

आचार्य  
श्री नरेंद्र मोदी  
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SHRI NARENDRA MODI  
उपाचार्य  
प्रो. विद्युत चक्रवर्ती  
UPACHARYA (VICE-CHANCELLOR)  
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विश्वभारती  
VISVA-BHARATI  
(Established by the Parliament of India under  
Visva-Bharati Act XXIX of 1951  
Vide Notification No. : 40-5/50 G.3 Dt. 14 May, 1951)  
संस्थापक  
रवीन्द्रनाथ ठाकुर  
FOUNDED BY  
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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सं./No. \_\_\_\_\_

दिनांक/Date. \_\_\_\_\_

**My Sixth Missive**

**25 July, 2020**

**To my colleagues, students, and other stakeholders surviving on and thriving because of  
Visva Bharati:**

### **An Epidemic of Land Sharks**

An authentic history of Visva-Bharati is yet to be written. The story of its evolution from Brahmacharya School to Visva-Bharati in 1921 is too well-known to need any further elucidation; its unfolding had begun with the arrival of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's father, Maharshi Debendranath in 1863. However, Santiniketan acquired its global reputation with the founding of Visva-Bharati by Maharshi's son, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore in an endeavour to provide an alternative education during colonial rule in India. Inspired by the Upanishadic ideas and other indigenous philosophical discourses, the bard endeavoured to develop a system of education which was not merely confined to books but also emphasized practices. His efforts were directed towards creatively blending the codified knowledge with what we learn by being dialectically connected with nature. It was therefore not surprising that classes in Patha Bhavana, one of the two schools in the campus of Visva-Bharati, are held in the open and students acquire knowledge in the natural surroundings. This is but one aspect of Gurudev's distinctive system of education; the other aspect revolved around his concern for securing the well-being of the villages around the campus. In order to translate his ideas into practice, the University adopted fifty villages around the campus at its inception. As is well-known, Gurudev Tagore invited scholars from all over the world to make Visva-Bharati a hub of learning which was clearly deviant from the established forms of education that flourished in



British India. Not only did Indian scholars responded to Gurudev's invitation, there were also foreign scholars, like Leonard Knight Elmhirst (1893-1974) and Charles Freer Andrews (1871-1940) who zealously joined hands with him in this venture. In most cases, the teachers whom Tagore chose for teaching the students in the schools and University, did not even get enough salary to make two ends meet. Nonetheless, they happily continued serving this great and innovative centre of education since it corresponded with their ideological mission as well. For them working at Visva Bharati was the fulfilment their inner desire to be part of this radical cultural experiment.

Although the teachers of Visva-Bharati did not get the salary they deserved they were given lease-hold land to construct dwelling houses for them. The purpose was to provide them with a space to live in the campus; otherwise, the idea of Visva-Bharati being an Ashram was defeated. Hence the plan was most laudable. Many scholars, from India and abroad, settled in Santiniketan which made the place vibrant with life in a natural environment. It became a place that was not only far away from the hurly burly world of Calcutta, but also free from industrial pollution, since its natural set-up was never allowed to be disturbed.

The inputs that I would like to share with those desirous of bringing back the past glory of Santiniketan relate to the encroachment and unauthorized construction on the land that legally belongs to Visva-Bharati. A careful study of how Visva-Bharati shrunk as a campus reveals that even those in the higher echelons of society are equally responsible for this. Those in and around the campus illegally held the entitlements by pulling strings and even by intimidating and giving physical threats to Visva-Bharati officials who are given the responsibility for protecting the campus from these land-sharks. This is easier said than done since the desire to survive and also thrive at the cost of the University is so well-entrenched that there is hardly an easy escape route. What is so striking is that those who are involved in these nefarious activities do it shamelessly while leaving no stone unturned to establish their claim of being *Rabindrik* (those inspired by Rabindranath's ideas and thoughts). Not only is this paradoxical, it is also an effort to accomplish a partisan design by those who, by giving a lip-service to Gurudev's unique socio-political views, resorted to an obnoxious method for pursuing self-gratifying goals. Visva-Bharati is that proverbial goose that lays golden eggs for these individuals since to a Bengali having property, including a dwelling unit, adds to his/her social reputation even if s/he hardly stays there for more than a week in a calendar year as a rough survey demonstrates. Visva-Bharati sees many of these owning "Rabindriks" during two annual events: *Poush Mela* in the month of December and *Basanta Utsav* (held on the day of



