



MR. ANAND KUMAR

Scholar and Educator

Taken by the Editorial Board

YT: Sir, your initiative, Super 30, has transformed the lives of many underprivileged students by preparing them for the IIT-JEE. What inspired you to start this program, and what were some of the biggest challenges you faced in its early days?

AK: It all began as a call of conscience after I missed the opportunity to study at Cambridge due to financial constraints. That experience deeply shaped my resolve to make education accessible to others. I started small by teaching mathematics to local students, and over time, it grew into something more substantial, even becoming a source of sustenance for me.

Later, I decided to take a bigger step by selecting 30 meritorious students from underprivileged backgrounds and providing them with free residential education. The journey was not easy—starting out without resources was particularly challenging. I worked from a makeshift venue and had to rent benches for students to sit on. Despite the hurdles, my vision to transform lives through education gave me the strength to persist.

YT: Your journey has been filled with both triumphs and obstacles. Can you share some of the most impactful success stories from your Super 30 program, and how these stories have impacted you personally?

AK: Super 30 is about transforming dreams into reality for those from the most challenging backgrounds. Every student here has an inspiring story of grit and determination. Whether it is the child of a daily wage laborer, a security guard, or a widow struggling to make ends meet, they have overcome incredible odds through hard work and passion. Many have gone on to work in top multinational companies, bringing about generational change. It is this ability to nurture hope and drive transformation that makes Super 30 truly unique.

YT: Education plays a crucial role in shaping the future of a nation. Based on your experience, what do you believe are the most pressing issues facing the Indian education system today, and how can we address them to ensure quality education for all?

AK: The most pressing issue is making education truly inclusive. Right now, different standards based on affordability create inequities and limit the talent pool. Many brilliant students lose opportunities simply because of financial constraints. This not only affects their futures but also hampers societal progress. Access to quality education must be based on ability and ambition, not economic status. Inclusivity is essential for building a fair and thriving education system and unlocking our society's full potential.

YT: In many STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields, gender parity remains a significant issue. How does Super 30 encourage and support female students to pursue careers in science and technology, traditionally male-dominated fields?

AK: Gender parity is essential in every field, and while things are gradually changing, it cannot happen overnight. Over the years, we have seen more girls entering fields where they were once underrepresented, and their numbers are steadily growing. At Super 30, in the early years, we only had boys because girls were often not seen as inclined towards engineering and mathematics. However, we did have a few girls in the program, and since they were just two or three, they stayed at my house with my mother for safety.

Today, even traditionally male-dominated fields are seeing more women, and this trend will continue to grow as awareness and opportunities expand. It is a positive shift, and with time, we will see even greater participation from women in all sectors.

YT: Your work has inspired many individuals to pursue careers in education and social work. What advice would you give to young people who aspire to make a difference in society through education?

AK: My only advice to the youth is to always give back to society what it has given you. If you are fortunate

enough to have opportunities and resources that many others lack, it's important to share those blessings when you're in a position to do so. Giving back can truly make a difference—it uplifts others and helps build a more compassionate, equitable society. By doing so, you not only change lives but also contribute to a stronger, more connected world.

YT: Reflecting upon the numerous accolades and recognition you have received in recent years, could you describe in detail how this fame has influenced and transformed your professional trajectory? How has it altered your approach to your work, collaborations with peers, opportunities for innovation, and overall career aspirations?

AK: Accolades and recognition come as a result of hard work, and they always bring with them a greater sense of responsibility to do even better. They should not be seen as a reason to rest on one's laurels but as encouragement to push further and achieve more.

Currently, I'm focused on expanding my work through online platforms to reach more needy students, not just across the country, but even beyond. I realized the power of technology in education when I started engaging with students remotely to help them avoid the stress of confinement during the pandemic. The response was overwhelming and encouraged me to transform Super 30 into Super Infinity. I'm still working on this expansion, collaborating with experts to enhance the initiative and make it even more impactful for students.

YT: With the advent of digital education and online learning platforms, how do you see the future of traditional classroom education evolving, and what role can technology play in making quality education accessible to all?

AK: Technology should be seen as a supplement, not a substitute for classroom teaching. A good teacher

will always be essential in guiding and inspiring students. However, technology can enhance the learning experience by making classrooms more engaging and interactive. It can provide students with access to the best educational materials available anywhere, ensuring quality education and broadening learning opportunities. When used effectively, technology can empower both teachers and students, helping them achieve more.

YT: You have faced numerous challenges in your mission to provide quality education to underprivileged students. Can you share an instance where you overcame a significant obstacle, and what lessons did you learn from that experience?

AK: When I started Super 30, it was a completely new concept. Nobody had thought of providing free residential education to 30 students. I kept them at home or nearby to ensure I could give them maximum attention. This pioneering initiative did not sit well with some in the coaching industry, who saw it as a threat to their business. For me, it wasn't about business—it was a mission I wanted to pursue.

Arranging for food, accommodation, and study materials for all the students was difficult, as I did not have the resources. My mother even cooked meals for the children. Despite this, there were people who tried to disrupt the initiative, even resorting to attacks. But I remained focused on my goal, and as Super 30 succeeded, others tried to copy it. Many started their own versions in hopes of diluting my efforts, but none succeeded. The key takeaway is that negativity never wins—Super 30 remained unique.

YT: As an educator who has worked closely with students from disadvantaged backgrounds, what personal values and principles have guided you throughout your journey, and how do you impart these values to your students?

AK: The biggest difference is the opportunity I provide. My principle is to offer all students the same opportunities and environment, regardless of caste or creed. Beyond that, they do the rest. I instill in them the belief that they are inferior to none and, in fact, better than many. I emphasize that they have the power to bring about a generational shift. I also stress that education is the only way they can rise above poverty and lift their families with them. The students are incredibly receptive to this message and passionate about their goals. This mindset shift is what drives them to succeed, and it is what makes all the difference in their journeys.

YT: The students of St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata, deeply admire your dedication to education and social upliftment. What message would you like to convey to them about the importance of education, perseverance, and giving back to the community?

AK: Education is power, wealth, progress, and liberation. It is the one weapon that can solve most of the world's problems, whether it is poverty, inequality, or other challenges. If you take education seriously, it will take you seriously throughout your life. It empowers you, not just to improve your own circumstances, but to give back to society. You owe it to yourself and to society to embrace it fully. For India to progress, education must reach every individual in equal measure. Only then can we truly unlock the potential of our people and build a more equitable and prosperous future.