

Chapter - I

From Bharmacharyashrama to Visva-Bharati: A Chronicle of Metamorphosis of a Tiny School into an Internationally-Acclaimed Centre of Learning

Visva-Bharati which epitomizes culmination of Asia's first Nobel Laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore's dream of an institution, slated to deliver holistic education, as preached in the Upanisadas "sā vidyā ya vimuktāye" (that which emancipates is knowledge) had a very modest beginning. In 1863, Debendranath Tagore, the poet's father and a herbringer of nineteenth century Bengal Renaissance took the users right of 20 bighas of land at an early land rent of twenty rupees in the arid soil of the district of Birbhum and established the Santiniketan Ashrama. In 1888, he executed a Trust Deed for the management of the Ashrama and dedicated it for the purpose of meditation.

Thoroughly averse to the-then education system and its mode of teaching which he considered mechanical, soulless and uninspiring, Rabindranath established a school, viz. Santiniketan Brahmacharyashrama on 23rd December, 1901 with five students with the avowed objective of providing, as reported by the Visva-Bharati Bulletin of January, 1924:

"to a limited number of children an education which would not be divorced from life, where pupils would become members of a larger family and regard the affairs of the institution as their own, and where they would live and grow in an atmosphere of freedom, mutual trust and happiness."

In conscious repudiation of the education system introduced by the British hegemony which harped on producing a group of stupefied clerks, bent on making British Raj unrivalled, Rabindranath introduced a new system of reading-learning where classes were held in open air, where man and nature enter into an immediate harmonious relationship. Twenty years later in a letter to Patrick Geddes, he emphasized:

"I merely started with this one simple idea that education should never be dissociated from life."

The concept of holistic education which will nurture a 'complete' human was imbibed by Rabindranath from our ancient Indian Upanisadic texts which preached emancipation of soul from the bondage of mundane prosperity. His resource was limited, but his ideal was unswerving.

By 1917, the idea of an Indian cultural centre was gradually shaping up. The centre will be slated "for the coordinated study of the different cultures." On 23rd December, 1918, the foundation stone of Visva-Bharati was laid by the poet-educator. In his short speech he explained the aims and objectives of the institution:

"The primary function of a university should be the constructive work of joining and imparting knowledge. Men should be brought together and full scope given to them not only for intellectual exploration, but of vital creation as well and the teaching should be the overflow of this spring of culture, spontaneous and inevitable."

Visva-Bharati was registered on 16th May, 1922. Scholars from all over the universe started pouring in to make Visva-Bharati indeed a centre of global culture and learning.

The Brahmacharya school during 1924 came to be called Visva-Bharati Purba Bibhaga and from 1925 it became Patha Bhavana of Visva-Bharati.

In 1921, the Department of Advanced Studies was established which was re-named as Vidya Bhavana in 1926.

From 1919 music and art were being taught at Kala Bhavana which finally branched off into two institutions i.e. Kala and Sangit Bhavana in 1933.

In his early years during his stay in Shilaidaha and Sahazadpur, Rabindranath could feel the agony and pain of village life, steeped in poverty and ignorance. To put an end of this sorry state of affairs, Rabindranath ventured to start a new mission in the form of introducing a system of vocational educational which will make the village people self-reliant. With this objective on 6th February 1922 the Visva-Bharati Agricultural and Village Reconstruction Department was started at the Surul under the inspiring leadership of Leonard Elmhirst. After some time it came to be known as Sriniketan (the abode of prosperity). The idea enshrined in establishment of this institution was to bring back life in its completeness to the villages and make villagers self conscious about their propensities. In 1924, was established another school "Siksha-Satra" which was finally shifted to Sriniketan in 1927.

The Cheena-Bhavana was formally inaugurated as a research department by Gurudeva on 14 April 1937 with the lofty ideal of strengthening the age-old cultural ties between India and China. The untiring zeal and effort of Professor Tan Yun-Shan opened up a

new vista of Sino-Indian Cultural Fellowship through the Visva-Bharati. In 1994, the establishment of the Nippon-Bhavana added another feather to promote advance studies in Japanese language and culture.

The foundation stone of Hindi-Bhavana was laid by C.F. Andrews and Kshitimohan Sen and the tireless endeavour of Pandit Banarasidas Chaturvedi bore fruit with the completion of the Hindi-Bhavana building on 31 January 1939.

In May, 1951 Visva-Bharati was accorded the status of Central University and “an institution of national importance.”

