

## Achyuta Samanta: An Inspiring Rags to Riches Story

Entrepreneurship, Rags To Riches | Dr. Varun Suthra | April 23, 2013 at 8:24 pm



In a world, so full of competitions amongst the rich, the powerful and the rank holders, that the inner self of a human being often finds itself lost or rather trampled. We live in a world which is being ruled by Money, Power, Status and Corruption. Whether one believes it or not, there are still some people around us who could have become powerful both in strength and in financial means but who instead dared to create an equitable world sans hunger and ignorance despite being surrounded by wealth and power.

In the early sixties, history was about to be written in a non-descript village Kalarabanka in the district of Cuttack. One finds after 48 long years, the non-descript obscure village Kalarabanka and its surrounding villages have become an education hub, for

the region acquiring the status of a model Panchayat, with the village Kalarabanka becoming the first village in India to cover its citizens by the Health Insurance. The unbelievable trait has happened, not through any miracle but, through the continuous and dedicated effort of its prodigy, a frail looking young man Achyuta Samanta who was raised there against all hopes of survival due to the untold miseries inflicted on him and his family by cruel destiny. Wild spinach and rice gruel were all that his mother could give Achyuta for sustenance, for she had to fend the entire family of seven in absence of her husband who died untimely when Achyuta was only four, a tiny tot. It can be left to one's imagination to visualize the horrendous life young Achyuta was leading with a dilapidated thatched roof over his head leaking in rainy season and turning into an inferno during summer.

It was indeed a difficult choice for anyone grown in such a hopeless situation to think for getting education, but as if driven by an instinct, young Achyuta followed the few elderly boys to reach the school. Surprised by his will to stay put in the class, the headmaster had to give in and the journey for the young lad started. Journey from a Primary School to High School, and from High School to College, and from a College to the University, always with the merit scholarship was both fascinating and challenging for Achyuta . In his journey from the village to a district Headquarters town and from there to the State capital Achyuta learned the hard ways of life. Since hunger was writ large on the walls of his house in village, empty stomach in the city could not be a hindrance for him to get his Master's in Chemistry from Utkal University. Scholarship was not enough for him to sail through for which he had to take up giving tuition to the students. The adversities of life, the penury he experienced made him to struggle and stand in the midst of just a very microscopic few who could transform his woes to advantages. The logical end to

a struggling young man's quest was a job to sustain himself and help the family back home. His academic excellence got him the job of a teacher in a local college, but his destiny had other plans for him.

**The hunger, the poverty and the will to forge ahead kept him going.** The prospects of a good life did not make him forget his wretched condition and deprivation. Adversaries of life taught him to take life as it came. Being crushed in poverty he learned to survive and transform his adversaries to advantages. Thus, Achyuta thought something big for deprived children where each one of them could study. It definitely needs courage to give up a secured future to run after a mirage. Few people dare to think of coming nearer to the horizon but very few of them set their own horizons and Achyuta was proving to be one in the second category. With all his savings, a **paltry sum of Rs. 5,000/- (100 US \$)**, Achyuta started a small Industrial Training Institute in 1993 which has grown into one of the finest **multi-disciplinary Universities** of the country. It is yet another story of a successful social entrepreneur which Achyuta has already been accepted. It was not his aim to open up an Industrial Training Centre and then upgrade it to an Engineering College to mint money. Around this time, Achyuta started a small school for 125 children belonging to the under-privileged section of the society. That small institute – **Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS)** has now grown into **the largest institute of the world for 20,000 tribal children, who are provided with accommodation, food, health care and education from KG to PG absolutely free.**



Achyuta Samanta along with the children of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS)

Born out of love, passion and dedication, KISS today stands testimony to Achyuta Samanta's expression of feelings and his sincerity to empower millions of under privileged aborigines through education. He has taken a very firm and bold step towards the creation of an equitable world. Through KISS, Achyuta Samanta ensured that no child should ever have a nightmarish shattered childhood. **He now plays, father to nearly 20,000 children,** as he knows what it meant to be a fatherless child. Love and care helped the tribal children to shine in every field. Whether it is to represent the nation in international sports or to secure position in various qualifying examinations, the indigenous children have proved beyond any doubt that given scope, they could outshine everyone. Participation of world organizations like UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA and US Federal Government in various projects of KISS prove that KISS has become the most accepted model to empower and create sustainable livelihood through education. Great economic planners, statesmen including Presidents, Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, Nobel Laureates and Social workers come here to appreciate and experience KISS. While world leaders are concerned about creating a better world and the UN also has set certain goals like Millennium Development Goals, KISS has slowly but steadily been inching towards fulfilling many of those goals. Volumes can be written about KISS and volumes can be written about Achyuta Samanta who single-handedly dared to give the underprivileged children, their due in the society.

Establishment of **KIIT** and **KISS** shows just a small glimpse of Achyuta Samanta's persona. His concern for the ailing society, his friends and people around him get lot of admirations for him even from his bitter critics. Regional, national and international publications have hailed him. 'Time magazine', 'Outlook',

'India Today' have featured him and now 'Reader's Digest', brought out in 21 languages from 50 countries put him in the cover giving a moving description of Samanta. Achyuta Samanta stands apart as a person who could have bought all the luxuries of life, but for a man like him for whom puffed rice was the luxury, the money and luxury meant very little. Neither he ever craved for power nor he ever thinks of living in comfort and luxury. He finds the greatest satisfaction by his Gandhian life style, his simple vegetarian food and inexpensive dress which speak a lot about him. He shares the pain of others and for him kindness in thinking creates profoundness and kindness creates love. It is the love for humanity that inspires Achyuta Samanta to stand as a class of his own in the midst of Great Philanthropists.

**What good is one's wealth, if it is not used to improve or enhance the general quality of mankind.** One cannot just keep earning money, if he does not have anything worthwhile to spend it. A time comes in every rich person's life when he starts thinking of the poor. While great philanthropists like **Warren Buffett, Bill Gages, Li Ka Shing, George Soros, Wang Jianlin, Terrence Pwegula** and the likes, after having all the luxury in life, started donating out their money for others, Samanta helps every one without having a house or a bank account in his name, for he thinks giving others is his greatest luxury in life. His struggle, his sacrifice and his simplicity are definitely more precious than anything money could buy.