digitization, automation and several other things.

Then this is what you should employ in a range of cases. If you establish linkages with organisations and can declare that job aspirants will be employed only if they know the latest technology-whatever the field, whether it is construction or anything you need to understand. Therefore, let us create a strategy for the university. Sit together for a while and think. But we have to be a bit fast. Some might independently invent, design and operate. But for the franchise model which I have talked about, and third, for the partnership you need to move towards-franchise model or partnership model. And it doesn't matter-you can have collaboration with anybody, as the government is doing, nobody stops you. You need to come out of that mind- set and we should have a tie-up.

The second most important point in my presentation which I would like to show to you is very important. I know, I tell you ISB, Hyderabad, says proudly that they are not affiliated to anybody, isn't it? And their fee goes to Rs.25 laths and it is difficult to get admission there. They do not have AICTE approval, but their programme is such that in one week someone comes from Harvard, in another week someone comes from Stanford, in the week after someone comes from Oxford; or someone comes for one week from Asoka. Like that, the teachers are from prestigious institutions and all the students get their jobs without a placement officer. No placement officers. People come to know that the curriculum delivery is happening here, no written examination, from 9' O'clock in the morning till 9'O clock in the night, all the 60 students are with a particular teacher, all of them are learning together. Only in the mark sheet it is written, that they have successfully completed the diploma. That is where education is moving. Can we move towards that? If we integrate skills and competency into each of our programmes then, we are going to achieve whatever I am saying.

Once a person from Mumbai met me. He had an 11 month-programme called digital marketing. What he did was, he trained the students in such a way that every student got a job, with a minimum package of Rs.6 laths per annum to a maximum of Rs.10 laths per annum. This has been happening for the last 6 years. He launched the 11 months' programme only because the Maharashtra Government doesn't allow anybody to launch a one- year programme, for one year or more, you should have permission or affiliation to university. so, he launched the 11- month programme. In this 11month- programme the fee is Rs.6 lakh and for 60 seats he received almost double or triple the number of applications. You can imagine, but the delivery system is very different. Because of the delivery, everything has changed today. Tomorrow, the students who complete the programme will bring in the kind of dynamic system which they have learnt and drafted. For that kind of dynamic system if you can bring in partnership there will be further innovation. We can't have a Board of Studies, Academic Council, and Management Council. Therefore, you need partnership and you need to move towards a very different model.

According to the new skills model, you must know that an Indian youth spends 6 hours on an average, browsing the Internet every day. But during the COVID, they started spending 12 hours on it. We need to understand that, all those age groups who are into technology are called the 'digital natives. In India, during the last six years, if one looks at the data price before 2016, it was 250 rupees per month for 1GB data. Today, we get 1GB per day. You need to capture this; you need to recognise the change, and you need to seek out the skills from this factor.

Then, if we compare the number of internet users, in 2016 it was 349 billion, and in 2022, it is 840 billion. India is the world's cheapest country in terms of internet data. So, understand this exciting fact and capture it. One can get a cheap Smartphone for

Rs.1250 today. And, all the technology can be incorporated into a smart phone. The COVID -19 situation had forced the transformation of business; similarly, we, who are in the education business should understand and adapt to the changed contexts.

Now India is Digital India. Most people including us can't sleep without reading on a Smartphone. This is what an opportunity is for a student irrespective of age and it is also the student potential and therefore the potential for the Open University. Now, you need to capture this. Our life goes on with these apps for food and beverages. When I was suffering from COVID, my mother-in-law, who is 96 was staying with me, and there was no third person in our house to do our household chores. The building doesn't allow servants to come in. How did we survive? We survived because of these apps! So this is the survival, with FinTech, Travel, Fashion, Entertainment, Banking, everything. I don't remember that I have gone to the bank in the last four years, I have not written a cheque for anybody but my entire banking is on my mobile. I didn't have a laptop during the entire two years of COVID. I was on my mobile and every day I was busy for almost six hours on my mobile, either addressing someone, conducting a meeting or attending some conference or something, all the time. This mobile device, we need to understand, has changed the whole world. Right or wrong, but this is what we have to help us survive. So business is digital in India. How do we move towards this reality? It is the skill we all need and all the programmes / courses which we need to offer should be through this. Our own teachers also need it. You can also give them training in the new technology use.