Thus, what began simply as a school, after traversing a long way amidst plethora of constrains-- financial, administrative or in whatever form they might be, has today expanded into a modern university with multifarious pursuits and disciplines with an emphasis which will always promote cultivation of excellence and the retention of an ever-alive experimental character. Santiniketan i.e. an abode of peace and Sriniketan i.e. an abode of grace- these two combined make Visva-Bharati a place of ethereal beauty, serenity and academic vibrancy.

Institutional Structure Today

Visva-Bharati, as per the Act of Parliament of 1951, has the President of India as the Paridarsaka (Visitor) and the Governor of West Bengal as the Pradhana (Rector). The President of India appoints the Acharya (Chancellor) and the Upacharya (Vice-Chancellor) of the University. The Act of 1951, with certain amendments made by Parliament thereafter, and the Statutes of Visva-Bharati constitute the basis of the powers and functions of the university and its constituent authorities. The chief decision-making bodies of the university are the Samsad (Court), the Karma Samiti (Executive Council), the Siksha Samiti (Academic Council), the Artha Samiti (Finance Committee), and the various Institute Boards and Patha Samitis (Boards of Studies).

The University has the following Institutes, namely :

At Santiniketan

Bhasha-Bhavana (Institute of Languages, Literature & Culture)

Vidya-Bhavana (Institute of Social Sciences)

Siksha-Bhavana (Institute of Science)

Kala-Bhavana (Institute of Fine Arts)

Sangeet Bhavana (Institute of Music, Dance & Drama)

Vinaya Bhavana (Institute of Education)

Rabindra Bhavana (Institute of Tagore Studies, Museum & Archives)

Patha Bhavana (Institute of Primary, Secondary & Higher Secondary Education)

At Sriniketan

Palli Samgathana Vibhaga (Institute of Rural Reconstruction)

Palli Siksha Bhavana (Institute of Agricultural Science)

Siksha Satra (Institute of Primary, Secondary & Higher Secondary Education)

At Kolkata

Granthana Vibhaga (Publishing Department)

Besides, Visva-Bharati also guides the functioning of Agro-Economic Research Centre (A research centre sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture integrated with Visva-Bharati) and the Computer Centre, which functions as a service centre that helps both academic and administrative departments, in addition to performing its academic functions.

Socially Relevant Research and Other Activities

Steps were taken to promote socially relevant research work in Humanities, Physical and Social Sciences, and need-oriented extension activities of weaker sections.

A short review of the various activities in consonance with the above is given below:

The major areas of research covered by Siksha-Bhavana (Institute of Science) include Plants and Herbicides, Crop-nutrition, Forestry, Pisciculture, Atomic Research, Environmental pollution concerning Agricultural production and fisheries and also Industrial pollution, Immunization of plants and identification of certain epidemics. The Department

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of Zoology has been identified as a department of Special Assistance by U.G.C. under the special Assistance Programme with two thrust areas of teaching and research namely Fish Biology and Environmental Biology.

The Agro-Economic Research Centre took up research work related to (a) Role of Non-Government Agencies in Agricultural Development in Bihar, (b) Marketing of Agricultural Commodities concerning processing and input supply, (c) Decentralised planning in Agriculture and Rural Development, (d) Effect of Subsidies on Agricultural Development, (e) Economic Viability of Marginal and Small Farms and (f) Agricultural Marketing with special focus on progressing and inputs supplies (West Bengal).

Palli Samgathana Vibhaga sought to bring about regeneration of village life through self-help and self reliance in the villages around Santiniketan and Sriniketan through action-oriented programmes such as Mass Literacy programme, adult education, programmes undertaken by Brati Balak and Youth Organisation, rural library services, craft extension & training, etc., especially in the areas inhabited by scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other backward classes.

Palli Charcha Kendra (Centre for Rural Studies) focused its attention on Anti-Proverty programmes in Rural Areas with an in-depth study of "Operation Barga", Agricultural Production and Agricultural Marketing under ICAR, and studies in Language Corruption and Culture confusion of the Tribal Communities, especially the Santhal Community.