*Holi*) in the month of March. Apart from these two occasions, these (sprawling if not palatial) houses remain under the care of caretakers for most of the year. This is not to suggest that those having houses here need always to stay, but simply to point out that these houses under the caretakers' supervision provide, on many occasions, a haven for elements which do not seem to be desirable in *Ashramik* canon.

After my joining Visva-Bharati in November, 2018, my attention was drawn to the encroachment of Visva-Bharati land and also unauthorized constructions around the campus. The Ministry of Human Resource Development issued an order on 30 November, 2017 directing all Higher Education Institutions to take stern steps to reclaim the encroached land and also demolish unauthorized construction within the campus. Steps were taken accordingly. As a matter of continuity, the administration was geared towards carrying on the directions of the Ministry. Since the beginning of my tenure, we have undertaken several operations to respect the decision of the Ministry, some of which are as follows:

- 1) There are many shops selling stationery items, vegetables, fruits, etc., in the area next to the post-office and Subarnarekha. After several round of visits, we discovered that there are many huts (reportedly shops) which have been shuttered for months which led us to realize that the aim was to retain possession of the occupied land. We also came to know that these shops were transferred from one person to another with high premium. Under these circumstances, the administration decided to demolish those so-called shops which remained closed for months together. We did not disturb other shops which were functional since they were sources of livelihood for many families although it was brought to our notice that many of the shop owners were pretty well-off. Nonetheless, we were guided by the fact that these shops help many families survive, and so we remained committed to their continued existence despite their being unauthorized occupants of Visva-Bharati land.
- 2) Our second point of attention was the unauthorized construction of a canteen next to the Nanda Sadan Hostel that purportedly provided breakfast and Chapati to the hostel dwellers. The Estate officer was threatened by the canteen owner who said that if a step towards the demolition of the canteen was taken, he would involve the students to scuttle the move violently. Even the OC, Santiniketan requested him in my presence, though he remained adamant. We took a firm decision to demolish the canteen also because we received a letter from the Hon'ble Governor of Bengal underlining that many unsocial activities, including those which cannot be allowed to carry on in a



university campus, were being undertaken under the cloak of a canteen. Our apprehension came true; there were apparently dilapidated buildings, (at least that is what it looks from outside) which housed all kinds of illegal activities under the patronage of local “Big Brothers” who were not afraid of legal punishment, it appears.

- 3) The story of Santisree hostel is similar. There was a large mud construction round the corner of the Hostel building, which was reportedly serving breakfast and snacks to the students. We politely requested the canteen owner to demolish the structure though it was not heeded; instead, he hurled abuses upon our staff members who went there to demolish the illegally built construction that had nonetheless been allowed to continue to exist . The Estate Office was then authorized to go ahead and the mud-construction was pulled down in view of the fact that it was an unauthorized construction.
- 4) We also felt that the so-called Kabiguru market that flourished around the Mela ground did not appear to have legal sanction; the shops that had sprouted there seem to have lacked authorization. Visva-Bharati had also in mind that many families are dependent on the income that these shops accrue for survival though we have information that many of the shop owners are actually very rich businessmen and one or two of them own resorts, guest houses etc. in Santiniketan. Those who even cross casually the Sonaijhuri Hat will notice many billboards of these lodges/resorts, the owners of which maintain shops of Santiniketani handicrafts in the Kabiguru market. To spread the message that the encroachment had affected Visva-Bharati, I along with my likeminded colleagues had sat for twelve hours of hunger strike in August, 2019. Simultaneously, we also felt that it was not in conformity with Tagore’s fundamental beliefs about humanity if we simply asked these shop owners to give up their business since it was their main source of livelihood. Hence, we devised an alternative; we identified two bighas of land (near Kabar Khana) to create an alternative market-complex for these displaced shop owners. The Hon’ble Minister, Sri Chandranath Sinha was very helpful and Visva-Bharati had given him the required permission to start constructing the complex, subject to the granting of permission by the State Government as we had actually gotten the land from the State Government. We believe that the Santiniketan-Sriniketan Development Authority has taken adequate steps to translate this decision into reality. Initially, we were assured that the complex would be ready by June, 2020; now, we are told that by this December, the shop owners will get their shops in a multistoried building (G+3), for which the approved DPR has already been handed over to the developer. I am further told by the Hon’ble Minister that the market complex



