



NAVADIGANTA

A MESSAGE

[SANSKRIT]

–ASATO MA SATGAMAYO;
TAMASO MA JYOTIRGAMAYO
MRITYURMAHMRTANG GAMAYO

We traverse
From Falsehood to Truth
From Darkness to Enlightenment
From Death to Eternity.

-- Brihadaranyak Upanishad (1/3/24)

During this journey of the human beings he /she has discovered the mysteries of the

universe- the billions of stars, galaxies, black holes, quasars, billions of light years apart, the mysteries of the quantum world-the photons, the strings, the quarks in the world of the Plancklengths ,mysteries of genetics and cloning. He/she has traveled all the way from primitive world to the world of love, affection, regard and bliss.

The journey towards Truth continues. Our Navadiganta (New Horizon) is a tiny spring board for the initiation of the quest for truth. Our motto is manifested (expressed) in our emblem.

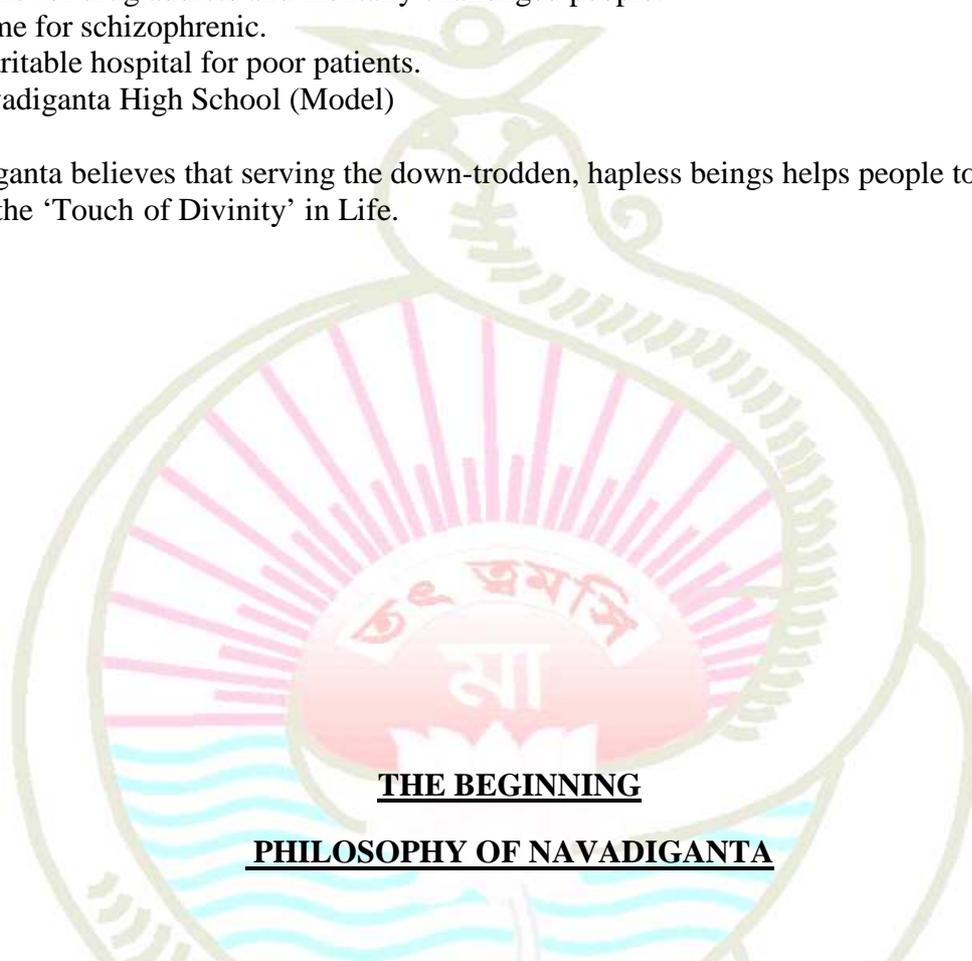
Our emblem symbolizes knowledge (Jnyan) by the half rising Sun, the service (Karma) by the flowing water, the devotion (Bhakti) by the lotus and the serpent energy (Kulakundalini Shakti) by the snake coiled in a clockwise direction to form the symbol of eternity the AWUMN (SANSKRIT -). Awumn represent the creation (AW), the preservation (U) and destruction (MN). It also epitomizes the three Gods – Lord Brahma (God of creation), Lord Vishnu (God of preservation) and Lord Maheshwara (God of destruction).And finally TAT-TAM-ASI means you are HE.

Any person can follow one or more ways represented by the symbols. But he/she has to do service to the society. Our Navadiganta serves the down trodden people, irrespective of caste, creed and religion with care, respect and reverence, as the worshipping of God.

Navadiganta runs the following :

1. An orphanage for the destitute boys.
2. Home for senior citizens.
3. Home for the deserted deaf and dumb women.
4. Home for drug addicts and mentally challenged people.
5. Home for schizophrenic.
6. Charitable hospital for poor patients.
7. Navadiganta High School (Model)

Navadiganta believes that serving the down-trodden, hapless beings helps people to realize the 'Touch of Divinity' in Life.



