

GBU: ON ITS WAY TO BECOMING A WORLD-CLASS HIGHER EDUCATION CENTRE

Q&A with S R Lakha (IAS Retd) Vice Chancellor Gautam Buddha University

Set up in August 2008, the 511-acre Gautam Buddha University is fast moving towards becoming a world class centre for excellence in education. It provides world class infrastructure to faculty and students and plan to have mutual collaborations with industry for research and development facilities. It is also one of the few Universities and institutions who are conducting a very organized research on Buddhist practices and civilization studies. The university's vice chancellor S R Lakha (IAS Retd) talks about the USP and mission of the university. Excerpts:

What is the legal status of Gautam Buddha University?

Gautam Buddha University is established by the Uttar Pradesh Act (9) of 2002 passed by the Uttar Pradesh Legislature. The University is recognized by the University Grants Commission under UGC Act and is a member of the Association of Indian Universities.

Why do you claim your University to be different from the rest?

Gautam Buddha University is modeled as a fully residential educational campus in line with the best institutions of higher learning across the globe. A fully residential campus for all Faculty, Staff and Students with world class infrastructure and support facilities, lush green campus spread over 511 acres with 30% green area in which 50,000 trees already planted, with a total built up campus area 55 lacs sq.ft. Our major thrust and our focus on four areas of activity in the University bears the philosophy of growth in totality. Our thrust areas are: Academics, Research, Sports and Culture. If you look at our accomplishments in three years of our commencement of the academic session, that explains the rest.

Can you elaborate on this?

We provide world class infrastructure to faculty and students and plan to have mutual collaborations with industry for research and development facilities. Our laboratories are equipped with *state-of-the-art* facilities and the instruments, machines and equipments used in them are at par with all national and international standards. We have plans to establish incubation centres and R&D centres for which we have already started working and finalizing the shape of the initiative. We promote sports activities to create national and international level players and athletes and plan to have reservation for sports persons in our admissions. The

Eklavya Sports Complex spread over more than 40 acres with indoor and outdoor stadium equipped with state-of-the-art sports facilities is getting ready in this academic session. The sports complex has an Olympic size swimming pool with an additional practice track with a world class gymnasium.

We have created many cultural clubs where students and faculty can have creative expressions to their fullest. GBU's annual cultural event adds wings to intellect, imagery, and creativity of our students. It aims at dissolving the cultural demarcations and facilitating a new school of thought where every student thinks beyond boundaries but still grounded to his values. It also gives a platform to the young aspirants and compels them to think out of the box.

What is the genesis of the creation of this University?

The initiative to establish this University stands out as an effort to revive Buddhist philosophy, which finds immense significance in the modern context. The founders of this University Manyawar Sh. Kanshi Ram Jee and our Hon'ble Chancellor Sushri Mayawatjee, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh envisioned revival of Buddhist Philosophy in India which extends to entire South-East Asia for peace, harmony and co-existence of multi-ethnic and diverse sections of an egalitarian society, as envisaged by Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar. All the eight Schools and the various research centres in the University are in synchrony with the essence of our predominant Buddhist Ethics and Practices in the modern context. The University encompasses modern fields of studies, high-end technological exposure and imparts global standards of higher education, training and research for meeting educational demands of the 21st Century.

What makes you say that you are going to be a Global centre of Excellence in Buddhist Research and civilization Study?

With our tireless efforts to make this University a Centre of Excellence in higher education and training, we are engaged in **Institutional Networking** with Universities and Institutions of Global repute in various fields of studies. We are open to academic collaborations, joint research programmes and faculty and student exchange programmes with academic institutions of repute dedicated to Buddhist Studies.

Perhaps, we are one of the few Universities and institutions who are conducting a very organized research on Buddhist practices and civilization studies. Though a huge number of scholars across the globe have been conducting research to explore Buddhist practices and civilization,

we have an integrated approach wherein, we are establishing global networking, establishing a Buddhist Museum and Research Centre, creating Buddhist archives and preserving all Buddhist notations. The School of Buddhist Studies and Civilization is a result of our fundamental commitment to the promotion of peace and harmony, development of Buddhist Traditions in our world torn apart by conflict, hatred and violence. This School shall be functional in the academic session 2012-13. We have also decided to establish a Buddhist Museum and Research Centre in the University campus with an estimated cost of Rs. 84 crore. Proposed area for the museum is 23 acres.



Do you have different criteria for giving admission to the students belonging to the underprivileged sections and historically excluded?

If you look at our Mission Statements, they clearly express our fundamental commitment to serve all sections of the society with special reference to historically marginalized sections of the society. We strictly implement the Reservation Policy as per the rules of the Government of Uttar Pradesh. We are at advantageous position in getting very good talent pool of young aspirants from these sections. We conduct national level entrance tests **GPT for Post Graduate Programmes, GPTU for Dual Degree Programmes and GPTR for Doctoral Degree Programmes**. In all these courses we get ample number of candidates from these sections that fulfill our admission criteria and qualify for respective programmes.