shall be built in PPP (Public-Private-Partnership) mode, and the private developer has already been identified. We hope that the work will be completed by this December, as promised by those who matter in this process.

- 5) In Balipara, Pearson Palli and Kallygaunge villages, the local tribal population has been occupying (unauthorizedly) more than 50 acres of land that legally belongs to Visva-Bharati. These three villages are technically located in the Visva-Bharati campus. It needs to be mentioned here that Visva-Bharati is probably the only University in the world that houses three villages (with population of more than 2000 habitats) on campus. There, Visva-Bharati maintains a primary school, Anganwadi Centre, health clinic, open air stage, among others. Since these villages are neither within the purview of Panchayat nor under the administration of the municipality, the villagers are deprived of all socio-economic benefits that are usually given by the State Government. This is not however a deterrent since Visva-Bharati land is being regularly encroached upon in these areas. To address this issues, a Joint Committee comprising the State Government and Visva-Bharati officials was constituted in 2008 and the Chief Secretary of the Government of West Bengal convened a meeting in 2014, which did not yield results as the situation remained unchanged. Nonetheless, Visva-Bharati gave “No Objection” to the State Government for including these villages within the jurisdiction of any of the local bodies.
- 6) There was a mushrooming of shops on one side of the road that goes through the Ashram, just past the the building for integrated sciences at Pearson Palli (on the Post Office - Kalisayer Road). We had a meeting among ourselves and decided not to allow these shops on Visva-Bharati’s land because it may end up becoming another Kabiguru market in the long run. It would then be difficult to reclaim the land when Visva-Bharati requires it. We gave notice of one week to these shop owners and then went ahead with our demolition plan. While it is true that our decision to stop unauthorized construction adversely affected those shop owners, it is also true that we are custodians of Visva-Bharati’s property. Hence the decision which might have caused heart-burn to some had to be taken.
- 7) Recently, in the month of June, 2020, we were told that a Shiva Temple was being constructed in our land in which the Tan Hostel is located. We made an appeal to the local people saying that the land belonged to Visva-Bharati and hence no construction was to be allowed. Furthermore, as per Visva-Bharati’s tradition and also codified



instruction in the Trust Deed, puja (formal worship) of any deity in any form is completely forbidden. Our request was not respected by the local people, including the representative of the local councillor. The local panchayat endeavoured hard to stall the construction of the wall by giving us a notice saying that Visva-Bharti had no right on the land since it was claimed to be vested (government) land, which was a lie as the Visva-Bharati land record shows. We marshalled our resources to build a boundary wall to protect the Tan Hostel. Since the controversial space belonged to Visva-Bharati, we decided to go ahead with whatever was to be done legally.

- 8) There are other areas that have been encroached upon by immigrants and slum dwellers, among others, in Khaspara, Purva Palli Railway Line Area, Dakshin Palli, Bhubandanga Bandh. These areas have easily been encroached since there is no boundary wall; Visva-Bharati, being a porous campus, seems to have become an easy prey for the so-called land-sharks.
- 9) In addition to these mass encroachments by the tribals, immigrants, slum dwellers, there are many examples of individual encroachments by well-to-do people and even those who are on the payroll of Visva-Bharati.