Palli Siksha Bhavana (Institute of Agricultural Science) took up (a) All India Coordinated Research projects on weed control under USDA and ICAR, (b) Nocil Research project on Weed Control on rice, (c) Oil-seed research scheme, (d) The effect of Neem Extract created on various crops, (e) A village level survey on nature, composition and utilisation of wastes under NROER and (f) Effect of irrigation and nitrogen on growth of crops, Agricultural Economy for the growth of Farm-Capital by introducing large scale, Jute, Sugarcane, Mustard Seed cultivation under the sponsorship of Visva-Bharati. Apart from the above, socially relevant projects undertaken by the Department of Plant Protection included (a) Integrated Pest Management, (b) Post-harvest Pathology, (c) Nematode Ecology, etc. A Soil Testing laboratory has also been set up in collaboration with the State Government, developing efficient soil testing methods for estimation of available soil phosphorous and potassium in lateritic soils in relation to production of rice crop.

The Department of Social Work organised programmes of socially relevant field studies like (a) Drop-outs to join schools, (b) Utilisation services of the health centres, (c) Investment in Agriculture and Industry by Co-operative Banks, (d) Family in socially distress, (e) Self-employment for SC/ST community and other backward classes of the rural population and special projects for the physically handicapped. It further initiated a community-based rehabilitation programme in collaboration with other governmental agencies in the neighbouring villages.

The Institute of Humanities and Social Science took up research programmes in Philosophy, Religion, History, Economics, Political Science and various languages, both Indian and foreign. Mention may be made of Bengali, Sanskrit, Palli & Prakrit, Persian, Urdu, Hindi, Santhali, Oriya, Tamil, Marathi, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese, Russian etc. Special studies on Buddhist literature and religion are being carried out in the Departments of Chinese Language & Culture and Indo-Tibetan Studies. They have a rich store house of old manuscripts. The Department of Oriya has taken up a special study of the Folklore of Orissa. Nippon Bhavana, i.e., the Japanese Studies & Culture Centre has been re-oriented towards cultural programmes between India and Japan with financial assistance from Japan.

That apart, the Indira Gandhi Centre for National Integration organises workshops and seminars on curricular development to determine how the culture of National integration may be taken up in the Secondary and Higher Secondary schools as a course of studies.

Apart from regular curricula in Computer Science at B.Sc. and M.Sc. levels, there is an independent Computer Centre of marked distinction imparting regular training and computation facilities to the Visva-Bharati community, both academic and administrative, to foster the generation of a computer culture. Computation facilities are also available in the following departments: English, Botany, Kala Bhavana, Mathematics, Palli Siksha Bhavana, Physics, Rabindra Bhavana, Zoology, and Agro-Economic Research Centre.

Mention may also be made of extension activities of students, which were marked by a special and socio-economic significance. These were organised in the form of regular programmes of NCC, NSS, Physical Education, and functions and festivals, including educational excursions which entailed an interaction with the people of the adjoining rural areas, mostly inhabited by scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The salient features of these extension activities related to social services, protection of the environment, eradication of illiteracy, primary health care as also the campaign against drug addiction.

The above gives a comprehensive view of the steps taken by the university to promote socially relevant research in tune with the dream of its founder Rabindranath Tagore, who looked forward to social uplift in India through socially relevant education programmes.

Functions and Festivals

The functions and festivals of Visva-Bharati are unique and have influenced, to a great extent, the life-style of the members of the University community. On these occasions, the entire community comes together in the wide open beauty of nature to experience a total Ashram life, chanting Vedic hymns and singing Rabindra Sangeet in the Mandir, Chhatimtala and Amrakunja.

Santiniketan Karmi-Mandali organised the following functions and festivals of the University during the year 2013-2014:

- i. Varsha-Sesh on the occasion of Bengali year ending on 14th April 2013 (Sunday, 31st Chaitra, 1419 BS).
- ii. Nava-Varsha on 15th April 2013 (Monday, 1st Vaisakh, 1420 BS).
- iii. Gurudev's 152th Birth Anniversary was celebrated on 9th May 2013 (Thursday, 25th Vaisakha, 1419 BS).
- iv. Gurudeva Smarana, the 72nd death anniversary of Gurudev and Vriksha ropan was observed on 8th August 2013 (Thursday, 22nd Shravana, 1420 BS).
- v. Halakarshana Utsava, celebrated on 9th August 2013 (Friday, 23rd Shravana, 1420 BS) at Sriniketan.
- vi. Rabindra Saptaha was observed from August 8 to 14th, 2013 (Shrabana 22 to 28, 1420 BS) Several lecture programmes were arranged at Sriniketan and Santiniketan on various topics related to Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore.
- vii. Silpotsava was celebrated in Silpa Sadana, Sriniketan on 17th September 2013 (Tuesday, 31st Bhadra, 1420 BS).
- viii. Poush Utsava was observed on 23rd December 2013 (Monday, 7th Poush, 1420 BS) at Chhatimtala, the beginning of a three days-festival with various cultural programmes, exhibitions, fire works and other entertainments widely known as Poush Mela.
- ix. Maharshi Samarana, the death anniversary of Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore was observed on 20th January 2014 (6th Magh 1420 BS).
- x. 91st Anniversary celebration of Sriniketan was observed from February 6 to 8, 2014. A three days festival with various cultural programmes, exhibitions, fire works and other entertainment widely known as Magh Mela.
- xi. Vasanta-Utsava, another popular festival was celebrated with traditional enthusiasm and gaiety on the day of Dolpurnima, 16th March 2014 (Sunday on 1st Chaitra, 1420 BS).