Like many other suburbs of Kolkata, Sarsuna has also undergone rapid transformation during the last three decades. Remnants of water bodies, marshes, bamboo-groves, wastelands and old mansions of erstwhile zaminders bear testimony of bygone era. The backdrop of mystic solitude and greenery of the past witnessed the pursue of five youths, driven by spiritual idealism in the 1970s : Sachidulal Banerjee, Santanu Banerjee, Tarun Kanti Kayal, Mukul Kayal and Umasankar Purkait all college students – living in and around Sarsuna, became friends and started searching for the answers to the mysteries of ' the Being' and the 'Creation'. They meditated in a small cottage and built a small temple . Simultaneously , they were deeply touched by the plight of suffering humanity 'as the nation passed through one crisis after another ; poverty, mal-nutrition , illiteracy, political movements, dictatorship and endless violence ruled the society in those days. The five friends soon realized that serving people and worshipping God are inseparable and no truth was truer than that.

Little did they know that they were going to create a unique Organization which would expand its charitable service to a sizable magnitude within three decades.

THE JOURNEY

In 1977, work began with a coaching center for poor students. Besides academic studies, the students learnt community living, sharing the joy of simple living in close association with the teachers. Some students were so charmed with the 'new education' that they started preferring staying with the teachers even in the night. Gradually, ten poorest of poor students were provided shelter, food, dress and education by the five friends. There were no funds. As a result they begged from door to door. Starving was common. But that could hardly dampen their high spirit. This studying-teaching-begging-starving cycle continued till the organization NAVADIGANTA was born and got officially registered on 21st March 1981.

Somehow, the then State Minister for Social Welfare, Mrs. Nirupama Sen came to learn about all these happenings and helped the group with a lump sum grant of Rs.9000 in two spells. The State Government gave them the permission to look after 50 Destitute Boys and sanctioned a grant of Rs.68.50p per child per month under the Capitation Scheme in 1981 and sent 40 boys from government shelters in the following year. Later, in 1984, the cottage scheme, run concurrently by the State and the Central Government, replaced the capitation scheme and the fund allocation improved to rupees 112.50 per head per month.

In 1987, accommodations were provided to two willing old people and soon the demand for an old age home could be felt. Lots of applications started flowing in and fifteen more people were given shelter. The ground floor and the 1st floor of the old age home were constructed with help of private donations.

A unique situation emerged. Destitute children and lonely grand parents of different origins and different status came in contact with each other and enjoyed the warmth of the age-old relationship. Women in distress due to various reasons also seek refuge. They received training for various services to enable them to earn their own bread. The Ashram – organization became a place of harmony-where mutual support of the members helped each other in their existence and in living a comfortable life. The children received education, the women got safety and shelter and the elders become the guardians of all.

This 'Mission of Harmony' earned Sri Sachidulal Banerjee, president of NAVADIGANTA, the prestigious ASHOKA INDIA FOUNDATION AWARD in 1989.

NAVADIGANTA never denied any aged person from admission on the grounds of ill health (physical or mental); rather it considered dependent /chronically ill old people, often neglected by their own relatives, most deserving. But this attitude necessitated ample facility to provide health care services. It was decided to build the Hospital in 1996. A portion of the ground floor was re-arranged to accommodate outdoor, indoor, pathological and X-ray laboratory and an operation theatre.

OUR EVALUATION

Navadiganta had no funds, when it began its journey. Immense sacrifice and hardship of its founder members helped to build and run the organization. However, they never ran short of faith and commitment to the course. Throughout its journey, this dual feature of abundant spirit and inadequate resources has characterized the organization. The centre of activities has shifted from the small hut where twenty students struggled with their 'teachers' – to a three storied residential home, a Hospital, a School and an office; Number of beneficiaries run in thousands – and the demand for more services is growing.

Navadiganta has helped the poor and destitute, diseased and neglected, homeless and mentally challenged – whenever one needed assistance. It has believed that help should be extended to any person who deserves it – and there should be no 'ifs' and 'buts' in it. Simple truth, no doubt, but Navadiganta has to fight against hoards of atrocities as it decided to stick to this principle for three long decades – and that itself was a test for the strength of the organization. Lonely people who are overlooked by their families, ignored by the society – and even denied of help by other organizations – flock here, at Navadiganta – and find a place to live with dignity and love.

The Hospital at Navadiganta also plays a unique role – it serves patients from the local area at a very cheap rate – and at the same time looks after the residents of the Old age home and hostels. The sickroom, the health check ups, the multidisciplinary treatment and investigation facilities – and its connection with the Homes – has made its role a pioneering one.

However, there are some other aspects of Navadiganta, which needs attention. –
STRATEGY WISE: Navadiganta has remained too busy to serve the worst affected people in our contemporary society; so busy, that it could hardly emphasize upon infusing positive practices and values into the society – so that people can live better. If Navadiganta has played exemplary role by accommodating geriatric patients and mentally challenged persons – it should also have played a more positive role of raising the standards of care for people within the society at large.

- 1) It should have started programs to involve middle-aged people (living in families) into creative activities and prepare themselves extract for their future life.
- 2) Navadiganta should immediately negotiate with other NGOs running similar homes – to enable them to have their own sickrooms and sevikas trained particularly to take care of geriatric patients.
- 3) A voice should be raised to be capable to understand and face challenges in better facilities and cheaper treatment for common old age illnesses.