#### **What is urgently required to be done: -**

- a) Dakshin Palli old Sub-Registry Office: 15-20 stalls are to be removed. Abandoned building to be demolished. Boundary wall (approximately 100 meters) to be renovated with raised heights.
- b) Bhubandanga Bandh area: this is the most critical area at present. 40-50 structures are to be removed. 1400 meters boundary wall is required to be constructed. 200 meters of boundary wall need to be built to complete unfinished boundary wall that the university constructed in 2012.
- c) Unauthorized occupation of leased land: unauthorized occupants of leased plots of Purva Palli/Dakshinpalli/Sripalli are required to be evicted. These occupants are very high-profile people and they pull strings to sustain their illegal claim on the land to which they have no legal entitlement. It is difficult to name them though they figure in the list of illegal occupants, because some of them are globally-reputed personalities who, despite earnest requests from Visva-Bharati, happily continue being unauthorized occupants of Visva-Bharati's land. Let me end this point with an interesting anecdote



that I have gathered after having examined some documents relating to the lease-hold land settlements in Visva Bharati campus. As shown by the land records kept in Visva-Bharati's custody, in the mid-1940s, the father of a globally famous personality wrote to Sri Rathindranath Tagore (who had been looking after the university after his father's demise) requesting him to agree to the allotment of a portion of land in the campus, in exchange for a portion of land in Lal Bandh (that was in the possession of the individual who wrote this letter). This land in Lal Bandh was useless barren land. Gurudev's son was in a serious dilemma since it was not easy for him to summarily reject the request for many complex reasons. He then sought the advice of the grandfather of one of our erstwhile Vice Chancellors, who convinced Sri Rathindranath Tagore to immediately discard the plea since it was clearly partisan and therefore contrary to the interests of Visva Bharati. This decision became one of the major sources of constant irritation in the relationship between Gurudev's son and that particular Santiniketan-based family.

- d) The rent for the buildings for which Visva-Bharati offered land is abysmally low: for instance, the rent that we receive from West Bengal SEDCL, SBI, Doordarshan, AIR, among others, needs instant revision since the rent was fixed several decades ago and we haven't even signed a formal agreement. In view of the spiraling market price of the land in the campus area and its vicinity, it is but natural that the issue of settling rent and executing legal agreements require to be thoroughly re-examined.
- e) The height of depriving Visva-Bharati of legal income was the fact that despite being located on campus land, the Cooperative Credit Society (opposite Mela ground) and *Samavyeeka* (near Post Office and Subarnarekha) have been functioning with no rent in the case of the former and a meagre amount of Rs. 100/- per month in the case of the latter. Interestingly, there is no lease agreement with regard to the former and no rent was never given since its inception, and it has been running this business for years together by being housed in a prime location in the campus land. We have started the process of agreement just last month (June, 2020) and are negotiating with the committee running the Credit Society for a reasonable monthly rent. As regards the *Samavayeeeka*, the case is a little a-*Rabindrik* since the *Samavayeeeka* used to earn little more than Rs. 500/- per month as rent from the vegetable vendor and Visva Travel, though it itself paid only Rs. 100/- per month to Visva-Bharati. Thus, its rental income was more than what *Samavayeeeka* agreed to give to Visva-Bharati as rent. This is a scam which needs to be thoroughly investigated; the funding agency, the MHRD has already been intimated. Furthermore, a perusal of the balance sheet of its annual sale



shows a respectable income. And, yet, the *Samavayeeeka* which has two large buildings in a prime location within the campus is reluctant to pay a reasonable rent. We have started the process of a new agreement with the fixing of a reasonable rent. If *Samavayeeeka* is not agreeable, we will take steps as per the law of the land, which will again be an unpleasant decision causing heart-burn to those thriving by being part of *Samavayeeeka*.