Other Functions and Festivals—01.04.2013 to 31.03.2014

July 22, 2013	Dharma Chakra Pravartana (Guru Purnima)
August 15, 2013	Swadhinata Divas (Independence Day)
September 27, 2013	Rammohan Smarana
October 02, 2013	Gandhi Janma Jayanti
December 19, 2013	Dinendra Janmotsava
December 25, 2013	Christotsava
January 23, 2014	Netaji's Birth day
January 25, 2014	Maghotsava
January 26, 2014	Republic Day
March 10, 2014	Gandhi Punyaha

Finance

The University is almost totally dependent on the U.G.C. grants for day to day running expenditure, a major part of which is in the nature of salaries etc. to teaching and non-teaching staff. The Maintenance grant (2013-2014) received from U.G.C. is ₹ 17,852.95 lakhs as against actual expenditure to the tune of ₹ 14,846.92 lakhs during 2012-2013.

Endowment Lectures held during the financial year 2013-2014 :

1. Maharshi Devendranath Memorial Lecture held on 24.12.2013
2. Nizam Memorial Lecture held on 03.02.2014
3. Sati Kumar Chatterjee Memorial Lecture held on 10.02.2014
4. Nripendra Chandra Bandyopadhyay Memorial Lecture held on 25.02.2014
5. Binodini Memorial Lecture held on 06.03.2014
6. Probodh Chandra Bagchi Memorial Lecture held on 11.03.2014
7. West Bengal Co-operative Union Memorial Lecture held on 25.03.2014
8. Amalabala Devi Memorial Lecture held on 27.03.2014

OBITUARY
As on 01-04-2013 to 31-03-2014

Since the last meeting of Samsad (Court) held on 30.03.2013, the University has lost the following renowned personalities, employees and ex-employees of Visva-Bharati:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Manna Dey | - | Noted Singer |
| 2. Subrata Chakraborty | - | Professor, Department of Physics, Siksha-Bhavana |
| 3. Syed Parvez Kabir | - | Assistant Professor, Kala-Bhavana |
| 4. Seuli Banerjee | - | Former Assistant Lecturer, Siksha-Satra |
| 5. Rabindralal Mazumder | - | Former Assistant Registrar |
| 6. Sibdas Banerjee | - | Former Senior Assistant, Accounts Office |
| 7. Narayan Pramanik | - | Peon, Palli-Samgathana Vibhaga |
| 8. Sailendra Nath Mandal | - | Former Peon, Finance Office |
| 9. Sk. Jerai | - | Former Security Guard, Watch & Ward Section |
| 10. Menoka Bauri | - | Former Skilled Labour, Agricultural Farm |
| 11. Suchitra Sen | - | Noted film Actress |
| 12. Tukli Hembram | - | Mali |
| 13. Asit Baran Mukherjee | - | Former Technical Assistant |
| 14. Suman Chandra Sarkar | - | Former Professor of Economics |
| 15. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar | - | Former faculty of Visva-Bharati |
| 16. Minati Kar | - | Former Adhyapika , Department of Sanskrit |
| 17. Satyaranjan Pal | - | P.C.K. Visva-Bharati |
| 18. Amarnath Meharatra | - | Former Adhyapaka, Social Work |

Category wise Administrative Staff as on 31-03-2014

Group	General		SC		ST		OBC		PH	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
A	47	4	8	0	3	0	3	1	-	-
B	148	28	23	4	9	4	3	2	-	-
C	267	36	50	4	9	0	15	1	3	-
MTS	154	20	97	24	19	12	10	2	3	-

UNIVERSITY AT A GLANCE

Total no. of Students : 8876 (Male—5007, Female—3869)

Total no. of Teaching Staff : 653 (Professor—157, Associate Professor-106, Asst. Professor-259, Asstt. Lect.—131)