There is a great deal of emphasis on global exposure in your university. Can you elaborate on various measures that you take towards this end?

To become a global centre for excellence, we are in the process of formalizing tie ups and mutual accreditations with many uni-

versities in UK, Canada, Australia, Denmark and USA. In this regard we have already signed MoUs with the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia, the International Business Academy, Kolding Denmark, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK, and Sheffield Hallam University, UK. The MoU with Keele University, UK is under process.

And can you please elaborate on the special global experience that is being provided to students of underprivileged sections?

To take the initiative of the University further, the govt. of Uttar Pradesh has intro-

duced special scholarships for students of SC/ST and other economically challenged students across all classes of the society enabling 50% of them to meet their expenses for one semester study at a university abroad for their travel, stay and course fees. In the session 2009-10, 15 students went to Denmark to attend Summer School Programme at the **International Business Academy, Kolding, Denmark** to study "The European Management Perspective". In the following session 2010-2011, 12 students of MBA, School of Management and M.Tech., School of Information and Communication Technology went to **Sheffield Hallam University, UK** to attend one Semester Abroad Programme. The third batch of students is preparing for the semester abroad programme for the session 2011-12 and a batch of approximately 45 students is being sent to **Sheffield Hallam University, UK** for a semester in September 2011.

And what you do on the special global experience that is being provided to students of other sections of the society?

We have been able to generate three Scholarships (one each in the study areas of

Management, Information and Communication Technology, and Biotechnology) in coordination with the host university (Sheffield Hallam University, UK) to give exposure to students from all sections.

What is your comment on faculty strengths? How do you ensure that the best talents are attracted to the University?

Our faculty members are drawn from the various institutions of national and international repute. All faculty members in all disciplines serving as assistant professors and above are doctorate with impressive

What is your USP?

The approach of our programmes is secular, egalitarian, and critical, relying on the Buddhist philosophy and its applicability in restoring supremacy of peace, co-existence, and development in totality. With emphasis on the rigorous training and education of our young aspirants, we ensure experiential, experimental and interdisciplinary learning and research in various fields of studies. Our meticulously designed curriculum and pedagogical training programmes stay focussed on imparting all necessary knowledge required and desired for creating humane and rational society.

research accomplishments. We emphasize on their personal growth and provide ample opportunity to get national and international exposure through conferences, symposia, seminars, and workshops.

Our School of Engineering organised a Management Development Programme (MDP) on Sewage Treatment for the Officials of UVA Provincial Building Department, Govt. of Srilanka from 23rd May 2011 to 28th May 2011. Srilankan Govt. has requested University to plan and organise this training programme for their Engineers looking at the expertise available in GBU. In addition to that conducting many short term faculty development programmes and management development programmes in various advance areas of engineering and technology like waste minimisation, remote sensing and GIS application in urban planning, MATLAB, disaster management and project management during summer i.e. may 2011 to July 2011.

What special efforts are you making in creating conducive atmosphere for research and academic developments at various Schools of learning in the University?

We have started with developing laborato-

ries, workshops, research centers and enriching them with state-of-the-art instruments, machines and equipments at par with national and international standards. For this purpose we have done sizeable budget allocation apart from regular expenditure in School of Biotechnology, School of Engineering, and School of ICT. We have made our PhD programme very meticulous in terms of entrance, administering the course, and very elaborate RDC procedures. We have been in consultations with experts of national and international repute for designing, developing and enriching the research facilities, curriculum and their mode of delivery.

Your Central library looks very impressive infrastructure-wise. What learning resources you have there?

Bodhisattava Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Library is the soul of academic and research activities of our University. The library is fully automated and functional with the RFID system in place. With a huge volumes of e-journals (approximately 24,000) which include Ebsco, IEEE, ACM, ASCE, Emerald, Pro Quest, Oxford University Press, Springer, Nature, J Store. And Delnet facilities. Apart from these journals we have 400 E-Books, 100 Print Journals and a huge collection of different titles covering all disciplines of studies at GBU. The library is well equipped with modern facilities, spacious stack halls, and 2000 seating capacity reading hall, reference sections, catalogue area, and multiple loaning counters.

So far what has been the industry's response to your institutions? Can you tell us more about your placement initiatives and industry's response to internships and traineeships for your students?

The Corporate Relations Cell (CRC) at GBU is the face of the University to the Corporate/Industry. It facilitates the process of close Industry University interactions and actively promotes new avenues in experiential learning. The CRC endeavors to bridge the gap between academia and corporate world. It engages leaders, entrepreneurs, executives, and policy makers to address students to facilitate practical learning. We have 100% summer placements and live projects in highly reputed industries. We have received very warm response from the Industry and corporate houses for final placement as well. We are a member of NHRD-Delhi NCR and are productively engaged in HR-Networking. We achieved around very impressive placements for the first batch of MBA students, and a very satisfying response from the industry for the second batch of MBA and first batch of M.Tech. ICT students.