- f) Being sensitive to Tagore's concern for humanity, we are aware of our responsibilities to those who are living on the occupied land for more than ninety years in Balipara, Pearson Palli and Kallygunge areas. As Visva-Bharati has already given NOC to the State Government there remains no hurdle for the local authorities to extend to these areas all those legitimate socio-economic benefits given elsewhere. Furthermore, the Government needs to exercise its power to permanently prevent the land sharks from driving away the hapless tribals who have also grown along with Visva-Bharati, by applying laws stringently against such illegal activities.

As was the case with my earlier Missives, the purpose of this Missive is to locate the reasons for the deterioration of Visva-Bharati, which came into being as the brain child of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore who, by certain innovative socio-economic designs, set in motion a wave of self-driven action for change.

I end this Missive with the same appeal that I had made in my earlier ones: since our fight is against COVID-19, we must remain socially connected, as this is the most effective weapon against this invisible enemy causing severe dislocations in our daily existence.

Keep the faith

*Bidyut Chakrabarty*  
Bidyut Chakrabarty  
25/07/2020



Vice-Chancellor  
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**Visva-Bharati  
Estate Office**



**Report on Eviction of Unauthorized Occupants and Demolition of Unauthorized Structures  
during the last two years**

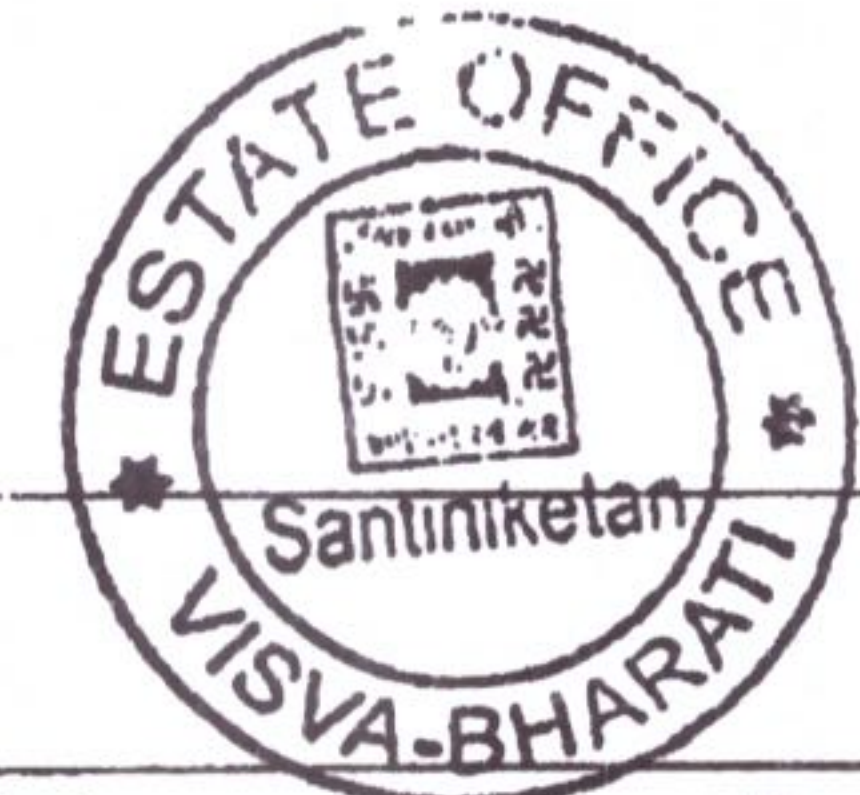
Trough administrative action by Estate Office