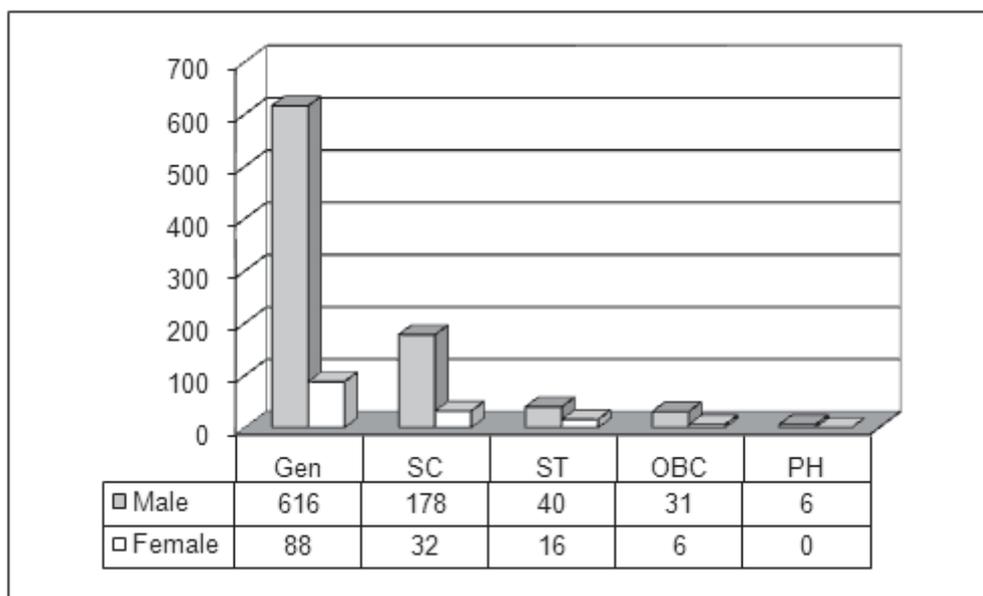
Total no. of Administrative Staff : 1013

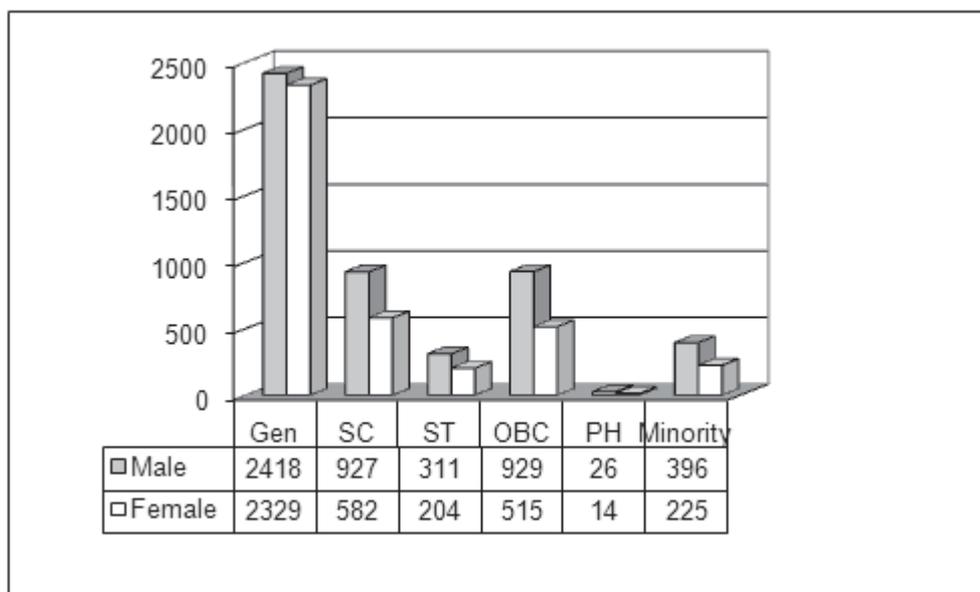
Group-A : 66 Group-B : 221 Group-C : 385 Group-MTS : 341

Total no. of sanctioned post of teaching staff (Prof. 70, Associate Prof. 153 Asst. Prof. 414, Asst. Lect. 159)

Total no. of sanctioned post of administrative staff (Group-A 90, Group-B 119, Group-C 686, Group-D 871)

Administrative Staff Composition as on 31.03.2014



Student Composition as on 31.03.2014**Teaching Staff Composition as on 31.03.2014**