Like Amazon, which changed the entire world of business and earned well too, isn't it? Uber, and Ola, are all innovations. The same thing is going to happen here, in education and therefore, whether accounts or marketing, we need to learn a lesson from the market. Now, what are the digital skills? First, there is coding,

there are the coding languages, which people will have to learn. You can teach these coding languages online, those who are from Computer department can start them or you can hire a person from industry. And then there are career opportunities for developers, back- end developers, and front- end developers and there are courses in specialised languages. Then, the second is design, user-interface and user-experience in every course or a programme. You need to instruct learners in design and prepare them for related careers like designer, visual or product or creative designer. And then, the third is digital marketing. You must be teaching something similar in your MBA- website developer, social media marketing, and all those things. Virtual storytellers get a lot of money today. Data science specialists, business analysts and the like are other career opportunities.

To summarise, these four are the most important pillars of digital businesses. You are aware of Block chain Technology, Full-Stack development, Artificial Intelligence, Business Analysis, Digital Marketing, Sales, Scientific Computing and Video Production. These are the top skills needed. So, these are the digital skill competencies needed in 2022.

We need to change our approach to education. This is just one part which I have shown you. Similarly, in other fields also you will have to it. "It is not the big that ate the small". It is in the past-history. You know even not having these many employees, small businesses are earning more money by having only 10 people in their office, but their business is about Rs.100 core. We have so many people in all the universities and in spite of having so many people we are unable to make that big business. If your product is not good, consumers will move away from you. I am telling you we have so much opportunity, because we have a brand. I will be happy if Dr. B R Ambedkar Open University Hyderabad converts them into an education brand, like **Marriott** -that is a brand and

together, you too, can. I am sure you can do it, you are a pioneer, and I can help you. Of course, on the phone, I am doing it. I have done this in all the universities, I did in YCMOU. I called it a parallel system. I brought in people from outside and now there are so many innovative people there. So, with this, I must thank you for listening to me patiently and hearing me out. Thank you very much.

(Transcript of the Lecture delivered Dr.BRAOU, Hyderabad 4th July 2022)



Professor Rajan M. Welukar

Brief Profile

Professor Rajan M. Welukar, is an eminent academician, former vice-chancellor of the University of Mumbai, Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University and G H Raisoni University.

Prof. Welukar has more than 36 years of experience in the Indian Higher Education System as a teacher, development leader, quality innovator, technology adopter, administrator and policy advisor.

Dr. Rajan Welukar has more than 35 years' experience with the Indian Higher Education System as a teacher, development leader, quality innovator, Technology adopter, administrator and policy advisor.

Institutions Prof. Welukar worked with include: Vice Chancellor, G H Raisoni University, Chindwara (1st Oct 2017 to 16th March 2019), Provost, Somaiya Group of Institutions, Mumbai (July 2015 to sept 2017), Vice-chancellor, University of Mumbai(July 2010 to July 2015), Vice-Chancellor, Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University(Sept 2004 to Sept 2009), I/C Vice-chancellor, SNDT Women's University (Feb 2011 to May 2011), Senior Programme Officer, Commonwealth Secretariat's CYP Asia Region(Oct 2003 to Aug 2004), Deputy Secretary to the Governor of Maharashtra(Mar 2002 to Oct 2003), Officer on special duty, Higher & Technical Education department, Government of Maharashtra (June 1996 to Feb 2001), i/c Director, Sydenham Institute of Management Studies, Research and Entrepreneurship Education(Sept 2009 to July 2010) and taught statistics to Undergraduate and Postgraduate classes in Institute of Science, Nagpur and Sydenham College of Commerce & Economics, Mumbai prior to 1996 from 1983). Vice Chancellor AURO University, Surat, Gujarat from 2nd March 2020 onwards.

Prof. Welukar worked on various important committees of National Knowledge Commission, University Grants Commission, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Film and Television Institute of India, Central Govt., State Govt., Future Generation University, USA and various important educational institutions.

He Compiled and edited a book, ***Gandhi@150*** which explores the relevance of Mahatma Gandhi's ideas in today's world and the impact of his philosophy across a wide spectrum of areas such as religion, economics, science, education, the arts and health and development.

Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR OPEN UNIVERSITY

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