Serial no	Date	Place	Land area Made Encroachment-Free	Details of Structures Removed	Remarks
1	25-11-2018	Post Office Market	3 decimals	6 stalls	These stalls were not in use.
2	06-01-2019	Dakshinpalli	02 decimals	3 huts	One family was residing. University has now walled / beautified the place. Students have done paintings on new wall.
3	10-01-2019	Post Office Market	2 decimals	3 stalls	
4	27-01-2019	Ratanpalli Market	01 decimals	2 stalls	
5	27-01-2019	Backside of Nanda Sadan Boys Hostel	05 decimals	1 abandoned Building (LSS qtrs)	Anti-socials were using this building. One family was also residing. Local people had complained to Governor.
6	01-02-2019	Nanda Sadana Hostel, Santisri Hostel	04 decimals	02 unauthorized canteens	These two unauthorized canteens were built more than 15 years ago. Earlier attempts to demolish these were foiled by students.
7	4-02-2019 9-02-2019	Lalbundh	02 decimals	1 earthen hut and 1 wooden hut	Sekh Asgar was residing here for 10 years. Even complaint to police failed to remove him.
8.	17-02-2019	Ratanpalli Market near Creche	02 decimals	2 stalls	Stall owners were dumping wastes inside the creche.
9.	19-2-2019	Post Office Market	01 decimal	2 stalls	
10	8-4-2019, 9-4-2019	Ratanpalli	03 decimals	Abandoned building	The abandoned building was being used by anti socials.
11	12-4-2019	Dakshinpalli staff qtrs	0.5 decimal	1 unauthorized pucca structure	Structure built unauthorized by Tanup Nath, employee.
12	15-4-2019	Gurupalli (near CFEL)	0.5	1 pucca toilet was built on V-B land.	
13	16-6-2019	Handicraft Market (Nisa Hotel - SBI)	-	-	Notice issued. Gov't help solicited. Meetings held. Project underway.
14	26-7-2019	Siksha Bhavana More to Vinaya-Bhavana More	20 decimals	10 stalls removed and earth levelled	Plantation done by Garden Section subsequently.

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15	14-8-2019	Post Office Market	02 decimals	3 stalls removed	
16	12-12-2019	Ratanpalli (backside of NCC)	01 decimal	1 building	Joint survey done. Engg Dept requested for boundary wall urgently.
17	24-01-2020	Near SBI, Santiniketan	-	-	Notice issued to Dasarath Konui Chinmoy Hazra, Bubai Hazra, Chinu. 03 dec land is encroached.
18	07-02-2020	Bhubandanga (Bolpur Mouza)	13 decimals		This was earlier given to PSV for running school. Caretaker's son staying here for 20 years. Land surveyed and marked. <b>Inspection report sent to authority for decision. Demolition and boundary wall required.</b>
19	07-03-2020	Nichu Bandhgora (Bandhgora mouza)	11 decimals	1 structure (Manasa temple)	Land surveyed, identified and pillared in presence of local people, V-B Security, Advocate and Councillor. <b>Proposal for boundary wall pending.</b>
20	09-06-2020	Post Office Market	03 decimals	6 stalls demolished.	
21	18-6-2020, 19-6-2020, 20-6-2020	Tan Boys Hostel	01	01 structure and 4 concrete columns	Unauthorized Shiva temple removed. Part of the complex walled by Engg Dept in presence of Estate, Security. <b>Boundary wall is to be completed.</b>

Proceedings started under PP Act, 1971

Sl No	Name of Suspected Occupier	Case no, if any	Area of Land affected	Present Status
1.	Madhabi Bhattacharya	1/ 2019	132 dec	Pending
2.	Branch Manager, BDCCB, Sriniketan	5/2019	10 dec	Construction stopped. Bank applied for agreement as per EC resolution of V-B
3.	Ananya Roy	4/ 2019	7 dec	Pending
4.	Ashis Nayek	5/ 2018	0.5 dec	Structure sealed
5.	Shital Dhibar	2/2020	2.5 dec	Construction stopped by party
6	Subhayu Chattopadhyay Satya Sain	4/2018	17 dec	Pending
7	Sumitro Kar	3/2019	19 dec	Pending/ Joint Survey held/ record corrected by the BLLRO
8	Subir Hazra		01 dec	Structure removed by party
9	Sk Humayun Jyotsna Bibi		03 dec	Pending
10	Inaul Mallik	3/2020	2.5 dec	Structure removed by party

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